

It is inconceivable, that a person of such dignity should, in the eye of unerring judgment, diminish the excellence of his personal character, by doing, or suffering that, which was the effect of wisdom, and which involved in it an incontestible proof of divine compassion. We may therefore be confident, that the Incarnation made no change in the *person* of the Son of God. If he made himself of no reputation, by taking upon him the form of a servant, it was in the eyes of *men*, not in the estimation of his FATHER : and even in the eyes of *men*, it was only in the opinion of the *carnal* that he was considered of no account ; for *others*, even before his ascension, said, We beheld his glory, (the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

It was not, however, till after his sufferings, resurrection, and ascension into heaven, that the glory of the person of Christ was generally understood ; nor was he *then*, nor is he *now*, adored by any man, but by the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord said,  
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HE SHALL GLORIFY ME : and, we may be confident, that Christ is not yet glorified by any of us, without that instruction which must, in every age, be attributed to him. We are assured, No man speaking by the Spirit of God, calleth Jesus accursed : and that no man *can* say, that Jesus is *the* LORD, but by the Holy Ghost.

II. The *sublimity* of our Lord's ascension is next to be considered : and here, I would take some notice of the manner in which he ascended into heaven, and of the nature of his exaltation.

1. The *manner* of our Lord's ascension is thus represented by Luke. In the Acts of the Apostles, he says, The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do, and teach, until the day in which he was taken up, after that he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the Apostles whom he had chosen : to whom also, he shewed himself alive after his passion by many *infallible* proofs, being seen of *them*  
forty

forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Thus this inspired writer, by referring to the *gospel*, already written by him to Theophilus, by his resuming his narrative of Christ where he had left it off, and carrying it forward, in a few words, nearly to the time of our Lord's ascension, prepared his devout friend to receive, in a proper manner, his exact account of that event.—Having done this, he thus proceeds :

And, being assembled together with them, he commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John baptized with water ; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, (but still misconceiving of the promised grace) they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons,

sons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,

Such, according to Luke, was the solemn and seasonable discourse which immediately preceded our Lord's ascension. For he adds, And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly towards heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath-day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas,  
Bartho-

Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alpheus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.—The number of the names together were about one hundred and twenty.

So much for the *manner* in which our Lord ascended ; which certainly was with a dignity that became his character. To this account of it, given us by Luke, which is at once concise, plain, and strong, I shall make no addition.

2. If thus leaving the manner of our Lord's ascension into heaven, we next consider the *nature* of his exaltation, we shall soon be compelled to say, that it is unspeakably glorious.

When he ascended, soon a cloud received him out of their sight. What followed, we can only know by report from heaven ; and that, though sufficient for our belief, is such  
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as neither gratifies our curiosity, nor stoops to the level of human apprehension.

We are told indeed, that he ascended up *far above all heavens*; that is, far above the *visible* heavens; those airy and starry regions, which are not concealed from our inspection. Yes, far beyond these our Lord ascended in our own nature, entered into the holiest of all; as the forerunner of his people, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. But, of these expressions, and of others, relative to his exaltation, we must be content to walk by faith, and not dream of walking by sight.

When it is said, that HE who endured the cross, and despised the shame, is set down at the right hand of the throne of God; this assertion, I apprehend, is as much intended to give us just notions of the PERSON of Christ, as of the grandeur of his ascension: and it becomes us continually to consider, that such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and  
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made higher than the heavens ; and that the evidence of this fact is now as conspicuous as we have any reason to expect, or have any right to require.

It is pleasing to perceive, that Abraham, Moses, and David, were not ignorant of the dignity of Christ, nor of that display of his glory which now engages our attention. Our Lord said to the Jews, Your father ABRAHAM rejoiced to see my day : and he saw it, and was glad. If by the word DAY must needs be meant that *characteristic* circumstance of his life, the laying down his life for the redemption of mankind\*, it is no wonder, that after Abraham had been thus indulged, he called the name of that place where the favour was granted, Jehovah-jireh ; or that we meet with this promise, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

\* See a masterly defence of this exposition of the word DAY, and some judicious remarks on the scenical representation of the sacrifice of Christ, by Abraham's offering up of his only son Isaac, in Bishop Warburton's Works, Vol. III. quarto edition.

MOSES,

MOSES, speaking of the same object, to the sons of Abraham, four hundred years after this transaction, said, Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God ; the earth also, with all that therein is : and DAVID, six hundred years after Moses, attributes as much as Moses himself, to the person of Jesus Christ. We have seen in the beginning of this discourse, what he said of him, and of his ascension ; and as the language of the eighth psalm may, in certain parts of it, be applied to our Redeemer, it permits us to add, though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.

Seeing then, that we have a great high priest, that is *passed into the heavens*, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come  
boldly



boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

III. It yet remains to take some notice of the *grace* which our Lord displayed on his ascension.

Of this grace, though we cannot comprehend it, we must, as believers, think highly of it, since we are told, that when he ascended up far above all heavens, it was *that he might fill all things*.

A commentator of established reputation\*, thus expounds this important clause : That he might *fill* all things, or *fulfil* all things, that were types of him, or predicted concerning him ; that as he had fulfilled many things already by his incarnation, doctrine, miracles, obedience, sufferings, death, and resurrection from the dead ; so he ascended on high that he might accomplish what was foretold concerning his ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God, and an-

\* DR. GILL.

swer to the type of the high priest's entering once a year into the holiest of all ; or that he might compleat, perfect, and fill up all his offices ; as the remainder of his priestly office, his intercession for his people ; and more fully his prophetic office, by the effusion of his spirit ; and more visibly his kingly office, by sending forth the rod of his strength out of *Zion*, and subduing the people under him : or that he might fill all places ; as God, he fills all places at once, being infinite, immense, and omnipresent ; as man, one after another ; at his incarnation he dwelt with men on earth ; at his crucifixion he was lifted up between heaven and earth ; at his death he descended into the lower parts of the earth, into hell, *Hades*, or the grave ; and, at his resurrection, stood upon the earth again, and had all power in heaven and in earth given him ; and at his ascension he went *through* the airy and starry heavens, into the highest heaven ; and so successively, was in all places : or rather that he might fill all persons, all his elect, both Jews and Gentiles ; and so the *Arabic* version renders it, *that he might fill all*  
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*creatures ;*

*creatures*; as the Gentiles were called; particularly, that he might fill each and every one of his people with his grace and righteousness, with his spirit, and the fruits of it, with spiritual knowledge and understanding, with food and gladness, with peace, joy, and comfort; and all his churches with his gracious presence, and with officers and members, and all with gifts and graces suitable to their several stations and work.

From this copious comment, and from the text itself, it appears, that sin has made that horrid void which could only be filled up by Christ's mediation. Adverting therefore to the promised Messiah, the patriarchs and prophets looked forward to his resurrection, and turned to the strong hold as prisoners of hope. But, from Malachi to John, the hope of Israel was much obscured in Judea. John at length appeared, his voice was heard in the wilderness, and the hopes of them who looked for redemption in Christ revived. At the resurrection of our Lord, the expectation of them that trusted in him, was much enlarged; and,

and, by his ascension, it was filled up and confirmed. The divine decrees, both of judgment and of mercy, were then better understood than in any former period. Then, all the promises of God appeared in Christ to be *yea*, and in him *Amen*, unto the glory of God by those that believed in him. Believers therefore, greatly rejoiced in his ascension, though they who believed not, were vexed to understand the report of that fact, and to hear that salvation was published in his name, and only to be had by his mediation.

May we, my brethren, reflect to our mutual benefit on the evident connection between our Lord's abasement and his being received up into glory; between his unequalled sonship, and his eternal triumph! May we, my brethren, rejoice that there is not any creature which is not manifest in his sight, and that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do! A thought indeed, which might confound us, were not our Lord as gracious

as he is great : but, by his being what he is, his omniscience should be considered by us as a source of unfailing joy ; since, though as sheep we were once going astray, we are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of our souls. For our sufferings, whether we suffer for conscience sake, or under a sense of our own misconduct, are ever before him ; and we have reason to believe, that his power to protect and chastise, to bless and restore, and to lead us into paths of righteousness for his name's sake, is as unbounded as his omnipresence.—May we therefore in belief of this, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us ; looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God ! AMEN.

## APPENDIX

A P P E N D I X

T O

S E R M O N XIV.

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WHEN these Lectures were given from the pulpit, there was one discourse On the Session of Christ, from the first verse in the hundred and tenth psalm. The words are, THE LORD SAID UNTO MY LORD, SIT THOU AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES THY FOOTSTOOL.

This is the only *subject* of the original Lectures, on which there is not a sermon in the present volume ; for though in them, there were twenty-six discourses, yet, as I preached more than one discourse from several of the subjects, *they* are all of them, introduced into

this work, except that which this Appendix states to be deficient; and of this, I shall now observe, that the sermon On the Session of Christ at the right hand of God, turned chiefly on the following observations.

It was said, that the person speaking in the text, was JEHOVAH; that the person addressed, was the ADON, or Lord of David; that when the Pharisees were asked, If David then, call *him* LORD, how is he his SON? No man was able to answer him who asked that question a single word; and that, without we ourselves possessed an unfeigned, and unshaken dependance on divine testimony, we should be as unable to answer the question which Christ proposed, as the Pharisees themselves.

Further; I observed, that from what John had asserted of Jesus Christ\*, and from what the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had said of angels†, it was manifest, that an an-

\* Rev. xxii. 16.

† Heb. i. 13.

swer

swer to our Lord's question was not difficult ; and that the SEAT which he enjoyed, and filled, was peculiar to HIMSELF, as being the ONLY begotten Son of God.

Afterwards, I attempted to prove, that what I had said of the Session of Christ, was expressive of his highest glory, as mediator ; that this glory could not be given to any other ; nor even to Christ, but as incarnate, and when the ends of his Incarnation on earth, had been completely fulfilled.

Finally ; it was asked, Why have we so many proofs of the exaltation of Jesus Christ ? And this question was answered to this effect : that we might be fully convinced all his enemies would be thoroughly subdued though hand joined in hand against him ; that it might be evident his conquest over them would be certain and complete, and that they who received him by faith, would have power from him to become the sons of God in this world, and in the future state,



the pleasure to hear him say, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. AMEN!

SERMON

SERMON XV.

ON THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

I JOHN ii. 1.

MY LITTLE CHILDREN, THESE THINGS WRITE I  
UNTO YOU, THAT YE SIN NOT: AND IF ANY MAN  
SIN, WE HAVE AN ADVOCATE WITH THE FATHER,  
JESUS CHRIST THE RIGHTEOUS.

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**W**HEN any thing of great moment to us depends upon testimony, it is natural to wish that those reports on which we are obliged to rely, may be as clear as the nature of the subject will admit, and such as cannot be contradicted.

John was aware of this, and of what his Christian friends would expect from him. He was careful, therefore, to inform them,  
that

that the object of whom he had written in this epistle, was from the *beginning*; and that what he and other Apostles had testified of him, was founded on what they had seen with their eyes, on what they had looked upon, and their hands had handled of the WORD OF LIFE.

Next to such original and authentic information on subjects of such importance, we are pleased with the benevolence of those messengers who make it manifest that their affection for their friends, corresponds with those tidings which they are commissioned to announce. This pleasure the friends of John enjoyed. For, what he wrote to them was written, that they also might have fellowship with him, and with other Apostles: and truly, said he, Our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ: so that they had reason to believe him when he added, And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

But as the most absurd inferences, even in  
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those days, were sometimes drawn from the purest and best of sentiments ; and, as from this abuse, alarming notions were propagated to prevent the spread of divine truth, John was disposed to guard his little children in the faith against mistakes and false alarms.—This purpose he pursued, with Christian wisdom, in various parts of this epistle.

The words I first read contain a serious declaration, a mournful supposition, and a provision of indemnity against the mischief supposed. Of each, let us now endeavour to take some notice, in the order they are here placed by John himself.

I. The DECLARATION in our text is in these words : *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.*

After a declaration so serious, it would be highly indecent to insinuate that this beloved and aged Apostle, was not in earnest to guard his Christian friends against yielding to the power of indwelling sin, and against falling into  
into