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SIXTEEN ORATIONS

ON

Various Subjects

OF THE

Most Interesting and Important Nature;

DELIVERED TO A

PUBLIC SOCIETY,

AT THE

QUEEN'S-ARMS, IN NEWGATE-STREET, LONDON

By J. WETHERALL.

.....Juvat, immemorata ferentem
Ingenuis oculisque legi, mambusque teneri. HOR.

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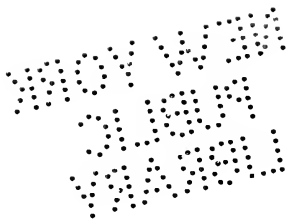
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PREFACE.

WHOEVER reads the title of this book, that is not acquainted with the nature of the Queen's Arms Society, will, of course, be led to ask the three following questions. First, What sort of a Society is this? Secondly, How comes such a motto to be fixed to this book, which would lead us to expect some productions entirely new; when it appears by the contents, that the subjects are common and familiar? And, in the third place, What can be the author's motives for exposing such trifling discourses as these to public view? An answer to these three questions will enable the reader to form some idea of what he is to expect in the following sheets.

First, as to the Society itself. By the contents of this book, you may think we are a set of people who meet here for the sake of religious worship; but you will easily be undeceived, by being told, that union of sentiment, which is the main support and cement of all religious societies, would presently be the destruction of this. For, according to the institution of this society, each person present is allowed

to give his sentiments upon the various questions, which, by the approbation of this society, have been entered in the book; and, as a great many of the questions are concerning moral and religious subjects, it would be very insipid to hear all of the same opinion.

But so far from this being the case, that were one to reckon up all the different denominations of people who wear the christian name, and add to them both the Jew and the Daisit, it would still be doubtful, whether or no we comprise the whole that at one time or another resort hither: For though there are members, chairman and rules; yet all that come are welcome, if they behave with order and decency.

And as this is the nature of the Society, what a variety of opinions may we not expect, especially upon religious subjects? And here it is that people of all denominations learn to forget the prejudice of education, and to make a distinction between men and their principles: And perhaps there never was a society so well calculated to destroy bigotry and a party-spirit, which, till of late years, so much prevailed in this kingdom.

But as six minutes only are allowed for each person to speak to a question, it was thought proper a few years ago, that six orations, or lectures, should be spoke or read by different persons about a quarter of an hour long, the first Friday in every month, upon such subjects as should be approved of by the

Society. And as the labouring bee not only gathers honey from the sweetest flowers, but also from the most stinking weeds; so a mind, rightly prepared, may reap some advantage from almost every subject which may be advanced. Such then is the nature of the Queen's-Arms Society.

And as the contents of the following sheets are sixteen orations, delivered at different times to this society, the second question is now to be answered, namely, how the author came to fix a motto that would lead one to expect something entirely new was to be offered? As for the subjects of these orations, they must be pretty ancient indeed, being borrowed from the scriptures; and as for the doctrines contained in the orations, you may be assured they are as old as the scriptures themselves. For there are but two points kept in view through the whole of the subsequent work, namely, the doctrine of original sin, which the modernizers of christianity are pleased to stile original nonsense; and the doctrine of justification by faith in a Redeemer's righteousness; which your refining gentry call the Destroyer of good works. But how these can be called immemorata, or unmentioned before, is the question. These doctrines may be said to be unthought of before, or unmentioned; because no man, by the light of natural reason, would ever once have been brought to think of, or mention either them: witness the refined reasoning of the Deists and Socinians, which leads them to bury them both in eternal oblivion.

And they may likewise be said to be unthought of by all the unregenerate men in the world, however they may talk about them, because the Spirit alone can 'convince of sin and of righteousness.' And, as Horace said, "He was the first who adapted the Grecian Iambicks to a Latin ear;" So this Society may well be said to be the first that brought religious orations to be delivered at a tavern: a thing that once would have been as much out of character, as to see a death's head painted over the door of a play-house.

And as for these orations in particular (if they may be allowed the name) every one that reads them, perhaps may think the author to be an original; because such a mixture of seriousness, satyrs, burlesque, and poetical flights are jumbled together, as scarce any body would have thought of but himself.

And to mention one more reason why they may be called immemorata, is the indigested manner in which they are sent into the world. For this the reader may well be assured of, that so far was the author from having any thoughts of letting them be published, that they were never intended to be read by any but himself. And whoever reads them, will easily observe such rapid transitions, from one thing to another, as will plainly shew, the person who delivered them drove Jehu-like to save his distance, the subjects being too copious to be discussed in the narrow limits of a quarter of an hour.

And this being the case, is it not reasonable for the author to say, He would be glad to be read by men of candour and ingenuity, who knows how to make allowances for men's principles, as also for time and place? The seriousness of a pulpit is not to be expected in a tavern.

It may be, many who come hither to waste an idle hour, neither go to church or meeting from one year's end to another : therefore the method taken in these orations, is first to amuse them with something historical, in order to gain their attention to what is doctrinal, and then to press home what is experimental : and a candid reader will not grumble now and then to supply an ellipsis, neither will he be offended at the curtailing, or abbreviating a text of scripture, since he will know it is done to save time.

But as no quarter is to be expected from those whose principles have been so roughly handled in the following sheets, it is to the experience of the real christian the author will venture to appeal.

The manner of his expressions he knows are rude and unfashionable; but if the matter contained will stand the touchstone of truth, the christian reader will not act the part of an incensed critic: But that these poor and unpolished tracts will be arraigned, tried and condemned before an enraged Socinian tribunal is so far from being a matter of concern to the author, that he makes no doubt but every real christian will look upon the condemnation as the

most convincing proof that he has not been playing the factor for hell.

But now, in the third place, that the reader may know why these trifling discourses come to appear in public. It is a too much to be lamented truth, that even good people, who have the root of the matter in them, are many of them too narrow and contracted in their religious sentiments; and are ready to think, if people do not subscribe in every point to their creed, there is no christianity in them; and if deism and infidelity have ever been advanced in any society, they immediately thunder out their dreadful anathemas against that society by wholesale, without considering that there may be, perhaps, an Abijah in the house of Jeroboam, or an Obadiah in the house of Ahab.

Now this has been the fate of the Queen's Arms Society; and the first reason why these discourses appear in public, is to let believers themselves see, that deism is not quite so rampant in this Society, but there are even here some, who dare set their faces as a flint in vindication of real spiritual christianity. And the second reason is, Because many, who heard these orations delivered, were so desirous of seeing some of them in print, as even to offer to defray the expence; so that in compliance to these gentlemen's requests, the author (though, as hath been hinted already, he never intended that any one of them should ever appear in public) has been obliged to expose himself to all that contempt and

ridicule which he must unavoidably meet with from an ill-natured criticising world, who will be sure to stigmatize every doctrine, contained in these orations, as nothing but **Enthusiasm, Methodism, and inconceivable Nonsense.**

The three questions, which may on course be asked, being thus briefly answered, the reader may now form some idea of what he is to expect; and all that the author desires is, that every thing advanced by him may be brought to the touchstone of truth, and ‘weighed in the balance of the sanctuary;’ and wherein he shall be found to err, he will be ever open to conviction, and freely retract what is here advanced, if contrary to the oracles of truth and the experience of the people of God.

ORATION I.



On the Rise and Progress of Idolatry, from the Creation to the Flood, and from the Flood to the Birth of Christ.

THAT the great ‘ God had made man upright, but they had sought out many inventions:’ This was an assertion of the wisest of men, after he had spent many years, not only in discovering the various properties of the animal and vegetable creation, but in experimentally scrutinizing the latent meanders of the human heart. And were we, carefully and without prejudice, to examine the various pages of antiquity; not only those, whose image and superscription bespeak their divine original, but even those which claim no higher birth than that of a human pen; even they would afford sufficient evidence, to prove the assertion of Solomon, Eccles. vii. 29.

But should it be asked, To which of all the numerous progeny of human inventions, (which the teeming womb of a depraved imagination has brought forth) may wretched mankind say, as once the Theban monarch did to his unhappy son, the miserable Acteon: “ It was thou, O my son, wast the

“ source of all thy father’s woe, in the midst
“ of my great prosperity*.” Should this, I
say, be asked; my answer would be, in the
language of the great God, by the mouth of
the prophet, ‘ They have forsaken Me, the
fountain of living waters, and have hewed
out to themselves *cisterns*, broken cisterns,
that can hold no water.’ But, not to preface
my discourse any longer, I shall endeavour,
if possible, to trace this overflowing stream
of idolatry to its fountain-head, and shew,
how that cloud, which was, at first, no big-
ger than a man’s hand, in time overspread
the whole horizon.

What I mean by idolatry, is this, either
ascribing the properties of deity to what is
not God, or else addressing the great God
contrary to his attributes and perfections,
and contrary to the rules, which he himself
has laid down how he would be addressed.
But, first, from the very nature of God, we
may venture to assert, that he is invariable;
he was ‘ the same, yesterday, to-day, and
for ever.’ And, whatever he declared the
method, by which he would be addressed by
his creatures; that method of worship must
always have been, and must always continue
to be, for substance, the same.

* Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.

This, then, being granted, we proceed to enquire, What was the precise method which God has laid down, by which he would be addressed? for, if he has revealed no method to man, he would not have been offended, if man had not addressed him aright: For, ‘where there is no law, there can be no transgression.’ But it was owing to the fruitfulness of man’s depraved imagination, vainly thinking to invent ways to worship God, more pleasing to God than those himself had appointed, which became the fruitful source of all idolatry.

Now, I know it is often objected, against divine revelation, that so few people being acquainted with it, is a proof that it could not come from God, because, say its enemies, as all mankind are equally related to God; so, to be just, God would have revealed himself equally to all. But this objection is false in fact; for we assert, and can prove it too, that God did reveal his will to all mankind at once; the whole world heard it, and all other particular revelations which God since made, are not any thing new, but only explanations of the first general one. You will then ask, When could this revelation be made, that all the world could hear it? I answer, As soon as ever man stood in need of it, even in the cool of that very day when

he first became obnoxious to his Maker.— And you, that are thinking hardly of God, and supposing him a hard master; hear what he says; hear the offended party, without being once asked; nay, so far from being asked for a pardon, that even after he had been upbraided to his face as the author of man's offence, let him declare, that he had found the method to reconcile offending man, and an offended God. 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.'— The words are few, but so comprehensive, that almost all the ensuing scriptures are but so many sermons preached from this one text, and spoken so loud that all the world heard them, as they stood dangling with their fig-leaves, in Eden's garden. These words gave rise to all religious worship; and a corruption of religious worship first gave rise to idolatry.

Now, the first religious worship, that God approved, we find, was by the mediation of sacrifice, which must have been of God's own appointment; because it would have been impossible for man ever to think, that the shedding of blood (a thing so nauseous, that it makes human nature shudder at the thought of it) could be grateful to God.— But, would one think it? no sooner had God

erected a church in the world, but immediately the devil rears up a chapel; and when the whole congregation consisted of but two people, (how shall I speak it?) the one was a christian, the other a deist; the one believed God's revelation, the other rejected it.

Here the first day-star of idolatry began to arise, the nature and fitness of things began to be canvassed, and Cain could see no reason for such a nasty thing as blood to be presented before God: No; he was too fine a gentleman to own himself a fallen creature; and, if he addressed God as himself thought fit, he was assured God would desire no more. But the great God resents the affront, and lets Cain know he was not to be trifled with; and thus expostulates with him: 'If thou addressest me aright, is there not a pardon? but, if thou dost not address me aright, sin resteth, as at the beginning.' And, what is very remarkable, Cain never once pretended to plead ignorance; for, no doubt, his father Adam had often preached unto him the doctrine of original sin, upon which the doctrine of a propitiation was founded. But he, like all his offspring, (perhaps) laughed at the old fellow's nonsense.

This, then, was the first act of idolatry, a disbelief of divine revelation and idolizing

his own performances; and though, from this time, throughout all the antediluvian world, I do not find any other God worshipped but only the true God; yet here lay the sin; all unbelievers, instead of presenting a sacrifice before God, and thereby testifying that he was propitious to them for the sake of another, were all, to a man, endeavouring to render him propitious by their own inventions.

And it is worth while, to make an observation on the practice of those antediluvian gentry, and see, whether a corruption of principle did not produce, as its genuine fruit, a corruption of practice; though our modern deists pretend, at least, that they are men of extraordinary morals; but I find persecution and blood-shed, murder and rapine, the enormous brood of their depraved principle: And, as similar causes produce similar effects, so it is natural to conclude, that the same tree, wherever it grows, will bear the same fruit. But, as I would not slander even the devil himself, so neither would I insinuate that the antediluvian world ever fell into any worse idolatry than deism; for, as three persons were able to keep up the remembrance of the true God, from Adam till Noah; it was hardly possible, they could

deify any created being; no, that was reserved for the inventions of modern times.

But, now, the first act of the world's drama begun to draw to a conclusion, when the whole world, except eight persons, were sunk into deism; and, as the curtain dropt at the end of the last scene, how dreadful was the interlude that followed! You might now behold the idolatrous wretches, who had refused to hear the voice of God, begin to tremble at the deafning roar of spouting cataracts, in dreadful eddies whirled, more loud than those that stun, with hideous noise, the inhabitants of Nile, or those loud yells of Scylla's barking dogs, whose echo sounds across Charybdis's ship-devouring gulph, and strikes aghast the trembling mariner.

But, to leave a deluged race floating amidst their watry graves, let us now pursue the living monument of electing love, emerging from the relics of a ruined world: And what do I hear of surviving Noah? He opens the first scene of the new world; with—— what? Not with building himself a house, but with erecting an altar unto the Lord. A lesson this, for all his future race, at their first setting out in life, to 'seek, first, the kingdom of God,' and then, I am sure, we should not have so many bankrupts. But, we are told, God smelled a sweet smell; that

is, God approved of the sacrifice, as it was a testimony of Noah's faith in the original promise: And such a reason is given, why God will no more drown the earth, as could be given by none other but the mouth of God; 'for,' says he, 'the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.' And, one would have thought, the next words should have been, 'and I will either make him better, or I will bring a deluge in every age:' No, but, because of this, I will no more destroy the earth by the waters of a flood. Amazing love! And it was not long after this, before we have a specimen of man's depraved heart, which I shall pass over, lest I act over again the detestable crime of Ham.

But, presently, immorality began to bud, and, soon after, idolatry in a thousand shapes; and not only deism, but polytheism prevailed; men began to study arts and sciences, and, as the art of writing was not then invented, (nor, as is probable, till the days of Moses) all knowledge was conveyed by types and symbolic representations. The great God was himself the author of this sort of teaching; as for instance, sacrifice was a typical instructor, and the rainbow became a symbol; wherever that was seen, it taught men, that God would no more drown the world by a flood. But, as men were always quick at

invention, so, in process of time, when Egypt became the seat of learning, they began to draw up a system of divinity, which they committed to hieroglyphic characters. The great God was symbolically represented by four faces, that of a lion, an eagle, a man, and a bull; eternity by a circle, justice by a flaming sword, wisdom by a serpent: And, so long as the original import of these figures was adhered to, they taught men sacred truth, at least in the theory. But, when divinity became a science, and was monopolized in the Egyptian schools, men began to mistake those hieroglyphics, and every attribute and perfection of God, was, in time, dissected into so many gods; till at last every beast, bird, and vegetable, used as symbols to lead to the knowledge of God, were, themselves, worshipped as gods: And, that we may have a proof of man's progressive degeneracy from the knowledge of the true God, you find an Egyptian king, in the days of Joseph, that could say, 'Can we find so discreet and wise a man, in whom the Spirit of God is?' And, in about two hundred and twenty-four years after, namely, in the time of Moses, you may hear the then reigning monarch so dreadfully ignorant, as to ask, 'Who is the Lord?'

Now, that polytheism took rise in Egypt, and from thence pervaded the whole world, is plain; for there is a fabulous story, the offspring of ancient tradition, that, when the giants invaded heaven, by heaping mountain upon mountain, the gods were so affrighted, that they fled into Egypt, and concealed themselves in the shapes of various animals; and the Egyptians, out of gratitude, worshipped those creatures: But the truth was this; those creatures were only the symbols, which represented God in his attributes, and, in time, were so misunderstood, as to be held as so many gods.

But I have three remarks to make, with which I shall conclude. The first is this; whatever god was worshipped in any nation, this much was always most industriously taught, amidst all the foppery of heathen idolatry, namely, That man was not as he came out of the hand of his Maker, but that he was a fallen creature; and the second thing, that a consciousness of guilt lay upon every conscience, and all thought something was to be done to render the gods propitious; and that's the reason we find every heathen altar smoking with blood, and sometimes with human blood: As on the altar of Molock Homocide, in the pleasant valley of Hinnom. The third thing was, that all

nations expected a divine person, who should restore the world to its original state of happiness again; and the person that was to do this, was to be the son of the great God; it was Jove that was to restore Saturnian times again: Hence you find, in all the heathen mythology, God is always described, as having a son; Osiris, the Egyptian god, and his son Orus; Oromazes, the Persian god, and his son Mythras; Saturn, the Grecian god, and his son Jupiter. Many of the heathen poets speak of this great person. Homer introduces God quite in an ecstasy at the birth of his son.

“From us, this day, an infant* springs
 “Fated to rule, and born a King of Kings.”

Which exactly agrees with that part of sacred writ, which says of the Son of God, ‘All kings shall bow before him; all nations shall do him service.’

Virgil, in his *Pollio*, celebrates the birth of the Son of God, even plainer than many

* Though the son, here spoken of, was Hercules, yet, by this, we may see, that a divine person was expected to make his appearance in the world; and no wonder that the titles, only applicable to the Son of God, should be wrong applied by the heathen world, when Eve herself said of Cain, ‘I have got the man the Lord.’

of the inspired prophets have done, though applied to Saloninus, the son of Asinius Pollio : But let any one judge, whether his expressions could be applicable to any mortal creature, much less to the son of Pollio, who died an infant. Some of them are these :

“ Now a great progeny from heav’n descends,
 “ The sacred babe is born, mankind defends ;
 “ From the old iron age of sin makes free,
 “ And gives again the golden one of liberty :
 “ Around thy cradle fragrant flow’rs shall spring,
 “ And the old serpent lose his fatal sting :
 “ Go, then, of race divine, Jove’s high-born Son ;
 “ This is the time to wear thy mortal crown.”

Thus, you see, amidst all the trumpery of antediluvian deism, and postdiluvian polytheism, the great God never left himself without witness. The three grand doctrines contained in that original promise, were engraven as with the pen of a diamond on every human heart, though they knew it not, namely, original sin, a propitiation for sin, and the dignity of that divine Person, appointed to perform this grand transaction.

I shall reserve the idolatry of gospel-times, for the subject of another oration, if this polite assembly can pardon the many imperfections, which the want of judgment, and the want of time, may have occasioned in this first attempt of their humble servant.

ORATION II.



On the progress of Idolatry from Christ to the present age.

THE last time I had the honour of addressing this polite assembly, my subject was the rise and progress of idolatry, from the creation to the flood, and from the flood to the birth of Christ. I then endeavoured to prove, but, with what success, I must leave to the judgments of those who heard me; I say, I then endeavoured to prove, that the antediluvian world never reached any other pitch of idolatry, but merely deism; and that polytheism, which, in time, pervaded the whole habitable world, took its rise in Egypt, the fruitful mother of many gods, and all from a misunderstanding of those hieroglyphic representations of the attributes and perfections of the true God.

And no wonder the infection should spread over all the neighbouring nations, who had no other guide than the twinkling star-light of benighted reason; when the dreadful contagion even reached the immediate residence of the great God himself, as Milton says; witness that hill of scandal, that oppro-

brious mount, where the uxorious king, to please his foreign wives, not only allowed liberty of conscience, to worship the idols of every nation; but even erected temples upon that mount, where he had, a very little before, so magnificently finished that wonder of the world, the temple of the Lord. Even upon that mount, I say, (would any one have thought it?) did this same king likewise erect temples to the abominations of all the neighbouring nations, namely, for Chemos, the obscene dread of Moab's sons; and Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood of human sacrifice, which Ammon's sons adored in Rabba, and her watery plain; Balaam likewise, and Ashteroth with her crescent horns, "to whose bright image, nightly, by the moon, Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs." All these, and more, were worshipped on the offensive mount, in opposition to the house of God: which proves, even to demonstration, that wherever God has a church the devil likewise has a chapel.

We are told, by the naturalists, that it is always darkest near break of day; and whoever examines the state of religion about the time when the Star of Jacob, that bright and morning-star, arose to usher in the gospel-day; cannot but see, that gross Egyptian darkness covered the earth. The Roman

people, who were not only the graspers after, but actual possessors of, universal empire; (being the last of the four successive empires, that the prophet Daniel had foretold should arise, each out of the ashes of the other) exceeded all their predecessors in the practice of idolatry; for they had erected a temple at Rome, called the Pantheon, which was the common receptacle for all the gods, that either were or could be invented. For good policy, and the acquaintance they had with the history of other nations, had taught them, that nothing was so dear to men as religious liberty; and the only way to endear themselves to the various nations, of which their empire was composed, was to give liberty of conscience for each nation to worship its respective gods; and, let people come from what part of the empire they would, they had free access to the Pantheon, where they might easily find their own gods.

But, among all that great multitude of gods, I never heard that the Hebrew God had any place assigned to him in the Pantheon: and the reason, possibly, was this; they had no objection to the divinity of the Hebrew God; but, as the Jews had no representation of their GOD, they could not instal him there, having no form nor similitude: And, considering the state the world

was now in, this was a piece of most excellent policy, and a scheme the best calculated to aggrandize the Roman empire. And thou, imperial city, ancient Rome, mightest still, perhaps, have stood the mistress of the world, if Rome Papal had learnt no more of religious persecution, than Rome Pagan; for, however ignorant the greatest part of the world was, of the true God; yet, to their honour be it spoken, they had learnt to think, and let think; and every one, in this sense, ‘sat under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree.’

The temple of Janus was shut both upon a religious and a civil account: For, when the Sun of righteousness arose upon a benighted world, with healing in his wings, it might well be called ‘a morning without clouds, even as clear shining after rain;’ and, throw the knowledge of true religion out of the question, I may venture to affirm, that more learned men appeared in that age, (whose names will be had in everlasting remembrance, wherever the globe is enlightened by the sun) than appeared in any age, either before or after. And a reason may be given, why God ordered it should be so; namely, he foresaw, that, when his First-born was about to appear in the world, he would be every where spoken against by the learned

world in all ages; and, if the wit and good sense of the people in this age did not appear upon record, succeeding ages would say, that the world was destitute of learning, and abounded with ignorance and superstition, so that they could not discover the imposture of the pretended Son of God. But this happens not to be the case in the happy reign of Augustus Cæsar: No; if any should dare to assert this, every school-boy might call majestic Virgil to his aid, and prove the scoundrel wretch a liar. And, though the despised Nazarene was known but by few, to be the person that was to restore Saturnian times again; yet the time was now come, when all nations expected such a person as the prophet calls ‘the desire of all nations.’ And even the heathen world, had they been well acquainted with their own principles, might have been convinced that the virgin’s Son was born; for the Delphic oracle was now struck dumb, as itself had foretold, many years before, it should be, when a virgin should bear a Son.

But, four thousand years were now elapsed, from the creation to the birth of Christ; and in all that time, the great God had never left himself without a witness to the world, though the world had always perverted the meaning of God’s messengers: and, though

the Redeemer was to be 'a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,' yet the world expected a mighty monarch, and one that was to acquire universal empire. But the end, for which the Redeemer came, was 'to purchase his church with his blood;' and the validity of his purchase, and the efficacy of his death, by no means depended on man's obedience or belief, as the prophet says, 'He has trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him: His own arm brought him salvation, and his fury, it upheld him: He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;' and, by one means or another, 'all that the Father hath given him, shall come to him.'

When we consider this, though the greatest part of the world are, now, either totally ignorant of God's method of salvation, or perverse blasphemers of it; yet Christ died not in vain, but he will find out his redeemed ones, however scattered over the face of the whole earth; and will, at last, present them before the eyes of his glory, 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,' though men and devils oppose.

But there is something very remarkable in the visible change, that passed on the world, after the resurrection of Christ; for

it was not long before all the idol gods began to vanish, like so many stars before the rising sun. The Jewish nation, (which was itself, with all its typical institutions, but a type of the gospel-church) was with these gradually removed, to make way before a rising God. But, alas! as under the old dispensation, a misunderstanding divine revelation, as conveyed in types and symbols, was the cause of all that visible idolatry, which every where abounded in the patriarchal and prophetic ages; so, from the days of Christ, to the present age, all that spiritual idolatry, which has, and still does abound, is occasioned by misunderstanding the person and offices of Christ, which the types and symbols represented.

No sooner had he finished the great work of man's redemption, and proved himself to be 'the Son of God with power;' but (as in the days of Solomon, no sooner was the temple finished, but presently the mount was studded over with idol temples) we find all the apostles of our Lord, complaining, that 'ungodly men *had* crept in, who turned the grace of God into licentiousness:' just as the deists do now, who tell us, "we teach men to sin," because we tell them grace has abounded. But what was the first step those ungodly men took in the apostolic age?

Why, they struck at the root of christianity, they denied the only Lord God: and who was that? even our Lord Jesus Christ. And what was the next step? They set aside his propitiatory death, which all the types, for above four thousand years, had figured out, and 'counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing.' And what did they introduce in the room of it? Why, truly, That men could not be saved, unless they kept the law. But, one thing must be observed, in favour of the church of Rome; idolatrous as she is, amidst all her hellish foppery and damnable trumpery, she never has rejected the Godhead of Christ, as Arius and Socinus have done, which redounds as much to his declarative glory, as the obedience to all his moral precepts, if such an obedience was possible to be performed by degenerate man. But, as every age plucked some feather from the Redeemer's wing, at last he was brought down to the level of a mere moral preacher; one that was sent to deliver a system of moral ethics to the world, and to restore what men call the law of nature: but, it happens, there is not one moral precept he taught, but what the world knew before; and unless it be allowed that Christ, in this sense, restored the law of nature, namely, by renewing in man, what he was naturally

created with, even the image of God; unless they allow that, He, in fact, did nothing at all, but only came to tell the world how wretched it was. But the reigning idols of our days, are man's righteousness, set in opposition to the righteousness of God; free will, in opposition to free grace; man's repentance, instead of Christ's blood; reformation, instead of regeneration, and the object of worship an absolute God, who is a consuming fire, instead of a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. Such, such, my friends, is the idolatry of gospel times.

“ To tell it all would take a thousand tongues,
“ A throat of brass, and adamantine lungs.”

ORATION III.

On Gen. iii. 24. And he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

OF all the various efforts, which the wisdom or wickedness of men have essayed, to make against the cause of christianity,

none have been so detrimental to the Redeemer's interest in the world, as those efforts, which have been made by his pretended friends; for, when one is introduced by the prophet Zechariah, as asking the Redeemer, in the day of his sufferings, 'What are these wounds in thine hands?' 'Those,' says he, 'I received in the house of my friends:' as if all the afflictions, he met with from his enemies, were imperceptible, when compared with those he received from his friends: And is it not much to be regretted, that there are with us, those who pretend, at least, to be enlisted under Christ's banner, to fight beneath the shadow of the crimson flag; yet, like Ephraim of old, 'being harnessed, and carrying bows, turn themselves back in the day of battle;' and not only so, but basely betray their lawful prince into his enemies hands.

You will naturally be led to ask, What base sort of creatures these are? for the name of a traitor, is, of all others, the most detestable: They are not the openly prophane and irreligious; not whore-mongers and sabbath-breakers; not the Magdalens and town-sinners, for these act above board, and are at open war with the God that made them,—and, as such, are exempted from the name of traitors; but they are the formal,

pharisaical, self-righteous people, who, perhaps make long prayers, and will tell you, with the gravity of a judge, that they never did a bad thing in all their days. These are they which the great God calls ‘ a stink in his nostrils, a fire that burns all the day :’ But, as the subject I have chose is the description of a siege in the world’s infancy, and is still carried on, with the utmost vigour, by the besiegers; so I doubt not there are, in this large assembly, not only a detachment of miners and bombardiers from the train of artillery, but some out of every regiment of the besiegers; and, as I hope, some or other will be brought within reach of the flaming sword, before I have done; I shall,

First, attempt to describe, What it is that began to be besieged in the days of Adam, even the tree of life.

Secondly, Who the defenders are, namely, Cherubims and a flaming sword: And,

Thirdly, Who the besiegers are, Adam, and all his posterity. For, it is said, ‘ He placed, at the east end of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.’ And why? lest Adam should ‘ put

forth his hand, to take also of the tree of life, and live for ever*.’

Now, as God has always conveyed spiritual knowledge to man, under metaphors borrowed from sensible objects, so it is our business to see through the metaphors, to the doctrines they convey: and I wonder that the learned world, who are so very fond of figurative expressions in other authors, should so much decry those master-pieces of rhetoric in the inspired penmen.—But, as a proof that there is conveyed something, of no little importance, in the words I have chose, let us only see whether the same preparation, when made among men, which is here represented to be made by the great God, is not in order to introduce something of the greatest moment.—I suppose, there are some here to-night, who have not, nor never will forget that dreadful day, when the artillery was drawn out of the Tower, and the king was about to fix his royal standard on Finchly-Common: did you not, then, think there was an attack going to be made by the approaching rebel army? Surely, you did. And, if so, when you hear that the artillery of heaven was drawn forth, and cherubims,

* Or to live for ever.

accoutred with heavenly panoply, brandishing a flaming sword, were placed as centinels, to keep the way of the tree of life; can you think, that God would thus prepare to stand a siege, if there had been no danger of an attack going to be made upon the tree of life? Yes, my friends, God then foresaw that not only Adam, but all his posterity, would lay siege to this tree of life: though, from that day to this, it has been guarded, on every side with a flaming sword.

If I should say there is not one soul in the infernal regions, nor never will be one, to the endless ages of eternity, but what fell, and will fall, by this flaming sword, in laying siege to the tree of life; I may, upon scripture-principles, be justified in my saying, and cleared whenever I am judged.—It is, now, about nine years since I was slain in this siege, in which I every day see many of my fellow mortals so deeply engaged; and, as an old deer-stealer makes the best park-keeper, so none are more fit to caution others than those that have been slain themselves. I may take it for granted, the greatest part of this audience are now in close siege before this tree of life, and are in great hopes, either by wisdom, strength, diligence, or cunning to gain the pass, and seize the tree of life. But, if the living can at all understand the language of the dead,

you might sooner, with Mercury, charm to sleep fair Io's keeper, with his hundred eyes, and rob him of his horned charge; or, with famed Jason, yoke the fiery bulls, and lull the wakeful dragon into sleep, and slay the army sprung from his poisonous teeth, and steal from Colchis the golden fleece of that famed ewe, which was the nurse of Jove; or, with melodious Orpheus charm the hundred-headed monster Cerberus, which guards the portal of infernal Jove, and set the disembodied prisoners free: All this, and more, you sooner may perform, than force the wakeful guard to pluck one leaf from this famed tree of life.

But, before I explain what is meant by this tree, and the cherubims and flaming sword, I would hope there are none here so ignorant of scripture language, as to think this was a material tree, which grew in Eden's garden, the fruit of which could Adam but have once tasted, nor he, nor we, should ever have tasted death. No, my friends, whatever may be advanced to the contrary, the whole history of the fall appears, from various parts of scripture, to be treated of in a figurative and metaphorical manner. First, by the tree of life, is meant, that law which God gave to Adam; and so long as Adam obeyed that law, and no longer,

he kept his spiritual life, which was fellowship with God, love, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost: I say, he preserved this by his obedience, just as he preserved his natural life, by eating of the fruit of the trees in the garden. For it is said, 'Do this and live;' and the apostle refers to this, when he says, 'The commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death;' as if he had said, the commandment, so long as Adam obeyed, was the preservation of his spiritual life; but once being broke, so far from restoring life, that it is the very hand of death; for, 'by the law is the knowledge of sin;' and yet, one could hardly think it, all mankind are seeking for life by the deeds of the law, though the same apostle, who, perhaps, had come as near this tree of life before he was slain, as any that ever besieged it; he says, 'If there could have been a law which could have given life, then, verily, righteousness would have been by the law:' by which, we see, Adam's obedience only preserved his spiritual life, so long as he obeyed; but, that being lost, no more life from partial obedience. Though we are all, in our natural state, before conversion, alive without the law; that is, being born blind, we never see the flaming sword, but think, if we do this good thing, and the other, we shall

surely obtain eternal life: 'But, when the commandment came,' says Paul, 'sin revived, and I died;' so shall we, when once we are let to see the law in all its terror.

Now, 'he that keeps the whole law, and offends but in one point, is guilty of all;' and what legalist will venture to say, he has never failed in any law, even of his own making? for, God will stoop to try every man by his own law, and even then, every man must be self-condemned. Thus much, then, for the tree of life, which appears to me to have been that law, which God gave Adam; as it is said, 'Do this and live;' but, Adam failing, lest he should run to make it up with God by future obedience; we find,

Secondly, A guard was placed, 'cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way.' That this has reference to the tabernacle, is plain; for, though the book of Genesis stands first, for order sake; yet it is allowed, by all, that Moses writ this after the law was given, and the tabernacle erected, as an introduction to the history of his own times. Now, you will find, that when the law was given, it was put into the ark, and over that was the mercy-seat, which is the emblem of Christ; and, at either end of the mercy-seat, stood a cherubim of gold, each of which shadowed the ark with its wings;

but the flaming sword was not here, because the mercy-seat came between. Yet, when we consider the law in its utmost extent, without the interposition of the mercy-seat, then the cherubims and flaming sword are the very emblem of justice; for, wherever you see justice painted, is it not in an angelic form, with a flaming sword? and, this is evident, from the custom of bearing a sword before a chief magistrate. And, that the sword is often put for justice, in scripture, is as evident; for, when a commission is given to vindictive justice to apprehend the Son of God, as the representative of his guilty people, it is expressed, 'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow.' And, again, 'If once I wet my glittering sword.' So that these cherubims, and this flaming sword, are the representation of justice; and, when said to be placed at the east of the garden, would convey thus much: You know, the east is that part of the world, where the light first breaks forth; which shows, that the justice of God may as clearly be seen, to keep men from hoping for salvation, by the works that they can do, as clear as one may see a flaming sword, that glitters in the beams of the rising sun.

And, that this sword is said to turn every way, is very significant; for, what schemes, what systems of legality, have not men invented to come at this tree of life? Is there a natural man in the world, but hugs himself, that, if he does so and so, he shall obtain life? But, though the sword is said to turn every way, in order to show the impossibility of man's obtaining life by the deeds of the law; yet, such is the nature of fallen man, that he will never desist from this siege, till the flaming sword has laid him flat. And I will appeal to any one, who has felt the terrors of God for a broken law; has it not been, to you, 'quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword,' to the 'dividing asunder of the joints and marrow?' The apostle Paul felt this to be true, when he says, 'I, by the law, am dead to the law:' And who, that has eyes to see, would fly to the law for life, when it is the very instrument of death? Thus we see what is meant by the flaming sword, even justice.

Thirdly, But do you think, this flaming sword was only placed to keep Adam from the tree of life? No, my friends; every son of Adam is engaged in the prosecution of this siege, till his eyes are opened to see what a Don Quixote he is. And if I had

not been in the siege myself, and an eye-witness to the folly of the besiegers, I could hardly think, there could be such knight-errantry in the world. For my own part, I never met with an unconverted person in my life, be he as wicked as hell, but is in this army of besiegers.

Now, the generality of besiegers, are either armed with comparative, negative, or positive goodness, as they call it. The most daring sort, are those, who are armed with comparative goodness. I know a man, who told me, and proffered to shew me the list too, of two hundred and seventy-five whores he had in one year; and yet that very man is of no little note in this army. And how do you think he keeps himself out of the reach of the flaming sword? Why, he never gets drunk, nor lets an obscene word come out of his mouth; and therefore is not so bad as such and such foul-mouthed drunken fellows. Others, indeed, will own they get drunk now and then, and do swear a little, and talk obscenely; what then, none can say, but they are very honest, for they pay twenty shillings in the pound, and do not cheat the world, like such and such canting, sanctified people. Then as to your negatively good people, who do no body any harm, they make a considerable figure in

this army. I once knew a great tradesman in this city, whose only daughter happened to die; and he could not think what he had done, that God should take away his daughter; and yet this very same man would cheat all his customers, if he could, by sending sugars, &c. inferior to the samples; and yet he did no body any harm. Then, as to your positively good people, I know an old lady, quite grown grey in this siege, who is really at the expence, of hiring a chaplain to read prayers twice a day, and has built alms-houses, and gives money to prisons twice or thrice a year. But, would you think it? This good lady is quite a gamester, and the money she gives to prisons, is what she wins at dear quadrille; and what pays her chaplain, and gets her the name of a good christain, is what she pinches out of her servants bellies, and deducts out of tradesmen's bills.

But I had like to have omitted one sort more, who besiege this tree of life, after they are dead and buried too. You will say this is strange, but no more strange than true: Have you never heard of people, who, after they have cheated the world for sixty or seventy years, and at last wronged their lawful heirs, would them compromise matters with God, by leaving money to build hospitals or alms-houses, or perhaps repair

churches? Instances need not be produced. The various roads from this great city* have many standing monuments to prove this.

Now, my friends; do you think this guard, to defend the tree of life, was needless? surely, instances enough have been produced to prove, that not only Adam, but all his posterity, in every age, have been, and still are, at daggers-draw with the God that made them, and ‘rush upon the thick bosses of his buckler, *like* a horse into the battle.’ And, should you or I, be seeking for life, by the law, and be yet unwounded by this flaming sword, and never see the real tree of life, even Jesus Christ, who is that ‘tree of life planted in the midst of the paradise of God, the leaves’ of which tree ‘are for the healing of the nations;’ I say, if we have never seen this, it is to be feared we have been, all our lives, climbing to heaven, by a rope of sand, or building a Babel, which will at last, come tumbling down about our ears, with vast destruction, and irreparable ruin.

* London.

ORATION IV.



On the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon.

HAVING lately, been thought too satyrical, in exposing the vices of particular persons, in some former Orations; therefore, have, now, chose this subject, in order to rescue the character of a particular person, out of the unhallowed hands of those, who, though they are mighty tender of the characters of their infamous contemporaries, yet, make no sort of scruple to stigmatize, with the most poignant reproach and infamy, the amiable characters of many of the most eminent persons, whom the Spirit of God has thought fit to dignify amidst the illustrious roll of scripture-worthies.

One of these glorious personages, that has been made the butt of reproach, against which an ill-natured world has thought fit to shoot out their venomous arrows, even bitter words, is that illustrious person, the never-to-be-forgotten queen of Sheba. How has the character of this worthy woman been torn to pieces, in the most scandalous manner, for taking that long and tiresome jour-

ney, to visit king Solomon? To vindicate so worthy a person, from such vile aspersions, it will be necessary to keep close to the historical account, which is given of this queen's journey, together with the motives, that induced her to travel so far; which, if the enemies of revelation had, in the least, attended to, one would have thought, that even detraction itself, must have stopped its opprobrious mouth.

Now, it appears to have been about that period of Solomon's life, when the temple of God and his own house were finished, which must be about the twentieth year of his reign, when the queen of Sheba came to visit him: at a time, when the worship of God was in its native purity; at a time, when Solomon's heart was flaming with love to the Lord his God, before he had ingulfed himself in guilt, by marrying such a number of strange women. And, the motive that induced this queen to come so far, appears to have rose from the following incident.

It seems, at this time, that king Solomon stood in the good graces of all the neighbouring kings: And the king of Edom, had given Solomon leave to build a navy, at a place called Ezion Geber, a harbour at the upper end of the red sea, in order to go to

Ophir for gold ; and, as the Israelites were entirely ignorant of navigation, that nothing might be wanted to aggrandize king Solomon, we find that his old friend, Hiram, king of Tyre, who had before afforded him such ample supplies of cedar and fir wood, from mount Lebanon, to build the temple, now furnished his ships with sailors, who had knowledge of the sea. For, the king of Tyre's dominions being situate at the upper end of the Mediterranean sea, and Tyre and Sidon being the grand resort for merchants, from all parts of the then known world ; the subjects of Hiram had all the opportunity imaginable, to be the most expert sailors. And these were they, with whom king Solomon's ships were manned : And the place, for which they were bound, was Ophir, a country in Arabia Felix, bordering upon the red sea or Arabian gulph. And, though our modern geographers are in dispute about the situation of Ophir, yet it is very clear, that it must have been between Eloth and the Indian ocean ; for the whole length of that gulph, which divides the Arabian from the Ethiopian coast, is not many hundred leagues. Yet, so little was the art of navigation then known, that they were three years in making this voyage ; by which it seems most likely, they coasted

it all the way, and were seldom out of sight of land.

Now, this Ophir, so famous for gold, was in the queen of Sheba's dominions; and, upon their arrival, we find that Solomon's merchants were introduced to the audience of the Queen. We may easily suppose what sort of conversation she had with these strangers: For, persons of royal dignity seldom enquire about any thing inferior to themselves. An instance of this we have in Dido, Queen of Carthage, upon the arrival of Æneas, the Trojan prince, where Virgil tells us of what Dido was most inquisitive, viz.

“ Of Priam much she ask'd, of Hector more,
 “ What arms black Memnon brought to Zanthus'
 “ shore;
 “ And then enquir'd of Diomedes' steeds,
 “ Of great Achilles, and his mighty deeds.”

All which were people and things of royal dignity. And there appears to have been but two things, of which this queen of Sheba made enquiry, viz. concerning the God that the Israelites worshipped, and the character of the then reigning monarch.

That Solomon's merchants were men of singular piety, as well as excellent orators, is very evident, from the effect their words had upon this queen. For, however some

people's high-flown rhetoric may gratify the ear, yet it is only words spoke from the heart, that can reach to the heart; and you will find those men had more the honour of God at heart, than the grandeur and wisdom of their master Solomon. And, there is no doubt, but they gave an exact account of the rise of the Hebrew nation, and the many and glorious miracles that God had wrought, from time to time, in behalf of his people Israel, and how high king Solomon stood in the esteem of the Lord his God, who had been honoured with building that beautiful temple, the more immediate residence of the Lord of all the earth.

Such discourse as this those merchants must have had; for, the history informs us, that, 'when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions.' Now, let it be observed, what induced the queen to this journey. It was not king Solomon's riches, for enough of that she had at home. It was not his graceful person, for we do not find that this was so much as mentioned. It was not, merely, curiosity to see his sumptuous buildings: No; but it was Solomon's fame concerning the Lord. Now, whoever is conversant with history, may see, that there was one prevail-

ing mistake, concerning the God of Israel, which had overspread the whole heathen world; which was this, they thought no other nation but the Israelites, had any right to the favour of Israel's God. This was occasioned, partly, by the great things God had done for Israel, and, partly, by the bigotry and pride of the nominal, hypocritical, selfish Israelites; who, like our modern formalists, valued themselves upon their ceremonial performances. But, this was not the spirit of an Israelite indeed; for good old Abraham rejoiced to think, that, 'in his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed.' And Solomon was so much of a catholic spirit, that, at the dedication of the temple, after his prayer for the people of Israel in particular, he did not forget the distant stranger; 'Moreover,' says he, 'concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country, for thy name's sake; (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm). When he shall come, and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for.' And I believe, from my heart, that Solomon's merchants repeated this very same clause of Solomon's prayer to the queen

of Sheba, or she had never come from so far a country. For Solomon had prayed for the stranger, that was to 'come from far, for the sake of the Lord.' And we find it was for no other reason, but concerning Solomon's fame, with regard to the name of the Lord, that brought this stranger queen so far; and, surely, we must suppose, she hoped for some extraordinary benefit from the Lord, or what could be her view, in coming so far?

Thus, you see, it was upon a religious account, that the queen of Sheba took this long and dangerous journey: and, by what she after confesses to king Solomon, she appears to be a woman of no mean abilities: she had learned to steer clear of those two dangerous rocks, credulity, on the one hand, and infidelity, on the other. She owned, when told of Solomon's wisdom, she believed not till her eyes had seen it; that is, she did not assent and consent to all that was told her, without examining into the matter. Nay, it is plain, she thought what was told her, a matter of such consequence, that she spared neither pains nor cost, to prove the truth of what she heard; and, accordingly, we find, she set out for Jerusalem, with a very sumptuous equipage, to prove king Solomon with hard questions.

What those questions were, we are not told ; but, let any one be asked what those questions were, and he will always answer according to the natural bent of his own mind. Ask a debauchee, and, I'll warrant you, he'll tell you, they were of the amorous kind. Indeed, the learned ignoramuses amongst the Jews, tell us, " this queen " brought a number of boys and girls to " Jerusalem, as like each other, both in " person and dress, as possible; and proved " Solomon's discernment, by his telling her, " which were boys, and which were girls, " at first sight." But the ridiculousness of this, needs no argument to confute it. It is as absurd as their saying, Christ did his miracles, by the name of Jehovah, which he stole out of the temple. Can any one, that reads the history of the queen of Sheba, ever discover such a trifling, nonsensical spirit in her? No, as she came concerning the name of the Lord, is it not most reasonable to think, her questions were concerning the name of the Lord too?

Pray, observe her conduct ; she appears to be under great distress of soul: whatever Solomon's merchants had said, she appears to be struck with convictions, that all was not right between the Lord and her : And, on her arrival, she took no notice of Solo-

mon's grandeur, till she had her doubts cleared up. Now, Solomon appears to be under a divine impulse, when he resolved the queen's questions. For, it is said, 'there was nothing hid from the king, which he told her not.' Doubtless she had been told of the blessings God had in store for his own people, and the misery of those who despised him; may we not suppose her first and grand question was, What she should do to have an interest in the God of Israel? and whether a stranger, that was not of God's people, might hope for any favour from Israel's God? When this grand question was resolved in the affirmative, no doubt her other questions were, concerning the divine attributes and perfections; for the heathens had no notion of omnipresence and omnipotence, because their deities were circumscribed to particular limits.

But Solomon could, and, doubtless, did tell her, that 'the heaven of heavens could not contain the Lord' *his God*; he, surely, displayed the wisdom of God, in creating; and the power of God in preserving the world; he, likewise, must have told her of the fall of man, and the method God had prescribed for his recovery. And, as Solomon's temple was a type of the Saviour of the world, and all the sacrifices of that

dispensation typical of the great sacrifice for sin, we cannot but think king Solomon preached all this, in the most masterly manner, to the queen of Sheba.

Now, when the queen had got all her questions answered, and all her scruples of conscience resolved, then, and not till then, she began to take a survey of Solomon's temple: for, alas! what pleasure can the splendor of a court afford to one over whose head a drawn sword hangs by a feeble thread? and such seemed to be the situation of this queen, till eased of all her doubts and fears by the preaching of Solomon; and then we find with what wonder and amazement she viewed the magnificence of Solomon; the order of his house, his attendance, the splendor of his table, but, above all, the ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord, namely, that magnificent portico, so gloriously adorned with all the works of art; on either hand of which, seven lofty pillars stood, all chequered over with nets of burnished gold, instilled with shining gems, which curious Hiram set so far beyond the conception of the most lavish imagination, that, when the queen beheld this, 'there was no more spirit in her;' she was struck with surprise at the very sight, and ingenuously confessed, that 'the half of what she had seen, had not been

told her.' But, as if all this unparalleled architecture, this blaze of shining gems, and sculptured gold, was nothing when compared to Solomon's wisdom; she pronounced his attendants not happy on the account of all this, but happy in 'standing continually before their master Solomon, and hearing his wisdom.' But does she stop here? if she had, I should have doubted the goodness of her heart, as well as some of our modern sensualists do. But, by a beautiful climax, she ascends, till, at last, she reaches the fountain-head, from whence all Solomon's wisdom and grandeur came; 'Blessed,' said she, 'be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel, because the Lord loved Israel for ever; therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice.'

Thus, you see, she centers all, at last, in the God of Israel, from whom alone all wisdom and riches flow. And, to show that this confession of her faith was of the right sort, she gave a testimony of her faith, by her works: for, let but once the heart be touched with the love of God; and who dare deny, that good works and generosity of soul will be the genuine consequence? As when it is said, 'the Lord opened the heart of Lydia to attend to the things that

were spoken by St. Paul ;' you presently hear, that she invited the apostles into her house ; so this queen, when touched with the love of God, immediately opened her heart and her treasury too ; for she gave to the king ' an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and, of spices, very great store, and precious stones : There came no more such abundance of spices as these, which the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon.'

Well now, if there be any here to-night, who love to degrade those whom God delights to honour ; what do you think of the queen of Sheba ? Can your vultures eyes spy any indecency in this good woman's conduct ? I call her good, because the only wise God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has told the self-righteous Jews that ' the queen of the south, even the queen of Sheba, should rise up in judgment against that generation, and should condemn it.'

But, methinks, I hear some say ; " You have not touched upon that part of the history, where we see the queen of Sheba's crime : You have said nothing of what king Solomon did for all these riches. It is said, ' he gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty.'" But, pray now, because the king gave her all she asked, does

it follow, as a consequence, that she asked him to go to bed with her? What, because an Amazonian queen once asked this favour of Alexander the Great, must the queen of Sheba ask it of Solomon? Or, because he gave her of his royal bounty, was there nothing worth the queen of Sheba's acceptance, but the enjoyment of his person? Sureiy, there was. Were the resolving of her doubts, and the dissipating her fears, nothing worth? Had you or had I been under the same anxiety, what would we not have given to have been set at liberty?

But, to conclude: To me at least, it appears, this queen was a woman of strict honour, virtue, and generosity: a woman, that did not experience Solomon's love; but the love of Solomon's God shed abroad in her heart. The observation I would make upon the queen of Sheba's journey is this; that the great God is never at a loss to procure means to bring his banished home. Has he a queen of the distant south, to be brought to the knowledge of himself? Why then, the winds and the waves shall all conspire to do God's work; even sailors, of all people the most reprobate and devilish, shall proclaim his name abroad. Nay, rather than Christ's sheep shall not be brought into his fold, the devil himself shall act the

part of a shepherd's dog, and, by barking and biting, drive them to the shepherd, so that, by one means or another, the Redeemer will either bring his people to the gospel, or send the gospel to them. And, at the last, when he makes up his jewels, he shall say, in the presence of God, 'Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me;' and, 'of all, that thou hast given me, I have lost none;' no, not even the distant queen of Sheba. For, as Isaiah says, when speaking in the person of the Redeemer, 'I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; and they shall bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth. And they from Sheba shall come, they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.'

ORATION V.

On the Serpent's Curse.—Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. Gen. iii. 14.

WHO is there, that has read the lively oracles of God, with an unprejudiced

eye, but must have made this one observation? (however mankind have distinguished themselves by different nations, denominations, and parties, and have divided and sub-divided from each other) That the great God has divided mankind into no more than two classes; the one distinguished by metaphors borrowed from the most amiable productions of nature; the other, by those borrowed from every production of nature that is vile, detestable, and abominable among men. Hence, you hear, the former are called by metaphors, which bespeak their utility; such as sheep, lambs, doves, wheat, gold, jewels, &c. The latter are distinguished by metaphors of the most detestable kind; such as goats, wolves, vultures, vipers, serpents, tares, &c. And, however the outward economy of kingdoms and nations may have differed, with regard to civil government; yet, there are two great monarchs, each of which has filled his respective throne in the world, ever since the day this dreadful curse was denounced, ‘On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, all the days of thy life.’ And, whether we like it or not, and whether we will or not, we are, and must be, subjects to one of these two great kings; for God and the devil divide the world between them.

The devil, indeed, is the god of this world, and all that are born in his dominions, are born his lawful subjects. But then, the great God has a kingdom likewise; and what sort of men are his subjects? A people that are taken out of the devil's territories, and 'translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.'

Now, in order to give man a description of the manner in which he became enslaved to the bondage of sin and death, the consequence of it; the sacred historian describes his fall, by representing to his ideas the image of a serpent, as the tempter of our first parents. And many, who see no farther than the mere letter of scripture, have formed to themselves gross ideas of what is here called the serpent, and, instead of enquiring into the nature of the doctrines couched under this hieroglyphic representation, have exerted their utmost skill to describe what kind of serpent this was, into which the devil entered. But were we take a walk over yonder Libya's* burning sands, and view with curious eyes, the various species of the serpent race; the drouzy asp; or spotted cenchris, rich in various dyes; or the fierce basilisk, by every other serpent feared; or dragon,

* Ninth Book of Lucan's Pharsalia.

armed with scales of glittering gold: nay, could we view each single species of the scaly brood, by which so many noble Romans fell a prey to vultures, on the Libyan waste, fleeing with Cato over that burning desert, to shun victorious Cæsar's conquering arms: and, could we single out the very kind which Moses had in view, when he said, 'the serpent was more subtle, than any beast of the field, which the Lord had made;' yet, after all, we should but gratify a needless curiosity, which would be of as little service to us, as to know how many knots there were upon Hercules' club, or how many buds there were upon Aaron's rod.

But we are told, that no scripture is of private interpretation; but is 'profitable for doctrine, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.' Therefore let me ask any one, What sort of doctrine, what sort of correction, or instruction, we can gather from God's saying to a poor serpent (which, at most, was merely passive in the affair) 'Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, all the days of thy life?' when it is as natural for a serpent to go upon its belly, and eat the dust, as it is for an ox to walk upon four legs, and eat the growing grass. No, my friends, God never intended to give us a story of a metamorphosed serpent, which

from having its head erect, and softly gliding along, with many a winding fold, was, henceforth, forced to crawl upon the barren sand; no more than he really intended, when he says, ‘Thou shalt not muzzle the ox, that treadeth out the corn,’ that we were to look no further than the horned creature. But, as Paul says, ‘Doth God provide for oxen?’ so may I say, Doth God fill up divine revelation, with storics of metamorphosed serpents? Far from it. It must be allowed, that the history of the fall, if taken literally, conveys to us some strange ideas. But, when we consider the age in which it was written, and by whom, we shall find the images exceeding expressive.

We are told, that Moses ‘was skilled in all the learning of the Egyptians.’ And, pray, how did the Egyptians convey their knowledge to each other? Not by letters, or written words, as we do; but by hieroglyphic characters. I cannot compare it to any thing, that so nearly resembles it, as our heraldry, which, I suppose, was borrowed from them. And have we not, very often, the history of whole families in the field of a coat of arms? So here, when the serpent is mentioned by Moses, it had, long before that time, in which Moses wrote, been fixed upon, as a figure, that denoted wisdom, art,

craft, cunning, or subtilty; and, when introduced into the history of the fall, pointed out that master-piece of subtilty, that apostate spirit, who led man into the captivity of sin; and, in other places of scripture, is called captivity itself. And in the same sense, as personality is applied to the Spirit of God, who witnesses with our spirits, and leads us into all truth; so this serpent spirit operates personally, and, by that means, vitiates and pollutes the soul, and estranges the heart from God. Thus did this spirit operate on the hearts of our first parents. Not (in my opinion) through the organs of a brutal serpent, but by presenting evil to their imaginations. As Paul says, ‘When I would do good, evil is present with me;’ and, as the bite of a serpent not only infects the part that is bit, but poisons the whole mass of blood, as you may read in Lucan, of the many sort of deaths, which Cato’s soldiers suffered in Libya’s sands, by the bites of different kinds of serpents. So our first parents, being deceived by this serpent spirit, the infection went so deep, that the soul, with all its noble faculties, became entirely polluted; and though, before that time, the body of man had been the temple of the Holy Ghost; yet, now, it became a cage for every unclean bird, and a temple for the

habitation of the devil, who is said to reign in the children of disobedience; for we are all, ‘by nature, the children of wrath, even as others.’ And that is the reason, why our Lord and his apostles often call the wicked, vipers, dogs, swine, children of the devil; nay, the very devil himself: ‘Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ And this is the reason which makes me conclude, that the serpent, here cursed, to go upon its belly, is unregenerate man, actuated by the serpent spirit, as all are intirely, as the degenerate children of a degenerate parent. For ‘the imagination of man’s heart is only evil, and that continually,’ and as opposite to the nature of God, as wheat is to tares, or as sheep are to goats.

But is it not abominable, (as one observes) that children should deny their parent, and say, they have no such kindred? And, what is still worse, will never be brought to own their kindred, till they are brought out of darkness, into God’s marvellous light; and then, when, at any time, under the hidings of God’s face, with bishop Ken they will often say,

“ —To my soul ’tis hell to be,

“ But for one moment, void of Thee.”

Though I am afraid I have been too tedious in ascertaining who this serpent is ; but, unless that was first fixed, we should still be at a loss to know where the curse centers ; and, perhaps, every snake we see, we should be ready to say, there is a monument of the curse, crawling upon its belly. Therefore, to give you ocular demonstration, that the serpent here spoken of, is a two-legged creature, and walks erect, as you or I may do : see now whether the cap does not fit every unregenerate man in the world, as actuated by this serpent spirit. ‘ Upon thy belly shalt thou go.’ What do we understand by this ? Ovid says, that “ God gave to man a lofty face, in order that he might center his affections upon things above.” But is this the case of the world in general ? No, very far from it, for the generality of men have put off their noble nature, for the grovelling qualities of downcast beasts. Are not all mankind by nature seeking for happiness from beneath, as the brute creation do ? for all their pleasures arise from the things of earth ; and so do men’s, in their natural state. Instead of rejoicing according to the command of God, and glorying in the knowledge of God, they look always for happiness from beneath. This was Cain’s case ; as soon as ever he was cursed of God,

he immediately flew to the creatures for happiness, and begun to amuse himself with building a city: and thus does every soul of man, that is destitute of the Spirit of God, look to the things of this lower world, and seek to strike out happiness from thence. When Solomon experienced a temporal desertion of God, what does he do? Why, he tells us, he ‘built him houses, and planted vineyards, and gat him men-singers and women-singers,’ and every thing that was delightful among men. And is not the case the same at this day? when men become weary of themselves, do they not then run to the witch of Endor for comfort? And is not this beautifully figured out by these words, ‘Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life.’

By dust, may be understood, all the things which this lower world affords, and every thing that comes within the circle of sense; and, by eating of dust, is as much as if God had said to all the serpent race, which were not included in the covenant of redemption: “Ye shall be a race of groveling creatures; “ye shall never know any happiness, but “what is common to you with the brute “creation, namely, the produce of the earth, “and the blessings of the nether spring; “such as heat and cold, rain and fruitful

“ seasons, and whatever pleasure the senses
“ can enjoy, this shall be your portion. But
“ as for the things of another world, the for-
“ giveness of sins, and the enjoyment of the
“ indwelling of God in the soul, by the re-
“ newing of the Holy Ghost, these you shall
“ never know. Nay, so far from knowing
“ any thing of the invisible realities of
“ another world, that you will not believe
“ there is any such thing, ‘ though a man
“ should declare it unto you.’” And by
these words, ‘ All the days of thy life ;’ is
fixed the curse with a witness ; as if God
had said, “ This curse is not for a day or a
“ year ; but all the days of thy life, so long
“ as thou livest upon the face of the earth.”

And now, my friends, what do you think
of the serpent’s curse ? Is not this to be
cursed above all the beasts of the field ? Their
centering all their thoughts upon the enjoy-
ments of sense, is, to them, a blessing : But,
when entailed upon man, the only rational
part of the creation ; upon man, originally
made in the image of God, and fitted for
communion with, and the enjoyment of God,
but by disobedience, reduced to a level with
the beasts that perish : what a curse is here !
These words once struck me with the most
poignant grief, when I observed the greatest
part of the world destitute of the grace of

God, were all, to a man, going upon their bellies, and licking the dust. And how ought those, who have experienced the riches of free grace, in pardoning love, to be struck with wonder, and, with the apostle John cry out, ‘ Behold, what manner of love is this, that the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God,’ while so many of our acquaintance are going upon their bellies, and eating dust all the days of their lives !

ORATION VI.

On Gen. iii. 15.—I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.

WERE we to ask the generality of professing christians, what is meant by that enmity, which is said to be put, between the woman and the serpent, and between its seed and her seed ? We may venture to affirm, the greatest part would answer, “ It is that
 “ natural detestation which is in man against
 “ the whole serpent race, which prompts
 “ him to destroy them wherever he sees
 “ them: and implies also, that natural dislike
 “ which the whole serpent race have to

“ man, and prompts them to bite and sting
“ him, whenever he comes in their way.”
But, as man, for the most part, destroys
the life of every serpent he encounters, that
(say they) is the reason why it is said, ‘ The
seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s
head ;’ that is, kill it ; as the head, you
know, is the seat of its life. But, as some-
times it happens, that man receives some
damage from the serpent ; for that reason,
it is said, the serpent shall ‘ bruise his heel ;’
that is, may hurt him a little, as the heel is
not a mortal part. This is the interpretation
of your moral, church-going formalists, who
will tell you, they believe all the Bible, from
Genesis to Revelation ; but will give you
just such a definition of any text, as that blind
man, I once heard of, did of colours, with
whom some virtuosos took a great deal of
pains to teach the distinction of colours ; and,
when they thought he had made some pro-
ficiency, they asked him, What some parti-
cular colour was like ? ‘ Its like—its like
(says he) the sound of a trumpet ;’ and just
as preposterous is the answer of every spirit-
ually blind person in the world, with regard
to sacred truth.

In a former Oration, I endeavoured to
prove, upon scripture-principles, what this
serpent and its seed were ; and to show,

from the evidence of scripture, that every son of Adam, by natural generation, till born again of God, is of that serpent race; and is as much the temple of the devil, as the heart of a regenerate man is the temple of the Holy Ghost: And, as the woman, and her seed, imply Christ the head, and all his people the members; so, the serpent and its seed, imply that apostate diabolic spirit, who reigns in the children of disobedience, and all his posterity. And as these two seeds comprise the whole world, then we are either going upon our bellies, and licking the dust, or else are made to walk upright, and feed upon Christ, the bread of eternal life.

But, throwing the hieroglyphic serpent (mentioned in our last) out of the question, we find, here was a declaration of war, made by the great God himself in Paradise; ‘I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.’ And has the word of eternal truth said it? And shall it not take place? God forbid! But, perhaps, you will say, “This war was declared so long ago, that we, in these dregs of time, have no concern in it.” But stop a little, my friend, and you shall see that you are now engaged in the midst of the battle; either fighting against others, or fought

against by others ; for there never was one moment's cessation of arms, from that day to this. You know, that enmity is a fixt, irreconcilable hatred, which can never be appeased ; you might as well reconcile fire and water, heat and cold, light and darkness, as reconcile the enmity there is between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Indeed, so long as God's people continue in their natural blindness, and are not ' translated out of darkness into God's marvellous light,' so long they are very free from this enmity. The world loves its own, but, let a man once depart from evil, and he will immediately become a prey : Let a man but once declare himself on the Lord's side, and immediately the serpent begins to hiss.

But, methinks, I hear some say, This is all mere fancy ; there is no such thing, as the serpent race, in the world ; we want a proof of this. Well, I do not desire you to take my word for it ; but, unless you are naturally, as well as spiritually blind, you shall have clear demonstration of this enmity between the two seeds, if the experience of all ages, from the days of Adam to this present day, can furnish out a sufficient proof. You may remember, I said, let but a man once declare himself on the Lord's side, and, immediately, the serpent begins

to hiss. And pray now, what a dreadful hiss did that first-born serpent, Cain, give, when his brother Abel gave evidence that he was a member of the seed of the woman, by offering a more acceptable sacrifice, than his deistical, unbelieving brother? We do not find any enmity appeared between Cain and Abel, before Abel shewed his religious sentiments, by offering a bloody sacrifice; but this was a crime sufficient, for righteous Abel to bleed by an only brother's hand insomuch, that God was obliged to give Eve another seed, instead of Abel whom Cain slew. But did the enmity stop here, with the death of righteous Abel? No; it raged as intensely as ever, through all the antediluvian world. And, when Noah commenced a preacher of righteousness, and began to prepare an ark, to save his house from the approaching deluge, we do not find that any body paid the least regard to the good old man's preaching; but rather seemed to deride and persecute him, as one that was enthusiastically mad. For they were in the height of all their jollity, 'eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, till the flood came, and swept them all away;' and then, it may be supposed, they began to cry out, Who could have thought that this old fellow spoke truth?

But, one would think, now, the serpent's race were all drowned in the flood; but, if we think so, we shall presently find our mistake; for, in one of Noah's three sons, the serpent soon began to erect his scaly head, insomuch, that his own father denounced, 'Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants shall he be to his brethren.' But, the serpent's race was never so rampant, but what the seed of the woman had always courage enough to make a stand for God. Accordingly, we find a righteous Lot vexed, from day to day, with the filthy conversation of the wicked inhabitants of Sodom; and, when he turned preacher for God, even his sons-in-law thought he was little better than mad; for 'he seemed to them as one that mocked,' to talk of God's destroying those wealthy cities. And, say the rest of the serpent race, 'This fellow came to sojourn with us, and he will needs be a judge over us.' Thus, you see how Lot made a stand for God, and bore the serpent's dreadful hiss.

And, to let us see that the seed of the woman does not run in the blood, you find a faithful Abraham, the father of a wicked mocking Ishmael. And the apostle Paul shows us, that the two seeds, I have been speaking of, were most evidently manifested in Isaac and Ishmael. The same was also

evident, in two, that were nearer akin, than Isaac and Ishmael; for, Jacob and Esau lay together in the same womb, and yet were distinct seeds; as it is said, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau have I hated.' And, did not the serpentine enmity show itself, as soon as ever they were grown up? 'The days of mourning for my father are at hand, and then I will slay my brother Jacob,' says a reprobate Esau. But did Jacob get clear of the serpent's hiss, when he fled for safety to his uncle Laban? I trow not; for, see now, that wicked wretch changing his wages ten times in seven years; and, at last, would certainly have sent him away empty, had not God himself visibly interposed. Yet, no sooner did Esau hear of his brother's return, after above one and twenty years absence, but immediately the serpent began to rouse; for he equipt himself in a warlike manner, and took four hundred men with him, in order to have destroyed Jacob in an instant. But, as the great God not only governs heaven, but hell also; instead of slaying his brother, the enmity, for that time, was turned to brotherly-kindness. And we are told, by those who wrote the lives of the patriarchs, that after the death of their father Isaac, the enmity broke out again, and Esau came once more upon his brother in a hostile manner;

and Esau fell by the bow of Jacob, who was forced to slay him in his own defence.

Again, when the holy seed became a numerous people, in the land of Egypt, how then did the serpent begin to hiss? Indeed, whilst God's people made no open profession of their religion, but were silent about the things of God, the serpentine, Egyptian race were pretty quiet with them. But, no sooner did they let the Egyptians see their religious principles, by saying, 'Let us go serve the Lord;' than the serpent began to erect his scaly crest. 'Who is the Lord?' says that grand emblem of diabolic pride, the king of Egypt: 'Ye are idle.' And his enmity was such, that he made their burdens ten times more than they were before.

Thus, you see, where the enmity levels; let but God's people conceal their religious principles, and they may live pretty secure amongst the serpent race; but, as soon as ever they shew themselves deserters from the devil's army, and avouch their allegiance to another king, even in the devil's territories, it is natural to think they must expect a weary life of it; and this was Israel's case, in that emblem of hellish darkness, the land of Egypt.

But, when Israel became a separate people, and set apart for God's more immediate

worship, one would have thought, no more of the serpent's enmity would have been found; but, as the eternal God never had a church, where the devil had not a chapel; so, you find, the enmity showed itself in various ways. In the affair of the golden calf, in the rebellion of Korah, and in the Hebrew spies, who 'brought an evil report upon the good land.' But Joshua and Caleb were actuated by a different spirit; for in them, we are told, was 'another spirit,' even the holy seed.

But to proceed, Who that reads the history of David and Saul, can help seeing how conspicuous the two seeds appeared in them? We find an evil spirit, which was the serpentine enmity, tormented Saul; and no sooner did he see that the Lord was with David, but such an enmity arose, that he broke through all the ties of gratitude, friendship, and affinity. What hazards did not David run to serve this ungrateful creature? Nay, what evidence did not David give to prove his innocency? And yet, what a hell does Saul undergo, to wreck his vengeance on guiltless David's head? But was Saul the only serpent, that hissed at, and stung this injured prince? No; says he, 'I became a stranger to my brethren, an alien to my mother's children.' And so hardly

was the prophet Jeremiah put to it, amongst the serpent's race, that he was forced to cry out, 'Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me; a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth.'

Thus you see how this enmity raged, for so many thousand years; in which time, not one of the souls that ever proved themselves to be of the woman's seed, but what all, to a man, felt the serpent's enmity. And though the gospel was ushered in with 'peace, good will towards men;' yet, so far from there being any peace between the two seeds, that now the enmity began to burn with double fury. And as war was declared by God in the infant world, so now in the end of the world, when this same God became incarnate, and though (with regard to his own people) he is the Prince of Peace, yet he makes a fresh declaration of war with the serpent race. 'Think not,' says he, 'that I came to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword; even to set the father against the son, and the son against the father.' 'And,' says our Lord, 'you shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.' And, so far from the doctrine of the gospel putting an end to the enmity of the serpent, that our Lord makes it a black mark of a man's being yet in the arms of

satan, if there appears any compromising of matters with the world; for, says he, 'Woe be unto you, when all men speak well of you.'

And now, will any one dare say he is a christian, and has never been persecuted for Christ, either in his name, body, or estate? Why, my friends, an unpersecuted christian is such a phœnomenon, as is rarely, if ever, seen; for let but two of the serpent's race be ever so much at variance, and I will tell you how to make them friends again. Let a poor christian come and declare, what God has done for his soul, and, my life for it, they will immediately agree to persecute that man with all their violence, if not with their hands, yet with their tongues. Have you forgot, when our Lord was arraigned before a Roman Pilate's bar, and was sent by him to Herod the king? It is very remarkable, that those two great men had been a long time at variance; but, from that day, in which they persecuted the Son of God, we are told, 'they were made friends.' Did you never see a bull set into the midst of a parcel of fighting, snarling bull-dogs, which (before the bull appeared) were ready to tear one another to pieces; but, as soon as they saw the bull, by the mere impulse of natural instinct, they all agreed to set upon the horned creature? And just so it is with the serpent race;

they as naturally fall upon the seed of the woman, as a dog does upon a bull, or as a wolf does upon a lamb. Nay, says our Lord, I 'send you as sheep into the midst of wolves;' and do you think a wolf will give any quarter to a sheep? No, it is contrary to nature; and the apostle Paul found it so, when he says, 'after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus.'

But, methinks, by this time, I hear some say, "This enmity, that you have been talking of, was only peculiar to the first ages of christianity, when the greatest part of the world were buried in idolatry: But, now the greatest part of the world are christians, there is no such thing as enmity between christians." Well, if you can, upon scripture principles, prove this assertion, I shall be as glad of it as Moses was, when told of some, that prophesied in the camp. But if you can prove that all are christians who are called so; then surely our Lord Jesus Christ was exceedingly mistaken when he says, 'You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.' Why, sirs, the greatest part of those, who are called christians, are no more hated for his name, than they are for the name of the emperor of China, of whose name, perhaps, they never heard.

But, if there are any here to-night, that have really known his name; which, as Solomon says, is ‘as ointment poured forth;’ I will appeal to you, whether you have not experienced this serpentine enmity; for, when first the Spirit of God arrested you, and let you see your lost estate by nature, insomuch that you were forced to cry out, ‘What must we do to be saved?’ did not even this first struggle of the new creature, alarm the serpent’s race? For did not all your unconverted friends and acquaintance think you were going mad? and did they not, either by fair or foul means, begin to beat you out of that mad way? but, when you were brought into the world of new creatures, and could experimentally say, that ‘the Son of man had *yet* power on earth to forgive sins;’ and that you had experienced this in your own heart, by being delivered from the burden of an accusing conscience, and the terrors of a broken law; why, such a confession as this, was enough to rouse the hisses of a thousand serpents tongues; enough to make them “rave, bounce, swear, “and seem to be, ten thousand devils in “epitome.”

How many, for witnessing this good confession, in all ages, have been persecuted, even by their nearest friends and relations?

And, though a man be ever so expert in secular matters, and ingenious in arts and sciences ; yet such a confession as this, will expose him to the utmost contempt and ridicule. Nay, if you are but in doubt of any one scripture-doctrine, you need to bring it to no other touch-stone, to prove the truth of it by, that the heart of an unregenerate man : for instance, as Mr. Bradbury* was preaching on the God-head of Christ, several persons began to hiss : “ Ay (says the good old man) it is no “ wonder the serpent should hiss at the “ divinity of him, who has so miserably “ bruised his head.” And the observation will hold good, with regard to all other doctrines of scripture. . You may be sure, if the serpent begins to spurn and hiss at them, it is a self-evident proof that they are from God ; if they were not, satan would approve and applaud them ; for he is never divided against himself.

And now, my friends, what do you think of the serpent’s race ? Have not marks enough been produced, whereby you may know whose image and superscription you bear ? You find, this sect of the seed of the woman must be every where spoken against ; and, if there be any here, who have not been spoken against for the sake of Jesus Christ and his righteousness, it is to be feared, you

have the black mark upon you. But, perhaps, there are others here to-night, who are sensible of the plague of their own hearts, and are ready to say, "You have but treated your subject superficially; had we no other serpents to fight with, but those from without, we could easily withstand them all: But, alas! our name is Legion, we have more serpents within than ever filled the Gorgon's shield." Well, my friends, "By what I felt, I know to succour those that labour under woe:" And, if you can excuse me for this time, in another oration, I may, perhaps, come to closer quarters, and describe how it is, that this enmity which has been spoken of, is not only rampant in the serpent's seed, but shows itself in various shapes, even in the hearts of all God's own people; which makes the christian's life to be one continued warfare; insomuch, that we shall find continual need for the whole armour of God, in order to stand against the fury, not only of the serpents in the wilderness of this world, but in the wilderness of that natural part, (that is, in the wilderness of our own hearts) 'which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.'

ORATION VII.



On Gen. iii. 15.—I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed.

IN a former Oration on this subject, though then your time was so much intruded on, yet, so far was my subject from being exhausted, that some of this auditory very justly thought, I only glided over the surface of it; and, instead of piercing through the joints of the harness, and shewing each child of God his twofold composition, namely, that, in every heart, that is born of God, and brought into the world of new creatures, both those two seeds sensibly existed. But, instead of that, my bow was drawn at a venture, and only aimed at the external enmity, which visibly appears in the world, between God's people and the people of the world. But, since you, my candid hearers, have permitted me to resume the subject, as before promised, shall now endeavour to come to closer quarters; and, by the help of the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, try to divide the very joints and marrow.

Now, may it not be taken for granted, that it was sufficiently proved, both from scripture, and the experience of all ages, that those two seeds have existed in the world, ever since the days of Adam, and will exist till time shall be no more? But was this all, the seed of the woman (in which is included, not only Christ, but all the members of his mystical body) would think their warfare very easy indeed. Especially in this land of liberty, where the serpent's head is so bruised, that the laws of the nation restrain it from biting and hurting God's people by outward persecution, as it, in former times, has done; for (thank God) we can each 'sit under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree;' and none dare make us afraid, only a hiss now and then we must expect.

But, my friends, you know that all of us are listed to be soldiers, and have got our names enrolled in the parish-books; and did we not then promise, to fight beneath the crimson flag, when called to the field of battle? Yes; methinks, I hear one say, "I have been inlisted in baptism, and will fight for my religion till I die." Well, it is good to hear people dare be bold for their religion. But, if thou hadst no other inlisting than thou hadst in thy outward baptism, I am

afraid thou wilt basely desert thy colours in the day of battle. For, let me tell you, there is a great difference between a mimic soldier, like one of those in the train-bands, and a real disciplined soldier in a marching regiment. The one, only appears on muster-days, and that without either much order or discipline ; but the other, is obliged to stand all weathers, and to go on whatever expedition he is sent, and face every opposing enemy : He is always accoutred, ever ready to obey command. And just such is the difference, between a nominal and real soldier of Jesus Christ ; between one that calls himself, and one that is called of God, to be a soldier of Christ.

You may see each nominal soldier, on Christ's muster-days, (which are Sundays) appear in his regimentals, armed with a prayer-book and Bible, stuck out perhaps in the front rank. For instance ; there is old father *Quibus*, every Sunday, in the front gallery, in Cripplegate-Church, with his full-bottomed peruke, and large prayer-book, as finely gilt as the shield of Achilles ; and, with a voice, like Stentor at St. Paul's, bawling out aloud, Amen. But, as soon as ever he gets home, you may hear him alarm the whole street, with scolding and quarrelling, about his roast beef and plumb-

pudding. And, were you to take a walk to Half-moon-Street, in the Strand, you might see the notorious Mrs. Ph—ps, the armoury-keeper of Venus, drawn out with her gilded fire-lock, going to muster at Covent-Garden church, every Sunday morning; though all the week long, she is fully employed, in arming soldiers, to fight in the wars of Venus.

But, to come close to the point, and leaving the multitude of mock militia, that might be mentioned, who have only taken hold of the skirt of Jew, and desired to be called by his name, to take away their reproach. Let us now view each soldier that Jesus Christ inlists by his Spirit: he is a soldier indeed; and that from the day he receives his inlisting money, even the manifestation of the forgiveness of his sins, by the Spirit of God witnessing with his spirit, that he is born of God. From that day, he puts on his spiritual armour, and never puts it off again, till the day of his death. If you ask what sort of armour this is, the apostle Paul shall answer for me: His 'loins' are 'girt about with truth,' and he has on 'the breast-plate of righteousness; his feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which

is the word of God.' This is the armour with which every soldier of Jesus Christ is to be accoutred. And do you think all this heavenly panoply has been prepared, in the armoury of God, for no purpose ; or to rust for want of using? No, no, that cannot be.

In my last oration, was described the serpent's race as visible in the world. Now, permit me to treat of these two seeds, that are at implacable enmity, in every individual child of God. The scripture describes them by different names, as well as by the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. Sometimes they are called nature and grace, the old man and the new, the flesh and the spirit, &c. Now, you that think a soldier of Jesus Christ is nothing more but only a mere profession, or outward morality ; pray hear a little of the life of a christian soldier, and then judge whether he has not need enough for all his armour. It is to be hoped there are some at least in this mixt assembly who will understand what is meant, when the believer's warfare is described.

When first the Spirit of God begins to plough up the fallow ground of a sinner's heart, his usual method is to begin as a spirit of bondage. He commonly sets the law before a man, and causes him to see whercin he has offended ; and, as all men

have their constitutional sin, for we have all one particular sin, (though not the same sin) which most easily besets us; even you, who are only acquainted with the language of Ashdod, know this to your sorrow. And, after all your fair promises of amendment, you know it, and God knows it too, you never can overcome that sin. Now the Spirit of God always strikes men home for their constitutional sin, as he did the collector-general of the publicans, I mean Zaccheus. Exaction and oppression were his predominant sins; he had been a covetous, griping creature; and, no sooner did the Spirit arrest him, but the guilt of this sin flew in his face; and immediately he began to disgorge his ill-gotten gain, by crying out, ‘Behold, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and, if I have done any wrong to any man, I will restore him four-fold.’ And before the Spirit has done with men, he makes them cry out, with the trembling gaoler, ‘What must we do to be saved?’

It may be, a man may continue, a long while, under the terrors of God, for a broken law; or, it may be, as soon as ever the sinner has brought in the verdict against himself, the Spirit sets him at liberty. For God is a sovereign, and the wind of his

Spirit blows when and where it listeth ; yet still, conviction goes before conversion, and the Spirit never sets at liberty, till he has pointed out Christ to the Soul ; and, by a text of scripture, appropriated the Saviour to that soul, as ‘ the balm of Gilead,’ and the ‘ Physician there.’ For, if convictions do not come in a text of scripture, and deliverance likewise in a text of scripture, we have reason to think, both our terrors and our comforts may be spurious. For the eternal God, to put an honour upon his word, by it he kills, and by it he makes alive ; by it he wounds, and by it he heals. And, when it has done both these offices in the soul, a man then, is just like a bird escaped out of the snare of the fowler : He that was a little before in darkness, and in the shadow of death, is now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

And do you think, when such an operation as this, has passed upon a man, that our Lord had not great reason to call it, a being born again ? For then ‘ all things become new ;’ a new set of hopes, a new set of fears, a new set of friends, a new set of enemies. And, indeed, a man is just like a new listed soldier : nothing is to be heard or seen, but mirth and joy, so long as his living money lasts. This is the day, when

a man receives the earnest of the promised inheritance; it is the believer's wedding day, the day of his espousals, as the scriptures call it. Yea, it is the day in which the angels tune their golden harps, and rejoice in heaven, at the conversion of a sinner. 'This is the day that God's people are 'made willing' in, even 'the day of his great power.' This is called the first love, when the new-born soul, like Icarus, mounts upon his borrowed plumes, and never thinks, if he soar too high, the sun will melt his wings. But these marriage transports, seldom continue for many days; though we are ready then to say, Our hill is so strong, we shall never be moved. And the serpent seed, (it may be) is so still within us, that we think we never shall hear it hiss any more. Yet, when brought down from the mount, we may be compared to Joseph's brethren, who went to buy corn in Egypt; but when they came to the inn, they found all their money restored in their sacks. Just so the poor believer, when Christ first sheds abroad his love in his heart, he really gives up all for Christ; the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;' which are the serpent's brood; and thinks, in these days of gladness, he shall never find them in him any more. But, alas! when he comes

to the inn, that is, to be conversant in the world again, he finds all his money returned in his sack's mouth; he finds those vipers, which he thought were all dead, begin to revive again; this made the apostle cry out, 'Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' It was so terrible to him, that he describes it by a metaphor, borrowed from a Roman custom, of binding a living man to a dead carcase, which is, of all others, the most nauseous death. This made good Dr. Goodwin glad, when he was told he should die; "Then, says he, I shall be delivered from these croaking, crawling toads, my lusts."

But there is a reason why these trials should come from the serpent's seed: For, if all our time was a time of peace, we should never know the use of our spiritual armour: But, when we are hardly put to it, and find we can scarcely stand it out in the evil day; for what with temptations from a corrupt heart within, and trials from the world without, we may be ready to give up all for lost, like David, though anointed king; yet, when a death came upon the promise, says he, 'I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.' So, perhaps, the poor weather-beaten soldier of Jesus Christ may often say: O this deceitful heart of mine! I am ten times worse

than I was before I knew the Lord. I have no might to withstand this great multitude, And, it may be, satan, at the same time, may be permitted to inject his fiery darts, blasphemous thoughts, even horrible to think on. But, when the soul begins to stir itself, and is enabled to draw out the sword of the Spirit, which sets home a text of scripture, with power, to his heart, and, by the shield of faith, repels these fiery darts, he is then enabled to hold out.

In John Bunyan's Holy War, you may see, at large, this combat between the two seeds, under the characters of Mansolians and Diabolonians, described in a most experimental and masterly manner. And, whoever considers the life of a christian, will see the necessity for these two seeds: For, when the natural Israel took possession of Canaan, the Canaanites were drove out only by little and little. And why? To prove the Israelites. So, in a spiritual sense, if these vipers, 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,' were quite taken away in conversion, there would be no need at all for spiritual armour. We should then never hear God's people cry out of carnality; and that there was a law in their members, 'warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into subjection to the law of

sin' and death. Indeed, my friends, whether you know it or not, these two seeds, in the real christian, are struggling like Jacob and Esau in the womb of Rebecca: or are at continual war, like the house of David and the house of Saul. If there was no tinder within, the sparks of outward temptation could never set us on a blaze.

But what shall I say to you, my friends, who are yet employed in the brick-kilns of Egypt, and have never yet been led through the red sea of the Redeemer's blood? What I have been saying, must sound very strange in your ears. The strong man armed keeps possession of your houses, and your goods are at peace: you are not plagued like other men. If you are what the world calls moral, honest men, and do nobody any harm; the serpent and his seed will fawn upon you; for the world loves its own, and will build you up in your formality, and tell you to keep your box of ointment, or sell it, and give it to the poor, and not waste it on the Redeemer's head. O there are more spiritual serpents in the world, than there are natural ones in Afric's burning sands. And many there are with such beautiful scales, that one would hardly think such beauty, such seeming innocence, had any poison in them at all.

The devil can, with Proteus, assume a thousand shapes, and sometimes, the form of an angel of light; and, 'if it were possible, would deceive the very elect.' And, sometimes the holy seed, in the believer's heart, is but 'like a grain of mustard seed;' nay, like a spark of fire in the midst of the ocean; and so overwhelmed with boisterous waves, that it is just extinct, the bruised reed almost quite broke, and the smoking flax just quenched.

Well, now, by this time, I hope, some can from experience say, I have, though with much incoherency, given some description of these two seeds, which are always at enmity with the believing soul. But here is the believing christian's comfort, amidst all these fiery serpents; in this waste, howling wilderness, he has got a brazen serpent to look to, as often as he is bit, which will expel the poison; and, when the dark night of death shall end this good fight of faith, he shall be brought off more than conqueror. And then he shall be crowned, not with the fading laurel, the reward of Olympian conquerors, but 'with an incorruptible crown that fadeth not away.' Then he shall be brought into that happy land where 'the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick: where the sucking child shall play on the

hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice-den, and they shall neither hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain.'

ORATION VIII.

God is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.

THERE is, perhaps, no subject that has employed so many pens, or has caused greater strife in the christian world than the various methods which have been invented to reconcile the two jarring attributes of the great God, namely, justice and mercy. I doubt not but great and good men have essentially differed upon this subject. I would hope, at least, what I have to offer in vindication of my own principles, though founded upon that ungentle and unfashionable book the BIBLE, will give no offence, neither to the Jew, nor the Gentile, nor to any of the church of God who may be in this mixt assembly.

Now, as there is no method for man's instruction, but what he receives through the

mêdium of his senses; therefore, the great God has condescended, to convey spiritual knowledge, by sensible objects. By man's rightly comprehending the true acceptation of these sensible objects, he is led to the knowledge of divine and spiritual things. For instance; in these two attributes of Jehovah, justice and mercy. By rightly understanding, what they mean among men, we are led to see what we are to think of them as applicable to God.

And we find, with regard to human government, it would be in vain for states and kingdoms, to enact laws, unless (to give a sanction to them) certain fines, punishments, or death itself were annexed to be inflicted upon the violators of those laws. And hence it is, that malefactors are said to suffer, by the hand of justice: or that justice may be satisfied in order to render the law sacred. And therefore, kings or chief magistrates have that emblem of justice, a sword borne before them, to shew that they are the executioners of those punishments, appointed as the guardians of the different laws which are under their inspection. But, wherever a law is broken, and the offender released from the punishment, by the lenity of the magistrate, this is called mercy. But, as in the original institution of the law, if there

is this proviso made, that the king or magistrate, is invested with a power, either to punish or pardon: (if so) whether he punish or remit, the law is properly defended, and justice is equally satisfied. But pardoning, with regard to the offender, is stiled an act of mercy.

That there is this proviso made, in the enacting of every law, is plain; because, oft-times you shall find, several persons condemned for one and the same crime, as in the late rebellion. For by a power invested in the king, he might either pardon or execute; and accordingly he did pardon some and execute others. Those who were pardoned, were obliged to confess that free grace and mercy saved them, and that without the least merit in themselves, and those, who were executed, could not but own that they died by the hands of justice. So that no one can say, that justice was not satisfied, as well as mercy shewn, even to those who were saved: because the law itself, in its fundamental institution, allowed the king this privilege, without being violated.

But now let us inquire into the nature of the divine laws, and see, how these two jarring attributes are made to harmonize, in the divine economy of pardoning sin. For, whether we are under a written law as

delivered by God to his servant Moses; or with those who deny divine revelation, we set up for Moses's to ourselves, and follow the dim light of benighted reason; yet, each individual is conscious, that he is a responsible creature. But those who deny divine revelation, have invented a new method, to reconcile justice and mercy in the divine being, contrary to all reason and common sense; nay, contrary to the method of any country or nation in the world, with regard to the maxims of human government: For, they suppose, that God puts their good deeds in one scale, and their bad ones in the other scale, and rewards and punishes according to that which is most ponderous. But as this is a method that can never be reconciled to common sense, or the custom of any nation under heaven, which always punish men for present crimes, without any regard to their past or future good conduct: I shall therefore wave this, and leave the deist to his own enthusiastic notions, to try himself before that tribunal, which will never be erected any where else but in his own brain.

Let us now come to the touchstone of truth, even divine revelation, and see, if we can ascertain the method, which God himself has appointed, to reconcile these two

jarring attributes, namely, justice and mercy. For to suppose, a God all made up of mercy, would be to suppose (what Dr. Young calls) a God unjust; and to suppose a God of extreme justice, would be to suppose, he must unavoidably condemn every human creature. For, as the Psalmist says, ‘If thou art extreme, to mark what is done amiss, who may abide it? but there is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared.’

And, as with regard to human laws, a right is invested in the king, to pardon without the violation of justice. So, when the great God commenced lawgiver, he reserved his right of pardoning without the violation of his justice; for he says, ‘As many as I reserve I pardon.’ And the very subjects of this pardon being mentioned, implies that God reserved to himself the right of pardoning them. For he prefaces the moral law, with this strange proclamation of himself: ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin: [And that will by no means clear the guilty.] Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.’

Now is not this a strange proclamation? Here is mercy to be extended to thousands, and justice to be executed on others, even to the utmost rigour and extent. And here you see, those who were to be the subjects of this overflowing ocean of mercy, are no better in themselves, than the subjects of vindictive justice. Better, said I, nay, three times worse; for, those who were by no means to be cleared, are only charged with iniquity; and those for whom mercy is reserved, are to be forgiven, both iniquity, transgression, and sin, which takes in all sorts of wickedness.

Now would not this make one cry out with the Psalmist, ‘How unsearchable are thy judgments, and thy ways past finding out!’ And, unless God himself had cut this gordian knot, should we not have been like the house of Israel of old, ready to cry out, ‘Are not the ways of the Lord unequal?’ It is for this, and this only, the great and eternal God has been pleased to make a revelation to the world, on purpose to display the harmony of his jarring attributes, and to shew the world his terms of mercy; though at the same time most strict justice is executed. Thus, as the scripture says, ‘God is just, and yet justifieth the ungodly.’

This is that grand mystery of godliness, which has been hid from ages and generations. And although, in that first display, that God made of his reconciliation, to a ruined world, there appeared the completest harmony, both of justice and mercy, as conveyed in these words; ‘The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head, and it shall bruise his heel.’ Yet, the vulture-eyed world, in no age, since the days of Adam, could ever discover this, either by reason, or the nature and fitness of things; but have always pictured to themselves a God, all made up of mercy, to the utter destruction of his justice. And, though the great God has never varied from his original plan, in pardoning a guilty world, by a complete harmony of justice and mercy; yet, who of all the guilty race of Adam ever saw this, till brought out of the dungeon of nature’s prison, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God?

And yet, when we see, that intolerable yoke of the ceremonial law, composed of offerings and costly sacrifices; and, that without blood, there was no remission of sin; does not this point at the justice of God; and that God would accept of a substituted victim in the sinner’s stead? Was it not a sufficient display of mercy? But, were we to

stop here, and look no farther than the blood of bulls and of goats, we might have strange conceptions of the justice of God. Yet surely we cannot but think, the great God was jealous to secure the honour of his justice, when we see through all these types and shadows to the real substance: even to a God in Christ, purchasing the church with his blood.

For no other ransom could be taken, but the precious blood of an incarnate God; as we find by that commission given to vindictive justice, by the great Jehovah, ‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and smite the man that is my fellow.’ And however little we may think, of preserving the honour of God’s justice in pardoning sin, yet it made even Omnipotence himself to tremble, when ‘the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all.’ Yea, it brought the Lord of glory to the silent grave; and, even exacted the utmost demands of vindictive justice before the sealed tomb, would open* its ponderous and marble jaws, to set the royal Prisoner free.

Had you but seen Innocence himself, sweating great drops of blood in Gethsemane’s garden, and arraigned before a Roman

* Hamlet.

Pilate's bar; and after that derided, spit upon, and then hung upon a cross between two thieves, by four great nails drove through his hands and feet: Would you not have asked, Why all this barbarity, on one, whom his very judge acquitted, on one, who did no violence; neither was guile found in his mouth? If you had asked this, the answer would have been, that justice might be satisfied, in punishing the bondsman, that the delinquents might go free; it was, that 'mercy and truth might meet together, righteousness' on God's part, 'and peace' on man's, 'might kiss each other.'

But it may be asked, how could this be mercy, if justice had its full demands on the Son of God? Indeed, it must be owned, that no mercy, either from God or man, was shewn to Jesus Christ, but the utmost rigour of vindictive wrath; for, he was wounded in the day of God's fierce wrath: 'He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair.' But, when men are made partakers of the purchased redemption, that is, in Jesus; surely, with regard to individuals, it must be stiled mercy, as Christ is stiled, 'the sure mercies of David.'

Let me ask, now, if any of you were slaves in Algiers, and a particular price was demanded, for your ransom, would you not

say, it was a great act of mercy, in the person, who paid the ransom, and set you, a wretched captive, free? Surely, you would say, it was an act, of the greatest mercy.

This, and much more, did the Son of God do; for, even when men were enemies to him, Christ died for the ungodly; insomuch, that a just God could not but declare, that as for thee, 'by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit in which there was no water.'

And, though God is said, not only to be faithful, but just also, in forgiving sins; yet, as flowing to us, through the channel of the Redeemer's blood, what other name would you give it but mercy? But, that we are pardoned at all, is, only in consequence of that union, there is between us and Jesus Christ; for, all the ties of blood and consanguinity, fail to describe, that union, there is, between Christ and his church; nay, all the endearing names of father, brother, husband, friend, must greatly fail, to figure out the affinity, and consanguinity too, that there is between Christ and his church.

That, of his being stiled the head, and his people the members; he the vine, and they the branches, are the most significant metaphors, that can resemble that union

there is between him and his people. When he was born, the whole church was born in him; as the prophet says; ‘A nation shall be born in a day.’ And Luther, alluding to this, says of himself, “the virgin mother
“was my mother, and Bethlehem the place
“of my nativity.” The scripture is quite clear in this, that Christ was the head-representative of all his people; as they were born in him, so his life was their life; his death was their death; for, says the apostle, We are buried with him, and raised with him, and seated with him, in heavenly places; and when he, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory.

Thus, you see, the demands of the law, both for obedience and suffering, were fulfilled by him, and his people considered in him. This, David was very sensible of, when he said, ‘They pierced my hands and my feet, they gave me vinegar to drink.’

This then being the case, we can easily see, how it is consistent with justice and mercy, for Christ, without any regard to what they are in themselves, to snatch one here, and another there, like brands out of the burning; for surely, it can be no dishonesty in him, to single out his sheep from the world’s fold, wherever he finds them

that bear his mark. And, though he purchased his people, by paying the utmost farthing; yet by a mere act of mercy, he is said to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him, as the reward of his sufferings; and, of all that the Father has given him, he has lost none, but will present them before the eyes of his glory, 'without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.'

Nay, so careful is he of them, that he declares, 'he that touches them, touches the apple of his eye.' For, when Saul was persecuting his poor distressed people, 'Saul, Saul,' says he, 'why persecutest thou me?' And you will hear him declare at the last day, that what was done for the least of his brethren, was done for himself. And, lest the vulture-eyed world should find out a flaw in the divine oeconomy, in the choice of his people; hear how he acquits himself of any malevolent aspersions: 'I have espoused thee in righteousness, in loving-kindness, and in tender mercies; yea, I have espoused thee in faithfulness:' which proves, that God, upon his own principles, in pardoning sin, had a jealous eye over the harmony of all his attributes; that, without the least jar or discord, 'mercy and truth might meet together; righteousness and peace might kiss each other.'

Thus have I endeavoured to shew, upon what principles we, that are stiled the world's fools, give 'a reason for the hope that is in us.' We are very far from aggrandizing one of God's attributes, to the destruction of another; and though 'great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, purchasing the church with his blood,' that, as Dr. Young says of the amazing work of man's redemption :

“ ——'Twas creation more sublime ;

“ ——'Twas the labour of the skies ;

“ Far more than labour—it was death in heaven.

“ A truth so strange ! 'twere bold to think it true ;

“ If not far bolder still, to disbelieve*.”

Yet, as 'by the offence of one, many were made sinners; so, by the obedience of one,' it was not only just but reasonable too, 'that many should be made righteous.' And, there is not one privilege or blessing, which was forfeited by our relation to the first Adam, but is doubly secured by the obedience and death of the second Adam, to all who believe in him. Did the first Adam dishonour the law of God, by breaking it? The second Adam obeyed the law, in man's stead, and made it honourable. Did justice demand satisfaction, to repair its

* Night Thoughts.

injured honour? Such an ample satisfaction, is made by the eternal Son of God becoming a sacrifice for sin; when ‘the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all,’ that aggrandized it more, than if the whole human race had been eternally punished in the nethermost hell. And the great God can now, with the strictest justice, say of each of the redeemed throng, Let this, and that man go; for I have found a ransom: And each of them will gladly sing the triumphs of victorious grace; and the greatest strife in heaven will be, not, who has done most to purchase heaven; but, who has been the greatest object of pardoning love and distinguishing mercy.

And now, my friends, may we not well cry out in astonishment, with the author just quoted?

“ O what a scale of miracles is here !

“ Survey the wondrous cure :

“ And at each step, let higher wonders rise !

“ Pardon for infinite offence ! and pardon

“ Thro’ means, that speaks its value infinite !

“ A pardon bought with blood ! with blood divine !

“ With blood divine of him, I made my foe !

“ Persisted to provoke ! tho’ woo’d and aw’d,

“ Blest and chastized, a flagrant rebel still !

“ A rebel, ’midst the thunders of his throne !

“ Not I alone ! a rebel universe !

“ Yet, for the foulest of the foul, he dies.”

ORATION IX.



On Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion.

WE are told by the word of eternal truth, and the experience of God's people in every age, has proved it a matter of fact, that 'no scripture is of private interpretation, but is profitable, for example, for doctrine, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness.' And, even the historical parts of scripture, which exhibit to our view a promiscuous throng of virtuous and vicious characters, are particularly recorded for our example, 'upon whom, the ends of the world are come.'

Had the sacred oracles of God, been only made up with precepts and instructions, enforced with the sanctions of rewards and punishments, without exhibiting the lives and characters of a variety of persons; that some, whose glorious examples should shine, 'like apples of gold set in pictures of silver,' not only for the admiration, but imitation of succeeding ages: While others, whose infamous practices, have justly rendered them, not only the subjects of divine vengeance, but,

dreadful examples to future ages, that men might be taught carefully to avoid their crimes, as they would willingly avoid their punishments. Had (I say) historical transactions been excluded from the oracles of God, we should have been left to travel in an unbeaten path; and, for want of seeing the footsteps of those that have gone before us, we should, either sink down with despair, when under the afflicting hand of God; or, with peevish Jonah, think, we had good reason to be angry, even with the eternal God himself, if his providences did but seem to cross hands with his promises.

But, besides all this, nothing is so great a proof of God's moral government of the world, as his providential dealings with particular persons. Who can doubt but the great God holds the reins of universal government in his own hands, when we see all the wisdom, policy, and contrivance of men, not only baffled and defeated, but oftentimes so over-ruled, as to bring about the determinate counsel of his own eternal mind? That the extraordinary person, whose conversion is the subject of this Oration, is not only a proof of God's moral government in the world, but also, that God has a peculiar people in every nation and language, whom he has before determined, shall come

to the knowledge of himself; and by some means or other, shall be made 'a willing people, in the day of his great power:' And, that the means by which they are made willing is, in the most harmonious manner, calculated to bring about the determined end, without at all infringing upon the free agency of man.

Whoever reads, with any attention, that part of the sacred writings, in the time of Hezekiah king of Judah, and compares it with what afterwards happened in the time of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, may easily discover, the first dawning of divine love began to appear towards some of the Babylonish nation at that time, when Hezekiah was recovered from the plague, of which he had been sick unto death. For, to assure Hezekiah of his recovery, God caused the shadow of the sun to go backward ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz; a phenomenon so strange, that the Chaldeans, who were at that time the most famous astronomers in the world, could by no means account for this retrogradation of the sun, by any of the then known maxims of astronomy. But it seems, though they were at so great a distance from Judea, yet they were told, that the wonder was wrought upon the account of the king of Judah; and so

desirous were the princes of Babylon after astronomical knowledge, that Berodach Baladan, the predecessor of Nebuchadnezzar, sent ambassadors, and a present to the king of Judah, to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land.

But though Hezekiah, like the rest of the world, when under the afflicting hand of God, had mourned, lamented, and chattered like a crane, that his life might be spared; yet, no sooner was he recovered, but all his fine speeches and fair promises, which he had made in his own strength, were quite forgotten. For now God put it in the power of Hezekiah, to declare his name to an idolatrous people. But who that hears this plea that Hezekiah makes with God for the recovery of his health, 'Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight,' but must be astonished at his after conduct? Who, that hears a weeping king putting God in mind of his upright heart, could ever have imagined, that when the Chaldean ambassadors came to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, but that Hezekiah (who knew they were idolators) should have taken this fair opportunity to have preached unto them the power and wisdom

of the God of Israel? and who would have thought but he would have shewed them, that the sun, which they ignorantly worshipped, was but a creature, of an inanimate nature, and entirely under the direction of the God of Israel? But behold, instead of this, he never once mentions the phænomenon, to aggrandize the glory of Israel's God; but began to entertain those strangers with a sight of his treasure and riches, and the splendor of his kingdom, to spread his own fame at the far Chaldean court. A dreadful lesson this, to pull down the self-righteousness and self-sufficiency of fallen man.

Hezekiah had pleaded his perfect heart before God in his sickness; and, now, God takes an opportunity, to let him see, what a mighty perfect heart he had, when left to himself. For, we are told, that in the business of the princes of Babylon, 'the Lord left Hezekiah, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart;' and a dreadful ALL it was; pride, vain-glory, self-sufficiency, and the love of the world, which is idolatry in the sight of God. And, let me observe by the way, whoever you are, who belong to God, and are not sufficiently acquainted with your own hearts, and their vile deceitfulness; you shall as surely be permitted to fall into some terrible

God-dishonouring sin, as ever Hezekiah was. But to what end? that God may eternally punish you for it? No; but that you may see, all that is in your hearts, and never trust them any more; so that your names may be cancelled out of the list of Solomon's fools.

But, no sooner, were the Chaldean ambassadors returned, than the prophet Isaiah is sent to Hezekiah, to let him see what an inconsistent part he had acted; and to acquaint him, that though he had neglected to declare the glory of God to those strangers, nevertheless, as God had a work to be done at Babylon; says the prophet, 'Thy children shall be carried to Babylon, and they shall be Eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon'. What for? Why, that they should have the honour to be instruments in the hand of God, to bring many, and even the king himself to the knowledge of God.

And accordingly you find, when Jerusalem was conquered by the king of Babylon in the days of Zedekiah, that the King was taken in the plains of Jericho, and his children slain before their father's face, by the command of Nebuchadnezzar. Yet he had given orders to take of the king's seed, and of the princes, in order to educate them in his own palace: But little did he

think he was only fulfilling what God had decreed; even that Daniel, who was of the blood royal of Judah, should afterwards be the instrument in the hand of God, to bring the king himself to worship that God, whose city and temple he had a few years before destroyed. It was about four years after this great monarch had destroyed Jerusalem, and distributed the captive Jews into the several provinces of Babylon, when the great God first began to work upon his stubborn heart.

Now it is very remarkable, that kingdoms and nations nearly resemble the human species; they have their infancy, they have their youth, and they have their old age: and as soon as ever they have reached the summit of their grandeur, they gradually decline and never rise any more. And it is further remarkable, that in every age of the world, there was some particular nation, that either grasped at, or was actually possessed of universal empire; and one nation has commonly rose out of the ruins of another.

Before the Babylonian empire arrived to the summit of its grandeur, the Assyrian had been the all-conquering monarch, and was by way of eminence stiled the great king, the king of Assyria. But now the scene was

changed, and the reins of universal empire were held by the proud, vain glorious Babylonian monarch, whose unruly will was his law, upon whose smiles or frowns, the lives of all his subjects depended.

But, we find, amidst all his pride and splendor, (which too often rob men of thought and reflection) the impertinence of thinking, would intrude upon his retired moments. Indeed he had now arrived at the utmost height of his ambition; for Isaiah justly calls him a ravenous bird, who had flown from nation to nation, and glutted his voracious maw with the blood of kings, and enriched his treasury with the costly spoils of ruined kingdoms. And there was not a nation, in all the wide extended bounds of Asia, but what he had either conquered, or was in alliance with. As for the Medes, he had let them alone, because Astyages was his father-in-law: and, as to the Persians, he had not interrupted them, because Cambyses was his brother-in-law.

But amidst all this blaze of prosperity and success, though his fawning subjects had addressed him with this flattering compliment, 'O king, live for ever;' yet there was a busy something within, that would read him a lecture of mortality; and he could not help thinking of what should be after him. We

may suppose he was now beginning to study means how to secure the Babylonish crown to his posterity, throughout all generations: such is the posthumous vanity of short-lived man.

But, now was the time, for the great God to interpose, and strike a damp upon his towering imaginations. For, whenever God begins a work, upon any human heart, he always begins by humbling that heart. So here, no sooner were Nebuchadnezzar's eyes closed in sleep, but a huge image was represented to his imagination, 'whose form was terrible.' Thus you see, though for the generality, dreams are only phantoms of the imagination; yet, sometimes they convey divine instructions; as Job says, 'Thou frightest me with dreams, and scarest me with visions.' And to shew what an absolute government the great God has over the minds of men, we find when the king awoke, though the horror of the dream remained, yet what the dream was he had quite forgot; though he was sure he could recollect it, if it was once told to him.

Now God had three important ends to answer, in causing the king to forget his dream. The first was, that he should not be imposed upon by a parcel of canting, fawning sycophants, who vainly pretend to

interpret dreams; and if the king could have but told them what the dream was, some plausible interpretation would have been put upon it, in order to feed the king's vanity, and make him ten times more insolent than he was before: but by his forgetting it, this was prevented.

The second thing was, That Daniel, who was ordained to be the instrument in the hand of God, to bring about the king's conversion, might be introduced to his presence.

And, the third thing was, To mortify the king's pride, when he was informed how little power he had to secure the throne to his posterity; and how many different nations were alternately to possess that very power he so much boasted of.

Now it is worth while to examine, what great things were shewn to the king by this dream. We are informed, he saw, 'an image whose head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron, and part of clay.' He likewise 'saw a stone cut without hands, which smote the image upon his feet, and break them to pieces.' By this dream, Nebuchadnezzar was let to see the four great empires, which were to

succeed each other, from that time, till the establishment of christianity.

By the head of fine gold, was meant Nebuchadnezzar himself, the head of the Chaldean monarchy: For, he was not only called a king, but a great king, even a king of kings; and was beautifully described by the head of fine gold. By the breast and arms of silver was described the Persian empire, which immediately succeeded the Chaldean, when Cyrus turned the course of the river Euphrates and stormed the city of Babylon on that very night, when Belshazzar, the son of this Nebuchadnezzar, was drinking himself drunk with all his nobles, and praising the gods of gold and silver.

The belly and thighs were of brass; this figured out the Grecian monarchy, which was less splendid than the two former; but, as Daniel said, it was to bear rule over all the earth: And this prophecy was fulfilled in Alexander the Great, who overcoming Darius, put an end to the kingdom of Persia, by erecting the Macedonian upon its ruins.

The legs of iron, the feet part of iron and part of clay, represented the Roman empire, which succeeded the Grecian, and was composed of many different nations; the kings of which, being of contrary interests, might

well be compared to iron and clay ; for as iron and clay will not incorporate, but divide from each other ; so those different nations, of which this empire was composed, could never agree long, but would always be rebelling in one part or other, and be perpetually torn by civil wars, as it afterwards happened, in the times of many of the Roman emperors.

But, in the days of those kings, who should reign in this last monarchy, was the Lord himself, to set up a kingdom, called the kingdom of the Stone, which should break in pieces all other kingdoms, and smite the image upon its feet, even the Roman empire. This was the Redeemer's kingdom, which is compared to a stone cut without hands, but was to grow to a great mountain, and fill all the earth.

That Christ is called a stone in scripture is plain, even ' a tried stone, a chief corner-stone, elect and precious.' And that he may be said to be cut out without hands, exactly describes him ; for there was ' no form nor comeliness in him ;' he was like ' a root out of a dry ground,' even like a stone that had never been hewn or polished by the statuary's art. And yet, as unpolished as he was, he was to break in pieces all other

kingdoms, and ‘grow to a great mountain, and fill all the earth.’

Now we cannot think there ever will be a time when all the earth will profess christianity at once; for consider in another place Christ is stiled the Sun of righteousness, that arose upon a benighted world with healing in his wings. Well now, only observe the natural sun, it does not enlighten the whole earth at once. No; but in the morning it arises in the east, and makes its progress towards the west, and gradually leaves the east in darkness, and in twenty-four hours describes its circle; and just so has the Sun of righteousness done. First, he enlightened the east, even Asia, and gradually proceeded west to Europe: And now he has got into the new-found western world, even America; and in the space of the gospel-day, there will not be a nation, but what will alternately have the light of the gospel shine upon it; but then it is only for a time. For has not Egyptian darkness again overspread all those eastern parts, where the primitive churches were planted? And though the name and form remains, as we come farther west towards Italy, Spain, and all those kingdoms, yet it is almost evening with them; they have lost sight of the Sun, and, it is to

be feared, will at last degenerate into a total darkness, and be worse than they were before the Sun of righteousness first arose upon them.

In this sense I at least understand what is meant by this mountain filling all the earth; and will not the scripture bear me out in this opinion? For our Lord himself tells the people, that the light of the gospel will not always shine: Therefore, says he, 'work while ye have the light, for the night cometh when no man can work.' And again, 'If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.' Nevertheless, be that as it will, Nebuchadnezzar by this dream was shewn the different nations, which were alternately to rule over the world; and also the kingdom of Christ, which the Lord himself was to erect. But what was the effect those great manifestations had upon his heart? Only this, to own that Daniel's God was a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets. And because God had shewed him this, (though not much to his interest) he promoted Daniel to be a ruler over his provinces; yet his heart remained as hard as the nether millstone.

But, to do justice to this subject, and trace step by step the several providential dealings of God with this great king, in order to bring him to know himself, I shall reserve the remaining part of his life, which is very extraordinary, for the subject of another oration, and conclude with only one observation, namely, that it behoves every one to bring his own experience of God's dealings with him to the touchstone of truth, even 'to the law and to the testimony;' and see, whether all his knowledge of gospel-truths have reached any further than only to enlighten the head, and not better his heart.

For, if sanctifying grace does not accompany enlightning grace, and we have not yet broke off our sins by repentance, we are still under the dominion of sin. Even a Balaam could see the star that was to come out of Jacob, but not for himself; and an abandoned Ahaz had the clearest prophecy of the Redeemer's birth declared to him, even that a virgin should conceive and bear a Son; and yet we have no reason to believe, that either of those two were benefitted by him; and if God had stopped short in his dealings with Nebuchadnezzar after this dream, though he owned the God of Israel, and honoured his servants, yet he would have

been left just as God found him. And it is to be feared, many own God, and honour his servants, and help (as it were) to build the ark, and will at last perish out of it.

ORATION X.

The second part of Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion.

A FORMER Oration on this subject was begun with taking notice of the great advantages which succeeding ages reap from historical facts, being recorded in the sacred oracles of God; one more advantage may be added to what was then mentioned.

When we read of the various displays of the mercy and forbearance of God, towards the ignorant, and those that are out of the way, how he sometimes follows the most abandoned wretches with one providence after another; sometimes by mild and gentle dispensations, sometimes by the rod of affliction, and the sharpest strokes of correction. What an advantageous lesson does posterity learn from God's thus providentially dealing with the children of men? Does

it not teach us to judge charitably, even with regard to men of the most profligate characters? when we see, that the hearts of all men are in the hand of God; and we often see the rugged, the proud, the cruel, and abandoned wretches, that, one would think, had damnation written on their very foreheads, snatched out of the midst of the burning, and made heirs of eternal life, as often as we see those of a mild, gentle and benevolent disposition brought to the knowledge of God, yea and oftener too.

Did not our Lord cast seven devils out of a prostitute Magdalene, when the young lawyer, with all his fine accomplishments and graceful carriage was sent away sorrowful? This is to teach us, that the great God does not see with our eyes. Who could have thought that Manasseh, that abandoned king of Judah, (who made innocent blood run like water in the streets of Jerusalem) had ever been designed by the eternal God as a monument of mercy? And yet you may see, that God gave even him repentance unto life. And who, that observes this monster of pride and cruelty, the king of Babylon, could ever have thought that God had fixed his love upon him; and was resolved, (though by a long series of providences) to bring him at last to the knowledge of himself?

Now it is to be observed, that whenever God begins to work upon any heart, he always strikes at a man's constitutional sin, in order to make that fly in his face. Pride, the sanguine mother of cruelty, was this great monarch's constitutional sin; and what various methods does God take to convince him of this?

In my former Oration on this subject, the image he saw in this dream was discoursed at large. And what was the main end of this, but to convince him of pride? But, instead of becoming humbler by this, he began to be ten times worse. For not being content with lording it over men's persons and properties, he now begins to lord it over their consciences too; and assumes a right to consecrate gods for his people's worship. And accordingly you find he erects an image of gold in the vale of Dura of an enormous size, which possibly was made out of some of the vessels brought from the temple at Jerusalem; and, as some historians tell us, it was made to resemble himself; and adorned with all the emblems of majesty, such as himself was wont to wear; and this was to be the object of the Babylonish worship.

How naturally is one sin the parent of another? for no sooner was the king told that some of the captive Jews refused paying

their adoration, but he immediately proceeds not only to deify himself, but even to make himself the most high God; 'For,' says he, 'what God is he that shall deliver you out of my hand?' implying that no God had greater power than himself. And so overcharged with rage was he, that his very visage was changed, and he sat by to see Daniel's three friends cast into the fiery furnace, heated seven times more hot than usual, insomuch that their executioners were burned to death.

As the king sat facing the furnace, and no sooner were they well in, but upon casting his ravenous eyes around, instead of seeing them consumed to ashes, he starts from his seat with wild amaze, and cries out, 'Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? and lo, I see four men walking loose in the midst of the fire, and have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.' A sight so strange and so unexpected as this, was enough (one would think) to harrow up his soul, freeze his hot blood*, and make each hair on his combined locks to start, and stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine! But, instead of this, he immediately recovers his surprise, and

* Hamlet.

with an air as composed as if nothing had been the matter, he approaches the mouth of the furnace, and calls Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth.

Now one would have thought such a sight as this should immediately have wrought a saving change in his heart ; but nothing will do, till God sets his eternal fiat to it, and strikes light into his dark soul. However, it had this effect upon him, to make him bless the God of Shadrach, and to make a decree that none should speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, &c. For, I suppose, before this, the God of Israel was treated with the utmost contempt and obloquy in all his dominions ; but yet you find he did not think Jehovah an object worthy of his own, or his people's worship.

Now who that reads this amazing transaction in the fiery furnace, can help being astonished at the long-suffering and condescension of God ? for he even vouchsafed to let this abandoned monarch see with his natural eyes that very person, who, in after ages, should redeem a lost world from the fire of hell, as certainly as he now saved these three men from the fire of this furnace. And it is my opinion, that so great was the resemblance between Jesus of Nazareth,

and this Son of God that Nebuchadnezzar saw, that had he been living in the days of the Messiah, he would have said, if he had seen Jesus Christ, that is the very person I saw in the fiery furnace.

But that ever this king should know that God had a Son, or that the form he saw was the form of the Son of God, is wonderful. Surely, when he thus cried out, he was under a divine impulse, it was that moment darted into his mind that God had a Son, and that this was the very person he saw. Just so Paul, when he was struck down in his way to Damascus, and asked by a voice, 'Why persecutest thou me?' His answer was, 'Who art thou, Lord?' Now it might have been some evil spirit that asked Paul this; but Paul, by an immediate impulse on his mind, knew it was the Lord. And such, I take it, was the case with this king. Yet all this did not change the savageness of his disposition. For, some time after this, Daniel advised him 'to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquity by shewing mercy to the poor.'

But as all those great things which God had done in manifesting his power hitherto proved ineffectual, he is resolved to take another method, and will now strike him home in the sensible part. And to render

him without excuse, he has fair notice given him of what God intended to do with him. He had represented unto him in a vision of the night a huge tree, which reached to heaven, and afforded food and shelter for all the fowls of the air and beasts of the field; he saw this beautiful tree hewed down and stripped of all its fruit, and lopt of all its branches, and only the stump remained in the earth, with a band of iron and brass. And, upon this being told to the prophet Daniel, we find the prophet was greatly astonished at what God was about to do with so great a monarch; and was for a full hour before he could or durst speak out the interpretation. But when this undaunted king commanded him to forego his sorrow, as if he had said I am confident, let the interpretation be what it will, it shall not in the least discourage me; then Daniel explained his vision.

And the king was as good as his word; for, when told he should be driven from men, and made to eat grass like an ox till seven years were gone over him; and when advised to repent, if so be it might lengthen his tranquillity; yet, astonishing to think on, it did not in the least abate his intolerable pride. For a year after this, we find him taking a survey of his magnificent palace

and beautiful gardens*, which were eight miles in circuit; and to say the truth of them, perhaps there never was so much cost and pains bestowed upon any gardens in the world, either before or after, as was expended on these; for the city being built on a large plain, in the form of a square, twenty leagues in compass, whose walls were eighty feet thick, and three hundred and fifty in height, that this great king might not be bounded in his prospect by the lofty walls, he had his gardens raised like so many terraces, one above another, by arch upon arch, till they overlooked the city wall; and the mould that covered the uppermost arches was so deep as to have room for the loftiest trees to take root in it; and in these gardens were the most elegant walks, green plats, flowers of all kinds, large canals, basons and aqueducts, and all the embellishments and beauties of nature and art.

And when taking a survey of so much cost and labour, instead of saying, with Solomon, that all was vanity, he seems to center all his happiness in the enjoyment of

* This description of Nebuchadnezzar's gardens, is extracted from Ramsey's Travels of Cyrus, who says he found it in Herodotus, who had been upon the spot.

them. With an air of loftiness, he says, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? But it is an old proverb, 'Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.' For when the words were in his mouth, a voice fell from heaven, saying, "O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee
" be it spoken, thy kingdom is departed
" from thee, and they shall drive thee from
" men, and thy dwelling shall be among
" the beasts of the field, and thou shalt eat
" grass like an ox:" And what for? Why, that he might know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of man, and giveth it to whom he will. And immediately his reason departed from him, and the heart of a beast was given him; insomuch that his people saw he had got the very nature of an ox; and they drove him out to graze among his fellow brutes.

Thus did God act towards this mighty monarch. But to what end? To destroy him? No; but to bring him to the knowledge of himself, and to be happy in the enjoyment of his God. For though his hairs grew like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds claws, yet God had still his eye upon him for good, though a more abandoned

wretch for pride, cruelty, and oppression, the world never saw. For he kept a fiery furnace and a lions den for the destruction of his people, whenever he had a mind to glut his savage rage. He was such a monster who seemed to have studied the art of cruelty from his youth. Was there ever a greater act of barbarity, than when he took the king of Judah prisoner in the plains of Jericho, to kill the king's children before their father's face? Well may we cry out in the language of Henry the sixth, in the tragedy of Richard the third :

“ O barbarous act ! unhospitable man !
 “ Against the rigid laws of arms to kill them !
 “ Was 't not enough, their hope of birthright gone,
 “ But must thy hate be levell'd at their lives ?
 “ Nor could a father's wrongs content thee ?
 “ Nor could a father's grief dissuade the deed ?”

And then as soon as the children were dead ; nay, perhaps, while they were yet gasping beneath the ravenous wolve's fell gripe, he caused the father's eyes to be put out, that the last dear fatal objects he saw, might ever after be uppermost in his imagination.

But now behold the savage monster driven from the society and commerce of mankind ; see him crawling on his hands and knees, a fit companion for the grazing

ox. Who that had seen him seated on his radiant throne, with all his shining courtiers circled round, not only dignified with the pompous title of a king, but of a great king, even a king of kings; and now to see him crawling over the verdant meads, and cooling his thirst in famed Euphrates' stream: who, I say, that saw his shagged locks and crooked claws, and heard him lowing amongst his horned messmates, could help crying out, What has God done!

And yet, such was the fate of this proud monarch, and that not only for a few days or weeks, but till seven years had gone over him, unhoused, unsheltered, either from summer's scorching heat, or winter's pinching cold, exposed to all the rigour of the various seasons. And what is most surprising yet, was this; That in all these tedious seven years, his faithful subjects never once swerved from their allegiance, but kept the empty throne to wait its lord's return.

For I suppose many of them had been witnesses to what Daniel said, and waited the expiration of the destined time. And what might still give them hope, we are told, (and by very good authority) that on the Jews Sabbath he had intervals of reason, which must needs force them to see that his

madness was not from a mere natural cause, but from the immediate hand of God. And no sooner was the time expired, but his reason returned, as suddenly as it left him; and it seems the Babylonish nobles were waiting the appointed time. For the king himself tells us, 'At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my honour and brightness returned unto me, and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me, and excellent majesty was added unto me.'

Thus did the great God make good his word unto this king; though the tree was cut down, the stump remained in the earth with a band of iron and brass: And thus the kingdom was sure unto him. But now let us see the consequence of these seven years grazing. You may remember the word of eternal truth had said it; 'That at the end of seven years, or seven times, he should know that the heavens do rule.' Not but that all this might have befallen him, and instead of being purified, he might have come out of the furnace of affliction ten times worse cankered than before. But God had given him this knowledge; his understanding, which had been dark, is now enlightened; not only the heart of a beast is taken away, and the heart of a man restored, but the

heart of stone is taken away also, and a heart of flesh given him.

It is a just observation, that there never was a still-born child brought into the world of grace. If you question it, here is an instance to prove it, given under this king's hand and seal to all nations, people and languages: says he, 'I blessed the most High, and praised and honoured him that liveth for ever.' And that he did not hide God's faithfulness within his heart, nor his truth from the great congregation, but was as exemplary for his piety as he had been for his idolatry; if we can credit the author of the Travels of Cyrus, he tells us, "This king assembled all his nobles in the vale of Dura, and mounted on an eminence, prostrated himself before the most high God, having thrown off his diadem, and concludes his worship with saying, 'O princes and people, learn to render homage to his greatness.'"

He then sends circular letters to all the nations, to tell what God had done to him, and for him. But how does he begin them? Not with thundering out his bloody decrees, but with 'Peace be multiplied unto you.' A sure sign that the God of peace had taken possession of his heart. And before he could tell them what he had got to say, he

breaks forth in this God-revering exclamation: ‘How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion from generation to generation.’ And then he proceeds to declare the different methods God had taken with him, which at last had brought him even to become a worshipper of that very God whom he had so often defied, and whose servants he had so cruelly treated; and then concludes, ‘Now I, king Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol, and honour the king of heaven, all whose works are true; and they who walk in pride he is able to abase.’

And now, my friends, what do you think of the king of Babylon? Can you, or can you not see upon him the marks of a converted person? Could a man ever make this noble confession from a heart sensible of what the tongue declares, and not be touched with renewing grace? Impossible! Did ever such language as this proceed from the mouth of one in the dark dungeon of nature’s night? Surely no. Thus it appears to me, that this great king was a converted person; for if one may judge of a tree by its fruit, surely you will see upon him many of the fruits of the Spirit.

For peace, which is the first fruit, appears in the first word of his letter. And a desire that every body should be as happy as himself in coming to the knowledge of God, which is another of the fruits of the Spirit, is clearly enough seen in him, to prove that the root of the matter was in him. For I will appeal to all the converted people in the world, whether, as soon as God manifested his love to them, they did not want every body to be as happy as themselves. Melancthon, as soon as converted, said he would go out and convert the whole world. And is it not plain that Nebuchadnezzar thought to do so too, by writing to all nations and languages? But as the old devil was too cunning for young Melancthon, so, doubtless, he was for old Nebuchadnezzar likewise. And now let me conclude with this observation : That we should never give up the most abandoned wretch as incurable; for though a person may have been the greatest sinner in the world, the great Physician of souls can as soon cure him who is all over spread with the infectious leprosy of sin, as one that is tainted with but one single spot.

ORATION XI.



These that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also.—Acts xvii. 6.

THIS night, my friends, will this scripture be fulfilled in your ears: for though this title was permitted to be given to the first preaches of the gospel, by a parcel of blaspheming wretches, yet it will remain an undeniable truth, that this title is applicable to every public minister of the gospel, and also to every private christian too, till time shall be no more.

Strange title indeed! Turners of the world upside down! And yet not more strange than true. This you know is a metaphorical, or rather an hyperbolical expression; and is commonly applicable to those who bring about great revolutions and changes in states and kingdoms; insomuch that whole empires have been so entirely overturned, and others erected upon their ruins, so diametrically opposite to each other, both in religion and politics, that it might well be said of such places, that they have been turned upside down.

But this has commonly been effected by superior power and force of arms ; so that such revolutions are not to be wondered at. But that it should be said of the apostles, and first preachers of the gospel, that they were the men that turned the world upside down, is indeed astonishing. This will appear, when in the first place we consider what sort of men they were.

And in the second place, what condition the world was then in amongst whom they were.

And in the third place, the manner in which they actually did turn the world upside down.

And first then let us consider the men themselves. And surely it was as unlikely for them to bring about such an event as might be called turning the world upside down, as it was for a parcel of crooked ram's horns to blow down the stately walls of Jericho. For what were they but a few illiterate fishermen, mean and despicable in themselves ; and the inhabitants of a meaner place, Galileans born ? A place so infamous as to be a proverb of reproach to the whole nation. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? And yet from this despised place (without the advantage of a polite education, or the aid of human literature, or the least

skill in the manner of address, whose very employment had rendered them obscure and contemptible) did the men come, who actually turned the world upside down.

But, thus it has always pleased the great God, to throw contempt upon all the learning and wisdom of men, in order to confound the wisdom of the wise, that the excellency of the power might appear (to all that had eyes to see) not to be of man, but of God. Yet, it may be objected, that there was one of the first preachers of the gospel, namely, the apostle Paul, of whom this was first said, who neither wanted wisdom, learning, nor address. This we will allow; but let any one examine that great man's life, and he will plainly see, that though he neither wanted natural or acquired abilities, yet when once he commenced a preacher of the gospel, he counted all these but dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; and desired to know nothing among those to whom he preached but Christ, and him crucified. So that, as a preacher of the gospel, Paul's natural and acquired abilities were quite out of the question; though he knew, as well as any man, how to fight the world with their own weapons: such then were the men that turned the world upside down.

And now, in the second place, let us see what condition the world was in when this great event was brought about. Perhaps our polite rationalists will have the assurance to tell us, that the world was at this time in a state of the most stupid ignorance, and quite destitute of the use of reason, and exposed to be deceived by every impostor. But the great God foresaw that this would be industriously insinuated; and therefore, when he brought his First-begotten into the world, he took care that it should be at a time when polite learning every where abounded; and the writings of that, and some preceding ages, have been handed down to posterity, to stand as everlasting monuments of the learning and good sense of the people of that age: so that, whoever should endeavour to vilify the wisdom and good sense of those times, every school boy has it in his power to summon majestic Virgil to his aid, and prove the scoundrel wretch a liar.

And, if you will examine into the state the world was now in with regard to morals, you will find there was not a moral, social, or relative duty, but what had been taught in the different nations, both by their philosophers and poets. Egypt had for many ages been the mother of polite learning, and

had been favoured with her Hermes; Persia her Zoroaster; Greece had had her Solon, her Lycurgus, her Socrates, and her Plato; and Rome her Pythagoras; and a little before this period flourished the famous Roman poets Horace, Virgil, and Ovid, all men of extraordinary abilities: and as for Judea, the scriptures abundantly prove what learned gentry the Scribes and Pharisees at that time were: and, as for Greece and Rome, their different philosophers had formed themselves into distinct classes, which were like so many colleges to breed up their pupils in.

What need I mention the Stoics, the Platonists, the Peripatetics, the Pythagoreans and Epicureans, and all the rest of the venerable sages of antiquity? And (among all the different sects of philosophers) I am apt to think there were none, not even Epicurus himself, if he had been rightly understood, but what taught the moral, social, and relative duties of life. And as for poetry, I think it had now reached the summit of perfection; nor have any succeeding ages ever pretended to equal, much less to rival it.

Such then was the state of the world in the happy days of Augustus Cæsar; and when the Sun of righteousness arose, it was

indeed a morning without clouds. The temple of Janus was then shut, and the whole world enjoyed a universal peace and tranquillity. And even with regard to religion itself, every one sat under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree; and though each nation had their particular deities, yet they all allowed one supreme universal Lord of all.

The great god Jupiter, was acknowledged to have all the inferior gods at his nod, as Homer abundantly shews: and though the great goddess Diana was in so great repute, yet her image was allowed, even by her worshippers, to have fallen down from Jupiter. Apollo was his son: Minerva is said to have sprung out of his brain; and most of the other gods had lineally descended from him; and the main source of all this polytheism in the world originally sprung from a misunderstanding of the Egyptian hieroglyphics, which represented the perfections and attributes of the great God, by various figures of creatures and things, which in time became metamorphosed into so many gods.

But, be that as it will, the world was so entirely ignorant of religious persecution, that they never once disputed the divinity of each other's gods; nor was any one despised because he worshipped a god different

from his neighbours. For there was the Pantheon at Rome, in which the gods of every nation were installed, and liberty of conscience for every individual to worship what god he pleased.

This then was the condition of the world with regard to learning, religion, and morals; when a few illiterate fishermen had the boldness to turn the world upside down.

But now, in the third place, let us consider how this was effected? ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.’ You may remember, when Nebuchadnezzar was told by the prophet Daniel of the different kingdoms that were in succeeding ages to arise, one out of the ashes of another; this memorable event was also foretold; for when Daniel interpreted the different parts of that huge image which this king saw in his dream, at last he descends to interpret the feet, which were composed of iron and clay, which are materials that will not incorporate; and very aptly figured out the various kingdoms of which the Roman empire was composed, being as unfit, by reason of their jarring interests, for incorporating, as iron and clay.

But in the days of those kings, of which this empire was composed, says Daniel, the Lord himself shall set up a kingdom, called

the kingdom of the stone: And what sort of a stone was it to be? Not a very polished one I assure you: For this stone is said to be cut out of a mountain without hands; no art or polishing was to be used about it; but, as rough and unpolished as it was, it was to smite the image upon its feet, even the Roman empire, and grow to a great mountain, and fill all the earth. And if this was not a turning the world upside down, I should be glad to know what is? But when the appointed time was come this word was fulfilled.

Let us now see how these poor despised illiterate creatures set about this stupendous work. And before we shew what they did do, it will be necessary to shew what they did not do. Now if you will examine, you will find that Paul and Silas, of whom this was said, did not offer to introduce to the Thessalonians, among whom they now were, any system of moral ethics, as the Socinians would insinuate; for preaching the doctrines of the moral law could never be said to be turning the world upside down; because the very people who threw this reflection upon the apostles, were actually Jews, and believed and taught the moral law in all their synagogues. Neither could teaching morality either to the Greeks or Romans be ever

stiled turning the world upside down, since their philosophers and lawgivers every where taught the same. And let morality be taught by Christians, Jews, Greeks, or Romans, it is all the same. And surely no body could, with the least propriety, call the preaching of moral righteousness, turning the world upside down. ‘For the Gentiles, who had no written moral law, were a law unto themselves, and did by nature the things contained in the law.’

But now, let us in the third place see what these men did do, to turn the world upside down.

Surely something very strange must be advanced, that so dreadfully overset the maxims of the world. And you find the grand accusation was, that they preached that Jesus was the Christ, or the Anointed of God. And this the people interpreted, was setting up another king in opposition to Cæsar. And at Athens they were accused of being setters-forth of strange gods, because they preached Jesus and the resurrection; so that upon the whole, you plainly see that it was preaching Jesus and the resurrection, which was to the ‘Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;’ and was indeed turning the world upside down.

Now, will any purblind Socinian pretend (by throwing dust in people's eyes, and making them more blind than themselves) to tell any body that these Jews and Greeks stumbled, and counted foolishness the apostles preaching the moral precepts of Christ? Surely if they do, their impudence has got a degree beyond that of the devil himself.

But let us see what is meant by preaching Christ. And surely we are to understand by it the gospel of Christ, even the glad tidings of what Christ is in all his offices, as prophet, priest, and king to us: his active and his passive obedience for us: his being made unto his people 'wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.'

Now who that thus preaches Christ, even in this gospel-day, will escape being called turners of the world upside down? And what sort of treatment such people have met with in every age, need not be told you; for every carnal unregenerate creature, not only in this room, but over all the world, is ready to cry out, Away with such monsters, they are not fit to live upon the earth: just as the people did with the person who first attempted to teach the doctrine of the Antipodes, whom the bigotted church of Rome actually put to death for saying there were people in the world who walked feet to feet.

But, had those bigots been now alive, they might easily have been better informed; for as those people were ignorant of the earth's attraction to its centre; so it is for want of knowing the attractive power of the Spirit of God, that makes the poor dry formalists of every age call the preaching of the gospel turning the world upside down.

But how, say you, does it turn every thing topsy-turvy? Why, you know, as the world stands on the natural basis upon which the sin of Adam placed it, the natural principles of the world's religion are these, (for it signifies nothing how men are pleased to baptise themselves; people of all religions over the whole globe, are the same in their unregenerate state) each individual is his own lawgiver, and proposes to himself some system of either positive or negative duties of morality, by which he is to render himself acceptable to God. But the cream of the jest is this, there never was a man but what set himself a task in his sedater hours, that he never could by any means perform. But what is he to do when he fails in what he calls his duty? Why then the next branch of his religion is his repentance, as he calls it, and he is to do better for the future. But still there is an after-clap that threatens him for deficiency: And how is this to be warded

off? O, then it is, God is merciful; and, for the consideration of his many good deeds, God will overlook his frailties and passions, which sometimes warp him from the straight line of moral rectitude.

Now, my friends, if I know any thing of human nature, the religion of all the unregenerate men in the world is reducible to the above-mentioned three articles, namely, to trust to Duty, Repentance, and the Mercy of God: And the religion of Jesus Christ is exactly calculated to turn this sort of religion upside down.

I should have shewn how the preaching of the gospel opposes each of these three branches of natural religion; but as the time is almost elapsed, shall reserve it for a second oration on this subject; and only conclude with telling you, not to be surprised that God should order it so, that wherever he intends to rear a structure, first to pull down the old building. When he created the visible world, it was but for him to say, ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’ But in the work of the new creation, the world, the flesh, and the devil, unanimously oppose him; and therefore wherever he sends his ministers to do his work, their commission runs as did the prophet Jeremiah’s; “I have (says God to the prophet)

“ this day set thee over the nations, to root
 “ out, and to pull down, and to destroy,
 “ and to throw down; and after that to
 “ build and to plant.” And if such is to
 be the work of the ministers of Jesus Christ,
 (as it most certainly is) who then will dare
 to say he has been commissioned of God to
 preach the gospel, if the world has never
 yet taken so much knowledge of him, as to
 dignify him with the title of a turner of the
 world upside down?



ORATION XII.



These that have turned the world upside down are come
 hither also.—Acts xvii. 6.

IN the former oration on this subject,
 were first described the characters of the
 men who are said to bring about this extra-
 ordinary event of turning the world upside
 down. And secondly, the condition the
 world was in with regard to religion when
 this was done. And thirdly, the manner in
 which this was effected; namely, by preach-
 ing the gospel of Christ, which is diametri-
 cally opposite to the world's principles; for

the world's religion is reducible to three articles, **DUTY**, **REPENTANCE**, and the **MERCY OF GOD**.

I told you the gospel was calculated to overturn every article of this sort of religion; and therefore it was no wonder that the carnal Thessalonian Jews should say of the apostles, 'these who had turned the world upside down are come hither also.'

And now I shall endeavour to shew how it is that the gospel of Christ is calculated to turn each article of the world's religion upside down, and we will begin with the first and most essential article, namely, **DUTY**. Now by this we may fairly understand all moral, social, and relative duties, both with regard to **God**, our neighbour, and ourselves; and no wonder the people of every age should talk of rendering themselves acceptable to **God** hereby. No matter what god, whether **Jupiter**, **Apollo**, **Diana**, or any other.

I say, it is no wonder the world should talk of rendering themselves acceptable to their various gods by their own performances; because our first parent, the great representative of all the human race, had actually got the law of **God** written in his heart by the finger of **God**; and so long as he obeyed that law, he continued acceptable to **God**;

but that being once broken, not only he, but all his posterity lost the ability to obey it for the future; as Paul said, ‘ I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into subjection to the law of sin and death.’

And this is the case of every son of Adam. There still remains in the human heart many legible characters of the moral law; for as the apostle says, ‘ The Gentiles, which have not the moral law, are a law unto themselves, and do by nature the things contained in the law.’ Now there is not an unregenerate man in the world but what thinks to render himself acceptable to God by his obedience to this natural law, which is written in his heart.

But what do you think, if the gospel of Jesus Christ is not exactly calculated to turn this first article of the world’s religion upside down? For here comes a purblind Socinian, or a stark blind Deist, and he tells you to exert your rational faculties; and if you act according to the dictates of your conscience, and do no body any harm, and discharge your duty in the state you are placed in, you have no reason to fear being rewarded for so doing. But upon the gospel-plan, instead of the moral law, being the means of saving men from hell, as the world’s

religion teaches, (would any one think it?) it is the moral law that will condemn men to hell, and is by the apostle called ‘the ministration of condemnation;’ and was only promulged because of offences, that sin might appear exceeding sinful, that man might see himself in it as in a looking-glass. But what! was he to see himself saved by it? No; but lost as the apostle Paul did; for, says he, ‘The law found me, and slew me;’ and, says he, ‘I by the law am dead to the law:’ And as Dr. Watts observes, “To condemn is all the law can do.”

And though it curses all that are under it; for so says the apostle, ‘as many as are under the law, are under the curse; and he that keepeth the whole law (for ever so long) and then offends in one point, is guilty of all.’

Yet how amazing to think of the stupidity of the world! that every individual should be running to the law for salvation, when it is the very hand of death. For, says our Lord, ‘I condemn you not.’ No, but you have one, ‘even Moses, in whom ye trust, he it is that condemns you.’ And has not every person in the world a Moses, or a law in whom they trust; and by the breach of that very law they are condemned?

But what do you think? How cunningly have the purblind Socinians in our days

contrived to escape the sword of vindictive justice? For though they deny in words the original depravity of human nature, which is not, neither indeed can be subject to the law of God; yet by experience they find they cannot keep what they call the moral law: And yet, having no other Saviour but the law, they have contrived to compromise matters with God; and though they cannot perform a compleat and perfect, yet they will bring him a sincere obedience.

Pray who said Amen to that bargain? Not God, I am sure. For, as under the law, the lame or deformed beast was an abomination in sacrifice; so with regard to the moral law, there is no medium; either men must obey it entirely, or not at all be accepted of God. It is a contradiction in terms, to talk of sincere, though imperfect obedience; it is a term never heard of in divinity, till the days of Socinus, no more than that term which the Swedes have lately invented was ever before heard of in politics, namely, a relative war. But of all the inventions the devil ever contrived to lead men blindfold to hell by, surely this sincere, though imperfect obedience, is his masterpiece; for so long as men are able to evade the condemning sentence of the law, so long they disarm the Spirit of God of his sword,

which convinces the soul of its lost estate by nature ; and so long they must be destitute of that faith which justifies the man from all things which he could not be justified from by the law of Moses, or of nature.

But pray now let us a little examine what is meant by these Socinians sincere, though imperfect obedience : and upon casting up of the account, you will find it amounts to neither more nor less, than that each of them may do whatever is right in his own eyes. For the nature of man is constitutionally this ; every individual has not a natural tendency to the commission of every sin : No ; but each has his constitutional master sin, what the scripture calls a ‘ right hand,’ or a ‘ right eye’ sin ; or ‘ that sin that most easily besets’ him ; and comparatively speaking, he has no great temptation to any other.

Now the Socinians feeling this, what do they do ? Why, they baptise their constitutional sin (be it lust, covetousness, uncleanness, envy, or any other of the black catalogue) as their natural failing ; but, indeed, as to other matters they are sincere, and willingly obey God’s law ; and as he is merciful, surely he will not condemn them for that which is so natural to them. This is their sincere, though imperfect obedience ;

but if they were as naturally tempted to the commission of every other sin as to any particular one, they would as naturally commit them. And surely, did but the Socinians consider that a man is as equally liable to condemnation for one sin, as for another, they would be ashamed to talk of their sincere obedience, if they failed in any one point ; and that they do fail, their own conscience must evidence, unless it be seared with a hot iron.

But, however, this sort of religion is not peculiar to the Socinians ; it is that vile vine which has flourished in nature's garden ever since the fall of Adam all over the globe. But before ever the enlivening beams of the Sun of righteousness can be of any comfort to the soul of man, that man (if he was the most moral man in the world) must have his Babel righteousness tumbled about his ears, and its very foundation rased out of the deep sand in which it was laid, before the gospel can comfort him : For the gospel is nothing but a free proclamation of pardon to lost condemned sinners, whom the law of God has arrested, and the Spirit of God has fixed such a sense of guilt upon the conscience, that instead of a man's hoping to be saved for his own performances, he is

forced to cry out, ‘ What must I do to be saved ?’

Now do you not think this is a dreadful turning of the world upside down? For what the world calls a good moral honest man, who concerning the law, like the apostle Paul, was blameless ; and, as he says, never did any body any harm in his life ; for such an one to have an overflowing deluge of the Spirit of God overwhelming his conscience, and convincing him that all his own ‘ righteousnes is as filthy rags,’ and that there is no law that can give life : Nay, so far from it, that whosoever is under any law, is under the curse.

Now should the Spirit of God, by the preaching of the gospel, sound such an alarm in any of your stupid unawakened souls, you would be forced, nay, glad to own what a turning upside down you have found ; just such a turning had the three thousand, who were pricked to the heart at the first gospel-sermon on the day of pentecost.

So much then for mens duty, by which they think to render themselves acceptable to God ; which notion the gospel is exactly calculated to overturn, and pluck up by the very roots. And this grand idol of man’s righteousness, which the apostles every where endeavoured to overturn, was so universally

adored, that no wonder they who preached up the righteousness of Christ and justification by that alone, in opposition to man's righteousness, were called turners of the world upside down.

Now, the next branch of the world's religion, which the gospel is calculated to overturn, is what they call REPENTANCE. When they have done contrary to their duty, O dear, how sorry they seem for it, and say we will do so no more. But I wish, when they say they will do so no more, they would put in what a good woman used to make her children say, when she corrected them for doing wrong; that is, till next time. For surely, my friend, whoever thou art that promisest God to do so no more, one would think thou hadst not been one day an inhabitant of that body of thine. Hast thou got no right hand or right eye sin, that most easily besets thee? Why, I will not wait for an answer; I tell thee thou hast, and thou mightest as well tell God thou wouldst stop the tide at London-Bridge, as say thou wilt do so no more. I tell thee thou wilt go on sinning and repenting till doom's-day in the afternoon, if thou shouldst live so long, unless the Spirit of God regenerates thee; and even after thou art regenerated, thou wilt find more than ever a 'law in

thy members warring against the law of thy mind; and that when thou wouldst do good, evil is present with thee.'

But pray now, admitting you could repent, and do so no more, this is not an evangelical but legal repentance; such a repentance as this Judas had: but for all that he hanged himself. But that repentance which is unto life, is not of a man's own working, but is wrought by the Spirit of Christ in the soul of man; for Christ is 'exalted to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.'

And pray now, where did you gather, that repentance, and doing so no more, did procure pardon for any offence? Examine the laws of any country under heaven, and see if you can find a law that pardons a breach of it, because a man is sorry for what he has done. No, justice demands that the punishment annexed to the crime be inflicted; and the gospel of Christ turns this sort of repentance upside down; for nowhere upon the gospel-plan is pardon of sin merited by repentance; for, says the apostle, who turned the world upside down, 'Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you remission of sins.' What! because of your repentance? No; but 'by him all that believe are justified

from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.'

But, the most that ever a legal repentance (which a man may act) can do, is to remove temporal punishment. 'Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself? Because he humbleth himself, I will not bring the evil in his days, but in his son's days,' saith the Lord to the prophet. Such repentance as leads men to patch up the breaches of a broken law by future obedience, can no more, upon the gospel-plan, acquit a man for former guilt, than my paying a tradesman for what I buy of him at present, can clear me from what I may be indebted to him years ago.

But in the gospel, the blood of Christ is set in direct opposition to man's repentance and amendment, and is alone the procuring cause of the remission of sins. So that the gospel turns this second branch of the world's religion likewise upside down with a witness.

And now for the last article of the world's religion. When every thing else fails them, when conscience will not longer be rocked to sleep in the devil's cradle of stupid security, it is——what? Why, **THE MERCY OF GOD**, which is the unawakened sinner's last shift, and is the last refuge he has recourse

to; but even then self-righteousness follows the guilty soul to the mercy-seat itself. For what do you think is the world's plea for mercy? Why, truly, they will own themselves guilty of many failings and infirmities, but they are not so bad as their neighbour such an one, who did this or the other notorious wickedness, and for that reason they hope God will have mercy upon them.

Now if ye doubt the truth of this, you need only give yourselves the trouble to make the experiment as I have done; and I do declare I never met with one in my life, let him be the most abandoned wretch in a whole parish or town, but bolsters himself up with hoping he is a subject of God's mercy for the above reason.

Not but it must be owned, that mercy is God's darling attribute, and his mercies are over all his works; but mercy in the abstract is very far from being an attribute of God, for he never magnifies one attribute to the destruction of another. Justice is as much an attribute of God as mercy is; for God is not only said to be merciful in forgiving sins, but faithful and just too, as the apostle beautifully expresses it. And the plan of salvation by the blood of Christ, secures all the attributes of God; for in him 'MERCY AND

TRUTH MEET TOGETHER; RIGHTEOUSNESS AND PEACE KISS EACH OTHER;' and therefore Christ is called by the apostle, as well as by David himself, 'The sure mercies of David.' For he is the channel through which pardon flows down to man, in consideration of his giving himself 'a ransom for many:' Christ being 'made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' And he having borne our sins in his own body on the cross, having had the iniquity of all his people laid on him, he can demand, and does demand, that all whom he has purchased with his blood be given to him as the travail of his soul. So that, though it is an act of the greatest mercy in Christ thus to purchase his church with his blood, yet with regard to God himself it cannot be said to be an act of mercy merely, because his justice and his faithfulness are as much magnified in the pardoning of sin, as his mercy is.

Thus the gospel of Christ quite oversets this abstracted notion, which the world has of the mercy of God. For without blood there never was, nor never will be, any pardon of sin; and it is the blood of Christ which is said to cleanse from all sin. Therefore, this being the case, no wonder the Thessalonians called the apostles the turners of the world

upside down. And so long as the world endures will this assertion of Christ be true, that HE is 'to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.' And why? Because these three articles of the world's religion, namely Duty, Repentance, and the Mercy of God, which every unregenerate person in the world trusts to, and expects to be saved for, are entirely overturned by the gospel.

For as the Israelites of old looked unto the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and were healed of the deadly bites of the fiery serpents; 'so,' says the great Redeemer, 'must the son of man be lifted up, that whosoever looks unto him' with the eye of faith 'shall be healed' of that bite with which the old serpent, the devil, has poisoned all the sons of Adam.

Thus, my friends, you see how contrary to the maxims of the world is the preaching salvation through faith in a Redeemer: And hence we may learn why it is that the preaching of the gospel has been so universally opposed in every age. And no wonder they who preach the gospel of Christ, and they who live according to the doctrines of the gospel are dubbed, by the world's saints, 'turners of the world upside down,' since their principles are so diametrically opposite

to each other; and they who have made any proficiency in the school of Christ, will by no means wonder why the world hates them, because they must know they are at open war with the world, and are of that sect, which was from the beginning, now is, and ever will be, 'every where spoken against.'



ORATION XIII.



The name of one was Peleg.—Gen. x. 25.

WHAT a glorious encomium is given of the word of God by the sweet singer of Israel, the royal prophet David: When in addressing his great Creator, he says, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' By which expression, the royal psalmist supposes himself, as hardly put to it to know and perform the duties which were incumbent upon him without the light of God's word, as a benighted traveller would be perplexed to find his way through a pathless desert, in a gloomy night.

But, methinks I hear a nibbling Deist, or a Socinian rationalist say, if we did not know your comparison was false, we should think this David was a poor weak-headed enthusiast, that could not know and perform what God required of him by the light of reason, and the due exercise of his intellectual faculties. But, my friends, however enlarged your great capacities may be, this great man of God was not ashamed, (though a king, and a brave one too) to descend a step lower still, and ingenuously own, even after he had the word of God in his hand, that he had no power of himself rightly to understand it. For, says he, ‘Open thou mine eyes, O Lord! that I may behold the wondrous things contained in thy law.’

Now would not you deistical and socinian gentry think any one (that was not naturally blind) quite beside himself, to talk at this rate, in our polite age? for your exalted reason can comprehend at first blush, every thing that is written in the word of God. And, indeed, you can see nothing in it, but what the dictates of natural reason suggest. For how (say you) can God, consistent with his perfections, give a revelation to the world that is not comprehensible by every body? And that it is not comprehensible by every body is a self-evident truth. But, as it would be

the greatest absurdity to say the fault was in the sun, because a blind man cannot discover the light of it ; so it would be no less absurd for to say the word of God is in itself incomprehensible, because every body cannot comprehend it. But the apostle Paul decides this point at once ; says he, ‘ the natural man discerneth not the things of God ;’ and for this plain reason, because ‘ they are spiritually discerned ;’ so that if the apostle’s argument is to be credited, and our Lord’s assertion to be believed, the Spirit must take of the things of Christ, and shew them unto us. For no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost ; and if so, what a condition must they be in who deny the power of the Holy Ghost, and idolize their own reason, which usurps the throne of God ?

But, as the sacred scriptures are sufficient, by the application of the Spirit of God, to make men wise unto salvation ; so with regard to historical facts, and all sorts of useful knowledge, no authors teach like them ; more knowledge is oftentimes conveyed by them in one word, than some authors convey in a whole folio.

I remember to have had two questions put to me at a time by a deist, which he thought unanswerable, in order to invalidate the

scriptures. Says he, You say the whole world was peopled by one man and one woman; pray, how comes it that there have been people found upon islands where no ship had ever been before? And how comes it, that some people were black and some white, if they were all of one complexion at first? It is plain, said he, God created numbers of people at once, and placed them in different countries and islands all over the world.

Now you see by these questions the very foundation of divine revelation is struck at. And, it must be owned, they are enough to stumble a person of a bad heart and weak judgment. And such stumbling-blocks as these thrown in the way of one who has imbibed deistical principles, and of consequence is running down hill in the road of wickedness, are enough to make him ten-fold more a child of hell than he was before. But lest any one here should have unthiakingly imbibed this doctrine, which is the first lesson in the school of deism, we will endeavour, by the help of one word gathered from scripture, to expel the poison, if you are not too much infected. And if we can by the help of this Peleg unlock the mighty secret, namely, how countries and islands (that when first discovered had till then no intercourse with other parts of the world) came

to be inhabited, such an enquiry will not be unworthy our search.

Though, if we will take my friend's answer, we may spare ourselves the trouble. But let it be observed that there were no persons in all the antediluvian, patriarchal and prophetic ages, but who gave names to their children, either from some particular circumstance that happened at their birth, or from some expectation they had from them; and this custom was introduced by the great God himself, who called the first-made man Adam. Why? Because he made him out of the dust of the earth, as that name denotes. And when Eve had brought forth her first-born son, she called his name Cain, which signifies an acquisition; for, says she, 'I have gotten a man from the Lord,' or rather a man, the Lord; and from this time, the custom became general. Hence you find Abraham called his son's name Isaac: Why? Because he and Sarah laughed when told they should have a son in their old age. So when Rachel bore her second son, he was called Benoni; why? Because his mother died in labour with him, for the name denotes the son of sorrow.

And now with regard to this Peleg, we are told his father Eber had two sons, and the name of the one was Peleg; why?

Because in his days the earth was divided. But how say you? By considering the meaning of this name, it will tell you, that it was not by fixing land marks to every person's possessions: No; though the word has since been used for divisions of any kind, as alluding to the earth's division in the days of Peleg. Though it will be hard to prove to the contrary, but that the whole earth had been one entire continent surrounded by the ocean, from the time that the flood left it, till about the birth of Peleg, when the face of the earth suffered some considerable change.

For his name not only signifies, as I apprehend, the channels of rivers which divide one country from another, or narrow seas between two lands, such as St. George's channel; but the channels which contain the waters of those seas, which divide the earth in different parts: For instance, that huge chasm which contains the waters of the great Mediterranean Sea, as also the Arabian Gulf, and many other seas which do not appear originally to have been coeval with the immense ocean with which the earth was surrounded. And, it is not at all improbable but those great chasms which contain the waters of so many seas, which divide the earth in different parts, were made by

earthquakes, which tore up the cavities of the earth, and left huge (and in many places) unfathomable depths, which are filled up with the waters of the circumambient ocean.

Though it is no where to be proved, what countries were thus divided from each other when Peleg was born, yet that some great and considerable divisions then happened is plain; because it is said in his days, or at his birth, 'the earth was divided.' Now I am apt to think the Mediterranean Sea was by Moses more immediately meant than any other; for the very name and situation of this sea, would naturally lead us to think, it arose from some terrible confusion of the earth which sunk down for such prodigious length directly from East to West, and the mouth or entrance of this cavity extending to the ocean, and being lower than it, the neighbouring waters immediately flowed in, and even now set in with a perpetual current; and as what we call the Straits of Gibraltar was the *ne plus ultra* of the ancients, so this sea from its very situation, might well be called the sea in the midst of the earth, being of so great a length, and dividing what they thought the midst of the earth.

But lest some should say, this is all but mere fancy, without the least shadow of

reason to prove it; I would beg leave to observe, that though the origin of this sea cannot be proved from history, yet that the greatest part of the earth did originally join, before divided by earthquakes and inundations, is very evident from history. For that Italy and Sicily did once join, many authors abundantly testify; and most geographers agree that the Straits between Ceylon and India, between Greece and Eubœa, the Straits likewise of Magellan, Manilha, and at the Sound, were all occasioned (through different periods) by the breaking in of the sea. And whoever views Dover cliffs, and those on the opposite French coast, cannot but discover such a likeness between them, as will lead him to think France and England once were joined, and that a division must have been made, either by earthquakes or inundations.

Now that you may not think me extravagant, with regard to the earth's being divided, there is now extant a dialogue of Plato's, called *Timæus*, wherein we are told, that when Solon, the great Athenian lawgiver, went into Egypt about six hundred years before Christ, an account was given him by one of the Egyptian priests, that the immense ocean between Europe and America was an island larger than both Asia and

Africa; but by earthquakes and inundations in one day and a night, all sunk and became what it now is, the vast Atlantic Ocean.

Now it will be in vain for us to cry out against the extravagance of this opinion, unless we could disprove it: that it was possible we cannot deny, because we know the whole earth originally arose out of the water, and has once since that time been laid under water: And as Egypt was the mother of all polite learning, and from whence all other nations borrowed their knowledge, we cannot but think all the memorable events that happened within the sphere of their knowledge were recorded there. As Moses himself received his education amongst the Egyptians, and as he gives us a hint of some such event happening at the birth of Peleg: Why may we not think that the Egyptians had this event at large in their records, both with regard to the Mediterranean and Atlantic? for, by Moses's passing over it in so slight a manner, it should seem the people, for whose immediate use he wrote, were no strangers to this event; if they were, this brevity is hardly to be supposed in an historian of his note.

But even Varenus is of opinion that New France, New England, and Canada, might of old join to Ireland: and pray why might

he not have added that Ireland did once join to Britain? And as it appears highly reasonable to think that Asia, Africa, Europe and America, were once one entire continent; where lies the difficulty in peopling the whole world from the offspring of Adam and Eve? And that some very extraordinary divisions were made of one country from another by water, when Peleg was born, is quite clear; for it is not said one country was divided from another, but the earth, as if some very great divisions were then made; and as if this memorable event was never to be forgotten, this very word *Peleg* is retained by the Greeks and Romans in their respective dialects, namely, Πελαγος in the Greek, and Pelagus in the Latin, and signifies not the great ocean, but the sea, as dividing one country from another, or islands from the continents or main land. Hence those Greeks who inhabited the sea coasts or islands were called by Homer Pelasgi, which signifies that they were a people divided from each other by the intervention of the sea.

But the objector seems quite sure of triumphing over the Mosaic history of the creation, because he is confident that people have been found on islands that could never be brought thither by ships. Now suppose we allow this; yet he must not be a little

grappled when we defy him or any one else to prove that people were found on any island; that it cannot be more clearly proved than that that island was at some time separated from the continent, and people upon it when that separation happened. For where are most of the islands in the world found? Scarce any in the immense ocean, but on the shores of the ocean or great continent.

There is scarce one between Africa and Brazil, except St. Helen and the Isle of Ascension; the islands in the Ægean sea, between Europe and Asia, are all in a cluster; the Hesperides are near Africa; the Melvides, of which it is said there are above eleven thousand, are all near India; nay, and all the Indian islands lie between Asia and the south land, only the Azores or Flanderian isles seem to be in the middle of the ocean, between America and the old world.

And that islands are found mostly near the continent (says Varenus) is because they have been cut off from the main land by the breaking-in of the sea; and that it could not cover all, was by reason of their height. Now as those cuttings-off, or separations of islands from the main land have happened at different periods, (though, I believe, the first

grand division that happened, or at least was taken notice of, was when Peleg was born) may we not therefore reasonably conclude that the people who were originally found on any island, must have been upon that spot when the separation happened, and there continued till found by sailors? But they having no notion of transmitting historical facts to posterity, were most of them as ignorant of their origin as our forefathers were, who inhabited this island. Only the Greeks (as mentioned above) seem by the name given to the islanders upon their coasts, to keep up a remembrance of their division from each other, by the breaking-in of the sea.

I am not insensible that islands are made by other means, than by being cut off from continents, namely, by sand-banks gathering in particular places of the sea, likewise by the sea retiring; and as there are both hills and dales, mountains and valleys in the bottom of the sea, so consequently when it makes a breach into one part of the earth, it must leave another part dry, which may in time become a habitable island. And there is another way by which islands are sometimes formed; and that is, by the earth being suddenly carried from the bottom of

the sea to the surface. For there may be in the bottom of the sea porous, spongy, hollow, sulphureous earth of less or equal weight with the water, which being broke off, an island may arise and suddenly appear.

Some of the ancients thought the floating isle of Delos came up this way: Nay, Seneca tells us, that the island Therasia, in the *Ægean* sea, actually did come up this way, and that the seamen saw it arise. And islands that thus arise float about till they meet with sand-backs and settle there. And Seneca likewise tells us that he saw in the lake *Cutilia*, an island that floated with trees and herbs upon it, and that it was never found a day and a night in one place. And *Boethius*, a writer of the Scotch history, tells us, that in a large lough, called *Lomond* in Scotland, there was an island that floated, and was driven with the wind, upon which cattle used to feed.

But upon the whole, however strange it may seem to us in these dregs of time, how different countries and islands came at first to be inhabited; yet if we can credit the various authors who have wrote upon the many and wonderful changes the terraqueous globe has undergone since the flood; our surprize at the whole earth being peopled

by the descendants of Adam must necessarily vanish.

But how comes it, says the objector, that there are people of such different colours to be found in different parts of the world, if they were all of one colour at first? Now it must be owned that many opinions have been given upon this subject. Some anatomists have told us that your woolley-headed blacks are different in the make of their bodies from white people, and especially in the scarf-skin. Some are so unthinking as to say, the mark that was set upon Cain was, that he became a black-moor; but as the people who say so seem to believe divine revelation, they ought to be reminded that all the offspring of Cain perished in the flood; so that the blacks cannot be his descendents, supposing he was black. But if they were to say that Canaan, the son of Noah, had been the first black, it would have been somewhat more probable, because he was cursed by his father to be a servant of servants to his brethren. And, say some, the very nature of blacks is such, that they seem ordained for nothing but to be slaves. This appears to be the sentiment of the author of the play of Oroonoko, when he puts it into the mouth of that prince to say--I must blush

“ Quite thro’ this veil of night a whitely shame,
“ To think I could design to make those free,
“ Who were by nature slaves : wretches design’d
“ To be their masters’ dogs, and lick their feet.”

But Canaan, the son of Noah, could not be made a black by his father’s curse; because his descendants inhabited that goodly land called by his name, which was afterwards the promised land. And there is no reason to think the Canaanites were black. But Ovid gives us a strange account how it was the Ethiopians became black; and that was by that excessive heat, when Phæton drove the chariot of the sun, and set the world on fire. But I suppose he founded this story upon what is said by Aristotle and Lucian concerning a dreadful burning which once happened in Italy and Ethiopia. But that the heat of the sun does occasion a black colour in the skin is plain; for were we to travel, beginning at the farthest bounds of the frozen north, till we reached beneath the torrid zone, we should find the complexions of the people grow darker and darker, till we come beneath the line.

So that it is plain the difference of countries occasion the difference of colour in the skin. And if white people were to settle under the line, would they not in a few ages become black? and if black people were to

settle in cold countries, would they not in a few ages become white? Besides, the very food in different countries has a wonderful effect upon the colour of the skin, and also upon the very temper and disposition of the mind. Nay, I have heard that the very smell of the American woods will turn tame cattle and hogs quite wild and furious; and has likewise a native tendency to render savage and cruel the people who inhabit there.

But we need not go out of our own island for a proof of this; for the inhabitants of almost every county differ in the disposition of their minds, and many of them in the very construction of their bodies. For how natural is it for a Welshman to be hot and fiery? a Scotchman to be proud and imperious, and to boast his great descent and noble pedigree? and almost every county in England has something good or bad peculiar to its natives. Shakespeare has long since fixed a very detestable epithet to the inhabitants of Cornwall: And Camden (I think it is) has given an epithet quite the reverse to the natives of Bedfordshire. And some have observed that a hoggish selfishness is peculiarly remarkable in the natives of the fens in Lincolnshire and the isle of Ely. And others have observed how

rude and ignorant the illiterate inhabitants of wild unconquered Kent are.

And as some counties produce small and some large cattle, so some produce tall, strong, and healthy people, and others small, weak, and feeble; so that since we find such difference among the people in our own island, why need we wonder if we find people of different complexions and dispositions in different climates? Especially as we know that all this may be, and is occasioned by the nature of the country in which they dwell.

And that man must have made but little observation of the world around him, who can no other way account for the various sorts of people in the world, but by concluding that the great God must have made many sorts at first, and scattered them all over the globe. But by these few imperfect hints you see we can, at least to our own satisfaction, shew that the different complexions of men will disprove none of them to be descendents of the first Adam. And would to God every one here did but know himself as nearly related to the second Adam.

ORATION XIV.



Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.

THIS terraqueous globe, with all its animal and vegetable productions, was spoke into being by the great Creator of the universe, for no other reason but to accommodate his favourite creature man; under whose dominion and government, both the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth were to be subject. And to man also was given every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth; and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to be for meat. Now when we consider that man, as he came out of the hand of his great Creator, was found invested with so great power, and accommodated with all that profusion of plenty, which the new-made earth produced; and that all this, even in the judgment of the all-wise God himself, was not only good, but very good: Would any one, after this, have ever imagined, but that all the productions of the earth would have been spontaneous, without the least

labour or toil from man? That this was the happy condition of the first parent of mankind, can hardly be denied. And that the great God was as able to continue the same to his latest posterity, can never be doubted; for why might not the great God as easily have caused the earth, without the least labour of man, to have continued in its original fertility, as that it should now stand in need of the greatest labour and toil, before it will produce even the necessaries of life? Whereas thorns and thistles, and all sorts of noxious weeds, can now hardly be suppressed from spontaneously springing up, and overspreading the face of the earth; when the greatest part of all vegetable productions must be planted, sown, pruned and weeded, and carefully guarded from all the extremes of heat and cold, of wind and rain, of storms and tempests, in order to partake of the fruits thereof. But thorns and thistles, briers and brambles, are continually springing up, whether men will or not, and always remain unhurt, amidst all the rigor of the various seasons. Now we are not to imagine these noxious weeds originally interfered with the more useful productions of the earth; but were sent by God himself for the punishment of man upon his fall; the greatest part of whose labour

should consist in clearing the earth from their intrusion and incumbrance. For ‘in the sweat of thy face,’ says the great God, ‘shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.’ And lest man in his degenerate, fallen state should forget both who and what he was, he is given to understand, he was not only originally taken out of the ground, and though so curiously formed by his great Creator’s plastic hand, yet still the matter of which he was formed was not changed. And O what a blow is here given by the great God to humble the pride of man; for ‘dust thou art,’ and what is more debasing and humbling, ‘unto dust thou shalt return.’ So that after a little animated dust has strutted about in borrowed plumes for a few days, it must return to its original mass, out of which it was taken; and perhaps administer nutriment and moisture to produce thorns and thistles, and every noxious weed, which help to constitute the curse of the earth.

And indeed whoever makes the observation, cannot help observing, that those grounds where human bodies are deposited, for the most part abound more with all sorts of weeds than most other places do. But are we to stop here, or did God stop here, when he said to offending guilty man,

‘Cursed be the ground for thy sake’? No; if that was all, the punishment of eating his bread in the sweat of his face, would have been but an easy punishment indeed. But alas! the curse went deeper still; the corporeal part of man being also earth must bear a part of the general curse and production; and those briars and thorns, and all sorts of nauseous weeds, which the ground spontaneously produces, are but emblems and shadows of those more grieving and offensive thorns and thistles, which so very naturally spring up, and overspread the mind of man. Insomuch that even the great apostle of the Gentiles, who seems to have as deep an insight into human nature as any man; even he could not help crying out, ‘In me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing.’ And thrice he invoked the great God for a removal of ‘a thorn in his flesh, the messenger of satan sent to buffet him.’ Neither was this case peculiar to the apostle Paul, for every son of Adam has more or less got the garden of his corrupt heart overspread with these thorns and thistles. There never was one exempted except the man Jesus Christ, ‘who was holy, harmless and undefiled, and separate from sinners;’ but as he came to be made sin for his people, and to become a curse for us, he in a literal sense

bore the curse of the earth ; for though he had no thorns and thistles within, yet he was goaded and stung by them on all sides. And his enemies were resolved he should bear the torture of them without, and therefore they crowned him with the curse of the earth, even with a CROWN OF THORNS.

But I suppose that those who deny the depravity of human nature, will hardly pretend to say, that the earth is now in the same condition it was when first created ; for surely, if they do, they must reflect the greatest dishonour on the Almighty Maker, who had it in his power to have produced it into being, naturally adapted spontaneously to produce whatever was necessary for the being or well-being of man ; whereas, in its present situation, the most beautiful garden that the art of man can design and lay out, if left to itself for one month, will be all over-grown with weeds of various kinds, and will soon over-run and destroy what art and industry have been preparing for a long season. And why these offensive weeds should every where so much abound, unless appointed as a punishment to man, is hardly to be imagined.

Now both reason and scripture declare, that the earth is degenerated from what it

originally was ; and if so, can any one imagine that man, who also is earth, is not degenerated too? And that he is degenerated, every thing within him, and every thing without him, abundantly prove. That ‘ he is born to trouble as naturally as the sparks fly upward,’ woful experience convinces us all. That inward passions of every kind alternately rage within him, and are as detrimental to his inward peace and quiet, as thorns and thistles are to the body that is galled with them ; no one can be so much a stranger to himself as not to feel. And can we have such dishonourable thoughts of God, as to imagine the master-piece of the creation came thus disordered out of his Maker’s hand? God forbid ! When the Creator of the universe, by his almighty *fiat*, spoke the world into being, for the first five days it was but for him to say, Let such and such things be, and immediately they appeared. But when that God-like creature man was about to be made, the whole Godhead or Elohim are joined in council to create the lord of the creation, even God’s vicegerent in this lower world ; one that was to wear his Maker’s image ; for we are told, ‘ In the image of God created he him.’

Various have been the opinions of men concerning this image of God in man, and

in what sense he was created in the image of God. And whoever minutely enquires into the process of this amazing piece of workmanship, may find it thus: There is nothing more clear in scripture than that there are three persons in the Godhead, namely, Father, Son, and Spirit; and that each person in the essence was employed in the creation of man. This is clearly implied in these words, 'Let us make man.' And that man, as he came out of the hand of God, was composed of body, soul, and spirit; and that these three parts being distinct from each other, made up the composition of man.

The corporeal part, the scripture declares, was the workmanship of the second person in the Godhead, called Jehovah Elohim, or the Logos or Word by whom the whole of the material world was made. And if man was so in no other sense, surely his corporeal part was in the image of God; for this very person, even before he appeared in our world as born of a virgin, had assumed that shape or image in which the body of man was made, even from the early ages of eternity. And when he appeared to the patriarchs of old as a man, yet they made no scruple to call him by the incommunicable name of Jehovah. And, whatever your

sentiments of God may be, the idea that I have of God is this: That the 'fulness of the godhead dwells bodily' or really in the man Christ Jesus, 'who is the true God and eternal life.' And he made the corporeal part of man in that very image in which the Godhead dwelt, in which God is reconciled to man, and in which he will sit as judge of quick and dead; and fix the irreversible eternal doom of all mankind, when time shall be no more.

Then, as for the Soul, the intelligent or intellectual part of man, with all its noble faculties, this was what God the Father contributed in the formation of man; for he is said to breathe into man the breath of life, in consequence of which he became a living soul; and is said to be the Father of spirits or soul, which, at its separation from the body, is said 'to return to the God that gave it.'

The third part of man is the Spirit, and was given to man by the third person of the Godhead, even by the Spirit of God. Thus man, being composed of three parts, may be said to be created in the image of the whole Godhead, each having contributed his part of his composition. Thus ennobled was that Godlike creature man, while he continued in a state of innocency. Well

might the scripture say, ' God made man upright.'

But, alas! man did not long continue in his primæval glory. It was not long before all his meridian sun-shine was turned into midnight darkness. The continuance of this third part of his composition, even the gift of the Spirit, depended upon his obedience; he was in a state of probation. ' In the day thou eatest of the tree of knowledge, thou shalt surely die,' says the great God. And though some are of opinion, that from the day he disobeyed, from that day, he became mortal, or liable to a natural death. Yet surely this is not the full sense of the threatening. The death which was threatened immediately took place, even that very day in which Adam transgressed the divine command; for then the Spirit of God left him. And to be destitute of the Spirit of God is, through all the scripture, deemed a state of death, spiritual death; for without the life of the Spirit of God, all men are as insensible of divine things, and of fellowship with God, as a man naturally dead is insensible of what passes in the natural world, and is cut off from all enjoyment of them.

Hence it is that the scripture concludes all men, in an unregenerate state, dead. So says our Lord, ' Let the dead bury their

dead ;' and ' the time cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear, shall live.' And says the apostle, to some who were spiritually quickened, ' You that were dead hath he quickened.' So that Adam's death, upon his disobedience, was a spiritual death: But the great reason why this threatened death is so much mistaken is this ; we are all brought into the world in a state of spiritual death. And, as it is commonly said, What we never had, we never lost : So no man having the Spirit by nature till he is born of the Spirit, he vainly imagines, he lost nothing by the fall of Adam.

But pray now, for illustration's sake, suppose the eldest son of one of the rebel lords, who lost both his title and estate in the last rebellion, should be foolish enough to say, he lost nothing by his father's being a rebel, because he had never been actually possessed of his father's title and estate ; would not any one conclude he was lost to all reason and quite beside himself ? And just as preposterous do those men talk, who would tell us Adam's sin only affected himself, and we lost nothing by his disobedience.

But indeed, to do these men justice, they are for having every tub to stand upon its own bottom ; for as they are confident they

received no detriment from Adam's transgressions, so they neither expect nor will accept of the obedience and death of Christ, to render them acceptable in the sight of God; and they still tell us, that every man is as much now in the image of God as Adam was; and this indeed in a sense is true, for the body of man being made after the image of the Son of God, and the rational soul being an immortal spark struck out of God, both of which continue the same, only with this difference, as man came out of the hand of his Maker, the moral law was written in his heart by the finger of God, which was a transcript of all God's perfections; and there was nothing in man to warp him from his obedience to it; if there was, he could never have been created in the image of God, who is holiness itself. But now, though the moral law still continues in very legible characters in the human soul, yet he has neither will nor power to obey it. This garden of God, which was holy, and declared so by God himself, is now all over-run with thorns and thistles. 'The fruitful field is become a wilderness;' and all those fruits of moral righteousness, which grew in the garden of Adam's heart, are turned wild. So says God himself, when speaking of Israel under the similitude

of a vineyard, 'I planted it a right vine; but when I looked that it should have brought forth grapes, behold it brought forth wild grapes.'

And wherever unregenerate man is spoken of in scripture, he is described as wild and degenerated. He is compared to that 'earth which beareth thorns and briers, and is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,' and to a 'wild bull caught in a net, and to a wild ass's colt,' or to 'a dromedary in the desert,' quite ungovernable. Now our Lord, in one of his parables, divests these thorns and thistles of their figurative import; and tells us plainly what they are, namely, the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. These are they that not only choke the word of God, but choke that moral rectitude which was originally sown in Adam's heart. Now by the cares of the world are meant the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life; these are the thorns and thistles which more or less flourish in the hearts of all the sons of Adam.

And now, my friends, if this be the case, that in our flesh dwells no good thing, let us learn these two things: First, Never to think we can clear the ground of our corrupt nature from these thorns and thistles which

are its natural produce ; for that which is filthy will be filthy still. The great God has said it, ‘ Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ;’ and so it will. Therefore, secondly, As we have no moral rectitude of our own that will bear to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, we have need of being renewed by the Spirit of God, who, ‘ when he is come, will take of the things of Christ and shew them to us ;’ he will plough up the fallow ground of our hearts ; and makes us not only willing, but ‘ desirous to be found in Christ, not having on our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is by faith in the Son of God ;’ who wore on his own head the curse of the earth, and bore in his body the curse of sin, that man might be delivered from the eternal curse of God’s holy and righteous law.

ORATION XV.



On the conversion of the expiring thief on the cross.

IF Luther could once say he never should have known the scriptures, if it had not been for the opposition he met with from the papists; surely every true believer may now say, if it were not from the vile glosses which the Socinians put upon many places in the word of God, he should never take so much pains to study the oracles of truth. For who that has experimentally felt the efficacy of divine grace can avoid seeing the dreadful havoc which is every day made of the doctrines of the gospel? And who that has the honour of God, or the good of mankind at heart, but will think it his duty to guard his friends and acquaintance from being infected with that deadly poison, with which the Socinian doctrines so plentifully abound?

It is upon this account I have chosen to give you an oration upon the conversion of the expiring thief, whose case has been most falsely represented by the Socinians, in direct opposition to the whole current of scripture,

and the most express texts of the evangelists. For though there is not a passage in all the book of God, which displays so much of the love of God to a lost and perishing sinner as the conversion of the thief upon the cross; yet, could any one think it? that the Socinians, who can allow of no salvation but for what they call good works, have so basely vilified this most amazing instance of redeeming love, which was shewn by our Lord when in the agonies of death, by snatching instantaneously an expiring thief from the jaws of hell. Yet they pretend to tell us “that this thief, though punished with the most terrible of all deaths, even the death of the cross; nevertheless for all that, he was a mighty good sort of a man; and though it is true, he had stole a little perhaps for mere necessity some years before, yet he had repented when in prison, and done a great many good things to atone for his crime. And because he had been so good for some years before he was executed; it was for this goodness of his (say the Socinians) that Jesus Christ saved him.”

This is the hellish gloss which they put upon the history of the penitent thief. But before I come to examine into the nature of the conversion of this penitent thief, give me leave to ask you Socinian gentry two

questions. First, Pray how came you so well acquainted with the life and conversation of this thief, that you can so confidently affirm how mighty good he had been, and how long he had repented before he came to the place of execution? When not one of the evangelists so much as mention either of the two thieves till brought to be executed; so that what you say of this thief's goodness is a mere chimera, hatched in your own brains, without the least matter of fact to go upon.

The second question is this; Pray how came you to know that those two thieves, or any other malefactors, were kept so long in prison before they were tried and executed? This is a supposition altogether as groundless as the other; for we find the custom in those provinces which were under the Roman government was, that as soon as a malefactor was taken, and his accusers could attend, the governor entered into the judgment-hall and proceeded to trial immediately, and commonly the next day he was executed. This you know was the case with the Son of God himself, and many others I could mention. So that you see both your assertions are groundless, as well with regard to this thief's conduct before he was hung

upon the cross, as with regard to the time between his apprehension and execution.

But now to wave your nonsensical unscriptural whims, let us adhere to matters of fact, as related by the evangelists, and there you shall find that in the salvation of this thief the great God did not vary one jot from the original plan, which he had laid down in his own eternal mind before the world began, with regard to the salvation of his people. And though the work of God in the soul of man may be carried on so progressively in some people, that from the time the Spirit first convinces of sin, till the complete salvation is witnessed in the heart, may be almost a man's whole life; yet the whole of this work appears to be effected in this thief's heart, perhaps, in one quarter of an hour, and that in the agonies of death too. But as there is but one instance of God's free grace at the last hour mentioned in scripture, it is, says Mr. Burkitt, "that none might despair; and the reason there is but one, is that none might presume."

Well then, let us examine what passed on this thief; and we find that he and his companion, who seem to be condemned for one and the same crime, have no mention made of them till put upon the cross; nay, not even till after they were nailed up. And so

far from there being any marks of repentance in either of them, that they appear, even when hanging upon the cross, a couple of as fool-hardy wretches as ever suffered such a painful death.

For, could any one think it? these abandoned wretches nailed as they were, and hanging by four great wounds made through the most tender parts of their bodies were so monstrous fool-hardy, that even when the Jewish clergy came to revile and mock the Son of God in his dying agonies, I say, these monsters, though in the same agonies of body with him, did so brave it out, and were such proficient in the devil's school, as to re-echo the chief priest's blaspheming ridicule; for Matthew tells us, that 'the thieves cast the same in his teeth' that the priests and elders had done. And, says Mark, 'they that were crucified with him reviled him,' that is, mocked him.

Now can any vulture-eyed Socinian spy the least glimpse of even what they call repentance in either of these two monsters of iniquity? so far from it, that we may defy all the annals of antiquity to produce two such fool-hardy wretches in the extremity of pain and agony, and on the very borders of hell. For if ever man be in the least serious, surely we may expect it in his

expiring moments. But if Matthew and Mark are to be credited, not a grain of seriousness appeared in either of them; so that the Sociuians may as well tell us the devil is actually become an angel of light, as to tell us either of these thieves was a good sort of a man when brought to be executed.

As to St. Luke, he seems to take up the history of the thieves, just where Matthew and Mark left it, as his intent was to give us an extraordinary instance of redeeming love. And what says he? one of the malefactors railed on him, that is, continued to rail on him, as they had both begun to do; but the other rebuked him, that is afterwards, or else we must give both Matthew and Mark the lie, and say that they and Luke contradict each other; which we shall hardly allow to please the Socinians however.

But this instance of free and distinguishing grace shows us that the great God will do what he will with his own; and that it is not the perverseness of men that shall stop the current of God's love, but that he 'will work, and none shall let it.' For though here were two most abandoned wretches both alike for badness, yet one shall be taken and the other shall be left; and this proves the divinity of the Son of God, though himself was expiring in the most dreadful

agonies ; yet even then he could display his almighty power in the conversion of a most profligate sinner, and could despoil principalities and powers, and make a show openly of the trophy of his victory even upon the cross, by snatching a poor abandoned thief out of the devil's jaws, and taking him triumphantly to glory, through all the assembled troops of hell.

But now, lest some narrow-hearted work-monger should say this was strange proceeding in the Son of God, to make a vile wretch a companion for those glorious saints, who had served God many years, and bore the heat and burden of the day. The evangelist Luke takes care to let those see (who have eyes to see) that the whole regenerating work of the Spirit of God did pass upon this thief to as much perfection, as ever it did on any child of God since the foundation of the world.

The very question this thief begins with to his fellow-sufferer, proves that the first work of the Spirit was wrought. 'Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds.' By this question, 'Dost not thou fear God?' is plainly implied that for his part he did fear God.

Well then, 'the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.' But how came that fear there? Why, says God, 'I will put my fear in their hearts;' no fear of God in any heart, till God puts it there. And what did this fear teach him? Why to own and confess his sins; it struck him with convictions. We indeed justly, no palliating his crimes: but he owns his sentence was just, and the due reward of his deeds. And though the death of the cross was so terrible, yet being convinced of sin, he saw no severity in it.

This was repentance with a witness; and though the Socinians say he was not so bad, having only stole a little a long time ago; yet he does not say so; no, we indeed justly. And by his asking his companion, 'Dost thou not fear God?' proves his convictions were of the right sort; for whoever has the fear of God in his heart, is far from a selfish contracted spirit, but is always desirous that other people should have it too. And though the carnal world think God's people are for monopolizing the grace of God, yet I will appeal to all the converted people in the world, if their greatest concern is not to bring others to the knowledge of forgiveness of sins as well as themselves.

This made the apostle Paul wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake.

And this made this thief ask the other, 'Dost not thou fear God?' But does he rest here? no; that Spirit who let him see his sins, soon let him see his Saviour too; for he said unto Jesus (though he had just before called him a man) 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' Amazing! was ever faith like this? Lord! what? to a poor, despised, agonizing, dying man, whom he had heard all the religious people in Jerusalem insult and reproach as the vilest wretch that ever hung between the heaven and the earth, and whom he himself had a little before upbraided with the same opprobrious language; and now to say unto Jesus, Lord! Be astonished O heavens! and wonder O earth! was there any thing in that poor mangled bloody figure, whose face was more marred than any man's? was there any thing, I say, that could discover to this poor dying thief, that there hung the Lord Proprietor of heaven and earth? 'Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;' not God's kingdom, but thy kingdom, even the kingdom of heaven, which our Lord had declared he was king of before Pontius Pilate, which Paul says was 'witnessing a good confession.'

This proves Christ to be the mighty God, and this is the faith of all God's elect. The

Spirit always shows him to the converted soul as the God of the whole earth, for so says the prophet, shall he be called. Well, what answer does our Lord make? Does he say, Friend, thou art mistaken, thou shouldst pray to God to remember thee; I have enough to do to pray to God to remember myself? Does he say so? No; but amidst all the agonies of approaching death, with a majesty which became the Lord of heaven and earth, Jesus said unto him, 'Verily (he puts his Amen to it, the very oath that binds the eternal God) I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.'

By this you see, as our Lord lived so he died; in the midst of his most profound humility, he scrupled not to appropriate to himself his own primæval glory. It is but for Omnipotence to say I will, and thou shalt; and this was our Lord's constant practice through his whole life.

Well, but what says the thief to this absolute unconditional promise? Not a single word; no, his loudest fears were hushed. 'The peace of God which passeth all understanding,' took possession of his trembling heart, which made an instantaneous calm; as when the same Almighty Lord said to the raging sea, 'Peace, be still, and there was a great calm.' And when our Lord said,

‘ Verily I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise,’ the Spirit of God witnessed the promise, and sealed him an heir of glory; and *the effect of this was quietness and assurance for ever.*

Thus you see, it is but for the Lord Jesus Christ to put forth the Almighty fiat which spoke unnumbered worlds into being, and immediately new creatures arise before him; a new heart is given in a moment, and the vilest sinner metamorphosed into the greatest saint.

And now, my friends, what do you think of this expiring thief? You vulture-eyed Socinians, who tell us this thief was saved for his morality, are you not ashamed to act such a hellish thievish part as this, to rob the Son of God of the spoils of his cross? One would think the disposition of this thief when it left him, has ever since cleaved unto you like the leprosy of Naaman the Assyrian to the servant of Elisha, that you dare even to rob the eternal God in the face of the sun. But come, take a second view of this thief’s behaviour, and see now, admitting him to be the vilest wretch that ever lived when put upon the cross; whether the whole work of the Spirit of God, which prepares the soul for glory, did not pass upon him, though perhaps, in less than a quarter of an

hour. Was not the fear of God, the first work of the Spirit, found in him? And was not conviction and repentance unto life found in him, when he said, we indeed justly? And was not faith in Jesus Christ (such a faith at such a time, as to degree, which never man before nor since had) found in him? And was not remission of sins witnessed in his soul by the Holy Ghost, which silenced all the fears experienced by him?

And now do you know of any other thing that justifies a sinner in the sight of God, but 'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ,' do you, I say? Yes, you Socinians will answer, if he had not done good works before he came to the cross, Jesus Christ would not have saved him. Pray what do you call good works? Giving a farthing now and then to the poor, and going to church or meeting, and presenting long prayers before God, and doing no body any harm? Do you expect to be saved merely for doing this? O you treasonous creatures! such as you are the greatest enemies to the Son of God the world ever knew. Hear what our Lord said to your brother pharisees in his own time, 'Publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you?' and why? Because 'you go about to establish your own righteousness,

and will not submit to the righteousness of God.' But what says the scripture? 'With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' And did not the thief believe and confess all this? was not the tree of grace, demonstrated to be planted in his heart by the fruit of his lips? Surely it was.

But methinks I hear some say, True, God did save this thief without any good works, but then God foresaw that if he had lived, he would have done good works. Now this is quite as bad as saying he was a good man before he hung on the cross. For if you allow God has any foreknowledge at all; then, that fore-knowledge let God see he never would do any other works than what he did upon the cross; for foreknowledge of any thing supposes the thing must some time take place that is foreknown: But as this thief was never to do any good works, it is the greatest absurdity to say God foresaw, if he had lived, he would have done good works.

But do you think it possible for the Son of man to forgive sins? Or will you join issue with the council of Trent, and say there is no such thing as knowing one's sins forgiven, till the day of judgment? I know you Socinians will; but pray be so kind as not

to make your judgment the standard of decision. You might as well tell us there is no such place as Rome; and that because you have not seen it. But 'let God be true, and every man a liar.' There never was a child of God, but either mediately or immediately did know his sins forgiven: and so sensible was the church of England of this, that she declares, "All works done before this justification or forgiveness of sins are so far from being meritorious, that she doubts not but they have in them the nature of sin." And so sensible was the apostle Paul of this being the privilege of every believer, that he writes to some that he calls only little children; and yet we find their sins were forgiven them. Even David could glorify God, who had cast all his sins behind his back.

And how did the good people in every age know this? but 'by the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits that they were born of God.' And if repentance and remission of sins were by our Lord's express command to be preached to all the world, would it not be very strange if no body knew this remission of sins as well as they knew that they repented of sin? But as the pardon of sin from the very nature of the thief's behaviour was experienced by him,

so it is the privilege of every believer to 'know also that he is passed from death unto life,' even by the Spirit which God has given him.

ORATION XVI.

We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept.—Luke vii. 32.

It was particularly observed of him, who spake as never man spake, that 'without a parable, said he nothing to the people.' And as similies, borrowed from natural and familiar objects, seldom fail of conveying a speaker's meaning in the best and clearest manner to the understandings of his hearers, this method of teaching, our Lord always pursued. And though some of his parables appear to us, at this distance of place and time, not so easy to be understood, because we are unacquainted with the nature of the things from which they were borrowed; yet at the time when, and in the country where our Lord lived, there was no body so

ignorant but well understood the nature of his similitudes.

As for this parable which you, gentlemen, have desired me to make the subject of this oration; surely there is no body so immured from the world, but what must have observed how natural it is for children to resort and play with their companions in a market-place, which is commonly in a wide open part of a town. Now, says our Lord, (as if he seemed at a loss for similitudes trifling and despicable enough to which he might compare the Jewish nation) ‘whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation? And what are they like?’ At last he hits upon a parable which would represent them very contemptible indeed; says he, ‘The men of this generation are like unto children sitting in the market-place,’ who it seems had got very odd sort of play-fellows, who were so sullen that nothing could please them; for, say their companions, ‘We have piped unto you;’ and what then? One would expect to hear, they should have immediately begun to dance to the sound of the pipe; but we find they were so mopish, that they will not move a foot, not they.

But since piping will not do, their companions will try to touch their passions by another method—they mourned unto them;

that is, they sung them mournful tragical songs, which are apt to touch the tender passions, and set open the sluices of the eyes. But will this affect them? No, 'we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept.' So that we find those children were the most sullen, stupid creatures in the world, like so many senseless stones quite unmoved, either with piping or with mourning. And, as "men are but children of a larger growth," our Lord sets home this parable upon the men of that generation, and lets them know, that they had acted a part altogether as stupid as those sullen children. For God had sent John the Baptist in a weeping, mournful strain, to shew to the 'house of Israel their transgression, and to the children of Jacob their sin,' to alarm a stupid people with the thunder of God's vindictive judgments for a broken law. But, like the stupid children, this mournful ditty had no effect upon them; it did not so much as draw one tear from their eyes.

But will God leave them in this hardened condition without another trial? No; after him came our Lord himself, with an olive-branch of peace in his mouth, proclaiming every where the gospel's joyful sound, enough one would think to have moved the listening oaks; but what effect had our

Lord's soft warbling pipe? Why, they would not dance; like the deaf adder they would not hear the charmer's voice, which was enough to make the dead arise and leap for joy. But, instead of that, as John came in a dull mournful strain, and with a dejected aspect, and very much affecting solitude, they said of him, 'he hath a devil.' But as our Lord came in a more familiar way, being easy of access, and far from affecting an uncommon singularity, and frequently resorting amongst people of no great character for sanctity, they looked upon him as a 'gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.'

Thus you see the dispositions of the men of that generation; neither law nor gospel, neither John nor Christ would do; the one was too mournful, the other too joyful. For let God send whom he would, learned or unlearned, sons of consolation or sons of thunder, nothing could please them. So that, well might our Lord compare them to children sitting in the market-place, and saying one to another, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept.

But are we to stop here, and only apply this parable to our Lord's cotemporaries? Surely no; for though the Jewish people

were neither touched with grief at the preaching of the law, nor transported with joy at the preaching of the gospel, yet this parable is applicable to every age and nation, wherever the lively oracles of God shall come. And both this weeping and dancing which are signified in the parable, must be found in every individual of mankind in order to be happy, either here or hereafter. For our Lord declares, ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;’ and says the Psalmist, ‘He that now goeth on his way weeping, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him.’ And again, ‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.’

Therefore let us now consider,

First, The nature of this weeping, and what occasions it: And,

Secondly, The nature of this dancing, and what occasions that.

And, as no one stands neuter in this affair, we shall conclude with examining whether any of us have been in either or both of these conditions.

First then, by weeping, we are not to think it only means the shedding a few briny tears; if that was all, it would be no great

trouble to some people who are of such a crocodile nature, that their tears can flow whenever they please. And others are of such fluctuating spirits, and have so much of the watry element in their compositions, that they can both laugh and cry at one breath.

So we find a hypocritical Esau, when he had lost his father's blessing, could weep with an exceeding loud and bitter cry, and yet under all concealed the spirit of a murderer. But evangelical tears flow from proper motives.

We see the children thought their companions ought to have wept, because they mourned unto them: and their expectations were reasonable; for weeping is of an affecting nature, and people of a tender disposition can hardly avoid it when they have examples before them. This made Horace say, "If you would have me weep, do you show me the way by weeping yourself." And that which ought to have been the occasion of those children's weeping, was their companions mourning unto them.

And let me here observe by the way, that the great God deals with men as rational creatures; he does not send angels nor disembodied spirits to be their instructors, but men of like passions with themselves; our

fellow-sinners, our companions, God has ordained to teach us. For we are to be 'drawn by the cords of a man.' Hence it is that when the great God himself condescended to become a teacher of righteousness, 'he was found in fashion of a man,' and was 'tempted in all things like unto his brethren.' And no less than thirty-two times in the evangelists he is stiled the Son of man. And though he was without sin, yet being tempted like other men, he knew how to succour others.

And though you find an angel was sent to Cornelius, yet he was not permitted to instruct him; but Cornelius must needs send for one Simon, whose sir-name was Peter, and he was to 'tell him what he must do.' Thus you see God's ordinary teachings are to be conveyed to us by our companions. But how are they to teach us? Why, says the great God to the prophet, 'Son of man, show to the house of Israel their transgressions, and to the children of Jacob their sin.' And how is this to be done, but by explaining the purity of God's righteous law, as our Lord did in his sermon upon the mount? And sometimes God so directs his preachers to explain those branches of the moral law which their hearers have violated (as when Paul was led to reason of temperance,

righteousness, and judgment to come) that the most stout-hearted, like Felix, is made to tremble.

Nay, there is something of such a mournful nature in the moral law, that at the giving of it, Moses himself could not help crying out, 'I exceedingly fear and tremble;' and wherever the law is preached with the demonstration of the Spirit, and with power, O Sirs! the preachers of it may well say, we have mourned unto you; for indeed it is the ministration of condemnation, and lays all mankind under its dreadful curse, whether they know it or not; though the generality of people sit as easy, under the thunders and lightnings of God's holy law, as a smith's dog under an anvil, when the sparks of fire fly around him.

But where the law has executed its office, and convinced the soul of sin, let me ask you, that have felt its condemning power, whether or no it has not been to you an occasion of weeping; that is, whether it has not forced you, from a felt sense of your lost condition, to cry out with the trembling gaoler, 'what must we do to be saved?' It had such an effect upon the great Colonel Gardiner, that it forced him to say, he really thought God could not be just unless he condemned him.

Such then is the effect the law of God ought to have ; that instead of men endeavouring to save themselves by it, they ought to be convinced that in the eye of the law they are condemned criminals, reserved for the execution of vindictive justice. And if this be not a weeping condition, I know not what is ; and by our Lord's introducing the children, as saying, ' we have mourned unto you, and ye have not wept ;' surely it insinuates that they ought to have wept. And though this same stupid insensibility may be charged home upon the greatest part of mankind, yet wherever the law executes its office in any soul, a weeping condition immediately follows.

This was the state David was in, when he so earnestly cried out, ' Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord ! for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' And this must have been the state of the apostle Paul, when the law found him and slew him ; for who that hears that dreadful, mournful sentence, ' Cursed is every one that continueth not in all the things that are written in the book of the law to do them : ' who, I say, that has the least concern for his soul, can help shedding (if it were possible) tears of blood ? Nay, so sensible does David appear to be of the dreadful condition

of those who are under the curse of the law, that, says he, mine eyes gush out with water, because men keep not thy law.' And so very sensible was the prophet Jeremiah of the mournful state of those who had transgressed the moral law, that he laments over them as already dead, when he breaks out in this affecting language ; ' Oh ! that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.'

Thus you see, how mournful the dispensation of the law is ; and yet, ' tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon,' though the God of eternal truth has declared, that, ' as many as are under the law are under the curse ;' yet every individual of mankind to whom the law has not been a matter of weeping, is seeking to save himself, by his partial obedience to something which he calls a law ; though such a procedure is altogether as preposterous as for a man to run into a burning fire to cool himself.

By this time, I take it for granted, that those who have eyes to see, cannot help seeing how absolutely necessary it is for the law to execute its condemning sentence in the soul of man, and produce what the parable means by weeping ; or else it will be

impossible that any one should dance at the sound of the gospel pipe. For what is the gospel but a free pardon to a condemned criminal, to one who is tied and bound (as our church expresses it) with the chain of his sins, to one whom the law has condemned in the court of his own conscience? Such then, and such only who have been made to weep under a sense of guilt, being weary and heavy-laden, will be made to dance to the gospel's joyful pipe.

But, as for your dead, dry, pharisaical formalists, who see no distinction between law and gospel, but who are thanking God they are not like this or the other notorious publican, surely they may well be compared to the children in the market; for they will neither weep at the mournful dispensation of the law, nor dance at the jubilee pipe of the gospel.

But now, in the second place, let me show the nature of this dancing, and what occasions it; and to illustrate this, suppose any of us were to visit a condemned criminal in one of the dark cells in Newgate, who every day expected his death-warrant to be signed, do you think it not reasonable to expect to find him weeping and lamenting his dreadful situation? In the midst of his distress, suppose a messenger should that instant come, and

instead of presenting the criminal with his death-warrant, should present him with a free pardon from the king ; do you think it would be in the power of words to describe the sudden, the surprizing transport which must then overflow his trembling heart ? And after that, should he be told that a pardon was not all, but that a place of honour was assigned him at court ; can you conceive but that he would be so amazingly overcome, as hardly to survive the joyful news ? Well now, just such in a spiritual sense is the case of every convinced sinner, when under the condemning sentence of God's righteous law. He has been tried in the court of his own conscience ; the law of God has condemned him ; and he only waits, as in a doleful cell, till the day of execution. But behold, before he is aware, the gospel-pipe sounds liberty to the captives, and the opening the prison door to them that are bound, and declares, all that curse and condemnation, which a wounded sinner labours under the sense of, was borne by Christ in his own body upon the tree ; and that by the blood of his covenant all his prisoners are set free ; and that justice, the most tremendous of all the attributes of God, can with honour say, Let this and that man go, ' for I have found a ransom.'

When this great, this free salvation, is set home by the Spirit of God to the guilty soul, either under the preaching of the gospel, or by reading the word of God, what is the consequence? Just the same in a spiritual sense, as with the criminal in a natural sense; the soul immediately 'passeth from death unto life:' the man that was one hour in the dungeon of despair, is the next delivered from all his fears and terrors, and may be compared to a bird escaped out of the snare of the fowler. And after this, when he sees that he is not only 'translated out of the kingdom of satan,' but that he is 'brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son,' and that he is 'an heir of God,' and even 'a joint-heir of Jesus Christ;' then, instead of looking upon God as an angry judge, he now sees him as a reconciled Father in Christ.

Now is there any one who has heard the sound of the gospel-pipe, so as to be thus made alive by its quickening power, but who indeed dances for joy?

But, methinks I hear some say, you have carried matters too far; there are but few of God's children that have been in either of these conditions to that degree you talk of. Indeed, I must own there is a great deal of difference in men's natural constitutions;

and what greatly affects one, will have less effect upon another ; but far be it from me to say how much, or how long any one is to be under this weeping dispensation, or to prescribe to what height his joy is to arise, when salvation is applied to his soul, by the gospel-pipe. But this I must say, without a man is first brought to see himself condemned by the law, he never is so blessed as to see himself justified by faith in Christ. ‘ The Spirit blows when and where he listeth ;’ and it is impossible to say, in how short a time a man may experience, what has been explained by weeping and dancing.

But as there is not a gift nor a grace of the Spirit, but what the devil often counterfeits, he can mimic both this weeping and this dancing in the soul of man : therefore we are exhorted by the apostle to ‘ examine ourselves whether we are in the faith.’ Let us see whether from the time we experienced what is here meant by dancing, the whole course of our lives be changed ; whether we act from a dead or a living principle. If we are still upon the old sandy foundation of working for life, we may be sure the devil has only been deceiving us with counterfeit sorrow and counterfeit joy ; but if our actions flow from a living principle, even from a principle of love to God, believing ‘ he hath

first loved us ;' and if we love all mankind in and for God, we shall then act from life received, and shall show forth our faith by our works, and the tree will prove itself to be good by the good fruit which it bears ; and though there be a great deal of counterfeit weeping and dancing in the world, yet it does not follow that there is no real evangelical weeping and dancing.

And by this parable our Lord plainly shews what a stupid wretched condition those people actually are in, who are in the same manner unaffected both with law and gospel, as these children were with piping and with mourning. And now, my friends, let us examine how stands the case with any, or all of us ? You may wonder why I so often address you upon subjects of this kind, but the reason of it is this : Our society is the world in epitome ; and as all are welcome here, without exception, it may be, curiosity may chance to bring some of your gay unthinking gentry amongst us, in order to kill a little time in hearing what the babblers say ; though, perhaps, from one year's end to another, they can by no means spare an hour to spend either at church or meeting ; but, that they may at least be without excuse, they are insensibly, as it were, brought to hear the mourning of the law, and the

pipings of the gospel. And as most of my subjects tend but to two points, namely, to humble the pride of men, and to exalt the great Redeemer's righteousness: Let me conclude with telling you, that I take it for granted there are three sorts of people here, namely, those who have heard the gospel-pipe: those who have only heard the mournful dispensation of the law: and those who have never distinguished the sound either of law or gospel.

You that have heard the gospel-pipe, and have danced at the joyful sound, though you may have heard it from your companions at an alehouse, I dare say you will never repent. You that may be under the thunders of the law, remember, God first kills before he makes alive. You that are in the case of the stupid children, and quite unaffected with either of these sounds, do you remember likewise, if you live and die in this condition, you shall be forced to bear a chorus, whether you will or no, in that doleful concert, where the music will be '*weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth,*' through the endless ages of a boundless eternity.

THE END.

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