

spoken my mind freely, and with some strength of language. So that perhaps, ye may say, If the son of Mary was in so many respects like us, wherein did he differ from us? This question would be very difficult to answer on certain principles which are now pushed into notice, and too much esteemed. But on my principles, the answer is easy; whether it is just, judge for yourselves.—I reply then, that our Lord differs from us in his miraculous conception; in his being born without sin; in the ineffable union between him who was born of the Virgin and the Word of God; in his being anointed in our nature, with the oil of gladness above his fellows; in the peculiar ground of his relation to his father, and to his people; by those offices he is invested with, and honours; and by that work which he alone was called to perform, and which he declared he had finished. By these, and other articles of distinction, our Lord had, and has, the pre-eminence; and they who believe in him, rejoice and triumph, in the pleasing disparity between  
him

him and those he hath redeemed to God by his blood.

Secondly ; what positive assistance was granted to the man Christ Jesus, from his union with the Word of God, is not for us to say : reason will not reach the subject, and revelation hath not gratified our curiosity. From the latter, it appears, that he was chiefly, if not entirely, assisted in his obedience, temptations, and sufferings, by the same spirit that helpeth our infirmities. This is evident from the words which have been introduced from the prophecy of Isaiah\*. Were more quotations wanting, more might be added to a large amount. But if this fact is admitted, we may infer, that the human nature of Christ, made no change in the person of the Word of God. When he who is so denominated, was made flesh, it was in a manner which produced no confusion between the divine nature and that which he assumed. The flesh to which he was united,

\* See Page 84.

continued

continued to be flesh, and was subject to all the laws of our nature in its undefiled state.

If it is difficult to believe, that he who was in the form of God, should be found in fashion as a man, it is more difficult to believe, that a *mere* man, upon his resurrection from the dead, should take upon him the form of God. He that is not God by nature, is not God at all. For the Incarnation of the Son of God, we can assign the strongest reasons. In the light of holy writ, we can say, that the salvation of men, the satisfaction of divine justice, the conservation of true religion, the manifestation of divine mercy, and the hope of our future glory, depended on this great event. But what can unbelievers urge, that he who was a *mere* man, for more than thirty years, what can they urge, that he should be *deified* on his resurrection from the dead? Doth the pardon of sin, the government of the world, the exercise of providence, the performance of miracles, the conversion of men, their preservation, the resurrection of the dead,  
the

the last judgment, the future felicity of believers, or the final condemnation of the wicked, depend on such extravagance? In no wise. Shall we then, ever give up those doctrines which are allowed, to be of difficult interpretation, only to embrace what is at bottom absurd? God forbid!—It is written, that God will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. May this just and awful sentence, make us very mindful of the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation.

From the manner in which the human nature of Christ was supported in this world, we may further infer, that they who believe in him, may expect to be supplied in the whole of their present conflict, and duty, by the same spirit. This is a pleasing consideration. It awakes their hope, and keeps alive their highest expectations. If we have not the spirit of Christ, we are none of his. But if that spirit which dwelt in him, dwelleth also in us, what temptation may we not resist? what duty may we not perform?

It

It is true, the Father gave not the spirit by measure unto him ; which implies he doth to others ; but if we are an habitation of God, through the spirit, and by his influence mortify the deeds of the body ; if our love, obedience, and strength, are by the power of his *grace*, he that helpeth our infirmities, will grant that measure of it, that will be sufficient for us. Unless we live in this belief, we cannot possess becoming courage ; but on the other hand, we need not tremble, either at our own weakness, or at the most formidable opposition, when we ardently seek, and humbly enjoy, this divine assistance.

In the third place ; the manner in which our Lord attended to relative duties, notwithstanding he was filled with the spirit, is both a pleasing, and instructing trait in his wonderful character. It is well known, how apt, in common, men are to swell on all occasions. Their birth, their family, and parts ; their portion, titles, offices, and I know not what beside, elate their minds, and  
contaminate

contaminate their conduct. But, though the birth of Jesus was miraculous, though by his union with the Son of God, he was the Lord from heaven, and appointed heir of all things, though he was wiser than Solomon, and knew that he was the Messiah, yet, in his private life, he was cheerfully obedient to Mary and Joseph; and even unto death, was wonderfully attentive to his mother's welfare.

After such an example, on what pretence can disobedience to parents be defended? Not, it may be said, on the ground of their poverty, but upon the plea of their being vicious. How! *vicious*? Is this true? Take care, young man, how you admit the charge. But if it cannot be denied, do you mean to say, your parents wish their children to be vicious as themselves? (Remember, I am not speaking to the dregs of mankind, but to a Christian congregation.) Suppose the worst; does the young man think his parents were vicious in rocking his cradle, in relieving his numerous wants, in being at the  
char

charge of his education, in providing for his future subsistence, and in doing all this, frequently with more pleasure than he received the favour? These surely, are obligations not easy to be discharged; these are benefits which should never be forgotten.—But my parents are defective in understanding.—He that makes this excuse to justify the want of filial obedience, should consider whether he does not underrate the talents of his parents to his own reproach. Perhaps they would not supply the extravagance of him that wanted discretion. Perhaps they justly rebuked him, when his vanity led him to expect their partial applause. Ah! young man, should you live to have a child, and to do as much for it as your parents have done for you, possibly you will then form better notions of domestic wisdom, and of the duties of those who preside in that important station.

Similar pretences have often been made, and taught, to promote disobedience to kings, and to all that are in authority. But  
were

were these people attentive to the injunctions, or to the example of our Lord, those pretences would perish, and a very different line of conduct would be pursued. But we are told, Christianity has nothing to do with our *civil* behaviour. Now, to refute such pernicious insinuations, you have but to open your New Testament, in order to see whether it does not abound with rules, motives, and examples, on that subject, which no other book can supply. Believe me, if these are despised, or forgotten, ye will at last find, that wiser rules, more noble motives, and better examples, will be sought for without success.

Fourthly; we may observe, that Christ, as a man, was brought up without, what is commonly called, a liberal education. He was not educated at Gamaliel's feet, nor at the feet of any other Rabbi. He was not assisted in his progressive improvements, by any philosopher; nor did the princes of this world take him under their protection. The word of God and prayer were his delight; and



and by these, he obtained that wisdom, and excellence, which never, in any other instance, adorned human nature.

I do not mean to infer from this, what hath too frequently been inferred, that a liberal education is to be despised. But I do mean to infer, it is not essential to human happiness, or to excellence of the highest kind. If they in particular, who are called of God to preach the gospel, were to give themselves up to the reading of his word, and prayer, they would become more able ministers of the New Testament, than by spending their money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfieth not.

I now allude to those courses of study which are magnified so much by some, and so much extolled by others. It is doubtless, very desirable, that some ministers should be acquainted with the scriptures in their original language; but this, so far as it relates to general edification, is, by no means, such an arduous task as some interested tutors are disposed

disposed to represent it. On the other hand, it is idle to imagine, that very important consequences will follow, merely because any man is versed in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek. For others, as learned as himself, will always differ from him in theological opinions ; and how are the bulk of mankind to settle the dispute ? Besides ; every body knows, or may know, that they who have read any part of the scriptures in their own vernacular language, have as grossly misinterpreted the sacred text, as those who were never able to read it, but by the medium of an imperfect translation. Some of the most important controversies now subsisting, are those in which, on both sides, the sacred text is allowed to be well translated.

For my own part, I see no reason why any person who has a taste for theological understanding, should be checked in his pursuit after a critical knowledge of the original text ; but if some institutions are very likely to send out the best of pastors, or the best of writers, on religious subjects, it will be to many a pleas-

H

ing,

ing disappointment.—After all, it is our duty to keep a steady eye on plain facts, and to rejoice in whatever turns out well, though we may not be able to account for what we see. Of one thing, at least, we may be certain, that every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the father of lights; with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

We may further observe; that our Lord was not only brought up without what is usually called, a liberal education, but under those outward repulses which were not easy to be surmounted. Yet was he fairer than the children of men. I do not mean, in his form, or natural complexion, of which we have no proof; but in the excellence of his understanding, and in the dispositions of his heart.

There is a hurtful notion widely spread amongst mankind, which is, that nothing great can be expected from the poor and afflicted, or from those who are under the oppressor's

pressor's rod, or beneath the tyrant's frown. This is so far from being true, that not only the best of men have reaped advantage by their distresses, but there is reason to conclude, that without their greatest trials, neither their invention, prudence, nor piety, would have been so considerable, or so conspicuous. Besides; there are virtues which are never visible to us, but in the hours of adversity. As some spices do not emit their odours unless they are bruised, so some of the most excellent graces of Christianity remain, if I may so express it, in their quiescent state, till affliction calls them forth to action, and to excite applause.

In holy writ, the names of many are recorded who became eminent as their trials most of all abounded. The names of Moses, Jacob, Joseph, and Job, are amongst those worthies; and a much larger catalogue may be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In Pagan history, we read of Æsop, Epictetus, and of others, not a few, who have given posterity a higher notion of their inherent

value, than their lords and masters have given us of theirs : and I could mention a long list of excellent men of modern date, who were never stimulated to study by the charms of affluence and ease—who were never soothed to write by the prospect of external indulgence.

Was our Lord then, or was he not, pleased to take upon him the form of a servant, that, among other things to be answered by such amazing condescension, he might encourage us, however tried, to aspire after that excellence which is rarely eminent in the splendid ranks of life ? There is reason to believe this was his kind intention. May we never therefore forget his illustrious example !

Remember he was of no account in the Jewish church or state. His own countrymen received him not. They procured his crucifixion ! and when at the bar of Pilate, who appeared in his favour ? All forsook him and fled. His purity and wisdom indeed, commanded transient admiration ; but could  
not,

not, in that adulterous age, procure his release. Barabbas was preferred, and Jesus rejected! Remember how he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself! Think of the magnanimity of his temper: his devotion to his father; and his compassion towards his persecutors. Call to mind the renown of his sufferings, and the relief and instruction which they impart; and under every oppression, set that Lord before you, who, in defiance of all that could be formidable, sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Any other improvement of this subject than has been made already, must now be comprized in a narrow compass.

We may just observe, that the benefits and blessing of *early* piety are strongly recommended by our Lord's example. Other things being equal, he that is pious in the dew of his youth, will reap the advantage of it, if he is spared, in the withering hours of

old age. But *every* display of the grace of God is glorious; nor should those who have slighted it long, despair: though it must be owned, that they who have been most of all kept from neglecting their own salvation, have the greatest reason to rejoice.

We must not, however, dictate to God. It is at his option to quicken whom he will, and when it seemeth good in his sight. Let us also remember, that in Christianity, as well as in common life, there is a state of infancy, childhood, youth, and advanced age. In the former, as well as in the latter, we are dependent on God, and subject both to external injuries, and to internal disorders. In the former, as well as in the latter, he that is an infant commonly becomes a child, and he that is a child, wisheth to be a young man, and he that is a young man, equally wisheth to be a father. But all these wishes are right or wrong as they are or are not, accompanied with resignation to God; and with a proper use of those means which he  
has

has appointed for our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I shall only add, that having been your stated Minister almost twenty years, I see, with pleasure, some young people growing up before me, who from their childhood, have known the holy scriptures; and who are, I trust already, made wise unto salvation. If my annual sermons to them, or any other part of my public labours, have been owned for their good, from the present subject also, I pray God they may derive some additional advantage. AMEN.



S E R M O N V.

ON THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW iii. 13.

THEN COMETH JESUS FROM GALILEE TO JORDAN  
UNTO JOHN, TO BE BAPTIZED OF HIM.

---

**W**E may be confident, that the baptism of Jesus Christ was not according to the will of man. Bad men ridiculed the solemn transaction, good men have thought it strange, and even John himself forbade him; saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? To this remonstrance our Lord replied, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Baptism is by no means, the only duty of  
which

which we had no notion, till we found it stated, and enjoined, in the New Testament. No, there are other doctrines, and other duties, of which we had not the remotest apprehension, till we were disposed to sit at our Redeemer's feet, and to receive, with religious submission, his unerring words.

Some, far from being thus disposed, have been prevented by a tenet of which certain philosophers are very fond. They say, that every wise agent always acts in a manner the most direct to answer his own end; and finding many things revealed which will not agree with that simplicity of invention they so much admire, and which, from eminent characters, they have been taught to expect, they are offended; and thus offended, treat with irreverence a book which will not indulge them in their favorite speculations.

How far it may be true, that every wise agent amongst *men*, acts in a manner the most direct to answer his own end, in the construction of some machine, in tilling of  
the

the ground, in reaping in the harvest, and in some other mechanical, and manual operations, I need not determine. But it may be observed, that to *man*, delay is often dreadful, and expence a burden. When it is otherwise, his actions are not so *direct* as the objection has stated. To apply therefore, this penurious notion to the Almighty, as if HE was altogether like unto *us*, is unwarrantable; and, as such temerity is always offensive to God, it must be injurious likewise to them who indulge this rash opinion.

The works which we undertake, though usually connected with other operations in the scale of our existence, are limited, and of narrow compass; our whole chain of connections is short, and soon surveyed from end to end. How different are the works of God! Who can unfold the extent of his designs! Who can conceive of all the ends he means to answer by *one* positive institution!

The true principle of our religious obedience, is the fear of God; that fear which com-  
prizes

prizes the knowledge, reverence, and esteem of him ; and the only rule of such obedience, is his will concerning us ; as it is clearly expressed, or strongly implied. This is always that rule of our religious duty it is extremely criminal in us to renounce, and which it is ever sinful to neglect.

But it requires much more to yield acceptable obedience unto God than is commonly supposed. Unless we are as cautious as we may be sincere, and as watchful, as we may be bold, we are liable to strange mistakes. The Jews, while they made their boast of the law, broke it, and dishonoured God ; and judaizing Christians, have desired to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

That circumspection and prayer, are necessary to the obedience of faith, they best know who are most attentive to the different œconomies of divine favor, and to the different characters of men, under the patriarchal, jewish, and christian dispensations. In all of  
 them,