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# SERMONS,

BY

SAMUEL HORSLEY,

LL.D. F.R.S. F.A.S.

LATE

LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

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*A New Edition,*

INCLUDING

NINE SERMONS ON OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION;

AND

A DISSERTATION ON THE PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH  
DISPERSED AMONG THE HEATHEN.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

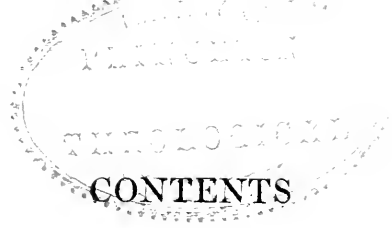
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PROPERTY OF  
PRINCETON

SERMON XXVIII.

THEOLOGICAL

PHILIPPIANS, iii. 15.

*Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.*

THE perfection of the Christian character, as may be collected from the apostle's description of his own feelings and his own practice, consists, it seems, in an earnest desire of perpetual progress and improvement in the practical habits of a good and holy life. When the apostle speaks of this as the highest of his own attainments, he speaks of it as the governing principle of his whole life; and the perfective quality that he ascribes to it seems to consist in these three properties, — that it is boundless in its energy, disinterested in its object, and yet rational in its origin. That these are the properties which make this desire of proficiency truly perfective of the Christian character, I shall now attempt to prove: and, for this purpose, it will be necessary to enquire what man's proper goodness is; and to take a view of man, both in his first state of natural innocence, and in his actual state of redemption from the ruin of his fall.

Absolute perfection in moral goodness, no less than in knowledge and power, belongs incommunicably to

God ; for this reason, that goodness in the Deity only is original : in the creature, to whatever degree it may be carried, it is derived. If man hath a just discernment of what is good, to whatever degree of quickness it may be improved, it is originally founded on certain first principles of intuitive knowledge which the created mind receives from God. If he hath the will to perform it, it is the consequence of a connection which the Creator hath established between the decisions of the judgment and the effort of the will ; and for this truth of judgment and this rectitude of the original bias of the will, in whatever perfection he may possess them as natural endowments, he deserves no praise, any otherwise than as a statue or a picture may deserve praise ; in which, what is really praised is not the marble nor the canvass, — not the elegance of the figure nor the richness of the colouring, — but the invention and execution of the artist. This, however, properly considered, is no imperfection in man ; seeing it belongs by necessity to the condition of a creature. The thing made can be originally nothing but what the maker makes it ; therefore the created mind can have no original knowledge but what the Maker hath infused, — no original propensities but such as are the necessary result of the established harmony and order of its faculties. A creature, therefore, in whatever degree of excellence it be supposed to be created, cannot originally have any merit of its own ; for merit must arise from voluntary actions, and cannot be a natural endowment ; and it is owing to a wonderful contrivance of the beneficent Creator, in the fabric of the rational mind, that created beings are capable of attaining to any thing of moral excellence, — that

they are capable of becoming what the Maker of them may love, and their own understandings approve. The contrivance that I speak of consists in a principle of which we have large experience in ourselves, and may with good reason suppose it to subsist in every intelligent being, except the First and Sovereign Intellect. It is a principle which it is in every man's power to turn, if he be so pleased, to his own advantage; but if he fail to do this, it is not in his power to hinder that the Deceiving Spirit turn it not to his detriment. In its own nature it is indifferent to the interests of virtue or of vice; being no propensity of the mind to one thing or to another, but simply this property, — that whatever action, either good or bad, hath been done once, is done a second time with more ease and with a better liking; and a frequent repetition heightens the ease and pleasure of the performance without limit. By virtue of this property of the mind, the having done any thing once becomes a motive to the doing of it again; the having done it twice is a double motive; and so many times as the act is repeated, so many times the motive to the doing of it once more is multiplied. To this principle, habit owes its wonderful force; of which it is usual to hear men complain, as of something external that enslaves the will. But the complaint, in this as in every instance in which man presumes to arraign the ways of Providence, is rash and unreasonable. The fault is in man himself, if a principle implanted in him for his good becomes by negligence and mismanagement the instrument of his ruin. It is owing to this principle that every faculty of the understanding and every sentiment of the heart is capable of being improved by exercise. It is the leading prin-

ciple in the whole system of the human constitution, modifying both the physical qualities of the body and the moral and intellectual endowments of the mind. We experience the use of it in every calling and condition of life. By this the sinews of the labourer are hardened for toil ; by this the hand of the mechanic acquires its dexterity ; to this we owe the amazing progress of the human mind in the politer arts and the abstruser sciences ; and it is an engine which it is in our power to employ to nobler and more beneficial purposes. By the same principle, when the attention is turned to moral and religious subjects, the understanding may gradually advance beyond any limit that may be assigned in quickness of perception and truth of judgment ; and the will's alacrity to conform to the dictates of conscience and the decrees of reason will be gradually heightened, to correspond in some due proportion with the growth of intellect.

" Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou so regardest him ! Thou hast made him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honour ! " — Destitute as he is of any original perfection, — which is thy sole prerogative, who art alone in all thy qualities original, — yet in the faculties of which thou hast given him the free command and use, and in the power of habit which thou hast planted in the principles of his system, thou hast given him the capacity of infinite attainments. Weak and poor in his beginnings, what is the height of any creature's virtue, to which he has not the power, by a slow and gradual ascent, to reach ? The improvements which he shall make by the vigorous exertion of the powers he hath received from thee, thou permittest him to call his own, imputing to him



the merit of the acquisitions which thou hast given him the ability to make. What, then, is the consummation of man's goodness, but to co-operate with the benevolent purpose of his Maker, by forming the habit of his mind to a constant ambition of improvement, which, enlarging its appetite in proportion to the acquisitions already made, may correspond with the increase of his capacities in every stage of a progressive virtue, in every period of an endless existence? And to what purpose but to excite this noble thirst of virtuous proficiency, — to what purpose but to provide that the object of the appetite may never be exhausted by gradual attainment, — hast thou imparted to thy creature's mind the idea of thine own attribute of perfect uncreated goodness?

But man, alas! hath abused thy gifts; and the things that should have been for his peace are become to him an occasion of falling. Unmindful of the height of glory to which he might attain, he has set his affections upon earthly things. The first command, which was imposed that he might form himself to the useful habit of implicit obedience to his Maker's will, a slight temptation, — the fair show and fragrance of the forbidden fruit, — moved him to transgress. From that fatal hour, error hath seized his understanding, appetite perverts his will, and the power of habit, intended for the infinite exaltation of his nature, operates to his ruin.

Man hath been false to himself; but his Maker's love hath not forsaken him. By early promises of mercy, by Moses and the prophets, and at last by his Son, God calls his fallen creature to repentance. He hath provided an atonement for past guilt. He promises the effectual aids of his Holy Spirit, to counter-

act the power of perverted habit, to restore light to the darkened understanding, to tame the fury of inflamed appetite, to purify the soiled imagination, and to foil the grand Deceiver in every new attempt. He calls us to use our best diligence to improve under these advantages; and it is promised to the faithful and sincere, that by the perpetual operation of the Holy Spirit on their minds, and by an alteration which at the general resurrection shall take place in the constitution of the body, they shall be promoted to a degree of perfection which by the strength that naturally remains in man in his corrupted state they never could attain. They shall be raised above the power of temptation, and placed in a condition of happiness not inferior to that which by God's original appointment might have corresponded with the improvement of their moral state, had that improvement been their own attainment, by a gradual progress from the first state of innocence. That the devout and well-disposed are thus by God's power made perfect, is the free gift of God in Christ, — the effect of undeserved mercy, exercised in consideration of Christ's intercession and atonement. Thus it is that fallen man in Christ Jesus "created anew unto those good works which God had before ordained that we should walk in them." His lost capacity of improvement is restored, and the great career of virtue is again before him. What, then, is the perfection of man, in this state of redemption, but that which might have been Adam's perfection in Paradise? — a desire of moral improvement, duly proportioned to his natural capacity of improving, and, for that purpose, expanding without limit, as he rises in the knowledge of what is good, and gathers strength in the practical habits of it.

Thus, you see, the proper goodness of man consists in gradual improvement ; and the desire of improvement, to be truly perfective of his character, and to keep pace with the growth of his moral capacities, must be boundless in its energies, or capable of an infinite enlargement.

Another property requisite in this desire of improvement, to give it its perfective quality, is that it should be disinterested. Virtue must be desired for its own sake, — not as subservient to any farther end, or as the means of any greater good. It has been thought an objection to the morality of the Christian system, that as it teaches men to shun vice on account of impending punishments, and to cultivate virtuous habits in the hope of annexed rewards, that therefore the virtue which it affects to teach it teaches not, teaching it upon mean and selfish motives. The objection, perhaps, may claim a hearing, because it is founded on principles which the true Christian will of all men be the last to controvert, — namely, that good actions, if they arise from any other motive than the pure love of doing good, or, which is the same thing, from the pure desire of pleasing God, lose all pretension to intrinsic worth and merit. God himself is good, by the complacency which his perfect nature finds in exertions of power to the purposes of goodness ; and men are no otherwise good than as they delight in virtuous actions, from the bare apprehension that they are good, without any selfish views to advantageous consequences. He that denies these principles confounds the distinct ideas of the useful and the fair, and leaves nothing remaining of genuine virtue but an empty name. But our answer to the adversary is, that these are the principles of Christi-

anity itself; for St. Paul himself places the perfection of the Christian character in that quality of disinterested virtue which some have injuriously supposed cannot belong to it. It may seem, perhaps, that the strictness and purity of the precepts of Christianity rather heighten the objection than remove it; that the objection, rightly understood, is this, — that the Christian system is at variance with itself, its precepts exacting a perfection of which the belief of its doctrines must necessarily preclude the attainment; for how is it possible that a love of virtue and religion should be disinterested, which, in its most improved state, is confessedly accompanied with the expectation of an infinite reward? A little attention to the nature of the Christian's hope, — to the extent of his knowledge of the reward he seeks, will solve this difficulty. It will appear, that the Christian's desire of that happiness which the Gospel promises to the virtuous in a future life, — that the desire of this happiness, and the pure love of virtue for its own sake, paradoxical as the assertion may at first seem, are inseparably connected: for the truth is, that the Christian's love of virtue does not arise from a previous desire of the reward; but his desire of the reward arises from a previous love of virtue. Observe that I do not speak of any love of virtue previous to his conversion to Christianity. But I affirm, that the first and immediate effect of his conversion is to inspire him with the genuine love of virtue and religion; and that his desire of the reward is a secondary and subordinate effect, — a consequence of the love of virtue previously formed in him: for, of the nature of the reward it promises, what does the Gospel discover to us more than this, — that it shall be great

and endless, and adapted to the intellectual endowments and moral qualities of the human soul in a state of high improvement? — And from this general view of it, as the proper condition of the virtuous, it becomes the object of the Christian's desire and his hope. "It doth not yet appear," saith St. John, "what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear (*i. e.* when Christ shall appear) we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." This, you see, is our hope, — to be made like to Christ our Saviour, in the blessed day of his appearance; and "he that hath this hope in him," — this general hope of being transformed into the likeness of his glorified Lord, of whose glory, which, as he hath not seen, he hath no distinct and adequate conception, — "purifies himself, as he is pure." Of the particular enjoyments in which his future happiness will consist, the Christian is ignorant. The Gospel describes them by images only and allusions, which lead only to this general notion, that they will be such as to give entire satisfaction to all the desires of a virtuous soul. Our opinion of their value is founded on a sense of the excellence of virtue, and on faith in God as the protector of the virtuous. The Christian gives a preference to that particular kind of happiness to which a life of virtue and religion leads, in the general persuasion, that of all possible happiness, *that* must be the greatest which so good a being as God hath annexed to so excellent a thing in the creature as the shadow of his own perfections. But the mind, to be susceptible of this persuasion, must be previously possessed with an esteem and love of virtue, and with just apprehensions of God's perfections: and the desire of the reward can never divest the mind of that disinterested love of God and good-

ness on which it is itself founded ; nor can it assume the relation of a cause to that of which it is itself the effect. It appears, therefore, that the Christian's love of goodness, — his desire of virtuous attainments, — is, in the strict and literal meaning of the word, disinterested, notwithstanding the magnitude of the reward which is the object of his hope. The magnitude of that reward is an object of faith, not of sense or knowledge ; and it is commended to his faith, by his just sense of the importance of the attainments to which it is promised.

If any one imagines he can be actuated by principles more disinterested than these, he forgets that he is a man and not a god. Happiness must be a constant object of desire and pursuit to every intelligent being, — that is, to every being who, besides the actual perception of present pleasure and present pain, hath the power of forming general ideas of happiness and misery as distinct states arising from different causes. Every being that hath this degree of intelligence is under the government of final causes ; and the advancement of his own happiness, if it be not already entire and secure, must be an end. It is impossible, therefore, that any rational agent, unless he be either sufficient to his own happiness (which is the prerogative of God), or hath some certain assurance that his condition will not be altered for the worse (which will hereafter be the glorious privilege of the saints who overcome), — but without this prerogative or this privilege, it is impossible that any rational being should be altogether unconcerned about the consequences of his moral conduct, as they may affect his own condition. In the present life, the advantages are not on the side of virtue : all comes alike to

all, — “to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not ; — to him that sweareth, and to him that feareth an oath :” and if a constitution of things were to continue for ever in which virtue should labour under disadvantages, man might still have the virtue to regret that virtue was not made for *him* ; but discretion must be his ruling principle ; and discretion, in this state of things, could propose no end but immediate pleasure and present interest. The Gospel, extending our views to a future period of existence, delivers the believer from the uneasy apprehension that interest and duty may possibly be at variance. It delivers him from that distrust of Providence which the present face of things, without some certain prospect of futurity, would be too apt to create ; and sets him at liberty to pursue virtue with all that ardour of affection which its native worth may claim, and gratitude to God his Maker and Redeemer may excite.

It is true, the alternative which the Gospel holds out is endless happiness in heaven, or endless suffering in hell ; and the view of this alternative may well be supposed to operate to a certain degree on base and sordid minds, — on those who, without any sense of virtue, or any preference of its proper enjoyments as naturally the greatest good, make no other choice of heaven than as the least of two great evils. To be deprived of sensual gratifications, they hold to be an evil of no moderate size, to which they must submit in heaven ; but yet they conceive of this absence of pleasure as more tolerable than positive torment, which they justly apprehend those who are excluded from heaven must undergo in the place of punishment. On minds thus depraved, the view of

the alternative of endless happiness or endless misery was intended to operate ; and it is an argument of God's wonderful mercy, that he has been pleased to display such prospects of futurity as may affect the human mind in its most corrupt and hardened state, — that men in this unworthy state, in this state of enmity with God, are yet the objects of his care and pity, — that “ he willeth not the death of a sinner, but that the sinner should turn from his way and live.” But, to imagine that any one whom the warnings of the Gospel may no otherwise affect than with the dread of the punishment of sin, — that any one in whom they may work only a reluctant choice of heaven as eligible only in comparison with a state of torment, — does merely in those feelings, or by a certain pusillanimity in vice, which is the most those feelings can effect, satisfy the duties of the Christian calling, — to imagine this, is a strange misconception of the whole scheme of Christianity. The utmost good to be expected from the principle of fear is that it may induce a state of mind in which better principles may take effect. It may bring the sinner to hesitate between self-denial here with heaven in reversion, and gratification here with future sufferings. In this state of ambiguity, the mind deliberates : while the mind deliberates, appetite and passion intermit : while they intermit, conscience and reason energize. Conscience conceives the idea of the moral good : reason contemplates the new and lovely image with delight ; she becomes the willing pupil of religion ; she learns to discern in each created thing the print of sovereign goodness, and in the attributes of God deseries its first and perfect form. New views and new desires occupy the soul : virtue is understood



to be the resemblance of God ; his resemblance is coveted, as the highest attainment ; heaven is desired, as the condition of those who resemble him ; and the intoxicating cup of pleasure is refused, — not that the mortal palate might not find it sweet, but because vice presents it. When the habit of the mind is formed to these views and these sentiments, then, and not before, the Christian character, in the judgment of St. Paul, is perfect ; and the perfective quality of this disposition of the mind lies principally in this circumstance, that it is a disinterested love of virtue and religion as the chief object. The disposition is not the less valuable nor the less good, when it is once formed, because it is the last stage of a gradual progress of the mind which may too often, perhaps, begin in nothing better than a sense of guilt, and a just fear of punishment. The sweetness of the ripened fruit is not the less delicious for the austerity of its cruder state ; nor is this Christian righteousness to be despised, if, amid the various temptations of the world, a sense of the danger as well as the turpitude of a life of sin should be necessary not only to its beginning but to its permanency. The whole of our present life is but the childhood of our existence : and children are not to be trained to the wisdom and virtues of men without more or less of a compulsive discipline ; at the same time that perfection must be confessed to consist in that pure love of God and of his law which casteth out fear.

We have now seen, that the perfective quality which the apostle ascribes to the Christian's desire of improvement consists much in these two properties, — that it is boundless in its energies, and disinterested in its object. A third renders it complete ;

which is this, — that this appetite of the mind (for such it may be called, although insatiable, and, in the strictest sense of the word, disinterested,) is nevertheless rational; inasmuch as its origin is entirely in the understanding, and personal good, though not its object, is rendered by the appointment of Providence, and by the promises of the Gospel, its certain consequence. Upon the whole, it appears that the perfection of the Christian character, as it is described by the apostle, consists in that which is the natural perfection of the man, — in a principle which brings every thought and desire of the mind into an entire subjection to the will of God, rendering a religious course of life a matter of choice no less than of duty and interest.

## S E R M O N XXIX.

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DANIEL, iv. 17.

*This matter is by the decree of the Watchers, and the demand by the word of the Holy Ones ; to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.\**

**T**HE matter which the text refers to the “decree of the Watchers,” and “the demand of the Holy Ones,” is the judgment which, after no long time, was about to fall upon Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of whom we read so much in history, sacred and profane. His conquest of the Jewish nation, though a great event in the history of the church, was but a small part of this prince’s story. The kingdom of Babylon came to him by inheritance from his father : upon his accession he made himself master of all the rest of the Assyrian empire ; and to these vast dominions he added, by a long series of wars of unparalleled suc-

\* Preached in the Cathedral Church of St. Asaph, on Thursday, December 5. 1805 ; being the day of public thanksgiving for the victory obtained by Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson, over the combined fleets of France and Spain, off Cape Trafalgar.

cess, the whole of that immense tract of country which extends from the banks of the Euphrates westward to the sea-coasts of Palestine and Phœnicia, and the border of Egypt. Nor was he more renowned in war than justly admired in peace, for public works of the highest utility and magnificence. To him the famous city of Babylon owed whatever it possessed of strength, of beauty, or convenience, — its solid walls with their hundred gates, immense in circuit, height, and thickness, — its stately temple, and its proud palace, with the hanging gardens, — its regular streets and spacious squares, — the embankments which confined the river, — the canals, which carried off the floods, — and the vast reservoir, which in seasons of drought (for to the vicissitudes of immoderate rains and drought the climate was liable) supplied the city and the adjacent country with water. In a word, for the extent of his dominion, and the great revenues it supplied, — for his unrivalled success in war, — for the magnificence and splendour of his court, — and for his stupendous works and improvements at Babylon, he was the greatest monarch, not only of his own times, but incomparably the greatest the world had ever seen, without exception even of those whose names are remembered as the first civilizers of mankind, — the Egyptian Sesostris and the Indian Bacchus. But great as this prince's talents and endowments must have been, his uninterrupted and unexampled prosperity was too much for the digestion of his mind : his heart grew vain in the contemplation of his grandeur : he forgot that he was a man ; and he affected divine honours. His impious pride received indeed a check, by the miraculous deliverance of the three faithful Jews from the furnace to which

they had been condemned. His mind at first was much affected by the miracle ; but the impression in time wore off, and the intoxication of power and prosperity returned upon him. God was therefore pleased to humble him, and to make him an example to the world and to himself of the frailty of all human power, — the instability of all human greatness. I say, an example to the world and to *himself*; for it is very remarkable, that the king's own conversion was in part an object of the judgment inflicted upon him : and, notwithstanding what has been said to the contrary, upon no ground at all, by a foreign commentator of great name, it is evident, from the sacred history, that object was accomplished ; and it was in order to the accomplishment of it that the king had warning of the impending visitation in a dream. That a dispensation of judgment should be tempered with such signal mercy to a heathen prince, not, like Cyrus, eminent for his virtues, however distinguished by his talents, is, perhaps, in some degree, to be put to the account of the favour he showed to many of the Jews his captives, and in particular to his constant patronage of the prophet Daniel. At a time when there was nothing in his situation to fill his mind with gloomy thoughts, “ for he was at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace,” he saw in a dream a tree strong and flourishing : its summit pierced the clouds, and its branches overshadowed the whole extent of his vast dominions ; it was laden with fruit, and luxuriant in its foliage ; the cattle reposed in its shade, and the fowls of the air lodged in its branches ; and multitudes partook of its delicious fruit. But the king saw a celestial being, a Watcher, and a Holy One, come down from heaven ; and heard

him give order, with a loud voice, that the tree should be hewn down, its branches lopped off, and its fruit scattered, and nothing left of it but “the stump of its roots in the earth;” which was to be secured, however, with a “band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field.” Words of menace follow, which are applicable only to a man, and plainly show that the whole vision was typical of some dreadful calamity, to fall for a time, but for a time only, on some one of the sons of men.

The interpretation of this dream was beyond the skill of all the wise men of the kingdom. Daniel was called; who, by the interpretation of a former dream, which had been too hard for the Chaldeans and the Magi, and for the professed diviners of all denominations, had acquired great credit and favour with the king; and before this time had been promoted to the highest offices in the state, and, amongst others, to that of president of the college of the Magi. Daniel told the king, that the tree which he had seen so strong and flourishing was himself, — that the hewing down of the tree was a dreadful calamity that should befall him, and continue till he should be brought to know “that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.”

Strange as it must seem, notwithstanding Daniel’s weight and credit with the king, — notwithstanding the consternation of mind into which the dream had thrown him, this warning had no permanent effect. He was not cured of his overweening pride and vanity till he was overtaken by the threatened judgment. “At the end of twelve months, he was walking in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon,” — probably on the flat roof of the building, or, perhaps, on one of

the highest terraces of the hanging gardens, where the whole city would lie in prospect before him ; and he said, in the exultation of his heart, — “ Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the seat of empire, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ? ” The words had scarcely passed his lips, when “ the might of his power and the honour of his majesty ” departed from him : the same voice which in the dream had predicted the judgment now denounced the impending execution ; and the voice had no sooner ceased to speak than the thing was done.

This is “ the matter, ” — this judgment, thus predicted and thus executed, is the matter which the text refers to “ the decree of the Watchers ” and the “ word of the Holy Ones. ” — “ The matter is by the decree of the Watchers, and the requisition is by the word of the Holy Ones ; and the intent of the matter is to give mankind a proof, in the fall and restoration of this mighty monarch, that the fortunes of kings and empires are in the hand of God, — that his providence perpetually interposes in the affairs of men, distributing crowns and sceptres, always for the good of the faithful primarily, ultimately of his whole creation, but according to his will.

To apprehend rightly how the judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, originating, as it is represented in the text, in the “ decree of the Watchers, and in the word of the Holy Ones, ” affords an instance of the immediate interference of God’s providence in the affairs of men, it is very necessary that the text should be, better than it generally has been hitherto, understood : and the text never can be rightly understood, until we ascertain *who* they are, and to *what class of*

*beings* they belong, who are called “the Watchers” and the “Holy Ones;” for, according as these terms are differently expounded, the text will lead to very different, indeed to opposite, conclusions, — to true conclusions, if these terms are rightly understood; to most false and dangerous conclusions, if they are ill interpreted.

I am ashamed to say, that if you consult very pious and very learned commentators, justly esteemed for their illustrations of the Bible generally, you will be told these “Watchers” and “Holy Ones” are angels, — principal angels, of a very high order, they are pleased to say, such as are in constant attendance upon the throne of God. And so much skill have some of these good and learned men affected in the heraldry of angels, that they pretend to distinguish the different ranks of the different denominations. The “Watchers,” they say, are of the highest rank; the “Holy Ones,” very high in rank, but inferior to the “Watchers:” and the angels are introduced upon this occasion, they say, in allusion to the proceedings of earthly princes, who publish their decrees with the advice of their chief ministers.

This interpretation of these words is founded upon a notion which got ground in the Christian church many ages since, and unfortunately is not yet exploded; namely, that God’s government of this lower world is carried on by the administration of the holy angels, — that the different orders (and those who broached this doctrine could tell us exactly how many orders there are, and how many angels in each order,) — that the different orders have their different departments in government assigned to them: some, constantly attending in the presence of God, form his



cabinet council : others are his provincial governors ; every kingdom in the world having its appointed guardian angel, to whose management it is intrusted : other again are supposed to have the charge and custody of individuals. This system is in truth nothing better than the pagan polytheism, somewhat disguised and qualified ; for in the pagan system every nation had its tutelary deity, all subordinate to Jupiter the sire of gods and men. Some of those prodigies of ignorance and folly, the Rabbin of the Jews, who lived since the dispersion of the nation, thought all would be well if for tutelary deities they substituted tutelary angels. From this substitution the system which I have described arose ; and from the Jews, the Christians, with other fooleries, adopted it. But, by whatever name these deputy gods be called, — whether you call them gods, or demigods, or demons, or genii, or heroes, or angels, — the difference is only in the name ; the thing in substance is the same : they still are deputies, invested with a subordinate, indeed, but with a high authority, in the exercise of which they are much at liberty, and at their own discretion. If this opinion were true, it would be difficult to show that the heathen were much to blame in the worship which they rendered to them. The officers of any great king are entitled to homage and respect in proportion to the authority committed to them ; and the grant of the power is a legal title to such respect. These officers, therefore, of the greatest of kings will be entitled to the greatest reverence ; and as the governor of a distant province will in many cases be more an object of awe and veneration to the inhabitants than the monarch himself, with whom they have no immediate connection, so the tute-

lar deity or angel will, with those who are put under him, supersede the Lord of all: and the heathen, who worshipped those who were supposed to have the power over them, were certainly more consistent with themselves than they who acknowledging the power withhold the worship.

So nearly allied to idolatry — or rather so much the same thing with polytheism — is this notion of the administration of God's government by the authority of angels. And surely it is strange, that in this age of light and learning Protestant divines should be heard to say that "this doctrine seems to be countenanced by several passages of Scripture."

That the holy angels are often employed by God in his government of this sublunary world is, indeed, clearly to be proved by holy writ. That they have powers over the matter of the universe, analagous to the powers over it which men possess, greater in extent, but still limited, is a thing which might reasonably be supposed, if it were not declared: but it seems to be confirmed by many passages of holy writ; from which it seems also evident that they are occasionally, for certain specific purposes, commissioned to exercise those powers to a prescribed extent. That the evil angels possessed, before their fall, the like powers, which they are still occasionally permitted to exercise for the punishment of wicked nations, seems also evident. That they have a power over the human sensory (which is part of the material universe), which they are occasionally permitted to exercise, by means of which they may inflict diseases, suggest evil thoughts, and be the instruments of temptations, must also be admitted. But all this amounts not to any thing of a discretional authority placed in the hands

of tutelar angels, or to an authority to advise the Lord God with respect to the measures of his government. Confidently I deny that a single text is to be found in holy writ, which, rightly understood, gives the least countenance to the abominable doctrine of such a participation of the holy angels in God's government of the world.

In what manner, then, it may be asked, are the holy angels made at all subservient to the purposes of God's government? — This question is answered by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, in the last verse of the first chapter; and this is the only passage in the whole Bible in which we have any thing explicit upon the office and employment of angels. “Are they not all,” saith he, “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?” They are all, however high in rank and order, — they are all nothing more than “ministering spirits,” or, literally, “serving spirits;” not invested with authority of their own, but “sent forth,” — occasionally sent forth, to do such service as may be required of them, “for them that shall be heirs of salvation.” This text is the conclusion of the comparison which the apostle institutes between the Son of God and the holy angels, in order to prove the great superiority in rank and nature of the Son; and the most that can be made of angels is, that they are servants, occasionally employed by the Most High God to do his errands for the elect.

An accurate discussion of all the passages of Scripture which have been supposed to favour the contrary opinion would much exceed the just limits of this discourse: I shall only say of them generally, that they

are all abused texts, wrested to a sense which never would have been dreamt of in any one of them, had not the opinion of the government of angels previously taken hold of the minds of too many of the learned. In the consideration of particular texts so misinterpreted, I shall confine myself to such as occur in the prophet Daniel, from whose writings this monstrous doctrine has been supposed to have received great support ; and of these I shall consider my text last of all.

In the prophet Daniel, we read of the angel Gabriel by name ; who, together with others unnamed, is employed to exhibit visions typical of future events to the prophet, and to expound them to him : but there is nothing in this employment of Gabriel and his associates which has the most remote connection with the supposed office of guardian angels, either of nations and states, or of individuals.

We read of another personage superior to Gabriel, who is named Michael. This personage is superior to Gabriel, for he comes to help him in the greatest difficulties ; and Gabriel, the servant of the Most High God, declares that this Michael is the only supporter he has. This is well to be noted : Gabriel, one of God's ministering spirits, sent forth, as such spirits are used to be, to minister for the elect people of God, has no supporter in this business but Michael. This great personage has been long distinguished in our calendars by the title of " Michael the archangel." It has been for a long time a fashion in the church to speak very frequently and familiarly of archangels, as if they were an order of beings with which we are perfectly well acquainted. Some say there are seven of them. Upon what solid ground

that assertion stands I know not : but this I know, that the word “ archangel ” is not to be found in any one passage of the Old Testament : in the New Testament, the word occurs twice, and only twice. One of the two passages is in the first Epistle to the Thessalonians ; where the apostle, among the circumstances of the pomp of our Lord’s descent from heaven to the final judgment, mentions “ the voice of the archangel.” The other passage is in the epistle of St. Jude ; where the title of archangel is coupled with the name of Michael, — “ Michael the archangel.” This passage is so remarkably obscure, that I shall not attempt to draw any conclusion from it but this, which manifestly follows, be the particular sense of the passage what it may : since this is one of two texts in which alone the word “ archangel ” is found in the whole Bible, — since in this one text only the title of archangel is coupled with any name, — and since the name with which it is here coupled is Michael, — it follows undeniably that the archangel Michael is the only archangel of whom we know any thing from holy writ. It cannot be proved from holy writ, — and if not from holy writ, it cannot be proved at all, — that any archangel exists but the one archangel Michael ; and this one archangel Michael is unquestionably the Michael of the book of Daniel.

I must observe by the way, with respect to the import of the title of archangel, that the word, by its etymology, clearly implies a superiority of rank and authority in the person to whom it is applied. It implies a command over angels ; and this is all that the word of necessity implies. But it follows not, by any sound rule of argument, that because no other superiority than that of rank and authority is implied

in the title, no other belongs to the person distinguished by the title, and that he is in all other respects a mere angel. Since we admit various orders of intelligent beings, it is evident that a being highly above the angelic order may command angels.

To ascertain, if we can, to what order of beings the archangel Michael may belong, let us see how he is described by the prophet Daniel, who never describes him by that title ; and what action is attributed to him in the book of Daniel, and in another book, in which he bears a very principal part.

Now Daniel calls him “ one of the chief princes,” or “ one of the capital princes,” or “ one of the princes that are at the head of all :” for this I maintain to be the full and not more than the full import of the Hebrew words. Now, since we are clearly got above the earth, into the order of celestials, who are the princes that are *first*, or *at the head of all*? — are they any other than the Three Persons in the Godhead? Michael, therefore, is one of them ; but which of them? This is not left in doubt. Gabriel, speaking of him to Daniel, calls him “ Michael *your* prince,” and “ the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people ;” that is, not for the nation of the Jews in particular, but for the children, the spiritual children, of that holy seed the elect people of God, — a description which applies particularly to the Son of God, and to no one else. And in perfect consistence with this description of Michael in the book of Daniel is the action assigned to him in the Apocalypse, in which we find him fighting with the Old Serpent, the deceiver of the world, and victorious in the combat. That combat who was to maintain, in that combat who was to be victorious,

but the seed of the woman? From all this it is evident, that Michael is a name for our Lord himself, in his particular character of the champion of his faithful people, against the violence of the apostate faction and the wiles of the Devil. In this point I have the good fortune to have a host of the learned on my side; and the thing will be farther evident from what is yet to come.

We have as yet had but poor success in our search for guardian angels, or for angels of the cabinet, in the book of Daniel; but there are a sort of persons mentioned in it whom we have not yet considered, — namely, those who are called “the princes of Persia and of Græcia.” As these princes personally oppose the angel Gabriel and Michael his supporter, I can hardly agree with those who have taken them for princes in the literal acceptation of the word, — that is, for men reigning in those countries. But if that interpretation could be established, these princes would not be angels of any sort; and my present argument would have no concern with them. If they are beings of the angelic order, they must be evil angels; for good angels would not oppose and resist the great prince Michael and his angel Gabriel: if they were evil angels, they could not be tutelar angels of Persia and of Græcia respectively, or of any other country. But, to come directly to the point, since they fight with Michael, to those who are conversant with the prophetic style, and have observed the uniformity of its images, it will seem highly probable that the angels which fight with Michael in the book of Daniel are of the same sort with those who fight with Michael, under the banners of the Devil, in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse.

“ There was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought with the Dragon ; and the Dragon fought and his angels.” The vision of the war in heaven, in the Apocalypse, represents the vehement struggles between Christianity and the old idolatry in the first ages of the Gospel. The angels of the two opposite armies represent two opposite parties in the Roman state, at the time which the vision more particularly regards. Michael’s angels are the party which espoused the side of the Christian religion, the friends of which had for many years been numerous, and became very powerful under Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor : the Dragon’s angels are the party which endeavoured to support the old idolatry. And in conformity with this imagery of the Apocalypse, the princes of Persia, in the Book of Daniel, are to be understood, I think, of a party in the Persian state which opposed the return of the captive Jews, first after the death of Cyrus, and again after the death of Darius Hystaspes. And the prince of Græcia is to be understood of a party in the Greek empire which persecuted the Jewish religion after the death of Alexander the Great, particularly in the Greek kingdom of Syria.

We have now considered all the angels and supposed angels of the Book of Daniel, except the personages in my text ; and we have found as yet no tutelar angel of any province or kingdom, — no member of any celestial senate or privy council. Indeed, with respect to the latter notion of angels of the presence, although it has often been assumed in exposition of some passages in Daniel, the confirmation of it has never been attempted, to the best of my recollection, by reference to that book. Its advocates have chiefly relied on



Micaiah's vision, related in the twenty-second chapter of the first Book of Kings; in which they say Jehovah is represented as sitting in *council* with his angels, and *advising* with them upon measures. But if you read the account of this vision in the Bible, you will find that this is not an accurate recital of it. "Micaiah saw Jehovah *sitting* on his throne, and all the host of heaven *standing* by him, on his right hand and on his left." Observe, the heavenly host are not in the attitude of counsellors, *sitting*: they are *standing*, in the attitude of servants, ready to receive commands, and to be sent forth each upon his proper errand. "And Jehovah said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?" Here is no consultation: no advice is asked or given: the only question asked is, Who of the whole multitude assembled, will undertake a particular service? The answers were various. "Some spake on this manner, and some on that;" none, as it should seem, showing any readiness for the business, till one more forward than the rest presented himself before the throne, and said, "I will persuade him." He is asked, by way of trial of his qualifications, "How?" He gives a satisfactory answer; and, being both ready for the business and found equal to it, is sent forth. If this can be called a consultation, it is certainly no such consultation as a great monarch holds with his prime ministers, but such as a military commander might hold with privates in the ranks.

Having thus disposed, I think, of all the passages in the Book of Daniel which mention beings of the angelic or of a superior order, except my text, I can now proceed to the exposition of that upon very safe and certain grounds.

Among those who understand the titles of “ Watchers ” and “ Holy Ones ” of angelic beings, it is not quite agreed whether they are angels of the cabinet, or the provincial governors, — the tutelar angels, to whom these appellations belong. The majority, I think, are for the former. But it is agreed by all that they must be principal angels — angels of the highest orders ; which, if they are angels at all, must certainly be supposed : for it is to be observed, that it is not the mere execution of the judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar, but the decree itself, which is ascribed to them : the whole matter originated in their decree ; and at their command the decree was executed. “ The Holy Ones ” are not said to hew down the tree, but to give command for the hewing of it down. Of how high order, indeed, must these “ Watchers and Holy Ones ” have been, on whose decrees the judgments of God himself are founded, and by whom the warrant for the execution is finally issued ! It is surprising, that such men as Calvin among the Protestants of the Continent \*, — such as Wells and the elder Lowth in our own church, — and such as Calmet in the church of Rome, — should not have their eyes open to the error and impiety, indeed, of such an exposition as this, which makes them angels ; especially when the learned Grotius, in the extraordinary manner in which he recommends it, had set forth its merits, as it should seem, in the true light, when he says that

\* Calvin, indeed, seems to have had some apprehension that this exposition (which, however, he adopted,) makes too much of angels, and to have been embarrassed with the difficulty. He has recourse to an admirable expedient to get over it: he says the whole vision was accommodated to the capacity of a heathen king, who had but a confined knowledge of God, and could not distinguish between him and the angels.

it represents God as acting like a great monarch “upon a decree of his senate,” — and when another of the most learned of its advocates imagines something might pass in the celestial senate bearing some analogy to the forms of legislation used in the assemblies of the people at Rome, in the times of the republic. It might have been expected that the exposition would have needed no other confutation, in the judgment of men of piety and sober minds, than this fair statement of its principles by its ablest advocates.

The plain truth is, — and some learned men, though but few, have seen it, — that these appellations, “Watchers” and “Holy Ones” denote the Persons in the Godhead; the first describing them by the vigilance of their universal providence, — the second, by the transcendent sanctity of their nature. The word rendered “Holy Ones” is so applied in other texts of Scripture, which make the sense of the other word coupled with it here indisputable. In perfect consistency with this exposition, and with no other, we find, in the twenty-fourth verse, that this decree of the “Watchers” and the “Holy Ones” is the decree of the Most High God; and in a verse preceding my text, God, who, in regard to the plurality of the Persons is afterwards described by these two plural nouns, “Watchers” and “Holy Ones,” is, in regard to the unity of the essence, described by the same nouns in the singular number, “Watcher” and Holy One.” And this is a fuller confirmation of the truth of this exposition: for God is the only being to whom the same name in the singular and in the plural may be indiscriminately applied; and this change from the one number to the other, without any thing in the principles of language to account for it, is frequent,

in speaking of God, in the Hebrew tongue, but unexampled in the case of any other being.

The assertion, therefore, in my text, is, that God had decreed to execute a signal judgment upon Nebuchadnezzar for his pride and impiety, in order to prove, by the example of that mighty monarch, that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.” To make the declaration the more solemn and striking, the terms in which it is conceived distinctly express that consent and concurrence of all the Persons in the Trinity in the design and execution of this judgment, which must be understood, indeed, in every act of the Godhead. And, in truth, we shall not find in history a more awful example and monument of Providence than the vicissitudes of Nebuchadnezzar’s life afford. Raised gradually to the pinnacle of power and human glory, by a long train of those brilliant actions and successes which man is too apt to ascribe entirely to himself, (the proximate causes being indeed in himself and in the instruments he uses, although Providence is always the prime efficient,) he was suddenly cast down from it, and, after a time, as suddenly restored, without any natural or human means. His humiliation was not the effect of any reverse of fortune, of any public disaster, or any mismanagement of the affairs of his empire. At the expiration of a twelvemonth from his dream, the king, still at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace, surveying his city, and exulting in the monuments of his own greatness which it presented to his eye, was smitten by an invisible hand. As the event stood unconnected with any known natural cause, it must have been beyond the ken of any fore-

sight short of the Divine; and it follows incontestably, that the prediction and the accomplishment of it were both from God. The king's restoration to power and grandeur had also been predicted; and this took place at the predicted time, independently of any natural cause, and without the use of any human means. And the evidence of these extraordinary occurrences, — of the prediction, the fall, and the restoration, — is perhaps the most undeniable of any thing that rests upon mere human testimony. The king himself, upon his recovery, published a manifesto in every part of his vast empire, giving an account of all which had befallen him, and in conclusion giving praise and honour to the King of heaven; acknowledging that “all his works are truth, and his ways judgment, and that those who walk in pride he is able to abase.” The evidence of the whole fact therefore stands upon this public record of the Babylonian empire, which is preserved *verbatim* in the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, of which it makes indeed the whole. That chapter therefore is not Daniel's writing, but Nebuchadnezzar's.

Nothing can so much fortify the minds of the faithful against all alarm and consternation, — nothing so much maintain them in an unruffled composure of mind, amid all the tumults and concussions of the world around them, as deep conviction of the truth of the principle inculcated in my text, and confirmed by the acknowledgment of the royal penitent Nebuchadnezzar, “that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.” But as this doctrine, so full of consolation to the godly, is liable to be perverted and abused by that sort of men who wrest the Scriptures to the destruction of themselves and others, — notwith-

standing that my discourse has already run to a greater length than I intended, the present occasion demands of me to open the doctrine in some points more fully, and to apply it to the actual circumstances of the world and of ourselves.

It is the express assertion of the text, and the language, indeed, of all the Scriptures, that God governs the world according to his will ; — by which we must understand a will perfectly independent and unbiassed by any thing external ; yet not an arbitrary will, but a will directed by the governing perfections of the Divine intellect—by God's own goodness and wisdom ; and as justice is included in the idea of goodness, it must be a will governed by God's justice. But God's justice, in its present dispensations, is a justice accommodated to our probationary state,— a justice which, making the ultimate happiness of those who shall finally be brought by the probationary discipline to love and fear God its end, regards the sum-total and ultimate issue of things, — not the comparative deserts of men at the present moment. To us, therefore, who see the present moment only, the government of the world will appear upon many occasions not conformable, in our judgments, formed upon limited and narrow views of things, to the maxims of distributive justice. We see power and prosperity not at all proportioned to merit ; for “the Most High, who ruleth in the kingdom of men, giveth it to whomsoever *he will*, and setteth up over it the basest of men,” — men base by the turpitude of their wicked lives, more than by the obscurity of their original condition ; while good kings are divested of their hereditary dominions, dethroned, and murdered : inso-much, that if power and prosperity were sure marks

of the favour of God for those by whom they are possessed, the observation of the poet, impious as it seems, would too often be verified ;

“ The conqueror is Heaven’s favourite ; but on earth,  
Just men approve and honour more the vanquish’d.” \*

As at this moment the world beholds with wonder and dismay the low-born usurper of a great monarch’s throne, raised, by the hand of Providence unquestionably, to an eminence of power and grandeur enjoyed by none since the subversion of the Roman empire, — a man whose undaunted spirit and success in enterprise might throw a lustre over the meanest birth, while the profligacy of his private and the crimes of his public life would disgrace the noblest. When we see the imperial diadem circling this monster’s brows, — while we confess the hand of God in his elevation, let us not be tempted to conclude from this, or other similar examples, that he who ruleth in the kingdom of men delights in such characters, or that he is even indifferent to the virtues and to the vices of men. It is not for his own sake that such a man is raised from the dunghill on which he sprang ; but for the good of God’s faithful servants, who are the objects of his constant care and love, even at the time when they are suffering under the tyrant’s cruelty : for who can doubt that the Seven Brethren and their mother were the objects of God’s love, and their persecutor Antiochus Epiphanes of his hate ? But such persons are raised up, and permitted to indulge their ferocious passions, — their ambition, their cruelty, and their

\* *Victrix causa Diis placuit ; sed vieta Catoni.*

revenge, — as the instruments of God's judgments for the reformation of his people; and when that purpose is answered, vengeance is executed upon them for their own crimes. Thus it was with the Syrian we have just mentioned, and with that more ancient persecutor Sennacherib, and many more; and so, we trust, it shall be with him who now "smiteth the people in his wrath, and ruleth the nations in his anger." When the nations of Europe shall break off their sins by righteousness, the Corsican "shall be persecuted with the fury of our avenging God, and none shall hinder."

Again, if the thought that God ruleth the affairs of the world according to his will were always present to the minds of men, they would never be cast down beyond measure by any successes of an enemy, nor be unduly elated with their own. The will of God is a cause ever blended with and over-ruling other causes, of which it is impossible from any thing past to calculate the future operation: what is called the fortune of war, by this unseen and mysterious cause may be reversed in a moment.

Hence, again, it follows, that men persuaded upon good grounds of the justice of their cause should not be discouraged even by great failures in the beginning of the contest, nor by sudden turns of ill fortune in the progress of it. Upon such occasions, they should humble themselves before God, confess their sins, and deprecate his judgments: but they should not interpret every advantage gained by the enemy as a sign that the sentence of God is gone forth against themselves, and that they are already fallen not to rise again. When the tribe of Benjamin refused to give up "the children of Belial which were in Gibeah"



to the just resentment of their countrymen, the other tribes confederated, and with a great force made war upon them. The cause of the confederates was just; the war, on their part, was sanctioned by the voice of God himself; and it was in the counsel and decree of God that they should be ultimately victorious: yet, upon the attack of the town, they were twice repulsed with great slaughter. But they were not driven to despair: they assembled themselves before the house of God, and wept and fasted. They received command to go out again the third day. They obeyed. They were victorious: Gibeah was burnt to the ground, and the guilty tribe of Benjamin was all but extirpated. An edifying example to all nations to put their trust in God in the most unpromising circumstances.

Again, a firm belief in God's providence, overruling the fortunes of men and nations, will moderate our excessive admiration of the virtues and talents of men, and particularly of the great achievements of bad men, which are always erroneously ascribed to their own high endowments. Great virtues and great talents being indeed the gifts of God, those on whom they are conferred are justly entitled to respect and honour: but the Giver is not to be forgotten, — the centre and source of all perfection, to whom thanks and praise are primarily due even for those benefits which are conveyed to us through his highly-favoured servants. But when the brilliant successes of bad men are ascribed to themselves, and they are admired for those very actions in which they are the most criminal, it is a most dangerous error, and often fatal to the interests of mankind; as, in these very times, nothing has so much conduced to establish the power

of the Corsican and multiply his successes, as the slavish fear of him which has seized the minds of men, growing out of an admiration of his boldness in enterprise on some occasions, and his hair-breadth escapes on others, which have raised in the many an opinion that he possesses such abilities, both in council and in the field, as render him an overmatch for all the statesmen and all the warriors of Europe, insomuch that nothing can stand before him ; whereas, in truth, it were easy to find causes of his extraordinary success in the political principles of the times in which he first arose, independent of any uncommon talents of his own, — principally in the revolutionary frenzy, the spirit of treason and revolt, which prevailed in the countries that were the first prey of his unprincipled ambition. But, were this not the case, yet were it impious to ascribe such a man's successes to himself. It has been the will of God to set up over the kingdom “the basest of men,” in order to chastise the profaneness, the irreligion, the lukewarmness, the profligacy, the turbulent seditious spirit of the times; and when this purpose is effected, and the wrath of God appeased, “wherein is this man to be accounted of, whose breath is in his nostrils ?”

It is a gross perversion of the doctrine of Providence, when any argument is drawn from it for the indifference of all human actions in the sight of God, and the insignificance of all human efforts. Since every thing is settled by Providence according to God's own will, to what avail, it is said, is the interference of man ? At the commencement of the disordered state which still subsists in Europe, when apprehensions were expressed by many (apprehensions which are still entertained by those who first expressed them) that the

great Antichrist is likely to arise out of the French Revolution, it was argued by them who were friends to the cause of France, — “To what purpose is it, then, upon your own principles, to resist the French? Antichrist *is* to arise, — he is to prevail, — he is to exercise a wide dominion; and what human opposition can set aside the fixed designs of Providence?” Strange to tell, this argument took with many who were no friends to the French cause, so far at least as to make them averse to the war with France. The fallacy of the argument lies in this, that it considers Providence by halves; it considers Providence as ordaining an end and effecting it without the use or the appointment at least of means: whereas the true notion of Providence is, that God ordains the means with the end; and the means which he employs are, for the most part, natural causes; and among them he makes men, acting without any knowledge of his secret will, from their own views as free agents, the instruments of his purpose. In the case of Antichrist, in particular, prophecy is explicit. So clearly as it is foretold that he shall rise, so clearly is it foretold that he shall fall: so clearly as it is foretold that he shall raise himself to power by successful war, so clearly it is foretold that war, — fierce and furious war, waged upon him by the faithful, — shall be in part the means of his downfall. So false is all the despicable cant of puritans about the unlawfulness of war. And with respect to the present crisis, if the will of God should be, that for the punishment of our sins the enemy should prevail against us, we must humble ourselves under the dreadful visitation: but if, as we hope and trust, it is the will of God that the vile Corsican shall never set his foot upon our shores, the loyalty and

valour of the country are, we trust, the appointed means of his exclusion. “Be of good courage, then, and play the men for your people; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good.”

It is particularly necessary at this season that I should warn you against another gross and dangerous perversion of the doctrine of Providence; which is misconceived and abused when we impute any successes with which we may be blessed, to any merit of our own engaging on our side that will of God by which the universe is governed. If we are successful in our contest with a tyrant who has surpassed in crime all former examples of depravity in an exalted station, we owe it not to ourselves, but to God’s unmerited mercy. Nor are we to ascribe it to any pre-eminent righteousness of this nation, in comparison with others, if we have suffered less and prospered more than others engaged in the same quarrel. This country, since the beginning of Europe’s troubles to the present day, has certainly been favoured beyond other nations; and at this very crisis, — at the moment when the armies of our continental ally were flying before those of the common enemy, — in that very moment the combined fleets of France and Spain, which were to have lowered the British flag, to have wrested from us our ancient sovereignty of the ocean, and to have extinguished our commerce in all its branches, — this proud naval armament, encountered by a far inferior force of British ships, — a force inferior in every thing but the intrepidity of our seamen and the skill of their leaders, — was dashed to pieces, at the mouth of its own harbour, by the cannon of that great commander whose grave is strewed with laurels and bedewed with his country’s tears. But

let not this inspire the vain thought, that, because we are righteous above all the nations of Europe, our lot has therefore been happier than theirs. It has been ruled by the highest authority, that they are not always the greatest sinners on whom the greatest evils fall : the converse follows most undeniably, that those nations are not always the most righteous who in peace are the most flourishing and in war the most successful. Let us give, therefore, the whole glory to God. In the hour of defeat let us say, “Why should man complain? — man, for the punishment of his sins?” In the hour of victory, “Let us not be high-minded, but fear.”

## S E R M O N   X X X .

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MALACHI, iii. 1, 2.

*And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in : behold He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

*But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?*

**F**OR the general meaning of this passage, all expositors, both Jewish and Christian, agree, and must indeed agree, in one interpretation ; for the words are too perspicuous to need elucidation or to admit dispute. The event announced is the appearance of that Great Deliverer who had for many ages been the hope of Israel, and was to be a blessing to all families of the earth. Concerning this Desire of Nations, this seed of the woman who was to crush the serpent's head, Malachi in the text delivers no new prediction ; but, by an earnest asseveration, uttered in the name, and, as it were, in the person, of the Deity, he means to confirm that general expectation which his predecessors in the prophetic office had excited. "Behold He shall come, *saith the Lord of Hosts.*"—*Saith the Lord of Hosts.* This was a solemn form of words with all the Jewish prophets ;

when they would express the highest certainty of things to come, as fixed in the decrees of heaven, and notified to man by Him to whom power is never wanting to effect what his wisdom hath ordained. And the full import of the expression is nothing less than this, — that the purpose of Him whose councils cannot change, the veracity of God who cannot lie, stand engaged to the accomplishment of the thing predicted. “He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.” With this solemn promise of the Saviour, Malachi, the last inspired teacher of the Jewish church, closes the word of prophecy, till a greater prophet should arise again to open it. It will be a useful meditation, and well adapted to the present season \*, to consider the characters under which the person is here described, whose coming is so pathetically foretold, and the particulars of the business upon which he is said to come ; that we may see how exactly the one and the other correspond to the person and performances of Jesus of Nazareth. These meditations will both much contribute to the general confirmation of our faith, and, in particular, they will put us on our guard against those gross corruptions of the Christian doctrine which the caprice and vanity of this licentious age have revived rather than produced.

First, for the characters under which the person is described whose coming is foretold. The first is, that *he is the Lord*. The word, in the original, is the same which David uses in the hundred and tenth psalm, when, speaking of the Messiah, he says, — “JEHOVAH said unto my Lord.” The original word

\* The season of Advent.

in this passage of Malachi, and in that of the hundred and tenth psalm, is the same ; and in both places it is very exactly and properly rendered by the English “ Lord.” The Hebrew word is not more determinate in its signification than the English : it denotes dominion or superiority of any kind, — of a king over his subjects, of a master over his slave, of a husband over his wife ; and it seems to have been used, in common speech, without any notion of superiority, property, or dominion annexed to it, as a mere appellation of respect, just as the word “ Sir ” is used in our language. Nevertheless, in its primary signification, it denotes a lord, in the sense of a governor, master, or proprietor ; and is used by the sacred writers as a title of the Deity himself ; expressing either his sovereign dominion over all as Lord of heaven and earth, or his peculiar property in the Jewish people, as the family which he had chosen to himself, and over which he was in a particular manner their master and head. It is a word, therefore, of large and various signification, denoting dominion of every sort and degree, from the universal and absolute dominion of God, to the private and limited dominion of the owner of a single slave. So that this title by itself would be no description of the person to whom it is applied. But the prophet has not left it undetermined what sort of lordship he would ascribe to him whose coming he proclaims. “ The Lord shall come to *his temple*.” The temple, in the writings of a Jewish prophet, cannot be otherwise understood, according to the literal meaning, than of the temple at Jerusalem. Of this temple, therefore, the person to come is here expressly called the lord. The lord of any temple, in the language



of all writers, and in the natural meaning of the phrase, is the *divinity* to whose worship it is consecrated. To no other divinity the temple of Jerusalem was consecrated than the True and Everlasting God, the Lord Jehovah, the Maker of heaven and earth. Here, then, we have the express testimony of Malachi, that the Christ, the Deliverer, whose coming he announces, was no other than the JEHOVAH of the Old Testament. Jehovah by his angels had delivered the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage; and the same Jehovah was to come in person to his temple, to effect the greater and more general deliverance of which the former was but an imperfect type.

It is strange that this doctrine should be denied by any in the Christian church, when it seems to have been well understood, and expressly taught, upon the authority of the prophetic writings, long before Christ's appearance. Nor does the credit of it rest upon this single text of Malachi: it was the unanimous assertion of all the Jewish prophets, by whom the Messiah is often mentioned under the name of "Jehovah;" though this circumstance, it must be confessed, lies at present in some obscurity in our English Bibles, — an evil of which it is proper to explain to you the cause and rise. The ancient Jews had a persuasion, which their descendants retain at this day, that the true pronunciation of the word "Jehovah" was unknown; and, lest they should miscall the sacred name of God, they scrupulously abstained from attempting to pronounce it; insomuch, that when the sacred books were publicly read in their synagogues, the reader, wherever this name occurred, was careful to substitute for it that other

word of the Hebrew language, which answers to the English "Lord." The learned Jews who were employed by Ptolemy to turn the Scriptures of the Old Testament into Greek, have every where in their translation substituted the corresponding word of the Greek language. Later translators have followed their mischievous example, — mischievous in its consequences, though innocently meant; and our English translators among the rest, in innumerable instances, for the original "JEHOVAH," which ought, upon all occasions, to have been religiously retained, have put the more general title of "the LORD." A flagrant instance of this occurs in that solemn proem of the Decalogue, in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, "I am the LORD thy God," so we read in our English Bibles, "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." In the original it is "I am JEHOVAH thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Another example of the same unhappy alteration we find in that famous passage of the hundred and tenth psalm which I have already had occasion to produce: "The LORD said unto my Lord;" which is in the Hebrew "JEHOVAH said unto my Lord." If translators have used this unwarrantable license of substituting a title of the Deity for his proper name in texts where that name is applied to the Almighty Father, — and in one, in particular, where the Father seems to be distinguished by that name from Jesus as man, — it is not to be wondered that they should make a similar alteration in passages where the Messiah is evidently the person intended. It will be much to the purpose to produce some examples of these disfigured texts, — not for the sake of fastening any invidious imputation

upon our translators, who were men too eminent for their piety, and have acquitted themselves too faithfully in their arduous task, to be suspected of any ill designs ; but for the more important purpose of restoring the true doctrine to that splendour of evidence which an undue deference to the authority of the ancient Greek translation hath in some degree unhappily obscured.

The passage I shall first produce is that famous prediction of Jeremiah, “ I will raise unto David a righteous branch ; and a king shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and justice on the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely. And this is his name whereby he shall be called, The LORD our Righteousness.” In the Hebrew it is “ JEHOVAH our Righteousness.”—“ Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion !” saith the prophet Zechariah ; “ for lo I come ; and I dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD ;” in the original, “ saith JEHOVAH.”—“ In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD,” says Isaiah, —in the original it is “ I saw JEHOVAH,” “ sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up ; and his train filled the temple : above it stood the seraphim ; and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts !” in the original “ JEHOVAH, God of Hosts ;” “ the whole earth is full of his glory.” The same Spirit which displayed this glorious vision to Isaiah, has given the interpretation of it by the evangelist St. John. St. John tells us that Christ was that Jehovah whom the entranced prophet saw upon his throne, — whose train filled the temple, — whose praises were the theme of the seraphic song, — whose glory fills the universe. “ For these things said Esaias,” saith John, “ when

he saw his glory and spake of him." St. John had just alleged that particular prophecy of Isaiah, which is introduced with the description of the vision in the year of Uzziah's death. This prophecy the evangelist applies to Christ, the only person of whom he treats in this place; subjoining to his citation of Isaiah's words, — "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." It was Christ's glory, therefore, that Esaias saw; and to him whose glory he saw the prophet gives the name of JEHOVAH, and the worshipping angels gave the name of JEHOVAH God of Sabaoth. Again, the prophet Joel, speaking of the blessings of the Messiah's day, saith, — "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD," in the original "JEHOVAH," "shall be delivered." Here, again, the Holy Spirit hath vouchsafed to be his own interpreter; and his interpretation, one would think, might be decisive. St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, alleges this passage of Joel to prove that all men shall be saved by believing in Christ Jesus. But how is the apostle's assertion, that all men shall be saved by faith in Christ, confirmed by the prophet's promise of deliverance to all who should devoutly invoke Jehovah, unless Christ were, in the judgment of St. Paul, the JEHOVAH of the prophet Joel?

From the few passages which have been produced, — more, indeed, might be collected to the same purpose, — but from these few, I doubt not but it sufficiently appears to you that the promised Messiah is described by the more ancient prophets, as by Malachi in the text, as no other than the Everlasting God, the JEHOVAH of the Israelites, — that Almighty God whose hand hath laid the foundations of the earth,

whose right hand hath spanned the heavens, — that jealous God who giveth not his glory to another, and spareth not to claim it for himself. These explicit assertions of the Jewish prophets deserve the serious attention of those zealous and active champions of the Arian and Socinian tenets who have within these few years become so numerous in this country ; and who, as they cannot claim the honour of any new inventions in divinity (for their corruptions were indeed the produce of an early age), are content to acquire a secondary fame by defending old errors with unexampled rashness. They are said to have gone so far in their public discourses as to bestow on Christ our Lord the opprobrious appellation of the “ Idol of the Church of England.” Let it be remembered, that he who is called the Idol of our church is the God who was worshipped in the Jewish temple. They have the indiscretion, too, to boast the antiquity of their disguised and mutilated scheme of Christianity ; and tell their deluded followers with great confidence, that the divinity of the Saviour is a doctrine that was never heard of in the church till the third or fourth century, and was the invention of a dark and superstitious age. This assertion, were it not clearly falsified, as happily it is, by the whole tenour of the apostolical writings, would cause a more extensive ruin than they seem to apprehend : it would not so much overturn any single article of doctrine, such as men may dispute about, and yet be upon the whole believers,—it would cut up by the roots the whole faith in Christ. Mahomet well understood this : he founded his own pretensions prudently, however impiously, on a denial of the Godhead of Christ. “ There is one God,” said Mahomet, “ who was not begotten, and who ne-

ver did beget." If the Father did not beget, then Christ is not God; for he pretended not to be the Father: if he claimed not to be God, he claimed not to be the person which the Messiah is described to be by the Jewish prophets: if Christ was not Messiah, the Messiah may come after Christ: if he was a prophet only, a greater prophet may succeed. Thus, Christ's divinity being once set aside, there would be room enough for new pretensions. Mahomet, it should seem, was an abler divine than these half-believers. With the pernicious consequence, however, of their rash assertion, they are not justly chargeable: they mean not to invalidate the particular claims of Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet, and the Deliverer promised to the Jews; but they would raise an objection to the notion of a plurality of persons in the undivided substance of the Godhead. They are particularly unfortunate in choosing for the ground of their objection this imaginary circumstance of the late rise of the opinion they would controvert. Would to God they would but open their eyes to this plain historical fact, of which it is strange that any men of learning should be ignorant, and which will serve to outweigh all the arguments of their erroneous metaphysics,—that the Divinity of the Messiah was no new doctrine of the first preachers of Christianity, much less the invention of any later age: it was the original faith of the ancient Jewish church, delivered, as I have shown you, by her prophets, embraced and acknowledged by her doctors, six hundred years and more before the glorious era of the incarnation. Nor was it even then a novelty: it was the creed of believers from the beginning; as it was typified in the symbols of the most ancient patriarchal worship. The

cherubim of glory, afterwards placed in the sanctuary of the Mosaic temple, and of Solomon's temple, had been originally placed in a tabernacle on the east of the garden of Eden, immediately after the fall. These cherubim were figures emblematical of the Trine persons in the Godhead, — of the mystery of redemption by the Son's atonement, — and of the subjection of all the powers of nature, and of all created things, animate and inanimate, to the incarnate God.

This, therefore, is the first character under which the person is described whose coming is foretold, that of the LORD JEHOVAH of the Jewish temple. Other characters follow, not less worthy of notice. The prosecution, therefore, of the subject demands a separate discourse.

## S E R M O N   X X X I .

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MALACHI, iii. 1, 2.

*And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

*But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?*

ALTHOUGH the words of my text are too perspicuous in their general sense and meaning to need elucidation, yet the characters by which the person is described whose coming is announced, and the particulars of the business upon which he is said to come, deserve a minute and accurate explication. The first character of the person, that he is the Lord of the Jewish temple, has already been considered. It has been shown to be agreeable to the descriptions which had been given of the same person by the earlier prophets; who unanimously ascribe to him both the attributes and works of God, and frequently mention him by God's peculiar name, "JEHOVAH;" which, though it be the proper and incommunicable name of God, is not exclusively the name of the Almighty Father, but equally belongs indifferently to every per-



son in the Godhead, since by its etymology it is significant of nothing but what is common to them all, *self-existence*.

The next character that occurs, in the text, of him whose coming is proclaimed, is that of a *messenger of a covenant*: “the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in.” The covenant intended here cannot be the Mosaic; for of that the Messiah was *not* the messenger. The Mosaic covenant was the word spoken by angels; it is the superior distinction of the Gospel covenant, that it was *begun to be spoken by the Lord*. The prophet Jeremiah, who lived long before Malachi, had already spoken in very explicit terms of a *new* covenant which God should establish with his people, by which the Mosaic should be superseded, and in which the faithful of all nations should be included: “Behold the days come, saith the JEHOVAH, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made *with their fathers*, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; but *this* shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the JEHOVAH, — I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” In a subsequent prophecy he mentions this covenant again, and calls it an *everlasting* covenant. He had mentioned it before, in less explicit terms; but in such which perspicuously though figuratively express the universal comprehension of it, and the abrogation of the ritual law: “In those days, saith the JEHOVAH, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the JEHOVAH! neither shall it come

to mind ; neither shall they visit it ; neither shall any more sacrifice be offered there. At that time, they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the JEHOVAH ; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it,—to the name of the JEHOVAH, to Jerusalem. Neither shall *they* (*i.e.* the Gentiles) walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart.” Of this *new* covenant we have another remarkable prediction, in the prophecies of Ezekiel : “ Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the *days of thy youth* ; and I will establish unto thee an *everlasting* covenant.” The *youth* of any people is a natural metaphor in all languages to denote the time of their first beginnings, when they were few, and weak, and inconsiderable. Here, therefore, by the days of Judah’s youth, I think is to be understood the very first beginnings of the Jewish people, when they existed only in the persons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The covenant made with Judah in these days of his youth signifies, as I apprehend, the original promises made to those patriarchs long before the promulgation of the Mosaic law. God says by the prophet here, that he will remember the original promises, the same which the psalmist calls “ the covenant which he made with Abraham, and the oath that he swore with Isaac ;” and that the effect of this remembrance shall be, that “ he will establish with Judah an everlasting covenant :” for the establishment of the everlasting covenant of the Gospel is the completion of the promises made to Abraham, and renewed to the succeeding patriarchs. The prophet goes on : “ Then shalt thou remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger.” You will observe, that the sisters of Ju-

dah are the nations of Samaria and Sodom ; which, in that masculine style of metaphor which characterises Ezekiel's writings, had been called her sisters in a former part of the discourse, — Samaria her eldest sister, Sodom her younger ; her sisters, it is meant, in guilt and in punishment. Now it is promised that she shall receive these sisters. The prophet adds, — “ I will give them unto thee for daughters ; ” *i. e.* the most wicked of the idolatrous nations shall be brought to the knowledge of the true God, and ingrafted into his church ; “ but not by *thy* covenant, — not by that covenant that now subsists with thee ; but by the terms of the everlasting covenant hereafter to be established. ” Of this covenant, so clearly foretold, and so circumstantially described by the preceding prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Malachi thinks it unnecessary to introduce any particular description. He supposes that it will be sufficiently known by the simple but expressive title of *the covenant*, — a title which by pre-eminence it might justly bear away from all other covenants, both for the general extent of it and for the magnitude of the blessings it holds out. Nor was it unusual with the Jewish prophets to refer in this short and transient manner to remarkable and clear predictions of their predecessors ; a circumstance which I mention, that it may not seem improbable that Malachi should pass over with so brief a mention *that* covenant to which the law was to give place, — the law which had been delivered on Mount Sinai with so much awful pomp upon the part of God, and embraced with such solemn ceremony by the people. That such brief and indirect reference to a former prophecy is not unexampled, will appear by a remarkable instance of it in the prophet Micah. In the

fourth chapter of his prophecies, he speaks very openly of the conversion of the Gentiles ; and in the beginning of the fifth, he declares that this conversion should not begin till the birth of Christ : “ Therefore he will give them up,” *i. e.* God will give the Gentiles up, — he will leave them to themselves, “ until the time when she which travaileth shall bring forth : then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.” Here she which travaileth is the virgin of whom Isaiah had already prophesied that she should conceive and bring forth a son. This virgin, Micah, by a bold and happy stroke of rhetoric, speaks of as already pregnant ; and this brief and animated reference to Isaiah’s prediction might more effectually revive the remembrance of it, and excite a renewed attention to it, than a more direct and explicit repetition ; at the same time that it was the most respectful manner of citing the original prophecy, as that which needed not either comment or confirmation. In like manner, Malachi, in the text, refers briefly, but emphatically, to the old prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, concerning a new covenant to be established in the latter days ; and, at the same time that he points but transiently, and in a single word, at those particulars in which former prophets had been explicit, the Holy Spirit directs him to set forth in the clearest light an important circumstance, concerning which they had been more reserved, — that the Great Deliverer to come *was himself to be the messenger of this everlasting covenant.* And this is the second character by which the Messiah is described in the text, — that of the Messenger of that new covenant to which there is frequent allusion in all the prophetic writings ;

and of which Jeremiah and Ezekiel, in particular, have expressly foretold the establishment, and clearly described the nature, duration, and extent.

Let us now join this second character with the first, that we may see what will result from the union of the two. The first character of the person to come is the LORD JEHOVAH; the second, the *Messenger of the Covenant* foretold by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. This is mentioned as a covenant to be established between Jehovah and his people: it was doubtless to be proposed on the part of God, — to be embraced by them. The Messenger of the Covenant can be no other than the messenger sent by Jehovah to make the proposal to his people. The Messenger of the Covenant, therefore, is JEHOVAH's messenger; — if his *messenger*, his *servant*; for a message is a service: it implies a person sending and a person sent: "in the person who sendeth there must be authority to send, — submission to that authority in the person sent. The Messenger, therefore, of the Covenant, is the servant of the Lord Jehovah: but the same person who is the messenger is the LORD JEHOVAH himself; *not the same person* with the sender, but *bearing the same name*, because united in that mysterious nature and undivided substance which the name imports. The same person, therefore, is servant and lord; and, by uniting these characters in the same person, what does the prophet but describe that great mystery of the Gospel, the union of the nature which governs and the nature which serves, — the union of the divine and human nature, in the person of the Christ? This doctrine, therefore, was, no less than that of the divinity of the Messiah, a novelty. as we are told, in the third or fourth century

after the birth of Christ, — an invention of the dark and superstitious ages! The two, indeed, must stand or fall together: we claim for both a reverend antiquity: we appeal to the sacred archives of the ancient Jewish church, where both are registered in characters which do to this day, and we trust shall to the last, defy the injuries of time.

To these two characters of the Messiah, of Jehovah and Jehovah's Messenger, — or rather to that one mysterious character which arises from the union of these two, — another is to be added, contained in the assertion that he is the Lord *whom the persons seek to whom the prophecy is addressed — the Messenger whom they delight in.* I doubt not but you prevent me in the interpretation of this character: you imagine that the general expectation of the Messiah is alluded to in these expressions, and the delight and consolation which the devout part of the Jewish nation derived from the hope and prospect of his coming. And if the prophet's discourse were addressed to those who trusted in God's promises, and waited in patient hope of their accomplishment, this would indeed be the natural interpretation of his words; but the fact is otherwise, and therefore this interpretation cannot stand. The text is the continuation of a discourse begun in the last verse of the preceding chapter, which should indeed have been made the first verse of this. This discourse is addressed to persons who *did not* seek the Lord, — who *could not* delight in the Messenger of his Covenant, — to the profane and atheistical, who, neither listening to the promises nor regarding the threatenings of God, take occasion, from the promiscuous distribution of the good and evil of the present life, to form rash and impious conclusions

against his providence, to arraign his justice and wisdom, or to dispute his existence. The expressions, therefore, of seeking the Lord and delighting in his Messenger are ironical, expressing the very reverse of that which they seem to affirm. You will observe, that there is more or less of severity in this ironical language, by which it stands remarkably distinguished from the levity of ridicule, and is particularly adapted to the purposes of invective and rebuke. It denotes conscious superiority, sometimes indignation, in the person who employs it; it excites shame, confusion, and remorse, in the person against whom it is employed, — in a third person, contempt and abhorrence of him who is the object of it. These being the affections which it expresses and denotes, it can in no case have any tendency to move laughter: he who uses it is always serious himself; and makes his hearers serious, if he applies it with propriety and address. I have been thus particular in explaining the nature of irony, that it may not be confounded with other figures of an inferior rhetoric, which might less suit the dignity of the prophetic language; and that I may not seem to use a freedom with the sacred text, when I suppose that this figure may be allowed to have a place in it. Irony is the keenest weapon of the orator. The moralists, those luminaries of the Gentile world, have made it the vehicle of their gravest lessons; and Christ, our Great Teacher, upon just occasions, was not sparing in the use of it. A remarkable instance of it, but of the mildest kind, occurs in his conversation with Nicodemus, whom he had purposely perplexed with a doctrine somewhat abstruse in itself, and delivered in a figurative language; and when the Pharisee could not dissemble the slowness of

his apprehension, Jesus seems to triumph over his embarrassment in that ironical question, "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?" The question, you see, seems to imply a respectable estimation of the learning and abilities of those masters in Israel of whom this nightly visitor was one, and to express much surprise at the discovery of Nicodemus' ignorance; whereas the thing insinuated is the total insufficiency of these self-constituted teachers, who were ignorant of the first principles of that knowledge which Jesus brought from heaven to make men wise unto salvation. Nicodemus was a man of a fair and honest mind; but at this time probably not untainted with the pride and prejudices of his sect. Jesus intended to give him new light; but for this purpose he judges it expedient first to make him feel his present ignorance; which the triumph of this ironical question must have set before him in a glaring light. In the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, examples of a more austere irony abound; but we shall nowhere find an instance in which it more forcibly applied than by Malachi in the text. "Ye have wearied the Lord," says this eloquent prophet to the infidels of his times, — "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words." He makes them reply, — "Wherein have we wearied him?" He answers, — "When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord; or when ye say, Where is the God of judgment? — And are ye then in earnest in the sentiments which you express? Is this your quarrel with Providence, that the blessings of this life are promiscuously distributed? Is it really your desire that opulence and honour should be the peculiar portion of the righteous, — poverty and shame the certain



punishment of the wicked? Do *you* of all men wish that health of body and tranquillity of mind were the inseparable companions of temperance, — disease and despair the inevitable consequences of strong drink and dalliance? Do you wish to see a new economy take place, in which it should be impossible for virtue to suffer or for vice to prosper? — Sanctified blasphemers! be content: your just remonstrances are heard; you shall presently be friends with Providence: the God of judgment comes; he is at hand: he comes to establish the everlasting covenant of righteousness, — to silence all complaint, — to vindicate his ways to man, — to evince his justice in your destruction, — to inflict on you a death of which the agonies shall never end.” All this reproach and all this threatening is conveyed with the greatest force, because with the greatest brevity, in those ironical expressions of the prophet, “ The Lord, whom *ye seek* ; the Messenger of the Covenant, whom *ye delight in*.” But although these expressions are ironical, they contain a positive character of the person to come; for the true sense of irony is always rendered by the contrary of that which it seems to affirm: the Lord and Messenger whom infidels are ironically said to seek and to delight in is the Lord whom they do not seek, the Messenger, in whom they cannot take delight, — the Lord who will visit those who seek him not, the Messenger in whom they who have not sought the Lord can take no delight, because he is the messenger of vengeance.

This, then, is another character of the person to come, — that he is to execute God’s final vengeance on the wicked. But as this may seem a character of the office rather than of the person, it leads me to treat of what was the second article in my original division

of the subject, — the particulars of the business upon which the person announced in the text is said to come. There remains, besides, the application of every article of this remarkable prophecy to Jesus of Nazareth. These important disquisitions we must still postpone ; that no injustice may be done to this great argument, on your part or on mine, — on mine, by a superficial and precipitate discussion of any branch of it ; on yours, by a languid and uninterested attention-

## S E R M O N   X X X I I .

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MALACHI, iii. 1, 2.

*And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddedly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

*But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?*

WE have already considered the several characters by which the Messiah is described in this text of the prophet. He is the Lord of the temple at Jerusalem : he is, besides, the Messenger of that everlasting covenant of which the establishment is so explicitly foretold by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel : he is also the Lord whom the profane seek not, — the Messenger in whom they delight not ; that is, he is *the appointed Judge of man*, who will execute God's final vengeance on the wicked. We are now to consider the *particulars of the business* on which the person bearing these characters is to come.

It may seem that the text leaves it pretty much undetermined what the *particular business* is to be ; intimating only in general terms that something very terrible will be the consequence of the Messiah's arrival : “ But who may abide the day of his coming ?

and who shall stand when he appeareth ? ” You will not wonder that the appearance of that “ Sun of Righteousness, who hath arisen with healing on his wings,” should here be spoken of in terms of dread and apprehension, if you bear in remembrance what I told you in my last discourse, — that the prophet is speaking to the profane and atheistical, — to those who had nothing to hope from the mercy of God, and every thing to fear from his justice. To these persons the year of the redemption of Israel is to be the year of the vengeance of our God. The punishment of these is not less a branch of the Messiah’s office than the deliverance of the penitent and contrite sinner : they make a part of that power of the serpent which the seed of the woman is to extinguish. But the prophet opens the meaning of this threatening question in the words that immediately follow it ; and which, if you consult your Bibles, you will find to be these : “ For he is like a refiner’s fire and a fuller’s soap : and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver : and he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. And I will come near to you to judgment ; and will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, saith the Lord of Hosts.” Here you see the Messiah’s business described in various branches ; which are reducible, however, to these, — the final judgment, when the wicked shall be destroyed ; a previous trial or experiment of the different tempers and dispositions of men, in order to that judgment ; and something to be done for their amendment and

improvement. The trial is signified under the image of an essayist's separation of the nobler metals from the dross with which they are blended in the ore: the means used for the amendment and improvement of mankind, by the Messiah's atonement for our sins, by the preaching of the Gospel, and by the internal influences of the Holy Spirit, — all these means, employed under the Messiah's covenant for the reformation of men, are expressed under the image of a fuller's soap, which restores a soiled garment to its original purity. One particular effect of this purification is to be, that the *sons of Levi* will be purified. The worship of God shall be purged of all hypocrisy and superstition, and reduced to a few simple rites, the natural expressions of true devotion. “And then shall this offering of Judah and Jerusalem (*i. e.* of the true members of God's true church) be pleasant unto the Lord.” These, then, are the particulars of the business on which the Messiah, according to this prophecy, was to come.

It yet remains to recollect the particulars in which this prophecy, as it respects both the person of the Messiah and his business, hath been accomplished in Jesus of Nazareth. And, first, the prophet tells us that the Messiah is *the Lord*, and should come to his temple. Agreeably to this, the temple was the theatre of our Lord's public ministry at Jerusalem: there he daily taught the people; there he held frequent disputations with the unbelieving Scribes and Pharisees: so that, to us who acknowledge Jesus for the Lord, the prophetic character of coming to his temple must seem to be in some measure answered in the general habits of his holy life. It is remarkable that the temple was the place of his very first public appearance; and

in his coming upon that occasion there was an extraordinary suddenness. It was, indeed, before the commencement of his triennial ministry: he was but a child of twelve years of age, entirely unknown, when he entered into disputation in the temple with the priests and doctors of the law, and astonished them with his accurate knowledge of the Scriptures. And in this very year the sceptre of royal power departed from Judah; for it was in this year that Archelaus the son of Herod the Great was deposed by the Roman emperor, and banished to Lyons, and the Jews became wholly subject to the dominion of the Romans. Thus the prophecy of Jacob was fulfilled, by the coincidence of the subversion of the independent government of the Jews with the first advent or appearance of Shiloh in the temple.

But there are three particular passages of his life in which this prophecy appears to have been more remarkably fulfilled, and the character of the Lord coming to his temple more evidently displayed in him. The first was in an early period of his ministry; when, going up to Jerusalem to celebrate the passover, he found in the temple a market of live cattle, and bankers' shops, where strangers who came at this season from distant countries to Jerusalem were accommodated with cash for their bills of credit. Fired with indignation at this daring profanation of his Father's house, he upset the accounting tables of the bankers, and with a light whip made of rushes he drives these irreligious traders from the sacred precincts. *Here* was a considerable exertion of authority. However, on this occasion he claimed not the temple expressly *for his own*; he called it his FATHER'S house, and appeared to act only as a son.

He came a second time as Lord to his temple, much more remarkably, at the feast of tabernacles ; when, “ in the last day, that great day of the feast, he stood in the temple, and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto ME and drink : he that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” That you may enter into the full sense and spirit of this extraordinary exclamation, it is necessary that you should know in what the silly multitudes to whom it was addressed were probably employed at the time when it was uttered : and for this purpose I must give you a brief and general account of the ceremonies of that last day, the great day of the feast of tabernacles ; the ceremonies, not the original ceremonies appointed by Moses, but certain superstitious ceremonies which had been added by the later Jews. The feast of tabernacles continued eight days. At what precise time I know not, but in some part of the interval between the prophets and the birth of Christ, the priests had taken up a practice of marching daily during the feast round the altar of burnt offerings, waving in their hands the branches of the palm, and singing as they went — “ Save we pray, and prosper us !” This was done but once on the first seven days ; but on the eighth and last it was repeated seven times : and when this ceremony was finished, the people, with extravagant demonstrations of joy and exultation, fetched buckets of water from the fountain of Siloam, and presented them to the priests in the temple : who mixed the water with the wine of the sacrifices, and poured it upon the altar, chanting all the while that text of Isaiah, — “ With joy shall ye draw water from the fountain of salvation.” The fountain of salvation, in the language of a prophet, is the Messiah ; the

water to be drawn from that fountain is the water of his Spirit. Of this mystical meaning of the water, the inventors of these superstitious rites, whoever they might be, seem to have had some obscure discernment ; although they understood the fountain literally of the fountain of Siloam ; for, to encourage the people to the practice of this laborious superstition, they had persuaded them that this rite was of singular efficacy to draw down the prophetic spirit. The multitudes zealously busied in this unmeaning ceremony were they to whom Jesus addressed that emphatical exclamation, — “ If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” The first words, “ If any man *thirst*,” are ironical. “ Are ye famished,” says he, “ with thirst, that ye fatigue yourselves with fetching all this water up the hill ? O ! but ye thirst for the pure waters of Siloam, the sacred brook that rises in the mountain of God, and is devoted to the purification of the temple ! Are ye indeed athirst for these ? Come then unto *me* and drink : I am the *fountain* of which *that* which purifies the temple is the type : *I am* the fountain of *salvation* of which your prophet spake : *from me* the true believer shall receive the living water, — not in scanty draughts fetched with toil from this penurious rill, but in a well perpetually springing up within him.” The words of Isaiah which I have told you the priests were chanting, and to which Jesus alludes, are part of a song of praise and triumph which the faithful are supposed to use in that prosperous state of the church, which, according to the prophet, it shall finally attain under Jesse’s Root. “ In that day shalt thou say, Behold God is my salvation : I will trust, and not be afraid ; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and song, he also is



become my salvation : therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Consider these words as they lie in the context of the prophet ; consider the occasion upon which Jesus standing in the temple applies them to himself ; consider the sense in which he applies them ; and judge whether this application was less than an open claim to be the Lord Jehovah come unto his temple. It is remarkable that it had at the time an immediate and wonderful effect. " Many of the people, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth *this is the prophet.*" The light of truth burst at once upon their minds. Jesus no sooner made the application of this abused prophecy to himself, than they perceived the justness of it, and acknowledged in him the fountain of salvation. What would these people have said had they had our light ? had the whole volume of prophecy been laid before them, with the history of Jesus to compare with it ? Would they not have proceeded in the prophet's triumphant song, — " Cry out and shout, O daughter of Zion ! Great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee !" — This, then, I take to be the second particular occasion in the life of Jesus in which Malachi's prediction, " that the Lord should come to his temple," was fulfilled in him, — when Jesus, in the last day of the feast of tabernacles, stood in the temple and declared himself the person intended by Isaiah under the image of the "*fountain of salvation :*" for by appropriating the character to himself, he must be understood in effect to claim all those *other* characters which Isaiah in the same prophecy ascribes to the same person ; which are these : " God, the salvation of Israel ; the Lord Jehovah, his strength and his song ; the

Lord, that hath done excellent things ; the Holy One of Israel.”

A third time Jesus came still more remarkably as the Lord to his temple, when he came up from Galilee to celebrate the last passover, and made that public entry at Jerusalem which is described by all the evangelists. It will be necessary to enlarge upon the particulars of this interesting story : for the right understanding of our Saviour’s conduct upon this occasion depends so much upon seeing certain leading circumstances in a proper light, — upon a recollection of ancient prophecies, and an attention to the customs of the Jewish people, — that I am apt to suspect few now-a-days discern in this extraordinary transaction what was clearly seen in it at the time by our Lord’s disciples, and in some measure understood by his enemies. I shall present you with an orderly detail of the story, and comment upon the particulars as they arise ; and I doubt not but that, by God’s assistance, I shall teach you to perceive in this public entry of Jesus of Nazareth (if you have not perceived it before) a conspicuous advent of the Great Jehovah to his temple. — Jesus, on his last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, stops at the foot of Mount Olivet, and sends two of his disciples to a neighbouring village to provide an ass’s colt to convey him from that place to the city, distant not more than half a mile : the colt is brought, and Jesus is seated upon it. This first circumstance must be well considered ; it is the key to the whole mystery of the story. What could be his meaning in choosing this singular conveyance ? It could not be that the fatigue of the short journey which remained was likely to be too much for him afoot ; and that no better animal was to be procured.

Nor was the ass in these days (though it had been in earlier ages) an animal in high esteem in the East, used for travelling or for state by persons of the first condition, — that this conveyance should be chosen for the grandeur or propriety of the appearance. Strange as it may seem, the coming to Jerusalem upon an ass's colt was one of the prophetic characters of the Messiah; and the great singularity of it had perhaps been the reason that this character had been more generally attended to than any other; so that there was no Jew who was not apprised that the Messiah was to come to the holy city in that manner. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!" saith Zechariah: "Behold thy King cometh unto thee! He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, even a colt the foal of an ass!" And this prophecy the Jews never understood of any other person than the Messiah. Jesus, therefore, by seating himself upon the ass's colt in order to go to Jerusalem, without any possible inducement either of grandeur or convenience, openly declared himself to be that King who was to come, and and at whose coming in that manner Zion was to rejoice. And so the disciples, if we may judge from what immediately followed, understood this proceeding; for no sooner did they see their Master seated on the colt, than they broke out into transports of the highest joy, as if in this great sight they had the full contentment of their utmost wishes; conceiving, as it should seem, the sanguine hope that the kingdom was this instant to be restored to Israel. They strewed the way which Jesus was to pass with the green branches of the trees which grew beside it; a mark of honour, in the East, never paid but to the greatest emperors

on occasions of the highest pomp : they proclaimed him the long-expected heir of David's throne, — the Blessed One coming in the name of the Lord ; that is, in the language of Malachi, the Messenger of the Covenant : and they rent the skies with the exulting acclamation of “ Hosanna in the highest ! ” On their way to Jerusalem, they are met by a great multitude from the city, whom the tidings had no sooner reached than they ran out in eager joy to join his triumph. When they reached Jerusalem, the whole city, says the blessed evangelist, was moved. Here recollect, that it was now the season of the passover. The passover was the highest festival of the Jewish nation, the anniversary of that memorable night when Jehovah led his armies out of Egypt with a high hand and an extended arm, — “ a night much to be remembered to the Lord of the children of Israel in their generations ; ” and much indeed it was remembered. The devout Jews flocked at this season to Jerusalem, not only from every corner of Judea, but from the remotest countries whither God had scattered them ; and the numbers of the strangers that were annually collected in Jerusalem during this festival are beyond imagination. These strangers, who, living at a distance, knew little of what had been passing in Judea, since their last visit, were they who were moved (as well they might be) with wonder and astonishment, when Jesus, so humble in his equipage, so honoured in his numerous attendants, appeared within the city-gates ; and every one asks his neighbour “ Who is this ? ” It was replied by some of the natives of Judea, — but, as I conceive, by none of the disciples ; for any of them at this time would have given another answer, — it was replied, “ This is the Nazarene, the great prophet

from Galilee." Through the throng of these astonished spectators the procession passed by the public streets of Jerusalem to the *temple*, where immediately the sacred porticoes resound with the continued hosannas of the multitudes. The chief priests and scribes are astonished and alarmed: they request Jesus himself to silence his followers. Jesus in the early part of his ministry had always been cautious of any public display of personal consequence; lest the malice of his enemies should be too soon provoked, or the unadvised zeal of his friends should raise civil commotions: but now that his work on earth was finished in all but the last painful part of it, — now that he had firmly laid the foundations of God's kingdom in the hearts of his disciples, — now that the apostles were prepared and instructed for their office, — now that the days of vengeance on the Jewish nation were at hand, and it mattered not how soon they should incur the displeasure of the Romans their masters, — Jesus lays aside a reserve which could be no longer useful; and instead of checking the zeal of his followers, he gives a new alarm to the chief priests and scribes, by a direct and firm assertion of his right to the honours that were so largely shown to him. "If these," says he, "were silent, the stones of this building would be endued with a voice to proclaim my titles:" and then, as on a former occasion, he drove out the traders; but with a higher tone of authority, calling it his *own* house, and saying, "My house is the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." — You have now the story, in all its circumstances, faithfully collected from the four evangelists; nothing exaggerated, but set in order, and perhaps somewhat illustrated by an application of old prophecies and a recollection of Jewish

customs. Judge for yourselves whether this was not an advent of the Lord Jehovah taking personal possession of his temple.

Thus, in one or in all, but chiefly in the last, of these three remarkable passages of his life, did Jesus of Nazareth display in his own person, and in his conduct claim, the first and greatest character of the Messiah foretold and described by all the preceding Jewish prophets, as well as by Malachi in the text, — *the Lord coming to his temple*. The other characters, when we resume the subject, will with no less evidence appear in him.

## SERMON XXXIII.

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MALACHI, iii. 1, 2.

*And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in : behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts.*

*But who may abide the day of his coming ? and who shall stand when he appeareth ?*

THIS text of Malachi has turned out a fruitful subject ; more so, perhaps, than the first general view of it might seem to promise. We have already drawn from this text ample confirmation of some of the chief articles of our most holy faith : we have seen their great antiquity : we have found that they affirm nothing of our Lord but what the Jews were taught to look for in the person whom we believe our Lord to be, the Messiah : we have had occasion to expound some important texts, — to open many passages of prophecy, — to consider some remarkable passages in the life of Jesus, — to make some general observations on the style of the sacred writers, — to recall the remembrance of some customs of the ancient Jews ; by all which, we trust that we have thrown some light upon interesting texts of Scripture, and have furnished the attentive hearer with hints which

he who shall bear them in remembrance may apply to make light in many other places for himself. This harvest of edification which hath been already collected encourages me to proceed in the remainder of my subject, with the same diligence and exactness which I have used in the former part of it ; and I trust that it will engage you to give me still your serious attention.

We have already found in Jesus of Nazareth that great character of the Messiah — the *Lord* of the Jewish temple. Such Jesus was ; and such, by three remarkable actions in three different periods of his ministry, he had claimed to be. Let us now look narrowly for the second character, — that of the *Messenger of the Covenant* ; of that covenant of which the establishment was so explicitly foretold by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

In general, that Jesus was the proposer of a covenant between God and man, is much too evident to need any laboured proof. Did he not announce blessings on the part of God ? did he not acquire duties in return from men ? Now, an offer of blessings from God, with a demand of duties in return from men, is, in the Scripture language, a covenant between God and man. It was thus that the promises to Abraham were a covenant : it was promised to Abraham, that his posterity should become a numerous nation, prosperous in itself, and a means of blessing to all the families of the earth : it was required, in return, of Abraham and his posterity, to keep themselves pure from the general corruption of idolatry, and to adhere to the true worship of the true God. Thus, also, the Mosaic institution was a covenant : the land of Canaan was given to the



Jews : a strict observance is required of the rituals of the Mosaic law, and obedience to the prophets who should succeed Moses. And thus the Christian institution is a covenant : the sins of men are forgiven, through the sacrifice of Christ ; eternal happiness is offered to them in the world to come : Christians are required, in return, to fear, love, and honour God — to make open profession of the faith in Christ — to love one another — to do good to all men — to forgive their enemies — to control their passions, and to deny all sinful appetites. Jesus, therefore, it is evident, propounded the terms of a covenant : and he made the proposal on the part of God ; for he declared that he came from God, and the works which he did by the finger of God bore ample testimony to him. But this is not sufficient : it must be examined whether the covenant which Jesus propounded bears the character of that which is described in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel ; for *that* being the covenant intended by Malachi in the text, if the covenant propounded by Jesus were any other, although he would still be the messenger of a covenant, he would not be *that* messenger whom Malachi predicts, — that messenger which the Messiah was to be ; and, by consequence, he would not be the Messiah. Now, the first remarkable character which we find in Jeremiah and Ezekiel of the covenant which they describe is, that it should be new, or different from the Mosaic institution. And this same character we can be at no loss to find in the covenant propounded by Jesus. The Mosaic institution required duties of a ceremonial service : Jesus requires the natural devotion of the heart, the reasonable sacrifice of an innocent and holy life. And the social

duty, under the law and under the Gospel, is in its first general principles the same: yet Jesus, in his sermon on the Mount, points out imperfections in certain particulars of the Mosaic law, in some of its political institutions; arising from that necessary accommodation to inveterate prejudices and general corruptions with which every rational scheme of reformation must begin; and the Mosaic institution is to be considered as the beginning of a plan of Providence for the gradual amendment of mankind, which Christianity was to finish and complete. He tells the multitudes, that it would not be sufficient that they should abstain from such criminal actions as were prohibited by the letter of the Decalogue, — that they must master the passions which might incline them to such actions. He taught that the law was fulfilled in the true and undissembling love of God and man; and although he did not, during his own life on earth, release men from the observance of the Mosaic rites, he seized all occasions of explaining to them the higher works of intrinsic goodness. Nor does his covenant differ less from the Mosaic in the blessings it offers than in the duties it prescribes. The promises of the Mosaic covenant were of temporal blessings: the disciples of Christ are taught to look for nothing in this world but persecution and affliction, with the grace of God to support them under it; but they are to receive hereafter an inheritance that fadeth not away. Thus new, thus different from the Mosaic, is the covenant of Jesus; agreeing well in this particular with that which is described by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Another circumstance of the covenant foretold by these prophets was, that it should be universal, comprehending all

the nations of the earth. And such was the covenant of Jesus. He commanded the apostles to go into all nations, and to preach the Gospel to every creature ; with a promise of salvation to every one that should believe ; and he scrupled not to tell the unbelieving Jews, “ that many should come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of God.” A third character attributed by Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the covenant which they foretold was, that it should be everlasting. And such the covenant of Jesus, in the very nature of the thing, appears to be : it has no respect whatever, either in its requisitions or in its promises, to any peculiarities of place or time. In the Mosaic institution, we find much attention to the particular tempers and manners of the Jewish people, — to the notions they had imbibed in Egypt, — to the circumstances in which they were afterwards to be placed, — to the situation of the land of promise with respect to other nations, — to the customs and dispositions of their neighbours. They were commanded to offer in sacrifice the animals which they had seen the Egyptians worship ; that they might not adopt the same superstitious veneration for them. They were forbidden to use a particular tonsure of the hair ; because a neighbouring nation used it in honour of a dead prince whom they worshipped. They were forbidden certain rites of mourning in use among the bordering people, who deified their dead. None of these local and temporary intendments are to be found in the covenant of Jesus, — no accommodations to the manners of any particular nation, — no caution against the corruptions of any particular age or place : the

whole is planned upon a comprehensive view of human nature in general, of the original and immutable relation of things, and of the perfections of the unchangeable God. The things commanded are such as ever were and ever will be good; the things forbidden, such as ever were and ever will be evil; — ever good and ever evil, not from their adjuncts, their accidents, or their circumstances, which may admit of change; but intrinsically, in their own formal natures, which are permanent and invariable as the ideas of the Divine Mind, in which the forms of things originate. Thus the religious fear and love of God are every where and always good, because his power and goodness are every where active; and power in act is by its formal nature, not by accident, the object of fear; and goodness in act the object of love. For the same reason, the neglect and disregard of God are always evil. Again, the love of man is always good; because man always bears in the natural endowments of his mind somewhat of that glorious image in which he was created; and because by this resemblance man partakes of the Divine nature, to be enslaved by the appetites which are common to him with the brutes, is always evil. And since the whole of the Christian duty is reducible to these three heads, — the love of God, the love of man, and the government of self, — it is evident that in this part of it the Christian covenant is in its very nature calculated to be everlasting. Nor do the promises of this covenant less than its requisitions demonstrate its everlasting nature. Its promises are such as cannot be improved; for what can God promise more than everlasting life? what better reward can Omnipotence bestow than the participation of the pleasures which

are at his own right hand? Evidently, therefore, in the duties it enjoins, and in the promises it holds out, the covenant of Jesus appears in its nature to be everlasting. Another character of the covenant foretold by Jeremiah and Ezekiel is, that it should be a law written in the hearts of God's people. And such is the Gospel; if we consider either the motives by which it operates, — those of hope and love, rather than of fear and awe, — or the gracious influences of the Spirit on the heart of every true believer.

Let us now briefly collect the sum of this investigation. The covenant foretold by Jeremiah and Ezekiel was to be different from the Mosaic, — general, for all nations; everlasting, for all ages; a law written in the hearts of the faithful. The covenant which Jesus, as God's messenger, propounded is altogether different from the Mosaic: it is propounded, generally, to all nations; and, in the terms of it, is fitted to be everlasting, for all ages; it is a law written in the heart. Assuredly, then, Jesus of Nazareth was the Messenger of the Covenant foretold by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But it is to be observed, that during his life on earth he was only the Messenger of this covenant: it was propounded, but not established by him, during his own residence among the sons of men. The hand-writing of ordinances remained in force till it was nailed with Jesus to his cross: then the ritual law lost its meaning and obligation; but still the new covenant was not established till it was sealed by the effusion of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension, and the Mosaic law was formally abrogated by the solemn sentence of the apostles in the council of Jerusalem: this was the authori-

tative revocation of the old and the establishment of the new covenant. You see, therefore, with what accuracy of expression the Messiah is called by the prophet the *Messenger* of the Covenant, and how exactly this second characteristic was verified in Jesus of Nazareth.

Having now traced in Jesus these two characters of the Lord, and the Lord's Messenger, it is not likely that any other will be wanting: for since we are assured by the prophets that these two characters should meet in the Messiah, — since we have no reason to believe that they ever shall meet in any other person, — and since we have seen that they have met in the person of Jesus, — it follows, undeniably, from the union of these two characters in his person, that Jesus was the Messiah; and of consequence, that all the other characteristics of that extraordinary personage will be found in him. The third is that of the Judge, who shall execute God's final vengeance on the wicked. This, it must be confessed, is a character which Jesus of Nazareth hath not yet assumed, otherwise than by declaring that hereafter he will assume it. His first coming was not to judge the world, but that the world through him might be saved. "Nevertheless, the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son; who shall come again, at the last day, in glory, to judge both the quick and dead." It must be confessed, that the prophets have so connected the judgment to be executed by the Messiah with his first appearance, that any one not acquainted with the general cast and genius of the prophetic language might not easily suspect that they speak of two advents of this great personage, separated from each other by a long interval

of time. But if you have observed that this is the constant style of prophecy, — that when a long train of distant events are predicted, rising naturally in succession one out of another, and all tending to one great end, the whole time of these events is never set out in parcels, by assigning the distinct epoch of each; but the whole is usually described as an instant, — as what it is in the sight of God; and the whole train of events is exhibited in one scene without any marks of succession; — if you consider that prophecy, were it more regularly arranged, and digested in chronological order, would be an anticipated history of the world, which would in a great measure defeat the very end of prophecy, which is to demonstrate the weakness and ignorance of man, as well as the sovereignty and universal rule of Providence; — if you take these things into consideration, you will, perhaps, be inclined to think, that they may best interpret the ancient prophecies concerning the Messiah who refer to two different and distant times as two distinct events, — his coming to make reconciliation for iniquity; and his coming to cut off the incorrigibly wicked. Again, if you consider the achievements which the prophets ascribe to the Messiah (which are such as cannot be accomplished but in the course of many ages), and that the general judgment must in the reason of the thing be the last of all, — if you consider that the Messiah was to come in humility before he should be revealed in glory, you will be convinced that the prophets cannot be understood of a single advent. If you recollect that the Messiah was to be cut off before he should reign, you will probably allow that the history of the New Testament is the best exposition of the types and oracles of the

Old : and in Jesus of Nazareth, who came in all humility, and was cut off, but not for himself, you will acknowledge Messiah the Prince ; and you will look for him a second time in glory.

Your faith will be much confirmed, if you recollect that the particulars of the business upon which the Messiah was to come appear no less evidently in the performances of Jesus than the personal characters in his person. The Messiah was to try the tempers and dispositions of mankind. This Jesus does, by the duties to which he calls us, and the doctrine he has left with us, — duties in which faith alone can engage us to persist ; a doctrine which the pure in heart ever will revere, and the children of this world ever will misinterpret and despise. “ Thus many shall be purified, and made white, and tried ; but the wicked shall do wickedly.” Messiah was to purify the sons of Levi. The doctrine of Jesus has in many nations reformed the public worship of God ; and we trust that the reformation will gradually become general. Us of the Gentiles he has reclaimed from the abominations of idolatry ; and hath taught us to loathe and execrate the rites whereby our forefathers sought the favour of their devils (for they were not gods), — the impure rites of human sacrifice and public prostitution ; things which it were unfit to mention or remember, but that we may the better understand from what a depth of corruption the mercy of God hath raised us. Blindness, it must be confessed, is at present upon Israel ; but the time shall come when they shall turn to the Lord, and when we shall unite with them in the pure worship of God, and in the just praises of the Lamb. “ Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant



unto the Lord : ” then shall the Lord Jesus come again, to execute what remains of the Messiah’s office, — to absolve and to condemn. God grant that every one here may be enabled to “ abide the day of his coming, and to stand when he appeareth ! ”

## S E R M O N   X X X I V .

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LUKE, i. 28.

*Hail, thou that art highly favoured! The Lord is  
with thee. Blessed art thou among women.\**

**T**HAT she who in these terms was saluted by an angel should in after ages become an object of superstitious adoration, is a thing far less to be wondered at, than that men professing to build their whole hopes of immortality on the promises delivered in the sacred books, and closely interwoven with the history of our Saviour's life, should question the truth of the message which the angel brought. Some nine years since, the Christian church was no less astonished than offended, by an extravagant attempt to heighten, as it was pretended, the importance of the Christian revelation, by overturning one of those first principles of natural religion which had for ages been considered as the basis upon which the whole superstructure of Revelation stands. The notion of an immaterial principle in man, which, without an immediate exertion of the Divine power to the express purpose of its destruction, must necessarily survive the dissolution of the body, — the notion of an im-

\* Preached on Christmas-day.

mortal soul — was condemned and exploded, as an invention of heathen philosophy: death was represented as an utter extinction of the whole man; and the evangelical doctrine of a resurrection of the body in an improved state, to receive again its immortal inhabitant, was heightened into the mystery of a reproduction of the annihilated person. How a person once annihilated could be reproduced, so as to be the same person which had formerly existed, when no principle of sameness, nothing necessarily permanent, was supposed to enter the original composition, how the present person could be interested in the future person's fortunes, — why *I* should be at all concerned for the happiness or misery of the man who some ages hence shall be raised from my ashes, when the future man could be no otherwise the same with me than as he was arbitrarily to be called the same, because his body was to be composed of the same matter which now composes mine, — these difficulties were but ill explained. It was thought a sufficient recommendation of the system, with all its difficulties, that the promise of a resurrection of the body seemed to acquire a new importance from it; (but the truth is, that it would lose its whole importance if this system could be established; since it would become a mere prediction concerning a future race of men, and would be no promise to any men now existing;) and the notion of the soul's natural immortality was deemed an unseemly appendage of a Christian's belief, — for this singular reason, that it had been entertained by wise and virtuous heathens, who had received no light from the Christian, nor, as it was supposed, from any earlier revelation.

It might have been expected, that this anxiety to

extinguish every ray of hope which beams not from the glorious promises of the Gospel would have been accompanied with the most entire submission of the understanding to the letter of the written word, — the most anxious solicitude for the credit of the sacred writers, — the warmest zeal to maintain every circumstance in the history of our Saviour's life which might add authority to his precepts, and weight to his promises, by heightening the dignity of his person: but so inconsistent with itself is human folly, that they who at one time seemed to think it a preliminary to be required of every one who would come to a right belief of the Gospel, that he should unlearn and unbelieve what philosophy had been thought to have in common with the Gospel (as if reason and Revelation could in nothing agree), upon other occasions discover an aversion to the belief of any thing which at all puts our reason to a stand: and in order to wage war with mystery with the more advantage, they scruple not to deny that that Spirit which enlightened the first preachers in the delivery of their oral instruction, and rendered them infallible teachers of the age in which they lived, directed them in the composition of those writings which they left for the edification of succeeding ages. They pretend to have made discoveries of inconclusive reasoning in the Epistles, — of doubtful facts in the Gospels; and appealing from the testimony of the apostles to their own judgments, they have not scrupled to declare their opinion, that the *miraculous conception of our Lord* is a subject “with respect to which any person is at full liberty to think as the evidence shall appear to him, without any impeachment of his faith or character as a Chris-

tian :” and lest a simple avowal of this extraordinary opinion should not be sufficiently offensive, it is accompanied with certain obscure insinuations, the reserved meaning of which we are little anxious to divine, which seem intended to prepare the world not to be surprised if something still more extravagant (if more extravagant may be) should in a little time be declared.

We are assembled this day to commemorate our Lord’s nativity. It is not as the birth-day of a prophet that this day is sanctified ; but as the anniversary of that great event which had been announced by the whole succession of prophets from the beginning of the world, and in which the predictions concerning the manner of the Messiah’s advent received their complete and literal accomplishment. In the predictions, as well as in the corresponding event, the circumstance of the miraculous conception makes so principal a part, that we shall not easily find subjects of meditation more suited either to the season or to the times than these two points, — the importance of this doctrine as an article of the Christian faith ; and the sufficiency of the evidence by which the fact is supported.

First, for the importance of the doctrine as an article of the faith. It is evidently the foundation of the whole distinction between the character of Christ in the condition of a man and that of any other prophet. Had the conception of Jesus been in the natural way, — had he been the fruit of Mary’s marriage with her husband, — his intercourse with the Deity could have been of no other kind than the nature of any other man might have equally admitted, — an intercourse of no higher kind than the prophets enjoyed, when

their minds were enlightened by the extraordinary influence of the Holy Spirit. The information conveyed to Jesus might have been clearer and more extensive than any imparted to any former prophet ; but the manner and the means of communication must have been the same. The Holy Scriptures speak a very different language : they tell us, that the same God who “ spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets hath in these latter days spoken unto us by his Son ; ” evidently establishing a distinction of Christianity from preceding revelations, upon a distinction between the two characters of a prophet of God and of God’s Son. Moses, the great law-giver of the Jews, is described in the book of Deuteronomy as superior to all succeeding prophets, for the intimacy of his intercourse with God, for the variety of his miracles, and for the authority with which he was invested. “ There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face, — in all the signs and wonders which Jehovah sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, and all his servants, and to all his land, — and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror, which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.” Yet this great prophet, raised up to be the leader and the legislator of God’s people, — this greatest of the prophets, with whom Jehovah conversed face to face, as a man talketh with his friend, — bore to Jesus, as we are told, the humble relation of a servant to a son. And lest the superiority on the side of the Son should be deemed a mere superiority of the office to which he was appointed, we are told that the Son is “ higher than the angels ; being the effulgence of God’s glory, the express image of his person ; ” the God “ whose

throne is for ever and ever, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness :” and this high dignity of the Son is alleged as a motive for religious obedience to his commands, and for reliance on his promises. It is this, indeed, which gives such authority to his precepts, and such certainty to his whole doctrine, as render faith in him the first duty of religion. Had Christ been a mere prophet, to believe in Christ had been the same thing as to believe in John the Baptist. The messages, indeed, announced on the part of God by Christ, and by John the Baptist, might have been different, and the importance of the different messages unequal ; but the principle of belief in either must have been the same.

Hence it appears, that the intercourse which Christ as a man held with God was different in kind from that which the greatest of the prophets ever had enjoyed : and yet how it should differ, otherwise than in the degree of frequency and intimacy, it will not be very easy to explain, unless we adhere to the faith transmitted to us from the primitive ages, and believe that the Eternal Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, so joined to himself the holy thing which was formed in Mary’s womb, that the two natures, from the commencement of the virgin’s conception, made one person. Between God and any living being having a distinct personality of his own, separate from the Godhead, no other communion could obtain than what should consist in the action of the Divine Spirit upon the faculties of the separate person. This communion with God the prophets enjoyed. But Jesus, according to the primitive doctrine, was so united to the Everliving Word, that the very existence of the man consisted in this union.

We shall not, indeed, find this proposition, that the existence of Mary's Son consisted from the first, and ever shall consist, in his union with the Word, — we shall not find this proposition, in these terms, in Scripture. Would to God the necessity never had arisen of stating the discoveries of Revelation in metaphysical propositions! The inspired writers delivered their sublimest doctrines in popular language, and abstained, as much as it was possible to abstain, from a philosophical phraseology. By the perpetual cavils of gainsayers, and the difficulties which they have raised, later teachers, in the assertion of the same doctrines, have been reduced to the unpleasing necessity of availing themselves of the greater precision of a less familiar language.

But if we find not the same proposition in the same words in Scripture, we find in Scripture what amounts to a clear proof of the proposition: we find the characteristic properties of both natures, the human and the divine, ascribed to the same person. We read of Jesus, that he suffered from hunger and from fatigue; that he wept for grief, and was distressed with fear; that he was obnoxious to all the evils of humanity, except the propensity to sin. We read of the same Jesus, that he had “glory with the Father before the world began;” that “all things were created by him, both in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, — whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and “he upholdeth all things by the word of his power:” and that we may in some sort understand how infirmity and perfection should thus meet in the same person, we are told by St. John, that “the Word was made flesh.”



It was clearly, therefore, the doctrine of Holy Writ, and nothing else, which the fathers asserted in terms borrowed from the schools of philosophy, when they affirmed that the very principle of personality and individual existence in Mary's Son was union with the uncreated Word; a doctrine in which a miraculous conception would have been implied, had the thing not been recorded, — since a man conceived in the ordinary way would have derived the principles of his existence from the mere physical powers of generation: union with the divine nature could not have been the principle of an existence physically derived from Adam; and that intimate union of God and man in the Redeemer's person, which the Scriptures so clearly assert, had been a physical impossibility.

But we need not go so high as to the divine nature of our Lord to evince the necessity of his miraculous conception. It was necessary to the scheme of redemption, by the Redeemer's offering of himself as an expiatory sacrifice, that the manner of his conception should be such that he should in no degree partake of the natural pollution of the fallen race whose guilt he came to atone, nor be included in the general condemnation of Adam's progeny. In what the stain of original sin may consist, and in what manner it may be propagated, it is not to my present purpose to enquire: it is sufficient that Adam's crime, by the appointment of Providence, involved his whole posterity in punishment. "In Adam," says the apostle, "all die." And for many lives thus forfeited, a single life, itself a forfeit, had been no ransom. Nor by the Divine sentence only, inflicting death on the progeny for the offence of the progeni-

tor, but by the proper guilt of his own sins, every one sprung by natural descent from the loins of Adam is a debtor to Divine justice, and incapable of becoming a mediator for his brethren. "In many things," says St. James "we offend all."— "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," saith St. John, "and the truth is not in us. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins." Even we Christians all offend, without exception even of the first and best Christians, the apostles. But St. John clearly separates the righteous Advocate from the mass of those offenders. That any Christian is enabled, by the assistance of God's Spirit, to attain to that degree of purity which may entitle him to the future benefits of the redemption, is itself a present benefit of the propitiation which hath been made for us: and he who, under the assault of every temptation, maintained that unsullied innocence which gives merit and efficacy to his sacrifice and intercession, could not be of the number of those whose offences called for an expiation, and whose frailties needed a Divine assistance to raise them effectually from dead works to serve the living God. In brief, the condemnation and the iniquity of Adam's progeny were universal: to reverse the universal sentence, and to purge the universal corruption, a Redeemer was to be found pure of every stain of inbred and contracted guilt; and since every person produced in the natural way could not but be of the contaminated race, the purity requisite to the efficacy of the Redeemer's atonement made it necessary that the manner of his conception should be supernatural.

Thus you see the necessary connection of the mira-

culous conception with the other articles of the Christian faith. The incarnation of the Divine Word, so roundly asserted by St. John, and so clearly implied in innumerable passages of Holy Writ, in any other way had been impossible, and the Redeemer's atonement inadequate and ineffectual ; insomuch, that had the extraordinary manner of our Lord's generation made no part of the evangelical narrative, the opinion might have been defended as a thing clearly implied in the evangelical doctrine.

On the other hand, it were not difficult to show that the miraculous conception, once admitted, naturally brings up after it the great doctrines of the atonement and the incarnation. The miraculous conception of our Lord evidently implies some higher purpose of his coming than the mere business of a teacher. The business of a teacher might have been performed by a mere man, enlightened by the prophetic spirit ; for whatever instruction men have the capacity to receive, a man might have been made the instrument to convey. Had teaching therefore been the sole purpose of our Saviour's coming, a mere man might have done the whole business ; and the supernatural conception had been an unnecessary miracle. He, therefore, who came in this miraculous way, came upon some higher business, to which a mere man was unequal : he came to be made a sin-offering for us, " that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

So close, therefore, is the connection of this extraordinary fact with the cardinal doctrines of the Gospel, that it may be justly deemed a necessary branch of the scheme of redemption. And in no other light was it considered by St. Paul ; who mentions it

among the characteristics of the Redeemer, that he should be “made of a woman.” In this short sentence, St. Paul bears a remarkable testimony to the truth of the evangelical history, in this circumstance. And you, my brethren, have not so learned Christ, but that you will prefer the testimony of St. Paul to the rash judgment of those who have dared to tax this “chosen vessel” of the Lord with error and inaccuracy.

The opinion of these men is, indeed, the less to be regarded, for the want of insight which they discover into the real interests and proper connections of their own system. It is by no means sufficient for their purpose that they insist not on the belief of the miraculous conception: they must insist upon the disbelief of it, if they expect to make discerning men proselytes to their Socinian doctrine: they must disprove it, before they can reduce the Gospel to what their scheme of interpretation makes it, — a mere religion of nature, — a system of the best practical deism, enforced by the sanction of high rewards and formidable punishments in a future life; which are yet no rewards and no punishments, but simply the enjoyments and the sufferings of a new race of men to be made out of old materials; and therefore constitute no sanction, when the principles of the materialist are incorporated with those of the Socinian in the finished creed of the modern Unitarian.

Having seen the importance of the doctrine of the miraculous conception, as an article of our faith, let us, in the next place, consider the sufficiency of the evidence by which the fact is supported.

We have for it the express testimony of two out of the four evangelists, — of St. Matthew, whose Gospel

was published in Judea within a few years after our Lord's ascension ; and of St. Luke, whose narrative was composed (as may be collected from the author's short preface) to prevent the mischief that was to be apprehended from some pretended histories of our Saviour's life, in which the truth was probably blended with many legendary tales. It is very remarkable, that the fact of the miraculous conception should be found in the first of the four Gospels, — written at a time when many of the near relations of the holy family must have been living, by whom the story, had it been false, had been easily confuted ; that it should be found again in St. Luke's Gospel, written for the peculiar use of the converted Gentiles, and for the express purpose of furnishing a summary of authentic facts, and of suppressing spurious narrations. Was it not ordered by some peculiar providence of God, that the two great branches of the primitive church, — the Hebrew congregations for which St. Matthew wrote, and the Greek congregations for which St. Luke wrote, — should find an express record of the miraculous conception each in its proper Gospel ? Or if we consider the testimony of the writers simply as historians of the times in which they lived, without regard to their inspiration, which is not admitted by the adversary, — were not Matthew and Luke, — Matthew one of the twelve apostles of our Lord, and Luke the companion of St. Paul, — competent to examine the evidence of the facts which they have recorded ? Is it likely that they have recorded facts upon the credit of a vague report, without examination ? And was it reserved for the Unitarians of the eighteenth century to detect their errors ? St. Luke thought himself particularly well qualified for the work in which he

engaged, by his exact knowledge of the story which he undertook to write, in all its circumstances, from the very beginning. It is said, indeed, by a writer of the very first antiquity, and high in credit, that his Gospel was composed from St. Paul's sermons. "Luke, the attendant of St. Paul," says Irenæus, "put into his book the Gospel preached by that apostle." This being premised, attend, I beseech you, to the account which St. Luke gives of his own undertaking. "It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." The last verse might be more literally rendered, — "That thou mightest know the exact truth of those doctrines wherein thou hast been CATECHISED." — St. Luke's Gospel, therefore, if the writer's own word may be taken about his own work, is an historical exposition of the *catechism* which Theophilus had learnt when he was first made a Christian. The two first articles in this historical exposition are, — the history of the Baptist's birth, and that of Mary's miraculous impregnation. We have much more, therefore, than the testimony of St. Luke, in addition to that of St. Matthew, to the truth of the fact of the miraculous conception: we have the testimony of St. Luke that this fact was a part of the earliest catechetical instruction, — a part of the catechism, no doubt, which St. Paul's converts learnt of the apostle. Let this, then, be your answer, if any man shall ask you a reason of this part of your faith, — tell him you have been learning St. Paul's catechism.

From what hath been said, you will easily perceive,

that the evidence of the fact of our Lord's miraculous conception is answerable to the great importance of the doctrine ; and you will esteem it an objection of little weight, that the modern advocates of the Unitarian tenets cannot otherwise give a colour to their wretched cause than by denying the inspiration of the sacred historians, that they may seem to themselves at liberty to reject their testimony. You will remember, that the doctrines of the Christian revelation were not originally delivered in a system, but interwoven in the history of our Saviour's life. To say, therefore, that the first preachers were not inspired in the composition of the narratives in which their doctrine is conveyed, is nearly the same thing as to deny their inspiration in general. You will, perhaps, think it incredible, that they who were assisted by the Divine Spirit when they preached, should be deserted by that Spirit when they committed what they had preached to writing. You will think it improbable, that they who were endowed with the gift of discerning spirits, should be endowed with no gift of discerning the truth of facts. You will recollect one instance upon record, in which St. Peter detected a falsehood by the light of inspiration ; and you will perhaps be inclined to think, that it could be of no less importance to the church, that the apostles and evangelists should be enabled to detect falsehoods in the history of our Saviour's life, than that St. Peter should be enabled to detect Ananias's lie about the sale of his estate. You will think it unlikely, that they who were led by the Spirit into all truth, should be permitted to lead the whole church for many ages into error, — that they should be permitted to leave behind them, as authentic memoirs of their Master's

life, narratives compiled with little judgment or selection, from the stories of the day, from facts and fictions in promiscuous circulation. The credulity which swallows these contradictions, while it strains at mysteries, is not the faith which will remove mountains. The Ebionites of antiquity, little as they were famed for penetration and discernment, managed, however, the affairs of the sect with more discretion than our modern Unitarians: they questioned not the inspiration of the books which they received; but they received only one book, — a spurious copy of St. Matthew's Gospel, curtailed of the two first chapters. You will think it no inconsiderable confirmation of the doctrine in question, that the sect which first denied it, to palliate their infidelity, found it necessary to reject three of the Gospels, and to mutilate the fourth.

Not in words, therefore, and in form, but with hearts full of faith and gratitude, you will join in the solemn service of the day, and return thanks to God, “who gave his only begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and, as at this time, to be born of a pure virgin.” You will always remember, that it is the great use of a sound faith, that it furnishes the most effectual motives to a good life. You will, therefore, not rest in the merit of a speculative faith; you will make it your constant endeavour that your lives may adorn your profession, — that “your light may so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.”



## S E R M O N   X X X V .

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DEUTERONOMY, xv. 11.

*For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and to thy needy in thy land. \**

SINCE civilised society is unquestionably the life which Providence designs for man, formed, as he evidently is, with powers to derive his proper happiness from what he may contribute to the public good, nor less formed to be miserable in solitude, by want of employment for the faculties which something of a natural instinct prompts him to exert, — since what are commonly called the artificial distinctions of society, the inequalities of rank, wealth, and power, must, in truth, be a part of God's design, when he designs man to a life in which the variety of occupations and pursuits, arising from those discriminations of condition, is no less essential to the public weal, than the diversity of members in the natural body, and the different functions of its various parts are essential to the health and vigour of the individual, — since, in harmony with this design of driving man

\* Preached at the Anniversary Meeting of the Sons of the Clergy, May 18. 1786.

by his powers and capacities, no less than by his wants and infirmities, to seek his happiness in civil life, it is ordained that every rank furnish the individual with the means, not only of subsistence, but of comfort and enjoyment, (for although the pleasures of the different degrees of men are drawn from different sources, and differ greatly in the elegance and lustre of their exterior form and show, yet the quantity of real happiness within the reach of the individual will be found, upon a fair and just comparison, in all the ranks of life the same,) — upon this view of the Divine original of civil society, with the inequalities of condition which obtain in it, and the provision which is equally made in all conditions for the happiness of the individual, — it may seem perhaps unreasonable, — it may seem a presumptuous deviation from the Creator's plan, that any should become suitors to the public charity for a better subsistence than their own labour might procure. Poverty, it may seem, can be nothing more than an imaginary evil; of which the modest never will complain, which the intelligent never will commiserate, and the politic never will relieve. And the complaint, it may seem, can never be more indecent, or less worthy of regard, than when it is used by those who profess to be strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and to have a balm for all the evils of the present world in the certainty of their prospects in a better country.

Shocking as I trust these conclusions must be to the feelings of a Christian assembly, it may nevertheless be useful to demonstrate, that they have no real connection with the principles from which they seem to be drawn, — that they are not less contrary

to reason and to sound policy than to the feelings of philanthropy and the precepts of the Gospel. For although I shall not readily admit that the proof of moral obligation cannot in any instance be complete, unless the connection be made out between the action which the heart naturally approves and that which a right understanding of the interests of mankind would recommend, (on the contrary, to judge practically of right and wrong, we should *feel* rather than philosophize, and we should act from sentiment rather than from policy,) — yet we surely acquiesce with the most cheerfulness in our duty when we perceive how the useful and the fair are united in the same action.

I therefore undertake to prove these two things :—

First, That poverty is a real evil ; which, without any impeachment of the goodness or wisdom of Providence, the constitution of the world actually admits.

Secondly, That the providential appointment of this evil, in subservience to the general good, brings a particular obligation upon men in civilised society to concur for the immediate extinction of the evil, wherever it appears. “ The poor shall never cease out of the land.” And for this especial reason, because the poor shall never cease, therefore it is commanded, “ That thou open thine hand wide unto thy brother ; that thou surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.”

The distribution of mankind into various orders is not more essential to the being of society, than it is conducive to the public good that the fortunes of every individual in every rank should be in a considerable degree uncertain : for were things so ordered that every man’s fortune should be invariably determined by the rank in which he should be born, or by

the employment to which he should be bred, an Epicurean indolence, the great bane of public prosperity, would inevitably take place among all ranks of men; when industry, of all qualities of the individual the most beneficial to the community, would lose the incitement of its golden dreams; and sloth, of all the vices of the individual the most pernicious to the community, would be released from its worst apprehensions. But to be uncertain in the degree which the public weal demands, the fortunes of the individual must be governed, as we see they are, by an intricate combination of causes, of which no sagacity of human forecast may predict or avert the event. The consequence must be, that the individual's means of subsistence will not always correspond with other circumstances, — that they will sometimes fall greatly short of what belongs to the particular sphere which upon the whole he is best qualified to fill with advantage to the community of which he is a member. *This* is the evil to which the name of *poverty* properly belongs. The man who hath food to eat and raiment to put on is not poor, because his diet is plain and his apparel homely; but he is truly poor whose means of subsistence are insufficient for his proper place in society, as determined by the general complication of his circumstances, — by his birth, his education, his bodily strength, and his mental endowments. By the means of subsistence, I understand not the means of superfluous gratifications; but that present competency which every individual must possess in order to be in a capacity to derive a support from his industry in the proper business of his calling. In every condition of life, something more is wanting to a man's support than

that he should earn by his industry, from day to day, the price of lodging, food, and raiment, for himself and for his family. The common labourer must be furnished with his mattock and his spade ; the tradesman must have wherewithal to purchase the commodities from the sale of which he is to derive his livelihood : in commerce, a large capital must often be expended upon the expectation of a slow and distant return of profit : those who are destined to the liberal professions are to be qualified for the part which they are to sustain in life by a long and expensive course of education ; and they who are born to hereditary honours, if they succeed, as too often is the case, to estates encumbered by the misfortunes or misconduct of their ancestors, are restrained, by the decorums of their rank, from seeking a reparation of their fortunes in any mercenary occupation.

Without something, therefore, of a previous competency, it is evident, that in every rank of life the individual's industry will be insufficient to his support. The want of this previous competency is poverty ; which, with respect to the whole, is indeed, in a certain sense, no evil : it is the necessary result of that instability of the individual's prosperity which is so far from an evil that it is essential to the general good. Yet the difficulty is a calamity to those on whom it lights, — a calamity against which no elevation of rank secures.

Nor is it any indication of inconsistency and contradiction in the management of the world, however it may seem to superficial enquirers, that the distinctions of rank, which the purposes of civil life demand, should be occasionally, as it may seem, confounded, and the different orders mixed and levelled, by a

calamity like this, universally incidental. It is, indeed, by this expedient that the merciful providence of God guards civil life against the ruin which would otherwise result from the unlimited progress of its own refinements. The accumulation of power in the higher ranks, were they secure against the chances of life and the shocks of fortune, — that is, in other words, were the constitution of the world such, that wealth should always correspond with other advantages in some invariable proportion, — would so separate the interests of the different orders, that every state would split into so many distinct communities as it should contain degrees : these again would subdivide, according to the inequalities of fortune and other advantages which should obtain in each ; till, in the progress of the evil, civil society would be dissipated and shivered into its minutest parts, by the uncontrolled operation of the very principles to which it owes its existence.

Thus it appears that poverty is, indeed, a real evil in the life of the individual ; which, nevertheless, the common good demands, and the constitution of the world accordingly admits.

But so wonderfully hath Providence interwoven the public and the private good, that, while the common weal requires that the life of the individual should be obnoxious to this contingency, the public is nevertheless interested in the relief of real poverty, wherever the calamity alights ; for Providence hath so ordained, that so long as the individual languishes in poverty, the public must want the services of a useful member. This, indeed, would not be the case, nor would the calamity to the individual be what it generally is, were the transition easy in civil society from

one rank to another. But the truth is, that as our abilities for any particular employment are generally the result of habits to which we have been formed in an early part of life, combined, perhaps, with what is more unconquerable than habit, — the natural bent of genius, — a man who is the best qualified to be serviceable to the community and to himself in any one situation of life, is by that very ability the most disqualified for the business of any other.

This is readily understood, if the supposition be made of a sudden transition from the lower stations to the higher. It is easily perceived, that the qualifications of a mechanic or a tradesman would be of no advantage in the pulpit, at the bar, or in the senate, — that the clumsy hand of the common labourer would be ill employed in finishing the delicate parts of any nice machine. But though it may be less obvious, it is not less true, that the difficulty would be just the same in descending from the higher to the lower stations; as there is still the same contrariety of habit to create it. At the tradesman's counter or the attorney's desk, the accomplishments of the statesman or the scholar would be rather of dis-service: the mechanic's delicacy of hand would but unfit him for the labours of the anvil; and he who has once shone in the gay circles of a court, should he attempt in the hour of distress to put his hand to the plough, would be unable to earn any better wages than the ridicule of every peasant in the village.

Thus, every man's ability of finding a subsistence for himself, and of being serviceable to the public, is limited by his habits and his genius to a certain sphere; which may not improperly be called *the sphere of his political activity*. Poverty, obstructing political ac-

tivity in its proper sphere, arrests and mortifies the powers of the citizen, rendering him not more miserable in himself than useless to the community ; which, for its own sake, must free the captive from the chain which binds him, in order to regain his services. So that, in truth, when it is said, as it is most truly said, that the evil of poverty is a public good, the proposition is to be admitted under a particular interpretation : the danger of poverty threatening the individual is the good : poverty *in act* (if I may borrow an expression from the schools) is to the community as well as to the sufferer an evil ; and since, in the formal nature of the thing, it is an evil from which the individual cannot be extricated by any efforts of his own, policy, no less than humanity, enjoins that the community relieve him.

Nor will the argument from political experience fail, if in some instances of poverty the evil to the public must remain when the individual is relieved. This is, indeed, the case when the calamity arises from causes which go beyond the obstruction of the political activity of the citizen to the extinction of the natural powers of the animal ; as when the limbs are lost or rendered useless by disease, or when the bodily strength or the mental faculties are exhausted by old age. To deny relief in such instances, upon a pretence that the political reason for it vanishes because the public can receive no immediate benefit from the alleviation of the evil, would be to act in contradiction to the very first principles, or, rather, to the first idea, of all civil association ; which is that of a union of the powers of the many to supply the wants and help the infirmities of the solitary animal.

Thus it appears, that the providential appointment



of poverty as a means of public good brings an obligation upon men in civil society to exert themselves for the effectual relief of those on whom the mischief falls.

I would now observe, that sacred as this obligation is, it is rather a duty which all individuals owe to the public than what the public owes to its members. I mean to say, that the most natural and the best method of relief is by voluntary contribution. It may be proper that the law should do something for the protection of the necessitous. The law should be careful not to do too much : its provisions should be such as may save poverty from neglect, and yet leave the danger of poverty indiscriminately independent over every individual in every station, that the community may receive the full benefit of the universal dread of that contingency. Whether this joint end, of removing the evil of actual poverty from private life without losing the public advantage of the danger, may be attained by any laws which give the poor a claim to a maintenance to be levied upon certain districts in proportion to the wants of the poor which each shall at any time contain, — when the effect of all such laws must be to change the dread of want in the lowest orders of the people into an expectation of a competency, or of something which idleness will prefer to a competency, — is a question which it is not my province to discuss. The fact I may take leave to mention, — that the burden of the imposition in this country is grown, as all know, to an enormous size : the benefit to the industrious poor, I fear, is less than the vast sum annually levied on the nation ought to procure for them ; and the pernicious effect on the manners of the lowest rank of people is notorious.

In another place the question might deserve a serious investigation, how far the manner of our legal provision for the poor may or may not operate to increase the frequency of criminal executions?

Meanwhile, it is my duty to inculcate, that neither the heavy burden nor any ill effects of the legal provision for the poor may release the citizen from the duty of voluntary benefaction; except, indeed, so far as what the law takes from him diminishes his means of spontaneous liberality. What the laws claim from him for public purposes he is, indeed, not to consider as his own: what remains after the public claims are satisfied is his property; out of which he is no less obliged to contribute what he can to the relief of poverty than if no part of what is taken out of his nominal property by the law were applied to charitable purposes. For the fact is, that after the law hath done its utmost, that most interesting species of distress which should be the especial object of discretionary bounty goes unrelieved. The utmost that the law can do is confined to the poverty of the lowest rank of the people: their old age or their debility it may furnish with the shelter of a homely lodging, with the warmth of coarse but clean apparel, and with the nourishment of wholesome food: their orphans it should cherish, till they grow up to a sufficiency of strength for the business of husbandry, or of the lowest and most laborious trades. But to the poverty of the middle and superior orders, the bounty of the law, after its utmost exactions, can administer no adequate relief.

Thanks be to God, that heavy as our public burdens are, of which the legal provision for the poor is among the greatest, they seem to be no check upon

the charitable spirit of this country ; in which free bounty is still dispensed with a wide and open hand. Witness the many large and noble edifices, the pride and ornament of this metropolis, many raised, all enriched, by voluntary contribution and private legacy, for the supply of every want, the mitigation of every disaster, with which frail mortality is visited, in every stage and state of life, from helpless infancy to withered age : witness the numerous charitable associations in all parts of the country, among all descriptions of the people : witness the frequent and ample contributions to every instance of private distress, once publicly made known : witness the pious associations for the support of distant missions, and the promotion of Christian knowledge : witness this annual celebrity, the prosperity of this charitable institution, and the numbers now assembled here. For I trust it is less the purpose of our present meeting to feast the ravished ear with the enchanting sounds of holy harmony (which afford, indeed, the purest of the pleasures of the senses,) than to taste those nobler ecstasies of energising love, of which flesh and blood, the animal part of us, can no more partake than it can inherit heaven. They are proper to the intellect of man, as an image of the Deity ; they are the certain symptoms of the Christian's communion with his God, and an earnest of his future transformation into the perfect likeness of his Lord.

Although every species of distress, not excepting that which may have taken rise in the follies and the vices of the sufferer, is an object of the Christian's pity, (for the love of Christ, who died for his enemies, is our example, and the beneficence of our heavenly Father, who is kind to the evil and the unthankful,

is the model of our charity,) yet our joy in doing good must then be the most complete, when innocence is united with distress in the objects of our bounty, when the distress is out of the reach of any other help, and when, in the exercise of the general duty, we fulfil the special injunctions of our Lord. In the distress which our present charity immediately regards, we find these circumstances united. The widow and the orphan are our objects: their claim to misery is in the common right of human nature; it stands not on the ground of guilt and ill-desert: and for those widows and those orphans, in particular, whose cause we plead, should we be questioned by what means their condition hath been brought thus low, we will confidently answer, By no sins of their husbands or their parents more than of their own. It is peculiar to the situation of a clergyman, that while he is ranked (as the interests of religion require that he should be ranked) with the higher orders of the people, and is forbidden by the ecclesiastical law, under the severest penalties, to engage in any mercenary business, which might interfere with the duties of his sacred calling, and derogate in the eyes of the multitude from the dignity of his character, — his profession, in whatever rank he may be placed in it, the least of any of the liberal professions furnishes the means of making a provision for a family. It may be added with great truth, that what means the profession furnishes, the cleric who is the most intent upon its proper duties, the most addicted to a life of study and devotion, is the least qualified to improve. Hence it will oftener happen to the families of clergymen than of any other set of men, and it will happen, perhaps, oftener to the families of

the worthiest, to be left in that state which by the principles established in the former part of this discourse is poverty in the truest import of the word, — to be left destitute of the means of earning a livelihood in the employments for which they are not disqualified by the laudable habits of their previous lives.

This evil in the domestic life of the minister of the Gospel, I will venture to predict, no schemes of human policy ever will remove. Grand in the conception, noble in the motives which suggested it, promising, perhaps, in its first aspect, but fraught with ruin in its certain consequences had it been adopted, was the plan of abolishing the subordinate dignities of the hierarchy, in order to apply their revenues to the better maintenance of the parochial clergy. The parts of civil societies, as of all things in this nether world, are severally wholes, similar to the compounds. Every order of men in the great society of a nation is but a smaller society within itself. The same principles which render a variety of ranks essential in the composition of a state require inequalities of wealth and authority among the individuals of which each rank is composed. These inequalities, to form a harmonised, consistent whole, require a regular gradation between the opposite extremes; which cannot be taken away, but the extinction must ensue of the whole description of men in which the chain is broken.

Nor less fatal to our order would be any change in the tenure of ecclesiastical property; especially the favourite project of an exchange of tithes for an equivalent in land. Many of us here have felt, in some part of our lives, the inconvenience of succeeding to dilapidated houses, with small resources in our private

fortunes, and restrained by the circumstances of a predecessor's family from the attempt to enforce our legal claims. But what would be the situation of a clergyman who in coming to a living should succeed to nothing better than a huge dilapidated farm? — which would too soon become the real state of every living in the kingdom in which the tithes should have been converted into glebe: not to mention the extinction of our spiritual character, and the obvious inconveniences to the yeomanry of the kingdom, which would be likely to take place, should this new manner of our maintenance send forth the spirit of farming among the rural clergy.

The truth is, that the hardships of our order arise from causes which defy the relief of human laws and mock the politician's skill. They arise, in part, from the nature of our calling; in part, from the corrupt manners of a world at enmity with God; but primarily, from the mysterious counsels of Providence, which, till the whole world shall be reduced to the obedience of the Gospel, admit not that the ministry should be a situation of ease and enjoyment. The Christian minister, in the present state of Christianity, hath indeed an indisputable right to a maintenance, from the work of the ministry, for himself and for his family; as he had indeed from the very earliest ages; “for the labourer is worthy of his hire.” In a Christian government, he justly may expect to be put, so far as the secular powers can effect it, into the same situation of credit and respect which might belong to a diligent exertion of equal talents in any other of the liberal professions. Such provision for the maintenance and for a proper influence of the clergy is at least expedient, if not necessary for the

support of Christianity, now that its miraculous support is withdrawn, and the countenance of the magistrate is among the means which God employs for the maintenance of the truth. Yet after all that can be done by the friendship of the civil powers, since our Lord's kingdom is not of the present world, it would indeed be strange, if his service, in the ordinary course of things, were the means of amassing a fortune for posterity, more than of rising to hereditary honours. Our great Master, when he calls us to the ministry, holds out no such expectation. He commands us to wean our affections from this transitory world, and to set our hearts upon a heavenly treasure, — to be more anxious for the success of our labours upon the hearts and lives of men than for the prosperity of our own families. He warns us, by his inspired apostle, that all who will live godly in Christ Jesus will more or less sustain a damage by it in their temporal interests. Yet he promises, that “if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all those things” that are necessary for our support and consolation in our pilgrimage shall be added to our lot, by him who feeds the fowls of the air with grain which they neither sow nor reap, and arrays the lilies of the field in a more elegant apparel than the East manufactures for her kings. On this promise it is fitting we rely; and in the effect of this charity, and of similar institutions in different parts of the kingdom, the clergy of the church of England see its daily verification.

As the providence of God for the most part effects its purposes by secondary causes, the charity of the church is the means which it hath appointed for the relief of her suffering ministers. The same authority

which commands us to be ready to forego the enjoyments of the world, hath commanded that the faithful bear one another's burdens. The same authority which promises the faithful minister support in this world and enjoyment in the next, promises an equal weight of glory to him who shall administer relief. Relying on these promises, secure of our unwearied attention to the commands of our invisible but not absent Lord, our departed brethren (not insensible in death to that concern for their surviving families which they knew to be sanctified by Christ's own example, when in his agonies he consigned his mother to his favourite disciple's care,) submitted with composure and complacency to the stroke which severed them from all which in this world they held dear; trusting to us, as to God's instruments, for the support of their unprovided families, destitute of other aid. Thus we who remain are the guardians of the widows and the orphans; appointed to that sacred office by no violable testaments of mortal men, but by the inviolable will of the Ever-living God. Let us see that we be faithful, as the deceased were in their day, to a trust which we may not decline; looking forward to the joys of that great day when tears shall be wiped from every eye, and "he that hath received a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward," — when his recompense in nowise shall be lost "who shall have given but a cup of cold water only to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple." In that day shall these sons and daughters of the prophets be gathered round the Son of Man, seated on his throne of glory; and, in the presence of the angelic host, bear their testimony to this day's work of love. What, then, shall be the



joy of those to whom the King shall say, — “ I was an hungered, and *ye* gave me meat ; I was thirsty, and *ye* gave me drink ; naked, and *ye* clothed me ; sick, and *ye* nursed me. Verily, I say unto you, as much as *ye* have done it to the least of these my brethren, *ye* have done it unto me. Come, *ye* blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world ! ” O rich requital of an easy service ! — love the duty ; heaven the reward ! Who will not strive to be the foremost to minister to the necessities of the saints ; secure of being doubly repaid, — here, in the delight of doing good ; hereafter, in a share of this glorious benediction !

## S E R M O N XXXVI.

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JOHN, xi. 25, 26.

*I am the resurrection and the life : he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this ?*

EXCEPT the cure of the two blind men at Jericho, some cures in the temple in the Passion-week, the malediction of the fig-tree, and certain manifestations of our Lord's power upon the seizure of his person in the garden of Gethsemane, — except these, the raising of Lazarus from the dead was, I think, the last public miracle performed by Christ during his abode in the flesh. It was undoubtedly among the most considerable which we read of in the whole course of our Lord's ministry ; and was an apt prelude to that greatest miracle of all, the seal of his mission and of our hope, his own resurrection from the dead. Accordingly, we find him preparing himself for this exhibition of his power on the person of his deceased friend with particular care and solemnity. He was at a distance from Bethany, the place of Lazarus's residence, when Lazarus first fell sick ; the alarm of the Jewish rulers, excited by his cure of the man born blind, and by his open claim to be the Son of

God and One with the Father, having obliged him to retire to Bethabara. When he received the news of his friend's illness, notwithstanding his affection for Lazarus and his sisters, he continued two days in the place where the message found him; that the catastrophe might take place before his miraculous power should be interposed. He had, indeed, already restored life in two instances: the daughter of Jairus was one; and the widow's son of Nain was the other. But in both these instances, the evidence of the previous fact, that death had really taken place, was not so complete and positive as our Lord intended it should be, and as it really was, in the case of Lazarus. Accordingly, it is remarkable, that our Lord's apostles, although they had been witnesses to these miraculous recoveries of Jairus's daughter and the widow's son of Nain, entertained not at the time of Lazarus's death the most distant apprehension that their Master's power went to the recovery of life once truly and totally extinguished. This appears from the alarm and the despair, indeed, which they expressed, when he informed them that Lazarus was dead, and declared his intention of visiting the afflicted family. They had so little expectation that the revival of Lazarus could be the effect, or that it was indeed the purpose, of his journey, that they would have dissuaded him from leaving the place of his retirement; conceiving, as it should seem, that the only end of his proposed visit to Bethany would be to gratify the feelings of a useless sympathy at the hazard of his own safety. "Master," they say unto him, "the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again?" And when they found him determined to go, "Let us also go," said St. Thomas,

“ that we may die with him.” They rather expected to be themselves stoned by the Jews together with their Master, and to be one and all as dead as Lazarus, in a few days, than to see the life of Lazarus restored.

I must observe, by the way, that these sentiments, expressed by the apostles upon this and similar occasions, afford a clear proof that the disciples were not persons of an over easy credulity, who may with any colour of probability be supposed to have been themselves deceived in the wonders which they reported of our Lord. They seem rather to have deserved the reproach which our Lord after his resurrection cast upon them,—“ Fools and slow of heart to believe !” They seem to have believed nothing till the testimony of their own senses extorted the belief. They reasoned not from what they had once seen done to what more might be : they built no probabilities of the future upon the past : they formed no general belief concerning the extent of our Lord’s power from the effects of it which they had already seen. After the miraculous meal of the five thousand upon five loaves and two fishes, we find them filled with wonder and amazement that he should be able to walk upon a troubled sea, and to assuage the storm. And in the present instance, their faith in what was past carried them not forward to the obvious conclusion, that he who snatched the daughter of Jairus from the jaws of death, and raised a young man from his coffin, would be able to bring back Lazarus from the grave. And this, indeed, was what was to be expected from persons like them, of low occupations and mean attainments, whose minds were unimproved by education and experience : for however certain

modern pretenders to superior wisdom may affect to speak contemptuously of the credulity of the vulgar, and think that they display their own refinement and penetration by a resistance of the evidence which satisfies the generality of men, the truth is, that nothing is so much a genuine mark of barbarism as an obstinate incredulity. The evil-minded and the illiterate, from very different causes, agree, however, in this, that they are always the last to believe upon any evidence less than the testimony of their own senses. Ingenuous minds are unwilling to suspect those frauds in other men to which they feel an aversion themselves: they always, therefore, give testimony its fair weight. The larger a man's opportunities have been of becoming acquainted with the occurrences of his own and former ages, the more he knows of effects daily arising from causes which never were expected to produce them,—of effects in the natural world, of which he cannot trace the cause; and of facts in the history of mankind which can be referred to no principle in human nature,—to nothing within the heart and contrivance of man. Hence the man of science and speculation, as his knowledge enlarges, loses his attachment to a principle to which the barbarian steadily adheres,—that of measuring the probability of strange facts by his own experience. He will be, at least, as slow to reject as to receive testimony; and he will avoid that obstinacy of unbelief which is satisfied with nothing but ocular demonstration, as of all erroneous principles the most dangerous, and the greatest obstacle to the mind's improvement. The illiterate man, unimproved by study and by conversation, thinks that nothing can be of which he hath not seen the like:

from a diffidence, perhaps, of his own ability to examine evidence, he is always jealous that you have an intention to impose upon him, and mean to sport with his credulity : hence his own senses are the only witnesses to which he will give credit. I am persuaded that nothing hath so much contributed to spread infidelity among the lower ranks of people, as the fear of discovering their weakness by being overcredulous, and the use which artful men have made of that infirmity.

But to return from this digression to my subject. It was our Lord's intention, that the miracle of Lazarus's resurrection should be complete and unexceptionable in all its circumstances : he continued, therefore, at Bethabara till the man was dead ; and he seems to have made delays upon the road, to give time for the report of his arrival to be spread, that a multitude might be assembled to be observers and witnesses of his intended miracle. Lazarus had been dead four days when our Lord arrived ; a space of time in which, in the warm climate of Judea, a general putrefaction was sure to take place, and render the signs of death unequivocal. Martha, one of the surviving sisters, met our Lord upon the road, at some little distance from the town : she accosted him in terms which rather indicated some distant doubtful hope of what his compassion and his affection for the family might incline him to do, than any expectation that her wishes would be realised. " Lord," said she, " hadst thou been here, my brother had not died : but I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She presumes not to ask him to raise her brother ; — it was a thing too great to be abruptly asked : she indirectly and mo-

destly suggests, that were Christ to make it his request to God that Lazarus might revive, Christ's request would be granted. It was our Lord's practice, — of which I purpose not at present to enquire the reason (it is a subject by itself which would require a close investigation); — but it was his constant practice, to exact of those who solicited his miraculous assistance, a previous belief that the power by which he acted was divine, and that it extended to the performance of what might be necessary to their belief. To Martha's suggestion that God would grant the resurrection of Lazarus to Christ's prayer, our Lord was pleased to reply with that reserve and ambiguity which he sometimes used, in order to throw the minds of his disciples into that state of suspense and doubt which disposed them to receive his mercy with the more gratitude, and his instruction with the more reverence and attention: "Thy brother," said he, "shall rise again;" not declaring at what time his resurrection should take place. Martha, not satisfied with this indefinite promise, nor certain of its meaning, and yet not daring to urge her request, and afraid to confess her doubts, replied, — "I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection of the last day." A resurrection at the last day was at that time the general expectation of the Jewish people. Martha's profession, therefore, of an expectation of her brother's resurrection at the last day was no particular confession of her faith in Christ. Our Lord, therefore, requires of her a more distinct confession, before he gave her any hope that his power would be exerted for the restoration of her brother's life. "I," said Jesus, "am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he

live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this ? ” Martha’s answer was little less remarkable than the question : “ She saith unto him, Yea, Lord ; I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world : ” as if she had said, — “ Yea, Lord, I believe whatever thou requirest of me. Although the sense of thy words is wrapt in mystery which I cannot penetrate, — although I have no distinct understanding of the particulars which you propose to my belief, nor apprehend how it is that the dead die not, — yet I believe that you are the Messiah promised to our fathers, — the Emmanuel foretold by our prophets ; and I believe you are possessed of whatever power you may claim. ” But let us return to the particulars of our Lord’s requisition. Martha had already declared her belief that God would grant whatever Christ would ask, although his request should go to so extraordinary a thing as a dead man’s recovery. Jesus tells her that he requires a belief of much more than this : he requires her to believe that he had the principles of life within himself, and at his own command ; and that even that general resurrection of the dead in which she expected that her brother would have a share was a thing depending entirely upon him, and to be effected by his will and power. “ I,” said he, “ am the resurrection and the life. ” Since he had the whole disposal of the business, it followed that he had the appointment of the time in which each individual should rise ; and nothing hindered but that Lazarus might immediately revive, if he gave the order. But this is not all : he requires that she should believe, not only that it depended upon him to restore life to whom and when it pleased



him, but that death is an evil which he hath the power to avert and ever does avert from his true disciples. “ He that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live ; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.”

It is of great importance to enquire in what sense it is promised to true believers (for in some sense the promise is certainly made to them) that they shall never die. For the resolution of this important question, I would observe, that our Lord’s words certainly contain an assertion of much more than was implied in Martha’s previous declaration of her belief in the doctrine of a future resurrection. This is clearly implied in our Lord’s emphatic question, which follows his assertion of his own power and promise to the faithful, — “ Believest thou this ? ” If every Christian, when he reads or hears this promise of our Lord, “ He that believeth in me shall never die,” would put this same question to his own conscience, and pursue the meditations which the question so put to himself would suggest, we should soon be delivered from many perplexing doubts and fears, for which a firm reliance on our Master’s gracious promise is indeed the only cure. “ Thou believest,” said our Lord to Martha, “ that thy brother shall rise in the resurrection at the last day : thou doest well to believe. But believest thou this which I now tell thee, — believest thou that the resurrection on which thy hopes are built will itself be the effect of my power ? And believest thou yet again that the effect of my power goes to much more than the future resurrection of the bodies of the dead, — that it goes to an exemption of them that believe in me from death, the general calamity ? Believest thou that the faithful live

when they seem to be dead ; and that they never die ? If with these notions of my power over life and death, and with these just views of the privileges of my servants, thou comest to me to restore thy brother to a life which may be passed in thy society, the immediate act of my power may justify thy faith. But any other belief of my power, — any other apprehension of thy brother's present state, which may prompt thee to solicit so singular a favour, — are erroneous ; and I work no miracle to confirm thee in an error." All this is certainly implied in our Lord's declaration, and the question with which it was accompanied. It is evident, therefore, that under the notion of not dying, he describes some great privilege, which believers, and believers only, really enjoy. But farther, the privilege here promised to the faithful must be something quite distinct from any thing that may be the consequence of the general resurrection at the last day. It has been imagined, that the death from which the faithful are exempted by virtue of this promise is what is called in some parts of Scripture the second death, which the wicked shall die after the general resurrection, — that is to say, the condemnation of the wicked to eternal punishment. But such cannot be its meaning ; for the exemption of the faithful from the second death is a thing evidently included in Martha's declaration of her faith in the general resurrection. What may be the state of the departed saints in the interval between their death and the final judgment, is a question upon which all are curious, because all are interested in it. It is strange that among Christians it should have been so variously decided by various sects, when an attention to our Lord's promises must have led all

to one conclusion. Those who imagine that the intellectual faculties of man result from the organization of the brain and the nervous system, maintain that natural death is an utter extinction of the man's whole being, which somehow or other he is to re-assume at the last day. It is surely a sufficient confutation of this strange opinion, — if that may deserve the name of an opinion which hath less coherence than the drunkard's dream, — but it is a sufficient confutation of this strange opinion, that if this be really the case, our Lord's solemn promise hath no meaning: for how is it that a man shall never die who is really to be annihilated and dead in every part of him for many ages? or what privilege in death can be appointed for the faithful, — what difference between the believer and the atheist, if the death of either is an absolute extinction of his whole existence? Of those who acknowledge the immateriality and immortality of the rational principle, some have been apprehensive that the condition of the unembodied soul, with whatever perception may be ascribed to it of its own existence, must, indeed, be a melancholy state of dreary solitude. Hence that unintelligible and dismal doctrine of a sleep of the soul in the interval between death and judgment; which, indeed, is nothing more than a soft expression for what the materialists call by its true name, — annihilation. Thanks be to God! our Lord's explicit promise holds out better prospects to the Christian's hope. Though the happiness of the righteous will not be complete nor their doom publicly declared till the re-union of soul and body at the last day, yet we have our Lord's assurance that the disembodied soul of the believer truly lives, — that it exists in a conscious state, and

enjoys the perception at least of its own existence.\* This is the plain import of our Lord's declaration to Martha, that whosoever liveth and believeth in him shall never die. The same doctrine is implied in many other passages of Holy Writ, — in our Lord's promise to the thief upon the cross, to be with him in paradise on the very day of his crucifixion; in his commendation of his own spirit, in his last agonies, to the Father; in St. Paul's desire to be absent from the body, that he might be present with his Lord; but, most of all, we may allege the sequel of this same story. The manner in which the miracle was performed made it a solemn appeal to Heaven for the truth of this particular doctrine. Many incidents are recorded which evince the notoriety of the death: physical causes could have no share in the recovery; for the offensive corpse was not to be approached, and no means were used upon it: our Lord, standing at the mouth of the cave, called to the dead man, as to one to whom his voice was still audible. His voice was heard, and the call obeyed; — the deceased, in the attire of a corpse, walked out of the sepulchre, in the presence of his relations, who had seen him expire, — in the presence of a concourse of his townsmen, who had been witnesses, some to the interment of the body, some to the grief of the surviving friends. Is it to be supposed that He who is truth itself would by such a miracle become a party in the scheme of imposture, or set his seal to the dreams of enthusiasm? God forbid that any here should harbour such a suspicion! But let us remember, that

\* For a fuller illustration of this doctrine, see SERMON TWENTIETH.

the soul's fruition of its separate life is described as a privilege of true believers, of which there is no ground to hope that an unbeliever will partake ; for to them only who believe in Jesus is it promised that " they shall live though they be dead," and that " they shall never die."

Now, to him that hath called us to this blessed hope of uninterrupted life, terminating in a glorious immortality, — to Him with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity, — to Him who shall change our vile body, that it may be made like to his glorious body, — to the only-begotten Son, with the Father, and Holy Ghost, Three Persons but one God, be ascribed, &c.

## S E R M O N XXXVII.

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MARK, vii. 26.

*The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation.*

THE maxim of our great moral poet, that the preponderance of some leading passion in the original constitution of every man's mind is that which gives the character of every individual its peculiar cast and fashion, influencing him in the choice of his profession, in the formation of his affinities and friendships, colouring both his virtues and his vices, and discovering its constant energy in the least as well as the more important actions of his life, — that the variety of this predominant principle in various men is the source of that infinite diversity in the inclinations and pursuits of men which so admirably corresponds with the variety of conditions and employments in social life, and is the means which the wise Author of our nature hath contrived to connect the enjoyment of the individual with the general good, to lessen the evils which would arise to the public from the vices of the individual, and enhance the benefits accruing from his virtues, — the truth of this principle is confirmed, I believe, to every man who ever thinks upon the subject, by his own experience of what passes within him-

self, and by his observation of what is passing in the world around him. As our blessed Lord was in all things made like unto his brethren, it will be no violation of the respect which is due to the dignity of his person, if, in order to form the better judgment of the transcendent worth and excellence of his character in the condition of a man, we apply the same principles in the study of his singular life which we should employ to analyse the conduct of a mere mortal. And if we take this method, and endeavour to refer the particulars of his conduct, in the various situations in which we find him represented by the historians of his life, to some one principle, we cannot but perceive, that the desire of accomplishing the great purpose for which he came into the world was in him what the ruling passion is in other men.

Two things were to be done for the deliverance of fallen man from the consequences of his guilt: the punishment of sin was to be bought off by the Redeemer's sufferings, — who is therefore said to have bought us with a price; and the manners of men were to be reformed by suitable instruction. From the first commencement of our Lord's public ministry, — perhaps from a much earlier period, — the business on which he came had so entirely taken possession of his mind, that he seems in no situation to have lost sight of it for a moment. On the contrary, it was the end to which every action of his life was, not so much by study as by the spontaneous habit of his mind, adjusted. In the greater actions of his life, we find him always pursuing the conduct which might be the most likely to bring on that tragical catastrophe which the scheme of atonement demanded, and studious to prevent every obstacle that might be thrown in the way

of the event, either by the zeal of his friends or the malice of his enemies. He works a miracle, at one time, to avoid being made a king, — at another, to secure himself from the fury of a rabble. The acceptance of an earthly kingdom had been inconsistent with the establishment of his everlasting monarchy; and he declined the danger of popular tumult and private assassination, that he might die in the character of a criminal by a judiciary process and a public execution. When by this management things were brought to the intended crisis, and his imagination shrunk from the near prospect of ignominy and pain, the wish that he might be saved from the approaching hour was overpowered by the reflection that “for this hour he came into the world.” Before the Jewish Sanhedrim and the Roman governor he maintained a conduct which seemed to invite his doom: before the Sanhedrim, he employed a language by which he knew he should incur the charge of blasphemy; and at Pilate’s tribunal he refused to plead “not guilty” to the false accusation of treason.

As the more deliberate actions of our Saviour’s life were thus uniformly directed to the accomplishment of man’s redemption, at the time and in the manner which the prophets had foretold, — so, in what may be called the ordinary occurrences of life, we find his whole conduct shaped and determined by a constant attention to the second branch of the great business upon which he came, the reformation of mankind. In every incidental situation, something peculiarly characteristic is discernible in his actions, by which they were marked as it were for his own, and distinguished from the actions of ordinary men in similar circumstances; and all these characteristic peculiarities of



his conduct will be found, if I mistake not, when narrowly examined, to convey some important lesson in morals or religion, first to his immediate followers, and ultimately to all mankind. Hence it is, that his actions, upon every occasion, as they are recorded by his evangelists, are no less instructive than his solemn discourses. I speak not now of the instruction conveyed by the general good example of his holy life, or in particular actions done upon certain occasions for the express purpose of enforcing particular precepts by the authority of his example ; but of particular lessons to be drawn from the peculiar manner of his conduct, upon those common occasions of action which occur in every man's daily life, when the manner of the thing done or spoken seems less to proceed from a deliberate purpose of the will than from the habitual predominance of the ruling principle. It is true, in our Saviour's life nothing was common ; his actions, at least, were in some measure always extraordinary : but yet his extraordinary life was so far analogous to the common life of men, that he had frequent occasions of action arising from the incidents of life and from external circumstances. The study of his conduct upon these occasions is the most useful speculation, for practical improvement, in which a Christian can engage.

The words of my text stand in the beginning of the narrative of a very extraordinary transaction ; which, for the useful lessons it contains, is related in detail by two of the evangelists. It is my intention to review the particulars of the story ; and point out to you, as I proceed, the instruction which the mention of each circumstance seems intended to convey.

It was in the commencement, as I think, of the last

year of his ministry, that our Lord, either for security from the malice of his enemies, the Pharisees (whose resentment he had excited by a recent provocation — a discovery to the people of the disguised avarice of the sect, and a public assertion of the insignificance of their religious forms), or perhaps that he found his popularity in Galilee rising to a height inconsistent with his own views and with the public tranquillity, — thought proper to retire for a season to a country where his person was little known, although his fame, as appears by the event, had reached it — the border of the Sidonian territory. The inhabitants of this region were a mixed people, partly Jews, partly the progeny of those Canaanites who were suffered to remain in these extreme parts when the children of Israel took possession of the promised land. On his journey to the destined place of his retirement, he was met by a woman, who with loud cries and earnest entreaties implored his aid in behalf of her young daughter, possessed by an evil spirit.

The first circumstance in this story which engages our attention, is the description of the woman which is given in my text. This requires a particular explanation, because it is the key to much of the mystery of our Lord's conduct upon the occasion. "The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation:" She was by nation, therefore, not a Jewess; she was not of the family of the Israelites, and had no claim to the privileges of the chosen people. But that is not all; she was by nation "a Syrophenician." The Phœnicians were a race scattered over the whole world in numerous colonies. The different settlements were distinguished by names taken from the countries upon which they bordered. The Canaanites were one

of these Phœnician colonies; and because they bordered upon Syria, they were called by the Greeks and Romans Syro-Phœnicians. A Syrophœnician, therefore, is a Canaanite under another name: the woman, therefore, who came out to meet our Lord was not only an alien from the stock of Israel, — she was a daughter of the accursed Canaan; she came of that impure and impious stock, which the Israelites, when they settled in Palestine, were commissioned and commanded to exterminate. Particular persons, it is true, at that time found means to obtain an exemption of themselves and their families from the general sentence, — as Rahab the hostess, by her kind entertainment of the Jewish spies; and the whole city of the Gibeonites, by a surrender of themselves and their posterity for ever to a personal servitude. But such families, if they embraced not the Jewish religion in all its forms, at least renounced idolatry; for the Israelites were not at liberty to spare their lives, and to suffer them to remain within the limits of the Holy Land, upon any other terms. Our Lord's suppliant was not of any of these reformed families; for she was not only "a Syrophœnician by nation," she was besides "a Greek." She was a "Greek." This word describes not her country, but her religion: she was an idolatress, bred in the principles of that gross idolatry which consisted in the worship of the images of dead men. And because idolatry in this worst form obtained more among the Greeks than the nations of the East, such idolaters, of whatever country they might be, were by the Jews of the apostolic age called Greeks; just as, among us, any one who lives in the communion of the Roman church, though he be a

Frenchman or a Spaniard, is called a Roman Catholic.

We now, then, understand what the woman was who sought our Lord's assistance, — by birth a Canaanite, by profession an idolatress. It appears by the sequel of the story, (for to understand the parts, we must keep the whole in view ; and we must anticipate the end, to make the true use of the beginning,) — it appears, I say, from the sequel of the story, that, whatever the errors of her former life had been, when she came to implore our Lord's compassion she had overcome the prejudices of her education, and had acquired notions of the true God and his perfections which might have done honour to a Jew by profession, a native Israelite. To this happy change the calamity with which she was visited in the person of her child had no doubt conduced : and to this end it was perhaps more conducive than any thing she could have suffered in her own person ; because her distress for her child was purely mental, and mental distress is a better corrective of the mind than bodily disease or infirmity, — because, equally repressive of the levity of the mind and the wanderings of the imagination to pleasurable objects, it is not attended with that disturbance and distraction of the thoughts which are apt to be produced by the pain and debility of sickness. Thus we see how God remembers mercy even in his judgments ; administering afflictions in the way in which they most conduce to the sufferer's benefit. Nor can it be deemed an injury to the child that it was subjected to sufferings for another's guilt ; since the innocence of its own future life might be best secured by the mother's reformation.

Conscious of the change that was already wrought

in her sentiments and principles, and resolved no doubt upon a suitable reformation of her conduct, the converted idolatress of the Syrophœnician race would not be discouraged, either by the curse entailed upon her family, or by the remembrance of the guilt and error of her past life, from trying the success of a personal application to our Lord. She well understood that no individual, of any nation or family, could without personal guilt be excluded from God's love and mercy, by virtue of any curse entailed upon the race in its political or collective capacity. Reasons of government in God's moral kingdom may make it expedient and even necessary, that the progeny of any eminent delinquent should for many generations, perhaps for the whole period of their existence upon earth as a distinct family, be the worse for the crimes of their progenitor. God, therefore, may, and he certainly does, visit the sins of the fathers upon the children collectively for many generations; as at this day he visits on the Jews collectively the infidelity of their forefathers in the age of our Lord and his apostles. But these visitations are in truth acts of mercy; and, rightly understood, they are signs of favour to the persons visited. They are intended not only for the general admonition of mankind, but for the particular benefit of those on whom the evil is inflicted; who are taught by it to abhor and dread the crime which hath been the source of their calamity. These curses, therefore, on a family hinder not but that every individual of the race holds the same place in God's favour or displeasure as had been due to his good or ill deservings had the public malediction never been incurred. It is true, the innocence of an individual may not procure him an exemption from his share of

the public evil ; but this is because it is for his advantage in the end that he be not exempted. “ If I am of the race of Canaan,” said our Syrophœnician woman, “ it is true I must take my share of certain national disadvantages which God hath been pleased to lay upon our race as lasting monuments of his abhorrence of the crime of our ancestors : but this is no reason that I trust not to his merey for deliverance from my own particular afflictions. Nor will I be deterred by the crimes and follies of my past life. My Maker knows that the understanding which he gave me is liable to error, — that he hath formed me with passions apt to be seduced : he hath administered a correction, by which I am brought to a sense of my error ; and I am, I trust, in some degree recovered from seduction ; I am no longer, therefore, the object of his displeasure, but of his merey ; of which my providential recovery from sin and ignorance, though effected by a bitter discipline, is itself a proof. He hath already shown me his merey in the very affliction which hath wrought my reformation. I should fail therefore in gratitude to my benefactor were I to indulge a timidity of imploring his assistance.”

Such were the sentiments of the reformed idolatress, when she had the courage to become a suppliant to our Lord in her own person ; and such should be the sentiments of every sinner, in his first efforts to turn from the power of darkness to serve the living God. He should harbour no apprehension that his past sins will exclude him from the Divine merey, if he can but persevere in his resolution of amendment. Nor is the perseverance doubtful, if the resolution be sincere : from the moment that the understanding is awakened to a sense of the danger and of the loath-

someness of sin — to a reverent sense of God's perfections — to a fear of his anger, as the greatest evil — to a desire of his favour, as the highest good, — from the moment that this change takes place in the sinner's heart and understanding, whatever may have been the malignity, the number, and the frequency of his past crimes, such is the efficacy of the great sacrifice, he is reconciled to God, — he obtains not only forgiveness, but assistance ; and the measure of the assistance, I will be bold to say, is always in proportion to the strength of evil habit, which the penitent hath to overcome. He is not, therefore, to be discouraged from addressing himself to God in prayer, by a sense of unworthiness arising from his past sins. Upon the ground of merit, no man is worthy to claim an audience of his Maker ; but to a privilege to which innocence might scarce aspire, by the mercy of the Gospel Covenant, repentance is admitted. Reformation, indeed, is innocence in the merciful construction of the Christian dispensation : the Redeemer stands at God's right hand, pleading in the behalf of the penitent the merit of his own humiliation ; and the effect is, that no remembrance is had in heaven of forsaken sin. The courage of our converted idolatress is an edifying example to all repenting sinners ; and the blessing with which it was in the end rewarded justified the principles upon which she acted.

Before we proceed to the more interesting subject of meditation — our Saviour's conduct upon this occasion, we must consider another circumstance on the woman's part — the manner in which her supplication was addressed. She came from her home to meet him on the road ; and she cried out — “ Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David ! ” Jesus, retir-

ing from the malice of his enemies or the imprudence of his friends to the Sidonian territory, is saluted by an idolatress of the Canaanites, by his proper titles — “the Lord,” “the Son of David.” It is, indeed, little to be wondered, that idolaters living on the confines of the Jewish territory, and conversing much with the Israelites, should be well acquainted with the hope which they entertained of a national deliverer to arise in David’s family, at a time when the expectation of his advent was raised to the height, by the evident completion of the prophecies which marked the time of his appearance ; and when the numberless miracles wrought by our Lord, in the course of three successive summers, in every part of Galilee, had made both the expectation of the Messiah and the claim of Jesus to be the person the talk of the whole country to a considerable distance. It is the less to be wondered, because we find something of an expectation of the Messiah of the Jews in all parts of the world at that season. But the remarkable circumstance is this, — that this Syrophœnician idolatress must have looked for no partial deliverer of the Jewish nation, but for a general benefactor of all mankind, in the person of the Jewish Messiah ; for had he been to come for the particular benefit of the Jews only, this daughter of Canaan could have had no part or interest in the Son of David.

Having examined into the character of our Lord’s suppliant, and remarked the terms in which she addressed him, we will in another discourse consider the remarkable manner in which on our Lord’s part her petition was received.



## S E R M O N XXXVIII.

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MARK, vii. 26.

*The woman was a Greek, a Syrophœnician by nation.*

THESE words describe what was most remarkable in the character of a woman, a Canaanite by birth, an idolatress by education, who implored our Lord's miraculous assistance in behalf of her young daughter tormented with an evil spirit. In my last discourse, the lessons to be drawn from this character of the woman, and from the manner in which her petition was preferred, were distinctly pointed out. I come now to consider, still with a view to practical inferences, the manner in which, on our Lord's part, the petition was received.

In the lovely character of the blessed Jesus, there was not a more striking feature than a certain sentimental tenderness, which disposed him to take a part in every one's affliction to which he chanced to be a witness, and to be ready to afford it a miraculous relief. He was apt to be particularly touched by instances of domestic distress ; in which the suffering arises from those feelings of friendship, growing out of natural affection and habitual endearment, which constitute the perfection of man as a social creature,

and distinguish the society of the human kind from the instinctive herdings of the lower animals. When at the gate of Nain he met the sad procession of a young man's funeral,—a poor widow, accompanied by her sympathising neighbours, conveying to the grave the remains of an only son, suddenly snatched from her by disease in the flower of his age, — the tenderness of his temper appeared, not only in what he did, but in the kind and ready manner of his doing it. He scrupled not to avow how much he was affected by the dismal scene : he addressed words of comfort to the weeping mother : unmasked, upon the pure motion of his own compassion, he went up and touched the bier ; — he commanded the spirit to return to its deserted mansion, and restored to the widow the support and comfort of her age.

The object now before him might have moved a heart less sensible than his. A miserable mother, in the highest agony of grief, — perhaps a widow, for no husband appeared to take a part in the business, — implores his compassion for her daughter, visited with the most dreadful malady to which the frail frame of sinful man was ever liable — possession. In this reasoning age, we are little agreed about the cause of the disorder to which this name belongs. If we may be guided by the letter of holy writ, it was a tyranny of hellish fiends over the imagination and the sensory of the patient. For my own part, I find no great difficulty of believing that this was really the case. I hold those philosophising believers but weak in faith, and not strong in reason, who measure the probabilities of past events by the experience of the present age, in opposition to the evidence of the historians of the times. I am inclined to think that

the power of the infernal spirits over the bodies as well as the minds of men suffered a capital abridgment, an earnest of the final putting down of Satan to be trampled under foot of men, when the Son of God had achieved his great undertaking: that before that event, men were subject to a sensible tyranny of the hellish crew, from which they have been ever since emancipated. As much as this seems to be implied in that remarkable saying of our Lord, when the seventy returned to him expressing their joy that they had found the devils subject to themselves through his name. He said unto them—“ I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” Our Lord *saw* him fall from the heaven of his power: what wonder, then, that the effects should no longer be perceived of a power which he hath lost? Upon these general principles, without any particular enquiry into the subject, I am contented to rest, and exhort you all to rest, in the belief, which in the primitive church was universal, that possession really was what the name imports. Be that as it may, whatever the disorder was, its effects are undisputed, — a complication of epilepsy and madness, sometimes accompanied with a paralytic affection of one or more of the organs of the senses; the madness in the worst cases, of the frantic and mischievous kind.

Such was the malady in which our Lord's assistance was implored. The compassion of the case was heightened by the tender age of the miserable patient. St. Mark calls her the “ young daughter ” of the unhappy suppliant; an expression which indicates that she had just attained that engaging season when a winning sprightliness takes place of the insipid state of puling infancy, and the innocence of child-

hood is not yet corrupted by the ill example, nor its good-humour ruffled by the ill usage of the world. It might have been expected, that the slightest representation of this dismal case would have worked upon the feelings of our compassionate Lord, and that the merciful sentence would immediately have issued from his lips which should have compelled the trembling fiend to release his captive : but, strange to tell ! he made as if he were unmoved by the dismal story ; and, regardless of the wretched mother's cries, "he answered her not a word."

It is certain that the most benevolent of men are not equally inclined at all seasons to give attention to a stranger's concerns, or to be touched with the recital of a stranger's distress. A suppliant to our charity, whose case deserves attention, sometimes meets with a cool or with a rough reception, because he applies in an unlucky moment. Since our Lord was made like unto his brethren, may something analogous to this fretfulness, which more or less is incident to the very best of men, be supposed in him, to account for the singularity of his conduct in this instance ? Were his spirits exhausted by the fatigue of a long journey made afoot ? was his mind ruffled by his late contentions with the captious Pharisees ? was he wearied out by the frequency of petitions for his miraculous assistance ? was he disgusted with the degeneracy of mankind in general, and with the hardened incredulity of his own nation ? was his benevolence, in short, for the moment laid asleep, by a fit of temporary peevishness ? God forbid that any here should harbour the injurious, the impious suspicion ; a suspicion which even the Socinians (not to charge them wrongfully) have not yet avowed,

however easily it might be reconciled with their opinions. The Redeemer, though in all things like unto his brethren, was without sin: the fretfulness which is apt to be excited by external circumstances, whatever excuses particular occasions may afford, is always in some degree sinful. Benignity was the fixed and inbred habit of his holy mind; a principle not to be overcome in him, as in the most perfect of the sons of Adam, by the cross incidents of life. We must seek the motives of his present conduct in some other source, — not in any accidental sourness of the moment.

This was the first instance in which his aid had been invoked by a person neither by birth an Israelite nor by profession a worshipper of the God of Israel. The miracle which he was presently to work for the relief and at the request of this heathen suppliant was to be an action of no small importance. It was nothing less than a prelude to the disclosure of the great mystery which had been hidden for ages, and was not openly to be revealed before Christ's ascension, — that through him the gate of mercy was opened to the Gentiles. When an action was about to be done significant of so momentous a truth, it was expedient that the attention of all who stood by should be drawn to the thing by something singular and striking in the manner of the doing of it. It was expedient that the manner of the doing of it should be such as might save the honour of the Jewish dispensation, — that it should mark the consistency of the old dispensation with the new, by circumstances which should imply, that the principle upon which mankind in general were at last received to mercy was the very same upon which the single family of the Israelites had

been originally taken into favour, — namely, that mankind in general, by the light of the Gospel revelation, were at last brought to a capacity at least of that righteousness of faith which was the thing so valued in Abraham that it rendered him the friend of God, and procured him the visible and lasting reward of special blessings on his posterity. It was fit that she who was chosen to be the first example of mercy extended to a heathen should be put to some previous trial; that she might give proof of that heroic faith which acts with an increased vigour under the pressure of discouragement, and show herself in some sort worthy of so high a preference. The coldness, therefore, with which her petition was at first received was analogous to the afflictions and disappointments with which the best servants of God are often exercised; which are intended to call forth their virtue here and heighten their reward hereafter. It is one of the many instances preserved in Holy Writ, which teach the useful lesson of entire resignation to the will of God, under protracted affliction and accumulated disappointments, — upon this principle, that good men are never more in the favour and immediate care of God than when in the judgment of the giddy world they seem the most forgotten and forsaken by him.

Our Lord's attendants, touched with the distress of the case, — penetrated by the woman's cries, — perhaps ashamed that such an object should be openly treated with neglect (for what had hitherto passed was upon the public road), — and little entering into the motives of our Lord's conduct, took upon them to be her advocates. “ They besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.” *Send her*

*away*, — that is, grant her petition, and give her her dismissal. That must have been their meaning; for in no instance had they seen the prayer of misery rejected; nor would they have asked their Master to send her away without relief. If our Lord had his chosen attendants, — if among those attendants he had his favourites, yet in the present case the interest of a favourite could not be allowed to have any weight. He had, indeed, belied his own feelings had he seemed to listen more to the importunities of his friends than to the cries of distress and the pleadings of his own compassion. The interference of the disciples only served him with an occasion to prosecute his experiment of his suppliant's faith. He framed his reply to them in terms which might seem to amount to a refusal of the petition which before he had only seemed not to regard: he said, "I am *not* sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." — Oh, miserable woman! offspring of an accursed race! cease thy unavailing prayers: — he hath pronounced thy sentence! Betake thee to thy home, sad outcast from thy Maker's love! Impatience of thy absence but aggravates thy child's distraction: nor long shall her debilitated frame support the tormentor's cruelty: give her while she lives the consolation of a parent's tenderness; — it shall somewhat cheer the melancholy of the intervals of her frenzy; — it is the only service thou canst render her. For thyself, alas! no consolation remains but in the indulgence of despair: the Redeemer is *not* sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and to that house, ill-fated Canaanite! thou wast born, and thou hast lived a stranger!

The faith of the Syrophœnician idolatress gave way to no such suggestions of despair. It required, indeed, the sagacity of a lively faith to discern that an absolute refusal of her prayer was not contained in our Lord's discouraging declaration. In that godly sagacity she was not deficient. "He is not sent." Is he then a servant, sent upon an errand, with precise instructions for the execution of his business, which he is not at liberty to exceed? — No: he comes with the full powers of a son. Wise, no doubt, and just is the decree that salvation shall be of the Jews, — that the general blessing shall take its beginning in the family of Abraham, — that the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem: be it, that by disclosing the great scheme of mercy to the chosen people, he fulfils the whole of his engagement; yet though he is *sent* to none but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, no restriction is laid upon him not to receive his sheep of any other fold, if any such resort to him. What though it be my misfortune to have been born an alien from the chosen stock? what though I have no claim under any covenant or any promise? — I will hope against hope; I will cast me on his free uncovenanted mercy; I will trust to the fervour of my own prayers to obtain what seems to be denied to the intercession of his followers.

Supported by this confidence, she followed our Lord into the house where he took up his abode: there she fell prostrate at his feet, crying, — "Lord, help me!" — O faithful daughter of an unbelieving race! great is the example which the afflicted have in thee, of an unshaken confidence in that mercy which ordereth all things for the good of them that fear



God! Thy prayer is heard ; help shall be given thee : but thy faith must yet endure a farther trial. By his answer to the disciples, our Lord seemed studious only to disown any obligation that the nature of his undertaking might be supposed to lay upon him to attend to any but the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Stifling the emotions of his pity, and dissembling his merciful intentions, he answers the wretched suppliant at his feet as if he were upon principle disinclined to grant her request, — lest a miracle wrought in her favour should be inconsistent with the distinction due to the chosen family. “ It is not meet,” he said, “ to take the children’s bread and cast it to dogs.” *Children’s bread ; and cast to dogs!* Terrible distinction! — The Israelites children, the Gentiles dogs! The words, perhaps, in the sense which they bore in the mind of the speaker, were rather descriptive of the different situation of the Jews and the Gentiles at that time with respect to the degree of religious knowledge they had for many ages severally enjoyed, than of the different rank they held in God’s favour. It is certain that God hath made of one blood all nations of men ; and his tender mercy is over all his works. The benefit of the whole world was ultimately intended in the selection of the Jewish people. At the time of the call of Abraham, the degeneracy of mankind was come to that degree that the true religion could no where be preserved otherwise than by miracle. Miracle, perpetual miracle, was not the proper expedient for its general preservation ; because it must strike the human mind with too much force to be consistent with the freedom of a moral agent. A single family, therefore, was selected, in which the truth might be preserved in a way that

generally was ineligible. By this contrivance, an ineligible way was taken of doing a necessary thing (a thing necessary in the schemes of mercy); but it was used, as wisdom required it should be used, in the least possible extent. The family which for the general good was chosen to be the immediate object of this miraculous discipline enjoyed no small privilege: they enjoyed the advantages of the light of Revelation; while among the Gentiles, the light of nature itself, in what regards morals and religion, bright as it may shine in the writings of their philosophers, was to the general mass of mankind almost extinguished. It was for this advantage which the one enjoyed, and the others were allowed to want that they might feel at length the dismal consequences of their defection from the worship of their Maker, that they are called collectively — the Jews “children,” and the Gentiles “dogs.” The Jew, indeed, who duly improved under the light which he enjoyed, and (not relying on his descent from Abraham, or on the merit of his ritual service,) was conscientiously attentive to the weightier matters of the law, became in another sense the child of God, as personally the object of his favour; and the Gentile who, shutting his eyes against the light of nature, gave himself up to work iniquity with greediness, became in another sense a dog, as personally the object of God’s aversion; and it is ever to be remembered, that in this worst sense the greater part of the Gentile world were dogs, and lived in enmity with God: but still no Jew was individually a child, nor any Gentile individually a dog, as a Jew or a Gentile, but as a good or a bad man, or as certain qualities morally good or evil were included in the notion of a Jew or a Gentile.

But how great was that faith, which, when the great mystery was not yet disclosed — when God's secret purpose of a general redemption had not yet been opened, was not startled at the sound of this dreadful distinction, — the Israelites, children; the Gentiles, dogs! How great was the faith which was displayed in the humility and in the firmness of the woman's reply! She said, — “ Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table.”

First, observe her humility, — her submission to the arrangements of unerring wisdom and justice. She admits the distinction, so unfavourable as it might seem to her own expectations, so mortifying as it unquestionably was to her pride: she says, — “ Truth, Lord: I must confess the reality of the distinction which thou allegest: thy nation are the children; we are dogs!” She admits not only the reality but the propriety of the distinction; she presumes not to question the equity and justice of it; she says not, — “ Since God hath made of one blood all nations of men, why should a single family be his favourites, and the whole world beside outcasts?” She reposes in a general persuasion of God's wisdom and goodness; she takes it for granted that a distinction which proceeded from him must be founded in wisdom, justice, and benevolence, — that however concealed the end of it might be, it must be in some way conducive to the universal good, — that it ought, therefore, to be submitted to with cheerfulness, even by those on whose side the disadvantage for the present lay. Would God, that men would imitate the humility of this pious Canaanite; that they would consider the scanty measure of the human intellect; rest

satisfied in the general belief of the Divine goodness and wisdom ; and wait for the event of things, to clear up the things “ hard to be understood ” in the present constitution of the moral world as well as in the Bible !

We have seen the humility of the Syrophœnician suppliant ; let us next consider her firmness. Hitherto she had prayed ; — her prayers meet with no encouragement : she ventures now to argue. The principles and frame of her argument are very extraordinary : she argues, from God’s general care of the world, against the inference of neglect in particular instances ; — such was the confidence of her faith in God’s goodness, that she argues from that general principle of her belief against the show of severity in her own case : she seems to say, — “ Though thou slay me, yet will I trust in thee ; I will rely on thy general attribute of mercy, against what, to one less persuaded of thy goodness, might seem the tenour of thine own words and the sense of thy present conduct.” Nor were the grounds of her argument less extraordinary than the drift of it : she avails herself of the distinction which our Lord had himself alleged, as it should seem, in bar of her petition, to establish a claim upon his mercy. This expostulation of the Syrophœnician woman with our Lord hath no parallel in the whole compass of the sacred history, except it be in Abraham’s pleadings with the Almighty upon the case of righteous men involved in national calamities. “ It is true,” she said, “ O Lord ! I am not thy child, — I am a dog ; but that’s the worst of my condition, — I still am thine, — I am appointed to a certain use, — I bear a certain relation, though no high one, in the family

of the universal Lord. The dogs, though not children, have, however, their proper share in the care and kindness of the good man of the house : they are not regaled with the first and choicest of the food provided for the children's nourishment ; but they are never suffered to be famished with hunger, — they are often fed by the master's hand with the fragments of his own table. Am I a dog ? — It is well : I murmur not at the preference justly shown to the dearer and the worthier children : give me but my portion of the scraps and offal.”

O rare example, in a heathen, of resignation to the will of God, — of complacency and satisfaction in the general arrangements of his providence, which he is the best Christian who best imitates ! The faithful Canaanite thankfully accepts what God is pleased to give, because he gives it : she is contented to fill the place which he assigns to her, because he assigns it ; and repines not that another fills a higher station : she is contented to be what God ordains, — to receive what he bestows, in the pious persuasion that every one is “ fed with the food that is convenient for him,” — that every being endued with sense and reason is placed in the condition suited to his natural endowments, and furnished with means of happiness fitly proportioned to his capacities of enjoyment.

We have yet another circumstance to remark in our Syrophœnician's faith ; which is less indeed a part of its merit than of the blessing which attended it ; but it is extraordinary, and deserves notice. I speak of the quick discernment and penetration which she discovers in religious subjects, and that, too, upon certain points upon which even now, in the full sunshine of the Gospel, it is easy for the unwary to go

wrong, and at that time it was hardly to be expected that the wisest should form a right judgment. Surely with truth the prophet said, "The secret of the Lord is among them that fear him." Whence, but from that secret illumination which is the blessing of the pure in heart in every clime and every age, could this daughter of the Canaanites have drawn her information, that among the various benefits which the Redeemer came to bestow upon the children of God's love, the mercy which she solicited was but of a secondary value? She ventures to ask for it as no part of the children's food, but a portion only of the crumbs which fell from their richly furnished table. We are apt to imagine that the Christians of the first age, among whom our Lord and the apostles lived and worked their miracles, were objects of a partial favour not equally extended to believers in these later ages: and it must be confessed their privilege was great, to receive counsel and instruction from the First Source of life and knowledge, and from the lips of his inspired messengers; but it was a privilege, in the nature of the thing, confined to a certain time, and, like all temporary privileges, conferred on a few for the general good: the clear knowledge of our duty, — the promise of immortal life to the obedient, — the expiation of our sins by a sufficient meritorious sacrifice, — the pardon secured to the penitent by that atonement, — the assistance promised to the well disposed, — in a word, the full remission of our sins, and the other benefits of our Saviour's life and death, of his doctrine and example, — these things are the bread which Christ brought down from heaven for the nourishment of the faithful; — in these benefits believers in all ages are equal sharers with

the first converts, our Lord's own contemporaries, provided they be equally good Christians. The particular benefits which the first Christians received from the miraculous powers, in the cure of their diseases and the occasional relief of their worldly afflictions, and even in the power of performing those cures and of giving that relief, — these things in themselves, without respect to their use in promoting the salvation of men by the propagation of the Gospel, were, as we are taught by our Syrophenician sister, but the fragments and the refuse of the bridegroom's supper.

We have now traced the motives of our Lord's unusual but merciful austerity in the first reception of his suppliant. What wonder that so bright an example of an active faith was put to a trial which might render it conspicuous? It had been injustice to the merit of the character to suffer it to lie concealed. What wonder, when this faith was tried to the uttermost, that our merciful Lord should condescend to pronounce its encomium, and crown it with a peculiar blessing? — “O woman! great is thy faith! Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.” The merey shown to this deserving woman, by the edification which is conveyed in the manner in which the favour was conferred, was rendered a blessing to the whole church; inasmuch as it was the seal of the merit of the righteousness of faith, — not of “faith separable from good works,” consisting in a mere assent to facts; but of that faith which is the root of every good work, — of that faith which consists in a trust in God, and a reliance on his mercy, founded

on a just sense of his perfections. It was a seal of the acceptance of the penitent, and of the efficacy of their prayers; and a seal of this important truth, that the afflictions of the righteous are certain signs of God's favour, — the more certain in proportion as they are more severe. Whenever, therefore, the memory of this fact occurs, let every heart and every tongue join in praise and thanksgiving to the merciful Lord, for the cure of the young demoniac on the Tyrian border; and never be the circumstance forgotten which gives life and spirit to the great moral of the story, — that the mother, whose prayers and faith obtained the blessing, “was a Greek, a Syro-phœnician by nation.”



## S E R M O N XXXIX.

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ECCLESIASTES, xii. 7.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was ; and  
the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.\**

NOTHING hath been more detrimental to the dearest interests of man, — to his present and his future interests, — to his present interests, by obstructing the progress of scientific discovery, and retarding that gradual improvement of his present condition which Providence hath left it to his own industry to make ; to his future interest, by lessening the credit of Revelation in the esteem of those who will ever lead the opinions of mankind, — nothing hath been more contrary to man's interests both in this world and in the next, than what hath too often happened, that a spirit of piety and devotion, more animated with zeal than enlightened by knowledge in subjects of physical enquiry, hath blindly taken the side of popular error and vulgar prejudice : the consequence of which must ever be an unnatural war between Faith and Reason, — between human science and divine. Religion and Philosophy, through the indiscretion of their votaries, in appearance set at variance, form, as it were, their

\* Preached for the Humane Society, March 22. 1789.

opposite parties : persons of a religious cast are themselves deterred, and would dissuade others, from what they weakly deem an impious wisdom ; while those who are smitten with the study of nature revile and ridicule a revelation which, as it is in some parts interpreted by its weak professors, would oblige them to renounce their reason and their senses, in those very subjects in which reason is the competent judge, and sense the proper organ of investigation.

It is most certain, that a Divine revelation, if any be extant in the world, — a Divine revelation which is, in other words, a discovery of some part of God's own knowledge made by God himself, notwithstanding that fallible men have been made the instruments of the communication, — must be perfectly free from all mixture of human ignorance and error, in the particular subject in which the discovery is made. The discovery may, and unless the powers of the human mind were infinite it cannot but be limited and partial ; but as far as it extends, it must be accurate ; for a false proposition, or a mistake, is certainly the very reverse of a discovery. In whatever relates, therefore, to religion, either in theory or practice, the knowledge of the sacred writers was infallible, as far as it extended ; or their inspiration had been a mere pretence : and in the whole extent of that subject, faith must be renounced, or reason must submit implicitly to their oracular decisions. But in other subjects, not immediately connected with theology or morals, it is by no means certain that their minds were equally enlightened, or that they were even preserved from gross errors : it is certain, on the contrary, that the prophets and apostles might be sufficiently qualified for the task assigned them, to be teachers of that wis-

dom which “maketh wise unto salvation,” although in the structure and mechanism of the material world they were less informed than Copernicus or Newton, and were less knowing than Harvey in the animal economy. Want of information and error of opinion in the profane sciences may, for any thing that appears to the contrary, be perfectly consistent with the plenary inspiration of a religious teacher ; since it is not all knowledge, but religious knowledge only, that such a teacher is sent to propagate and improve. In subjects unconnected, therefore, with religion, no implicit regard is due to the opinion which an inspired writer may seem to have entertained, in preference to the clear evidence of experiment and observation, or to the necessary deduction of scientific reasoning from first principles intuitively perceived : nor, on the other hand, is the authority of the inspired teacher lessened, in his proper province, by any symptoms that may appear in his writings of error or imperfect information upon other subjects. If it could be clearly proved (which, I take it, hath never yet been done,) against any one of the inspired writers, that he entertained opinions in any physical subject which the accurate researches of later times have refuted, — that the earth, for instance, is at rest in the centre of the planetary system ; that fire is carried by a principle of positive levity towards the outside of the universe, — or that he had used expressions in which such notions were implied, — I should think myself neither obliged, in deference to his acknowledged superiority in another subject, to embrace his erroneous physics, nor at liberty, on account of his want of information on these subjects, to reject or call in question any part of his religious doctrine.

But though I admit the possibility of an inspired teacher's error of opinion in subjects which he is not sent to teach, (because inspiration is not omniscience, and some things there must be which it will leave untaught,) — though I stand in this point for my own and every man's liberty, and protest against any obligation on the believer's conscience, to assent to a philosophical opinion incidently expressed by Moses, by David, or by St. Paul, upon the authority of their infallibility in Divine knowledge, — though I think it highly for the honour and the interest of religion that this liberty of philosophising, except upon religious subjects, should be openly asserted and most pertinaciously maintained, — yet I confess it appears to me no very probable supposition, (and it is, as I conceive, a mere supposition, not yet confirmed by any one clear instance,) that an inspired writer should be permitted in his religious discourses to affirm a false proposition in *any* subject, or in *any* history to misrepresent a fact; so that I would not easily, nor, indeed, without the conviction of the most cogent proof, embrace any notion in philosophy, or attend to any historical relation, which should be evidently and in itself repugnant to an explicit assertion of any of the sacred writers. Their language, too, notwithstanding the accommodation of it that might be expected, for the sake of the vulgar, to the notions of the vulgar, in points in which it is of little importance that their erroneous notions should be immediately corrected, is, I believe, far more accurate, — more philosophically accurate, in its allusions, than is generally imagined. And this is a matter which, if sacred criticism comes to be more generally cultivated, will, I doubt not, be better understood: meanwhile, any

disagreement that hath been thought to subsist between the physics or the records of the Holy Scriptures and the late discoveries of experiment and observation, I take in truth to be nothing more than a disagreement between false conclusions drawn on both sides from true premises. It may have been the fault of divines to be too hasty to draw conclusions of their own from the doctrines of Holy Writ, which they presently confound with the Divine doctrine itself, as if they made a part of it ; and it hath been the fault of natural philosophers to be no less hasty to build conjectures upon facts discovered, which they presently confound with the discoveries themselves, — although they are not confirmed by any experiments yet made, and are what a fuller interpretation of the phenomena of nature may hereafter, perhaps, refute. Thus, while genuine revelation and sound philosophy are in perfect good agreement with each other, and with the actual constitution of the universe, the errors of the religious on the one side, and the learned on the other, run in contrary directions ; and the discordance of these errors is mistaken for a discord of the truths on which they are severally grafted.

To avoid this evil, in every comparison of philosophy with revelation, extreme caution should be used to separate the explicit assertions of Holy Writ from all that men have inferred beyond what is asserted or beyond its immediate and necessary consequences ; and an equal caution should be used to separate the clear naked deposition of experiment from all conjectural deductions. With the use of this precaution, revelation and science may receive mutual illustration from a comparison with each other ; but without it, while we think that we compare God's works with

God's word, it may chance that we compare nothing better than different chimeras of the human imagination.

Of the light which philosophy and revelation may be brought to throw upon each other, and of the utility of the circumspection which I recommend, we shall find an instructive example in a subject in which the world is indebted for much new information to the learned and charitable founders of that Society of which I am this day the willing advocate; a Society which, incited by the purest motives of philanthropy, in its endeavours to mitigate the disasters of our frail precarious state, regardless of the scoffs of vulgar ignorance, hath in effect been prosecuting for the last fourteen years, not without considerable expense, a series of difficult and instructive experiments, upon the very first question for curiosity and importance in the whole compass of physical enquiry, — what is the true principle of vitality in the human species? and what certainly belongs to what have generally been deemed the signs of death?

The words which I have chosen for my text relate directly to this subject: they make the last part in a description of the progress of old age, from the commencement of its infirmities to its termination in death, which these words describe. The royal preacher evidently speaks of man as composed of two parts, — a body, made originally of the dust of the earth, and capable of resolution into the material of which it was at first formed; and a spirit, of a very different nature, the gift of God. The royal preacher teaches us, what daily observation, indeed, sufficiently confirms, that in death the body actually undergoes a resolution into its elementary grains of earth; but

he teaches us besides, what sense could never ascertain, that the spirit, liable to no such dissolution, “returns to God who gave it.”

All this is perfectly consistent with the history of the creation of the first man, delivered in the book of Genesis. There we read, first, of a man created after God’s own image ; (which must be understood of the mind of man, bearing the Divine image in its faculties and endowments ; for of any impression of the Maker’s image the kneaded clay was surely insusceptible ; ) next, of a body formed out of the dust of the earth, and animated by the Creator by the infusion of the immaterial principle. “The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,” or, as the words might, perhaps, more properly be rendered, “the breath of immortality :” the original words at least express life in its highest force and vigour. That this “breath of life” is the principle of intelligence, the immaterial soul, might be made evident from a careful examination of the text itself, as it stands connected with the general story of the creation, of which it is a part ; but more readily, perhaps, to popular apprehension, by the comparison of this passage with other texts in Holy Writ ; particularly with that passage in Job in which it is said that the *breath* of the Almighty is that which “giveth man understanding,” and with the text of the royal preacher immediately before us : for none who compares the two passages can doubt, that the “breath of life” which “God breathes into the nostrils of the man” in the book of Genesis is the very same thing with the spirit “which God gave” in the book of Ecclesiastes. And that this spirit is the immaterial

intelligent principle, is evident ; because it is mentioned as a distinct thing from the body, not partaking of the body's fate, but surviving the putrefaction of the body, and returning to the giver of it.

But farther : the royal preacher in my text, assuming that man is a compound of an organised body and an immaterial soul, places the formality and essence of death in the disunion and final separation of these two constituent parts : death is, when “ the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

And this again is perfectly consistent with the account of the creation of the first man in the book of Genesis ; which makes the union of these two principles the immediate cause of animation. “ The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ; and man (or, *so* man) became a living person.” God's inspiration of the breath of life, his infusion of the immaterial principle, the union of the soul to the body, was the means by which man became a living person ; whence the conclusion is obvious and necessary, that the dissolution of that union is the sole adequate cause of the extinction of that life which the union produced.

It is the explicit assertion, therefore, both of Moses and of Solomon, that man is a compound of body and soul ; and that the union of the immaterial soul with the body is the true principle of vitality in the human species. And this account of man is solemnly delivered by them both, as a branch of their religious doctrine : it demands, therefore, the implicit assent of every true believer ; and no philosophy is to be heard that would teach the contrary.



But now let the divine be careful what conclusions he draw from this plain doctrine, and what notions he ingraft upon it. Although we *must* believe, if we believe our Bible, that the union of soul and body is the first principle of animation in the human subject, it is by no means a necessary consequence that the life of man is in no degree and in no part mechanical. Since man is declared to be a compound, the natural presumption seems to be, that the life of this compounded being is itself a compound. And this experience and observation prove to be indeed the case. Man's life is compounded of the life of the intellect and the animal life. The life of the intellect is simply intelligence, or the energy of the intelligent principle. The animal life is itself a compound, consisting of the vegetable life combined with the principle of perception. Human life, therefore, is an aggregate of at least three ingredients, — intelligence, perception, and vegetation. The lowest and the last of these, the vegetable life, is wholly in the body, and is mere mechanism, — not a mechanism which any human ingenuity may imitate, or even to any good degree explore; but the exquisite mechanism of a Divine artificer: still it is mechanism; consisting in a symmetry and sympathy of parts, and a correspondence of motions, conducive, by mechanical laws established by the Creator's wisdom, to the growth, nourishment, and conservation of the whole. The wheels of this wonderful machine are set agoing, as the Scriptures teach us, by the presence of the immaterial soul; which is, therefore, not only the seat of intelligence, but the source and centre of the man's entire animation. But it is in this circumstance only, namely, that the immaterial mover is itself at-

tached to the machine, that the vegetable life of the body, considered as a distinct thing, as in itself it is, from the two principles of intelligence and perception, differs in kind (for in respect of excellence and nicety of workmanship all comparison were impious ; but in kind the vegetable life of the human body differs in this circumstance only) from mere clock-work.

This mechanism of life, in that part which belongs to the body, so evident to the anatomist and physician, and so obvious, indeed, to common observation, is so little repugnant to Holy Writ, that it is clearly implied in many passages. It is implied in the expressions in which Moses describes the animation of the first man ; which, though it be referred to the union of soul and body as a principle, is described, however, in expressions which allude to the mechanical action of the air, entering at the nostrils, upon the pulmonary coats. The mechanism of life is again most remarkably implied in the verse which immediately precedes my text ; in which the approaches of death are described as the gradual rupture of the parts of a machine ; not without particular allusion to the true internal structure of the human body, and the distinct offices of the principal viscera in maintaining the vegetable life, — “ the silver cord loosed, — the golden bowl broken, — the pitcher broken at the well, — the wheel broken at the cistern.” I dare not in this assembly, in which I see myself surrounded by so many of the masters of physiology, attempt a particular exposition of the anatomical imagery of this extraordinary text ; lest I should seem not to have taken warning by the contempt which fell on that conceited Greek who had

the vanity to prelect upon the military art before the conquerors of Asia. I shall only venture to offer one remark, to confirm what I have said of the attention (not of implicit assent, except in religious subjects, but of the attention,) which is due to what the inspired writers say upon any subject; which is this: the images of this text are not easy to be explained on any other supposition, than that the writer, or the Spirit which guided the writer, meant to allude to the circulation of the blood, and the structure of the principal parts by which it is carried on. And upon the supposition that such allusions were intended, no obscurity, I believe, will remain for the anatomist in the whole passage: at any rate, it is evident that the approaches of death are described in it as a marring of the machine of the body by the failure of its principal parts; and this amounts to an assumption of the mechanism of life, in that part which belongs to the body.

Thus revelation and philosophy agree, that human life, in the whole a compounded thing, in one of its constituent parts is mere mechanism.

But let the philosopher in his turn be cautious what conjectures he build upon this acknowledged truth. Since human life is undeniably a compound of the three principles of intelligence, perception, and vegetation, — notwithstanding that the vegetable life be in itself mechanical, it will by no means be a necessary conclusion, that a man must be truly and irrecoverably dead so soon as the signs of this vegetable life are no longer discernible in his body. Here Solomon's opinion demands great attention: he makes death consist in nothing less than the dissolution of that union of soul and body which Moses makes the

principle of vitality ; and he speaks of this disunion as a thing subsequent, in the natural and common course of things, to the cessation of the mechanical life of the body. Some space, therefore, may intervene, — what the utmost length of the interval in any case may be is not determined, — but some space of time, it seems, may intervene between the stopping of the clockwork of the body's life and the finished death of the man by the departure of the immortal spirit. Now, in all that interval since the union of the spirit to the body, first set the machine at work, if the stop proceed only from some external force, some restraint upon the motion of any principal part, without derangement, damage, or decay of the organisation itself, the presence of the soul in the body will be a sufficient cause to restore the motion, if the impediment only can be removed.

Thus, by the united lights of revelation and philosophy, connecting what is clear and indisputable in each, separated from all conjecture and precarious inference, we have deduced a proof of those important truths to which the founders of this Society have been indeed the first to turn the attention of mankind, — namely, that the vital principle may remain in a man for some time after all signs of the vegetable life disappear in his body ; that what have hitherto passed even among physicians for certain signs of a complete death, — the rigid limb, the clay-cold skin, the silent pulse, the breathless lip, the livid cheek, the fallen jaw, the pinched nostril, the fixed staring eye, — are uncertain and equivocal, inasmuch that a human body, under all these appearances of death, is in many instances capable of resuscitation.

The truth of these principles, however contrary to

received opinions and current prejudices, is now abundantly confirmed by the success with which Providence hath blessed the attempts of this Society for the space of fourteen years. It is universally confirmed by the equal success vouchsafed to the attempts of similar societies, formed after the example of this, in other parts of Great Britain, and in foreign countries. The benevolence of the institution speaks for itself. The founders of it are men whom it were injurious to suspect of being actuated in its first formation by the vain desire of attracting public notice by a singular undertaking. The plan of the Society is so adverse to any private interested views, that it acquits them of all sordid motives; for the medical practitioners accept no pecuniary recompense for the time which they devote to a difficult and tedious process, — for the anxiety they feel while the event is doubtful, — for the mortification which they too often undergo, when death in spite of all their efforts at last carries off his prey, — nor for the insults to which they willingly expose themselves from vulgar incredulity. Their sole reward is in the holy joy of doing good. Of an institution thus free in its origin from the suspicion of ambitious views, and in its plan renouncing self-interest in every shape, philanthropy must be the only basis. The good intention, therefore, of the Society is proved by its constitution; the wisdom and public utility of the undertaking are proved by its success. The good intention, the wisdom, and the public utility of the institution, give it no small claim upon the public for a liberal support. I must particularly mention, that the benefit of this Society is by no means confined to the two cases of drowning and suspension: its timely succours have roused the lethargy of opium,

taken in immoderate and repeated doses : they have rescued the wretched victims of intoxication, — re-kindled the life extinguished by the sudden stroke of lightning, — recovered the apoplectic, — restored life to the infant that had lost it in the birth, — and they have proved efficacious in cases of accidental smothering, and of suffocation by noxious damps, in instances in which the tenderness of the infant body, or the debility of old age, greatly lessened the previous probability of success ; insomuch that no species of death seems to be placed beyond the reach of this Society's assistance, where the mischief hath gone no farther than an obstruction of the movements of the animal machine, without any damage of the organs themselves. Whether an institution, of which it is the direct object to guard human life (as far as is permitted) against the many casualties that threaten it, — to undo the deadly work of poisons, — to lessen the depredations of natural disease, — whether an institution so beneficial to individuals, so serviceable to the public, by its success in preserving the lives of citizens, deserve not a legal establishment and patronage, to give it the means and the authority to prosecute its generous views with the more advantage, — it is for statesmen to consider, who know the public value of the life of every citizen in a free state. It is for us, till this public patronage be obtained, to supply the want of it, what we can, by the utmost liberality of voluntary contribution.

Nor let any be deterred from taking a part in the views of this excellent institution, by a superstitious notion, that the attempt to restore life is an impious invasion of His province in whose hands are the issues of life and death. The union of soul and body once

dissolved, the power which first effected can alone restore ; but clockwork accidentally stopped may often be set agoing again, without the hand of the original artificer, even by a rude jog from the clumsy fist of a clown, who may know next to nothing of the nicer parts of the machine. If the union of soul and body remain, as we have seen reason to believe, for some time after the vegetable life hath ceased, — whilst it remains, the man whom we hastily pronounce dead is not indeed a dead man, but a living man diseased : “ he is not dead but sleepeth ; ” and the attempt to awaken him from this morbid sleep is nothing more criminal or offensive to God than it is criminal or offensive to God to administer a medicine to a man sick of any common distemper. The province of God, who wills that at all times we rely upon his blessing as the first cause of deliverance in all distress, but forbids not that we use the instruments which his mercy hath put in our own hands, — his province is no more invaded in the one case than in the other. On the contrary, it is not less criminal, less uncharitable, less offensive to God, to neglect the man under the recent symptoms of death than to neglect the sick man, in whom those symptoms have not taken place ; since the true condition of both, for any thing we can possibly know to the contrary, is only that of sickness.

Nor let us be deterred from promoting the attempts to re-animate, by another superstition, — that if we recover the man apparently dead, we do him no good office ; we only bring him back from the seats of rest and bliss to the regions of misery. Elijah had no such apprehension, when he revived the widow’s son ; nor our Lord, when he re-animated the daughter of Jairus, or the widow’s son of Nain, — nor even when he recalled

the soul of Lazarus. *He* recalled the soul of Lazarus! The soul once gone no human effort ever shall recall; but if it were criminal to stay the soul not yet gone, but upon the point of her departure, the cure of diseases and of wounds, and the whole art of medicine and of surgery, by parity of reason, would be criminal. But in truth, whatever might be the case of St. Paul and others of the first preachers and martyrs, who had no expectation in this world but misery, and were secure of their crown of glory in the next, — to the generality of men, even of Christians, continuance in the present life is highly desirable; and that without regard to secular interests and enjoyments, (which claim, however, a moderate subordinate regard,) but purely with a view to the better preparation for the next. Upon this ground we pray against sudden death; and we may lawfully use other means besides our prayers to rescue ourselves and our brethren from it. The continuance of the present life gives the good leisure to improve, and affords the sinner space for repentance. Nor is it the least part of the praise of this Society, that the restoration of the present life, effected by its means, hath been to many, by the salutary instruction and admonition which they have received from their deliverers, the occasion that they have been begotten anew, by the word of God and the aid of his Holy Spirit, to the hope of immortality.

They stand here before you whose recovered and reformed lives are the proof of my assertions. Let them plead, if my persuasion fail, let them plead the cause of their benefactors. Stand forth, and tell, my brethren, to whom you owe it under God that you stand here this day alive! Tell what in those dreadful moments were your feelings, when on a sudden



you found yourselves surrounded with the snares of death, when the gates of destruction seemed opening to receive you, and the overflowings of your own ungodliness made you horribly afraid! Tell what were your feelings, when the bright scene of life opened afresh upon the wondering eye, and all you had suffered and all you had feared seemed vanished like a dream! Tell what were the mutual feelings, when first you revisited your families and friends! — of the child returning to the fond parent's care, — of the father receiving back from the grave the joy, the solace of his age, — of the husband restored to the wife of his bosom, — of the wife, not yet a widow, again embracing her yet living lord! Tell what are now your happy feelings of inward peace and satisfaction, sinners rescued from the power of darkness, awakened to repentance, and reconciled to God! Your interesting tale will touch each charitable heart, and be the means of procuring deliverance for many from the like dangers which threatened your bodies and your souls. Let it be the business of your days, so unexpectedly lengthened, first to pay to God the true thanksgiving of a holy life; next, to acknowledge, for the good of others, the instruments of his mercy. Say, “ These are they who saved our bodies from the power of the grave, and have restored us to thy fold, O Shepherd and Bishop of our souls! What though the dead praise thee not, nor they that go down to the regions of silence? yet we will bless the Lord from this time forth for evermore!”

## S E R M O N XL.

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 MATTHEW, XXIV. 12.

*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.\**

COMPARING the actual manners of mankind with those magnificent descriptions which occur in every page of prophecy, of the prosperous state of religion, both speculative and practical, under the Christian dispensation, — in those happy times “when the mountain of the Lord’s house should be exalted above all hills, and all nations should flow unto it,” — “when the earth should be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea,” — when this knowledge should not only be imparted to all nations, but indiscriminately dispensed to all ranks and conditions of men, (for the promise was, that not only on “the sons and daughters” but on “the servants also and the handmaids” the spirit should be poured forth,) — when the fruit of this knowledge was to be, that “kings should reign for righteousness, and for equity princes should bear rule;” that government should be administered, not for the purposes of avarice and ambition, but for the advantage of the

\* Preached for the Philanthropic Society, March 25. 1792.

subject, and the general happiness of mankind, — “when the vile person should no more be called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful ;” when the foolish preacher of infidelity (a mean and sordid doctrine, which perplexes the understanding and debases the sentiments of man,) should no longer have the praise of greatness of mind ; nor the atheistic churl, who envies the believer his hope full of immortality, be esteemed as a patriot generously struggling for the freedom of mankind enthralled by superstitious fears, — “when nothing to hurt or destroy should be found in all the holy mountain ;” when all pernicious opinions should be banished from the schools of the learned, and all evil passions weeded out of the hearts of men, — “when the work of righteousness should be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever,” — comparing the actual manners of mankind, even in those countries where the Christian religion is taught and professed in its greatest purity, with these prophetic descriptions of the state of religion under the Gospel, we may, perhaps, imagine that we see too much reason to conclude, that the liberality of the promise is balked in the poverty of the accomplishment, — that the event of things falsifies the prediction.

Survey the habitable globe, and tell me in what part of Christendom the fruits of Christianity are visibly produced in the lives of the generality of its professors ? in what Christian country is charity the ruling principle with every man in the common intercourse of civil life, insomuch that the arts of circumvention and deceit are never practised by the Christian against his brother, nor the appetites of the individual suffered to break loose against the public weal, or

against his neighbour's peace? Where is it that the more atrocious crimes of violence and rapine are unknown? Where is it that religion completely does the office of the law, and the general and habitual dread of future wrath spoils the trade of the executioner? — If that zeal for good works which ought to be universal in Christendom is nowhere to be found in it, it may seem that Christianity, considered as a scheme for the reformation of mankind, has proved abortive. In truth, since the whole object of Revelation is to recover mankind from the habit and dominion of sin, in which the first transgression had involved them, — since this was the common object of the earliest as well as of the latest revelations, — since the promulgation of the Gospel is evidently, in the nature of the thing, and by the express declarations of Holy Writ, the last effort to be made for the attainment of that great object, — if that last effort still proves unsuccessful, the conclusion may seem inevitable, that in a contest for the recovery of man from sin and perdition, continued for the space of full seven thousand years, from the hour of the fall to the present day, between the Creator of the world and man's seducer, the advantage still remains (where from the first indeed it hath ever been) on the side of the apostate angel; a strange phenomenon, it should seem, if Infinite Goodness, Infinite Wisdom, and Omnipotence, have really been engaged on the one side, and nothing better than the weakness and malice of a creature on the other!

But ere we acquiesce in these conclusions, or indulge in the scepticism to which they lead, let us compare the world, as it now is, not with the perfection of the ultimate effect of Christianity as described

by the entranced prophets contemplating the great schemes of Providence in their glorious consummation, but let us compare the world as it now is, with what it was before the appearance of our Saviour. We shall find, if I mistake not, that the effect of Christianity in improving the manners of mankind, though as yet far less than may be ultimately hoped, is already, however, far from inconsiderable. Let us next consider by what means God vouchsafes to carry on this conflict of his mercy with the malice of the Devil. We shall see, that the imperfection of what is yet done so little justifies any sceptical misgivings, that, in the very nature of the business itself, ages are necessary to the completion of it; and that the considerable effect already wrought is an argument of the efficacy of the scheme to the intended purpose, and an earnest of the completion of the work in God's good season. We shall also be enabled to discern what we may ourselves contribute to the furtherance of a work so important even to the present interests of the individual and of society.

Comparing the world as it now is with what it was before the promulgation of the Gospel, we shall find the manners of mankind, in this respect at least, improved, — that they are softened. Our vices are of a more tame and gentle kind than those of the ancient heathen world; they are disarmed of much of their malignity, by the general influence of a spirit of philanthropy, which, if it be not the same thing in principle with Christian charity (and it may, indeed, be different), is certainly nearly allied to it, and makes a considerable part of it in practice. The effect of this philanthropic spirit is, that the vices which are still generally harboured are sins of indulgence and

refinement rather than of cruelty and barbarism — crimes of thoughtless gaiety rather than of direct pre-meditated malice.

To instance in particulars. We are not destitute, as the heathen were, of natural affection. No man in a Christian country would avoid the burden of a family by the exposure of his infant children: no man would think of settling the point with his intended wife, before marriage, according to the ancient practice, that the females she might bear should be all exposed, and the boys only reared, — however inadequate his fortune might be to the allotment of large marriage-portions to a numerous family of daughters: nor would the unnatural monster (for so we now should call him) who in a single instance should attempt to revive the practice of this exploded system of economy, escape public infamy and the vengeance of the laws.

The frequency of divorce was another striking symptom, in the heathen world, of a want of natural affection, which is not found in modern manners. The crime, indeed, which justifies divorce is too frequent, but the husband is not at liberty, as in ancient times, to repudiate the wife of his youth for any lighter cause than an offence on her part against the fundamental principle of the nuptial contract. Upon this point the laws of all Christian countries are framed in strict conformity to the rules of the Gospel, and the spirit of the primeval institution.

We are not, as the apostle says the heathen were, “full of murder.” The robber, it is true, to facilitate the acquisition of his booty, or to secure himself from immediate apprehension and punishment, sometimes imbrues his hand in blood; but scenes of blood

and murder make no part, as of old, of the public diversions of the people. Miserable slaves, upon occasions of general rejoicing and festivity, are not exposed to the fury of wild beasts for a show of amusement and recreation to the populace, nor engaged in mortal combat with each other upon a public stage. Such bloody sports, were they exhibited, would not draw crowds of spectators to our theatres, of every rank, and sex, and age. Our women of condition would have no relish for the sight: they would not be able to behold it with so much composure as to observe and admire the skill and agility of the champions, and interest themselves in the issue of the combat: they would shriek and faint; — they would not exclaim, like Roman ladies, in a rapture of delight, when the favourite gladiator struck his antagonist the fatal blow; nor with cool indifference give him the signal to despatch the prostrate suppliant.\* Nor would the pit applaud and shout when the blood of the dying man, gushing from the ghastly wound, flowed upon the stage.

We are not, in the degree in which the heathen were, “unmerciful.” With an exception in a single instance, we are milder in the use of power and authority of every sort; and the abuse of authority is now restrained by law in cases in which the laws of ancient times allowed it. Capital punishment is not inflicted for slight offences; nor, in the most arbitrary Christian governments, is it suddenly inflicted, upon the

\* “ ————— Consurgit ad ictus,  
Et quoties victor ferrum jugulo inserit, illa  
Delicias ait esse suas, pectusque jacentis  
Virgo modesta jubet, converso pollice, rumpi.”

*Prudentius.*

bare order of the sovereign, without a formal accusation, trial, conviction, sentence, and warrant of execution. The lives of children and servants are no longer at the disposal of the father of the family; nor is domestic authority maintained, as formerly, by severities which the mild spirit of modern laws rarely inflicts on the worst public malefactors. Even war has lost much of its natural cruelty; and, compared with itself in ancient times, wears a mild and gentle aspect. The first symptom of the mitigation of its horrors appeared early in the fifth century, when Rome was stormed and plundered by the Goths under Alaric. Those bands of barbarians, as they were called, were Christians; and their conduct in the hour of conquest exhibited a new and wonderful example of the power of Christianity over the fierce passions of man. Alaric no sooner found himself master of the town, than he gave out orders, that all of the unarmed inhabitants who had fled to the churches or the sepulchres of the martyrs should be spared; and with such cheerfulness were the orders obeyed, that many who were found running about the streets in a phrensy of consternation and despair were conducted by the common soldiers to the appointed places of retreat: nor was a single article touched of the rich furniture and costly ornaments of the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul. This, you will observe, was a thing very different from the boasted examples of Pagan manners, the generosity of Camillus, and Scipio's continence. In either of those examples, we see nothing more than the extraordinary virtue of the individual, because it was extraordinary, equally reflecting disgrace on his times and credit on himself: this was an instance of mercy



and moderation in a whole army, — in common soldiers, flushed with victory, and smarting under the wounds they had received in obtaining it.

From that time forward the cruelty of war has gradually declined, till, in the present age, not only captives among Christians are treated with humanity, and conquered provinces governed with equity, but in the actual prosecution of a war it is become a maxim to abstain from all unnecessary violence : wanton depredations are rarely committed upon private property ; and the individual is screened as much as possible from the evil of the public quarrel. Ambition and avarice are not eradicated from the heart of man ; but they are controlled in the pursuit of their objects by the general philanthropy. Wars of enterprise, for conquest and glory, begin to be reprobated in the politics of the present day. Nor, in private life, have later ages seen the faithless guardian mix the poisoned cup for the unhappy orphan whose large property has been intrusted to his management.

In the virtues of temperance and chastity, the practice of the present world is far below the standard of Christian purity ; but yet the worst excesses of modern voluptuaries seem continence and sanctity, when they are set in comparison with those unnatural debaucheries of the heathen world, which were so habitual in their manners, that they stained the lives of their gravest philosophers, and made a part of even the religious rites of the politest nations.

You will remember that it is not to extenuate the sins of the present times that I am thus exact to enumerate the particulars in which our heathen ancestors surpassed us in iniquity : I mean not to justify the ways of man, but of God. The symptoms of a gra-

dual amendment in the world, I trust, are numerous and striking. That they are the effect of Christianity, is evident from this fact, — that in all the instances which I have mentioned, the perceptible beginnings of amendment cannot be traced to an earlier epoch than the establishment of the Christian religion in the Roman empire by Constantine; and immediately after that event they appeared. The work of God, therefore, is begun, is going on, and will unquestionably be carried to its perfection. But let none imagine that his own or the general conduct of the world is such as may endure the just judgment of God: sins yet remain among us, which, without farther reformation and repentance, must involve nations in judgment and individuals in perdition.

In comparing the manners of the Christian and the heathen world, impartiality hath compelled me to remark, that in one instance (and I trust in one only) an abuse of authority, and I must add a cruelty of avarice, obtain among us Christians in the present world, not to be exceeded by the worst examples that may be found in the annals of heathen antiquity. I speak of that worse than Tyrian merchandise “in the persons of men,” which is still carried on under the express sanction of the laws; and the tyranny which, in despite of law, is exercised by Christian masters on the miserable victims of that infamous traffic. In this instance, the sordid lust of gain has hitherto been deaf to the voice of humanity and religion. And yet I trust, that the existence of this iniquitous trade is less a symptom of depravity, than the loud and general cry of the people of this country for its abolition is an argument that the mild spirit of Christianity is gaining more and more of an ascend-

ancy ; and that God's good work is tending to its consummation, by that gradual progress by which, from the very nature of the means employed, the business must be expected to proceed.

The means which God vouchsafes to employ for the perfect overthrow of the Devil's kingdom, are not such as he might be expected to put in use if his omnipotence alone were regarded ; but they are such as are consistent with the free agency of man—such as are adapted to the nature of man as a rational and moral agent, and adapted to the justice and wisdom and mercy of God in his dealings with such a creature.

God's power is unquestionably competent to the instantaneous abolition of all moral evil, by the annihilation at a single stroke of the whole troop of rebellious angels, and the whole race of sinful man, and the production of new creatures in their room. God's power is competent to the speedy abolition of moral evil, by the sudden execution of severe judgments on wicked nations or sinful individuals, — by such examples of wrath immediately pursuing guilt as might act with a compulsive force upon those who saw them. But God “willeth not the death of the sinner, but that the sinner turn from his way and live ;” and he seeks an obedience to his will founded less on fear than love. He abstains, therefore, from these summary, abrupt, coercive measures ; and he employs no other means than the preaching of the Gospel, — that is, in effect, no other means than those of persuasion and argument, invitation and threatening. It is very obvious that ages must elapse before these means can produce their full effect, — that the progress of the work will not only be gradual, but liable to temporary inter-

ruptions ; insomuch, that it may seem at times not only to stand still, but even to go backwards, as often as particular circumstances in the affairs of the world draw away the attention of men from the doctrines of the Gospel, or rouse an extraordinary opposition of their passions to its precepts. Our Saviour in the text apprises his apostles that this would be the case in the season of the Jewish war ; and St. Paul has foretold an alarming increase of wickedness in the latter days. The use of these prophetic warnings is to guard the faithful against the scepticism which these unpromising appearances might be apt to produce ; that instead of taking offence at the sin which remains as yet unextirpated, or even at an occasional growth and prevalence of iniquity, we may firmly rely on the promises of the prophetic word, and set ourselves to consider what may be done on our own part, and what God may expect that we should do, for the furtherance of his work and the removal of impediments.

This we are taught pretty clearly, though indirectly, in the words of the text ; which, though they were uttered by our Saviour with particular reference to the Jewish war, remind us of a general connexion between the “ abounding of iniquity ” and the decay of that principle by which alone the abounding of iniquity may be resisted : “ because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

“ The love of many ” is understood by some expositors (by St. Chrysostom among the ancients, and by Calvin among the moderns) of the mutual love of Christians for each other ; — which, indeed, will be very apt to languish and die away when iniquity abounds and chokes it : but as this discourse of our Lord’s is an express formal prophecy, and the style of prophecy

prevails in every part of it, I am persuaded that love is to be taken in the same sense here which it manifestly bears in the Apocalyptic prophecies; where it denotes not brotherly love, but a much higher principle, — the root of brotherly love, and of all the Christian virtues, — the love of God and of Christ, or, which is much the same thing, a devout attachment of affection to the religion of Christ, and a zeal for its interests. This will naturally decay under the discouragement of the abounding of iniquity: because many will grow indifferent about a religion which seems to have no permanent good effect. Whatever opinion they may retain in their own minds of its truth, they will think it of no consequence to be active in the support and propagation of it: their love, therefore, will grow torpid and inactive.

Such will be the conduct of many; but since religion (by which I mean the Christian religion, for no other has a title to the name) is the only sure remedy against the growth of iniquity, the wise conduct would be the reverse of this. The more iniquity abounds, the more diligent it becomes the faithful to be in calling the attention of mankind to religious instruction: for sin never could abound if the attention of men were kept steadily fixed upon their eternal interests. Eternal happiness and eternal misery, the favour and the wrath of God, are things to which it is not in the nature of man to be indifferent, when he seriously thinks about them. The success, therefore, of instruction is certain, if man can be made to listen to it. It is the more certain, because we are assured that the Divine mercy interests itself in the conversion of every individual sinner, just as the owner of a large flock is solicitous for the recovery of a single stray;

and because there is something in the doctrine of the Gospel particularly adapted to work upon the feelings of a sinner, — insomuch that publicans and harlots were found to be readier to enter into the kingdom of God than the scribes and Pharisees.

But here lies the great difficulty, that in seasons of a particular prevalence of iniquity, those who the most need instruction, being the most touched with the general infection, will be the last to seek it or to bear it. General public instruction at such times will never prove an effectual remedy for the evil: means must be found of carrying reproof and admonition home to the refractory offender, who purposely absents himself from the assemblies where public instruction is provided for him, and refuses the general invitation to the marriage-feast.

It is the singular praise of the charitable institution of which I am this day the advocate, that the founders of it have been the first in this country who have endeavoured to meet this difficulty, and to supply the necessary defects of general instruction, by an immediate special application of the benefits of a sober godly education to those miserable outcasts of society the children of convicted criminals and of the profligate poor, accidentally picked up in the public streets of this metropolis, or industriously sought out in the lurking-holes of vagrant idleness and beggary, and the nightly haunts of prostitutes and ruffians. Such children had been too long, indeed, overlooked by the virtuous; but in no propriety of speech can it be said they had been neglected. Under the tuition of miscreants old and accomplished in the various arts of villany, they had been in training, by a studied plan of education, well contrived and well directed

to its end, for the hopeful trades of pilferers, thieves, highwaymen, housebreakers, and prostitutes. From this discipline of iniquity they are withdrawn by this Society, and placed under proper masters, to reclaim them from the principles instilled by their first tutors, to infuse the contrary principles of religion, and to instruct them in the mysteries of honest trades. The utility of the undertaking is so evident, that its merit would be injured by any attempt to set it forth in words: it conduces to the security of the person and property of the individual; it conduces to the public prosperity, by the diminution of vice and the increase of industry; and it is directed to the noblest purposes of humanity and religion.

Such are its ends: for the efficacy of its plan, the appearance here before you best may answer for it. These are its first-fruits, — these are they whom its first efforts have rescued from perdition. Wretched orphans! bereaved or deserted of your parents, — disowned by society, — refused as servants in the poorest families, as apprentices in the meanest trades, — excluded from the public asylums of ignorance and poverty! your infancy was nourished to no better expectation than to be cut down in the very morning of your days by the unrelenting stroke of public justice! By the mercy of God, working through these his instruments, your benefactors, you are born again to happier hopes, — you are acknowledged by society, — you are become true denizens of your native land, — you are qualified to live in this world with comfort and credit to yourselves and with advantage to your country, — you are brought back to the great Shepherd's fold, — you are become children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven!

Men and brethren! countrymen and fellow Christians! it is not for me, it is for your own feelings, to commend to your support and protection the interests of this Society, — this work and labour of love. Christ our Lord came into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost:” this Society, we trust, are humble imitators of his example, — labourers under Christ. To the extent of their ability, they seek what was lost, and bring it to Christ to be saved by him. Public liberality must supply the means of carrying the godly work to perfection. Buildings must be erected, where the children may be kept secure from any accidental interviews with their old connexions. To this purpose, so essential to the attainment of their object, — an object so important to the individual, the public, and to the church of God, the present funds of the Society are altogether unequal. But public liberality in this country will not forsake them; nor will the blessing of God forsake them, while they trust in him, and lose not sight of the first end of their institution.

Those illustrious persons who with a zeal so laudable condescend to direct the affairs of this charity, “will suffer from their brother and fellow-servant in the Lord” the word of exhortation. Remember, brethren, that piety is the only sure basis of even a moral life, — that religious principle is the only groundwork of a permanent reformation; nor can any thing less powerful than the grace of God infused into the soul eradicate evil principles instilled in childhood, and evil habits contracted in that early part of life. Your own experience hath shown you with what success religious principle may be instilled into the most depraved mind, and with what efficacy



the grace of God counteracts evil principles and evil habits ; for you have found that “ the situation of infant thieves is peculiarly adapted to dispose their minds to the reception of better habits.” Remember, therefore, that if you would be true to your own generous undertaking, religious instruction must be the first, not a secondary object of your institution. Nor must the masters of the different trades be suffered so severely to exact the children’s labour as to defraud them of the hours that should be daily allotted to devotion, nor of some time in every week, which, besides the leisure of the Sundays, should be set apart for religious instruction. To educate the children to trades, is a wise, beneficial, necessary part of your institution : but you will remember, that the eternal interests of man far outweigh the secular ; and the work of religion, although the learning of it require, indeed, a smaller portion of our time, is of higher necessity than any trade. While your work is directed to these good ends, and conducted upon these godly principles, the blessing of God will assuredly crown your labours with success ; nor shall we scruple to extend to you the benediction, in its first application peculiar to the commissioned preachers of righteousness, “ Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, and send forth the feet of the ox and the ass.”

## S E R M O N X L I .

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JOHN, xx. 29.

*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.*

THESE were the words of Christ's reply to his apostle Thomas, when he, who had refused to credit the resurrection of Jesus upon the report of the other apostles, received the conviction of his own senses in a personal interview, and recognised our Saviour for Lord and God.

What is most remarkable in these words, on the first general view of them, is the great coolness with which our Lord accepts an act of homage and adoration offered with much warmth and cordiality; a circumstance which plainly indicates some defect or blemish in the offering, by which its value was much diminished. And this could be nothing but the lateness of it, — the apostle's wonderful reluctance to believe much less than what he at last professes: but eight days since, he would not believe that Jesus to be alive whom now he worships as the living God.

But this is not all: the apostle is not only reproved for his past incredulity; he is told besides, at least it is indirectly suggested to him, that the belief which

he at last so fervently professes hath little merit in it, — that it was not of that sort of faith which might claim the promises of the Gospel ; being, indeed, no voluntary act of his own mind, but the necessary result of irresistible evidence. This is clearly implied in that blessing which our Lord so emphatically pronounces on those who not having seen should yet believe. “ Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed :” you now indeed believe, when the testimony of your own senses leaves it no longer in your power to disbelieve. I promise no blessing to such reluctant faith : “ Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Here arise two questions, which, either for the difficulty which each carries in the first face of it, or for the instruction which the speculation may afford, may well deserve an accurate discussion. The first is, why Thomas was reprov'd for not believing till he was convinc'd ? the second, what should be the peculiar merit of that faith which hath not the immediate evidence of sense for its foundation or support, that our Saviour should on this sort of faith exclusively pronounce a blessing ? A readiness to believe wonders upon slender evidence hath ever been deem'd a certain mark of a weak mind ; and it may justly seem impossible that man should earn a blessing by his folly, or incur God's displeasure by his discretion.

For the clearing up of these difficult questions, this shall be my method, — First, to consider what ground there might be for St. Thomas to believe the fact of our Lord's resurrection upon the report of the other ten apostles, before he had himself seen him ; and from what motives it may be supposed that

he withheld his assent. In the course of this enquiry, it will appear that an evidence very different from ocular demonstration may in many cases command the assent of a reasonable man ; and that no man can be justified in setting a resolution within himself, as Thomas did, that he will not believe without this or that particular kind of proof. Secondly, I shall show that the belief of any thing upon such evidence as Thomas at last had of Christ's resurrection is a natural act of the human mind, to which nothing of moral or religious merit can reasonably be ascribed. These preliminary disquisitions will furnish the necessary principles for the resolution of that great and interesting question, What is the merit, and at the same time what is the certainty, of that faith which believes what it hath not seen ?

In the first place, I propose to consider what ground there might be for Thomas to believe the fact of our Saviour's resurrection, upon the testimony of the other apostles, before he had himself seen him ; and what may be supposed to have been the motives upon which he refused his assent. And here the thing principally to be considered is, what degree of trust the apostle might reasonably have placed in our Lord's promise of rising again after the event of his crucifixion ; and what there might be on the other hand to outweigh the expectation of the thing, and the positive testimony of his fellow disciples. Our Saviour had on many occasions foretold his own death ; and never without assurances that he would rise again on the third day. This he generally declared enigmatically to the Jews, but in the most explicit terms to the apostles in private : and it is very remarkable, that though he had spoken of no-

thing more plainly in private, or more darkly in public, than of his resurrection, describing it under the figure of rebuilding a demolished temple, and under allusions to the prophet Jonah's miraculous deliverance, — yet the Jews, whose understandings had been blind to the meaning of the easiest parables, took the full meaning of these figured predictions; while the apostles either understood them not, or retained not in their memory the plain unequivocal declarations which our Lord had made to them; so that while the rulers of the Jews were using all precaution to prevent the success of a counterfeit resurrection, nothing could be more remote from the expectations of the apostles than a real one. In this we see the hand of Providence wonderfully directing all things for the conviction of after ages. Had the caution of the Jews been less, or the faith of the apostles more awake, the evidence of this glorious truth, that “Christ is risen, and become the first-fruits of them that slept,” might not have been to us what now it is. Nevertheless, though none of the apostles seem to have had positive expectations of our Lord's resurrection before it happened, yet St. Thomas seems to have been singular in treating the report of the resurrection as a manifest fiction.

From the conversation of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, it may be gathered that the first report of the holy women, though it had not yet obtained belief, was by no means rejected with absolute contempt. On the contrary, it seems to have awakened in all but Thomas some recollection of our Lord's predictions, and some dubious solicitude what might be the events of the third day. And yet it cannot be supposed that St. Thomas at this time had

no remembrance of our Lord's predictions of his resurrection ; of which the other ten could not but remind him : but the consideration, it seems, had no weight with him. And yet the person who had given his followers these assurances was no ordinary man : his miraculous conception had been foretold by an angel ; his birth had been announced to the peasants of Judea by a company of the heavenly host, — to the learned of a distant country by a new wonder in the air ; his high original had been afterwards attested by voices from heaven ; he had displayed powers in himself which amounted to nothing less than an uncontrolled and unlimited dominion over every department of the universe, — over the first elements of which natural substances are composed, in his first miracle of changing water into wine, and in the later ones of augmenting the mass of a few loaves and a few small fishes to a quantity sufficient for the meal of hungry multitudes, — over the most turbulent of the natural elements, composing the raging winds and troubled waves, — over the laws of nature, exempting the matter of his body on a particular occasion from the general force of gravitation, and the power of mechanical impulse, so as to tread secure and firm upon the tossing surface of a stormy sea, — over the vegetable kingdom, blasting the fig-tree with his word, — over the animal body, removing its diseases, correcting the original defects and disorders of its organs, and restoring its mutilated parts, — over the human mind, penetrating the closest secrets of each man's heart, — over the revolted spirits, delivering miserable mortals from their persecution, and compelling them to confess him for their Lord and the destined avenger of their crimes ; and, what might

more than all add weight to the promise of his resurrection, he had shown that life itself was in his power, restoring it in various instances, — in one when it had been so long extinguished that the putrefaction of the animal fluids must have taken place.

These wonders had been performed to confirm the purest doctrine, and had been accompanied with the most unblemished life. This extraordinary personage had predicted his own death, the manner of it, and many of its circumstances ; all which the apostles had seen exactly verified in the event. Even when he hung upon the cross in agonies, — agonies of body, and stronger agonies of mind, which might more have shaken the faith of his disciples, Nature bore witness to her Lord in awful signs of sympathy ; the sun, without any natural cause, withdrew his light ; and in the moment that he yielded up the ghost, the earth shook and the rocks were rended.

From this series of wonders, to most of which he had been an eye-witness, had not St. Thomas more reason to expect the completion of Christ's prediction at the time appointed, than to shut his ears against the report of the other ten, of whose probity and veracity in the course of their attendance on their common Lord he must have had full experience ? Cases may possibly arise, in which the intrinsic improbability of the thing averred may outweigh the most positive and unexceptionable evidence ; and in which a wise man may be allowed to say, not, with Thomas, “ I will not believe,” (for a case can hardly be supposed in which testimony is to be of no weight) but he might say, “ I will doubt :” but where ten men of fair character bear witness, each upon his own knowledge, to a fact which is in itself more probable than

its opposite, I know not upon what ground their testimony can be questioned.

Such was the case before us. Where then can we look for the ground of the apostle's incredulity, but in the prejudices of his own mind? Possibly he might stand upon what he might term his right. Since each of the other ten had received the satisfaction of ocular demonstration, he might think he had a just pretence to expect and to insist upon the same. He had been no less than they attached, he might say, to his Master's person, — no less an admirer of his doctrine, — no less observant of his precepts, — nor less a diligent though distant copier of his great example; not less than the rest he revered and loved his memory; he would not less rejoice to see him again alive; nor would he with less firmness and constancy, provided he might be indulged with the same evidence of the fact, bear witness to his resurrection, nor less cheerfully seal the glorious attestation with his blood: but for what reason could it be expected of him to believe, upon the testimony of the other ten, that for which each of them pretended to have received the immediate evidence of his own senses? He never would believe that his kind Master, who knew his attachment, — whose affection he had so often experienced, if he were really alive, would deny the honour and satisfaction of a personal interview to himself alone of all his old adherents.

If these were the apostle's sentiments, he did not fairly weigh the evidence that was before him of the fact in question; but made this the condition of his believing it at all, — that it should be proved to him by evidence of one particular kind. Did he ask himself upon what evidence he and the Jews his contem-



poraries believed in the divine authority of the laws of Moses? — upon what evidence they received as oracular the writings of the ancient prophets?

A general revelation could never be, if no proof might be sufficient for a reasonable man but the immediate testimony of his own senses. The benefit of every revelation must in that case be confined to the few individuals to whom it should be first conveyed. The Mosaic institution could have been only for that perverse race which perished in the wilderness through unbelief; and the preaching of the prophets, for those stubborn generations which refused to hearken, and underwent the judgments of God in their long captivity. These examples might have taught him that the advantage of ocular proof is no mark of God's partial favour for those to whom it may be granted. Were it not unreasonable to suppose, that Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Jacob, and Job, and Daniel, who saw the promises of the Messiah only afar off, were less in the favour of Heaven than they who lived in later times, when the promises began to take effect?

Religious truth itself, and the evidence of religious truth, is imparted, like all other blessings, in various measures and degrees, to different ages and different countries of the world, and to different individuals of the same country and of the same age. And of this no account is to be given, but that in which all good men will rest satisfied, — that “known unto God are all his ways,” and that “the Judge of all the earth will do what is right.” Every man, therefore, may be allowed to say that he will not believe without sufficient evidence; but none can without great presumption pretend to stipulate for any particular kind of proof, and refuse to attend to any other, if that which

he may think he should like best should not be set before him. This is indeed the very spirit of infidelity ; and this was the temper of those brethren of the rich man, in our Saviour's parable, who hearkened not to Moses and the prophets, and yet were expected to repent if one should arise from the dead : this is the conduct of modern unbelievers, who examine not the evidence of revelation as it actually stands, but insist that that sort of proof should be generally exhibited which from the nature of the thing must always be confined to very few. The apostle Thomas, in the principles of his unbelief, too much resembled these uncandid reasoners. Yet let them not think to be sheltered under his example, unless they will follow it in the better part, by a recantation of their errors and a confession of the truth full and ingenuous as his, when once their hearts and understandings are convinced.

From this summary view of the evidence that St. Thomas might have found of our Lord's resurrection, before it was confirmed to him by a personal interview, — and from this state of the principles upon which alone his incredulity could be founded, — it may sufficiently appear that the reproof he received was not unmerited ; and we may see reason to admire and adore the affectionate mildness with which it was administered.

The same thing will still more appear, when it shall be shown, that in the belief of any thing upon such evidence as was at last exhibited to Thomas of our Lord's resurrection, there can be no merit ; and for this plain reason, that a belief resulting from such evidence is a necessary act of the understanding, in which the heart is totally uninterested. An assent to full

and present proof, from whatever that proof may arise, — whether from the senses, from historical evidence, or from the deductions of reason, — an assent, I say, to proof that is in itself complete and full, when the mind holds it in immediate contemplation, and comprehends and masters it, arises as necessarily from the nature of the understanding as the perception of external objects arises from the structure of the organs to which they are adapted. To perceive truth by its proper evidence, is of the formal nature of the rational mind ; as it is of the physical nature of the eye to see an object by the light that it reflects, or of the ear to hear the sounds which the air conveys to it. To discern the connection between a fact and its evidence, a proposition and its proof, is a faculty fixed in the nature of the mind by God ; which faculty the mind is pretty much at liberty to employ or not, and hath a strange power of employing it in some instances perversely ; but when it is employed aright, — when proof is brought into the mind's view, either by its own fair investigation or by the force of external objects striking the bodily organs, assent and conviction must ensue. The eye may be shut ; the ear may be stopped ; the understanding may turn itself away from unpleasing subjects : but the eye, when it is open, hath no power not to see ; the ear, when open, hath no power not to hear ; and the understanding hath no power not to know truth when the attention is turned to it. It matters not of what kind the proposition may be to which the understanding assents in consequence of full proof ; — the completeness of the proof necessarily precludes the possibility of merit in the act of assenting. Now this was the case of Thomas, and indeed of all the apostles, — not with respect to

the whole of their faith, but with respect to the particular fact of our Lord's resurrection; — the proof they had of it was full and absolute: Jesus in his well-known person stands alive before them; and to believe, when they saw him alive, that he who had been dead was then living, could be nothing more meritorious than to believe that he was dead when they saw the body laid in the grave.

I desire not to be misunderstood. There may be much merit in the diligence, the candour, and sincerity with which a man enquires and investigates; — there may be merit in the conduct he pursues in consequence of particular convictions. In the conduct of the apostles, there was much merit, under the conviction they at last attained of our Lord's resurrection, — in their zeal to diffuse his doctrines, — in their firmness in attesting his triumph over the grave, in defiance of the utmost rigour of persecution, — such merit as shall be rewarded with unfading crowns of glory: But in the mere act of believing a fact evidenced by the senses, or a proposition legitimately proved, of whatever kind, there can be none.

But here arises that most interesting question, Since there is confessedly no merit in that act of belief which is the result of ocular conviction, what is the merit of that faith which hath no such foundation, — which “believes that which it hath not seen,” that our Saviour should so emphatically pronounce it blessed?

I trust that I shall evince, by God's assistance, that this blessing to the faithful standeth sure. But this great subject may well demand a separate discourse.

## S E R M O N XLII.

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JOHN, xx. 29.

*Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.*

**T**HE propriety of the reproof addressed in these words to the apostle hath been already shown. It was not his fault that he did not believe before he was convinced ; but that he had hastily set a resolution of unbelief, without attending to a proof which, however inferior to the evidence of sense, might have given him conviction.

It hath been shown besides, that a faith which is the result of the immediate testimony of the senses must be altogether destitute, as our Saviour intimates, of moral merit. Hence arises this interesting question, the last in my original division of the subject, which I now purpose to discuss, — Since there is no merit in believing upon ocular conviction, what is the merit of that faith which hath not that foundation? Is it that it is taken up upon slighter grounds? Is this possible in the nature of things, that the imperfection of the proof should enhance the merit of belief? Will it not follow, if this principle be once admitted, that where there is the least of proof there

will be the most of this merit; and that the faith which is the most valuable in the sight of God is that which hath the least support and countenance from the understanding? — a proposition which the adversaries of our holy religion would much rejoice that its professors should affirm.

To clear these difficulties, I know no readier way, than to enquire on what grounds their faith for the most part is likely to be built, who believe, as all Christians do who at this day believe the Gospel, without the evidence of their senses. From this enquiry, I hope to make appear both the certainty and the merit of our faith, — its certainty, as resting on a foundation no less firm, though far less compulsive, than the evidence of sense itself; its merit, as a mixed act of the understanding and of the will — of the understanding, deducing its conclusions from the surest premises — of the will, submitting itself to the best of motives. Our faith therefore will appear to be an act in which the moral qualities of the mind are no less active than its reasoning faculties; and upon this account, it may claim a moral merit of which the involuntary assent of understanding present to sense or to necessary proof must ever be divested.

What then is the ground upon which the faith of the generality of Christians in the present ages is built, who all believe what they have not seen? — I say, of the generality of Christians; for whatever it may be which gives faith its merit in the sight of God, it is surely to be looked for not in any thing peculiar to the faith of the learned, but in the common faith of the plain illiterate believer. What then is the ground of his conviction? Is it the historical evidence of the facts recorded in the gospels? Per-

haps no facts of an equal antiquity may boast an historical evidence equally complete ; and without some degree of this evidence there could be no faith : yet it is but a branch of the proof, and, if I mistake not, far from the most considerable part ; for the whole of this evidence lies open but to a small proportion of the Christian world : it is such as many true believers, many whose names are written in the book of life, have neither the leisure nor the light to scrutinize so as to receive from this alone a sufficient conviction : in the degree in which it may be supposed to strike the generality of believers, it seems to be that which may rather finish a proof begun in other principles than make by itself an entire demonstration.

What then is that which, in connection with that portion of the historical evidence which common men may be supposed to perceive, affords to them a rational ground of conviction ? Is it the completion of prophecy ? This itself must have its proof from history. To those who live when the things predicted come to pass, the original delivery of the prophecy is a matter to be proved by historical evidence : to those who live after the things predicted are come to pass, both the delivery of the prophecy and the events in which it is supposed to be verified are points of history ; and moreover, by the figured language of prophecy, the evidence which it affords is of all the most removed from popular apprehension. What then is the great foundation of proof to those who are little read in history, and are ill qualified to decypher prophecy, and compare it with the records of mankind ? Plainly this, which the learned and the ignorant may equally comprehend, — the intrinsic excellence of the doctrine, and the purity of the precept ; — a doctrine

which conveys to the rudest understanding just and exalted notions of the Divine perfections; exacts a worship purged of all hypocrisy and superstition, — the most adapted to the nature of him who offers, — the most worthy, if ought may be worthy, of the Being that accepts it; prescribes the most rational duties, — things intrinsically the best, and the most conducive to private and to public good; proposes rewards adequate to the vast desires and capacities of the rational soul; promises mercy to infirmity, without indulgence to vice; holds out pardon to the penitent offender, in that particular way which secures to a frail imperfect race the blessings of a mild government, and secures to the majesty of the Universal Governor all the useful ends of punishment; and builds this scheme of redemption on a history of man and Providence, — of man's original corruption, and the various interpositions of Providence for his gradual recovery, — which clears up many perplexing questions concerning the origin of evil, the unequal distribution of present happiness and misery, and the disadvantages on the side of virtue in this constitution of things, which seem inexplicable upon any other principles.

This excellence of the Christian doctrine considered in itself, as without it no external evidence of revelation could be sufficient, so it gives to those who are qualified to perceive it that internal probability to the whole scheme, that the external evidence, in that proportion of it in which it may be supposed to be understood by common men, may be well allowed to complete the proof. This, I am persuaded, is the consideration that chiefly weighs with those who are quite unable to collect and unite for themselves the



scattered parts of that multifarious proof which history and prophecy afford.

I would not be understood to disparage the proof of revelation from historical evidence or from prophecy: when I speak of that part of it which lies within the reach of unlettered men as small, I speak of it with reference to its whole. I am satisfied, that whoever is qualified to take a view of but one half, or a much less proportion, of the proof of that kind which is now extant in the world, will be overpowered with the force of it. Some there will always be who will profit by this proof, and will be curious to seek after it; and mankind in general will be advantaged by their lights. But of those in any one age of the world who may be capable of receiving the full benefit of this proof, I question whether the number be greater than of those in the apostolic age who were in a situation to receive the benefit of ocular demonstration. And I would endeavour to ascertain what common ground of conviction there may be for all men, of which the ignorant and the learned may equally take advantage; and I took this enquiry, in order to discover wherein that merit of faith consists which may entitle to the blessing pronounced in the text and in various other parts of Scripture: for whatever that may be from which true faith derives the merit, we are undoubtedly to look for it not in any thing peculiar to the faith of the learned, but in the common faith of the plain illiterate believer. Now, the ground of his conviction, that which gives force and vigour to whatever else of the evidence may come within his view, is evidently his sense and consciousness of the excellence of the gospel doctrine. This is an evidence which is felt no doubt in its full force by many a man who can hold no argu-

ment about the nature of its certainty, — with him who holds the plough or tends the loom, who hath never been sufficiently at leisure from the laborious occupations of necessitous life to speculate upon moral truth and beauty in the abstract : for a quick discernment and a truth of taste in religious subjects proceed not from that subtilty or refinement of the understanding by which men are qualified to figure in the arts of rhetoric and disputation, but from the moral qualities of the heart. A devout and honest mind refers to the doctrines and precepts of religion that exemplar of the good and the fair which it carries about within itself in its own feelings : by their agreement with this, it understands their excellence : understanding their excellence, it is disposed to embrace them and to obey them ; and in this disposition listens with candour to the external evidence. It may seem, that by reducing faith to these feelings as its first principles, we resolve the grounds of our conviction into a previous disposition of the mind to believe the things propounded, — that is, it may be said, into a prejudice. But this is a mistake : I suppose no favour of the mind for the doctrine propounded but what is founded on a sense and perception of its purity and excellence, — none but what is the consequence of that perception, and in no degree the cause of it. We suppose no previous disposition of the mind, but a general sense and approbation of what is good ; which is never called a prejudice but by those who have it not, and by a gross abuse of language. The sense and approbation of what is good is no infirmity, but the perfection of our nature. Of our nature, did I say ? — the approbation of what is good, joined with the perfect understanding of it, is the perfection of the Divine.

The reason that the authority of these internal perceptions of moral truth and good is often called in question is this, — that from the great diversity that is found in the opinions of men, and the different judgments that they seem to pass upon the same things, it is too hastily inferred that these original perceptions in various men are various, and cannot therefore be to any the test of universal truth. A Christian, for example, imagines a natural impurity in sensual gratifications ; a Mahometan is persuaded that they will make a part of the happiness of the righteous in a future state : the Christian reverences his Bible because it prohibits these indulgences ; the Mahometan loves the Koran because it permits them. Whence, it is said, is this diversity of opinion, unless the mind of the Christian perceives those things as impure which the mind of the Mahometan equally perceives as innocent ? From these equal but various perceptions they severally infer the probability of their various faiths ; and who shall say that the one judges more reasonably than the other, if both judge from perceptions of which they are conscious ? Yet they judge differently ; both therefore cannot judge aright, unless right judgment may be different from itself. Must it not then be granted, either that these perceptions are uncertain and fallacious, — or, which may seem more reasonable, since no man can have a higher certainty than that which arises from a consciousness of his own feelings, that every man hath his own private standard of moral truth and excellence, purity and turpitude ; that right and wrong are nothing in themselves, but are to every man what his particular conscience makes them ; and that the universal idea of moral beauty, of which some men

have affected to be so vehemently enamoured, and which is set up as the ultimate test of truth in the highest speculations, is a mere fiction of the imagination?

It is not to be wondered that many have been carried away by the fair appearance of this argument, in which nothing seems to be alleged that is open to objection. Nevertheless, the conclusion is false, and the whole reasoning is nothing better than a cheat and a lie; the premises on which it is founded being a false fact, with much art tacitly taken for granted. The whole proceeds on this assumption, — that men, in forming their judgments of things, do always refer to the original perceptions of their own minds, that is, to conscience. Deny this, and the diversity of opinions will no longer be a proof of a diversity of original perceptions; from which supposed diversity the fallaciousness of that perception was inferred. And is not this to be denied? Is it not rather the truth, that no man is at all times attentive to these perceptions? that many men never attend to them at all? that in many they are stifled and overcome, — in some, by education, fashion, or example; in others, by the desperate wickedness of their own hearts? Now, the mind in which this ruin hath been effected hath lost indeed its natural criterion of truth; and judges not by its original feelings, but by opinions taken up at random. Nevertheless, the nature of things is not altered by the disorder of perverted minds; nor is the evidence of things the less to those who perceive them as they are, because there are those who have not that perception. No man the less clearly sees the light, whose own eye is sound, because it is not seen by another who is blind; nor are the distinctions of colour less to all mankind, because a

disordered eye confounds them. The same reasoning may be applied to our mental perceptions : the Christian's discernment of the purity of the Gospel doctrine is not the less clear, — his veneration for it arising from that discernment not the less rational, because a Mahometan may with equal ardour embrace a corrupt system, and may be insensible to the greater beauty of that which he rejects. In a word, every man implicitly trusts his bodily senses concerning external objects placed at a convenient distance ; and every man may with as good a reason put even a greater trust in the perceptions of which he is conscious in his own mind ; which indeed are nothing else than the first notices of truth and of Himself which the Father of Spirits imparts to subordinate minds, and which are to them the first principles and seeds of intellect.

I have been led into an abstruse disquisition ; but I trust that I have shown, and in a manner that plain men may understand, that there is an infallible certainty in our natural sense of moral right and wrong, purity and turpitude ; and that I have exposed the base sophistry of that ensnaring argument by which some men would persuade the contrary : consequently, the internal probability of our most holy religion is justly inferred from the natural sense of the excellence of its doctrines ; and a faith built on the view of that probability rests on the most solid foundation. The external evidence which is to complete the proof is much the same to every man at this day as the external evidence of the resurrection was to Thomas upon the report of the other ten apostles, with this difference, — that those wonderful facts of our Saviour's

life which Thomas knew by ocular proof we receive from the testimony of others.

The credibility of this testimony it is not difficult for any one to estimate, who considers how improbable it is that the preachers of a righteous doctrine, a pure morality, a strict religion, should themselves be impostors, — how improbable that the apostles and first preachers could be deceived in things which passed before their eyes; and how much credit is naturally due to a number of well-informed men, of unimpeached character, attesting a thing to their own loss and at the hazard of their lives. This is the summary of the external evidence of Christianity as it may appear to men in general, — to the most illiterate who have had any thing of a Christian education. The general view of it, joined to the intrinsic probability of the doctrine, may reasonably work that determined conviction which may incline the illiterate believer to turn a deaf ear to objections which the learned only can be competent to examine; and to repose his mind in this persuasion, — that there is no objection to be brought, which, if understood, would appear to him sufficient to outweigh the mass of evidence that is before him.

It is to be observed, that all the writers who have attacked the external evidence seem to have taken it for granted, that the thing to be proved is in itself improbable. None, I believe, hath been so inconsiderate as to assert, that if the Christian scheme were probable in itself, the evidence we have of it, with all the difficulties they have been able to raise in it, would not be amply sufficient. That they do not perceive the intrinsic probability of Christianity, — those of them, I mean, who discover a due respect

for natural religion, — that these do not perceive the intrinsic probability of the doctrines of our religion, I would not willingly impute to any moral depravity of heart: I will rather suppose that they have attended singly to the marvel of the story, and have never taken a near view of the beauty and perfection of the moral and theological system.

From this general state of the principles on which the faith of Christians in these ages may be supposed to rest, when none can have the conviction of ocular proof, it is not difficult to understand what is the peculiar merit of that faith which believes what it hath not seen, whereby it is entitled to our Saviour's blessing. The merit of this faith is not to be placed merely in its consequences, in its effects on the believer's life and actions. It is certain that faith which has not these effects is dead: there can be no sincere and salutary faith, where its natural fruit, a virtuous and holy life, is wanting. But faith, if I mistake not, hath, besides, another merit more properly its own, not acquired from its consequences, but conveyed to it from the principles in which it takes its rise. These, indeed, are what give to every action, much more than its consequences, its proper character and denomination; and the principles in which faith is founded appear to be that integrity, that candour, that sincerity of mind, that love of goodness, that reverent sense of God's perfections, which are in themselves the highest of moral endowments, and the sources of all other virtues, if, indeed, there be any virtue which is not contained in these. Faith, therefore, in this view of it, is the full assemblage and sum of all the Christian graces, and less the beginning than the perfection of the Christian charac-

ter : but if in any instance the force of external evidence should work an unwilling belief where these qualities of the heart are wanting, in the mere act of forced belief there is no merit : “ the devils believe and tremble.” Hence, we may understand upon what ground and with what equity and reason salvation is promised in Scripture to faith, without the express stipulation of any other condition. Every thing that could be named as a condition of salvation on the Gospel plan is included in the principle no less than in the effect of that faith to which the promises are made.

On the other hand, it is easy to perceive that the sentence of condemnation denounced against the unbelieving is not to be applied to the ignorance or the error of the understanding ; but to that unbelief which is the proper opposite of the faith which shall inherit the blessing, — that which arises from a dishonest resistance of conviction, — from a distaste for moral truth, — from an alienation of the mind from God and goodness. This unbelief contains in it all those base and odious qualities which are the opposites of the virtue of which true faith is composed : it must be “ nigh unto cursing,” in as much as in the very essence and formality of its nature it is an accursed thing.

Lest any thing that has been said should seem to derogate from the merit of the apostles’ faith, I would observe, that whatever degree of evidence they might have for some part of their belief, in particular for the important fact of our Lord’s resurrection, they had ample exercise for it in other points where the evidence of their sense was not to be procured, or any external evidence that might be equally compulsive, for the whole of their faith. For the great



doctrines of the Father's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice of himself, — of the efficacy of the mediatorial intercession, — of the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, — of the resurrection of the body, — of the future happiness of the righteous and misery of the wicked, — of the future judgment to be administered by Christ, — for these and many other articles, the apostles had not more than we the testimony of their senses : it is not, therefore, to be imagined that they were deficient in that meritorious faith which believeth what it hath not seen ; nor is the reproof to Thomas to be extended to the whole of his conduct, but confined to that individual act of incredulity which occasioned it. Thomas, with the rest of the delegated band, set the world a glorious example of an active faith, which they are the happiest who best can imitate : and, seeing faith hath been shown to partake in its beginnings of the evidence of consciousness itself, and to hold of those first principles of knowledge and intellect of which it cannot be doubted that they are the immediate gift of God, let us all believe ; and let us pray to the Father to shed more and more of the light of his Holy Spirit, and to help our unbelief.

## S E R M O N XLIII.

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I JOHN, iii. 3.

*And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.\**

**T**HAT the future bliss of the saints in glory will, in part at least, consist in certain exquisite sensations of delight, — not such as the debauched imagination of the Arabian impostor prepared for his deluded followers, in his paradise of dalliance and revelry, — but that certain exquisite sensations of delight, produced by external objects acting upon corporal organs, will constitute some part of the happiness of the just, is a truth with no less certainty deducible from the terms in which the Holy Scriptures describe the future life, than that corporal sufferance, on the other hand, will make a part of the punishment of the wicked.

Indeed, were Holy Writ less explicit upon the subject than it is, either proposition, that the righteous shall be corporally blessed, and the wicked corporally punished, seems a necessary and immediate inference from the promised resurrection of the body: for to what purpose of God's wisdom or of his justice, — to

\* Preached at the Anniversary of the Institution of the Magdalen Hospital, April 22. 1795.

what purpose of the creature's own existence, should the soul either of saint or sinner be re-united to the body, as we are taught in Scripture to believe the souls of both shall be, unless the body is in some way or another to be the instrument of enjoyment to the one and of suffering to the other? or how is the union of any mind to any body to be understood, without a constant sympathy between the two, by virtue of which they are reciprocally appropriated to each other, in such sort that this individual mind becomes the soul of that individual body, and that body the body of this mind? — the energies of the mind being modified after a certain manner by the state and circumstances of the body to which it is attached, and the motions of the body governed under certain limitations by the will and desires of the mind. Without this sympathy, the soul could have no dominion over the body it is supposed to animate, nor bear, indeed, any nearer relation to it than to any other mass of extraneous matter: this, which I call my body, would in truth no more be mine than the body of the planet Jupiter: I could have no more power to put my own limbs in motion, as I find I do, by the mere act of my own will, than to invert the revolutions of the spheres; — which were in effect to say, that no such thing as animation could take place. But this sympathy between soul and body being once established, it is impossible but that the conscious soul must be pleasurably or otherwise affected, according to the various impressions of external objects upon the body which it animates. Thus, that in the future state of retribution, the good will enjoy corporal pleasure and the bad suffer corporal pain, would be a necessary consequence of that re-union of the soul

and the body which we are taught to expect at the last day, had the Holy Scriptures given no other information upon the subject.

But they are explicit in the assertion of this doctrine. With respect to the wicked, the case is so very plain that it is unnecessary to dwell upon the proof. With respect to the righteous, the thing might seem more doubtful, except so far as it is deducible, in what manner I have shown, from the general doctrine of the resurrection, — were it not for one very explicit and decisive passage in the second of St. Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. This passage hath unfortunately lost somewhat, in our public translation, of the precision of the original text, by an injudicious insertion of unnecessary words, meant for illustration, which have nothing answering to them in the original, and serve only to obscure what they were intended to elucidate. By the omission of these unnecessary words, without any other amendment of the translation, the passage in our English Bibles will be restored to its genuine perspicuity; and it will be found to contain a direct and positive assertion of the doctrine we have laid down. “We must all appear,” says the apostle, “before the judgment-seat of Christ.” And this is the end for which all must appear before that awful tribunal,—namely, “That every one may receive the things in the body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad \* ;” that is to say, that

\* Τα ἕνα τε σώματα, — not ill rendered by the Vulgate *propria corporis*. But this rendering, though the Latin words, rightly understood, convey the true sense of the Greek, has given occasion, through a misapprehension of the true force of the word *propria*, to those paraphrastic renderings which we find in our English Bible, and in many other modern translations;

every one may receive in his body such things as shall be analogous to the quality of his deeds, whether good or bad, — good things in the body, if his deeds have been good; bad things, if bad. Thus the end for which all are destined to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ is declared by the apostle to be this, — that every individual may be rewarded with corporal enjoyment, or punished with corporal pain, according as his behaviour in this life shall have been found to have been generally good or bad, upon an exact account taken of his good and evil deeds.

What those external enjoyments will be which will make a portion of our future bliss, — in what particulars they will consist, we are not informed; probably for this reason, — because our faculties, in their present imperfect and debased state, the sad consequence of Adam's fall, are not capable of receiving the information. And yet we are not left destitute of some general knowledge, of no inconsiderable importance.

It is explicitly revealed to us, that these joys will be exquisite in a degree of which, in our present state, we have neither sense nor apprehension. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, such good things as God

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which entirely conceal the particular interest the body hath in this passage. To the same misapprehension of the true sense of the Vulgate, we owe, as I suspect, a various reading of the Greek text, — *ἰδια* for *τα δια*, which appears in the Complutensian and some old editions; and is very injudiciously approved by Grotius, and by Mills, if I understand him right; though it has not the authority of a single Greek manuscript, or the decided authority of any one of the Greek fathers to support it. The Syriac renders the true sense of the Greek, *τα δια τε σωματις*, with precision and without ambiguity.

hath prepared for them that love him." Numberless and ravishing are the beauties which the mortal eye beholds in the various works of creation and of art! Elegant and of endless variety the entertainments which are provided for the ear, — whether it delight to listen to the sober narratives of history, or the wild fictions of romance, — whether it hearken to the grave lessons of the moralist, to the abstruse demonstrations of science, the round periods of eloquence, the sprightly flourishes of rhetoric, the smooth numbers and bold flights of poetry, or catch the enchanting sounds of harmony, — that poetry which sings in its inspired strains the wonders of creating power and redeeming love, — that harmony which fans the pure flame of devotion, and wafts our praises upon its swelling notes up to the eternal throne of God! Infinite is the multitude of pleasurable forms which Fancy's own creation can at will call forth: but in all this inexhaustible treasure of external gratifications with which this present world is stored, — amidst all the objects which move the senses with pleasure, and fill the admiring soul with rapture and delight, — nothing is to be found which may convey to our present faculties so much as a remote conception of those transporting scenes which the better world in which they shall be placed shall hereafter present to the children of God's love.

It is farther revealed to us, that these future enjoyments of the body will be widely different in kind from the pleasures which in our present state result even from the most innocent and lawful gratifications of the corporal appetites. "In the resurrection they neither marry," saith our Lord, "nor are given in marriage; but are as the angels of God in heaven."

But this is not all : another circumstance is revealed to us, which opens to our hope so high a prospect as must fill the pious soul no less with wonder than with love. It is plainly intimated, that the good things which the righteous will receive in their bodies will be the same in kind, — far inferior, doubtless, in degree, — but the same they will be in kind, which are enjoyed by the human nature of our Lord, in its present state of exaltation at the right hand of God. It is revealed to us, that our capacity of receiving the good things prepared for us will be the effect of a change to be wrought in our bodies at Christ's second coming, by which they will be transformed into the likeness of the glorified body of our Lord. “The first man,” saith St. Paul, “was of the earth, moulded of the clay ; the second man is the Lord from heaven.” “And as we have borne the image of the man of clay, we shall also bear the image of the man in heaven.” And in another place, “We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.” This change, the same apostle in another place calls “the redemption of the body ;” and he speaks of it as “the adoption” for which we wait. The apostle St. John, in the former part of the discourse from which my text is taken, speaks of this glorious transformation as the utmost that we know with certainty about our future condition. “Beloved,” he saith, “now we are the sons of God : and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know, that when He shall appear, (that is, when Christ shall appear, of whose appearance the apostle

had spoken just before in the former chapter,—we know this, though we know nothing else, that when Christ shall appear,) we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” To this declaration the apostle subjoins the solemn admonition which I have chosen for my text: “And every man that hath this hope in him,” this hope of being transformed in his body into the likeness of his glorified Lord, “purifies himself as He is pure.”

For the right understanding of this admonition, it is of importance to remark, that the pronoun “He” is to be expounded not of God, but of Christ. Every one who seriously cherishes this glorious hope “purifies himself as Christ is pure.” It is the purity, therefore, of the human nature in Christ Jesus, not the essential purity of the Divine nature, that is proposed to us as an example for our imitation. An inattention to this distinction was the cause of much folly in the speculations, and of much impurity in the lives, of many of the ancient Mystics. The purity of the Divine nature is one of the incommunicable and imitable perfections of God: it consists in that distance and separation of the Deity from all inferior natures which is the sole prerogative of Self-existence and Omnipotence. Sufficient in himself to his own happiness and to the purposes of his own will, it is impossible that God can be moved by any desires towards things external, — except it be in the delight he takes in the goodness of his creatures; and this ultimately resolves itself into his self-complacency in his own perfections. The Mystics of antiquity, rightly conceiving this purity of the Divine nature, but not attending to the infinite distance between the First Intellect and the intelligent principle in man, absurdly



imagined that this essential purity of God himself was what they were required to imitate: then observing, what plainly is the fact, that all the vices of men proceed from the impetuosity of those appetites which have their origin in the imperfections and infirmities of the animal nature, — but forgetting that the irregularity of these appetites is no necessary effect of the union of the soul to the body, but a consequence of that depravity of both which was occasioned by the first transgression, — they fell into this extravagance. They conceived, that the mind, in itself immaculate and perfect, became contaminated with vicious inclinations, and weakened in its powers, by its connection with the matter of the body, to which they ascribed all impurity: hence they conceived, that the mind, to recover its original purity and vigour, must abstract itself from all the concerns of the animal nature, and exercise its powers, apart as it were from the body, upon the objects of pure intellect. This effort of enthusiasm they vainly called an imitation of the Divine purity, by which they fancied they might become united to God. This folly was the most harmless when it led to nothing worse than a life of inoffensive quietism; which, however, rendered the individual useless in society, regardless of the relative duties, and studious only of that show of “will-worship and neglecting of the body” which is condemned by St. Paul. But among some of a warmer temperament, the consequences were more pernicious. Finding that total abstraction from sense at which they aimed impracticable, and still affecting, in the intelligent part, parity with God, they took shelter under this preposterous conceit: — they said, that impurity so adhered to matter, that it could not be communicated to mind;

that the rational soul was not in any degree sullied or debased by the vicious appetites of the depraved animal nature ; and under this, whether serious persuasion or hypocritical pretence, they profanely boasted of an intimate communion of their souls with God, while they openly wallowed in the grossest impurities of the flesh. These errors and these enormities had been prevented, had it been understood, that it is not the purity of the Divine nature in itself, but the purity of the human nature in Christ, which religion proposes to man's imitation.

But again : the purity of the human nature in Christ, which we are required to imitate, is not that purity which the manhood in Christ now enjoys in its present state of exaltation ; for even that will not be attainable to fallen man, till " the redemption of the body " shall have taken place : the purity which is our present example is the purity of Christ's life on earth in his state of humiliation ; in which " he was tempted in all things like unto us, and yet was without sin." In what that purity consisted, may be best learnt in the detail by diligent study and meditation of Christ's holy life. A general notion of it may easily be drawn from our Lord's enumeration of the things that are the most opposite to it, and are the chief causes of defilement : " These," saith our Lord, " are the things which defile a man, — evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

Of these general defilements, the most difficult to be entirely escaped are the three of evil thoughts, adulteries, and fornications. Few have hardened their hearts to the cruelty of murder, or their foreheads against the shame of theft or perjury ; few are

capable of the impiety of direct blasphemy : but to the solicitations of what are called the softer passions we are apt to yield with less repugnance ; probably for this reason, — that neither the injury of our neighbour, nor a sordid self-advantage, nor the affront of God, being so immediately the object of the act in these as in the other instances, we are not equally deterred from the crime by any atrocious malignity or disgusting meanness that it carries in its very first aspect. Hence these are the sins with which the generality of mankind, in the gaiety of their thoughtless hearts, are most easily beset ; and perhaps very few indeed hold in such constant and severe restraint as might be deemed any thing of an imitation of Christ's example, the wanderings of a corrupt imagination, the principal seat of fallen man's depravity, towards the enticing objects of illicit pleasures.

For this reason, the Holy Scriptures with particular earnestness enjoin an abstinence from these defilements. “ Flee from fleshly lusts,” says St. Peter, “ which war against the soul.” And to these pollutions the admonition in the text seems to have a particular regard ; for the original word which we render “ pure ” is most properly applied to the purity of a virgin.

“ Purifies himself as He is pure.” Would to God, a better conformity to the example of his purity than actually obtains were to be found in the lives of nominal Christians ! — the numbers would be greater which might entertain a reasonable hope that they shall be made like to him when he appeareth. But, thanks be to God, repentance, in this as in other cases, — genuine, sincere repentance, — shall stand the sinner in the stead of innocence : the penitent is al-

lowed to wash the stains even of these pollutions in the Redeemer's blood.

By the turn of the expression in my text, the apostle intimates, that every one's purification from defilements which, in a greater or a less degree, few have not contracted, — the individual's personal purification must, under God, depend principally upon himself, — upon his care to watch over the motions of his own heart, — upon his vigilance to guard against temptations from without, — upon his meditation of Christ's example, — upon his assiduity to seek in prayer the necessary succour of God's grace. Much, however, may be done for the purification of the public manners, by wise and politic institutions ; — in which the first object should be, to guard and secure the sanctity of the female character, and to check the progress of its incipient corruption ; for the most effectual restraint upon the vicious passions of men ever will be a general fashion and habit of virtue in the lives of the women.

This principle appears, indeed, to have been well understood and very generally adopted in the policy of all civilised nations ; in which the preservation of female chastity, in all ages and in all parts of the world, hath been an object of prime concern. Of various means that have been used for its security, none seem so well calculated to attain the end, nor have any other proved so generally successful, as the practice which hath long prevailed in this and other European countries, of releasing our women from the restraints imposed upon them by the jealousy of Eastern manners ; but under this indispensable condition, that the female, in whatever rank, who once abuses her liberty to bring a stain upon her character, shall

from that moment be consigned to indelible disgrace, and expelled for the whole remainder of her life from the society of the virtuous of her own sex. But yet, as imperfection attends on all things human, this practice, however generally conducive to its end, hath its inconveniences, I might say its mischiefs.

It is one great defect, that by the consent of the world (for the thing stands upon no other ground), the whole infamy is made to light upon one party only in the crime of two ; and the man, who for the most part is the author, not the mere accomplice, of the woman's guilt, and for that reason is the greater delinquent, is left unpunished and uncensured. This mode of partial punishment affords not to the weaker sex the protection which in justice and sound policy is their due against the arts of the seducer. The Jewish law set an example of a better policy and more equal justice, when, in the case of adultery, it condemned both parties to an equal punishment ; which indeed was nothing less than death.

A worse evil, a mischief, attending the severity, the salutary severity upon the whole, of our dealing with the lapsed female, is this, — that it proves an obstacle almost insurmountable to her return into the paths of virtue and sobriety, from which she hath once deviated. The first thing that happens, upon the detection of her shame, is, that she is abandoned by her friends, in resentment of the disgrace she hath brought upon her family ; she is driven from the shelter of her father's house ; she finds no refuge in the arms of her seducer, — his sated passion loathes the charms he hath enjoyed ; she gains admittance at no hospitable door ; she is cast a wanderer upon the streets, without money, without a lodging, without

food : in this forlorn and hopeless situation, suicide or prostitution is the alternative to which she is reduced. Thus, the very possibility of repentance is almost cut off; unless it be such repentance as may be exercised by the terrified sinner in her last agonies, perishing in the open streets, under the merciless pelting of the elements, of cold and hunger, and a broken heart. And yet the youth, the inexperience, the gentle manners once, of many of these miserable victims of man's seduction, plead hard for mercy, if mercy might be consistent with the safety of the treasure we so sternly guard. We have high authority to say, that these fallen women are not of all sinners the most incapable of penitence, — not the most unlikely to be touched with a sense of their guilt, — not the most insusceptible of religious improvement : they are not of all sinners the most without hope, if timely opportunity of repentance were afforded them : sinners such as these, upon John the Baptist's first preaching, found their way into the kingdom of heaven before the Pharisees, with all their outward show of sanctity and self-denial.

This declaration of our Lord justifies the views of this charitable institution, which provides a retreat for these wretched outcasts of society, — not for those only who by a single fault, seldom without its extenuations, have forfeited the protection of their nearest friends ; but even for those, generally the most unpitied, but not always the most undeserving of pity among the daughters of Eve, whom desperation, the effect of their first false step, hath driven to the lowest walks of vulgar prostitution. In the retirement of this peaceful mansion, — withdrawn from the temptations of the world, — concealed from the eye of public scorn, — protected from the insulting tongue

of obloquy, — provided with the necessaries of life, though denied its luxuries, — furnished with religious instruction, and with employment suited to their several abilities, — they have leisure to reflect on their past follies ; they are rescued from despair, that worst enemy of the sinner's soul ; they are placed in a situation to recover their lost habits of virtuous industry, — the softness of their native manners, and to make their peace with their offended God.

The best commendation of this charity is the success with which its endeavours, by God's blessing, have been crowned. Of three thousand women admitted since the first institution, two thirds, upon a probable computation formed upon the average of four years, have been saved from the gulf in which they had well nigh sunk, restored to the esteem of their friends, to the respect of the world, to the comforts of the present life, and raised from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness and the hope of a glorious immortality.

Happier far their lot than that of their base seducers ! who, not checked, like these, in their career of guilty pleasure, by any frowns or censures of the world, “ have rejoiced themselves in their youth ” without restraint, — “ have walked,” without fear and without thought, “ in the ways of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes,” — and at last, perhaps, solace the wretched decrepitude of a vicious old age with a proud recollection of the triumphs of their early manhood over unsuspecting woman's frailty ; nor have once paused to recollect, that “ God for these things will bring them into judgment.” But with Him is laid up the cause of ruined innocence : he hath said, and he will make it good, “ Vengeance is mine, and I will repay.”

## S E R M O N XLIV.

ROMANS, xiii. 1.

*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.\**

THE freedom of dispute, in which for several years past it hath been the folly in this country to indulge, upon matters of such high importance as the origin of government and the authority of sovereigns, — the futility of the principles which the assertors, as they have been deemed, of the natural rights of men, allege as the foundation of that semblance of power which they would be thought willing to leave in the hands of the supreme magistrate (principles rather calculated to palliate sedition than to promote the peace of society and add to the security of government), — this forwardness to dispute about the limits of the sovereign's power, and the extent of the people's rights, with this evident desire to set civil authority upon a foundation on which it cannot stand secure, — argues, it should seem, that something is forgotten among the writers who have presumed to treat these curious questions, and among those talkers who with

\* Preached before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, January 30. 1793; being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First.



little knowledge or reflection of their own think they talk safely after so high authorities :—it surely is forgotten, that whatever praise may be due to the philosophers of the heathen world, who, in order to settle, not to confound, the principles of the human conduct, set themselves to investigate the source of the obligations of morality and law, — whatever tenderness may be due to the errors into which they would inevitably fall in their speculations concerning the present condition of mankind, and the apparent constitution of the moral world, — of which, destitute as they were of the light of Revelation, they knew neither the beginning nor the end, — the Christian is possessed of a written rule of conduct delivered from on high ; which is treated with profane contempt if reference be not had to it upon all questions of duty, or if its maxims are tortured from their natural and obvious sense to correspond with the precarious conclusions of any theory spun from the human brain : it hath been forgotten that Christians are possessed of authentic records of the first ages, and of the very beginning of mankind, which for their antiquity alone, independent of their Divine authority, might claim to be consulted in all enquiries where the resolution of the point in question depends upon the history of man.

From these records it appears, that the Providence of God was careful to give a beginning to the human race in that particular way which might for ever bar the existence of the whole or of any large portion of mankind in that state which hath been called the state of nature. Mankind from the beginning never existed otherwise than in society and under government : whence follows this important consequence, — that to build the authority of princes, or of the chief magis-

trate under whatever denomination, upon any compact or agreement between the individuals of a multitude living previously in the state of nature, is in truth to build a reality upon a fiction. That government, in various forms, is now subsisting in the world, is a fact not easily to be denied or doubted; that the state of nature ever did exist, is a position of which proof is wanting; that it existed not in the earliest ages, the pretended time of its existence is a fact of which proof is not wanting, if credit may be given to the Mosaic records: but to derive governments which now are from a supposed previous condition of mankind which never was, is at the best an absurd and unphilosophical creation of something out of nothing.

But this absurdity is, in truth, but the least part of the mischief which this ill-conceived theory draws after it. Had what is called the state of nature, — though a thing so unnatural hath little title to the name, — but had this state been in fact the primeval condition of mankind; that is, had the world been at first peopled with a multitude of individuals no otherwise related than as they had partaken of the same internal nature and carried the same external form, — without distinct property, yet all possessing equal right to what they might have strength or cunning to appropriate each to himself of the earth's common store, — without any governor, head, or guardian, — no government could ever have been formed by any compact between the individuals of this multitude, but what their children in the very next generation would have had full right to abolish; or any one or more of those children, even in opposition to the sense of the majority, with perfect innocence, though not without im-

prudence, might have disobeyed: insomuch, that if such compact be the true foundation of sovereign authority, the foundation is weaker than these republican theorists themselves conceive.

The whole foundation of government, in their view of it, is laid in these two assumptions, — the first, that the will of a majority obliges the minority; and the second, that the whole posterity may be bound by the act and deed of their progenitors. But both these rights, — that of the many to bind the few, and that of the father to make a bargain that shall bind his unborn children, — both these rights, though sacred and incontrovertible in civil society, are yet of the number of those to which civil society itself gives birth; and out of society they could have no existence. The obligations on the minority and on the child to stand by the resolutions of the majority and the engagements of the father, arise not from any thing in the nature of man individually considered: they are rather indeed unnatural; for all obligations, strictly speaking, are unnatural, which bind a man to the terms of a covenant made without his knowledge and consent: but they arise from the condition of man as a member of society, — that is, from the relation of the individual to the public; a relation which subsists not till a public is formed. And to make those civil rights and obligations the parents of public authority, which are indeed its offspring, is strangely to confound causes and effects.

The plain truth is this: The manner in which, as we are informed upon the authority of God himself, God gave a beginning to the world, evidently leads to this conclusion, — namely, that civil society, which always implies government, is the condition to which

God originally destined man: whence, the obligation on the citizen to submit to government is an immediate result from that first principle of religious duty which requires that man conform himself, as far as in him lies, with the will and purpose of his Maker. The governments which now are have arisen not from a previous state of no-government, falsely called the state of nature; but from that original government under which the first generations of men were brought into existence, variously changed and modified, in a long course of ages, under the wise direction of God's over-ruling providence, to suit the various climates of the world and the infinitely varied manners and conditions of its inhabitants. And the principle of subjection is not that principle of common honesty which binds a man to his own engagements, much less that principle of political honesty which binds the child to the ancestor's engagements; but a conscientious submission to the will of God.

I must observe, that the principles which I advance ascribe no greater sanctity to monarchy \* than to any other form of established government; nor do they at all involve that exploded notion, that all or any of the present sovereigns of the earth hold their sovereignty by virtue of such immediate or implied nomination on the part of God, of themselves personally, or of the stocks from which they are descended, as might con-

\* It is true, that for many generations after the creation, the whole world must have been under the monarchy of Adam; and of Noah, for some time after the flood: but this primitive patriarchal government, in which the sovereign was in a literal sense the father of the people, was so much *sui generis*, so different from any of the monarchical forms which have since taken place, that none of these can build any right of preference upon those examples.

fer an endless indefeasible right upon the posterity of the persons named. In contending that government was coeval with mankind, it will readily be admitted, that all the particular forms of government which now exist are the work of human policy, under the control of God's general over-ruling providence ; that the Israelites were the only people upon earth whose form of government was of express Divine institution, and their kings the only monarchs who ever reigned by an indefeasible Divine title : but it is contended, that all government is in such sort of Divine institution, that, be the form of any particular government what it may, the submission of the individual is a principal branch of that religious duty which each man owes to God : it is contended, that the state of mankind was never such, that it was free to any man or to any number of men, to choose for themselves whether they would live subject to government and united to society, or altogether free and unconnected.

It is true, that in the world taken as it now is and hath been for many ages, cases happen in which the sovereign power is conferred by the act of the people, and in which that act alone can give the sovereign a just title. Not only in elective monarchies, upon the natural demise of the reigning prince, is the successor raised to the throne by the suffrage of the people ; but in governments of whatever denomination, if the form of government undergo a change, or the established rule of succession be set aside by any violent or necessary revolution, the act of the nation itself is necessary to erect a new sovereignty, or to transfer the old right to the new possessor. The condition of a people, in these emergencies, bears no resemblance or analogy to that anarchy which hath been called

the state of nature : the people become not in these situations of government what they would be in that state, a mere multitude ; they are a society, — not dissolved, but in danger of dissolution ; and, by the great law of self-preservation inherent in the body politic no less than in the solitary animal, a society so situated hath a right to use the best means for its own preservation and perpetuity. A people, therefore, in these circumstances hath a right, which a mere multitude unassociated could never have, of appointing, by the consent of the majority, for themselves and their posterity, a new head ; and it will readily be admitted, that of all sovereigns, none reign by so fair and just a title as those who can derive their claim from such public act of the nation which they govern. But it is no just inference, that the obligation upon the private citizen to submit himself to the authority thus raised arises wholly from the act of the people conferring it, or from their compact with the person on whom it is conferred. In all these cases, the act of the people is only the means \* which Providence employs to advance the new sovereign to his station : the obligation to obedience proceeds secondarily only from the act of man, but primarily from the will of God † ; who hath appointed civil life for man's condition, and requires the citizen's submission to the

\* “ Quasi vero Deus non ita regat populum, ut cui Deus vult, regnum tradat populus.” — *Milton, Defensio pro Pop. Angl.*

† “ Ratio cur debeamus subjecti esse magistratibus, quod Dei ordinatione sunt constituti : quod si ita placet Domino mundum gubernare, Dei ordinem invertere nititur, adeoque Deo ipsi resistit, quisquis potestatem aspernatur ; quando ejus, qui juris politici auctor est, Providentiam contemnere, bellum cum eo suscipere est.” — *Calvin, in Rom. xiii. 1.*

sovereign whom his providence shall by whatever means set over him.

Thus, in our own country, at the glorious epoch of the Revolution, the famous Act of Settlement was the means which Providence employed to place the British sceptre in the hands which now wield it. That statute is confessedly the sole foundation of the sovereign's title ; nor can any future sovereign have a just title to the crown, the law continuing as it is, whose claim stands not upon that ground. Yet it is not merely by virtue of that act that the subject's allegiance is due to him whose claim is founded on it. It is easy to understand, that the principle of the private citizen's submission must be quite a distinct thing from the principle of the sovereign's public title ; and for this plain reason, — the principle of submission, to bind the conscience of every individual, must be something universally known, and easy to be understood. The ground of the sovereign's public title, in governments in which the fabric of the constitution is in any degree complex and artificial, can be known only to the few who have leisure and ability and inclination for historical and political researches. In this country, how many thousands and ten thousands of the common people never heard of the Act of Settlement? of those to whom the name may be familiar, how many have never taken the pains to acquire any accurate knowledge of its contents? Yet not one of these is absolved from his allegiance, by his ignorance of his sovereign's title. Where, then, shall we find that general principle that binds the duty of allegiance equally on all, read or unread in the statute-book and in the history of their country? where shall we find it, but among those general rules

of duty which proceed immediately from the will of the Creator, and have been impressed upon the conscience of every man by the original constitution of the world?

This divine right of the first magistrate in every polity to the citizen's obedience is not of that sort which it were high treason to claim for the sovereigns of this country: it is quite a distinct thing from the pretended divine right to the inheritance of the crown: it is a right which the most zealous republicans acknowledged to be divine, in former times, before republican zeal had ventured to espouse the interests of atheism\*: it is a right which in no country can be denied, without the highest of all treasons; — the denial of it were treason against the paramount authority of God.

These views of the authority of civil governors, as they are obviously suggested by the Mosaic history of the first ages, so they are confirmed by the precepts

\* “All kings but such as are immediately named by God himself have their power by human right only; though, after human composition and agreement, their lawful choice is approved of God, and obedience required to them by divine right.” These are the words in which Bishop Hoadly states Hooker's sentiments. Hooker's own words are stronger and more extensive. But the sentiment, to the extent in which it is conveyed in these terms, the republican Bishop approved. — See *Hoadly's Defence of Hooker*.

“Quod Dii nuncupantur, quicumque magistratum gerunt, ne in ea appellatione leve inesse momentum quis putet: ea enim significatur, mandatum a Deo habere, Divina auctoritate præditos esse, ac omnino Dei personam sustinere, cujus vices quodammodo agunt.” — *Calvin. Inst. lib. iv. cap. 20. sect. 4.*

“Resisti magistratui non potest, quin simul Deo resistatur.” — *Calvin. Inst. lib. iv. cap. 20. sect. 23.*



of the Gospel: in which, if any thing is to be found clear, peremptory, and unequivocal, it is the injunction of submission to the sovereign authority, and, in monarchies, of loyalty to the person of the sovereign.

“Let every soul,” says the apostle in my text, “be subject to the higher powers.”

The word “powers” here signifies persons bearing power: any other meaning of it, whatever may be pretended, is excluded by the context.\* The text,

\* It has been a great point with republican divines to explain away the force of this text. But, for this purpose, they have never been able to fall upon any happier expedient, than to say that the word “powers,” ἐξουσιαι, signifies not persons bearing power, but forms of government. Then, restraining the precept to such governments as are perfectly well administered, and finding hardly any government upon earth administered to their mind (for they never make allowance for the inevitable imperfection and infirmity of all things human), they get rid of the constraint of this Divine injunction, which, by this interpretation and this limitation, they render as nugatory as any of their own maxims; and find their conscience perfectly at ease, while they make free, in word and in deed, with thrones, dominions, and dignities. Whatever be the natural import of the word ἐξουσιαι, the epithet which is joined to it in the text shows that it must be understood here of something which admits the degree of high and low. But of this, forms of government are incapable: every form is supreme where it is established; and since different forms of government cannot subsist at the same time among the same people, it were absurd to say of forms of government that one is higher than another. Again, in the third verse of this same chapter, the power (ἐξουσια) is said to bestow praise upon those who do good; in the fourth, to be “the minister of God;” and in the sixth, to receive tribute as the wages of a close attendance upon that ministry. None of these things can be said of forms of government, without a harshness of metaphor unexampled in the didactic parts of Holy Writ: but all these things may be said with great propriety of the persons governing.

In

indeed, had been better rendered — “ Let every soul be subject to the sovereign powers.” The word “ sovereign ” renders the exact meaning of that Greek word for which the English Bible in this place rather unhappily puts the comparative “ higher : ” in another passage it is very properly rendered by a word equivalent to sovereign, by the word “ supreme. ” — “ Let every soul be subject to the sovereign powers. ” The sovereignty particularly intended, in the immediate application of the precept to those to whom the epistle was addressed, was the sovereign authority of the Roman emperor. Nero was at the time the possessor of that sovereignty ; and the apostle, in what he immediately subjoins to enforce his precept, seems to obviate an objection which he was well aware the example of Nero’s tyranny might suggest. His reasoning is to this effect : — “ The sovereignty, you will say, is often placed in unfit hands, and abused to the worst purposes : it is placed in the hands of sensual rapacious men, of capricious women, and of ill-conditioned boys : it is in such sort abused, as to be made the instrument of lust and ambition, of avarice and injustice : you yourselves, my brethren, experience the abuse of it in your own persons. It may seem to you, that power derived from the Author of all Good

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In the twelfth chapter of St. Luke’s Gospel, the first preachers are warned that they are to be brought before synagogues, and magistrates, and powers (*εξουσιας*). There the word evidently signifies persons bearing power. I will venture to add, that not a single instance is to be found in any writer, sacred or profane, of the use of the word *εξουσιας* to signify form of government ; nor is that sense to be extracted by any critical chemistry from the etymology and radical meaning of the word.

would never be so misplaced, nor be permitted to be so misused; and you may, perhaps, be ready to conclude, that the father of lies once at least spake truth, when he claimed the disposal of earthly sceptres as his own prerogative. Such reasonings (saith the apostle) are erroneous: no king, however he might use or abuse authority, ever reigned but by the appointment of God's providence.\* There is no such thing as power but from God: to him, whatever powers, good or bad, are at any time subsisting in the world, are subordinate: he has good ends of his own, not always to be foreseen by us, to be effected by the abuse of power, as by other partial evils; and to his own secret purpose he directs the worst actions of tyrants, no less than the best of godly princes. Man's abuse, therefore, of his delegated authority, is to be borne with resignation, like any other of God's judgments. The opposition of the individual to the

\* *Hoc nobis si assidue ob animos et oculos obversetur, eodum decreto constitui etiam nequissimos reges, quo regum autoritas statuitur; nunquam in animum nobis seditiosæ illæ cogitationes venient, "tractandum esse pro meritis regem, nec æquum esse ut subditos ei nos præstemus, qui vicissim regem nobis se non præstat."* — *Calvin. Inst. iv. 20. sect. 27.*

"Si in Dei verbum respicimus longius nos deducet, ut non eorum modo principum imperio subditi simus, qui probe, et qua debent fide, munere suo erga nos defunguntur, sed omnium, qui quoquo modo rerum potiuntur, etiamsi nihil minus præstent, quam quod ex officio erat principum."

"In eo probando insistamus magis, quod non ita facile in hominum mentes cadit, in homine deterrimo, honoreque omni indignissimo, penes quem modo sit publica potestas, præclaram illam et Divinam potestatem residere, quam Dominus justitiæ ac judicii sui ministris, verbo suo, detulit: proinde a subditis eadem in reverentia et dignitate habendum, quantum ad publicam obedientiam attinet, qua optimum regem, si deretur, habituri essent." — *Calvin. Inst. iv. 20. 25.*

sovereign power is an opposition to God's providential arrangements; and it is the more inexcusable, because the well-being of mankind is the general end for which government is obtained; and this end of government, under all its abuses, is generally answered by it: for the good of government is perpetual and universal; the mischiefs resulting from the abuse of power, temporary and partial: insomuch, that in governments which are the worst administered the sovereign power, for the most part, is a terror not to good works, but to the evil; and upon the whole, far more beneficial than detrimental to the subject.\* But this general good of government cannot be secured upon any other terms than the submission of the individual to what may be called its extraordinary evils."

Such is the general scope and tenour of the argument by which St. Paul enforces the duty of the private citizen's subjection to the sovereign authority. He never once mentions that god of the republican's idolatry—the consent of the ungoverned millions of mankind†: he represents the earthly sovereign as the vicegerent of God, accountable for misconduct to

\* "Nulla tyrannis esse potest, quæ non aliqua ex parte subsidio sit ad tuendam hominum societatem."—*Calvin. in Rom. xiii. 1.*

† The first mention that I remember to have found any where of compact as the first principle of government is in the "Crito" of Plato; where Socrates alleges a tacit agreement between the citizen and the laws as the ground of an obligation to which he thought himself subject—of implicit obedience even to an unjust sentence. It is remarkable, that this fictitious compact, which in modern times hath been made the basis of the unqualified doctrine of resistance, should have been set up by Plato in the person of Socrates as the foundation of the opposite doctrine of the passive obedience of the individual.

his heavenly Master, but entitled to obedience from the subject.\*

While thus we reprobate the doctrine of the first formation of government out of anarchy by a general consent, we confess, — with thankfulness to the overruling providence of God we confess, and we maintain, that in this country the king is under the obligation of an express contract with the people. I say, of an *express* contract. In every monarchy in which the will of the sovereign is in any degree subject (as more or less, indeed, it is in all) either to the control of custom or to a fixed rule of law, something of a compact is implied at least between the king and nation; for limitation of the sovereign power implies a mutual agreement, which hath fixed the limits: but in this country, the contract is not tacit, implied, and vague; it is explicit, patent, and precise: it is summarily expressed in the coronation oath; it is drawn out at length and in detail in the Great Charter and the corroborating statutes, in the Petition of Right, in the *Habeas Corpus* Act, in the Bill of Rights, and in the Act of Settlement. Nor shall we scruple to assert, that our kings in the exercise of their sovereignty are held to the terms of this express and solemn stipulation; which is the legal measure of their power and rule of their conduct. The consequence which some have attempted to deduce from these most certain premises we abominate and reject, as wicked and illegitimate, — namely, that “our kings

\* “Neque enim si ultio Domini est effrænata dominationis correctio, ideo protinus demandatam nobis arbitremur, quibus nullum aliud quam parendi et patiendi datum est mandatum.” — *Calvin. Inst.* iv. 20. 31. “De privatis hominibus semper loquor.” — *Ibid.*

are the servants of the people; and that it is the right of the people to cashier them for misconduct." Our ancestors are slandered, — their wisdom is insulted, — their virtue is defamed, when these seditious maxims are set forth as the principles on which the great business of the Revolution was conducted, or as the groundwork on which that noblest production of human reason, the wonderful fabric of the British constitution, stands.

Our constitution hath indeed effectually secured the monarch's performance of his engagements, — not by that clumsy contrivance of republican wit, the establishment of a court of judicature with authority to try his conduct and to punish his delinquency, — not by that coarser expedient of modern levellers, a reference to the judgment and the sentence of the multitude, — wise judgment, I ween, and righteous sentence! — but by two peculiar provisions of a deep and subtle policy, — the one in the form, the other in the principles of government; which, in their joint operation, render the transgression of the covenant on the part of the monarch little less than a moral impossibility. The one is the judicious partition of the legislative authority between the King and the two houses of Parliament; the other, the responsibility attaching upon the advisers and official servants of the Crown. By the first, the nobles and the representatives of the commons are severally armed with a power of constitutional resistance, to oppose to prerogative overstepping its just bounds, by the exercise of their own rights and their own privileges; which power of the estates of Parliament with the necessity takes away the pretence for any spontaneous interference of the private citizen, otherwise than by the use of the

elective franchise and of the right of petition for the redress of grievances: by the second, those who might be willing to be the instruments of despotism are deterred by the dangers which await the service. Having thus excluded all probability of the event of a systematic abuse of royal power, or a dangerous exorbitance of prerogative, our constitution exempts her kings from the degrading necessity of being accountable to the subject: she invests them with the high attribute of political impeccability; she declares, that wrong, in his public capacity, a king of Great Britain cannot do; and thus unites the most perfect security of the subject's liberty with the most absolute inviolability of the sacred person of the sovereign.

Such is the British constitution, — its basis, religion; its end, liberty; its principal means and safeguard of liberty, the majesty of the sovereign. In support of it the king is not more interested than the peasant.

It was a signal instance of God's mercy, not imputing to the people of this land the atrocious deed of a desperate faction, — it was a signal instance of God's mercy, that the goodly fabric was not crushed in the middle of the last century, ere it had attained its finished perfection, by the phrensy of that fanatical banditti which took the life of the First Charles. In the madness and confusion which followed the shedding of that blood, our history holds forth an edifying example of the effects that are ever to be expected: — in that example, it gives warning of the effects that ever are intended, by the dissemination of those infernal maxims, that kings are the servants of the people, punishable by their masters. The same lesson is confirmed by the horrible example which the pre-

sent hour exhibits, in the unparalleled misery of a neighbouring nation, once great in learning, arts, and arms; now torn by contending factions, — her government demolished, — her altars overthrown, — her firstborn despoiled of their birthright, — her nobles degraded, — her best citizens exiled, — her riches sacred and profane given up to the pillage of sacrilege and rapine, — atheists directing her councils, — desperadoes conducting her armies, — wars of unjust and chimerical ambition consuming her youth, — her granaries exhausted, — her fields uncultivated, — famine threatening her multitudes, — her streets swarming with assassins, filled with violence, deluged with blood!

Is the picture frightful? is the misery extreme, — the guilt horrid? Alas! these things were but the prelude of the tragedy: public justice poisoned in its source, profaned in the abuse of its most solemn forms to the foulest purposes, — a monarch deliberately murdered, — a monarch, whose only crime it was that he inherited a sceptre the thirty-second of his illustrious stock, butchered on a public scaffold, after the mockery of arraignment, trial, sentence, — butchered without the merciful formalities of the vilest malefactor's execution, — the sad privilege of a last farewell to the surrounding populace refused, — not the pause of a moment allowed for devotion, — honourable interment denied to the corpse, — the royal widow's anguish embittered by the rigour of a close imprisonment; with hope, indeed, at no great distance, of release, of such release as hath been given to her lord!

This foul murder, and these barbarities, have filled the measure of the guilt and infamy of France. O my country! read the horror of thy own deed in this recent heightened imitation! lament and weep that



this black French treason should have found its example in the crime of thy unnatural sons ! Our contrition for our guilt that stained our land, — our gratitude to God, whose merey so soon restored our church and monarchy, — our contrition for our own crime, and our gratitude for God's unspeakable mercy, will be best expressed by us all, by setting the example of a dutiful submission to government in our own conduct, and by inculcating upon our children and dependants a loyal attachment to a king who hath ever sought his own glory in the virtue and prosperity of his people, and administers justice with an even, firm, and gentle hand, — a king who in many public acts hath testified his affection for the free constitution of this country, — a king, of whom, or of the princes issued from his loins and trained by his example, it were injurious to harbour a suspicion that they will ever be inclined to use their power to any other end than for the support of public liberty. Let us remember, that a conscientious submission to the sovereign powers is, no less than brotherly love, a distinctive badge of Christ's disciples. Blessed be God, in the church of England both those marks of genuine Christianity have ever been conspicuous. Perhaps, in the exercise of brotherly love, it is the amiable infirmity of Englishmen to be too easy to admit the claim of a spiritual kindred. The times compel me to remark, that brotherly love embraces only brethren : the term of holy brotherhood is profaned by an indiscriminate application. We ought to mark those who cause divisions and offences. Nice scruples about external forms, and differences of opinion upon controvertible points, cannot but take place among the best Christians, and dissolve not the fraternal tie : none,

indeed, at this season, are more entitled to our offices of love, than those with whom the difference is wide, in points of doctrine, discipline, and external rights,—those venerable exiles, the prelates and clergy of the fallen church of France, endeared to us by the edifying example they exhibit of patient suffering for conscience sake : but if any enjoying the blessings of the British government, living under the protection of its free constitution and its equal laws, have dared to avow the wicked sentiment, that this day of national contrition, this rueful day of guilt and shame, “ is a proud day for England, to be remembered as such by the latest posterity of freemen,” with such persons it is meet that we abjure all brotherhood. Their spot is not the spot of our family ; they have no claim upon our brotherly affection : upon our charity they have, indeed, a claim : miserable men ! “ they are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity : ” it is our duty to pray God, if perhaps the thought of their heart may be forgiven them.

## APPENDIX

TO

## THE PRECEDING SERMON.

IT is much less from any high opinion of the importance of Calvin's authority to confirm the assertions of the foregoing discourse, that reference has been so frequently made in the notes at the bottom of the page to his "Theological Institutions," than from a desire of vindicating the character of Calvin himself from an imputation which they who think it ill-founded will be concerned to find revived in a late work of great erudition, and for the ability of the execution, as well as for the intention, of great merit, — the "Jura Anglorum" of the learned Mr. Francis Plowden. In a matter in which the sense of the Holy Scriptures is so plain as it certainly is upon the questions which are treated in the foregoing discourse, the preacher esteems the additional weight of any human authority of little moment: but he cannot allow himself not to take advantage of an occasion spontaneously as it were arising from his subject, of rescuing the memory of a man, to whom the praise of conspicuous talents and extensive learning must be allowed by all, from unjust aspersions; — the injustice of which lies not properly, however, at the door of the learned author of the "Jura."

Calvin was unquestionably in theory a republican: he freely declares his opinion, that the republican form, or an aristocracy reduced nearly to the level of a republic,

was of all the best calculated in general to answer the ends of government. So wedded, indeed, was he to this notion, that, in disregard of an apostolic institution, and the example of the primitive ages, he endeavoured to fashion the government of all the Protestant churches upon republican principles; and his persevering zeal in that attempt, though in this country through the mercy of God it failed, was followed, upon the whole, with a wide and mischievous success. But in civil politics, though a republican in theory, he was no leveller. That he was not, appears from the passages cited in the notes upon the foregoing discourse; and will be still more evident to any who will take the trouble to peruse the whole of the last chapter of the last book of his “*Institutions of the Christian Religion.*” In that chapter, he professedly treats the question of the consistency of civil government with the scheme of Christianity; which he maintains against the fanatics of his times.\* He shows that submission to the magistrate is under all forms of government a religious duty †: he declares his preference of a republican aristocracy to any other form ‡: but this declaration is prefaced with an express protest against the futility of the question, what form is absolutely and in itself the best ||: he affirms, that the advantage of one government above another depends much upon circumstances §; that the circumstances of different countries require different forms; that government under every form is a Divine ordinance ¶; that the variety of governments in the different regions of the earth is no less conducive to the general benefit of mankind, and no less the work of Providence, than the variety of climates \*\*: and with respect to monarchy in particular, (by which, it is to be observed, he means absolute monarchy,) he remarks, that submission to monarchical governments is particularly enjoined in holy writ; for this especial reason, — that monarchy was the form which in the early ages

\* *Institut.* lib. iv. cap. xx. sect. 1, 2, 3.

† Sect. 8.

‡ Sect. 8.

|| *Ib.*

§ *Ib.*

¶ Sect. 4.

\*\* Sect. 8.

was the most disliked.\* Whatever preference, therefore, in speculation, he might give to the republican form, he could not, with these principles, be practically an enemy to the government of kings. This last chapter of his “Institutions,” in which he expressly treats the general question of government, must be supposed to contain the authentic exposition of his deliberate opinions upon the whole of the subject, — the confession of his political faith; and by reference to this, any passages in other parts of his writings, in which subordinate questions are incidentally touched, ought in candour to be interpreted. The passages in which he has been supposed to betray the principles of a leveller lie widely scattered in his comment on the book of Daniel. They shall be briefly examined, nearly in the order in which they occur. If it should be found that they bear a different sense from that which hath been imposed upon them, it will necessarily follow, that they will not justify the reflections which have been cast.

In the thirty-ninth verse of the second chapter, “And after these shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee,” this difficulty presents itself: with what truth could the prophet say, that the kingdom which was to arise next after Nebuchadnezzar’s, namely, the Medo-Persian, should be inferior to his; when, in fact, in wealth and power it was greatly the superior of the two? — for Nebuchadnezzar’s Chaldean kingdom, with its appendages, made a part only of the vast empire of the Medes and Persians under Cyrus. Calvin’s solution of the difficulty is this, — whether it be the true one or no, is not the question; but it is this, — that the Medo-Persian empire was in this respect inferior to Nebuchadnezzar’s, that it was worse in a moral sense; the condition of mankind being more miserable, and the manners more degenerate: the cause of which he refers to this general maxim, — that the more monarchies (*i. e.* empires, under whatever form of government) extend themselves to distant regions, the more licentiousness rages in

\* Sect. 7.

the world.\* That the word “*monarchiæ*” he renders “*empires*,” without regard to any particular form of government, is most manifest, from the use of it in the comment on the very next verse; where, after the example of his inspired author, the expositor applies it to the Roman empire under its *popular government*. From this general observation upon the baleful influence of overgrown empires upon the happiness and morals of man, he draws this conclusion: “Hence it appears, how great is the folly and madness of the generality, who desire to have kings of irresistible power; which is just the same as to desire a river of irresistible rapidity, as Isaiah speaks, exposing this folly:” and again, “They are altogether mad who desire monarchies of the first magnitude; for it cannot be but that political order should be much impaired where a single person occupies so wide a space.”† It is evident that this passage expresses no general disapprobation of monarchy, but of absolute monarchy, — of the arbitrary rule of one man, — of such arbitrary rule stretched over a vast extent of country, — and of such extensive arbitrary dominion founded upon conquest. In truth, irresistible military force is the specific thing intended under the epithet “*potentissimos*;” as appears by the reference to the prophet Isaiah; for that is the power represented by Isaiah under the image of a flood, when he would expose the folly of those who court the alliance of such princes. And it is to be observed, that though such power is reprobated in speculation, as what none but a madman could wish to see in its plenitude, yet it is not said, nor is it insinuated, that the govern-

\* “*Quo sese longius extendunt monarchiæ, eo etiam plus licentiæ in mundo grassatur.*”

† “*Unde apparet, quanta sit omnium fere stultitia et vesania, qui cupiunt habere reges potentissimos; perinde ac si quis appeteret fluvium rapidissimum, quemadmodum Iesaias loquitur, coarguens hanc stultitiam.*” “*Prorsus igitur delirant, qui appetunt summas monarchias; quia fieri non potest, quin tantundem decedat ex legitimo ordine, ubi unus occupat tam latum spatium.*”

ment of a conqueror is not to be quietly submitted to, when once his dominion is established, or that conquest may not be the foundation of a just title to dominion. It is only in a loose translation, in which the natural force of the epithets “*potentissimos*” and “*summas*” is neglected, and their specific application in these sentences, taken in connection with the entire discourse, overlooked, that the passage can appear as a sly insinuation against monarchical government in general, or an oblique hint to the subjects of any monarchy to rise in rebellion against their prince.

Chapter iv. 25. — “Till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.” — Upon this passage Calvin remarks, that “it teaches us how difficult it is for us to ascribe supreme power to God: especially when God hath raised us to any degree of dignity, we forget that we are men.” “Monarchs,” says he, “hold forth in their titles, that they are kings, and dukes, and counts, by the grace of God: but many of them make a false pretence of the name of God, to found a claim of *absolute* dominion for themselves; meanwhile they would willingly trample under foot that God under whose shield they shelter themselves; so little do they seriously reflect that it is by his favour that they reign. It is mere disguise, therefore, when they give it out that they reign by the grace of God.”\* In this he means not to deny the doctrine that princes reign by the grace of God; of which he was indeed a strenuous assertor: he condemns not the use of such titles, but the abuse of them:

\* “*Iterum docet hic locus, quam difficile sit nobis Deo tribuere summam potentiam. — Præsertim ubi Deus nos extulit in aliquem dignitatis gradum, obliviscimur nos esse homines. — Hodie monarchiæ semper in suis titulis hoc obtendunt, se esse reges, et duces, et comites, Dei gratia: sed quam multi falso nomen Dei prætextunt in hunc finem, ut sibi asserant summum imperium. — Interea libenter Deum, cujus clypeo se protegunt, calcarent pedibus; tantum abest ut serio reputent se habere ejus beneficio ut regnent. Merus igitur fucus est, quod jactant se Dei gratia pollere dominatione.*”

he says the title is abused when it is made the pretence and instrument of tyranny: he says, that the prince who in the exercise of his power profanely forgets the God whom he confesses in his title is a hypocrite: he says, these solemn titles have in fact been so abused, and that princes have been guilty of this hypocrisy. Would God that history refuted him in these assertions!

Chapter vi. 25. 27. — Upon the edict of Darius enjoining the worship of the God of Daniel, Calvin remarks to this effect: “Darius, by his example, will condemn all those who at this day profess themselves either catholic kings, or Christian kings, or defenders of the faith; and at the same time not only bear down true piety, but, as far as lies in them, shake the whole worship of God, and, could they have their will, would blot his name out of the world, — who exercise tyranny against all pious men, and by their cruelty establish impious superstitions.” \* It is not to be wondered, that this exaggerated and indecent language of invective should be offensive to the learned author of the “*Jura Anglorum* :” it is to be hoped, that in the present age it is offensive to every one, of whatever communion he may be, who reads the passage. It is not indeed to be borne, that the forms of worship of any Christian church, however grievous its corruptions, should be uncharitably stigmatized in the gross with the odious name of impious superstitions; nor is it true of the princes who persecuted the reformed churches, cruel as the persecutions were, that their object was to overturn the whole worship of God, and blot his name out of the world: that project was reserved for the accursed crew of French philosophers, turned politicians, at the close of the eighteenth century. But it is to be remembered, that Calvin lived in an age when neither

\* “Darius — exemplo suo, damnabit omnes eos, qui hodie se profitentur vel catholicos reges, vel Christianos, vel protectores fidei; et interea non modo obriunt veram pietatem, sed etiam, quantum in se est, labefactant totum Dei cultum, et libenter nomen ejus extinguerent e mundo; exercent sævam tyrannidem adversus omnes pios, stabiliunt sua sævitia impias superstitiones.”



the Christianity nor the good policy of religious toleration was understood; and he himself possessed a large share of the intolerant spirit of his times. How little he possessed of the spirit of a leveller, appears from what he says, upon chapter iv. 19. of the duty of submission to those very princes whose conduct he so vehemently arraigns. The learned reader will find the passage entire at the bottom of the page. \*

Chapter vi. 22. — The exposition of this verse concludes thus: “ Earthly princes divest themselves of their authority when they rise in rebellion against God; nay, they are unworthy to be reputed among men. It were better, therefore, to spit upon their persons than to obey them, where they so far exceed all bounds as to attempt to rob God of his right, and as it were take possession of his throne, as if they were able to drag him down from heaven.” † This passage, taken by itself, may seem, it must be confessed, to go to the full extent of those detestable maxims which had been propagated in an earlier age, — that “ he who is in mortal sin is no civil magistrate;” and that “ a king not having the Spirit of God forfeits his dominion.” Accordingly, it is produced as affirming the same or equivalent propositions. But if it be considered not by itself, but in its connection with the discourse of which it makes the close, the sense of the expressions will be found so restrained by the subject matter as to convey nothing of this pernicious meaning. Daniel having openly paid his daily devotions to

\* “ *Discamus igitur, exemplo prophetæ, bene precari pro inimicis nostris, qui cupiunt nos perditos; maxime vero precari pro tyrannis, si Deo placeat nos subjici eorum libidini: Quia, etsi indigni sint ullo humanitatis officio, quia tamen non præsumunt nisi Deo ita volente, modeste feramus jugum; neque id tantum propter iram, ut Paulus admonet, sed propter conscientiam; alioqui, non tantum illis, sed etiam Deo ipsi, sumus rebelles.*”

† “ *Abdicant enim se potestate terreni principes, dum insurgunt contra Deum; imo, indigni sunt qui censeantur in hominum numero. Potius ergo conspuere oportet in ipsorum capita, quam illis parere, ubi ita proterviunt, ut velint etiam spoliare Deum jure suo, ac si possent eum e cælo detrahere.*”

his God, during the time that the edict of Darius was in force prohibiting the adoration of god or mortal but the king himself for thirty days, was in pursuance of the edict thrown to the lions, and lay in the den the whole night: the next morning, when he was found alive by the king himself, he gives the king this account of his deliverance: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths that they have not hurt me; forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me, and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." Daniel had disobeyed the king's edict; yet he says, that even with respect to the king he had committed no offence; and he alleges his innocence in that respect as in part the ground of his miraculous deliverance; intimating that he should not have been thought worthy of the Divine protection, could he not have said for himself with truth that "before the king he had done no hurt." Calvin contends, that it was with great truth and justice that the prophet thus asserted his innocence, even as a subject. To make this out, it is necessary to show (for the thing could be made out in no other way) that the king's edict was in itself a nullity. This is the point which Calvin argues; and thus he argues it: "Earthly kingdoms are established by God; but under this condition, that God derogates nothing from himself, but that whatever there may be of pre-eminence in the world be subordinate to his glory. "Fear God, and honour the king," is one entire precept: the two parts are to be taken in connection, and cannot be separated; and the fear of God must precede, in order that kings may maintain their proper authority. Daniel, therefore, upon just ground, here defends himself as having done no harm against the king; inasmuch as it was under the obligation of paying obedience to the government of God that he neglected what the king commanded in opposition to it. For earthly princes abdicate their own authority;" &c. \* It is evident, that the subject matter re-

\* "Scimus constitui terrena imperia a Deo, sed hac lege, ut ipse sibi nihil deroget — et quicquid est præstantiæ in mundo, ejus gloriæ sit subjectum. — 'Deum timete, regem honorate:'

strains this implied abdication of authority to authority exercised in those individual commands which expressly contravene some express command of God; and it is in the individual instances of such commands that Calvin asserts that the guilt and danger of contempt accompanying the just refusal to obey would be nothing in comparison of the guilt and danger of obedience. Certainly the priest Urijah, had he spit upon King Ahaz when the king commanded him to make an altar after the fashion of the idolatrous altar at Damascus, though such contempt of majesty would not have been altogether free of blame, had done, however, better than he did when he executed the king's order; and yet this wicked act of the king's was no forfeiture of his title to the crown, nor a general release of his subjects from their allegiance. This passage, therefore, of Calvin carries in it no such meaning as may appear upon the first view of it, detached from the context; but it contains indeed a principle upon which the faithful are bound to act when the dreadful necessity arises. Calvin could never support the abominable doctrine that the ordinary misconduct of a king sets the subject free, without contradicting the principles he lays down, in the last chapter of his "Theological Institutions," of the duty of submission, even to the worst of kings, in things not contrary to the express commands of God.

It is not to be apprehended that the learned and candid author of "Jura Anglorum" will be displeased that the memory of a great man should be vindicated from an unfounded accusation; which has been revived, not originally set up, by him upon the authority of Helin, and other writers, on whom he thought he might rely. No injustice

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Sunt hæc duo inter se connexa, nec potest alterum ab altero divelli: Præcedat igitur oportet timor Dei, ut reges obtineant suam auctoritatem.— Jure ergo Daniel hic se defendit, 'Quod nullam pravitatem commiserit adversus regem,' quia scilicet, coactus parere Dei imperio, neglexerit quod in contrariam partem rex mandabat. Abdicant enim," &c.

of intention, — nothing worse than a very pardonable mistake, — is imputed to this respectable author. The Christian spirit of charity and tolerance which breathes through this work, and appears in the sentiments which the author avowed in a former publication, entitled “The Case Stated,” \* acquits him of the most distant suspicion of a design to advance the credit of his own church by wilfully depreciating the character of an illustrious adversary. In the citation of passages in proof of the charge, it is justice to him to acknowledge, that he hath only copied *verbatim* as it should seem from an anonymous work, entitled “Philanax Anglicus.” He will certainly esteem it no disservice done to that great cause in which his learning and his talents have been so honourably engaged, — the cause of government and liberty united, if the levellers are deprived of the authority of Calvin’s name; to which, together with that of Luther and of other celebrated reformers, some among them have pretended, in the pious design no doubt of passing off their political opinions as a branch of the general doctrine of the Reformation. When Salmasius upbraided Cromwell’s faction with the tenets of the Brownists, the chosen advocate of that execrable faction replied, that if they were Brownists, Luther, Calvin, Bucer, Zwinglius, and all the most celebrated theologians of the orthodox, must be included in the same reproach. † A grosser falsehood, as far as Luther, Calvin, and many others are concerned, never fell from the unprincipled pen of a party-writer. However sedition might be a part of the puritanic creed, the general faith of the Reformers rejects the infamous alliance.

It is alleged indeed against Calvin, by grave and respectable historians, that he expressed approbation of the outrages of John Knox in Scotland. If the charge be true,

\* See “The Case Stated,” page 42—48.; but particularly page 47, 48.

† “Ita Lutherus, Calvinus, Zwinglius, Bucerus, et orthodoxorum quotquot celeberrimi theologi, fuere, tuo judicio, Brownistæ sunt.” — *Defens. pro Pop. Ang. cap. v. sub fin.*

his conduct in this instance was contrary to his avowed principles. But the accusation requires better proof than Knox's own interpretation of some general expressions in Calvin's letters. It cannot, however, be denied, that he too often indulges in a strain of coarse invectives against the foibles and the vices incident to kings; of which he sometimes speaks as if he thought them inseparable from royalty; and that he treats many of the princes of Europe, his contemporaries, with indecent ill language. Some allowance is to be made for the natural harshness of the man's temper; more, for his keen sense of the cruel treatment of Protestants in many kingdoms; but the best apology for him is, that he lived before a perfect specimen of a just limited monarchy had been anywhere exhibited, — before the example of the British constitution in its finished state, and of the princes of the Brunswick line, had taught the world this comfortable lesson, — that monarchy and civil liberty are things compatible, and may be brought to afford each other the most effectual support.



**NINE SERMONS,**

ON THE

NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

BY WHICH

THE FACT OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

IS ESTABLISHED ;

AND

ON VARIOUS OTHER SUBJECTS.

---

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

**A DISSERTATION**

ON THE PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH DISPERSED  
AMONG THE HEATHEN.





## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE Dissertation which stands first in the following pages was evidently written in connection with the three Discourses on the Faith of the Samaritans, and appears by the form of compilation to have been, like them, originally delivered from the pulpit.

It came into the Editor's hands in loose and unconnected sheets, and these were not arranged and examined by him till long after the publication of the two first volumes of Sermons. After he had examined them, he found them to contain an unfinished Essay, which evidently had never been prepared by the Author for the press. He therefore laid it aside. But having shown it, during his stay in London, in the month of May last, to some literary friends, he was strongly advised to publish it; for though confessedly an incomplete work, yet it was deemed worthy of publication, as displaying the Bishop's thoughts on an important subject.

In this opinion he anxiously hopes the literary world in general may be disposed to agree. But if not, let it be remembered, that the blame of publication (if there be any) rests with the Editor, not the Author; for it is again repeated, that the Manuscript was not left in that state in which the latter, had he been living, would have published it: indeed

a note found in one of the pages of the Manuscript expressly states, that it was the Author's intention to have revised it.

To the Dissertation the Editor has added nine hitherto unpublished Sermons, collected and arranged from scattered and mutilated Manuscripts; but which, in his opinion, now that they are arranged, display the same vigour of thought, and the same masterly powers of expounding Scripture, as characterise his Father's other Theological Works.

A

## DISSERTATION

ON

THE PROPHECIES OF THE MESSIAH DISPERSED  
AMONG THE HEATHEN.

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THE expectation of an extraordinary person who should arise in Judea, and be the instrument of great improvements in the manners and condition of mankind, was almost if not altogether universal at the time of our Saviour's birth; and had been gradually spreading and getting strength for some time before it. The fact is so notorious to all who have any knowledge of antiquity, that it is needless to attempt any proof of it. It may be assumed as a principle, which even an infidel of candour would be ashamed to deny; or if any one would deny it, I would decline all dispute with such an adversary, as too ignorant to receive conviction, or too disingenuous to acknowledge what he must secretly admit.

If we enquire what were the general grounds of the expectation which so generally prevailed, the answer to the question is exceedingly obvious: that the ground of this expectation was probably some traditional obscure remembrance of the original promises. But the great point is, to discover by what means this remembrance was perpetuated in the latter and darker ages of idolatry, when the name of Jehovah was forgotten, and his worship neglected, except in one nation, in which the knowledge and

worship of the invisible Creator was miraculously preserved.

Now, my conjecture is, that this was effected by a collection of very early prophecies, which were committed to writing in a very early age, and were actually existing in many parts of the world, though little known till the extirpation of paganism, by the propagation of the Gospel. I am well aware how extravagant such an opinion may appear in this incredulous age. But I stand not in the judgment of infidels; I speak to a Christian audience. They will judge of the probability of my assertion, when I have stated the grounds on which I build it.

For the more perspicuous arrangement of my argument, I shall divide it into two parts: —

First, I shall prove the fact from historical evidence, that the Gentile world in the darkest ages was in possession, not of vague and traditional, but of explicit written prophecies of Christ. When I have established the fact, and by that means shown the immediate cause of the expectation which so generally prevailed, I shall then produce the more remote and higher cause, and prove that these written prophecies were the remains of Divine oracles of the earliest ages.

*First*, For the fact that the Gentile world in the darkest ages was possessed of explicit written prophecies of Christ, I shall found the proof of it on the contents of a very extraordinary book, which was preserved at Rome under the name of the oracles of the Cumæan Sibyl, which was held in such veneration that it was deposited in a stone chest in the temple of Jupiter in the Capitol, and committed to the care of two persons expressly appointed to that office. For the contents of this book I shall make no appeal to

the quotations of the ancient fathers. I am well persuaded that many of them were deceived \*, and that the verses which they produce as prophecies of Christ found in the Sibylline books, and which contain rather a minute detail of the miraculous circumstances of our Saviour's life than general predictions of his advent and his office, were scandalous forgeries. And God forbid that I should endeavour to restore the credit of an imposture that hath been long since exploded. At the same time I must observe, that though this censure be just as applied to the later fathers, yet the testimony of the earlier, of Justin Martyr in particular, and of Clemens Alexandrinus, seems deserving of more credit : not so much for the great learning and piety of those venerable writers, for with all this they were very capable of giving too easy credit to what might seem to serve their cause ; but because they lived before the age of pious frauds, as they were called, commenced, and while the Sibylline books were extant ; so that they might easily have been confuted by the heathens, had they alleged as quotations from those books, forged predictions, which appeared not in the authentic copies. Of their evidence, however, I shall not avail myself ; for I would build my assertion on none but the most solid ground. I shall therefore take my idea of the contents of these books entirely from the testimony of heathen writers. At least I shall make no use of any assertion even of the earliest fathers ; much less

\* It is remarkable, however, that Celsus charged the Christians of his time with interpolating the Sibylline books. Origen challenges him to support the accusation by specific instances of the fraud, and insinuates that the most ancient copies of those books had the passages which Celsus esteemed insertions of the Christians. *Contra CELSUM*, pp. 368, 369. E.

shall I credit any of the quotations of the latter, except so far as I find them supported by the most unquestionable heathen evidence.

Among heathen writers, I believe, it would be in vain to seek for any *quotations* of particular passages from the Sibylline oracles. They never made any. For, to produce the words of the Sibylline text would have been a dangerous violation of a law, by which the publication of any part of these writings was made a capital offence. We have, however, such representations of the general argument of the book, and of the general purport of particular prophecies, as afford a strong presumption in favour of the opinion we have advanced, that it was composed of adulterated fragments of the patriarchal prophecies and records, and that put it out of doubt, that of much of the prophetic part the Messiah was the specific subject.

From the general argument of the book as it is represented by heathen writers, it is very evident that it could be no forgery of heathen priestcraft; for this reason, that it was exceedingly unfavourable to that system of idolatrous superstition, which it was the great concern and interest of the heathen priesthood to propagate and support; and this was probably the true reason that the Roman senate committed the book to the custody of two of the Augural College, and kept it from the inspection of the vulgar by the severest laws. Now this extraordinary fact, that it was little for the interests of idolatry that the contents of the Cumaean oracles should be divulged, we learn from a dispute which was keenly agitated at Rome, between the friends of Julius Caesar and the leader of the republican party; in the course of which a member of the Augural College in the heat of argument let the secret out.

Julius Cæsar, you know, attained the height of his power within a few years before our Saviour's birth : little was wanting to his greatness but the title of a king, of which he was ambitious. The difficulty was to bring the Senate to confer it ; for without their sanction it was unsafe to assume it. One of his adherents thought of an expedient not unlikely to succeed. He produced a prophecy from the Cumæan Sibyl of a king who was to arise at this time, whose monarchy was to be universal, and whose government would be necessary and essential to the happiness of the world. The artful statesman knew, that if he could once create a general persuasion upon the credit of this prophecy, that universal monarchy was to be established, and that the state of the world required it, the difficulty would not be great to prove, that Cæsar was the person of his times best qualified to wield the sceptre.

The republican party took the alarm. Tully was at that time its chief support ; and his great abilities were called forth to oppose this stratagem of the dictator's faction. In his opposition to it he brings no charge of falsification against those who alleged this prophecy. He denies not that a prophecy to this effect was actually contained in the Sibylline books, to which as a member of the Augural College he had free access ; and when he allowed the existence of the prophecy, he was a better politician than to make the application of it to Cæsar the point of controversy, and to risk the success of his opposition to the schemes of Cæsar's party upon the precarious success of that particular question. Confessing the prophecy, he knew it was impolitic to attempt to apply it to any but a Roman, and applying it to a Roman it had been difficult to draw it away from Cæsar. He

therefore takes another ground. Having granted that the prophecy was fairly alleged by the opposite party from the Sibylline books, he attempts to overthrow the credit of the prophecy by a general attack on the credit of the books in which it was found. He affirms that these Sibylline oracles were no prophecies. His argument is, that in the writings of the Sibyl no marks are to be found of frenzy or disorder, which the heathens conceived to be the necessary state of every prophet's mind while he prophesied, because the prophets of their oracular temples affected it. But these books, he says, carried such evident marks of art and study, particularly in the regular structure of the verse, as proved that it was the work of a writer who had the natural use and possession of his faculties. This statement of Tully's may be correct, but his conclusion is erroneous, at least it must appear so to us who take our notions of prophetic style from the specimens which the Bible furnishes; for the true prophets were never impeded or disturbed in the natural use and possession of their faculties by the Divine impulse. Their faculties were not disturbed, but exalted and invigorated; and in the most animated of the sacred prophecies we find, beside what might be the natural character of the prophetic style, force, elevation, and sudden transition; we find, beside, an exquisite art of composition, and a wonderful regularity of versification. However, the Roman critic having proved, as he imagined, from this circumstance, that these Sibylline oracles were no prophecies, concludes his whole argument with this edifying remark:—“ Let us, then,” says he, “ adhere to the prudent practice of our ancestors; let us keep the Sibyl in religious privacy; these



writings are, indeed, rather calculated to extinguish than to propagate superstition." This testimony is above all exception. Tully, as an augur, had free access to the book in question. It cannot be doubted that he would improve his opportunities ; for he was a man of an exquisite taste, of much learned curiosity ; and, with these endowments, of a very religious turn of mind. It is certain, therefore, that he speaks upon the best information ; and he is the more to be credited, as this frank confession fell from him in the heat of a political debate in which he took an interested part. And from this testimony we may conclude, that the ancient fathers, whatever judgment is to be passed upon their pretended quotations from the Sibylline books, were not mistaken in the general assertion, that the worship of the one true God, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, and of a future retribution, were inculcated in these writings ; which it seems, in Tully's judgment (and a competent judge he was), were proper weapons to combat idolatry : and by what weapons may error be more successfully combated than by the truth ?

If the Sibylline oracles in their general tenour were unfriendly to the interests of idolatry, it is the less to be wondered, that they should contain predictions of its final extirpation : of this I shall now produce the evidence ; still relying, not upon particular quotations, but upon the general allusions of the heathen writers.

Virgil, the celebrated Roman poet, flourished in the court of Augustus no long time before our Saviour's birth, when the general expectation of a person to appear who should abolish both physical and moral evil was at the highest.

Among his works still extant is a congratulatory poem addressed to a noble Roman, the poet's friend,

who bore the high office of consul at the time when it was written. The occasion seems to have been the birth of some child, in whose fortunes Pollio, the poet's friend, was nearly interested. The compliment to Pollio is double, being partly drawn from a flattering prediction of the infant's future greatness, (for it is affirmed, that he will prove nothing less than the expected deliverer,) and partly from this circumstance, that the year of Pollio's consulate should be distinguished by the birth of such a child. Whoever should read this poem without a knowledge of the history of the times would conclude, that it was a compliment to Pollio upon the birth of his own son.

But it is a very extraordinary, but a very certain fact, that the consul had no son born in the year of his consulate, or within any short time before or after it. Nor will the history of these times furnish us with any child born within a moderate distance of Pollio's year of office, which, by its rank and connection with his family, might seem of sufficient importance to be the subject of this congratulation, even when all possible allowance has been made for a poet's exaggeration and a courtier's flattery. But what is most worthy of remark, and the most for my present purpose, is the description which the heathen poet gives of the extraordinary person that he expected; of his origin, his achievements, and the good consequences of his appearance; which is such, that if any illiterate person who was to hear this poem read in an exact translation, with the omission only of the names of heathen deities, and of allusion to profane mythology, which occur in a few passages, — any illiterate person who was to hear the poem read with these omissions, which would not at all affect the general

sense of it, if he had not been told before that it was the composition of a heathen author, would, without hesitation, pronounce it to be a prophecy of the Messiah, or a poem at least upon that subject written in express imitation of the style of the Jewish prophets. The resemblance between the images of this poem and those in which the inspired prophets describe the times of the Messiah has ever been remarked with surprise by the learned, as indeed it is much too striking to escape notice; and many attempts have been made to account for it. It has been imagined, that the poet had actually borrowed his images from the prophets. The books of the Old Testament having been translated into the Greek language long before the days of Virgil, it has been supposed that he might have become conversant with the sacred writings in the Greek translation.

But I see no reason to believe that these books were ever in any credit among the Romans, or that the contents of them were known at all, except to some few who were proselytes to the Jewish religion.

It has been supposed, that Herod's visit at the court of Augustus might be the means of making the Roman poet acquainted with the Hebrew bards. Herod, indeed, was some months at Rome; but there is little probability that the king, or any of his train, had leisure to be the poet's tutor in Hebrew learning. It is very strange that in so many attempts to account for the extraordinary fact under consideration, more attention should not have been paid to the account which the poet himself has given of it. He refers to the oracles of the Cumæan Sibyl as the source from which he drew these predictions. And in this lay the whole force of his compliment to Pollio, — *That*

*the child whose future greatness was the object of Pollio's ambition, would prove to be that personage whom the Cumæan Sybil had announced as a deliverer of the world from physical and moral evil.* For that is the sum and substance of the character according to the poet's description. Here, then, we have the clear testimony of this heathen poet, that the oracles of the Sibyl contained a prophecy, not accomplished when he wrote this congratulatory poem to his friend, but likely to be accomplished in the rising generation, of the appearance of a very extraordinary person. We know that the Jewish prophets marked the same time for the season of the Messiah's advent. From the strain of the poet's compliments, we gather the particulars of the Sibylline prophecy in regard to the character which it ascribes to the person whose appearance it announced; we find that this character perfectly agrees with that of the Messiah as it is drawn by the Jewish prophets; the difference being only this, that the Jewish prophecies are more circumstantial than the Sibylline.

The sum of the character is the same in both; in its nature unequivocal, and such as even in the general outline could not possibly belong to different persons in the same age.

The object of the Sibylline oracle, as well as the Messiah of the Jews, was to be of heavenly extraction, — the high offspring of the gods, the great seed of Jupiter. He was to strike an universal peace, and to command the whole world; and in this universal government he was to exercise his father's virtues. He was to abolish all violence and injustice, to restore the life of man to its original simplicity and innocence, and the condition of man to its original

happiness. He was to abolish the causes of violent death ; and all death, considered as a curse, is violent. He was to kill the serpent, and purge the vegetable kingdom of its poisons. The blessings of his reign were to reach even to the brute creation ; for the beasts of the forest were to lose their savage nature, that the ox might graze in security within sight of the lion.

It is evident, therefore, that the Jewish prophecies and the Sibylline oracles announce the same person, and of consequence, that the Sibylline oracles contained a prediction of the Messiah. Nor is it to be wondered, that the images of sacred prophecy should abound in this treasure of the heathen temples if it was composed of adulterated fragments of true prophecies. The thing seems inexplicable upon any other supposition.

Thus it appears, that the *Romans at least*, in the ages of their worst idolatry, were in possession of a book which they held, though they knew not why, in religious veneration, containing explicit prophecies of Christ. An extraordinary accident recorded in history furnishes an incontestable proof that the same prophecies were extant in a very late age, in various parts of the world.

About a century before our Saviour's birth, the book of the Cumaean Sibyl was destroyed by a fire which broke out in the Capitol, and consumed the temple where those writings were deposited. The Roman senate thought it of so much importance to repair the loss, that they sent persons to make a new collection of the Sibylline oracles in different parts of Asia, in the islands of the Archipelago, in Africa, and in Sicily ; for in all these parts copies, or at least

fragments, of these prophecies were supposed to be preserved. The deputies after some time returned with a thousand verses, more or less, collected in different places, from which the most learned men at Rome were employed to select what they judged the most authentic ; and this collection was deposited to supply the loss of the original.

I have now established my fact, that from the first ages of profane history to the very time of our Saviour's birth explicit predictions of him were extant in the Gentile world, in books which were ever holden in religious veneration, and which were deposited in their temples. The matter of these prophecies, and the agreement of the imagery of their language with what we find in the prophecies of Holy Writ, is, I think, a sufficient argument of their Divine original. Observe, I affirm not in general of the Sibylline books that they were divine, much less do I affirm that the Sibyls were women who had the gift of prophecy. I believe that they were fabulous personages, to whom the ignorant heathens ascribed the most ancient of their sacred books, when the true origin of them was forgotten. But the existence of these imaginary prophetesses, and the authority of the writings ascribed to them, are distinct questions. Whether these books contained prophecies of Christ is a question of fact in which the affirmative is supported by the highest historical evidence. That these prophecies, wherever they might be found, could be of no other than Divine original, the matter and the style of them is in my judgment an irrefragable argument ; when and where these prophecies were originally delivered, to whom they were addressed, and how they came to make a part of the treasure of the heathen temples, are questions which remain to be considered.

That they were drawn from the Jewish prophecies is improbable; for the books of the Cumæan Sibyl fell into the hands of the Romans, if we may credit their historians, in a very early age, when they were an obscure, inconsiderable people, without any connections in the East, and long before any part of the Old Testament was extant in the Greek language. And yet after the first settlement of the Jews in Canaan, I am persuaded that true prophets were nowhere to be found but in the Jewish church. These prophecies, then, that were current in the Gentile world in later ages, since they were neither forgeries of the heathen priests, nor founded on the Jewish prophecies, must have been derived from prophecies more ancient than the Jewish. They were fragments, (mutilated, perhaps, and otherwise corrupted,) but they were fragments of the most ancient prophecies of the patriarchal ages. By what means fragments of the prophecies of the patriarchal ages might be preserved among idolatrous nations is the difficulty to be explained.

To clear this question it will be necessary to consider, what was the actual state of revealed religion in the interval between the first appearance of idolatry in the world and the institution of the Jewish church by Moses.

I shall show you, that though the beginning of idolatry through man's degeneracy was earlier than might have been expected, its progress, through God's gracious interposition, was slower than is generally believed: that for some ages after it began the world at large enjoyed the light of Revelation in a very considerable degree: that, while the corruption was gradually rising to its height, Providence was taking measures for the general restoration at the appointed

season : that the gift of prophecy was vouchsafed long before the institution of the Mosaic church : that letters being in use in the East long before that epoch, the ancient prophecies were committed to writing ; and that, by the mysterious operation of that Providence which directs all temporary and partial evil to everlasting and universal good, the blind superstition of idolaters was itself made the means of preserving these writings, not pure, but in a state that might serve the purpose of preparing the Gentiles for the advent of our Lord, and maintaining a religious veneration for them.

I am then to consider what was the actual state of revealed religion, between the first appearance of idolatry in the world and the institution of the Mosaic church by Moses.

*First*, It is obvious that the worship of Jehovah was originally universal, without any mixture of idolatry among the sons of Adam for some time after the creation ; and that it became universal again among the descendants of Noah for some ages after the flood. It is obvious, that so long as this was universal, the *promises* would be universally remembered ; both the general promises of man's redemption and the particular promises of blessings to certain families ; and when the defection to idolatry began, these particular promises would be the means of retarding its progress, and of preserving the worship of the true God in the descendants of those to whom these promises were made, for some ages, at least, after the revolt of the rest of mankind.

And, on the other hand, wherever the true worship kept its ground the promises could not sink into oblivion.



Thus I conceive the promises to Abraham would for some time be remembered, not only in Isaac's family, and in the twelve tribes of Arabians descending from Ishmael, but among the nations that arose from his sons by his second wife, Keturah ; and these, if I mistake not, peopled the whole country that lay between the Arabian and the Persian Gulf, and occupied considerable tracts in Africa, and in the upper part of Asia near the Caspian Sea ; and the memory of these promises, in all these nations, would for several ages keep the true religion in some degree alive. So the earlier promises to Shem, contained in Noah's prophetic benediction, would be for some time remembered among his posterity ; and accordingly we find from ancient history, that the Persians, the Assyrians, and the people of Mesopotamia, the offspring of Shem, through his sons Elam, Ashur, and Aram, were among the last nations that fell into any gross idolatry.

Now, if we are right in these principles (and I think they are principles in which it is impossible to be greatly in the wrong, for the memory which I suppose of blessings promised to the head of a family, with which some degree of veneration for the Deity from whom they came and by whose providence they were to be accomplished, that is, some degree of the true religion would be inseparably connected ; — the memory, I say, of such blessings seems but a necessary effect of that complacency which men naturally feel in the notion that they have a claim, or that they stand within a probable expectation of a claim, to hereditary honour and distinctions) ; but if we are right in the supposition of some long remembrance of the promises, and a preservation of the true religion

among the descendants of the patriarchs to whom the promises were given, the first defection from the worship of the true God could not be universal, it could only be partial. And the effect of a partial defection would be, that all the nations whose loyalty to the sovereign Lord remained unshaken would take measures to resist the corruption and maintain among themselves the true worship of the true God.

Something of this kind seems to have happened early in the antediluvian world. "In the days of Enos, men began to call themselves by the name of Jehovah." At this time, pious men took alarm at the beginning of idolatry in the reprobate family of Cain, and formed themselves in a distinct party, and took a name of distinction to themselves as worshippers of the true God. They called themselves by the name of Jehovah, as we now call ourselves by the name of Christ; and they probably made profession of the true religion by some public rites.

As human nature is in all ages much the same, something similar is likely to have happened upon the first revival of idolatry after the flood. The measures that were used for the preservation of the true religion were likely to be some one or all of these.

If any of the nations that adhered to the true God had in these ages the use of letters, (and the use of letters in the East, I am persuaded, is of much greater antiquity than is generally supposed,) they would commit to writing, and collect in books what tradition had preserved of the beginning of the world and the promises to their ancestors. These books would be committed to some public custody, and preserved as a sacred treasure.

That something of this kind was done, appears, I

think, from fragments which still remain of ancient Eastern histories, which in certain particulars of the deluge, and in the dates which they assign to the rise of the most ancient kingdoms, are wonderfully consonant with the Mosaic records.

Again, the most interesting passages of the ancient history of the world, particularly the promises, they would put into verse, that they might more easily be committed to memory. It would be part of the education of the youth of both sexes, and of all conditions, to make them get these verses by heart. They would be set to music, and sung at certain stated festivals. That this was done (that it could hardly be omitted) is highly probable, because it was the universal practice of all the nations of antiquity to record in song whatever they wished should be long remembered, — the exploits of their warriors, their lessons of morality, their precepts of religion, and their laws. They would institute public rites, in which the history of the old world, and of the privileged patriarchs in particular, would be commemorated in certain enigmatical ceremonies. In these there would be allusions to the deluge, to the ark, to the raven and the dove, to Noah's intoxication, to the different behaviour of his three sons upon that occasion, to Abraham's entertainment of his three guests from heaven, to his battle with the confederate kings, to the offering of Isaac, to the exile of Hagar and her son, and other parts of patriarchal history. That something of this kind was done, appears, I think, by manifest allusions that we find to some of these particulars in the religious rites of some ancient nations, even after they became idolaters. These institutions would, perhaps, in the end be the means of

spreading the corruption they were intended to resist. At the first they would be simple, significant, perspicuous, and of good effect; but by degrees additions would be made to them without any attention to the original meaning, for no other purpose but to add to the gaiety and splendour of the spectacle: and these improvements of the show would be multiplied till they destroyed the significance of the symbol, and rendered the simple and instructive rite, first inconsistent, then obscure, absurd, and unintelligible, at last, perhaps, lascivious and obscene.

This, however, would be the consequence of a slow and gradual corruption; and I mention it only to remark, what extreme caution should be used in introducing any thing into religious rites which may too forcibly strike the grosser senses, and by imperceptible degrees change public worship from an employment of the intellect into an amusement of the imagination. Our church, when she separated from the Roman communion, wisely retrenched the pomp and gaiety of shows and processions, while she retained every thing that was truly majestic, and might serve to elevate the mind of the worshipper. Public worship should be simple without meanness, dignified without pageantry. But this by the way. I return to my subject:—

These were the means which *MEN were likely to employ* (I shall come afterwards to speak of means employed, as I conceive, by God himself): but these are means which men would be likely to employ to resist the progress of idolatry when it first began.

Written collections of traditional history, songs of high and holy argument, rites and shows of historical allusion: and these means could not but have a lasting

and a great effect to preserve the true religion, in some considerable degree at least, among all the nations where thy were practised ; that is, not only among Abraham's descendants, but in all the other branches of Shem's posterity, — among the Edomites, Moabites, Arabians, Assyrians, Persians, and many other people of less note, notwithstanding that many of these in later times became the worst of idolaters.

In what age or in what country idolatry made its first appearance, we have no certain information. The suspicion, I think, may reasonably fall upon Canaan, from the curse which is so emphatically pronounced upon him upon the occasion of his father's crime, rather than upon any other of Ham's descendants, which must have had its reason in some particular impiety in the character of Canaan himself, or of his early descendants. We have it, however, from the highest authority, that it prevailed in that part of Mesopotamia where the race of the Chaldeans afterwards arose, in the days of Terah the father of Abraham. For Joshua begins his last exhortation to the Israelites with reminding them, that “ in old time their fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood, even Terah the father of Abraham and the father of Nachor, and they *served* other gods.” This passage puts it out of doubt that some sort of idolatry prevailed in Terah's time in his country. But it amounts not to a certain proof that Terah, or any of his ancestors, were themselves idolaters ; for the expression, that they *served*, necessarily imports no more than that they lived as subjects in countries where other gods were worshipped. In this sense it is said of the Jewish people in their dispersion, they should serve other gods ; and yet the Jews in their dispersions have never been ido-

laters. In the sequel of this same speech, the service which the fathers of the Israelites, while they dwelt beyond the flood, paid to other gods, is so expressly opposed to the worship of Jehovah now required of the Israelites, that little doubt can remain that the expression of serving other gods is to be taken here in its literal meaning, — that the ancestors of Abraham, and Abraham himself, before God's gracious call, were infected with the idolatry which in that age prevailed.

It is not to my present purpose to trace the progress of idolatry through all its different stages; it will be sufficient for me to show, that for many ages the worship of the true God subsisted, though preposterously blended with the superstitious adoration of fictitious deities and even of images. Just as at this day in the church of Rome, the worship of the ever-blessed Trinity subsists in preposterous conjunction with the idolatrous worship of canonized men and inanimate relics.

When Abraham took up his abode in Gerar, the chief city of the Philistines, Abimelech, the king of Gerar, became enamoured of his wife. Upon this occasion God came to Abimelech; and the motive of his coming was in mercy to Abimelech, that he might not draw destruction upon himself and upon his family, by the indignity which he was upon the point of offering to Abraham's wife. From this it has been, with great probability, concluded, that this Abimelech, and the people which he governed, were worshippers of God; for it is not likely that such tenderness should have been shown to a wicked prince and a wicked nation. Sarah's purity might have been preserved by other means. Nor does the humility and

submission with which Abimelech receives the heavenly warning, nor the severity with which he expostulates with the patriarch for his unjust suspicion of him and his subjects, suit the character of one who feared not God.

Again, in the days of Isaac, another Abimelech, the son or grandson of the former, in an interview with Isaac (the object of which was to compose some quarrels that had arisen between Isaac's herdsmen and his own subjects), tells Isaac that he saw certainly that Jehovah was with him. That under this conviction he solicited his friendship and his peace ; and he calls Isaac the *Blessed of Jehovah*. This is the language of one who feared Jehovah and acknowledged his providence. In the days of Abraham, therefore, and of Isaac, the worship of the true God was not yet extinguished among the idolaters of Palestine.

In Mesopotamia, in the same age, the family of Nachor, Abraham's brother, was not untainted with idolatry. Laban had certain images which he calls his gods, for which it should seem that his daughter Rachel entertained some degree of veneration. Yet two occasions are recorded, upon which Laban mentions the name of Jehovah, and acknowledges his providence. The first is, when he receives Abraham's steward, who came as a suitor on the part of Isaac to Rebecca; the second, when he solemnly calls Jehovah to witness the reciprocal engagements of friendship between Jacob and himself at their parting.

In Egypt, the great workshop of Satan, where the molten images were cast which in later ages all the world adored, — in Egypt idolatry was in its infancy (if it had at all gotten ground) in the days of Joseph. For when Joseph was brought to Pharaoh to inter-

pret his dream, the holy patriarch and the Egyptian king speak of God in much the same language, and with the same acknowledgment of his over-ruling providence.

It may be added that this dream, though, perhaps, the chief end of it was the elevation of Joseph and the settlement of Jacob's family in Goshen, is some argument of a care of Providence for the Egyptian people; for by this merciful warning they were enabled to provide against the seven years of famine.

Idolatry, therefore, in this country was in no advanced state in Joseph's time; and the settlement of the patriarchs there, and the rank and authority that Joseph held, must have checked its growth for some considerable period.

At the time when the Israelites went out of Egypt, that country and the land of Canaan were sunk in the grossest idolatry. The name of Jehovah was forgotten, and in the public religion no traces were remaining of his worship. And yet the examples upon record of particular persons, who amid the general apostasy retained some attachment to the service of the true God, afford, I think, an argument, that in either country this extreme degeneracy was at that time of no very ancient date.

The two Egyptian women to whom Pharaoh committed the iniquitous business of stifling the male children of the Hebrews in the birth "*feared God,*" *i. e.* they feared the true God; for the superstitious fear of idols is never, in the Scripture language, called the fear of God. They feared God in that degree, that they would not execute the king's command; and that the true fear of God was the motive from which they acted appears from the recompense they received: "Because the midwives feared God, God dealt well



with them, and made their families great and prosperous." The mixed multitude which went with Moses out of Egypt, though not genuine Israelites, were surely in some degree worshippers of the God of Israel; for idolaters, in the proper sense of the word, would hardly have been permitted to follow the armies of the Lord. And after forty years, when the Israelites arrived at the land of Canaan, Joshua's spies found, in the town of Jericho, a woman who confessed that "Jehovah the God of Israel, he is God in heaven above and in the earth beneath." And from this persuasion, and in confident expectation of the execution of his vengeance on her guilty country, she entertained the Israelitish spies, and managed their escape; for which she is commemorated by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews among the eminent examples of faith.

These remains of true religion, which were found in Egypt and Canaan so late as the days of Moses and Joshua, are, I think, a proof, that a total apostasy from the invisible Creator to the worship of fictitious deities as the sole managers and masters of this lower world, general as it was now become, had not, however, long prevailed in the countries where the corruptions of idolatry were of the longest standing, and may be supposed to have made the greatest advances.

And as for the idolatry of the older and the milder sort, which, retaining the worship of the true God and acknowledging his providence, added a superstitious adoration of certain inferior spirits, who were supposed to have a delegated command, under the control of the Supreme, over different parts of nature, from *this* even the chosen family itself was not always pure.

When the patriarch was to take up his abode at Bethel, the place where God appeared to him when he fled from Esau, which he considered as sanctified by God's immediate presence, we find him ordering his household to put away their *strange gods*; of which they had no small variety, as appears by the sacred historian's expression, that in compliance with this injunction they gave unto Jacob *all* their strange gods. These were, probably, the idols which Rachel brought with her from Mesopotamia, with others introduced by Judah's marriage with the daughter of a Canaanite.

Upon occasion of his removal to Bethel, the patriarch reformed the worship of his family and his dependents, and took measures to prevent an immediate revival of the corruption. He put the objects of superstitious adoration out of sight, burying the idols under an oak near Shechem. But none that is conversant with the sacred history of the Israelites can doubt, that after Jacob's death, his descendants contracted a new stain; and in the later years of their sojournment in Goshen, were deeply infected with the idolatry which then prevailed in Egypt, to which in the desert they discovered an attachment. The molten calf they made in Horeb was surely not the first they had worshipped.

I have now considered, as I proposed, the general state of religion in the world before the institution of the Jewish church. I have shown you the seductive form in which idolatry began, and the slow progress that it made; which is partly to be ascribed to the means employed by pious nations in the beginning to resist the corruption, but in much greater part, as I shall hereafter show, to the merciful providence of God. Idolatry, in that malignant form which disowns

the true God, and attaches itself entirely to fictitious divinities, prevailed nowhere till some short time, perhaps a century or more, before the deliverance of the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage. Idolatry in its milder form, acknowledging the Supreme Providence, and retaining the fear and worship of the true God, but adding the superstitious worship of fictitious deities, prevailed everywhere from the days of Abraham, his single family excepted; insomuch that, after the death of Abraham and Isaac, the chosen family itself was from time to time infected.

Now it is to be observed, that paganism in this milder form was rather to be called a corrupt than a false religion; just as at this day the religion of the church of Rome is more properly corrupt than false. It is not a false religion; for the professors of it receive, with the fullest submission of the understanding to its mysteries, the whole Gospel. They fear God. They trust in Christ as the author of salvation. They worship the three persons in the unity of the Godhead. The Roman church, therefore, hath not renounced the truth, but she has corrupted it; and she hath corrupted it in the very same manner, and nearly in the same degree, in which the truth of the patriarchal religion was corrupted by the first idolaters; adding to the fear and worship of God and his Son the inferior fear and worship of deceased men, whose spirits they suppose to be invested with some delegated authority over Christ's church on earth. Now, the corruptions being so similar in kind, and pretty equal in degree, the idolaters of antiquity and the Papists of modern times seem much upon a footing.

Nor can I understand that these idolaters, so long as they acknowledged the providence and retained the

worship of the true God, and believed in the promises to the fathers, were more separated from the church of Noah by their corruptions than the Papists now, by similar corruptions, are separated from the true catholic church of Christ.

The ancient idolaters were not separated from the patriarchal church till their superstition ended in a total apostasy. The superstitions of Romanists may terminate in a similar apostasy equally complete, and then will they be equally separated from the church of Christ. And this I say not in any bitterness of zeal against those of the Roman communion, whom I maintain to be as yet a part of the great Shepherd's flock, although in danger of being lost, but merely to compare past things with present, and to show by the analogy of modern times what was the true state of religion in the world at large in the middle ages of idolatry between its first rise and its last stage of a total apostasy.

When this took place, the Gentile world were cut off from all communion with the worshippers of the true God by the institution of the Jewish church, from which idolaters of every degree and denomination were excluded. But in the whole intermediate period, the Gentiles were nothing less than the corrupt branch of the old patriarchal church, the church of Noah and of Shem; and the family of Abraham were nothing more than the reformed part of it. Now, since a church in any state of corruption short of apostasy, through God's merciful forbearance, retains the *privileges* of a church; that is, is indulged in those advantages which God of his free mercy grants to the general society of his worshippers on earth, and for this reason, that in the merciful judgment of our

heavenly Father, in his pity for the infirmities of the human understanding, nothing but the apostacy of the heart extinguishes the character of a worshipper.— I shall now enquire how far the Gentile world, in the middle ages between Abraham and Moses, considered as a corrupt branch of the patriarchal church, might be in the merciful care of Providence; what means might be used on the part of God to keep up the remembrance of himself among them, by a right use of which they might have recovered the purity from which they fell, and which, though through the extreme degeneracy of mankind they prevented not a general apostacy for many ages, had a tendency however to the general restoration by raising an universal expectation of the great Restorer. And in this enquiry, I shall proceed as I have done in the preceding part of my subject, by making the analogy of modern times the interpreter of ancient history.

I recur, therefore, to my former example, and I set out with this principle, that the church of Rome is at this day a corrupt church, — a church corrupted with idolatry; with idolatry very much the same in kind and in degree with the worst that ever prevailed among the Egyptians or the Canaanites till within one or two centuries at the most of the time of Moses. Yet we see this corrupt, this idolatrous church of Rome, has her priests and her bishops, who, deriving in continual succession from the apostles, are true priests and true bishops, invested with the authority which, by the original institutions, belongs to those two orders. The priests of the corrupt church of Rome have a true authority (I speak not of an exclusive authority in prejudice of the Protestant priesthood), but they have their share of the common

authority of priests of the church catholic to preach the word of God, although they preach other things for which they have no authority.

They have a true authority to administer the sacraments, although they have no authority to institute *new* sacraments; and we doubt not, notwithstanding their presumption in preaching adventitious doctrines, and in obtruding supernumerary sacraments, that the *true* word preached by them, and the *true* sacraments administered, are accompanied with God's blessing, and produce a salutary effect on the heart of the hearer.

Again, the bishops of this corrupt church have, in common with the bishops of the Protestant and of the Greek churches, all the authority of the first successors of the apostles, that may be supposed to subsist without the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit.

If they usurp rights which the inspired apostles never claimed, their *just claims* are not invalidated by those unwarrantable pretensions: they are to judge of the qualifications of those that would be ordained: they have authority to appoint to the priest's office, and to consecrate to their own by the imposition of their hands: they are the overseers of Christ's flock: they have the power to suspend heterodox or immoral priests from the exercise of their function, and to exclude laics of scandalous lives from the sacraments: in a word, to inflict ecclesiastical censures and penalties for ecclesiastical offences. Like other magistrates, they are accountable to God for any abuse of power, but still the right of government is in their hands. In their own church, and over those of their own communion, they have a true episcopal jurisdic-

tion. And this is the avowed opinion of the church of England, as it must be the opinion of all who acknowledge the divine institution of the episcopal order. For when a priest who has received his orders from a bishop of the church of Rome openly abjures the errors of that church, and declares his assent to the articles of the church of England, he becomes immediately a priest in our church without any second ordination from a Protestant bishop: as a laic of that church who openly abjures its errors is admitted to our communion without any second baptism by the hands of a Protestant priest.

Now, since in these days the church of Rome, though corrupted with idolatry, has her priests and her bishops, it may seem the less strange that the ancient patriarchal church, when she became corrupted with a similar idolatry in an equal degree should have her priests and her prophets. True priests and true prophets, though not perhaps untainted with the errors of their times; priests who offered sacrifices to the true God, and had authority to accept the oblations of the laity; prophets who were commissioned to resist the prevailing corruption, and to prophesy of the great redemption. That these two orders were maintained through the wonderful mercy of God in idolatrous countries, till the degeneracy came to that extreme degree that he judged it fit to separate the apostates, and to put his chosen people under the safe keeping of the law, I shall now prove from the sacred records.

And, first, for the priests of the patriarchal church in her corrupted state.

In the days of Abraham, a prince of a *Canaanitish* nation, Melchizedek, king of Salem, was the priest of

the Most High God. The Jews have, indeed, a vain tradition that this Melchizedek was the patriarch Shem. According to the chronology which the Jews choose to follow, Shem might be alive at the time that Melchizedek received the tenths from Abraham. But by a truer account, which the Jews followed in more ancient times, and which was followed by all the primitive fathers of the Christian church, Shem was dead above four hundred years before Abraham was born; and if we were even to grant that he might be living in the days of Abraham, the Jews have not yet explained how he came by the kingdom which this tradition gives him in the land of Canaan. But we have it on better than rabbinical authority, on the authority of an apostle, that Melchizedek had no connection with the family of Abraham. "He counted not his descent," saith St. Paul, "from them." And St. Paul's argument, as is acutely remarked by the learned Bishop Patrick, would be equally inconclusive whether Melchizedek's descent were counted from Abraham, or Abraham's from him. Melchizedek, therefore, was neither descendant nor any ancestor of Abraham. He was, as Josephus, the learned historian of the Jews, candidly acknowledges, a prince of Canaan.

Yet was he no self-constituted usurping priest, but a priest by divine appointment and commission, as appears by the deference which Abraham paid him: "For consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." This tenth of the spoils was no payment to Melchizedek in his temporal capacity as king of Salem, for any assistance he had given Abraham in the battle; for he went out to meet him when he was *returning*



from the slaughter of the kings. The king of Salem, therefore, had taken no part in the expedition ; he had remained at home inactive, and went out to meet the patriarch upon his return, in the quality of God's high priest, to pronounce God's blessing upon him, to bear his public testimony to Abraham as God's chosen servant, and to declare that it was by the immediate succour of the arm of the Most High God, whose priest he was, that Abraham's little army had overthrown the confederate kings ; and the tenths, being no payment for a military service, could be nothing else than a religious offering on the part of Abraham, by which he acknowledged the protection of the Most High God, and acknowledged the authority of Melchizedek's priesthood ; the divine authority of which appears again more strongly in this circumstance, that this priest Melchizedek was no less than the type of that high-priest who now standeth at God's right hand making intercession for the sins of all mankind. Of his universal everlasting priesthood, the priesthood of Melchizedek was the type.

The prophet David declares the nature of Christ's priesthood, by the analogy it bears to the priesthood of Melchizedek. And from this analogy, St. Paul builds his great argument for the superiority of Christ's priesthood above the Levitical. Christ is for this reason a priest for ever, because he is after the order of Melchizedek.

From all this it appears, that in the days of Abraham, at least, there was a priesthood among the Canaanites of higher rank than the Levitical, and more exactly typical of the priesthood of the Son of God.

Again, in the days of Joseph, we find in Egypt a

Potipherah a priest of On, whose daughter Joseph married ; and in the days of Moses, a Jethro a priest of Midian, whose daughter Moses married. It has been made a question concerning both these persons, whether they were priests at all. The doubt arises from the ambiguity of the Hebrew word, which is used in some parts of Scripture for a prince or magistrate. But it is to be observed, that not a single passage is to be found in the books of Moses where it is used in these senses, except it be in these two instances. That they were both priests, was clearly the opinion of the Jews who made the first Greek translation of the Pentateuch, of the Jewish historian Josephus, and of St. Jerome.

And if they were priests at all, they were priests of the true God, the one in Egypt in the town of On in the days of Joseph, the other among the Midianites in the days of Moses. For it is hardly credible, that Providence should have permitted either Joseph or Moses to contract an alliance by marriage with a priest of any idolatrous temple.

Thus it appears, that the true God had an order of priests in the Gentile world down to the time of the Mosaic institution. These priests were the corrupt remains of the ancient priesthood of Noah's universal church.

We have then, I think, found the priests of the patriarchal church in its corrupted state ; let us now look for its prophets. This is a point still more material to establish than the existence of the priesthood, because it is the existence of true prophecies among idolatrous nations which is the chief subject of our enquiry ; and true prophecies, that is, prophecies of divine original, could not have been found among

idolatrous nations, unless certain persons had lived amongst them who were gifted by the spirit of God, and favoured with divine communications.

But of this order we have two undoubted instances, — the one in Job, the other in Balaam.

Job, by the consent of the learned of all ages, was no Israelite. He was certainly of the family of Abraham; for whatever difficulties may be raised about his particular country, none will deny that it lay in some part of that region of which the whole was occupied by Abraham's descendants. He was not, however, of the elected branch of the family, and was probably of that stock which became at last the worst of idolaters, the Edomites. That the country in which he lived was in his time infected with an incipient idolatry, appears from the mention that he makes of the worship of the sun and moon as a crime with which he was himself untainted; a circumstance from which he could have pretended no merit, had not the prevailing fashion of his country and his times presented a strong temptation to the crime. And as there is no mention of any other kind of idolatry in the book of Job, it is reasonable to conclude, that in his time the corruption had gone no greater length.

Now, that Job was a prophet is so universally confessed, that it is needless to dwell upon the proof of it. He was a prophet in the declining age of the patriarchal church, in the interval between Esau, from whom he was descended, and Moses, whose time he preceded; and he prophesied in an idolatrous country, where the sun and moon were worshipped.

In this idolatrous country he prophesied of the Redeemer; and it is a circumstance that deserves

particular attention, that he prophesies of the Redeemer, not without manifest allusion to the divinity of his nature, and express mention of the resurrection of the body as the effect of his redemption; — two articles of our creed, which, we are told with great confidence, are modern innovations; whereas, we find them not only in the Jewish prophets, but in far more ancient prophets of a more ancient church.

“ I know,” saith Job, “ that my Redeemer liveth; I know that he *now* liveth; that is, that his nature is to live. He describes the Redeemer, you see, in language much allied to that in which Jehovah describes his own nature in the conference with Moses at the bush. Jehovah describes himself by his uncaused existence; Job describes the Redeemer by a life inseparable from his essence. “ I know that in the latter days this ever-living Redeemer shall stand upon the earth. He shall take up his residence among men in an embodied form; God shall be manifested in the flesh to destroy the works of the Devil: he shall stand upon the earth in the latter days; in the last period of the world’s existence;” which implies that this standing of the Redeemer upon the earth will close the great scheme of Providence for man’s restoration: “ and although he shall not stand upon the earth before the latter days, yet I know that he is *my* Redeemer; that my death, which must take place many ages before his appearance, will not exclude me from my share in his redemption. For though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Though nothing will be then remaining of my external person, though the form of this body will have been long destroyed, the organisation of its constituent parts demolished, and

its very substance dissipated, the softer part become the food of worms bred in its own putrefaction, the solid bones moulded into powder ; notwithstanding this ruin of my outward fabric, the immortal principle within me shall not only survive, but its decayed mansion will be restored. It will be re-united to a body, of which the organs will not only connect it with the external world, but serve to cement its union with its Maker. For in my flesh, with the corporeal eye, with the eye of the immortal body which I shall then assume, I shall see the divine Majesty in the person of the glorified Redeemer.”

Such was the tenor of Job’s prophecies, of a prophet of the Gentiles ; and such was the light which God granted to the Gentile world in the first stage of its corruption. And that this light was not withdrawn till the corruption attained its height, we learn from the second instance, the Aramaean prophet Balaam.

What might be the exact degree of the degeneracy in Balaam’s country, I cannot take upon me to determine. But the bordering nation, the Moabites, were addicted to that gross idolatry which made homicide and prostitution an essential part of its religious rites. From the extreme depravity of the times, and from the wickedness of Balaam’s own character, it has been doubted whether he was properly a prophet. It has been imagined that he might be a sorcerer, who practised some wicked arts of magical divination, and owed his fame to the casual success of some of his predictions ; that those remarkable prophecies which he delivered when Balak called him to curse the Israelites, were the result of an *extraordinary* impulse upon his mind upon that particular

occasion, and no more prove that the gift of prophecy was a permanent endowment of his mind, as it was in Job and the Jewish prophets, than the speaking of his ass upon the same occasion proves that the animal had a permanent use of the faculty of speech.

The difficulty of conceiving that true prophets should be found in an idolatrous nation, if I mistake not, I have already removed, by the analogy which I have shown to subsist between ancient and modern corruptions. The difficulty of conceiving that the gift of prophecy should be imparted to a wicked character, will be much softened, if not entirely removed, if we recollect the confessed crimes of some of the Jewish prophets, and the confessed indiscretions of some persons who shared in the miraculous gifts of the Spirit in the primitive churches. And if once we admit, as the evidence of plain fact compels us to admit, that the gift of prophecy is not always in proportion to the moral worth of the character, we must confess it to be a question which is beyond the ability of human reason to decide, in what proportion they must necessarily correspond, or with what degree of depravity in the moral character the prophetic talent may be incompatible. Balaam's impiety at last ran to the length of open rebellion against God; for he suggested to the king of Moab, as the only means by which the fortunes of the Israelites could be injured, the infernal stratagem of enticing them to take a part in that idolatry for which, by the tenor of his own predictions, the Moabites were destined to destruction. But this apostacy of Balaam's was subsequent to the prophecies that he delivered to Balak, and was the effect of the temptation which the occasion presented, the offer of riches and preferment in Balak's court. It is pro-

bable, indeed, that his heart had never been right with God, or these objects could not have laid hold of him so forcibly. But this, for any thing that appears from the sacred history, might be his first act of open impiety and rebellion; and the conclusion, that in the former part of his life he had been too bad a man to be honoured with the prophetic gift, is precarious. The circumstances of the story are of far more weight than any reasoning built upon such precarious principles as man's notion of the manner in which the divine gift should be distributed; and, from the circumstances of the story, it appears that he was a true prophet of the true God. When Balak's messengers first came to him, he speaks the language of one who had the fear of God habitually upon his mind. He disclaims all power of his own to bless or curse, to take any step in the business but under God's express direction and permission. He must have God's leave to go Balak; and when he comes to Balak, he must take heed to speak what Jehovah puts into his mouth. Although Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, he could not transgress the word of Jehovah *his* God, to do less or more. This was his language in the *ordinary* state of his mind, when he was under no prophetic impulse; and it is remarkable that he speaks of God in the same terms which were afterwards in use among the Jewish prophets: "Jehovah *my* God," "Jehovah, the God whose prophet am I." In ecstasy he expresses the same sentiments in a more figured language. He describes his own faculty of prediction in images the most exactly expressive of the prophetic gifts and the prophetic office; expressive of no singular unexampled impulse upon this

occasion, but of frequent and habitual intercourse with the Most High God, by voice and visions, in dream and in trance.

It is very remarkable, that in the strain of these predictions there is no indication of that violent constraint which some have imagined upon the mind of the speaker, or that he was more a necessary agent than any other prophet under the divine impulse. In every instance of prophecy by divine inspiration, thoughts and images were presented to the prophet's mind by the inspiring Spirit, which no meditation or study of his own could have suggested; and therefore the mind of the man under this influence might properly be considered as a machine in the hand of God. Yet the will of the man in this, as in every instance in which man acts under the control of Providence, seems to have been the spring by which the machine was put in motion.

And though in conceiving the prophecy the man was passive, in uttering it he was a free and voluntary agent; which appears from this circumstance, that the prophet had it in his choice to dissemble and prevaricate, to utter smooth things, and to prophecy deceits. And this was Balaam's situation when he tells Balak's messengers that he cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah his God; that what God should put in his mouth, *that* he must speak. It is not that his organs of speech were not upon these occasions in his own command, that they were determined by some other principle than his own will to the utterance of certain words which might convey certain thoughts, but that he had no power of uttering true predictions, of pronouncing either blessing or curse that might prove effectual, otherwise than as he spake



in conformity to the divine motions ; and the alacrity and ardour of his prophetic strains indicate a satisfaction and complacency of his own mind in uttering his conceptions.

There is one passage in his second song, which, as it lies in the English Bibles, may seem to contradict this assertion : “ Behold, I have received commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it.” Which may seem to say, that if he *could*, he would have reversed the blessing. But the original, according to the reading of the best manuscripts, expresses a very different sentiment : “ Behold, to bless was I brought hither (*brought*, not by Balak’s invitation, but by God), to bless was I brought hither. I will bless, and I will not decline it.” And the same sense appears in the Greek translation of the Septuagint ; and, accordingly, he pronounces his blessing without reserve or reluctance. He discovers no unwillingness to paint the prosperity of the Jewish nation in the highest colours, no concern for the calamities that awaited their enemies ; and in his last effusions, his mind seems to enjoy the great scene that was before him, of the happiness and glory of the Messiah’s reign, and the final extermination of idolaters.

Another circumstance to be remarked is, that no traces of idolatrous superstition or magical enchantment appear in the rites which were used upon this occasion. We read, indeed, that after the third sacrifice, “ he went not, as at other times, to seek enchantments.” Some have taken alarm at the word *enchantments*, taking it in a bad sense. No conclusion can be drawn from a passage so obscure, as all who are versed in the Hebrew language must

confess this to be in the original. The words which are rendered “as at other times,” seem not to allude, as these English words should do, to something that had been Balaam’s ordinary practice upon *former* occasions, but to what he had done before upon *this* occasion. “He went not as from time to time before ;” or, “he went not as he had done once and again, to seek enchantments.” What these enchantments might be which he went to seek, since it cannot be determined by the mere force of the word *enchantments*, may be best conjectured by considering what Balaam had done once and again upon the present occasion.

Now once and again after each of the first sacrifices he retired to a solitary place. And what sought he in this retirement? What he sought may be divined by what he met with. He met God, and God put a word in his mouth ; and this the third time Balaam did not. He stayed with Balak and the Moabitic chiefs in the place where the third sacrifice had been performed, patiently waiting the event, with his face toward the wilderness, where the Israelite army lay encamped. These enchantments, therefore, which once and again he went to seek, and which the third time he sought not, were, as it should seem, no idolatrous or magical enchantments, but either some stated rites of invocation of the inspiring spirit which he practised in retirement, or, as I rather think, some sensible signs by which, in the early ages of the world, God was pleased to communicate with his prophets ; some voice or vision. His preparatory rite was, that in each place where he took his station he directed the king of Moab to make seven altars, and to offer seven bullocks and seven rams. In this

there is nothing of idolatry, but every circumstance is characteristic of a solemn sacrifice to the true God. The altars were raised expressly for the particular purpose of this sacrifice. He used no altar that was ready made, lest it should have been profaned by offerings to the idols of the country. And being raised in a hurry upon the spot, they could not be durable or stately erections of workmanship and art (such altars as the Israelites were permitted to erect), but simple mounds of earth, or heaps of unpolished stone, which could not long remain after they had served the present solemn business, to be afterwards profaned by idolatrous sacrifices.

Some have suspected something of idolatrous superstition in the number of the altars and of the victims. On the contrary, I am persuaded, that the choice of the number *seven* was a solemn and significant appropriation of the offerings to the Supreme God, the Maker of the world. The last business in the book of Job, when the great argument between Job and his friends is brought to a conclusion, is a solemn sacrifice, not devised by Job or any of his friends, but prescribed by the *express voice of God*. And this sacrifice, like Balaam's, consists of seven bullocks and of seven rams. It should seem, therefore, that in the earliest ages it was a characteristic rite of the pure patriarchal worship to sacrifice on occasions of great solemnity by sevens. The key to this rite is the institution of the Sabbath. The observance of the seventh day was the sacrament of the ancient church; of that church, which was more ancient than the Jewish; of that priesthood, which was more dignified than Aaron's; of the church of Adam before the flood; of the church of Noah after it. For the

same reason that the seventh day was sanctified, the victims bled by sevens ; and to sacrifice seven rams or seven bullocks at a time, was to declare that the offering was made to that God who created the world in six days, and to whose service the seventh day was therefore consecrated. Upon the same principle it was that much of the Jewish ritual was governed by the number seven. The golden candlestick had seven branches supporting seven burning lamps. When atonement was to be made for the sin of a priest or of the congregation, the vail was to be sprinkled seven times with the blood of the offering, and the mercy-seat was to be sprinkled seven times on the great day of annual expiation. The festivals of the Jews were celebrated each for seven days successively, and among the extraordinary sacrifices of each day were seven or twice seven lambs. When the ark of the covenant was brought from the house of Obed-Edom to Jerusalem, the sacrifice on that great occasion was seven bullocks and seven rams. Perhaps, in a much later age than Balaam's, the number of his altars and his victims would have afforded no certain character of a pure worship ; for in the later ages of idolatry we find a superstitious veneration for the number seven among the heathens. But thus it is with all ceremonies, that their significance depends upon the interpretation which custom makes of them. And the interpretation of the same ceremony will be different, according to the different state of opinions in different countries and at different times. Hence what was originally an act of pure devotion, may become, in later times, a superstitious rite. The stone which Jacob erected at Bethel, became afterwards an occasion of idolatry. So, to offer animals by sevens

was no longer an appropriation of the sacrifice to the invisible Creator, when it could no longer be understood to allude to that particular circumstance in the creation, that it was finished in six days. And to this no allusion could be understood, where the circumstance itself was not remembered. But this hinders not but that in the days of Balaam, who lived within a century of Job, the same ceremonies had the same meaning in Balaam's worship as in Job's; and that the number of his altars and his victims, was a circumstance which in that age gave a public character to his sacrifice, by which Balak and his princes, and the confederate armies of Moab and Midian, might understand that it was offered in contempt of their idols, and in honour of the God who rested from the business of creation on the seventh day.

Now, when all these circumstances are put together; the age of Balaam, that he lived within a century after Job; his country, which was in the neighbourhood of Job's, — part, at least, of a tract which was occupied by descendants of Abraham, or by collateral branches of the family; his open acknowledgment of Jehovah as his God; that both in his ordinary state of mind and under the divine impulse, he refers his prophetic talent to the inspiration of Jehovah; that he disclaims any power of his own to bless or to curse, otherwise than as the interpreter of the counsels of Heaven; that he practises no magical enchantments, but offers sacrifices to God after the patriarchal rites; that in uttering his predictions, he appears not to have been more a necessary agent than every other prophet: when to all these circumstances we add, that he uttered a true prophecy, a prophecy

extending, if I read its meaning aright, from his own time to the Messiah's second advent ; a prophecy which in every part which relates to times which are now gone by, hath been fulfilled with wonderful exactness, and in other parts which relate to ages yet to come, harmonises with the predictions of the Jewish prophets and of the Apocalypse ; — can a doubt remain, that the man who, to all secondary characters of a prophet, added this great character, that by a divine impulse, as is confessed, he delivered a prophecy of things too distant to fall within any man's natural foresight ; a prophecy which the world hath seen in part accomplished, and which, in its other parts, resembles other prophecies not yet accomplished, but confessedly divine ; a prophecy which, for the variety of its composition in its various parts, for the aptness, the beauty, the majesty, the horror of its images, may compare with the most animated effusions of the Hebrew bards ; can a doubt remain whether this man, with all the imperfections of his private character, was a true prophet ?

I am not ignorant that Origen, and other divines of ancient and modern times, have been unwilling to acknowledge his pretensions. If their authority should seem to outweigh the evidence drawn from the particulars of his story, I have a greater authority to produce against them, the authority of an inspired apostle. “The dumb ass,” saith St. Peter, alluding to Balaam's story, “the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the *prophet* ;” acknowledging him, you see, for a prophet, though, for the folly of loving the wages of unrighteousness, he calls him mad.

Balaam, therefore, was a prophet ; for, with the evidence of facts and the authority of an inspired

apostle on our side, we will be confident in the assertion, though Origen and Calvin be against us. Balaam was a prophet. He lived in an age of gross idolatry, and prophesied to idolaters. In him, as I conceive, the prophetic order without the pale of the Mosaic church, which was now formed, was extinguished; for I find no traces in history, sacred or profane, of a true prophet out of Israel after the death of Balaam. He fell, you know, in the general carnage of the Midianites, and was himself among the first instances of God's vengeance on apostates. It is probable, therefore, that the prophecies which he delivered at Shittim were the last that were addressed to the old patriarchal church, now corrupt in the extreme, and on the verge of dissolution. It is remarkable that this church should be admonished by the last words of her last prophet of the impending vengeance, as the Jewish church, by a greater prophet, within a few years of her dissolution, was admonished of *her* fate. It is remarkable that this last call of God to that apostatizing church should be the first occasion, upon record at least, upon which the Messiah is described in images of terror, as a warlike prince reducing the world by conquest, and putting his vanquished enemies to the sword. With these predictions of the Messiah (predictions which, by all expositors, Jews as well as Christians, by Rabbis of later times as well as by the more candid and more knowing Jews of earlier ages, are understood of the Messiah), with these predictions, Balaam intermixes many brief but eloquent assertions of the first principles of natural religion: — the omnipotence of the Deity, his universal providence, and the immutability of his counsels. And, to be a standing monument of these great truths, he leaves a very

general but very exact prediction of the fortunes of the empires and kingdoms that were at that time the most considerable, and of those that in succeeding ages were successively to arise and perish in their turns. And his images bear all the analogy to those of later prophets, of Daniel in particular, and the sublime author of the Apocalypse, which the language of a general sketch can bear to that of a minute detail; and the names and epithets which he applies to the Supreme Being are the very same which are used by Moses, Job, and the inspired writers of the Jews; namely, *God*, the *Allmighty*, the *Most High*, and *Jehovah*; which is a proof, that, gross as the corruptions of idolatry were now become, the patriarchal religion was not sufficiently forgotten for its language to be grown obsolete.

In this Balaam set the sun of prophecy in the horizon of the Gentile world, and yet a total night came not. For some ages a twilight glimmered in their sky, which gradually decayed, and became at last almost insensible, but began to brighten again during the captivity of the Jews under the Babylonian monarchs, and from that period continued to gather strength, till at length the morning-star took its station over the stable at Bethlehem. The Sun of righteousness arose to set no more, and the light again was clear and universal.

You will recollect what I advanced as a probable conjecture in a former part of these disquisitions, that upon the first appearance of idolatry, when the uninfected part of mankind would be taking all means to check the progress of the contagion, the traditional history of the creation, the deluge, and the promises to the first patriarchs, which at that time would, pro-



bably be pretty perfect, would be committed to writing. We may assert, I think, with more certainty, that the prophecies of Job and Balaam, and of other prophets of that period, if any other existed, (and many might, although their works and their very names have been long since forgotten;) it is more certain, I say, of the prophecies of these ages, that they would be committed to writing, than of the earlier traditions. For that letters were older than the beginnings of idolatry cannot be proved, though, in my opinion, it is more probable than the contrary. Whereas it is certain, not only that the Israelites had letters before the law, but that books and writing were in use in the days of Job, in that part of the country where Job and Balaam lived; and if in use in the days of Job, certainly not out of use in the later days of Balaam. For although religion in these ages was upon the decline, arts and sciences were in a stage of progress and advancement. — That Balaam's prophecies, at Shittim in particular, were committed to writing among the Moabites and the Midianites, is, I think, incontestable. For to the Moabites and Midianites they were delivered, not within hearing of the Israelites. And how did Moses, who heard them not, come by the knowledge of them, unless it were that they were committed to writing, and that the books of the Moabites or the Midianites fell into the conqueror's hands? Moses, it is true, was an inspired writer, which may seem to some to account sufficiently for his knowledge of every thing that he relates.

But God, even in the more immediate interpositions of his providence, acts by natural means and second causes, so far as natural means and second

causes may be made to serve the purpose. The influence, therefore, of the inspiring Spirit on the mind of an historian, can be nothing more than to secure him from mistake and falsity, by strengthening his memory, and by maintaining in his heart a religious love and reverence for truth, that he may be incapable of omission through forgetfulness, and may be invincibly fortified against all temptations to forge, conceal, disguise, or prevaricate. That inspiration ever was the means of conveying the first knowledge of facts to an historian's mind, is a very unreasonable supposition. It is to suppose an unnecessary miracle. For a miracle is always unnecessary where natural means might serve the purpose. And the supposition of an unnecessary miracle is always an unreasonable, and indeed a dangerous supposition. Unreasonable, because no evidence can prove it, and no plausible argument can be alleged for it; dangerous, because it leads to an unlimited and pernicious credulity. We conclude, therefore, that Balaam's prophecies at Shittim were committed to writing by the people to whom they were delivered, because they are recorded by the inspired historian, to whom they were *not* delivered, who could not by any other means have come to the knowledge of them, and who, by virtue of his inspiration, was incapable of the dishonest act of forging facts of which he had no knowledge. But further, it appears from another inspired writer of the Jewish church, that other authentic accounts of Balaam's prophecies at Shittim, besides that which Moses had transmitted, was current among the Jews in a very late age, which contained some particulars which Moses, as foreign to the subject of his history, has omitted. Moses has preserved the public predictions

which related to the fortunes of the Israelites and their adversaries in all ages, and to the universally interesting subject of the Messiah.

These other accounts contained the particulars of a private conference between Balaam and Balak, in which the idolatrous king enquires of God's prophet, in what way *he* the king might make expiation for his offences. "Remember, O my people," saith the prophet Micah, "what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, from Shittim unto Gilgal." And then he relates the conference. The word *remember* evidently refers the Israelites of Micah's time to some account of this conference which they might remember, which they ought to have holden in remembrance. Which account, in the judgment of Micah, who thus solemnly appeals to it, was authentic, and we must believe it to be authentic upon the credit of Micah's inspiration. Now what could this be but some written records of the prophecies at Shittim, transmitted from the times of Balaam, which must have come to the Israelites, as the other account came to them, from the original books of the Moabites?

Balaam's prophecies at Shittim, therefore, were committed to writing among the people to whom they were first delivered. If these prophecies, why not earlier prophecies of Balaam's? for that these were not the first and only prophecies, appears from the reputation he held as a prophet when the war between Balak and the Israelites broke out.

If Balaam's prophecies, why not those of earlier prophets? The idolatry of the age in which they lived would not prevent it; for idolatry is always superstitious, and superstition would receive without

distinction whatever went under the name of a prophecy, especially if the style in which it was conceived might at all suit with its pretensions. Accordingly we find, that idolaters were not at all deficient in their veneration for the true prophets. It was rather their error, that without distinguishing between the true prophet and the false, they entertained an extravagant respect for both, ascribing to them not only a foresight, but a command of futurity. This unreasonable belief in the prophet, not as the messenger, but as the assessor of the gods, sharing their power rather than declaring their will, was itself a branch of idolatry, even when the true prophet was the object of it. But the consequence of this superstition would be, that all prophecies, true and false, would be promiscuously recorded. At first, perhaps, while idolatry, in Shem's family at least, was the crime of individuals only, and the true worship of God had the support of the civil magistrate; (and in the country where Job and Balaam lived, the first public defection must have taken place in the interval between Job and Balaam; for, in Job's time, the first and mildest species of idolatry, the worship of the sun and moon, was an iniquity punished by the judge;) while this state of things continued, prophecies would be added from time to time, as they were delivered, to those earlier collections of sacred history, which, if our conjecture be admitted that they existed, would probably be in the custody of the priests.

If no collections of history of the antiquity we have supposed existed, the first prophecies that were committed to writing would form a sacred volume, which unquestionably would be committed to the care of the priests, whose office it would be to add to it from time

to time any later prophecies that might seem of sufficient importance to be registered in the archives of the church ; for this is agreeable to what we find to have been in later ages the universal practice of all nations.

Among all nations certain books, from the supposed authenticity of early records and pretended oracles which they contain, have been holden in religious veneration ; and these have ever been preserved in the temples under the care of the priests, who from time to time have added such new matter as to themselves and the civil rulers, might seem of sufficient moment to challenge a place in these sacred registers. We have an instance of this practice among God's people ; for when Joshua, some little time before his death, by his last pathetic exhortation to the general assembly of the tribes of Israel, had brought the people to a solemn renewal of their vows of obedience to Jehovah, he wrote the story of the whole transaction in the book of the law of God. He *added* this narrative to the sacred volume of the law, which, by Moses' express command, was deposited in the sanctuary on one side of the ark of the covenant. Now, while the priests and the magistrates were themselves free from any idolatrous taint, the sacred books in their custody would suffer no wilful corruption. But when the keepers of these books became themselves infected with idolatrous superstition, they would not lose their veneration for writings which had long been esteemed divine, nor would they be so hardy as to destroy any part of the original deposit, or even to make any considerable alterations in the text, however unfavourable it might be to the new system in the interests of which they were now engaged. The contrariety would not be perceived, nor would such measures be taken to abolish it. Priest-

craft indeed is politic and daring, but simple superstition is both timid and indiscreet. Priestcraft was the growth of later ages, and the consequence of a further corruption. For priestcraft, which is a cunning management of the superstitions of the people for the temporal advantage of the priesthood, supposes a priesthood itself free of superstition, and was never known in the world till the Gentile priests of *sincere* idolaters (if the expression may be allowed) became infidels. Simple superstition was the first stage of the corruption among priests, no less than laics; and simple superstition hath no freedom in the pursuit of ends, no determination in the choice of means, but is the slave of fear and habit.

Habit therefore previously formed, would, for some time, preserve a respect for the records of the ancient church, when the pure religion was forsaken. And while this habit operated, fear would prevent any corruptions of them by wilful mutilation, changes or erasures. They would be liable, however, to a corruption of another kind. The priests receiving false oracles with no less veneration than the true, and zealous for the credit of superstitious rites of worship, would make large additions of fable to the historic part, and of feigned predictions of impostors to the prophetic. Still the original true history and true prophecy would be preserved, and, blended with the false, would, from age to age, while the corruption lasted, be carefully laid up under the care of the priests, and make a part of the treasures of the heathen temples.

Nor is the strange mixture of sense and absurdity, of rational religion and impious superstition, which appear in the lives and opinions of the wiser heathens, to be traced with equal probability to any other source.

The purest morals in the ordinary life, joined with obscene and impious rites of worship; a just notion of the moral attributes of the Deity, accompanied with a belief in the subordinate power of impure and cruel dæmons; a clear understanding of the nature of the human mind as an immaterial substance and a voluntary agent, connected with a persuasion of the influence of the stars on the affairs of men, not only in the revolutions and commotions of empires, but on the private fortunes of every individual: — these were the inconsistencies, not only of the popular creed and of the popular practice, but of the creed and of the practice of the wisest and the best of their philosophers. Socrates himself, pure as his morality and sublime as his theology were, so far as the supreme God was their object, worshipped the gods of his country according to the established rites.\*

Now, how may we account for these contradictions in the opinions, and these inconsistencies in the conduct, of wise and conscientious men? for such, it must be confessed, many of the heathen philosophers were, notwithstanding the abuse which is sometimes so liberally bestowed upon them by ignorant declaimers. Whence was it, that the same men should practise rational devotion in the closet, and come abroad to join in a rank superstition? that they should form themselves to the general habits of sobriety and temperance, and yet occasionally partake of the indecent liberties of a Greek festival? unless it was that they found the principles of true religion and the rites of an idolatrous worship established on what appeared to them the same authority, upon the credit of their sacred

\* That he died a martyr to the doctrine of the unity of the Divine substance, is a vulgar error.

books, in which both were alike inculcated ; books, to which they could not but allow some authority, at the same time that they had no certain means of distinguishing the authentic part from later and corrupt additions. Be that as it may, whether this might be the true source of that inconsistency of principle and practice which was so striking in the lives of virtuous heathens, and is really a phenomenon in the history of mankind, (which I mention, only because it affords a collateral argument for the truth of perhaps the only supposition by which it may be satisfactorily explained ;) the existence of such books as I have described, composed of fable joined with true history and of false prophecies of great antiquity, added to more ancient predictions of God's true prophets, will hardly bear a doubt. Since it is the necessary consequence of principles which cannot reasonably be disputed, that in early ages the worshippers of the true God would use all means to preserve the memory of the first revelations, and that the first idolaters, retaining a blind veneration for these ancient collections, when they no longer knew the real importance of them, would not be less careful to preserve the false oracles in which they equally believed. If such books existed, it cannot bear a doubt that they made the ground-work of all the idolatrous worship of later ages, and, together with the corruption, were the means of perpetuating some disguised and obscure remembrance of true prophecies. So wonderfully hath Providence over-ruled the follies and the crimes of men, rendering them the instruments of his own purpose, and the means of general and lasting good. It was to the remains of these books, which I have shown you to have been in fact the corrupted and mutilated records of the patri-



archal church, that the Greek philosophers were probably indebted for those fragments of the patriarchal creed, from which they drew the just notions that we find scattered in their writings, of the immortality of the soul, a future retribution, the unity of the Divine substance, and even of the trinity of Persons; for of this the sages of the Pythagorean and Platonic schools had some obscure and distorted apprehensions. And to no other source can we refer the expectation that prevailed in the heathen world at large, of a great Personage to arise in some part of the East for the general advantage of mankind.

And in this, I think, you will now agree with me, if you bear in mind the fact that I set out with proving from historical evidence, that certain books which were preserved as a sacred treasure in the heathen temples, contained explicit prophecies of Christ; which are more likely to have been ancient prophecies preserved in the manner I have described, though not without a mixture of corruption, for which, too, I have accounted, than the involuntary effusions of the impostors of later ages, occasionally uttering true predictions under a compulsive influence of the Divine Spirit: an opinion which, I am persuaded, would never have been adopted, had not the severe notions that too long prevailed of an original reprobation of the greater part of mankind, made men unwilling to believe that heathens could be in possession of the smallest particle of true prophecy, and of course cut off all enquiry after the means by which it might be conveyed to them. Beside that, in all questions of difficulty, as this must be confessed to be, men are apt rather to consult their ease, by taking up with the first plausible solution their invention may devise, than to submit to the labour of an accurate investi-

gation of facts, and a circumspect deduction of consequences. The fact, however, that books were preserved in the heathen temples, which contained true prophecies of Christ, rests, as I have shown you, upon the highest historical evidence. Nor does it rest alone upon the contents of those books which were preserved at Rome under the name of the Oracles of the Cumean Sibyl ; the same, perhaps, might be established by another work, which was of no less authority in the East, where it passed for the work of Hystaspes, a Persian Magus of high antiquity. I forbear, however, to exhaust your patience by pushing the enquiry any farther, and shall now dismiss the subject by cautioning you not to take alarm at the names of a Sibyl or a Magus. I assert, not that any of the fabled Sibyls of the old mythology uttered true prophecies, but that some of the prophecies which were ascribed to Sibyls were true prophecies, which the ignorant heathens ascribed to those fabulous personages, when the true origin of them was forgotten. For Hystaspes, I will not too confidently assert that he was not the compiler of the writings which were current under his name ; but I conceive he was only the compiler from originals of high authority. And a Magus, in the old sense of the word, had nothing in common with the impostors that are now called magicians. The Magi were wise men who applied themselves to the study of nature and religion. The religion of the Persians in the latest age that can be given to Hystaspes, if it was at all tainted with idolatry, was only tainted in the first degree. And even in much later times Eastern Magi were the first worshippers of Mary's Holy Child ; which should remove any prejudice the name of a Magus might create.

FOUR DISCOURSES  
ON THE  
NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE  
BY WHICH THE FACT  
OF OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION  
IS ESTABLISHED.



## S E R M O N I.

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ACTS, x. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God.*

**T**HE prop and pillar of the Christian's hope (which being once removed the entire building would give way), is the great event which we at this season commemorate, the resurrection of our Lord; insomuch that the evidence of that fact may properly be considered as the seal of his pretensions, and of the expectation of his followers. If, notwithstanding the pure and holy life which Jesus led, the sublimity of the doctrine which he taught, and the natural excellence of the duties which he enjoined; if, after all the miracles which he performed, he was at last forsaken of the God to whose service his life had been devoted; if his soul at last was left in hell, and the Holy One of God was suffered, like a common man, to become the prey of worms and putrefaction, then truly is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain. It is to no purpose that we exhort you to sacrifice present interest to future hopes; to renounce the gratifications of sense for those promised enjoyments in the presence of God; to rely on his atonement for the pardon of involuntary

offences ; and to trust to a continual supply of the Holy Spirit, proportioned to the temptations which the world presents. It is to no purpose that ye submit to a life of mortification and constraint, of warfare with the world, and of conflict with the sensual appetite : it is to no purpose that ye stand in jeopardy every hour, in painful apprehension of the wiles of the great deceiver, the treachery of your own unguarded hearts, and the sallies of unconquered appetites. “ If Christ be not risen from the dead,” all promises that are made to you in his name are vain, and the contempt of the present world is folly. If Christ be not risen from the dead, the consequence must either be, that he was an *imposter*, and that his whole doctrine was a fraud ; or if the purity of his life might still screen him from so foul an imputation, and the truth of his pretensions be supposed consistent with a failure of his predictions in the most important article, you would only have in him a discouraging example of how little estimation in the sight of God is the utmost height of virtue to which human nature can attain. If neither the unspotted sanctity of our Saviour’s character, nor his intimate union with the first principle of life itself, could give him a deliverance from the bonds of death, what hope for us who have neither claim nor plea but what is founded on the value of the Redeemer’s sufferings ; no union with God but what we enjoy as the disciples and worshippers of his incarnate Son. But, beloved, “ Christ is *risen* from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” His *resurrection* was the accomplishment both of the ancient prophecies and of his own prediction ; a declaration on the part of God that the great atonement was accepted ; an attestation to the truth of our Sa-

viour's doctrine and of his high pretensions ; a confirmation of the hopes of his followers, which renders it no less unreasonable, as the case stands, to doubt of the ultimate completion of his largest promises, than it would have been to hope, had his promises been actually found to fail in so principal an instance. We have reason, therefore, to be thankful, that in the first preaching of the Gospel, Providence ordained that a fact of such importance should be accompanied with irresistible evidence. Nor can we better employ the present season which the church devotes to the commemoration of this great event, than in considering how complete the evidence of the fact is, notwithstanding the cavils that may be raised against it. For this reason I have chosen for my text a passage of Holy Writ, in which, as it stands at least in our English Bibles, the evidence is set forth to the least advantage.

The proof of the fact arises, we are told, from the testimony of those, who, from the time of our Lord's first entrance on his ministry, had been his constant attendants. Their report was, that the sepulchre, in which his body had been laid, was found empty on the third morning from the day of his crucifixion, notwithstanding the precaution which the Jews had taken to set sentinels to prevent a fraudulent removal of the body by his disciples ; — that his resurrection was declared by angels to certain of his female attendants, who, for the purpose of embalming his body, made an early visit to the sepulchre ; — that he appeared to these women on their return to the city, and that same evening came unexpectedly upon the eleven apostles as they sat at meat ; — that for forty days after this he appeared from time to time to the apostles,

sometimes partaking of their meals, discoursing with them upon the propagation of the Gospel, and showing himself alive by many infallible proofs.

The credibility of evidence in all cases arises from the number, the information, and the veracity of the witnesses. The *number* of the witnesses in the present case, if we reckon only the eleven apostles (and many more might be reckoned), was far greater than has ever been deemed sufficient to establish a fact in a court of justice in the most intricate and weighty causes. Their *information* upon the general point in question, "that our Lord was seen alive after his crucifixion," was the most complete that can be imagined: — THEY could not be mistaken in his person, who had so long and so constantly attended him. The *veracity* of a witness is to be measured, not simply by the probity of his disposition and his habits of sincerity, but by the motives which circumstances may present to him to adhere to the truth, or to deviate from it. No man loves falsehood for its own sake: no man, therefore, deliberately propagates a lie, but for the sake of some advantage to himself; and the advantage which a man pursues by falsehood must always be something in the present world: his ease and security, or the advancement of his fortune. For no one who looks forward to a future state thinks that his interest there may be served by falsehood. It always, therefore, heightens the credit of a witness, if he is materially a sufferer by the testimony which he gives, when he could not suffer, either in fortune, ease, or reputation, by a contrary testimony. The apostles asserted our Lord's resurrection to their own loss, and at the hazard of their lives. To have denied his resurrection, at least to have disproved it,



which the apostles might easily have done had the thing been a fiction ; to have rendered it in any high degree questionable, which any of the apostles might have done, had not the guilt of falsehood and prevarication seemed to them a greater evil than any sufferings which the powers of this world could inflict, had been the certain road to wealth and honours.

To the charms of wealth and honours the apostles were not insensible. It was evidently the hopes of becoming the first ministers of the first monarch upon earth, which at first attached the sons of Zebedee to their master's service. The twelve were thrown into a consternation, by our Lord's reflection on the inconsistency of the love of riches and the pursuit of heaven ; conscious, no doubt, that they were not exempt from the desire of riches, although not born to the expectation of them ; and Simon Peter discovered a great anxiety to know what valuable acquisitions he was to make in our Lord's service, in consideration of the old crazy boat and tattered nets, (his all, he called them,) which he had left upon the Galilean lake to follow Christ. Nor were the apostles regardless of suffering and danger. Their desertion of our Lord in the garden of Gethsemane showed them by no means unconcerned about the safety of their own persons. Not, therefore, to insist on the probity of the apostles (which appears in many circumstances of the evangelical history), their *veracity*, by the circumstances in which they were placed, is, I maintain, rendered unquestionable. They persevered in an asseveration which exposed them to the highest indignities, and to the cruellest persecution ; to the loss of fame, of property, of liberty, and life, when a denial or recantation might have secured to them the most

liberal rewards, and the most honourable distinctions, which the favour of princes and statesmen could bestow. In every circumstance, therefore, for the *numbers*, the *information*, and the *veracity* of the witnesses, no testimony could surpass in its degree of credibility that which was borne by the apostles to the fact of our Lord's resurrection.

It is a very singular circumstance in this testimony, that it is such as no length of time can diminish. It is founded upon the universal principles of human nature, upon maxims which are the same in all ages, and operate with equal strength in all mankind, under all the varieties of temper and habit of constitution. So long as it shall be contrary to the first principles of the human mind to delight in falsehood for its own sake ; so long as it shall be true that no man willingly propagates a lie to his own detriment and to no purpose ; so long it will be certain that the apostles were serious and sincere in the assertion of our Lord's resurrection. So long as it shall be absurd to suppose, that twelve men could all be deceived in the person of a friend with whom they had all lived three years, so long it will be certain that the apostles were competent to judge of the truth and reality of the fact which they asserted. So long as it shall be in the nature of man, for his own interest and ease, to be dearer than that of another to himself, so long it will be an absurdity to suppose, that twelve men should persevere for years in the joint attestation of a lie, to the great detriment of every individual of the conspiracy, and without any joint or separate advantage, when any of them had it in his power, by a discovery of the fraud, to advance *his own fame and fortune* by the sacrifice of nothing more dear to him

than the reputation of the rest ; and so long will it be incredible that the story of our Lord's resurrection was a fiction which the twelve men (to mention no greater number), with unparalleled fortitude, and with equal folly, conspired to support. So long, therefore, as the evangelical history shall be preserved entire ; that is, so long as the historical books of the New Testament shall be extant in the world, so long the credibility of the apostles' testimony will remain whole and unimpaired. As this circumstance, to have in itself the principle of permanency, never happened to human testimony in any other instance, this preservation of the form and integrity of the apostolic evidence, amidst all the storms and wrecks which human science, like all things human, hath in the course of ages undergone, is, like the preservation of the Jewish nation, something of a standing miracle. It shows, in the original propagation of the Gospel, that contrivance and forecast in the plan, that power in the execution, which are far beyond the natural abilities of the human mind, and declares that the whole work and counsel was of God.

It may seem, perhaps, that the veracity of the apostles, in the report of our Lord's resurrection, is too hastily concluded, from the hardships which they incurred by their constancy in the asseveration. Wealth and power are not the only objects to which men will sacrifice their ease, their fortunes, and their lives. That personal consequence which is acquired by bold and arduous undertakings, and the fame which follows them in after-ages, are sought by some as the highest good ; and as this ambition is incident to the most generous and the most active minds, it is in this pursuit that we see men the most ready to encounter

danger and renounce enjoyment. The honour of being long remembered as the founders of a sect, might, with men of a certain turn of mind, be a motive to endure all the hardships which the apostles underwent. It must be confessed, that men will sacrifice much to rescue their memories from oblivion, and that the fame of being the first teachers of a new philosophy or a new religion, will, by its singularity, be preferred to any other by minds of a particular complexion. But, of all men that ever lived, the apostles were, perhaps, the least likely to be touched with this ambition. Their birth was mean, their occupation laborious, their highest attainments were probably no more than to be able to repeat the Ten Commandments, and to have learned by rote some of the first principles of the Jewish faith. Such men were likely to be strangers to the pride of learning, and the ambition of invention and discovery. At least, that twelve men of their condition should be found in any one country, at any one time, inflamed with this passion in the degree in which they must all have been, if it was the principle which produced their unanimity and firmness in the propagation of a fiction at all hazards; that but one of the twelve should prove false to so strange a combination; that he in a fit of despair and remorse, the effect of his treachery, should hang himself, and dying by his own hand, not die without evident signs of God's anger pursuing him in his last moments; — all this seems a much greater improbability than the extraordinary fact which is supported by their testimony. It might seem less extravagant to suppose, that the sanguine hopes which they had conceived, of the advancement of their own fortunes in the kingdom of that temporal

Messiah which they had expected in our Lord, together with his promise of rising on the third day after the death which he foretold he was to suffer (to which promise, however, as well as to the prediction of his death, the fact seems to be they had given little attention): it might, I say, be less extravagant to suppose, that this repeated promise of our Lord's, together with their own hopes of advancement in his temporal kingdom, might make them after his death an easy prey to the art of some new imposter, who might take advantage of some general resemblance in himself to the person and features of the blessed Jesus, to personate their crucified Master. This might seem a supposition less extravagant than the former, *that the apostles were supported in the asseveration of a falsehood by an ambition seldom incident to men of low birth and mean attainments.* But the fact is, that the evangelical history equally excludes the one and the other supposition. If there was any thing of fraud and delusion in the story of our Lord's resurrection, it is very evident the apostles must have had a principal share in the contrivance; if his resurrection was a fiction, the body was conveyed away in the night.

The report of his resurrection was spread early in the next morning by some of his female disciples; their tale was presently confirmed, not, indeed, in the whole, but in some collateral and secondary circumstances, by the testimonies of St. Peter and St. John. Some few hours after, Peter vouches that he had seen our Saviour. In the afternoon two of the disciples bring the news to the apostles, that they had met with him in their way to a village in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem; and they relate, that they had no sooner

recognised his person than he suddenly disappeared. Their tale was hardly finished when Jesus in person salutes the company. From this time ten of the eleven apostles are loud in the assertion of his recovery from the grave ; and, a week after, the eleventh is cured of his affected incredulity, and joins in the report of his associates. The apostles, either separately or in company, converse with him repeatedly. He tells them that all power is given him in heaven and in earth ; he formally invests them with a commission to preach the Gospel to the whole world, and to form a universal church, open to all nations ; at last, he leads them out to Bethany, and there, in the act of bestowing on them a solemn benediction, he was raised from the earth and carried to heaven in their sight. Of the four writers who have transmitted this story, two, Matthew and John, were apostles. The other two, Mark and Luke, by the consent of all antiquity, wrote under the inspection of apostles, — Mark under the direction of St. Peter, Luke of St. Paul. The credit, therefore, of the apostles is pledged for the particulars of the narrative ; and whether we consider the story in itself, or the writers of the story, it is evident, that if it was at all a fiction the apostles had a principal share in the fabrication of it. But since the apostles had no motive to fabricate the lie, or to persevere in the propagation of it, since the force of temptation drew the other way, that is, to induce them to deny the fact, or desist at least from the avowal of it ; that is, since their very veracity in this particular instance at least is unquestionable, it follows, that if their report was a fiction, it was not of their invention ; and yet it has been shown, that in the invention they must have had a principal part. A fiction not coined by

them, and of which they were still the coiners, is surely the fiction of a fiction, the dream of a distempered brain. So that if any human testimony ever attained the certainty of demonstration, it is in this instance of our Lord's resurrection; which is established with far greater certainty by the evidence of the apostles than any other fact in the whole compass of history, sacred or profane. Thus complete and perfect is the testimony of the twelve apostles to the matter in question. But a greater testimony is yet behind.

Let it be supposed that the apostles, to avoid the infamy of having been themselves deceived, might conspire to propagate the delusion, and either fabricated the story of our Lord's resurrection with all its circumstances, or entered into the views of some new deceiver who had the resolution to personate Jesus after his crucifixion. Whence, then, was it that this deceit obtained the testimony of the Holy Spirit? The concurrent testimony of the apostles themselves and the Holy Spirit form the evidence of our Lord's resurrection. "He shall testify of me," said our Lord before he suffered, "and *ye* also shall bear witness." That notable miracles were done by the apostles in the name of the Lord Jesus was so manifest to all them that dwelt in Jerusalem, that the bitterest enemies of their doctrine could not deny it; nor was it ever denied by the infidels of antiquity. On the contrary, their attempt to account for it by the power of magic is a confession of the fact; and while the fact is confessed, the conclusion from the fact is obvious and inevitable. To refer the miracles, which were wrought in confirmation of a doctrine which went to the extirpation of every corruption in morals and in worship, and to the establishment of a practical reli-

gion of good works springing from an active faith, to the spirit of delusion, is a subterfuge for infidelity which that spirit only could suggest.

I have now, briefly indeed, and in a summary way, but more particularly than I thought to do, laid before you the irrefragable and permanent nature of the testimony by which the fact of our Lord's resurrection is supported. It is my intention to discuss a certain objection to this evidence, as the evidence is stated in my text, which must be allowed to be very plausible in the first appearance of it. I mean to show, that it is the necessary consequence of certain circumstances, which indispensably require that the evidence of the resurrection should be just what it is; insomuch that the proof would be rather weakened than improved by any attempt to complete it in the part in which it is supposed to be deficient. But this I shall reserve for future discourses. Meanwhile you will remember, that the entire evidence of our Lord's resurrection consists of two parts,—the testimony of the apostles, and the testimony of the Spirit. The testimony of the apostles is the most complete that human testimony every was; the testimony of the Spirit is unexceptionable. The fact, therefore, is established. So certain as it is that Christ died, so certain it is that he is risen. He died for our sins, he is risen for our justification. And remember, that the only purpose for which Christ died and rose again was, that we, enlightened by his doctrine, edified by his example, encouraged with the certain hope of mercy, animated by the prospect of eternal glory, “may rise from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness.”



## S E R M O N II.

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ACTS, x. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God.*

THE return of the season devoted by the church to the solemn commemoration of our Lord's glorious resurrection seemed to admonish us, that we should direct our attention to the *evidence* by which the merciful providence of God was pleased to confirm so extraordinary a fact. The entire evidence consists of two branches : it is in part *human*, and in part *divine*. The attestation of the apostles to the fact makes the human part of the evidence ; the testimony of the Spirit in the miraculous powers exercised by the apostles was divine. The human part is what is chiefly to be examined ; for the credibility of *that* being once established, the force of the testimony of the Spirit is obvious and irresistible : for, provided the fact be once established, that such miracles were performed by the apostles, these miracles were manifestly the "*witness of God*" which he bore to his own Son. The historical evidence of the fact lies in the testimony of the apostles themselves, and in the concession of their adversaries. The *human testi-*

*mony*, therefore, the testimony of the apostles, is to us, who were not eye-witnesses of the miracles which they performed, the groundwork of the whole evidence.

In my last discourse I explained to you, in a summary way, that the credibility of this testimony arises from the *number*, the *information*, and the *veracity* of the witnesses. *Their number*, more than is required by any law to establish a fact in a court of justice; *their information* infallible, if an infallible knowledge of their Master's person was the result of an attendance upon him for three years; *their veracity*, by the circumstances in which they were placed, is rendered unquestionable: so that, in this singular instance, if in any, the evidence of testimony emulates the certainty of mathematical demonstration. I showed you, that the testimony of the apostles to the fact of our Lord's resurrection is not more extraordinary in the degree than in the permanency of the credibility which belongs to it. It is not only so constituted that it must have been satisfactory and irrefragable at the time when it was delivered, but so immutable are the principles on which the credit of it stands, that by no length of time can it suffer diminution. What it was to the contemporaries of the apostles, the same it is to us now in the end of the eighteenth century; and so long as the historical books of the New Testament shall be extant in the world, (and to suppose that a time shall come when they shall be no longer extant, were, I think, to mistrust our Master's gracious promise,) so long as these books then shall be extant, so long the testimony of the apostles shall preserve its original credibility.

Another circumstance must be mentioned, not less extraordinary than the permanent nature of the testimony, which may be called the *popularity of the evidence*. It is not always the case that a proof built on true principles, and sound in every part, which, when it is narrowly examined, must of consequence be satisfactory to men of knowledge and discernment, is of a sort to be easily and generally understood. For the most part, perhaps, the proof of fact is a thing more remote from popular apprehension than scientific demonstration: for the connection of an argument is what every one naturally and necessarily perceives; but between a fact and the testimony of the witnesses who affirm it there is indeed no physical and necessary connection. A witness may speak rashly, without a sufficient knowledge of the fact which he pretends to assert, or he may speak falsely, contrary to his knowledge. Thus the folly and the vices of men have rendered it for the most part very difficult to perceive, how the certainty of a fact arises from the attestations given to it; and to appreciate the credibility of historical evidence is become a task for the highest and most improved abilities; requiring a certain dexterity and acuteness of the mind in detecting great fallacies, and in reconciling seeming inconsistencies, which is seldom to be acquired in any considerable degree but by a practical familiarity with the habits of the world, joined to an accurate and philosophical study of mankind. And, accordingly, we see, that men of the slowest apprehension, if they have had but a sufficient degree of experience to make them jealous of being imposed upon, are always the most averse to believe extraordinary narrations. But, in the case before us, no extraordinary penetration is

requisite to perceive the *infallibility of the evidence*. Every man has experienced the certainty with which he distinguishes the person and the features of a friend. Every one knows how dearly he loves himself; with what reluctance he would sacrifice his ease and expose his person in any project, from which he expected no return of profit or enjoyment. And with this experience and these feelings, every one is qualified to sit in judgment upon the fact of our Lord's resurrection, and to decide upon the evidence. And in this circumstance, no less than in the permanent nature of the evidence, we may see, and we have reason to adore, the hand of Providence. For to what can we ascribe it but to the over-ruling providence of God, that while the proof of historic facts is, for the most part, of the most intricate and embarrassed nature, the most extraordinary event which history records should be accompanied with a proof as universally perspicuous as the fact itself is interesting? Every man born into the world is interested in the event which has opened to us all the gate of heaven. And the evidence which accompanies the fact is such, that every man born into the world is in a capacity to derive conviction from it.

Notwithstanding, however, the solidity and the general perspicuity of the proof, considered in itself, it may seem to lie open to *a considerable objection*. Many objections have indeed been brought against it. Some have been taken from the varieties with which the four Evangelists relate the first declaration of the event by the angels to the Galilean women at the sepulchre. These I consider as cavils rather than objections. Every attentive reader of the Gospel knows that the female followers of our Lord were numerous.

He will easily discover that these numerous female followers had made an appointment to meet at the sepulchre at an early hour of the first day of the week, for the purpose of embalming the body ; a business which the intervention of the Sabbath had obliged them to postpone. He will easily imagine that these women would be lodged in different parts of the city, and of consequence would come to the sepulchre in several parties and by different paths ; that they arrived all early, but not exactly at the same time. He will perceive, that the detachments of the heavenly squadron, the angels who attended on this great occasion, to whom the business was committed of frightening the Roman sentinels from their station, of opening the sepulchre for the admission of the women, and of announcing the resurrection, became visible and invisible at pleasure, and appeared to the women of the different parties, as they successively arrived, in different forms, and accosted them in different words ; and in this way the first evidences of the fact were multiplied, which had been single, had the women all arrived in a body at the same instant, and seen all the same vision.\* Each evangelist, it

\* The company which saw what is related by St. Matthew (of which company Mary Magdalene, although mentioned by the Evangelist, was not, I think, included,) went by a path which led to the front of the sepulchre, and came within sight of it early enough to be witnesses to the descent of the angel, the flight of the guard, and the removal of the stone. While these things passed, Mary Magdalene with her party were coming by another path which led round the back part of the sepulchre, and came not within sight of the entrance of the sepulchre till the first party had left it. They, therefore, no sooner came within sight than they saw that the stone was removed, and Mary Magdalene immediately ran back to inform

may be supposed, has confined himself to that part of the story which he had at the first hand from the women who had first fallen in his way, and each woman related what she herself had seen and heard, which was different from what had been seen and heard by the women of another company. These few simple observations, as they reconcile the narratives of the several evangelists with each other, and the particulars of each narrative with the general fact in which they all consent, dissipate any objections that may be raised from the varieties of their story. The objection which I purpose to consider, in the first face of it, is far more specious. It seems to arise spontaneously from the state of the evidence which is given in the text; and thus throwing itself in the way of every one who reads the Bible, or who hears it read, it seems to be a stumbling-block in the way of the believer, which it is our duty, if God shall give us the ability, to remove. “Him hath God raised up, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but to witnesses *chosen* before of God.”

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Peter and John of her suspicions. The rest of the women of that party proceeded to the sepulchre, entered it, and were assured of our Lord's resurrection by the angel whom they found within the tomb in the manner related by St. Mark. Presently after these women had left the sepulchre, Peter and John arrived, followed by Mary Magdalene; for she hastened back to the sepulchre when she apprised the apostles of her fears. After Mary Magdalene, waiting at the sepulchre, had seen our Lord, and was gone away to carry his message to the apostles, Luke's women arrive, and are informed by two angels within the tomb. In the interval between our Lord's appearance at the sepulchre to Mary Magdalene, and the arrival of Luke's party, he appeared to St. Matthew's party, who were yet upon the way back to the city. For that the appearance to Mary Magdalene was the first, St. Mark testifies.

The *selection* of witnesses carries, it may be said, no very fair appearance. Jesus was seen alive after his crucifixion, but he was seen, it should appear, by those only who had been his early associates, who had been employed by him to travel over the country as his heralds, proclaiming him as the long-expected Messiah, who, by the event of his public and ignominious end, were involved in general contempt and ridicule. Why was he not shown to all the people, if the identity of his person would stand the test of a public exhibition? Was it not more likely, that the Jewish people would be sooner convinced by his own public appearance, than by the report of those who had long been considered as the first victims of his imposture, or the sworn accomplices of his fraud? The most incredulous of his enemies had declared they would believe in him, if they might but see him descend from the cross. Would they not much more have believed, had they seen him on the third day arisen from the grave? Were the Jewish people kindly treated when they were punished for their infidelity, of which they might have been cured, had the evidence been afforded them, which in so extraordinary a case they might reasonably demand? In such a case, the CHOICE of witnesses brings a suspicion on their whole testimony; a surmise that they were chosen, not of God, but of themselves and their confederates. Perhaps they preferred persecution, with the fame attending it, to security accompanied with contempt; and they pretended a selection of themselves to be witnesses on the part of Heaven, to give the better colour to the lie, which they were determined, at all hazards, to maintain.

This imperfection, as it may seem, in the proof of our

Lord's resurrection, was not overlooked by the infidels of antiquity. It was urged in one of the first written attacks upon Christianity; and Origen, whose elaborate confutation of that able adversary is still extant, allows that the objection is not contemptible. The fact which creates the whole difficulty (that Jesus was not seen in public after his interment) seems, indeed, confessed in the text, and confirmed in general by the evangelical history. Nevertheless, this fact is not to be admitted without some limitation. We read in St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians, of a certain appearance of our Lord to more than five hundred brethren at once. So large a company is not likely to have been assembled in a house, nor is it likely that they met by accident; the assembly must have been called together for some express purpose, and what purpose so likely as to receive the satisfaction which was absolutely afforded them, of beholding with their own eyes their crucified Lord restored to life? Nor is it to be supposed, that an object of the human size and form could be seen distinctly by five hundred persons all at once, but by day-light. Here, then, is one appearance of our Lord, in which no circumstance of privacy could be pretended. It was by day-light; in the open air. Notice had been given of the time and place of the appearance. The notice which drew together so numerous an assembly, at a distance from the capital, or any populous town, must have been very public; and from a sight to which five hundred brethren were admitted, it is not easy to conceive that any who were not brethren, if they were pleased to repair to the appointed place at the appointed time, could be excluded. Indeed, if this appearance of the five hundred, recorded by St. Paul, was the same with



that on the Galilean hill, recorded by St. Matthew, which is the opinion of the most learned critics and divines, and is highly probable, because the appearance on the Galilean hill was an appearance at a set time and place, as that to the five hundred must have been ; — if these, I say, were one and the same appearance, it is certain that our Lord was seen upon this occasion by some who were not brethren. For St. Matthew relates, that when Christ was seen and worshipped on the Galilean hill, “some doubted.” Not some of the eleven who are mentioned in the preceding verse, for the eleven doubted not. Thomas was the last of the eleven to believe, yet Thomas ceased to doubt upon our Lord’s second appearance in the evening assembly, on the Sunday se’night after his resurrection. Nor is it likely that doubters should be included by St. Paul in the number of those whom he dignified with the appellation of brethren. This appearance, therefore, in Galilee was public, not to the disciples only, but to a promiscuous multitude of disciples and of doubtful, unbelieving Jews. The assertion, therefore, of my text, that Christ, raised from the dead, was not shown openly to all the people, is to be understood with some limitation. Once he certainly was shown openly, perhaps not oftener than once ; and if once or twice more, still his appearance was not public compared with the unreserved manner of his conversation with the world during his triennial ministry. He resorted not daily to the temple ; he preached to no multitudes in the fields ; he performed no public miracles ; he held no public disputations ; he was present at no weddings ; he ate not with publicans and sinners. They were only his *chosen* witnesses to whom ocular proof was *repeatedly* given that

he was indeed alive again. In a general way of speaking, it is to be confessed that he was not shown openly to *all* the people. But what if the assertion were true in the utmost sense in which the adversary would wish it to be accepted? What if it were granted, that the pretended appearances after the interment were not public in any single instance? It will follow that our Lord, if he was really alive again, was not seen by many: what of that? Is it a necessary consequence that he was not seen by some? Is there no evidence of the many who saw him not, and have, therefore, nothing positive to say upon the question, to overpower the explicit assertions of those who depose to the fact of repeated appearances? It will hardly be pretended that the bare fact, that he was not seen by the many, amounts in itself to a proof that the story of his resurrection was a fiction.

But it is supposed, I apprehend, that had the resurrection been real, public appearances would have heightened the proof of it; and that, on the other hand, if the thing was a fiction, the concealment of the person who was made to pass for Jesus among the credulous disciples was a means of preventing a detection of the fraud. And it is thought unreasonable to suppose, that the belief of so extraordinary a thing should be required of the world on the part of Heaven, without the highest proof that could be given, or without a fair submission of the evidence to the strictest scrutiny. The objection, therefore, is this, that the proof which is produced of the fact is less than might have been procured had the thing averred been a reality, and that, such as it is, it was not submitted at the time to the examination of the public. In my next discourse I shall endeavour to show you,

that the objection is of a sort to deserve less attention than you may at first imagine, even if what it presumes were true, that the frequency of public appearances would have been a means of heightening the evidence of fact on the one hand, or of detecting an imposition on the other. *Secondly*, I shall show you that both these presumptions are indeed erroneous: that an open conversation with the world would neither have added to the proof of a real resurrection, nor contributed to the detection of a counterfeit. And, after all, I shall show you, that frequent public exhibitions of the person after the resurrection, if they could have heightened the proof of the fact, had been on other accounts improper. Insomuch, that what the story might have gained in credit by an addition of testimony, it would have lost in another way, by an impropriety and inconsistency which might have been charged upon the conduct of our Lord.

Meanwhile, if it should occur to you to wonder that Jesus, after his resurrection, should not be shown openly, but to chosen witnesses, remember, that by the fundamental maxims of the doctrine which Jesus preached, it is the privilege of the "*pure in heart,*" and of them only, to see God. In some sense, indeed, God is seen by all mankind, and by the whole rational creation. God is seen by all men in his works, in the fabric and the motions of the material world. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy-work." The very devils see him in his judgments: wise men see him in his providential government of human actions, in the rise and fall of states and empires: the pious believer sees him with the eye of faith, in the miraculous support and preservation of his church from the

attacks of open enemies, the treachery of false friends, and the intemperate or the lukewarm zeal of its weaker members. He sees him with the intellectual eye discerning, in part at least, his glorious perfections; and they, and only they who thus see him now, shall at last literally see the majesty of the Godhead in the person of their glorified Lord. By the lost world Jesus shall be seen no more, except as he hath been seen by the unbelieving Jews, in judgment, when he comes to execute vengeance on them who know not God, and obey not the Gospel; but if any man keep his saying, he shall be admitted to his presence, “that where his Saviour is, there he may be also.”

### S E R M O N III.

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ACTS, x. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God.*

IN my first discourse upon this text, I endeavoured to explain to you the credibility of the testimony which was borne by the apostles to the fact of our Lord's resurrection ; its original credibility at the time when it was delivered ; its undiminished credibility in all succeeding times ; and the universality of the proof, not only as it must subsist to all ages, but as it is accommodated to all capacities.

In a second discourse, I stated some of the principal objections which our adversaries have raised, to elude the force of this invincible proof. I showed you the futility of those which are taken from a pretended disagreement of the evangelists, in their relation of the manner in which the discovery was made to the women who visited the sepulchre on the Sunday morning. I showed you, that the whole force of these objections rests on a very improbable supposition, which has not the least countenance in the circumstances of the story, that the numerous female followers of our Lord went all in one body to the

sepulchre ; that they all arrived, at least, in the same instant of time, and all saw the same vision. Admit only that the women went in different parties, that they arrived some a little earlier, some a little later, and that the attending angels showed themselves to the different companies in different forms, and accosted them in different words, and you will find no disagreement of the four evangelists, no differences in their relation, which should affect the credit of their testimony to the general fact. Their several narrations harmonise as different parts of one story, each relating the particular part which he could best attest.

I engaged in a more particular discussion of an objection, in the first face of it far more specious, founded on the acknowledged concealment of the person of Jesus after his resurrection. Forty days elapsed before he took leave of this sublunary world, by an ascension to heaven in the sight of his apostles. In the interval he was seen repeatedly by them and by other disciples ; but it seems to be acknowledged in the text, that he was not shown openly to all the people.

I showed you, that the assertion that he was not publicly seen, is to be understood with certain limitations. That once, at least, our Lord was shown openly to as many as thought proper to repair to an appointed place. The circumstances of this appearance will not admit of the supposition that any were excluded from the sight, unless the body in which he was seen by the five hundred was, upon this occasion, visible only to the brethren : — a supposition in itself not absurd, perhaps not improbable, were it not set aside by St. Matthew's testimony, that he was actually seen by some at least who were not brethren, by some who

doubted while the eleven worshipped. He was, therefore, upon this occasion, visible to all without distinction.

Of any other public exhibition of the person, no trace is to be found in the history of the forty days. And if we might suppose it to have been once or twice repeated, still his appearance was not public compared with what it had been during his triennial ministry. Nothing like an open familiar conversation with the world can be pretended or indeed supposed. It must be confessed, with a certain limitation, that he was not shown openly to all the people. To the rulers of the people he was never shown at all. His single public appearance was not in the metropolis or its vicinity, but in a remote corner of Galilee, where his friends and followers were the most numerous, and his enemies in the least credit ; insomuch that, even in this instance, there was something of a selection of spectators ; and the candid believer, by the evidence of the Gospel history itself, is reduced to a concession, (a concession, however, in which he will find cause to glory,) that whatever reality there may be in the story of his resurrection, Jesus ever after it shunned the public eye.

It is imagined by the adversary, that had the resurrection been real, public appearances would have heightened the proof of it ; and that, on the other hand, if the thing was a fiction, concealment of the person was a means of preventing a ready detection of the fraud. And he thinks it unreasonable to suppose, that the belief of a thing so extraordinary should be required of the world on the part of Heaven, without the highest proof that could be given, or without a fair submission of the evidence, such as it might be, to the severest scrutiny. The sum of the

objection, then, is this, that the proof which is produced of the fact is less than might have been given had the thing averred been a reality, and that, such as it is, it was not fairly submitted at the time to the examination of the public.

I come now to show you, as I engaged to do, *first*, That the objection is really of a sort to deserve little attention, even if what it presumes were true, that the frequency of public appearances would have heightened proof on the one hand, or facilitated the detection of fraud on the other.

*Secondly*, That the objection is erroneous in both these suppositions.

And when I shall have thus overturned the objection, I shall show you, that without any regard to what the proof of the fact might have gained by the frequency of public appearances, or what it might lose by the want of them, other considerations rendered it improper and indecent, that our Lord, arisen from the grave, should renew his open conversation with the world in general. So that, be the force of the objection what it may, if there be any truth in our Saviour's high pretensions, any thing of reality in the evangelical scheme of redemption, his resurrection, be it ever so much a fact, must, in the nature of the thing, be obnoxious to this objection. That Christ should rise from the dead, and that risen he should converse openly and familiarly with the world in the manner in which he did before his passion, these two things are incompatible ; so that if both appeared as facts upon the sacred records, the proof which it is supposed might have accrued to the resurrection from the frequency of public appearances, would have been overpowered by the general incoherence of the story.



First, I say, the objection, were the assumptions true on which it rests, would be of little weight. The reality of a fact is always to be measured by the positive proof on one side or the other, which is really extant in the world. If no proof is found but what is in itself imperfect, as when the witnesses seem too few, or their reports contradictory, the fact is questionable. But if any proof exists in itself unexceptionable, the thing is not to be questioned for the mere want of other proofs, which men, living at a distance from the time and the scene of the business, may imagine it might have had. Men are very apt to lose sight of this principle. They are apt to amuse themselves with a display of their sagacity (for such they think it) in alleging the proof that might have been, when their penetration would be better shown in a fair examination of what is actually extant. They are not aware, that in thus opposing proof which is not, to that which is, they are really weighing a shadow against a substance; and that the highest argument of a weak mind (an imputation which they most dread) is not to feel the force of present evidence. Thus it is, that “professing themselves wise they become fools.” This is an answer which will apply on every occasion, when men resist the conviction of a proof, in which they can discover no fallacy or imperfection, upon a pretence that some collateral proof of the same fact, which would have been more satisfactory, is wanting. An objection of this sort is always frivolous, even when it is true that the required proof, had it been extant, would have been more satisfactory than any that is found, provided what is found be in itself a just proof, true in its principles, coherent in its parts, and fair in its conclusions.

But, secondly, I affirm, that in the particular case before us, the required proof which is supposed to be wanting, had it been given, would have been no addition to the evidence of the thing in question. If our Lord really rose from the grave, as we believe he did, the evidence of the fact would not have been heightened by repeated public appearances to the Jewish people. It is evident, that to have seen him ever so often after his resurrection would have qualified no one to be a witness of the fact, who had not such a previous knowledge of his person as might enable him to perceive and attest its identity. Perhaps we may insist upon another circumstance, that every one pretending to avouch the resurrection should have been an eye-witness of the crucifixion. For the fact to be attested is, that this same man "was dead and is alive again." But in the innumerable multitude that was assembled to behold the tragic scene on Calvary, how many may be supposed to have had such a view of the Divine Sufferer, as might bring them acquainted with his person? The far greater part not only saw him at a distance, but, in the tumult which would attend the dismal spectacle, they would never get a steady view: they would now and then catch a momentary glimpse of a part only of his person, which they would lose again before any distinct impression could be made. Those who saw the whole transaction from the most advantageous stations would see the cheeks pale, the features convulsed, the whole body distorted with the torture of the punishment. Those who saw the very beginning of this horrid business, who saw Jesus before he was fastened to the cross, would see him exhausted with the mental agony in the garden, worn down with the fatigue of

his long examination, and with the pain of those preparatory inflictions, which, by the Roman law, by the terms of which he suffered, were the constant prelude to a capital execution, and in this instance had not been spared. Nor would the spectators be sufficiently composed, agitated as they all would be, some with the horror of the scene, some with pity of his sufferings, some with joy for the success of their infernal machinations ; under one or another of these various emotions none would be sufficiently composed to observe and remark the peculiarities of his person. Insomuch, that of those who saw him now for the first time, few, perhaps, had he ever been seen by them again, would have known him from either of the malefactors who were made the companions of his agonies.

It may seem, perhaps, that at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, his person must have been generally well known among the Jews, when, for a longer time than three years, he had sustained the public character of a teacher and a prophet. He had been much resorted to for the fame of his doctrine, and for the benefit of his miracles, as well as for an opinion which, to the moment of his apprehension, prevailed among the common people, that he would prove the long-expected deliverer of the nation. It may be presumed, therefore, that many who saw him expire on the cross were previously well acquainted with his person. But if it be considered, that during the whole period of his ministry he was constantly in motion, travelling from place to place ; that the multitudes that followed him, whenever he appeared in public, were for the most part numerous, to the amount of several thousands, it will seem improbable that the

number of those could be great, who had the good fortune to get a distinct sight of him oftener than once in the whole course of his triennial ministry. Of consequence, it is improbable that many beside his constant followers knew him well enough to identify his person. They who had not this *distinct* knowledge of his person, however frequent the public appearances had been after the resurrection, were not qualified to be *witnesses* of the fact even to themselves. The conviction that the person whom they now saw alive was the same person who had been put to death, they must have owed to the attestations of those who knew him better than they. And the few who might be the best acquainted with his person, still were not qualified to be *witnesses of his resurrection to the world, unless their knowledge of the person was itself a fact of public notoriety*. For, to establish the credit of a witness, it is not sufficient that he be really competent to judge for himself of the reality of the fact which he takes it upon him to attest, but his competency in the matter must be a thing generally known and understood. Now this *was* the case of the apostles. It is a notorious fact, that they could not be incompetent in the knowledge of their Master's person presented to their senses. But the same thing, although it might have been equally true, could not be equally manifest of any who had pretended to join in their attestation, from a knowledge of his person acquired in accidental interviews, of which the reality was known only to themselves. Their testimony would rather have discredited the cause than heightened the evidence; as in all cases the depositions of witnesses suspected of incompetency have no effect but to create a prejudice against

the fact which they assert, and to diminish the force of better testimony, which, left to itself, would have produced conviction.

It appears, therefore, upon a nice discussion of the question, that the evidence which we actually have of our Lord's resurrection, in the testimony of the *chosen witnesses*, is indeed the greatest of which the fact is naturally capable. No other could have been transmitted as original testimony to posterity, no other could have been satisfactory to the public at the time. The demand of frequent public exhibitions of the person is the demand of folly; not perceiving the distinction between a just proof, by which a fact may be established, and those vague reports which every one adopts and no one owns, which serve only to multiply doubt and to propagate uncertainty. Public appearances could have added nothing to the testimony of the chosen witnesses. By destroying the precision of the story, they might have diminished the efficacy of its proper evidence. The conviction to be derived from them would have been appropriated to the few who had a distinct knowledge of our Saviour's person, and the whole benefit of their conviction would have been confined to themselves. If it should seem that such persons had a right to the evidence of their own senses, because they were qualified to receive it, the principle perhaps might be doubted; for the testimony of the apostles was of no less force with respect to these persons than to the rest of the world; and I cannot see that any man in any case has a right to more than proof. Yet it may be presumed, that a provision was mercifully made for their particular conviction by the appearance in Galilee. It is remarkable at least, that the province

where our Saviour's person must have been the most generally known, was chosen for the scene of the single public exhibition. The testimony of sense was, by this choice of the place of appearance, made as general as a single appearance could make it ; and more, perhaps, was not to be done for the satisfaction of individuals, without hazarding the credit of the public evidence.

For the same reasons for which frequent public appearances would not have heightened the evidence of the fact, if the resurrection was real, they would have contributed nothing to the detection of the fallacy, had it been a fiction. Those to whom the living person had been unknown were as ill qualified to deny as to affirm the identity ; and any whose knowledge of the person had been so acquired as not to be notorious to the public, however they might decide upon the fact for themselves, their testimony on either side was insignificant. At the same time, an appearance in Galilee, the province where the family of the real Jesus lived, where the whole of his own life had been passed before the commencement of his ministry, and the greater part of it afterwards ; where he performed his first miracles, and delivered his first discourses ; a public appearance in this part of the country, at a set time and place, was a step on which an impostor hardly would have risked his credit.

Thus it appears, that the objection to the fact of our Lord's resurrection, arising from the concealment of his person, specious as at first it seems, rests upon no solid foundation. The fact being of such a nature, that however unreserved the exhibition of the person had been, its evidence must still have rested on the testimony of chosen witnesses, which, notwithstand-

ing any frequency of public appearances, would still have been the single proof. For to the perfection of this proof, taken by itself, the certainty of the fact must still have been proportional. Had it been imperfect, public appearances could not have supplied the deficiency. Perfect as it is, its validity is nothing weakened by the mere absence of insignificant attestations.

There were, perhaps, among the enemies of our Lord, some who were well acquainted with his person. Such were many of the Pharisees with whom he disputed, the chief priests before whom he was examined, Herod and his courtiers, Pontius Pilate, and the great officers of his train. It may be imagined that many, if not all of these, would have been converted by repeated public appearances after the resurrection. Their attestations would certainly have carried considerable weight ; and infidelity may dream, that it is a suspicious circumstance that the method was not taken which might have procured so important an addition to the evidence, and to any but an impostor must have ensured success. The truth is, that all this evidence would have consisted in the testimony of particular persons ; and any testimony of particular persons which the frequency of public appearances might have procured, would still have been the evidence of chosen witnesses. To ask, therefore, why the evidence of the Pharisees or the priests, of Herod or the Roman governor, was not secured, is only to ask, why the chosen witnesses were not other than they are ? or why the number was not multiplied ? It might be sufficient to reply, that the number was more than sufficient, that the persons chosen, for their competency and veracity, were un-

exceptionable. But a special reason will appear, why the rulers of the Jews were not admitted to the honour of bearing witness to him whom they had crucified and slain, when I come to allege the particular considerations which, without regard to what the proof of the fact might have gained by the frequency of public appearances, or what it may have lost by the want of them, rendered it improper that our Lord, arisen from the grave, should resume his open conversation with the world. Improper in that degree, that in the same sense in which we say of God that he cannot be unjust or cannot lie, it may be said of Christ that he could not, after his resurrection, be openly conspicuous to all the people.



## S E R M O N   I V .

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ACTS, x. 40, 41.

*Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly ; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God.*

**W**E are still upon the propriety of a *selection* of witnesses to attest the fact of our Lord's resurrection. In my last discourse, I discussed the objection which may be brought against the fact, from the acknowledged concealment of the person. The whole force of the objection rests on an assumption, that the frequency of public appearances, on the one hand, would have heightened the evidence of the fact, if it were real ; on the other, would have been a means of detecting the fallacy had it been a fiction. I have shown you, that the objection is of a sort to deserve little attention, were the assumption true : because the reality of a fact is always to be measured by the positive proof, on one side or the other, which is really extant in the world ; which is never to be set aside by the mere absence of another proof, which men, living at a distance from the time and scene of the transaction, may imagine might have been had.

For this, indeed, were to make the caprice of men the standard of historic truth.

I showed you farther, that the assumption, on which the objection is built, is false in both its branches: that the frequency of public appearances would have been no means of heightening evidence, or of detecting fallacy. It is essentially necessary to the proof of any fact by testimony, that the *witnesses should be chosen*. Witnesses must be chosen who are competent to the knowledge of the thing which they attest, and whose competency is itself a fact of public notoriety. In the case in question, witnesses were to be chosen who had a distinct knowledge of the person of Jesus before his passion, and of whom it was publicly known that they had this previous knowledge of the person. I showed you, that this was likely to be the case of very few among the Jews, except our Lord's constant followers, and certain leading persons in the faction of his persecutors. A particular reason why the latter were excluded from the honour of bearing their testimony to him whom they had persecuted and slain, will presently appear: for I come now to the last part of the task in which I am engaged, which is to show you, that, without any regard to what the proof of the fact might have gained by the frequency of public appearances, or what it might lose by the want of them, other considerations rendered it improper and indecent that our Lord, arisen from the grave, should renew his open conversation with the unbelieving world; — improper in that degree, that in the same sense in which we say of God that he cannot be unjust, and cannot lie, it may be said of Christ that he *could not*, after his resurrection, be universally and

ordinarily conspicuous to all the people. And this, indeed, is the only answer which Origen thought it worth while to give to the objection brought against the fact of the resurrection from the concealment of our Saviour's person. He is at no pains to show, what he wanted not acuteness to discern, or eloquence to persuade, that the evidence of the fact could not have been heightened by any frequency of public appearances; but as if he would allow the advantage resulting from them to the proof to be any thing the adversary might be pleased to suppose, he rests his reply on the sole consideration of an unseemliness in the thing required, constituting what may be called a moral impossibility.

To understand this, it will be necessary to consider the manner of our Lord's appearance to his disciples after his resurrection. We shall find, even in his interviews with them, no trace of that easy familiarity of intercourse which obtained between them before his death, when he condescended to lead his whole life in their society, as a man living with his equals. Had the history of his previous life been as mysteriously obscure as that of the forty days between the resurrection and ascension is in many circumstances; had his previous habits been as studiously reserved, proof would, indeed, have been wanting that he had ever sustained the condition of a mortal man, and the error of the Docetæ, who taught that he was a man in appearance only, might have been universal. But the truth is, that the scheme of redemption required, that before the passion the form of the servant should be predominant in the Redeemer's appearance; that after the resurrection the form of God should be conspicuous. Accordingly,

throughout his previous life his manners were grave but unreserved, serious rather than severe; his deportment highly dignified, but unassuming; and the whole course and method of his life was unconcealed, and it appears to have been the life of a man in every circumstance. He had a home at Capernaum, where he lived with his mother and her family, except when the stated festivals called him to Jerusalem, or the business of his ministry induced him to visit other towns. When he travelled about the country to propagate his doctrine, and to heal those that were vexed of the devil, the evangelical history, for the most part, informs us whence he set out and whither he went; and, with as much accuracy as can be expected in such compendious commentaries as the Gospels are, we are informed of the time of his departure from one place, and of his arrival at another. We can, for the most part, trace the road by which he passed; we can mark the towns and villages which he touched in his way; and in many instances we are told, that in such a place he was entertained at the house of such a person. Upon these journies he was attended by the twelve and other disciples; and, except upon one or two very extraordinary occasions he travelled along with them, and just as they did. Upon some occasions his own body was the subject of his miraculous power. In its natural constitution, however, it was plainly the mortal body of a man. It suffered from inanition, from fatigue and external violence, and needed the refection of food, of rest, and sleep: it was confined by its gravity to the earth's surface: it was translated from one place to another by a successive motion through the intermediate space; and if, in a few instances, and upon some very extraordinary

occasions, it was exempted from the action of mechanical powers, and divested of its physical qualities and relations, — as when, to escape from the malice of a rabble, he made himself invisible, and when he walked upon a stormy sea; these were the only instances of our Lord's miraculous powers in his own person, which no more indicate a preternatural constitution of his body, than his other miracles indicate a preternatural constitution of the bodies on which they were performed. That he walked upon the sea is no more a sign of an uncommon constitution of his own body, which sunk not, than of the water which sustained it. In every circumstance, therefore, of his life, before his passion, the blessed Jesus appears a mortal man. An example of virtue he, indeed, exhibited, which never other man attained. But the example was of human virtues; of piety, of temperance, of benevolence, and of whatever in the life of man is laudable. Before his resurrection it was in power only, and in knowledge, that he showed himself divine.

After his resurrection the change is wonderful; inasmuch that, except in certain actions which were done to give his disciples proof that they saw in him their crucified Lord arisen from the grave, he seems to have done nothing like a common man. Whatever was natural to him before seems now miraculous; what was before miraculous is now natural.

The change first appears in the manner of his resurrection. It is evident that he had left the sepulchre before it was opened. An angel, indeed, was sent to roll away the stone; but this was not to let the Lord out, but to let the women in. For no sooner was the thing done than the angel said to the women, "He is not here, he is risen; come and see the place where

the Lord lay." St. Matthew's women saw the whole process of the opening of the sepulchre; for they were there before it was opened. They felt the earth quake; — they saw the angel of the Lord descend from heaven; — they saw him roll away the vast stone which stopped the mouth of the sepulchre, and, with a threatening aspect, seat himself upon it; — they saw the sentinels fall down petrified with fear. Had the Lord been waiting within the tomb for the removal of the stone, whence was it that they saw him not walk out? If he had a body to be confined, he had a body to be actually visible; and it is not to be supposed, that with or without the heavenly guard which now attended him, he was in fear of being taken by the sentinels and put a second time to death, that for his security he should render himself invisible. But he was already gone. The huge stone, which would have barred their entrance, had been no bar to his escape.

With the manner of leaving the sepulchre, his appearances first to the women, afterwards to the apostles, correspond. They were for the most part unforeseen and sudden; nor less suddenly he disappeared. He was found in company without coming in; he was missing again without going away. He joined, indeed, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, like a traveller passing the same way; and he walked along with them, in order to prepare them, by his conversation, for the evidence which they were to receive of his resurrection. But no sooner was the discovery made, by a peculiar attitude which he assumed in the breaking of bread, than he disappeared instantaneously. The same evening he presented himself to the apostles, at a late hour, assembled in a

room with the doors shut ; that is, fast made up with bolts and bars, for fear of a visit from the unbelieving Jews, their persecutors. To him who had departed from the unopened sepulchre, it was no difficulty to enter the barricadoed chamber. From all these circumstances, it is evident that his body had undergone its change. The corruptible had put on incorruption. It was no longer the body of a man in its mortal state ; it was the body of a man raised to life and immortality, which was now mysteriously united to divinity. And as it was by miracle that, before his death, he walked upon the sea, it was now by miracle that, for the conviction of the apostles, he showed in his person the marks of his sufferings.

Consonant with this exaltation of his human nature, was the change in the manner of his life. He was repeatedly seen by the disciples after his resurrection ; and so seen as to give them many infallible proofs that he was the very Jesus who had suffered on the cross. But he lived not with them in familiar habits. His time, for the forty days preceding his ascension, was not spent in their society. They knew not his goings out and comings in. Where he lodged on the evening of his resurrection, after his visit to the apostles, we read not ; nor were the apostles themselves better informed than we. To Thomas, who was absent when our Lord appeared, the report of the rest was in these words : “ We *have seen* the Lord.” That was all they had to say : they had seen him, and he was gone. They pretend not to direct Thomas to any place where he might find him, and enjoy the same sight. None of them could now say to Thomas, as Nathaniel once said to Philip, “ Come and see.” On the journey from Jerusalem to Galilee,

he was not their companion, — he went before them. How he went we are not informed. The way is not described : the places are not mentioned through which he passed : their names are not recorded who accompanied him on the road, or who entertained him. The disciples were commanded to repair to Galilee. They were not told to seek him at Capernaum, his former residence, or to enquire for him at his mother's house. They were to assemble at a certain hill. Thither they repaired ; they met him there ; and there they worshipped him. The place of his abode for any single night of all the forty days is nowhere mentioned ; nor, from the most diligent examination of the story, is any place of his abode on earth to be assigned. The conclusion seems to be, that on earth he had no longer any local residence, his body requiring neither food for its subsistence, nor a lodging for its shelter and repose : he was become the inhabitant of another region, from which he came occasionally to converse with his disciples. His visible ascension, at the expiration of the forty days, being not the necessary means of his removal, but a token to the disciples that this was his last visit ; an evidence to them that the heavens had now received him, and that he was to be seen no more on earth with the corporeal eye, till the restitution of all things.

I might have been less particular in the detail of circumstances which lead to this conclusion, had it appeared in our English Bibles, as it does in the original, that St. Peter roundly asserts the very same thing in the words of my text : “ Him God raised up the third day,” says St. Peter, “ and showed him openly,” as our English Bibles have it, “ not to all the people.” But here is a manifest contradiction.



Not to be shown to all the people, is not to be shown openly. To be shown openly, therefore, not to all the people, is to be shown and not to be shown at the same time. The literal meaning of the Greek words is this, “Him God raised up the third day, and gave him to be visible.”\* Not openly visible; no such thing is said; it is the very thing denied: but, “He gave him to be visible.” Jesus was no longer in a state to be naturally visible to any man. His body was indeed risen, but it was become that body which St. Paul describes in the fifteenth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, which having no sympathy with the gross bodies of this earthly sphere, nor any place among them, must be indiscernible to the human organs, till they shall have undergone a similar refinement. The divinity united to the blessed Jesus produced, in a short space, that change in him which, in other men, according to the mysterious physics of St. Paul, must be the effect of a slower process. The divinity united to him having raised him on the third day from the grave, in a body incorruptible and invisible, gave him to become visible occasionally, not to all the people, but to his chosen witnesses; to those who were chosen to the privilege of beholding God face to face in the person of his Son, of attesting the fact of Christ’s resurrection, and of publishing through the world the glad tidings of the general redemption.

Thus, you see, every appearance of our Lord to the apostles, after his resurrection, was in truth an appearance of the great God, the Maker of Heaven and earth, to mortal man. The conferences, though

\* Et dedit eum manifestum fieri. — *Vulg.* Et dedit eum ut conspicietur aperte. — TREMELL. ex Syr. Fecitque ut is conspicuus fieret. — BEZA.

frequent, seem to have been short, and upon each occasion mixed with that condescension which was necessary to give the disciples sensible evidence of the reality of the resurrection. We discover much of a reserved dignity in his deportment ; a tone of high authority prevails in his language, and something profoundly mysterious in his actions. His familiar conversation with the world before his passion, was a principal branch of his humiliation ; and his humiliation was an essential part of those sufferings by which the guilt of man was expiated. But the atonement being once made, the form of a servant was to be removed ; Christ was to reassume his glory, and to be seen no more but as the only-begotten of the Father.

Would you now ask, Why Jesus, after his resurrection, was not rendered visible to all the people ? Will you not rather stand aghast at the impiety of the question ? Ask, Why God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ? Ask, Why he who conversed with Abraham as a man talketh with his friend, conversed not but in judgment with the vile inhabitants of Sodom ? Ask, Why Moses only of all the congregation, was allowed to enter the thick darkness where God was ? The appearances to the apostles after the resurrection were of the same kind with the appearances, in the earliest ages, to the patriarchs and the chosen rulers of the Jewish nation. He who, to converse with Abraham, veiled his glory in a traveller's disguise ; he who appeared to Joshua, under the walls of Jericho, in the habit of a warrior, with his sword ready drawn for the attack ; he who was seen by Gideon and Manoah in the human form ; the same showed himself at the sepulchre to Mary Magdalen, in the form of a gardener ; to the two disciples on

the road to Emmaus, as a wayfaring man ; to the eleven separately, or altogether, in various forms, at various times ; upon every occasion, in the manner of his appearance, manifesting his exaltation, and yet finding means to afford them satisfactory proofs that he was the same Jesus who had died.

It is true, that in those earlier ages the ever-blessed Son of God appeared in a body assumed, it is probable, for each particular occasion, whereas his appearances after the resurrection were in that permanent body to which, after Mary's conception, he was inseparably united. But this circumstance may hardly be supposed to make any material difference. The difference, whatever it may seem, was overlooked by St. Paul \*, who, in the 15th chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, enumerating the principal appearances after the resurrection, closes the catalogue with the appearance to himself, which wrought his conversion. The mention of this, as the last in order, shows that he considered it as of the same kind with all the rest. But this appearance to St. Paul, was an appear-

\* The argument drawn, in this paragraph, from the appearance to St. Paul, may seem, in some degree, precarious. Because it may be thought uncertain, whether the appearance mentioned, 1 Cor. xv. 8., be that on the road to Damascus, or the vision afterwards in the temple. This latter was a vision to the apostle in a trance. It appears not certainly that Jesus was in this instance seen in the human form ; but the CONTRARY appears not. However, as the apostle saw this vision in a trance, it seems more reasonable to understand what is said, 1 Cor. xv. 8., of the appearance on the road to Damascus, when the apostle was in no trance. For what men see entranced, is generally deemed less real than what they see in their natural state, and less fit to be alleged in evidence or argument.

ance of the Lord in glory. It was no less an appearance of God, in the form of God, than that to Moses at the bush. St. Paul saw nothing but that tremendous light, which struck himself and his companions to the ground. He saw not the man Jesus, he saw only the light, — the token of the divine presence ; and from the midst of that light he heard the voice of Jesus speaking. Yet this appearance, in which the human form of Jesus was not rendered visible, is mentioned as the last instance in which Jesus was seen after his resurrection ; which proves, that all the rest in which the human form was seen, were considered by the apostles as, equally with this, manifestations of the Deity.

This circumstance, the confessed divinity of the person who appeared, was the obstacle to public appearances. The Jewish nation, in the rejection of our Lord, had filled the measure of its guilt. They were cast off. God no longer held his visible residence among them ; and henceforward he was to be found only in the Christian church. Our Saviour had, accordingly, publicly warned the Jews, when he was led to crucifixion, that “ *they should see him no more* ” till they should be prepared to acknowledge his authority. He had privately told the apostles that “ *they should see him again, but the world should see him no more.* ” In conformity with these predictions of his own, and with the whole plan of revelation, his single public appearance after the resurrection was not at Jerusalem, but in a remote corner of Galilee, which was in some degree a selection of spectators. It is remarkable, that Ananias tells St. Paul, that God had *chosen* him to see the Just One. In short, from every circumstance of the story of the

forty days which intervened between our Lord's resurrection and his visible ascension, from the assertion of my text, and from the intimations of other passages of Scripture, it is evident that our Lord arisen from the grave, could not be shown openly to all the people : he could not resume his familiar conversation with the world ; because they who may be admitted to this immediate communion with the Deity must be persons distinguished by their godly dispositions from the mass of the corrupt world, and chosen by God himself to so high a privilege.

Hence we are taught the universal importance of the precept so often inculcated upon the Israelites under the law, and adopted by St. Peter as a general maxim of the Christian's duty, " Be ye holy, for I, Jehovah, your God, am holy." If the want of holiness excluded the mass of the Jewish people from that sight of God, in the person of our Lord, which was granted to the apostles and other believers here on earth, and from the benefits which that sight might have conveyed to them, -- the testimony of their own senses to the truth of our Lord's pretensions, and the certainty thence arising of the salvation of the faithful ; much more shall the want of holiness finally exclude from the sight of God in Heaven, and from that fulness of joy which shall be the portion of those who shall be admitted to his presence. To see the God-head in the person of our Lord, is proposed to the Christian's hope as the highest privilege of the saints that shall overcome. The physical capacity of this vision is placed by St. John in a resemblance and sympathy that the glorified bodies of the saints shall bear to the body of our Lord in glory. " We know," says St. John, " that when he shall appear we shall be

like him :” we must be like him, “because we shall see him as he is.” St. Paul speaks with no less confidence of the resemblance we shall bear to him. “Our Lord Jesus Christ,” he says, “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the workings whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.” Or, as the passage might more properly be rendered, “Who shall cause the fashion of our body of humiliation to be made like unto his body of glory, according to the energy of his power of subduing all things to himself.” This transformation of the bodies of the faithful, by the power of our Lord, requires a previous transformation of the mind to a resemblance of him, by faith in his word, by reliance on his atonement, by conformity to his precepts, and imitation of his example. For he that hath this hope in him, of being transformed into the likeness of his Lord, of seeing him as he now is, and of standing for ever in his presence ; he that hath this hope “purifieth himself as he is pure.”

# **FIVE SERMONS.**





## S E R M O N I.

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PSALMS, xcvi. 7.

*Worship him, all ye gods.*

IT should be a rule with every one who would read the Holy Scriptures with advantage and improvement, to compare every text, which may seem either important for the doctrine it may contain, or remarkable for the turn of the expression, with the parallel passages in other parts of Holy Writ; that is, with the passages in which the subject-matter is the same, the sense equivalent, or the turn of the expression similar. These parallel passages are easily found by the marginal references in the Bibles of the larger form. It were to be wished, indeed, that no Bibles were printed without the margin. It is to be hoped that the objection obviously arising from the necessary augmentation in the price of the book may some time or other be removed by the charity of religious associations. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge could not more effectually serve the purpose of their pious institution, than by applying some part of their funds to the printing of Bibles, in other respects in an ordinary way, for the use of the poor, but with a full margin. Meanwhile those who can afford to purchase the larger Bibles should be diligent in the improvement of the means with which Providence has furnished them. Particular diligence

should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and the New Testaments. When you read the Old Testament, if you perceive by the margin that any particular passage is cited in the New, turn to that passage of the New to which the margin refers, that you may see in what manner, in what sense, and to what purpose, the words of the more ancient are alleged by the later writer, who, in many instances, may be supposed to have received clearer light upon the same subject. On the other hand, when in the New Testament you meet with citations from the Old, always consult the original writer, that you may have the satisfaction of judging for yourselves, how far the passage alleged makes for the argument which it is brought to support. In doing this you will imitate the example of the godly Jews of Berea, which is recorded with approbation in the Acts of the Apostles, who, when Paul and Silas reasoned with them out of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, clearly setting before them the prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the accomplishment of those prophecies in Jesus, whom they preached, “searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so.” These Berean Jews compared the parallel passages of St. Paul’s oral doctrine, with the written Scriptures of the Old Testament. And *we now* should with equal diligence compare the written doctrine of St. Paul, and of his fellow-labourers, with the writings of the Old Testament. It is incredible to any one, who has not in some degree made the experiment, what a proficiency may be made in that knowledge which maketh wise unto salvation, by studying the Scriptures in this manner, without any other commentary or exposition than what the different parts of the

sacred volume mutually furnish for each other. I will not scruple to assert, that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his English Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner, will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, but, by God's blessing, he will become learned in every thing relating to his religion in such a degree, that he will not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments, or by the false assertions of those who endeavour to engraft their own opinion upon the oracles of God. He may safely be ignorant of all philosophy, except what is to be learned from the sacred books; which, indeed, contain the highest philosophy adapted to the lowest apprehensions. He may safely remain ignorant of all history, except so much of the history of the first ages of the Jewish and of the Christian church, as is to be gathered from the canonical books of the Old and New Testament. Let him study these in the manner I recommend, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit, by which these books were dictated; and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history, shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian's faith. The Bible thus studied, will, indeed, prove to be what we Protestants esteem it, a certain and sufficient rule of faith and practice, a helmet of salvation, which alone may quench the fiery darts of the wicked. My text, I trust, will prove a striking instance of the truth of these assertions.

If, in argument with any of the false teachers of the present day, I were to allege this text of the Psalmist in proof of our Lord's divinity, my anta-

gonist would probably reply, that our Lord is not once mentioned in the psalm; that the subject of the psalm is an assertion of the proper divinity of Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, as distinguished from the imaginary deities which the heathen worshipped. This psalm, therefore, which proposes Jehovah, the God of the Israelites, as the sole object of worship to men and angels, is alleged, he would say, to no purpose, in justification of worship paid to another person. And to any one, who might know nothing more of the true sense of this passage than may appear in the words taken by themselves, my adversary might seem to have the better in the argument. I think I should seem to myself to stand confuted, if I knew no more of the meaning of my text, or rather of the inspired song of which it makes a part, than an inattentive reader might collect from a hasty view of its general purport. But observe the references in the margin of the Bible, and you will find that a parallel passage occurs in the epistle to the Hebrews, in the first chapter at the sixth verse. Turn to this passage of the epistle, and there you will find this text of the Psalmist cited by St. Paul to this very purpose; namely, to prove that adoration is due from the blessed angels of God to the only-begotten Son; for thus he reasons: "When he bringeth in the First Begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him." The only passage in the Old Testament, as the Hebrew text now stands, is this seventh verse of the ninety-seventh psalm. The words of the Psalmist, indeed, are these: "Worship him, all ye gods." The apostle, that he might clearly exclude a plurality of gods, while he asserts the Godhead of the Son, thinks proper to explain the Psalmist's words, by substituting "all the

angels of God” for “all the gods.” But it is very evident that the First Begotten was, in the apostle’s judgment, the object of worship propounded by the Psalmist; otherwise, these words of the Psalmist, in which he calls upon the angels to worship Jehovah, were alleged to no purpose in proof of the Son’s natural pre-eminence above the angels. For either the Son is the object of worship intended by the Psalmist, or the Son himself is to bear a part in the worship so universally enjoined.

But, further, the collation of the Psalmist’s text with the apostle’s citation, will not only enable the unlearned Christian to discover a sense of the Psalmist’s words not very obvious in the words themselves, but it will also give him certain, although summary, information upon a point of ecclesiastical antiquity of great importance, upon which the illiterate cannot be informed by any other means. In the late attempts to revive the Ebionæan heresy, much stress has been laid, by the leaders of the impious confederacy, upon the opinions of the primitive church of Jerusalem. They tell you, with great confidence, that the Redeemer was never worshipped, nor his divinity acknowledged, by the members of that church. The assertion has, indeed, no other foundation but the ignorance of those who make it, who confound a miserable sect, which separated from the church of Jerusalem, with the church itself. But how is the truth of the fact to be proved to the illiterate Christian, unread in the history of the primitive ages, who yet must feel some alarm and disquietude when he is told, that he has been catechised in a faith never held by those first and best Christians, the converts of the apostles, among whom James, the brother of our Lord, was bishop.

Holy writ, if he is diligent in consulting it, will relieve his scruples, and remove his doubts, not only upon the principal matter in dispute, but upon this particular historical question. It must be obvious to every understanding, that when any passage of the Old Testament is cited by writers of the New, in confirmation of any particular doctrine, without any disquisition concerning the sense of the citation, or any attempt to fix a particular sense upon it which may suit the writer's purpose ; it must be evident, I say, that a text thus cited, without any solicitude to settle its true meaning, was generally understood at the time by those to whom the argument was addressed. For a text alleged in any sense not generally admitted could be no proof to those who should be inclined to call in question the sense imposed. The Hebrews, therefore, to whom the apostle produces this text of the Psalmist in proof of the high dignity of the Redeemer's nature, agreed with the apostle concerning the sense of the Psalmist's words. They well understood that the Psalmist calls upon the angels to worship the only-begotten Son. And who were these Hebrews? The very name imports that they were Jews by birth : they were, indeed, the Jewish converts settled in Palestine. And since the epistle was written during St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, which might easily be made to appear from the epistle itself, and St. Paul's first imprisonment at Rome ended about the thirtieth year after our Lord's ascension, they were no other than the *first race* of Jewish Christians, who agreed with St. Paul that the Redeemer is the object of worship propounded to the angels by the Psalmist. And thus, by this plain remark, and by the authority of the sacred books, the

unlearned Christian may settle his own mind, and put to shame and silence the disturbers of his faith.

But this is not the whole of the information which the unlearned Christian may draw from the Psalmist's text, compared with the apostle's citation. The apostle cites the Psalmist's words as spoken when the First Begotten was introduced into the world, that is to say, to mankind; for the word, in the original, literally signifies not the universe, for in that world the First Begotten ever was from its first formation, but this globe, which is inhabited by men, to which the First Begotten was in these later ages introduced by the promulgation of the Gospel. Now, since the occasion upon which these words were spoken was an introduction of the First Begotten into the world, if these words are nowhere to be found but in the ninety-seventh psalm, it follows that this ninety-seventh psalm is that introduction of the First Begotten into the world of which the apostle speaks. — Hence the unlearned Christian may derive this useful information, that the true subject of the ninety-seventh psalm, as it was understood by St. Paul and by the church of Jerusalem, to which this epistle is addressed, within thirty years after our Lord's ascension, when that church must have been entirely composed of our Lord's own followers and the immediate converts of the apostles, was not, as it might seem to any one not deeply versed in the prophetic language, an assertion of God's natural dominion over the universe, but a prophecy of the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel, and the general conversion of idolaters to the service of the true God. The First Begotten is the Lord, or rather the Jehovah, for that is the word used in the original, whose king-

dom is proclaimed as an occasion of joy and thanksgiving to the whole world.

And that this was no arbitrary interpretation of the psalm, imagined by enthusiasts, or invented by impostors, to make the sacred oracles accord with their own conceits, or with their own designs, will appear by a closer inspection of the psalm itself, which cannot be consistently expounded of any other king or of any other kingdom.

That Jehovah's kingdom in some sense or other is the subject of this divine song, cannot be made a question, for thus it opens, — "Jehovah reigneth." The psalm, therefore, must be understood either of God's natural kingdom over his whole creation; of his particular kingdom over the Jews, his chosen people; or of that kingdom which is called in the New Testament the kingdom of Heaven, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Christ. For of any other kingdom of God, besides these three, man never heard or read. God's peculiar kingdom over the Jews cannot be the subject of this psalm, because *all nations* of the earth are called upon to rejoice in the acknowledgment of this great truth, "Jehovah reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the many isles be glad thereof." The many isles are the various regions of the habitable world: for the word *isles* in the Old Testament denotes a region circumscribed by certain boundaries though not surrounded by the sea; as appears by the use of it in the tenth chapter of Genesis, at the fifth verse, where the sacred writer says of the sons of Japheth, mentioned in the three preceding verses, "By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided," though all the sons of Japheth had their settlements either in the Asiatic or the



European continent. The same consideration, that Jehovah's kingdom is mentioned as a subject of general thanksgiving, proves that God's universal dominion over his whole creation cannot be the kingdom in the prophet's mind : for in this kingdom a great majority of the ancient world, the idolaters, were considered, not as subjects who might rejoice in the glory of their Monarch, but as rebels who had every thing to fear from his just resentment. God's government of the world was to them no cause of joy, otherwise than as the erection of Christ's kingdom, which was to be the means of their deliverance, was a part of the general scheme of Providence. It remains, therefore, that Christ's kingdom is that kingdom of Jehovah, which the inspired poet celebrates as the occasion of universal joy. And this will further appear by the sequel of the song. After four verses, in which the transcendent glory, the irresistible power, and inscrutable perfection of the Lord, who, to the joy of all nations, reigneth, are painted in poetical images, taken partly from the awful scene on Sinai which accompanied the delivery of the law, partly from other manifestations of God's presence with the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness ; he proceeds, in the sixth verse, " The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory." We read in the nineteenth psalm, that " the heavens declare the glory of God." And the glory of God, the power and the intelligence of the Creator, is indeed visibly declared in the fabric of the material world. But I cannot see how the structure of the heavens can demonstrate the *righteousness* of God. Wisdom and power may be displayed in the contrivance of an inanimate machine ; but righteousness cannot appear in the arrangement of

the parts, or the direction of the motions of lifeless matter. The heavens, therefore, in their external structure, cannot declare their Maker's righteousness : but the heavens, in another sense, attested the righteousness of Christ, when the voice from heaven declared him the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father was well pleased ; and when the preternatural darkness of the sun at the crucifixion, and other agonies of nature, drew that confession from the heathen centurion who attended the execution, that the suffering Jesus was the Son of God : " And all the people see his glory." It is much to be regretted that our translators, over studious of the purity of their English style, have, through the whole Bible, neglected a distinction constantly observed in the original, between *people* in the singular, and *peoples* in the plural. The word *people*, in the singular, for the most part, denotes God's chosen people, the Jewish nation, unless any other particular people happen to be the subject of discourse. But *peoples*, in the plural, is put for all the other races of mankind, as distinct from the chosen people. The word here is in the plural form, " And all the peoples see his glory." But when, or in what sense, did any of the peoples, the idolatrous nations, see the glory of God ? Literally they never saw his glory. The effulgence of the Shechinah never was displayed to them, except when it blazed forth upon the Egyptians to strike them with a panic ; or when the towering pillar of flame, which marshalled the Israelites in the wilderness, was seen by the inhabitants of Palestine and Arabia as a threatening meteor in their sky. Intellectually, no idolaters ever saw the glory of God, for they never acknowledged his power and Godhead : had they thus seen his glory, they

had ceased to be idolaters. But *all the peoples*, upon the preaching of the Gospel, saw the glory of Christ. They saw it literally in the miracles performed by his apostles ; they saw it spiritually when they perceived the purity of his precepts, when they acknowledged the truth of his doctrine, when they embraced the profession of Christianity, and owned Christ for their Saviour and their God. The Psalmist goes on ; “ Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols : worship him, all ye gods.” In the original this verse has not at all the form of a malediction, which it has acquired in our translation from the use of the strong word *confounded*. “ *Let them be ashamed.*” This is the utmost that the Psalmist says. The prayer that they may be ashamed of their folly, and repent of it, is very different from an imprecation of confusion. But in truth the Psalmist rather seems to speak prophetically, without any thing either of prayer or imprecation, — “ they shall be ashamed.” Having seen the glory of Christ, they shall be ashamed of the idols, which in the times of their ignorance they worshipped. In the eighth and ninth verses, looking forward to the times when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, and the remnant of Israel shall turn to the Lord, he describes the daughters of Judah as rejoicing at the news of the mercy extended to the Gentile world, and exulting in the universal extent of Jehovah’s kingdom, and the general acknowledgment of his Godhead. In the tenth verse, having the sufferings, as it should seem, in view, which the first preachers were destined to endure, he exhorts those who love Jehovah to adhere at all hazards to their duty, in the assurance that their powerful Lord,

on whom they have fixed their love, “preserveth the souls of his saints, and delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.” “Light,” he adds, “is sown for the righteous;” or, to render the words more strictly, “Light is shed over the Just One, and gladness upon the upright of heart.” The *just* and the *just one* are two different words; the one a collective noun expressing a multitude, the other expressive of a single person. These two words are unfortunately confounded in our English Bibles. The Just One is, I think, in many passages of the Psalms, of which I take this to be one, an appellation which exclusively belongs to Christ in his human character.\* Light, or splendour, is an easy image for a condition of prosperity and grandeur. “Light is shed over the Just One, the man Christ Jesus, who is now exalted at the right hand of God.” And light, if I mistake not, is, without any metaphor, literally shed over him. By virtue of his union to the sacred person of the Godhead, this Just One, the man Christ, is now so taken into glory that he is become an inhabitant of the Shechinah, dwelling bodily in the centre of that insufferable light; in which situation he showed himself before he suffered to the three apostles on the Mount, to animate their faith, and after his ascension to the unconverted Saul, to check his persecuting zeal upon his journey to Damascus. Thus light, the light of God’s own glory, is shed over the Just One, over the glorified person of our Lord. And this light thus shed on him is a source of gladness to all

\* Psalm xxxiv. 19. “Great are the troubles of the Just One, but Jehovah delivereth him out of all.” And again, 21. “God shall slay the ungodly, and they that hate the Just One shall be made desolate.”

the upright in heart. “ Rejoice in Jehovah, therefore, ye righteous, rejoice in him by whom ye are yourselves united to the first principle of goodness, being, power, happiness, and glory ; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.”

Thus by a brief, but, I hope, a perspicuous exposition of this whole psalm, I have shown you that every part of it easily applies to the subject of the Messiah’s ascension to his kingdom, and that many parts of it cannot be expounded of any other kingdom of God. This psalm is, indeed, one of five psalms, from the ninety-sixth to the hundredth inclusive, which, if they are not all parts of one entire poem, at least all relate to the same subject, “ the introduction of the First Begotten to the world.” Christ is the Jehovah whose dominion is proclaimed ; who is declared to be the God whom men and angels are bound to serve and worship. Such is he who for our deliverance condescended to assume our nature, and upon this day was born of a pure virgin. For thus it seems the matter stood in the counsels of Eternal Wisdom : it behoved him “ to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining unto God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.”

## S E R M O N II.

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ROMANS, iv. 25.

*Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

**T**HE manner in which the apostle connects, in these remarkable words, both the sufferings of Christ with the sins of men, and the resurrection of Christ with the absolution of the sinners, deserves a deep consideration, and leads, if I mistake not, to conclusions of the highest moment in speculation and in practice. The apostle not only speaks of the sins of men as the cause or occasion of our Lord's death, but he speaks of the justification of men as equally the cause or occasion of his resurrection. For the elucidation and improvement of this doctrine, I shall treat the subject in the following order: —

*First,* Taking the first clause of my text by itself, I shall enquire in what sense it may seem to be implied, in these expressions, “delivered for our offences,” that the sins of mankind were the cause or occasion of Christ's sufferings.

I shall, in the *next* place, show, that if aught of ambiguity may seem to adhere to these expressions, it is entirely removed by the similarity of connection which is alleged in the two clauses taken jointly; between the sins of men, with the death of Christ, on

the one hand, — and the justification of men, with the resurrection of Christ, on the other. I shall show you, that the similarity of these connections, — men sinned, therefore Christ died; men are justified, therefore Christ was raised again, — necessarily leads to the particular notion of Christ's death as an expiatory sacrifice, in the most literal meaning of which the words are capable; that it leads to this notion of Christ's death in particular, because it excludes all other notions of it.

And, *lastly*, I shall point out the important consequences that follow from this great article of our faith, — that Christ's blood was spilt for the expiation of the sins of the penitent.

Now, for the sense in which it may seem to be asserted, that the sins of men were the cause or the occasion of our Lord's bitter sufferings and ignominious death; since his death, with all the circumstances of pain and ignominy which attended it, was brought about by the malice of his enemies, it may seem that, in this sense, the sins of men were literally the causes of his sufferings. But the apostle says, that he was delivered for "our offences." The expression, "our offences" is general, and cannot be expounded of the particular sins of our Lord's personal enemies; of the malice of the Pharisees, who procured his death; of the perfidy of Judas, who betrayed him; of the injustice of Pilate, who, against his own conscience, and in defiance of the Divine warnings, condemned him; of the cruelty of the Jewish populace, who derided him in his agonies. Of any or of all of these particular sins of the persons concerned, as contrivers, as directors, as instruments, or as gratified spectators in the horrid business of his death, the apostle's expression, "our

offences," is too general to be understood. It can only be expounded of the sins of all us men, or at least of all us Christians.

Nor is it agreeable to the usual cast of the Scripture language, that the persons immediately concerned in procuring and in executing the unjust sentence upon our Lord, should be spoken of as the original agents or causes in the dreadful business of his death. They were only instruments in the hand of a higher cause. They were the instruments which Providence employed to bring about the counsels of his own wisdom. This is implied in the words of my text: "He was delivered for our offences." These words, "he was delivered," refer to a purpose and design of God's over-ruling Providence, by which the Redeemer was delivered over to the pains which he endured. The unbelieving Jews,—the false traitor,—the unrighteous judge, — the unfeeling executioner, — the insulting rabble, — were but the instruments of that purpose, which, in some way or other, had a general respect to "our offences;" that is, to the offences of all us men, or, in the most limited sense in which the words can be taken, of all that portion of mankind which should hereafter be brought to the knowledge and worship of that God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and by faith in the crucified Redeemer, should become admissible to a share in those benefits, whatever they may be, in order to which the sufferings of the Son of God were ordained.

If the single service which Christ rendered to mankind was in the character of a teacher of religion; if men were not otherwise to be reclaimed from their vices, than by the discovery which our Lord hath made of the different conditions of the righteous and



the wicked in a future life ; if by this discovery every man once brought to a belief of the doctrine, might be reclaimed in such degree as to merit, by his future conduct, not only a free pardon of his past offences, but a share of those good things which “ God hath prepared for them that love him ;” if our Lord’s doctrine might of itself, in this way, be a remedy for the sins of men, and his sufferings and death were necessary only for the confirmation of his doctrine, — the sins of men might, figuratively and indirectly, be said to be the occasion of his death ; his doctrine being the means of their reformation, and his death the means of establishing his doctrine. But if the case really be, that nothing future can undo the past ; that the guilt of past crimes cannot be done away by future innocence ; if, after we have done all that is commanded us, we are still to say, “ we are unprofitable servants ;” if we have incurred guilt without so much as the ability of meriting reward ; if all that is commanded us, which, were it done, would not amount to merit, be still more than ever is performed ; if the utmost height of human virtue consists in a perpetual conflict with appetites which are never totally subdued, in an endeavour after a perfection which never is attained ; if the case be, that “ if we say,” that is, if we who believe, if we Christians say, “ that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us ;” if, nevertheless, the faith and veracity of God himself is pledged, “ if we confess our sins, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ;” — “ if it be the blood of Christ which cleanseth us from sin ;” if the benefit of his death be in some degree extended to those who are unacquainted with his doctrine, who by consequence are not within the

reach of any influence that may be ascribed to his instruction, “for Christ is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world;”—it is evident that the Redeemer’s death must have been otherwise available to the expiation of the sins of men, than by its remote effect upon the manners of mankind, by the confirmation which it affords of the truth of the Christian Revelation.

Indeed, were it only as a proof of doctrine, or as an example of patient suffering, that the death of Christ had been serviceable to mankind, similar benefits would be, in some degree, to be ascribed to the sufferings of many of our Lord’s first disciples. And yet, though the early martyrs were, in the common acceptance of the word, just men, who suffered unjustly for the service of God and for the good of man, and in the cause of the true religion, yet it is never said of them that they suffered “the just for the unjust, that they might bring us to God.”

We read not, that we have access to the Father through the blood of St. Peter or St. Paul; and yet, if the expiatory virtue of our Saviour’s death consisted merely in what it contributed towards the reformation of mankind, by giving evidence and effect to his doctrine, it would be injustice to St. Peter and St. Paul, and all the other martyrs whose deaths contributed, in the same remote way, to the same effect, to deny them a share in the business of expiation. St. Paul, indeed, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Colossians, speaking of his own sufferings, says, that “he was filling up in his own flesh that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ.” But in this passage he is speaking of the church under the image of Christ’s body. By the afflictions of Christ, which he speaks

of as unfinished, he means the afflictions of the church : and he speaks of his own sufferings, not as supplying any supposed deficiency of our Lord's sufferings, but as filling up the appointed measure of the afflictions of the church, and laying the foundation of its future prosperity and peace. Of the proper sufferings of our Lord in his own person, the apostles every where speak a very different language ; describing them as the means by which the apostles themselves, no less than other Christians, were each individually reconciled to God, and admitted to the hope of future glory. “ In him we have redemption, — through his blood the forgiveness of sins.” — “ The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” — “ My blood is shed for you,” said our Lord himself to the apostles, “ and for many, for the remission of sins.” Expressions of the like import so frequently occur in the sacred writings, the notion of the blood of Christ, as the matter of an expiatory sacrifice, is so strenuously inculcated, that it is not easy to conceive that nothing more is meant than to describe, in figurative expressions, the great importance of our Lord's death as a proof of his doctrine, when a similar importance might be ascribed to the deaths of other preachers, to which the same figure never is applied. It should rather seem that the blood of Christ had some direct and proper efficacy to expiate the guilt of men, independent of any remote effect upon their actions.

That this is really the case, appears with the highest evidence from that view of the mystery of redemption, which my text, in the second clause, more particularly sets forth, in which the resurrection of Christ is connected with our justification in the same manner as, in the first clause, his death is connected with our

sins. As our Lord's death was, in the scheme of Providence, the consequence of our sins, so, by the same scheme of Providence, his resurrection was the consequence of our justification.

The English expressions, it must be confessed, are in themselves in some degree ambiguous. That he rose again "for our justification," may be either an assertion that the justification of man naturally brought on the event of our Lord's resurrection, or that their justification is some future benefit, which the event of Christ's resurrection shall, in due season, surely bring about; and the latter may seem the more obvious sense of the expression. But that this is not the true exposition, even of the English words, evidently appears when the two clauses are considered in connection: for, as the death of Christ had no tendency to produce those offences for which he was delivered, but, on the contrary, our offences were the reason of his humiliation (and it were unreasonable to suppose that similar expressions should be used in opposite senses in different parts of the same sentence), our justification, for which Christ rose, must be something which, in the order of things, led to the Redeemer's resurrection. The original words are without ambiguity, and clearly represent our Lord's resurrection as an event which took place in consequence of man's justification, in the same manner as his death took place in consequence of man's sins.

It follows, therefore, that our justification is a thing totally distinct from the final salvation of the godly. It is some part of the wonderful business of redemption which was to be finished before our Lord, consistently with the scheme of his great undertaking, could rise from the dead. It is something annexed

to no condition on the part of man, a benefit freely and generally bestowed, without any regard to any previous effect of the evangelical doctrine upon the lives of individuals. Now this is easily explained, if the death of Christ was literally an atonement for the sins of the penitent; but in any other view of the scheme of redemption it is inexplicable.

Christ in his original nature, as the uncreated Word, the ever-living Image of the Father, was incapable of sin, as he was far above all infirmity and imperfection. It were the height of impiety to imagine that it was for any sins of his own in a pre-existent state, that he was delivered over to a condition of weakness and mortality. Christ, in assuming our mortal nature, contracted nothing of the general pollution. The miraculous manner of his entrance into human life, excluded the possibility of his being touched with that contagion. He died not, therefore, for any share belonging to himself of the universal corruption. Christ, in the form of a servant, was subject to temptation, but still not liable to actual sin. He died not, therefore, for his own sins: he died as the proxy of guilty man. As he died not, therefore, for any delinquency of his own, there was nothing to detain his soul in hell or his body in the grave; nothing to protract his continuance in the condition of a dead man, that is, of an executed criminal, when once the atonement of our sins was made, and the justice of our offended God was satisfied. So soon as the expiation was complete, justice required that the Redeemer's sufferings should terminate, and his resurrection to life and glory was the immediate consequence. Our justification, you will observe, is quite a distinct thing from the final abso-

lution of good men in the general judgment. Every man's final doom will depend upon the diligence which he uses in the present life, to improve under the means and motives for improvement which the Gospel furnishes. Our justification is the grace "in which we now stand." It is that general act of mercy which was previously necessary on the part of God, to render the attainment of salvation possible to those who had once been wilfully rebellious, and to the last continue liable to the surprises of temptation. It is that act of mercy which conveys to all true penitents a free pardon of all sins committed before conversion, and a free pardon of the sins of incurable infirmity after conversion. This act of mercy is the immediate benefit of Christ's death; it hath no respect to any merits of the individuals to whom it is applied; its very foundation is, that all are concluded under sin; it embraces all without distinction, and is procured by the sole merit of our Lord's atonement. If the purpose of the Redeemer's death was to procure this mercy, it is evident, that when he had endured what was necessary to procure it, the purpose of his death was answered, and his resurrection could not but ensue. In any other view of the scheme of redemption, it is not easy to understand what that justification of man should be, of which the apostle speaks in the text as requisite in the order of things to the Redeemer's resurrection. If any one imagines, that the pardon of sin in the present life with that tolerance of man's infirmity, the promise of which under the Gospel is the great motive to renewed obedience; — if any one imagines, that this double act of mercy, freely remitting past guilt, and accepting a sincere instead of a perfect obedience, proceeds from the

pure benignity of God the Father, in consideration of the sinner's own repentance, and without regard to the virtue of any atonement, he will find it difficult to assign a reason why the grant of the pardon upon these terms should follow rather than precede the death of Christ. He will find it difficult to explain, upon what principle our justification should be an intermediate event between the death of Christ and his resurrection, rather than between his nativity and his baptism ; or upon what principle indeed it should be connected with any particular circumstance in the life of Christ, more than with any imaginable circumstance in the life of any other man, — of Pontius Pilate for instance, or Gamaliel. The text, therefore, is one remarkable passage out of a great number which exhibits such a view of the scheme of redemption which is incapable of any rational exposition, if the notion of Christ's death as an actual atonement for the sins of men be rejected.

This doctrine of an atonement, by which the repenting sinner may recover, as it were, his lost character of innocence, and by which the involuntary deficiencies are supplied of his renewed obedience, is so full of comfort to the godly, so soothing to the natural fears of the awakened sinner's conscience, that it may be deemed a dreadful indication of the great obduracy of men, that a discovery of a scheme of mercy, which might have been expected to have been the great recommendation of the Gospel to a world lost and dead in trespasses and sins, the means of procuring it an easy and favourable reception, should itself have been made the ground of cavil and objection. And it is a still worse symptom of the hardened hearts of men, if, among those who profess themselves disciples

of a crucified Saviour, any may be found who allow no real efficacy to that “blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.” Let us rather charitably hope, that this misbelief and contradiction have arisen from some misapprehension of the Scripture doctrine, and that the real doctrine of our Lord’s atonement has all the while had no opponents. Those who speak of the wrath of God as appeased by Christ’s sufferings, speak, it must be confessed, a figurative language. The Scriptures speak figuratively when they ascribe wrath to God. The Divine nature is insusceptible of the perturbations of passion; and when it is said that God is angry, it is a figure which conveys this useful warning to mankind, that God will be determined by his wisdom, and by his providential care of his creation, to deal with the wicked as a prince in anger deals with rebellious subjects. It is an extension of the figure when it is said, that God’s wrath is by any means appeased. It is a figure, therefore, if it be said that God’s wrath is appeased by the sufferings of Christ. It is not to be supposed that the sins of men excite in God any appetite of vengeance, which could not be diverted from its purpose of punishment till it had found its gratification in the sufferings of a righteous person. This, indeed, were a view of our redemption founded on a false and unworthy notion of the Divine character. But nothing hinders but that the sufferings of Christ, which could only in a figurative sense be an appeasement or satisfaction of God’s *wrath*, might be, in the most literal meaning of the words, a satisfaction to his *justice*. It is easy to understand that the interests of God’s government, the peace and order of the great kingdom over which he rules the whole world of moral agents, might re-



quire that his disapprobation of sin should be solemnly declared and testified in his manner of forgiving it : it is easy to understand, that the exaction of vicarious sufferings on the part of him who undertook to be the intercessor for a rebellious race amounted to such a declaration. These sufferings, by which the end of punishment might be answered, being once sustained, it is easy to perceive, that the same principle of wisdom, the same providential care of his creation, which must have determined the Deity to inflict punishment, had no atonement been made, would now determine him to spare. Thus, to speak figuratively, his anger was appeased, but his justice was literally satisfied ; and the sins of men no longer calling for punishment when the ends of punishment were secured, were literally expiated. The person sustaining the sufferings in consideration of which the guilt of others may, consistently with the principles of good policy, be remitted, was, in the literal sense of the word, so literally as no other victim ever was, a sacrifice, and his blood shed for the remission of sin was literally the *matter* of the expiation.

It now only remains that I point out to you, as distinctly as the time will permit, the important lessons to be drawn from this view of the scheme of man's redemption.

*First*, then, we learn from it that sin must be something far more hateful in its nature, something of a deeper malignity, than is generally understood. It could be no inconsiderable evil that could require such a remedy as the humiliation of the second Person in the Godhead. It is not to be supposed, that any light cause would move the merciful Father of the universe to expose even an innocent man to unmerited suffer-

ings. What must be the enormity of that guilt, which God's mercy could not pardon till the only-begotten Son of God had undergone its punishment? How great must be the load of crime, which could find no adequate atonement till the Son of God descended from the bosom of the Father, clothed himself with flesh, and being found in fashion as a man, submitted to a life of hardship and contempt, to a death of ignominy and pain?

Again, we learn that the good or ill conduct of man is a thing of far more importance and concern in the moral system than is generally imagined. Man's deviation from his duty was a disorder, it seems, in the moral system of the universe, for which nothing less than Divine wisdom could devise a remedy, — the remedy devised nothing less than Divine love and power could apply. Man's disobedience was in the moral world what it would be in the natural, if a planet were to wander from its orbit, or the constellations to start from their appointed seats. It was an evil for which the regular constitution of the world had no cure, which nothing but the immediate interposition of Providence could repair.

We learn still further, that as the malignity of sin is so great, and the importance of man's conduct so considerable, the danger of a life of wilful sin must be much more formidable than imagination is apt to paint it. The weight of punishment naturally due to sin must bear some just proportion to its intrinsic malignity, and to the extent of the mischiefs which arise from it. Its punishment must also bear some just proportion to the price which has been paid for our redemption. Terrible must have been the punishment which was bought off at so great a price as the blood

of the Son of God ; and terrible must be the punishment which still awaits us, if “ we count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing,” and forfeit the benefit of that atonement.

Another lesson to be drawn from the doctrine of our redemption is, that man, notwithstanding his present degeneracy, notwithstanding the misery and weakness of his present condition, the depravity of his passions, and the imbecility of his reason, hath nevertheless a capacity of high improvement in intellect and moral worth. For it cannot reasonably be supposed, that so much should be done for the deliverance of a creature from the consequence of its own guilt, of whom it was not understood that it had the capacity of being rendered, by the discipline applied in some future stage at least of its existence, in some degree worthy of its Maker’s care and love. The scheme of man’s redemption originated, we are told, from God’s love of man. In man, in his fallen state, there is nothing which the Divine love could make its object. But the Divine intellect contemplates every part of its creation in the whole extent of its existence ; and that future worth of man, to which he shall be raised by the Divine mercy, is such as moved the Divine love to the work of his redemption. For, to say that God had loved a creature which should be unfit to be loved in the whole of its existence, were to magnify the mercy of God at the expence of his wisdom.

But, since all improvement of the intellectual nature must, in some degree, be owing to its own exertions to the purpose of self-improvement, the prospect of the great attainments which the grace of God puts within our reach, ought to excite us to the

utmost diligence “to make our calling and election sure ;” as, on the other hand, the prospect of the danger which threatens the perverse, the careless, and the secure, should keep us in a state of constant watchfulness against the temptations of the world, the surprises of passion, and the allurements of sense. The Christian should remember, that the utmost he can do or suffer for himself, by a denial of his appetites, and a resistance of temptation, or even by exposing himself to the scorn and persecution of the world, is far less than hath been done and suffered for him. And what has *he* to expect from a merciful, but withal a wise and righteous Judge, who thinks it hard to mortify those passions in himself, for which the Lord of life made his life an offering ?

Who ever thinks without just indignation and abhorrence of the Jewish rulers, who, in the phrenzy of envy and resentment, — envy of our Lord’s credit with the people, and resentment of his just and affectionate rebukes, — spilt his righteous blood ? Let us rather turn the edge of our resentment against those enemies which, while they are harboured in our own bosoms, “ war against our souls,” and were, more truly than the Jews, the murderers of our Lord. Shall the Christian be enamoured of the pomp and glory of the world when he considers, that for the crimes of man’s ambition the Son of God was humbled ? Shall he give himself up to those covetous desires of the world, which were the occasion that his Lord lived an outcast from its comforts ? Will the disciples of the holy Jesus submit to be the slaves of those base appetites of the flesh, which were, indeed, the nails which pierced his Master’s hands and feet ? Will he, in any situation, be intimidated by

the enmity of the world, or abashed by its censures, when he reflects how his Lord endured the cross, and despised the shame? Hard, no doubt, is the conflict which the Christian must sustain with the power of the enemy, and with his own passions. Hard to flesh and blood is the conflict; but powerful is the succour given, and high is the reward proposed. For thus saith the true and faithful Witness, the Original of the creation of God: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me in my throne, even as also I overcame, and am sitten down with my Father in his throne." Now, unto Him that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood; to Him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore; to Him who hath disarmed sin of its strength, and death of its sting; to the only-begotten Son, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, three Persons and one only God, be glory and dominion, praise and thanksgiving, henceforth and for evermore.

### SERMON III.

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MATTHEW, XX. 23.

*To sit on my right hand and my left is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."*

THESE, you know, were the concluding words of our blessed Lord's reply to the mother of Zebedee's children, when she came with a petition to him for her two sons, that they might be the next persons to himself in honour and authority in his new kingdom, sitting the one on his right hand, the other on his left. It was, surely, with great truth he told them "they knew not what they asked." At the time when their petition was preferred, they had, probably, little apprehension what that kingdom was to be in which they solicited promotion; and were not at all aware that their request went to any thing higher, or that it could indeed go to any higher thing than the first situations in the king of Israel's court. He told them that they sought a pre-eminence not easily attained, to be earned only by a patient endurance of unmerited sufferings for the service of mankind and the propagation of the true religion; and he asks them, in enigmatical language, whether they were prepared to follow his example? It is of the nature of ambition to overlook all difficulties, and

to submit to any hardships for the attainment of its ends. Two miserable fishermen of the Galilean lake, raised to the near prospect, as they thought, of wealth and grandeur, thought no conditions hard by which they might become the favourites and ministers of a king; nor, perhaps, did they understand in what extent it was ordained that they must suffer, before they could be permitted to enjoy. They answered, that they were prepared for all difficulties. Our blessed Lord, continuing his enigmatical language, (for although their ambition was to be repressed, it was but too evident that their faith was not yet ripened to bear a clear prospect of the hardships which they had to undergo,) tells them, "that they shall drink, indeed, of his cup, and be baptized with the baptism with which himself should be baptized." Expressions upon which, at the time, they would probably put some flattering interpretation, understanding them only as a general declaration, that they were to share their Master's fortunes. "But to sit," says he, "upon my right hand and my left is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father."

These last words deserve particular attention. There can be no question that the kingdom of which our Saviour speaks is his future kingdom, and "to sit upon his right hand and his left," in the sense, which, in his own private thoughts, he put upon the words when he used them, denotes a situation of distinguished happiness and glory in the future life. This is evident from the means which he points out for the attainment of this promotion. His question to the apostles implies, that what they ignorantly sought was unattainable, except to those only who

should have the fortitude to drink of *his* cup, and to be baptized with *his* baptism. *His* cup was the cup of suffering ; *his* baptism, the baptism of a violent and ignominious death. But the only promotion to which this cup and this baptism can ever lead must be a situation of glory in the life to come. This life is to be thrown away in the acquisition. The next, therefore, must necessarily be the season when the reversion is to take effect. Our Lord, therefore, speaks of the distinctions of the blessed in the future life, when he says, that “to sit on his right hand and his left is not his to give ; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of the Father.”

It must, therefore, strike every attentive reader, that our Lord, in these very remarkable words, seems to disclaim all property in the rewards and honours of the future life, and all discretionary power in the distribution of them. They are not mine, he says. Not being mine, I have no right to give them away ; and as I have no right, so neither have I authority for the distribution of them : the whole business is, indeed, already done : there are certain persons for whom these things are prepared, and to them, and them only, they shall be given. This declaration is the more extraordinary, not only as it is inconsistent with our general notions of the Son of God to suppose that there should be any thing not absolutely in his disposal (for all things that the Father hath are his), but because it is the clear doctrine of the Scriptures, that the general judgment is particularly committed to his management ; that he is the appointed Judge who is to decide upon every man’s merit ; and is to assign to every individual the particular proportion of reward



or punishment, happiness or suffering, glory or shame, that may be due to his good or ill deservings in the present life. This business is allotted to the Son, not as peculiarly his in his original Divine character, like the business of creation, but as proper to his assumed character of the incarnate God. "The Father judgeth no man, but he hath committed all judgment to the Son." And judgment is committed to him for this especial reason, that he is the Son of Man. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by the man whom he hath ordained, even the man Christ Jesus." To recite all the texts in which the general judgment is described as a business in which Christ, as the Christ, shall have the whole direction, would be an endless task. I shall produce only one more: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am sitten down with my Father in his throne." In these words our Saviour expressly claims that very power which he seems to disclaim in the words of my text.

Much of this difficulty arises from an inaccuracy in our English translation. The Greek words might be more exactly rendered thus: "To sit upon my right hand and my left is not mine to give, except to those for whom it hath been prepared of my Father." Our Saviour, therefore, in these words, disclaims not the authority which the Holy Scriptures constantly ascribe to him, and which, in the epistle to the church of Laodicea, in the book of Revelations, he claims for himself in the most peremptory terms. He disdains not the authority of making the final distribution of reward and punishment, and of appointing to situations of distinction in his future kingdom. But yet

he speaks as if in the management of this business he were tied down to certain rules prescribed by the Almighty Father, from which he would not be at liberty to depart. But in this manner of speaking there is nothing but what is conformable to the usual language of Holy Writ. The Son is everywhere spoken of as giving effect to the original purposes of the paternal mind, by his immediate action upon the external world, with which the Father, otherwise than through the agency of the Son, holds, as it were, no intercourse. Not that the purposes and counsels of the Father are not equally the purposes and counsels of the Son, or that the Son acts without original authority by a mere delegated power; but that this notion of the Father's purpose executed by the Son is the best idea that can be conveyed to the human mind of the manner in which God governs his creation. And beyond this it becomes us not to be curious to enquire. But upon another point we may be permitted to be more inquisitive, because it touches our interests more nearly. Our Saviour's words intimate, that the business of the future judgment is already settled; that the particular situations of the future life are allotted to particular persons; and that his office, when he shall come to execute judgment, will only be to see that each individual is put in possession of the office and the station, which, by the wise counsels of Providence, have been long ago set apart for him. "To sit upon my right hand and my left is not mine to give, except to those for whom it is prepared of my Father." It should seem, therefore, that the first stations in Christ's future kingdom are appropriated to particular persons, who must enjoy them. If the first, why not the second stations? If the se-

cond, why not the third? And thus it will follow, that every station in Christ's future kingdom, from the highest to the lowest, is appropriated; and, of consequence, that the condition of every individual is irresistibly determined by a decree, which was passed upon him ages before he was brought into existence.

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans has been thought to teach the same doctrine. And if this doctrine were to be found clearly asserted in the apostle's writings, this discouraging interpretation of our Lord's declaration would seem but too certain. The fact is, that St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans represents the degeneracy of mankind as so great in consequence of the fall, that if God had been pleased to make an arbitrary selection of certain persons to be admitted to mercy upon their repentance, and had consigned the rest of the race to the natural punishment of their guilt, the proceeding could not have been taxed either with cruelty or injustice. But he affirms, that God hath actually dealt with mankind in a far milder and more equitable way, admitting all, without exception, who are willing to repent, to repentance, and all who do repent to the benefit of our Lord's atonement; inviting all men to accept the proffered mercy; bearing with repeated provocation and affront; and leaving none but the hardened and incorrigible exposed to final wrath and punishment. This being the true representation of God's dealings with mankind, the happiness of the future life being open to all men upon the condition of faith, repentance, and amendment, the degrees of that happiness will unquestionably be proportioned to the proficiency that each man shall have made in the emendation of his heart and his manners by the rules of the Gospel.

'Those, therefore, for whom it is prepared to sit upon our Lord's right hand and his left cannot be any certain persons *unconditionally predestined* to situations of glory in the life to come.

I say they cannot be any certain persons unconditionally predestined after this manner: John the son of Zebedee to this office, James the son of Zebedee to that, Peter to a third; whatever the conduct of John, James, or Peter, in their apostolical ministry in the present life may have been. It is certain that God's foreknowledge hath from the beginning extended, not only to the minutest actions of the life of every man who ever was to live, but even to the most secret motives from which each man's actions were to spring; to his thoughts, his wishes, his fears, his likings, and aversions. God, therefore, had from all eternity as exact a knowledge of every man's character, as true an estimation of his good or ill deserts, as can be had when the man shall have lived to finish the career of virtue or of vice which God hath ever foreseen that he would run. This foreknowledge of every man's character cannot but be accompanied with a foreknowledge of the particular lot of happiness or misery which it will be fit he should receive. And since to perceive what is fit, and to resolve that what is fit shall be, must be one act, or if not absolutely one, they must be inseparable acts in the Divine mind, it should seem, indeed, that every man's final doom, in consequence of an exact view of his future life, must have been eternally determined. But this is only to say, that the world, with its whole consequence of events, has ever been present to the Creator's mind. And however difficult the thing may be for the human apprehension, this predetermination of all things, which

is implied in this idea of the Divine omniscience, leaves men no less morally free, and makes their future doom no less subject to the contingency of their own actions, than if nothing were foreseen, nothing decreed in consequence of foreknowledge. The foreknowledge of an action, and the purpose of reward or punishment arising from that foreknowledge, being no more a cause of the action to which reward or punishment will be due, than the knowledge of any past action, and the resolution of certain measures to be taken in consequence of it, are causes of the action which give rise to the resolution ; the knowledge of a fact, whether the thing known be past or future, being quite a distinct thing from the causes that produce it. Neither the foreknowledge, therefore, of the Deity, though perfect and infallible, nor any predestination of individuals to happiness or misery, which may necessarily result from that foreknowledge, however unaccountable the thing may seem, is any impediment to human liberty ; nor is any man's doom decreed, unless it be upon a foresight of his life and character. Nor is it prepared for Peter and Paul to sit upon Christ's right hand and his left, in preference to John or James, who may be more deserving. It is no such arbitrary arrangement which our Lord disclaims any discretionary power to put by. The irreversible arrangement, which he alleges as a bar against any partial operation of his own particular affections, is an arrangement founded on the eternal maxims of justice, in favour, not of certain persons, but of persons of a certain character and description ; of persons who will be found distinguished by particular attainments of holiness, by the fruits of a true and lively faith, by an extraordinary proficiency in the habits of

true piety, charity, and temperance. His declaration is no renunciation of his property in the rewards to be bestowed, or of his authority for the distribution of them ; but it is a very forcible and striking declaration of the absolute impartiality with which the business of the last judgment will be conducted. The Son of God, when he assumed our mortal nature, became so truly man, that we may be allowed to say, that he formed, like other men, his particular friendships and attachments ; as appeared strongly in the case of Lazarus, and in some other instances. One of the brothers, for whom the request was made which occasioned the declaration in my text, was his favourite disciple in such a degree, as to excite the envy of the rest. But he tells them, that in the distribution of the glories of his future kingdom, no private feelings which may belong to him as a man will be allowed to operate. That justice, the Creator's justice, tempered indeed with mercy, with general and equitable mercy, but unbribed by favour and affection, will hold its firm and even course. So that every man will be placed in the situation to which his comparative merit shall entitle him, without any preference in favour even of those who were chosen by our Lord to be his earliest associates and his most familiar friends. The lesson to be drawn from this explicit declaration of our Lord is, the necessity of an actual repentance on the one hand, and the certainty of acceptance on the other, if this necessary work is once accomplished. Our Lord's declaration, that every man will at last find himself in the station which eternal justice has ordained that he shall hold, cuts off all hope but what is founded on an active and sincere repentance ; on such a repentance as may entitle to the benefit of the Redeemer's expiation, which

is ever to be kept in view ; for, without that, our Saviour's declaration would render every man altogether hopeless. On the other hand, this declaration holds out to the sincere penitent the most animating hope. If the highest stations in the future life are reserved for the apostles, it is because the apostles will be found to have excelled all other Christians in the love of God and the duties of the Christian life. Should two persons appear at the great judgment more worthy than the sons of Zebedee to sit upon Christ's right hand and his left (the supposition is, perhaps, extravagant, and, otherwise than as a mere supposition to illustrate a point of doctrine, it is unwarrantable) ; should two such persons appear, the sons of Zebedee will not be permitted to take place of them. Such being the equity with which the future retribution will be administered, there is evidently no hope for sinners but in a true repentance, and for a true repentance there will be no disappointment in its glorious hope. Nor let any one be discouraged from the work of repentance by any enormities of his past life. Confirmed habits of sin heighten the difficulty of repentance ; but such are the riches of God's mercy, that they exclude not from the benefits of it. This our Lord was pleased to testify in the choice that he made of his first associates, who, with the exception, perhaps, of two or three who had been previously tutored in the Baptist's school, had been persons of irregular irreligious lives ; and yet these we know are they who hereafter shall be seated on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. " Be ye zealous, therefore, and repent ;" " for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

## S E R M O N IV.

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 EPHESIANS, iv. 30.

*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

A SEAL has been in use from the earliest antiquity, to authenticate writings of importance, both in public and private transactions. When the prophet Jeremiah purchased, by God's command, his uncle Hananeel's estate, the conveyance of the property was by deeds that were signed and sealed; and the letters which Jezebel issued for Naboth's destruction were sealed with Ahab's seal. In allusion to this practice, whatever may seem to justify a claim to any particular privilege, commission, or authority, or to afford a confirmation of a promise that is hereafter to take effect, is, by an easy figure, called a seal. Thus, St. Paul calls the Corinthian church the seal of his apostleship: "The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord." The blessing of God which crowned my labours among you with such success, as to reclaim you from the idolatry and the debaucheries to which idolaters are addicted, is a certain evidence that God sent me to perform that work which his providence hath brought to so happy an effect. By the same figure



he calls circumcision the seal of Abraham's righteousness of faith. It was the appointed mark, and standing memorial of the promises which were made to Abraham, in consideration of that righteousness of faith which Abraham had exercised before those promises were given, or this right was appointed. It was an evidence of the acceptance of this righteousness in the person of Abraham ; and, by consequence, since there can be no respect of persons with the all-righteous God, since the qualities that he accepted in Abraham he must equally accept in every other person in whom they may be equally conspicuous, this seal of Abraham's righteousness was a general seal of the righteousness of faith. It was an evidence to every one who should in after-times become acquainted with the patriarch's history, that righteousness would be imputed to all who should walk in the steps of Abraham's faith, which he had being uncircumcised. And again, by the same figure, the apostle in the text calls the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost the seal of the Christian's hopes : " Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed to the day of redemption." The same image occurs frequently in his writings. Thus in the first chapter of this same epistle he says, " In whom," *i. e.* in Christ, " having believed, ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." And in the second to the Corinthians, " It is God that hath sealed us, and given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts."

In all these passages, the seal of the Holy Spirit is to be understood of those gifts and graces which the Scriptures teach us to ascribe to his immediate operation. And taken in the utmost latitude, as including both the miraculous gifts which were peculiar to the pri-

mitive ages, and the general sanctifying influence on the heart of every true believer, the Spirit may, on various accounts, be justly called the seal of our final redemption; inasmuch as it is that which gives the utmost certainty to our hopes of future bliss and glory, which any thing antecedent to the actual possession can afford.

In the *first* place, the visible descent of the Holy Spirit on the first Christians, and the extraordinary powers which they displayed in consequence of it, were the proper seal of the general truth of Christianity. These gifts had been predicted by the earliest prophets as a part of the blessings of the Messiah's reign, to be enjoyed under the covenant which he should establish. "It shall come to pass," says Joel, "that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit." John the Baptist, when he declared himself to be the promised forerunner of the Messiah, and announced his speedy advent, places the great superiority of his character and office in this circumstance, — that he should fulfil these ancient predictions by baptizing his disciples with the fire of the Holy Ghost. Alluding, as I conceive, in that expression, both to the active nature of that holy principle which the Christian baptism conveys into the converted heart, and to the form in which the Almighty Spirit made his visible descent upon the first Christians. Christ himself promised his disciples, that "when he should leave them to return to the Father, he would send them another Comforter

to abide with them for ever ; even the Spirit of truth, who should lead them into all truth ;” give them just views of that scheme of mercy which they were to publish to the world ; a right understanding of the ancient prophecies ; a discernment of their true completion in the person of Christ, and the establishment of his religion ; bring all things to their remembrance which Christ had told them ; and supply them, without previous study or meditation of their own, with a ready and commanding eloquence, when they should be called to make the apology of the Christian faith before kings and rulers. But this Comforter, he told them, could not come before his own departure ; and this was agreeable to ancient prophecy. David, in the sixty-eighth psalm, predicting, according to St. Paul’s interpretation of the passage, these miraculous gifts of the Spirit, speaks of them as subsequent to the Messiah’s ascension : “ Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men.” What these gifts should be, is declared in the conclusion of the verse, — “ that the Lord God may dwell among them.” This dwelling of God must signify something more than God’s residence in the Jewish sanctuary ; for whatever might be in the mind of the prophet, the prophetic spirit looked forward to later times. It cannot signify the Son’s dwelling among men, when he came to preach the doctrine of life, and to pay the forfeit of their crimes, because it is described as subsequent to his ascension. It can signify, therefore, no other dwelling of God than the residence of the Holy Spirit in the Christian church. I must not pass over this passage of the Psalmist without remarking, that the original word which is

rendered Lord is *Jah*, one of the proper names of God, of the same etymology and import with the name Jehovah; of which, indeed, some have thought it only an abbreviation. I have upon former occasions explained to you, that the name Jehovah is in various passages of the holy prophets applied to the Messiah. You have here an instance of a name of the same kind equally proper to the Deity applied to the Holy Spirit, provided we are right in the application of this last clause to him. Concerning the former part, “the ascending on high, and the receiving of gifts for men,” there can be no doubt. We have the apostle’s authority for applying it to Christ’s ascension, and the gifts afterwards imparted by the Spirit. The application of the concluding clause I confess is not equally certain, because it makes no part of the apostle’s quotation; and the great obscurity of the grammatical construction in the original throws something of uncertainty upon the meaning. In the sense which our English translators have expressed, the words evidently respect the Holy Spirit. And in this sense the Jews of the second century seem to have acquiesced.\* These predictions of the ancient prophets and the Baptist, and these promises of our Lord, were largely and exactly verified in the event. After frequent appearances to his disciples, within the space of forty days after his resurrection, Jesus took a solemn leave, and ascended on high as David had foretold, having commanded the apostles

\* For the words were rendered to the same effect Aquila. Houbigant, upon the authority of the Syriac, proposes a violent alteration of the present reading, for which, however, I find no authority in Dr. Kennicott’s Collection of Various Readings.

to “wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father.” They were not disobedient to our Lord’s injunction; and their waiting was not long, nor was it fruitless. For when the day of Pentecost was come, that is, the fiftieth day from the festival of the Passover on which our Lord had suffered, and, by consequence, the eighth or ninth only after his ascension, the apostles being assembled, suddenly the sound of a blast rushing with violence through the air filled the house where they were sitting. The sound was immediately succeeded by the appearance of parted tongues of fire, (fire from the first institution of the law, if not, indeed, from earlier ages, had been the peculiar symbol of God’s immediate presence,) settling upon each of them. The immediate effect was what our Saviour had foretold; and more, indeed, than might at first appear in the words in which his promise had upon any occasion been conveyed. He had promised them a ready utterance in the defence of the Christian doctrine: but they find themselves suddenly endued with the power of utterance in a variety of languages which they had never learned. Jerusalem was at this time, as it always was during the festivals of the Passover and the Pentecost, crowded with strangers from every quarter of the world. The sacred historian mentions by name not fewer than fifteen countries, of which the natives with astonishment confessed that they heard the wonders of God declared, each in the proper language of the country where he had been born. The testimony of these impartial foreigners was a sufficient confutation of that base insinuation, — that the speakers were filled with new wine. This seems, indeed, to have been the illiberal surmise of the meanest only of the

rabble of Jerusalem, who, understanding none of the languages in which the apostles spake, imagined that they were uttering a jargon, and that the whole transaction was either an imposture, or, as they rather believed, a drunken frolic. But we have the testimony of those who were the only competent judges of the fact, that nothing of the levity or incoherence of drunkenness appeared either in the matter or the manner of these extraordinary discourses. The matter was the wonderful works of God, the great mystery of godliness displayed in man's redemption. And upon this abstruse and weighty subject each speaker delivered himself with perspicuity and propriety in the language that he used; though this was probably the first occasion in his life on which he had either used it himself or heard it spoken. For of the fifteen languages which the sacred text enumerates, many, I believe I might have said the greater part, were as little known in Judea in the time of the apostles, as the languages of China and Japan are at this day in Europe. Our Saviour had also promised, that the Holy Spirit should lead his disciples into all truth: accordingly, the immediate illumination of the understanding upon his visible descent was not less remarkable than the new powers of elocution. To the very last moment of our Lord's continuance on earth, the apostles cherished the fond expectation of a temporal kingdom to be immediately established: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" was the last question that they asked just before Christ ascended. After the descent of the Holy Spirit, we find no traces of this prejudice remaining. The charge of intoxication drew from St. Peter an apology, very remarkable for the brevity and

the perspicuous arrangement of the unstudied argument, as well as for the commanding strain of manly rhetoric in which it is conveyed. In this speech the apostle discovers a clear insight into the sense of prophecies, which, till this hour, it is certain he had never understood. He insists on the spiritual nature of the kingdom to which he now understands his Lord to be exalted at God's right hand ; he proves it by prophetic passages of the Psalms ; and he insists upon the present miracle as an instance of his power. " Being exalted," says he, " to the right hand of God, and having received the promised Holy Spirit from the Father, he has poured out that which ye now see and hear." I would remark by the way, that these last words, " ye see and hear," deserve attention. Something extraordinary, it seems, was publicly seen, as well as heard, by the multitude upon this occasion. But we read of nothing that was visible but the appearance of the fiery tongues. This appearance, therefore, was not a private one, confined to the chamber where the apostles were sitting when the Holy Spirit came upon them ; but it continued visible on the head of each when they came abroad to speak to the multitude. So that the appearance of this glorious light, the token of God's immediate presence, no less than the consistence and propriety of the discourses that were delivered, refuted the base charge of intoxication.

Thus the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost, as it was a completion of the earliest prophecies, and a verification of the Baptist's prediction, and of our Saviour's promises, is a seal of the general truth of the Christian doctrine. And as the private hopes of every Christian depend upon the

general truth of the revelation, the Holy Spirit thus sealing the doctrine, in some sense “seals every true believer to the day of redemption.”

But again:—This visible descent of the Holy Spirit was in itself, without any reference to former prophecies and promises, a seal of the general truth of Christianity, as it was a token of the merit of Christ’s atonement, and the efficacy of his intercession with the Father, “the Author of every good and perfect gift.”—“I will pray the Father,” said Jesus to his disciples, “and he shall give you another Comforter.” The coming of that other Comforter is a certain argument that Christ’s intercession has prevailed, and a sure ground of hope that it shall equally prevail for all the purposes for which it shall be exerted. Again:—If we consider the Comforter as sent immediately to the church by Christ himself, which is the Scripture doctrine, his visible descent was an instance of that power which Christ exercises at the right hand of God, for the welfare and preservation of his church. In this light, therefore, as a token of the Father’s acceptance of Christ’s atonement, and of the power exercised by Christ in his exalted state, the visible descent of the Holy Ghost was a seal of the Christian doctrine. And the hope of every believer being built on the acceptance of that meritorious sacrifice, and on Christ’s power to raise the dead bodies of his servants from the grave, and transform them to the likeness of his own; whatever is, in the nature of the thing, a certain sign of Almighty power exercised by Christ, and of the merit of his sacrifice, is a seal of every believer’s hope of his own final redemption.

As the visible descent of the Holy Ghost, and the



powers which were conveyed by it to the first Christians, made the proper seal of the Christian doctrine, so the power of imparting these extraordinary endowments, in certain due proportions to other Christians, was the seal of the apostolical office and authority. That the apostles were exclusively possessed of this extraordinary privilege, is evident from the history of the first converts of Samaria. The Gospel was preached to them by Philip the deacon, who baptized his converts of both sexes. And when the apostles, who as yet resided at Jerusalem, heard of Philip's success in Samaria, they sent thither Peter and John, who seem to have been deputed for the express purpose of communicating the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. For, when they were come down, they prayed for them, "that they might receive the Holy Ghost : for as yet he was fallen upon none of them." And after these prayers the two apostles "laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." That the gifts conveyed to these Samaritan converts, by the imposition of the hands of the apostles, were of the miraculous kind, is evident, in the *first* place, from this general consideration, that the persons who received these gifts had already been baptized by Philip ; and the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, those moral influences by which every believer must be regenerated in order to his being saved, are conferred in baptism. The same thing is further evident from the particulars of the story. Simon the sorcerer was of the number of Philip's converts : — "When Simon *saw* that the Holy Spirit was given by the imposition of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, Give *me* also this power, that on whomsoever I may lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." It

is evident, that the Holy Ghost, which was given upon this occasion by the apostles, was some sensible gift of a very extraordinary and notorious kind, which Simon saw ; and he vainly and impiously imagined, that the power of conferring it might be of great use to him in carrying on his trade of magical delusion. The power, therefore, of imparting these miraculous gifts was the peculiar seal of the apostolical office, and some share of them seems to have been the constant effect of the imposition of their hands. The gift that seems to have been the most generally bestowed is that of tongues. For when St. Paul laid his hands upon the Ephesian converts of Apollos, the effect was, that the Holy Ghost came upon them in his sensible operations, and they “ spake with tongues and prophesied ;” that is, they celebrated the praises of God and of Christ. And, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle, making a distinct and orderly enumeration of the miraculous gifts, places that of tongues last, as among great things the least considerable. Indeed, it appears from that epistle, that it was possessed and exercised by many in the Corinthian church, who had little discretion in the use of it. This, therefore, seems to have been of the extraordinary gifts the most common. And the conceit of some learned men, who have imagined that this gift was not one of the standing powers of the primitive church in the apostolic age, but a particular miracle that accompanied the first descent of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost, and his subsequent descent on the family of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert ; and that it was never heard of but in these two instances ; this conceit of some learned men, who lived about the beginning of the Reform-

ation, is vain, and destitute of all foundation. But to return: — The Holy Spirit, by the power with which he invested the apostles of communicating his extraordinary gifts to their converts in due proportion, according to the exigencies of the church and the merits of the persons on whom their hands were laid, sealed their authority. And as the true believer's hopes rest on the authority of the apostles to preach Christ's religion, the Holy Spirit thus sealing their authority, seals all those who embrace and practise the faith they taught "to the day of redemption."

The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were also a visible mark of God's acceptance of the Gentile converts, and a particular seal of *them* "to the day of redemption."

But the seal of which the apostle speaks in my text I rather take to be the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost than any or all of the miraculous endowments. This may be inferred with certainty from the parallel passage in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, that God has sealed us, by "giving the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Many of the passions of the mind, — anger, fear, joy, grief, surprise, and others, — when they rise to any considerable height, have a sensible effect on the motion of the blood, to accelerate or retard its circulation, to collect and confine it in the heart, or to drive it to the external surface of the body. Hence the effect of these passions on the body is particularly felt in the region of the heart, which was therefore the part first thought of for the seat of the soul. Afterwards, when men came to understand that the brain is the immediate organ of sensation, they refined,

and allotted distinct seats \* to the understanding, the manly passions, and the appetites ; placing the first in the brain, the second in the heart, and the last in the liver. Hence in all languages, and with all writers sacred and profane, the heart is used figuratively to denote the moral qualities and dispositions of the mind. And this expression, “the Holy Spirit in our hearts,” can signify no other thing than his ordinary influences on these moral qualities and dispositions in every true believer. These influences, the apostle asserts, are to every Christian the seal of his redemption. And this, which is the doctrine most immediately arising from my text, I purpose hereafter to discuss : imploring the assistance of that Spirit who is with the faithful to the end of the world, to give me the power to declare, and you to apprehend, this great and interesting, but difficult and mysterious, branch of the doctrine of redemption.

\* PLATO in the *Timæus*.

## S E R M O N V.

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 EPHESIANS, iv. 30.

*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

**I**N my last discourse upon these words of the apostle, I told you, that the seal of the Spirit, in this and all other passages where the same image may occur, is to be understood of those gifts and graces which the Scriptures teach us to ascribe to the immediate operation of the Holy Spirit of God. And taking the expression in its most extensive meaning, as comprehending the miraculous, as well as what are called the ordinary, influences, I showed you, that those miraculous powers which subsisted in the primitive ages, may with great propriety be esteemed a seal of every private Christian's hope; inasmuch as they were the seal of the general truth of the Christian doctrine; the seal of Christ's power; the seal of the efficacy of his intercession, and the merit of his sacrifice; the seal of the authority of the apostles to establish that new religion, by the terms of which we hope for mercy; and the seal of the acceptance of the Gentile converts, who enjoy their share of these extraordinary endowments, so long as they subsisted at all in the Christian church.

I come now to treat a doctrine, which, if I mistake not, is a source of greater and more general comfort, and is the doctrine more immediately arising from the text, — that the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit on the mind of every true believer are to every individual of that description a particular seal of his personal interest in the glorious promises of the Gospel: — a doctrine full of the truest consolation and the highest joy, but very liable to be misunderstood. Great difficulties have indeed been raised in it, by those who have unskillfully maintained, and those who have rashly denied it. It is to be treated, therefore, with accuracy and caution; and we must rely on the assistance of that Spirit, who, we trust, is in this and in all ages with the faithful teacher and diligent hearer of the word, to conduct us to the truth in this important but difficult disquisition.

The proposition which we apprehend to be implied in the text, and which is inculcated in innumerable passages of Holy Writ, is this, — that the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit on the heart of every true believer are to every such person an earnest of his final salvation. These influences are an immediate action of the Holy Spirit of God upon the mind of man, by which he is brought to will, and enabled to do according to God's pleasure; to master the importunity of appetite; to curb the impetuosity of passion; to resist the temptations of the world; to baffle the wiles of the devil; to deny himself; to take up his cross, and follow his crucified Lord through the strait and thorny paths of virtue, to the peaceful seats of endless bliss and glory. It is the doctrine of the Scriptures, that a strength conveyed from God into the Christian's mind renders him sufficient for

these great performances. And the text, assuming this doctrine as a confessed and certain truth, teaches him to conclude, that God's enabling him to do what, without God's assistance, could not be done, is a certain argument of God's merciful design to promote him to that happiness hereafter, for which the habits of a religious temper here are the natural preparative. And admitting the premises, the conclusion seems obvious and inevitable. It was wisely said by the philosophers of old, that nature does nothing in vain. It was said wisely, because the whole of nature is conducted by the continual Providence of the Being who created it. In what are called the operations of nature, God is the first and sovereign agent. And a wise being cannot act but to some end; nor can it be but that infinite power must attain the ends to which it is exerted. The maxim, therefore, that nature never acts in vain, is true; but the truth of it rests upon the wisdom and power of God, who made and governs nature. And it is improperly alleged as itself a first principle of science, of original and intrinsic evidence, since it is only a consequence from a higher and more general principle, "that God never acts in vain." This principle obtains universally in the moral no less than the material world. No act of the Deity can be without an end; and when God enables the believer to become that character which shall be the object of his mercy in a future life, the only end to which this action can be directed is, to bring the person on whom it is performed to that state of future happiness in which this character fits him to be placed. So that if the principle be true, that without a constant action of God's Spirit on the mind of man no man can persevere in a life of virtue

and religion, the Christian who finds himself empowered to lead this life cannot err in his conclusion, that God's power is at present exerted upon himself in his own person for his final preservation.

But here it may reasonably be asked, by what sensible evidence any private Christian may be assured that he is himself a sharer in these sanctifying influences of the Spirit? For when they are mentioned as the seal of his future hopes, there seems to be an appeal to something, of which there is a sensible perception as an evidence of the reality of those things which are not yet become the objects of perception and sense. As the seal affixed to a declaratory deed is a sensible mark and token of the internal purposes and invisible resolutions of the human mind, the sensible evidence of the action of God's Spirit on his own, the Christian must look for in the integrity of his own principles and the innocence of his life. It may be said of the Holy Spirit what Christ has said of other spirits, "by his fruits ye shall know him."—"The fruit of the Spirit is LOVE:" love of God, from a just sense of his perfections, which render him no less the object of rational love than of holy fear; love of man, as created in the image of God; a more especial love of Christians, as brethren and members of Christ. "JOY:" a mind untroubled and serene amidst all the discouragements and vexations of the world; a full satisfaction and entire complacency in the ability of a holy life. "PEACE:" a disposition and endeavour to live peaceably with all men, not only by avoiding what might justly provoke their enmity and ill will, but by a studious cultivation of the friendship of mankind by all means which may be consistent with the purity of our own conduct, and with the interests of



that religion which we are called upon at all hazards to profess and to maintain. “LONG-SUFFERING:” a patient endurance of the evil qualities and evil practices of men, even when they create particular disturbance and molestation to ourselves, founded on an equitable attention to that natural infirmity and corruption from which none of us are entirely exempted; a temper more inclined to bear than to retaliate much unprovoked injury and undeserved reproach, esteeming injury and reproach a lighter evil of the two than the restless spirit of contention and revenge. “GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE:” these are the fruits by which the Spirit of God is known. But every man’s own conscience must decide whether these fruits are ripened to any perfection in his heart; whether these are the ruling principles of his conduct. If his conscience is void of offence towards God and towards man: if he makes it the business of this life to prepare for his future existence: if he uses the present world without abusing it: if he is patient in affliction, not elated in prosperity; mild in power, content in servitude; liberal in wealth, honest in poverty; fervent in devotion, temperate in pleasure: if he rates not the present world above its real worth, and sets his chief affection on eternity: — this propriety of conduct in the various situations of life; this holy habit of the soul, turning from the things that are seen, and looking forward to the things invisible, is the undoubted work of God’s Holy Spirit. It is, therefore, an instance of mercy extended in the present life to the person on whom the effect is wrought, and the surest earnest of the greater mercies promised in the life to come. For God being immutable in his nature and his attri-

butes, and uniform in the methods of his government, the experience of his present goodness is the firmest ground of future hope. But of the reality of that improved state of sentiment and manners from which the merciful interposition of God's Spirit is inferred, every man's own spirit, that is, his conscience, is the judge; and the judgment of conscience must be taken from the sensible effects of godly dispositions and a holy life.

But is this all? Is the believer's assurance of his sanctification nothing more at last than an inference of his own mind from the favourable testimony of his conscience? This is indeed the case. Yet this assurance is no inconsiderable thing; for the inference is certain and infallible. "Beloved," says St. John, "if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." And the rule by which the heart must judge is this: — "He that practiseth righteousness is righteous, in like manner as he, that is as Christ, is righteous." And "every one that practiseth righteousness is born of him." And to the same purpose our Lord himself;—"If any one love me, he will keep my word: and the Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Thus, you see, he that keeps Christ's commandments is in the love of Christ and of the Father: he that doeth righteousness is born of God: he that is absolved by his conscience may be confident God absolves him. And yet St. Paul assures us, that he "who has not the spirit of Christ is none of his." And St. John, that the evidence that we are in his love and under the protection of his providence is, "that he has given us of his own Spirit." In these texts the very same things are denied of him who shall be without the

Spirit, which, in those before alleged, are affirmed of him whose conscience shall be pure. Evidently, therefore, the connection is necessary and constant between a good life and a regenerate mind ; and where there is a conscience void of offence, there is the sanctifying Spirit of the Lord.

Many, it is true, pretend to something more than this, and speak of the action of the Holy Ghost upon their minds as something of which they have an immediate and distinct perception independent of the testimony of conscience ; and they describe it as something that they know by what they feel to be the internal operation of the Spirit. This is, indeed, a bewitching doctrine, which may easily steal upon the unwary, upon men of a sanguine temper and a weak judgment, because it seems to open a new source of comfort. But this persuasion is not of Him that calleth us. It is visionary and vain. We have the express declaration of Him who alone has a perfect understanding of man's nature and of God's, and who alone, therefore, understands the manner in which the Divine Spirit acts on man's ; — we have the express declaration of Him who sends the Spirit into the hearts of his disciples, that its operation is no otherwise to be perceived than in its effects. He compares it to the cause of those currents of the atmosphere of which the effects are manifest and notorious, though the first efficient is what no sense discerns, and the manner of its operation what no philosophy can explain :—“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.”

Those who, unmindful of this declaration of our

Lord, stand for a perception of the Spirit independent of conscience, it is to be supposed are little aware that no greater certainty of the Spirit's operation would arise from the feelings they describe, were it real, than conscience may afford without it. For of the reality of this feeling, could we suppose it real, conscience still must be the judge, because conscience is the seat of all internal perception. Conscience is the faculty whereby the mind, in every moment of its existence, perceives itself, with every thing that either naturally belongs, or for the present time is incident to its being and condition; its present thoughts, its present designs, its present hopes, fears, likings, and aversions. Of these or any other circumstances of its present state, — of any thing itself may do, or of any thing which may be done to it, — the mind can have no feeling but by this faculty. Whatever may excite or impress the feeling, conscience is the place, if the expression may be allowed, where it must be felt. A perception, therefore, of the mind of any thing done to itself, distinct from the perceptions of the conscience, is no less an absurdity, in the very first conception, than an object that should be seen without meeting the eye, or a sound that should be heard without striking on the ear. It is something to be internally perceived otherwise than by the faculty of internal perception. And it is in vain to allege God's power for the production of such feelings, because no power can effect impossibilities. If, therefore, that internal feeling, to which enthusiasts pretend, were real, it would, indeed, be a new matter of employment for the conscience; but it would add nothing to the security of our present condition, or to the certainty of our distant hopes. For, consider how the case

stands without these feelings. Conscience attesting that the life is innocent and the heart sincere, Faith draws the conclusion that this upright heart and blameless conduct is the work of the Holy Spirit of God. And thus, in the sensible effect of a reformed life and regenerate mind, it discovers a token of God's present favour. Consider, on the other hand, how far the case will be altered by the supposition of an internal feeling of the Holy Spirit's influence. All that could be felt would be the effect, an impression on the mind. This impression the conscience alone could feel. That this impression felt in the conscience should be from God's Spirit rather than from any other agent, would still be a conclusion to be made by faith. And by what sign or token could faith discern between the Divine Spirit and another, but by those good works which the Divine Spirit claims as his proper and his constant fruits? You see, therefore, that the accession of these pretended internal feelings would neither change the ground nor improve the certainty of the Christian's hope. The ground of his hope would remain what it has been shown to be without them, — the conclusions of faith from the testimony of conscience. Only this difference is to be observed between the fictitious and the real case, that no internal feeling, other than the consciousness of good qualities, and holy habits, and dispositions, could be interpreted by a true and unenlightened faith as a part of the Spirit's sanctifying influence. Because, the express doctrine of the Gospel being what it is, it is no less the part of a true faith to disbelieve the reality of any immediate perception of the mysterious intercourse between God's Spirit and the human soul, than to embrace, with all thankfulness,

the belief of a constant unperceived communion. For the one is denied by the very same authority by which the other is asserted. And to disbelieve what Christ hath denied, no less than to believe what he hath affirmed, is an essential part of the faith in Christ.

If I have delivered myself with the perspicuity at which I have aimed, you will be sensible that we neither abolish nor weaken the testimony of the Spirit by bringing it to rest upon the testimony of conscience. This does by no means reduce the hopes of the Christian to what they might be, if the testimony of the Spirit were removed. To perceive this the more clearly, make the supposition for a moment, that the doctrine of the Gospel being in all other points exactly what it is, this article of the Spirit's general and ordinary influence had been kept entirely out of sight; there is no absurdity in supposing that God might have acted just as we are taught he does upon the hearts of the faithful, although man had never been made acquainted with this wonderful part of the scheme of his salvation. And, notwithstanding his ignorance in this particular, the good Christian would still have found in the favourable testimony of his conscience a solid ground of future hope. But this hope, though, perhaps, not less firm, must have been by many degrees less vigorous and animating than that which he now derives from the belief of the Holy Spirit's constant operation on his heart. For on the supposition of his ignorance upon this point, his conclusion concerning his own future condition must have been drawn from a persuasion of the truth of God's general promises, to all persons of that reformed character, which he might understand to be his own. Whereas, with the knowledge that he

actually enjoys, his hopes are built on a personal experience of God's present goodness. You see, therefore, what gratitude we owe to God, both for the unspeakable gift and for the clear knowledge of it which he has given us; which renders it to every Christian in the present life the private and personal seal of his future expectations.

It remains for me briefly to remind you, that the effect of a seal in any civil contract is to fasten the conditions of the covenant upon both parties. And thus it is to be understood, that the seal of the Spirit, as it confirms the promises on the part of God, and renders them in some measure personal to every one who find the impression of this seal in the testimony of his conscience, so it confirms the obligation to a holy life, and renders it personal on the part of the Christian. There is a general obligation upon all mankind to a strict discharge of the duties of religion as far as they are made known to them, arising from their intrinsic fitness and propriety, and from the common relation in which all men stand to God, as their Creator and Preserver. There is a more particular obligation upon Christians to observe the injunctions of their Lord, arising from the particular benefits and blessings of the Christian covenant, from the clear discovery of future rewards and punishments, and from the wonderful manifestation of the riches of God's mercy, who gave his Son to die for us while we were enemies. But there is besides these general obligations, — besides the obligation upon all *men* to their natural duties, upon all *Christians* to the public injunctions of their Lord, — there is, I say, besides, upon every true Christian who has tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partaker

of the Holy Ghost ; who experiences in the improvement of his own mind and manners, the present powers of the world to come ; upon every such person, there is a special and personal obligation, to cleanse himself from all impurity of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God ; especially to listen with a vigilant and interested attention to the private admonitions of his own conscience, which is, indeed, nothing less than the voice of God within him. For as it is certain, on the one hand, that no man has any testimony from the Spirit of his present sanctification, no assurance of his final salvation but what is conveyed to him through the conscience ; so it is equally certain, on the other, that every good suggestion of the conscience proceeds from the Spirit of God. And whoever stifles these suggestions, whoever is not diligent to consult this internal monitor, or reluctantly and imperfectly obeys him, grieves the Spirit whose oracle he is. And the danger is, that the Spirit will be quenched, that those assistances will be withdrawn which negligence and perverseness render ineffectual and useless. For God's grace is given to help the infirmities of the upright and sincere, but it will not forcibly reclaim the refractory or the thoughtless. " Give, therefore, all diligence to make your calling and election sure : " For this shall effectually secure your admission into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To whom, &c.

THE END.

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