

“ Jesus had a two-fold character: the one, of a messenger from God *simply*, with the tidings of salvation: the other, of a messenger promised, under the title of the *Messiah*. His credentials, under each of these characters, were *miracles*. Those worked by him in his life, as credentials, referred to a divine messenger *simply*: that of the resurrection, at his death, respected his other character of *Messiah*, or a divine messenger *promised*: and the *necessity* of this miracle may be seen even from hence, that the ancient prophets had foretold it.—The very *nature* of the CHRISTIAN dispensation likewise, required of *necessity*, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Christianity is the restoration of lapsed and forfeited man, to life and immortality, from the power and dominion of death. But the course of human nature continuing the same, after this restoration, which it held before; and death still visibly existing, though it had lost its sting, there seemed to be need of some *sensible* evidence, to evince the truth of this entire change of the order of things. And this restoration being procured at the price of  
the

the death and sufferings of Christ, sacrificed on the cross ; when the price was paid, and paid thus *visibly*, the nature of the compact demanded, that the benefit should be as *visibly* possessed and enjoyed ; and both one and the other, openly exemplified in the *same* person. If the REDEEMER himself was not seen to enjoy the fruits of the redemption procured, what HOPES had remained for the rest of mankind ? Would not the natural conclusion have been, that the expedient of *Redemption*, by the death and sacrifice of Jesus, had proved ineffectual ? This is the conclusion which Saint Paul himself makes : IF CHRIST BE NOT RAISED, YOUR FAITH IS VAIN, YE ARE YET IN YOUR SINS : SO necessarily connected, in his opinion, was THIS MIRACLE with the very essence of the *Christian* religion. But now, adds the apostle, is Christ risen, and become the FIRST fruits of them that slept ; i. e. his resurrection is the thing which both *assured* and *sanctified* all that were to follow. For the Jewish *first fruits*, to which the expression alludes, were of the

*nature*, and secured the *plenty*, of the approaching harvest.

But, in matters of religion, as that which is *necessary* in one view, is never without its *uses and expediences* in another, it may be proper to illustrate this truth before we proceed.

The heathen world had a general notion of *another life*. But the resurrection of this mortal body never once entered into their imagination.—Nay, so little did the doctrine of the resurrection of the body enter into their most improved conceptions, that when at Athens, the very seat of science, St. Paul preached *JESUS and the RESURRECTION*, they took the second enunciation to be, like the first, a new *DIVINITY*, a certain goddess called *Anastasis*.

With all their prejudices, so unfavourable to the resurrection of the body, nothing less than the best attested *MIRACLE* in confirmation of it, could have reconciled the Gentile world to the credibility of so incredible a doctrine.

This

This may be said with the greater confidence, since St. Paul himself, on this occasion, appears to have been of the same opinion. For when he had rectified their mistake concerning JESUS and the RESURRECTION, and had given them a precise account of the doctrine of the gospel, in which he explained to them, that the *resurrection* meant *a resurrection from the dead*, he adds—*whereof God hath given ASSURANCE, IN THAT HE HATH RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD.*

Thus hath this capital MIRACLE, the *seal* of our Redemption, all the evidence for its truth, which can arise either from its *necessity*, or its *use*. It was proclaimed by the public decrees of the Father; and accomplished to verify the character of the Son, and to facilitate the progress of his gospel. Causes so important, that we can conceive none more worthy the care of the Lord of the Universe; viz. than that what had been promised, should be fulfilled; and what was now preached, should be miraculously confirmed.

After so strong *internal* evidence to prove it *right and fit to be done*, all that was wanting to establish it, was the *external*, to prove it *actually done* : and this St. Paul pours out with a very liberal hand\*.”

2. Here, I close my quotation : and if these remarks meet with your applause, the *external* evidence of the resurrection of Christ will be better understood : and, I will venture to say, while they are properly esteemed, the minute objections which infidels make to the witnesses of our Lord's resurrection, will not disturb your peace ; nor will you be drawn by them, into frivolous controversies and absurd disputes.

\* This long quotation is taken from Bishop Warburton's discourse *On the Resurrection*, in the quarto edition of his works, vol. V. p. 473.—As his works are but little known among the generality of my acquaintance, and as some of my friends are prejudiced against that learned prelate, by the licentious effusions of an immoral poet, and by the outcries of enthusiasts, I was the more willing to do him justice in my connections.—A man, in my opinion, that will be revered, when all his enemies, the mighty and the mean, are either forgotten, or mentioned with disgust.

When

When the witnesses to a common fact vary, in unessential circumstances, from one another, it is sometimes, though not always, a diminution to its credit. For human testimony being that on which *alone* it stands, whatever impeaches THAT, weakens the credibility of the fact. But, in an act *miraculous*, the first ground of its stability being its *internal* evidence, where human testimony hath realized that, such variety takes little from its credit, which stands upon those *two* supports: the testimony that the thing was done, resting on the strong foundation, that it was fit and necessary to be done\*.

Of the *external* evidence of this fact, I shall only further observe, we meet with the same witnesses of it, in general, that have been already introduced in these Lectures†. When we consider their number, which exceeds five hundred, the influence which our Redeemer's resurrection had upon their own minds, and, by their preaching, and the

\* Bp. WARBURTON. † See SERMON VII.

power of the Holy Ghost, on the minds of others, and that all this had been, for time immemorial, the subject of the most sacred predictions, the evidence is complete. For, if these things may be rationally rejected, it is impossible to say what kind of evidence, on the same subject, could be rationally received.

II. The resurrection of Christ may be considered as a fact of the greatest IMPORTANCE.

For if Christ be not risen, then, saith Paul, to the Corinthians, is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ :—but if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. He adds, If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable : and concludes irresistably, in the words of our text, But now is  
Christ

Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.

Such were the arguments used by St. Paul, to confirm the reality, and importance of our Lord's resurrection from the dead : but they were urged by him, with becoming dignity ; without being either minute, or tedious ; which may teach us, that when we have done justice to any subject peculiar to revelation, we may safely leave it, without attempting to gratify the claims of impertinence, or the folly of the foolish ; and without being terrified at the appearance of idle objections.

We may be much better employed ; and shall be so, if we recollect, that when Christ rose from the dead, he who was delivered for our offences, rose again for our justification, to be himself the ground of our greatest triumph.—Who is he that condemneth ? It is Christ that died ; yea, rather that is risen again ; who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. These are glad tidings. Embrace them, and you will



will bid defiance to delusion and despair. But, should you reject the gospel, delusive hopes will gain admittance into your minds, and when they are chased away, you will be abandoned to extreme distress.

But you know, my brethren, that when Christ rose from the dead, he was then declared to be the Son of God with power, and made it evident he was possessed of that power, by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself; of that power that shall bring to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!

Nevertheless remember, that as believers are begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and from it expect complete salvation, they who believe unto the saving of the soul, *exercise* themselves to have always a conscience void of offence, towards God, and towards man. Nor forget, that they who were buried with Christ, by baptism, into death, were thus buried, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead,

dead,

dead, by the glory of the father, even so they also should walk in newness of life.

What that walk is, you may learn from the sixth of Romans, and the third of Philipians. In the latter, to be made *conformable to the death of Christ*, seems to be the proper, and peculiar fruit of his resurrection: but what we are to understand by that phrase, or how a blessing of such importance is to be enjoyed by us, you will not now expect me to say.—I shall only add, seeing as believers, ye are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. AMEN!

## APPENDIX

A P P E N D I X

T O

S E R M O N XIII.

---

*AS* these discourses are *now* addressed to the eye, and not to the ear, a Postscript, or an Appendix, may occasionally be admitted without impropriety.

The occasion of the present Appendix was some recent reflections on these words, BEING MADE CONFORMABLE TO HIS DEATH. Having mentioned this duty, at the close of the preceding sermon, as the proper, and peculiar fruit of our Lord's resurrection, I have ventured to add a few thoughts upon it in this place.

It is a mistake to imagine that any person  
can

can be conformable to the death of Christ who is not a believer in him. Formerly, to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God; even to them that believed on his name. The same order is still preserved; and out of it, neither our communion with Christ, nor our being made conformable to his death, can be rationally expected.

It is also a mistake to imagine, that our acting agreeably to the death of Christ should be confined by us, either to our repentance, or rejoicing, or to any one temper, or duty, belonging to Christianity. The death of Jesus Christ was undoubtedly designed to answer many important ends; and he that would magnify some of them to depreciate the rest, acts inconsistently with the perfection of that atonement, and is likely to injure others by his contracted disposition.

It is a mistake still more pernicious to aim, if I may so express it, to be more conformable to the death of Christ, than the leading purpose

pose of his oblation will admit. Of his atonement it may be said, Nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it. If, therefore, any man conceives he is to fill up that which is said to be behind of the afflictions of Christ, by the *merit* of his own sufferings, he indulges a gross mistake ; deprives himself of that joy and peace which proper thoughts of the vicarious sufferings of Christ produce, and of that genuine, and pleasing humility which they bring forth.

It is likewise a mistake to imagine that even believers can be conformable to the death of Christ by their own unassisted efforts : they are, all of them, inadequate to this effect ; and if they were not, the consequence of succeeding by their own power, would, in no wise agree with the design of our being redeemed from sin and death by Jesus Christ ; which is, that no flesh should glory in the presence of God ; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Yet, it is a mischievous mistake for  
any

any believer to imagine he should ever cease from exerting his best endeavours to be more and more conformable to the death of Christ. Paul, after long and eminent acquaintance with him, did not think himself perfect; but still endeavoured to apprehend that for which he himself had been apprehended. This one thing, said he, I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Let me now add, that, in my opinion, some of the most important instances of our being conformable to the death of Christ, are in our having proper views of sin and grace, of duty, of our own sufferings, and our own departure.

Our views of *sin* are conformable to the death of Christ, when we believe it is by us inexpressible, and that while it dwelleth in us, it ever is without excuse; when we believe there is not any sin irremissible to him who receives the atonement; none which cannot

Y

be

be mortified through the Spirit, none that shall have real dominion over him who is not under the law, but under grace.

Our views of *grace* are conformable to the death of Christ, when we believe that where sin abounded, grace did much more abound, and that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.—With these views of sin and of grace, we shall perceive that when we esteem the latter, we are as welcome to enjoy it as the Apostles themselves; and, thus encouraged, we shall conclude, that, by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they.

Our views of *duty* are conformable to the death of Christ, when we believe that the law of the spirit of life which is in him, hath made us free from the law of sin and death; when we perceive that what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, by sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, hath done, and hath condemned sin in  
the

the flesh of Christ, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.—As, with proper evidence, we believe these things, our duty will be rightly placed, and well performed : it will be done unto the Lord, and for his glory, with cheerfulness, and with humility ; and therefore, comparatively speaking, it will be vigorous, extended, and lasting.

Our views of those *sufferings* to which, as Christians, we may be exposed, are conformable to the death of Christ, when they are surveyed with the same judgment, and sustained in the same spirit, that so happily distinguished the primitive believers. They reckoned that their sufferings were not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed in them. They believed it was better, if such was the will of God, that they should suffer for well-doing than for evil doing. They rejoiced therefore, inasmuch as they were partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory should be revealed, they might be glad with exceeding



joy. In short, they suffered as real Christians, both in respect of the cause of their sufferings, and in respect of their tempers: they were not therefore ashamed of the cross of Christ, but glorified God in their most fiery trials, and tremendous temptations.

Lastly; our views of our own *departure* are conformable to the death of Christ, when we believe that through death, he has destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; when we believe that the sting of death is thus removed, and that by the invincible power of our risen Redeemer, death shall be swallowed up in victory.—May we every day renew and enlarge our acquaintance with him that died for our sins according to the scriptures, and so know him, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, as to be able to say, For us to live is Christ, and to die is gain! AMEN!

SERMON

S E R M O N XIV.

ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST.

EPHESIANS IV. 10.

HE THAT DESCENDED IS THE SAME ALSO THAT ASCENDED UP, FAR ABOVE ALL HEAVENS, THAT HE MIGHT FILL ALL THINGS.

---

AT the Incarnation, the heavenly host praised the Almighty, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men : and, when our Lord ascended, creatures the most exalted and depressed, again rejoiced in God with superior satisfaction.

David, prophesying of this blissful event, said, The chariots of God are twenty thousand

sand, even thousands of angels : the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. He added, Thou hast ascended on high ; thou hast led captivity captive : thou hast received gifts for men ; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them.

In another place, speaking of the same event, he said, God is gone up with a shout, the Lord, with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises : sing praises to our king, sing praises.—Nor are his ardent expressions in the twenty-fourth psalm, inferior to these, either in eloquence, or in their evangelical importance.

The words of our text are taken from the sixty-eighth psalm. In it, the *person* who ascended, the *sublimity* of his ascent, and the *grace* which he displayed on his ascension, are equally conspicuous.—These are subjects worth your notice ; and, on each of them, I wish to say something worthy of your attention in this lecture.

I. Let

I. Let us take some notice of the PERSON who ascended.

This was the *same* that descended ; and, from what has been delivered, in a former lecture, on the Incarnation of Christ, you are, I hope, convinced that this person *was*, and is, THE SON OF GOD.

There is something wonderfully grand in *personal* existence. Things inanimate, and creatures irrational, may be more numerous, vast, varied, and externally brilliant than persons ; but they are none of them equal in dignity, none of them equal in duration, to the children of men.

Amongst those who are possessed of personal excellence, we are accustomed to speak of three orders ; human, angelic, and divine. Of the latter, we have heard of no more than THREE persons : and of *these*, it is the SECOND person, who is IMMANUEL, God with us, of whom the Apostle speaketh in our text.