

rious subjects, without a sufficient reason, is not more singular, than he is reprehensible for the hurtful tendency of his singularity.

Could, indeed, the literal sense of this text be proved to be absurd, it would be our duty to give it up. But if we admit the existence of evil spirits, who will tell us exactly, what they can or cannot do? It is enough for us to know, let their powers be what they may, that they cannot do any thing which is truly miraculous; and that they cannot compel us to do any thing which is mischievous, or offensive unto God.

In the temptation which is now before us, Satan made no attempt to throw down the Son of God from the summit of the temple. Such an action exceeded the limits of his permission, and was equally inconsistent with his malevolent design. His object was to seduce Christ to do something unworthy of himself; and however, by any medium, he may alarm, or allure mankind, HURT THY-
SELF,

SELF, is, to every individual, the final end of all his temptations.

Our Lord had said, in his first reply to Satan, It is written; and here those words are retorted, and perverted. Cast thyself down, said Satan, for, It is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee. This perversion of the text, our Lord exposes, not by saying it is unfairly quoted, and improperly applied, (which, however, was the fact,) but by observing, It is written AGAIN, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Happy had it been for thousands, who have resisted unto blood, if their tempters, and tormentors, that loudly urged upon them, It is written, had but considered what answer Christ returned to Satan when that adversary produced a written text to countenance the worst of crimes. Had these rash people but considered, It is written AGAIN, it might have produced a careful comparing one part of the sacred writings with another, and have led them to the true sense of those

things which they only fancied they understood. But the scripture must be fulfilled; and this among others: Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.

Where quotations are important, from the authority of the writings from whence they are selected, care should be taken that they are in *point*, and that nothing is urged from any text which it will not bear, or which is inconsistent with the present œconomy of grace. Our ablest lawyers, in their legal pleadings, are most exact in their appeals to written reports. But it is one of the felicities of the gentlemen at the bar, to plead in the presence of accurate judges; whereas many who are permitted to step into pulpits, seem to take it for granted, that their quotations will not be canvassed, that their arguments will not be inspected, nor their sermons ever become the subjects of sober examination.—
There are, however, preachers who never
dream

dream of such indulgence ; but always suppose that some of their hearers are not deficient in religious understanding ; who rejoice in that belief, who wish to be approved by such judges, and who are neither elated by extravagant praise, nor dejected by impertinent reproofs.

The THIRD temptation is stated thus :— Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down, and worship me.

Of this exceeding high mountain, the ancients have wisely said but little. But some of the moderns, with less of reverence for the silence of the sacred scripture, have said a great deal too much. For my own part, I will neither venture to give it any name, nor question where it stood, or what might be its form.

To assert, that by all the kingdoms of the world, the Roman empire is alone intended, is destitute of wit, and without a grain of wisdom. For all the kingdoms of the world might as well be shewn in a moment's time, as the Roman empire. The fact seems to have been this; that the body of Christ was again removed, and now, from the pinnacle of the temple to some very high mountain, to give the greater air of probability to a deceptive exhibition. This deception, however daring, was consistent enough with the horrid proposition it was intended to introduce.

All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. What could be more audacious or absurd? To be sure, there is nothing which depraved minds covet more strongly than external dominion. Only in the THRONE, said Pharaoh to Joseph, will I be greater than thou. But what a foolish proposition was the offer of every earthly throne to Jesus Christ, whose kingdom was
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not of this world—especially by such an agent, and on such a *promising* condition!

That the devices of Satan are sometimes fraught with surprising sagacity, must be admitted; but that our great adversary is sometimes as foolish as he is wicked, I cannot doubt. Revelation allows us to suppose it, and when we consider against whom his wrath is kindled, it is rational to suppose, that some of his schemes would be full of infatuation.

Yet, however it has happened, the common notion is, that there is no want of light, of order, and of unanimity, among wicked spirits. But how does this appear? I will venture to say, for this popular imagination, there is not one argument it would not be easy to answer. The same fallacy has been applauded when applied to wicked men. For it has been supposed, that the servants of Satan are always as shrewd as they are prophane. But those who have sold themselves to work wickedness, however they have been
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set up, have always been as silly in some of their capital pursuits, as in other instances of their opposition to religious wisdom, they have been sagacious.

In proportion as I find any man to be very wicked, I expect to find him very foolish; and the nearer he approaches to the diabolical nature, the more I am confident, that his absurdities must be such as cannot be very long concealed.

To this last insult of the DEVIL, our Lord instantly replied, Get thee hence, Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Satan, being thus rebuked, departed; vanquished indeed, but in nothing mended by the just rebuke.

After this victory, and Satan's retreat from the Son of God, it is said, Behold, angels came, and ministered unto him. This undoubtedly they did with the greater pleasure, as they themselves had resisted the same
seducer,

seducer, when other angels had been deceived by him into the inextricable abyss of disobedience. We see, that neither poverty, nor the worst of temptations, made the Elect angels reluctant to wait on him that was victorious. Let us rejoice, that for his sake, they are sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.

Having thus glanced at those temptations which our Lord effectually surmounted, the following *miscellaneous* remarks will bring us to the close of this discourse.

I. In each of these temptations, the malice of the Tempter seems to be equally levelled at the Father and the Son. For, in the first of them, Christ was tempted to despair of parental protection. In the second, to presume upon it. In the third, to forget his father's glory; or, rather, to transfer it to the worst of Beings.

II. The importance of Christ's being the Son of God, appears in a strong light, from
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the manner in which he was tempted to doubt of that fact, or to disgrace himself in that distinguished condition. The enmity of Satan was fired at the apprehension. He knows, that religion is founded on relation; and that only as the latter subsists, and is enjoyed, will the former be regarded, and esteemed. His enmity descends to those who are predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ; nor is there any temper he so much endeavours to destroy, as the spirit of adoption. While that spirit continues, the Father of all our mercies must be adored, and he that would prevent it is abhorred. Consider how much depends on filiation. If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. But if not children, where is our inheritance? What is our victory? and what our conversation?

III. Though Christ was the Son of God, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: and, from his preparatory exercises, his future greatness might have been predicted. He did not appear to John till he was
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fully ripe for that solemn interview. When he was baptized, he was not elated by the voice which proclaimed his glory, nor eager to reap immediate applause. On the contrary, we have seen, that he retired into the wilderness ; not as a *monk*, to lead an inactive life, or to draw after him a deluded crowd ; for the people knew not whither he was gone ; no, he went thither to face his most formidable adversary in secret, to resist his repeated efforts, and after conquest, to return, and to live and die in public, as Jesus Christ the righteous ; and as such, to be the only advocate who should, in every age, save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him.

Our Lord obtained a double triumph over Satan. One in secret, and one upon the cross. Both were glorious, but it is by his atonement that believers joy in God, and receive strength to follow his example. Paul was fully convinced of this, when he said, God forbid, that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world :

world: and with this conviction, he was so far from being negligent of his own spiritual improvement, that he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; and that too, with such holy vigor, that he could say, without a blush for his being so bold, Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so, as ye have us for an ensample.

IV. Though there is much in the character of Christ which was never intended for our imitation, yet in the present view of it, there are those things which must be regarded, if we hope to rise above indiscreet applause. For instance, his repeated retirements from the world, his acquaintance with the scripture, his addiction to prayer, his neither seeking, nor declining temptation, his conquest over those that approached him while he was led of the Spirit, the simplicity of his intention, ever directed to the glory of his Father, his courage always to pursue what he knew to be a part of his mission, whatever others thought, or said, of his behaviour;

haviour; these things were essential to his future fame; and it is certain, that none can be very famous in the church of God, at any less expence.

By what spirit then are they led, who rush upon the public, as ministers of Christ, while they are at once unqualified to teach, and unwilling to be taught? If ye meet with such men, either denying the promised assistance of the holy Spirit, or ascribing unto him the worst of errors, or the worst of tempers, beware! Such men are confined to no religious party: they may be found where ye least expect them, and sometimes, they will not be found in the most suspicious situations.

V. I shall only add, that a remark which some reputable pædobaptists have made on this period of our Lord's temptations, seems to be more inconsistent than might have been expected. Observe, say they, that temptations usually follow baptism, the beginnings of spiritual life, and covenants made with God. Such are the words of one celebrated Commentator,

tor, and others speak to the same effect. But I cannot conceive, how they who contend for the sprinkling of infants, who act on that notion, and call it baptism, should exhort their readers to observe these things. For what temptations immediately follow that aspersion of infants which they enjoin? What beginnings of spiritual life does the sprinkled child enjoy? or what covenants does it make with God?

To how many conflicts *believers* may be exposed, after publickly owning their confidence in Christ, and being baptized in his name, is another question: and what consolations they may derive from his temptations, and from his ability to succour them that are tempted, is a pleasing consideration. That many pædobaptists are eminently endowed with spiritual blessings is undisputed; but none are blessed in such abundance as to be exempt from mistake; nor is any mistake the better, because it gains the sanction of the learned, the esteem of the pious, or the vote of the multitude from age to age.

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To conclude; temptations to real Christians are unavoidable. They may say to God, Lead us not into the power of temptation; but they cannot pray in faith, never to meet with temptation, affliction, or death. Nor need they wish for such indulgence. It is enough for them to know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called, according to his purpose. It is enough for them to believe, that if their temptations are manifold, they are limited; that if they produce heaviness, it is only for a season, and if need be; and, that the grace of Christ is, and ever will be sufficient for them. May that grace be with all our spirits!
AMEN.

S E R M O N VII.

ON THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

LUKE iv. 14.

AND JESUS RETURNED IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT
INTO GALILEE; AND THERE WENT OUT A FAME
OF HIM THROUGHOUT ALL THE REGION ROUND
ABOUT.

THOUGH the human nature of Christ was possessed of that degree of excellence which no man but himself ever enjoyed, yet, not to the limited, and dependent excellence of that nature, but to the power of the Spirit, are his mightiest works ascribed.

By the holy Spirit he was led into the wilderness, and there became victorious; and, still led by the same Spirit, he returned, not
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to Jerusalem, but into Galilee; from whence, as we have seen, he came to John to be baptized.

In Galilee, he was to begin his public ministrations, and there, his first miracles were to be wrought; and from thence, were his Apostles, in general, to be called. It was not, therefore, a natural love to the place of his private education, which drew him back to that obscure abode; but a divine impulse, in order to fulfil that prophecy which he alone was born to accomplish.

Isaiah had said, The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the shadow of death, upon them hath light shined. These things said Isaiah of Galilee of the nations; and these things were fulfilled, when Christ taught in their synagogues, preached to them the gospel of his kingdom, and healed all manner of disease among the people.

By thus fulfilling what Isaiah had predicted,

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there went out a fame of him, throughout all the region round about. Well it might. For what could be famous, if that which Christ did, and taught, was not? But his fame was, by no means, to be confined to a single region, country, or nation. It was to fly to the ends of the earth, and to flourish when the elements shall melt with fervent heat, when the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Even while he lived in Judea, his fame so increased that his enemies said, This man doth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and, since his death, and resurrection, it is evident, that God hath given him a name, which is above every name; that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.

Of the *teaching* of Christ, we are to take some notice of the following discourse; this therefore, shall be chiefly confined to those miraculous operations of our Lord, by which his fame was inevitably spread abroad.

But

But let us FIRST confider what a miracle is ; and then, what may be ASSERTED of the miracles of Jesus Christ.

I. What a miracle is, I have already ventured to give my opinion*. But it is very difficult to produce such a definition of a miracle as shall be liable to no exception. Something redundant, or defective, is, perhaps, unavoidable in every verbal definition of a miracle : and, I am afraid, in most of those verbal definitions which so frequently occur, on all sorts of subjects. But on the present, it may be sufficient to say, that a real miracle is an event which cannot be accounted for, either by the operation of the known general laws of nature, or by ascribing the miracle to any finite Being, or to any thing which has been huddled up under the name of chance.

A learned foreigner is of opinion, that miracles are of two distinct orders. Those of

* See page 63.

the *first* order, he thinks are miracles in the strictest sense of the term, or unusual supernatural effects, which were only produced by the ALMIGHTY ; and, by their being *unusual*, he supposes, they are sufficiently distinguished from other supernatural effects, which, being frequent, are not, in his opinion, to be considered as miracles. Those of the *second* order, he says, are effects which cannot be produced by us, though they may be produced by creatures of a superior rank ; and, in proof this proposition, he quotes several passages of scripture.

But to this account, I have two objections. First, miracles would not cease to be miracles, were they ever so frequent : because the sphere of a miracle is of no great extent ; and therefore, however repeated, the extraordinary operation would still be distinguished from the wide-surrounding, and common course of things. Secondly, the scriptures which the learned author has produced for miracles of a second sort, are such as do not
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speak of real miracles* ; and whatever is called a miracle in condescension to popular belief, must not pass for argument on this serious subject.

But the better to conceive what a miracle is, let us consider *on what* miracles are wrought, and *to whom* the stupendous power of performing what is *truly* miraculous, may be safely ascribed.

1. It is clear, miracles are only wrought on that which is *created*. But all that God hath created, all at least that we have heard of, is MATTER and MIND.

If there be any thing miraculous wrought on *material* agents, this supposes a known, and settled course of nature, governed by those laws which the ALMIGHTY hath established and preserves ; and the miracle consists in a real, and evident deviation from those laws ; for where there is no deviation

* Deut. xiii. 1. John v. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 9.