

AN ESSAY

ON THE

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST;

IN WHICH

PROOFS OF THE FACT ARE ADDUCED,

ITS IMPORT IS EXPLAINED,

AND ITS BENEFICIAL INFLUENCE ILLUSTRATED.

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INTRODUCTION.

Though in the whole system of revealed truth few articles have been more frequently discussed, or more thoroughly investigated, than the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; yet the importance of the subject will, I hope, plead my excuse, if, indeed, any apology be necessary, for laying before the reader this little sketch of a vast, grand, and comprehensive theme.

The great apostle of the Gentiles expresses his earnest desire to know Christ, and particularly the power of his resurrection, Phil. iii 10. The knowledge of the Son of God, of his person, his character, his offices and his work, is supremely interesting. This is the most excellent knowledge, the most sublime, the most consolatory, the most beneficial, the most necessary. But in his whole history there is no fact more worthy our serious attention than his resurrection. This is one of the most extraordinary, and important facts recorded in the gospel. On this account, it is very circumstantially related, frequently mentioned, often alluded to, and introduced in various connexions. It was the centre of the apostolic testimony; and in the inspired writings of the New Testament it occupies a very conspicuous place. An acquaintance, therefore, with a fact so conspicuous in the sacred Volume, must be highly desirable.

To feel the force of the evidence with which this great fact is attended, to comprehend its import, and to experience the salutary influence of the belief of it, upon the mind, the conscience, the heart, and the life, is to be truly wise and substantially happy. There is a power in the evidence, a power in the fact, and a power in the belief of it; as I am now to show.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE EVIDENCE OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

Is Christ risen from the dead?—This is a question of fact, the object of which must be ascertained precisely in the same way as any other historical truth. a resurrection, as a fact, admits of the same kind of evidence as any other fact. It is a fact of which the senses are competent to judge.

But sensible evidence cannot be afforded to every individual. We cannot have ocular demonstration of the resurrection of Christ, in which we are deeply interested. But we have the same kind of evidence, in this case, as is universally admitted to be sufficient for the establishment of other historical truths, which have not fallen under the cognizance of our senses; I mean credible testimony.

It is evidently the intention of the wise and benevolent Author of our intellectual and moral frame, that we should rely on credible testimony, for the greatest part of our little stock of knowledge.

For if we reject this kind of evidence, which is founded on that moral order the Supreme Being has established, justice cannot be administered, the wheels of government must stand still, our dearest rights cannot be secured, the bands of society will be broken, business must stagnate, all history will become useless, and our knowledge will be circumscribed within very narrow bounds. Did we exist in all periods of time, and in all parts of the globe, so as to see everything with our own eyes, we should not be human beings; for to be limited by time and place, is one of the properties of man. “We are but of yesterday,” and know comparatively “nothing.” The sphere of our observation reaches but a little way. If, then, we regard as true that only of which we are witnesses, our incredulity will necessarily expose us to the most painful state of existence, by keeping us ignorant of many things an acquaintance with which is immediately connected with our present happiness. In a great number of cases, moral evidence is perfectly satisfactory. We are confident of the existence of persons, places, and things, the knowledge of which can be derived from no other source than human testimony. In all our most important concerns, we act upon this principle, that men of understanding and integrity are worthy of credit. “But moral evidence,” it may be said, “changes its nature, according to the nature of the things to which it is applied; so that what is proof of a fact which comes within the sphere of physical occurrences, is no evidence of supernatural events.” It must

be granted, that more evidence is required to substantiate extraordinary occurrences, than those which take place according to what is called the established course of nature; to prove, for instance, that a man arose from the dead, than that he died. But the same sort of evidence as is admitted in regard to common facts, is equally suited to authenticate those that are extraordinary.

The question which I now propose, is not, Whether the resurrection of Jesus be a natural event? but, whether this fact, supposing it to have taken place, be attended with proper evidence, and with such a degree of proper evidence as ought to satisfy a reasonable mind? The truth of a fact which involves in it no contradiction or absurdity, depends not on its nature, but on its proofs. The reason is obvious: for, what is styled *nature* is invisible, but proofs are open to investigation. In natural philosophy improbabilities, arising from our ideas of the nature of things, are often overruled by direct positive proofs.

If, indeed, we were fully acquainted with the secret economy of the universe,—if we knew the full extent of that power which created all things, and were competent to affirm that a resurrection is impossible,—testimony would not operate conviction in our minds: but if we admit that God can raise the dead, a resurrection is not a thing incredible. For if we believe that there is a power sufficient to effect it, the natural possibility of the event is granted. Now, though the resurrection of a dead person be really a stupendous work, it is not too hard for Omnipotence. That He who gave life, can, if he please, restore it, reason, independently of revelation, directs us to acknowledge.

What is there, then, in a resurrection that shocks our feelings? “It is a wonderful event.” True. But is not the natural world full of the Creator’s wonders? Is it not wonderful that, after the death of winter, the spring should come forwards in all her beauty, health, and fragrance? Is it not wonderful that the principle of vegetative life should break forth from the dead and corrupted mass that lay buried in the earth, and rise to a beautiful plant! Is it not wonderful that the little insect, which to all appearance died, should come forth into new life, and take its flight into regions to which, in its former grovelling state of animated existence, it could not soar? “These,” it may be said, “are common events.” They are so; and it is because they are common that they excite little or no surprise; though they are really as mysterious as the resurrection of a man. Is it not evident that the power which can effect these familiar events is able also to raise the dead?

As the natural attributes of the Deity render a resurrection possible, so, if it can be made to appear that the resurrection of Jesus is eminently conducive to the glory of God, and to the happiness of men, it must be considered as perfectly compatible with

the moral excellences of the Divine character. Let us, then, briefly state the evidence we have of this singular fact.

That there was such a person as Jesus Christ—that he was crucified, dead, and buried—and that his tomb was found empty on the third day—we have no occasion to prove; as these particulars are admitted by Jews and Gentiles. Christ must, then, have been taken away, or he arose. If taken away, his removal must have been effected by either friends, or foes; for an indifferent person, if, indeed, any one at that time in Jerusalem could have remained indifferent, cannot be supposed to have interfered. If his enemies secured the body, why did they not produce it, to confound the disciples, to vindicate themselves from the heavy charges exhibited against them, and to stop the progress of a story, which could not fail to prove, in the highest degree, mortifying to their national pride? Incapable of producing the dead body to public view, they maintained that it was in possession of the disciples. The soldiers, they said, affirmed that while they slept, the disciples stole the body from the sepulchre, with a view to impose upon the credulity of the simple by a pretended resurrection.

The story of the soldiers, which the Jewish priests and rulers invented, is a series of improbabilities. Every one conversant with ancient history, knows that the vigilance of Roman sentinels was secured by the strictest discipline. To sleep on guard was death. Is it, then, probable that these soldiers should sleep on the present occasion; and that they should all sleep at the same time? Is it probable that the disciples should know the precise time? Is it probable that a few timid men, who fled with terror when they might have rescued their Master's life, would venture in the face of an armed guard, to ascend the hill, to roll away the stone which closed the mouth of the grave, and to convey away the corpse? What motive could induce them to undertake such a perilous enterprise? I call it perilous; for, if the removal of the stone should awake a soldier, or, if any one of that vast multitude of people which crowded Jerusalem at the passover, should, by aid of the moon, which, being then full, shone all night, detect them in the cheat, their scheme is destroyed, their hopes are blasted, and their ruin is inevitable. But, if they escape detection, what is their object? What will they do with the body? What scheme could they mean to support? Will they say that he is risen? They had no steady expectation that he would arise; or, if they had, why should they act the part which the soldiers attributed to them?

After all, what confidence can be placed in this story? It has the complexion of a fraud. The soldiers were taught to say, that while they were asleep, the disciples stole the body of their Master: but they were not instructed to inform us how they ascertained what was transacted while their senses were locked up in sleep. Such a tale, unsupported by evidence, would not be regarded in any court of justice. It has

not even the air of probability. It is calculated only to excite ridicule. If they who framed it, meant to display the strength of their prejudice, the baseness of their hearts, and the weakness of their cause, we should, in this instance, give them credit for the wisdom they discover in adapting the means to the end.

But let us leave this absurd story, and inquire whether a consistent account can be given of a fact which was not then disputed,— I mean the removal of Christ's body from the sepulchre. Let us hear what those who call themselves the apostles of Jesus have to relate. They say, that," scarcely expecting the event, though their Master had himself foretold it, but in language which at the time he spake they did not fully comprehend, they were surprised with an account that his body was gone; and that they found afterwards, to their great joy, that he was alive; that he appeared to them at different times, and in various places, eating and drinking with them, and speaking to them of the things which concern the kingdom of God; that Thomas, one of their company, would not credit the relation of those who saw Christ on the day when he arose; that he carried his incredulity to the length of saying, 'Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe,' John xx. 25; that Jesus, on the first day of the following week, condescended to offer him the very evidence which he required; that Thomas, fully convinced, exclaimed, My Lord and my God; that Jesus Christ afterwards appeared in Galilee to above five hundred brethren at one time; that, of those who saw him before and after his death, he selected twelve, including Matthias, to be witnesses of his resurrection; that a principal article in the destined employment of these chosen witnesses, called apostles, was to give testimony to a fact of which they were assured by many infallible proofs, during his residence with them for forty days, before he, in their sight, ascended into heaven; and that, about ten days after his ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon them, agreeably to their Master's promise, enabling them to speak in many languages, which they had never learned by study, that they might bear witness to men of all nations, and to confirm their testimony by signs following."

This, which is the substance of the apostolic report, is a plain, consistent, and apparently artless narrative. If we do not credit it, we must suppose either that the apostles were themselves deceived, or that they studiously endeavoured to deceive the rest of the world. Now there seems to be no rational ground for either of these suppositions.

Here are twelve men who agree in their testimony, though in general, two or three witnesses are thought sufficient. They say," that which we have seen, and heard, and handled, declare we unto you," 1 John i. 1, 3. They affirm that the fact, of which they are witnesses, fell under the examination of their senses. This circumstance is

material, and demands notice. For, if these unlearned and ignorant men had been required, without Divine aid, to trace the etymology of a doubtful term; to fix the precise date of some remote event, concerning which the most skillful chronologists are divided in their sentiments; to ascertain a deep point in metaphysics; or to investigate any other intricate subject, their incompetency might be pleaded; but, in the case before us, there is no difficulty. They bear testimony to a palpable fact of the certainty of which they could entertain no rational doubt. For they had lived with Jesus Christ, in the greatest intimacy, several years before his death, so that they could not be mistaken in his person; and after his resurrection they had many opportunities of conversing with him, of beholding the print of the nails, and the wounds in his side, and of recognizing all those amiable and strongly expressive traits by which his person was identified. Had he appeared with the velocity of a flash of lightning, and instantaneously vanished, had he presented himself to them when they were just aroused from their midnight slumbers, before the senses could well exercise their office, or reason assume its empire, had he been viewed only at a distance, or in the air, had he appeared in a new body, or had he, under any of these circumstances, been seen by only one person, there would be some colour of plausibility in what is often said of the illusions of the senses, and the vagaries of fancy. But here all things were the reverse.

If, therefore, Christ be not risen, the apostles were false witnesses. They were, on this supposition, impostors of the worst class. But have they any of the characteristic marks of impostors? Can they be challenged on any one ground of rational exception? "They were the friends of Jesus," it may be objected. It is true they were. But may not friends be honest men? Who but friends can be supposed, in this case, to bear testimony? Besides, if he deceived their expectations, sported with their credulity, and, without any indemnification, wantonly exposed them to the most cruel scorn, and to the severest punishment, what could be the ground of their attachment to such an impostor?

The moral character of these witnesses has never been impeached. Their manners were irreproachable, their enemies being judges. They possessed not only those moral qualities which are generally required, but those transcendent virtues which are seldom found in common witnesses. That their moral character was eminently and illustriously virtuous, their most bitter adversaries could not deny. Their simplicity and candour, their piety and benevolence, were conspicuous in all their actions, and are still visible in all their writings.

It will not at all derogate from the merit of these excellent men, to maintain that they could not invent the story which they told. For the resurrection of Christ is to be considered not as an insulated fact, but rather as the key-stone of that religious

institute which is contained in the New Testament. Remove this, and the whole fabric falls. But while this is preserved, the superstructure is perfectly secure. Now, in this sacred volume, we have a scheme of doctrine, a system of morals, and a plan of worship, infinitely superior to any that can be found in the writings of their predecessors. The philosophers of Rome, the wise men of Greece, the magi of Persia, and prophets of Israel, and even the legislator must bow the knee and give the palm to these fishermen.

But, supposing that the genius of these unlearned men were equal to the invention of this most refined, and most sublime religious system, yet, if they were false witnesses, we should be at a loss to account, on any rational principles, for their conduct; at a still greater loss to account for their motives; and at the greatest loss of all to account for their success.

First. There are many particulars in their conduct which demand attention, many traits of character which distinguish these witnesses from all the imposters that have ever appeared.

They were explicit and circumstantial in their accounts. They bore testimony in an open, public, and authoritative manner. They did not creep into dark corners. They did not propagate their story by secret means. They did not require a blind faith: but, with confidence, they proclaimed the fact, appealing to the common sense of men, provoking examination, and daring their adversaries to invalidate their testimony. In the capital, before numerous assemblies, in the presence of the magistrates, while Calvary was yet stained with the blood of the Saviour, and his enemies were still mad with rage, they boldly say, "him whom ye have crucified, hath God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses," Acts ii. 32; iii. 15; iv. 10. If the apostles were imposters, how can we account for such unprecedented boldness? Had they gone first to the isles afar off, remote from the scene of action; or had they borne testimony to an event which occurred many years before they spake of it; the fact, in either case, could not have been so properly investigated.

Again: The manner in which they supported their testimony, is worthy of notice. They appealed to miracles, as vouchers of the fact of which they called themselves the witnesses. Their history informs us, that these illiterate men, of the lowest class, address "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia," and many other countries, in their respective vernacular tongues; and tell them that they are endowed with this extraordinary power by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus Christ has sent from heaven. To a man who was well known to have been lame from his birth, they say, "in the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk," Acts iii. 6, etc.; and immediately, in the presence of many spectators," he leaping up stood, and

walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.” When interrogated, by the Sanhedrin, respecting “this good deed, by what means the impotent man was made whole?” they magnanimously say, “be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ—whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.” And the rulers, beholding the man that was healed, could say nothing against it, Acts iv. 10. 14. Now, if the witnesses did not work miracles, how can we account for their conduct in appealing to them? What they call the demonstration of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ii. 4, and the signs of an apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 12, would have, unnecessarily, encumbered the scheme of an impostor.

Once more: The witnesses persevered in giving testimony, with heroic constancy, and some of them, at length, sealed it with their blood. It has been observed, that, though many have fallen martyrs to opinion, the disciples of Christ were the only persons who ever sacrificed their lives in attestation of a fact —of a fact, we may add, to the belief of which they were not inclined through the influence of education, of civil or religious authority, or of worldly interest. Nothing, then, but the strongest conviction of the certainty of the fact, can furnish us with an adequate cause of such unexampled fortitude. For,

Secondly, If the apostles were false witnesses, by what motives can we suppose them actuated?

To what purpose did they attempt to impose upon mankind? What interest did they pursue? At what scope could they possibly aim. Or, by what human principles were they governed?

No man becomes an impostor without having some end to answer. Two principles are incontestable, for they are confirmed by universal observation, and experience; the one, that we cannot act without a motive; and the other, that the force of every motive is derived from our innate love of happiness. We naturally, necessarily, and invariably, seek felicity. An attachment to what we consider as our interest, is constantly felt. This is always the centre of our desires. Eradicate from the heart of man that love of happiness which the Author of his nature has implanted, and you annihilate volition.

The question, then, returns, By what motives were the apostles influenced? By affection to their Master? Did they regard him as a deceiver, such affection could not animate their bosoms. By the hope of worldly gain? they had no such expectation. On the contrary, they suffered with joy the loss of all things. By the ambition of being at the head of a sect? but they knew that infamy and death would be their

portion. By the prospect of felicity in another world? if they were impostors, they could indulge no expectation of happiness from a God who will not be mocked. If they were not persuaded of the truth of what they taught, we cannot assign the motives of their conduct: but, if the love of truth had not been predominant in them, we can easily conceive many powerful motives, which might have induced them to conceal the fact. How noble, then, their spirited language," we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard!" Acts iv. 20. What shall we say,

Thirdly, of their success?

It is a fact, that the apostolic testimony obtained credit. In Judea, Greece, Italy, and many other countries, vast numbers of persons, of different ages, characters, and circumstances, professed to believe it; so that, in a few years, a change was produced, in the moral and religious state of society, far more astonishing, all things considered, than any other revolution which history records. Now, this extraordinary revolution must have a cause. What, then, is this cause? Shall we seek it in the charms of eloquence, in the attraction of riches, in the splendour of dignities, or in the influence of worldly power? No; for the cause we are examining operated without even their concurring aid: what is more, it produced its effect in opposition to their united force. The belief of Christ's resurrection was the cause of the prevalence of his religion; and the demonstration of the Spirit was the cause of the belief of this fact.

That the fact would not have obtained such credit, if it had not been well authenticated, we may infer from these two considerations;

1. It would have been easy, in this case, to have proved it false; and there were not wanting powerful motives, to induce the enemies of the gospel, to make the most rigid inquiry.

If the Jewish magistrates had no benevolence to men, no attachment to their own law, nor any zeal for the honour of their nation; yet a regard to their own reputation would have stimulated them to exert every endeavour to prevent the propagation of a story which loaded them with infamy, as the murderers of the Lord of life. Nor will it be denied, that they possessed every possible advantage for detecting the fraud, if any fraud there had been. But what did they? Instead of bringing those whom they affected to consider as impostors to a public trial, that their extraordinary story might undergo a fair investigation, they imprison, they threaten, they command them to speak no more in the name of Jesus. Would they, in the first instance, have had recourse to violent measures, would they have adopted such absurd expedients, if they could have invalidated the apostolic testimony?

But the public testimony which the apostles gave to the fact of which they were witnesses, tended, not only to fix an odium on the grand Sanhedrin, but also to destroy the authority of Jewish and heathen priests, to annihilate the superstitious regard paid to deified emperors, to pour contempt on the boasted wisdom of philosophers, and to expose the prejudices, the idolatry, and the fanaticism of the people. Whithersoever, therefore, the witnesses directed their course, the miracles they wrought in proof of the fact which they testified, must have undergone the severest scrutiny. This will more evidently appear, if we consider, that

2. It was easy for those who then embraced Christianity to ascertain the truth of this fact; and, circumstanced as they were, we cannot suppose that they would profess faith without previous inquiry.

Did the witnesses affirm, in proof of our Lord's resurrection, that he sent his Holy Spirit to enable them to work miracles? How natural the inquiry, Do they work miracles? Do they cause the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear? Do they raise the dead? Did they declare that they communicated supernatural gifts to those who embraced their doctrine? How could men, before they professed to believe, avoid asking, Is this a fact? Are there any proofs of such communication? If there were no evidence of these things, how could the apostles impose upon their followers? Or by what means could they persuade thousands of Jews and Gentiles to enter into confederacy with them to cheat the rest of the world?

That such numbers of persons of all descriptions, as composed the primitive churches, should declare their belief of the resurrection of Christ, if they were not convinced of its reality, will appear highly improbable, if we consider what were then the consequences of this profession. A new religion, of which this great fact is the grand support, was, necessarily, embraced. This new religion, espoused by those who believed that Jesus arose from the dead, is of a peculiar character, adapted in no respect to captivate those evil dispositions which are predominant in the depraved heart. It has no charms for those who mind only earthly things. This religion is not calculated, like the Jewish, to gratify the love of pomp; for its spiritual worship requires no magnificent temple nor costly sacrifices. The religion of Christ does not, like some of the ancient heathen religions, provide gratification for the senses, by rich perfumes, and grand processions. Unlike the religion of Mohammed, it promises no sensual pleasures. No: for it declares," all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world," 1 John ii. 16. It counteracts pride in all its forms. It mortifies the pride of birth, of riches, and of station, by revealing God as no respecter of persons, and by teaching, that no religious prerogative is attached to descent, that no superiority in the church is associated with wealth, and that elevated rank confers no right to dominion over

conscience. The pride of virtue it mortifies, by showing that, in point of acceptance with God, all men are on a level; that as all have sinned, all are equally at the disposal of mercy; and that all who are saved, are alike indebted to sovereign grace, reigning through the righteousness of Christ. It mortifies the pride of genius and of learning, by requiring us to receive, on Divine testimony, what reason could not discover, and what, though revealed, reason cannot fully comprehend. In a word, the religion of Christ mortifies the love of sin, strikes at the root of every evil passion, requires the exercise of self-denial, and demands incessant watchfulness. It prohibits every vice, and inculcates every virtue. Those who, in the apostolic age embraced this religion, suffered persecution. It appears, not only from the New Testament, but from other ancient records, that their profession exposed them, without any worldly advantage, to the loss of all those things which are naturally most dear to the heart of man, and to the danger of enduring what is most terrible to nature, reproach, imprisonment, and death.

If, then, we deny the resurrection of Christ, we must admit other miracles; for the prevalence of his religion, without any evidence to support it, and under circumstances the most inauspicious is as totally incompatible with those laws which govern the moral world, as the resurrection of a dead man is with what are called the laws of nature. For it is absolutely impossible to account for the conduct of the primitive Christians, on those principles which generally regulate human conduct, if Christ did not arise from the dead; but if this fact be admitted, those difficulties, which would otherwise overwhelm the mind, entirely disappear.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE IMPORT OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

The resurrection of Christ, once established, supplies us with a new principle of reasoning. It opens for us a new path, plain, safe, and pleasant, which leads to the discovery of many capital truths. It affords firm ground for every step we take in the investigation of religious sentiments. For we set out in our inquiries, not from doubtful conjectures, not from any assumed hypothesis, but from a certain fact—a fact, pregnant with consequences of the most interesting nature; for most of the

doctrines we are required to believe, and of the duties we are commanded to practice, are so many inferences naturally deducible from this one fact. On this rock, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail, rests the whole system of Christianity. For if Christ be not risen, the preaching of the apostles was vain; our faith is, therefore, vain; we are yet in our sins, 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17.

But, though reasonings conducted on evident facts are the most easy, the most clear, and the most conclusive, yet so liable are we to err, through the weakness of our intellects, the false medium through which we often behold objects, the passions which frequently agitate us, and the prejudices we are apt to imbibe; that it becomes us to be diffident of ourselves, and to examine the original witnesses of the resurrection that we may learn what were their ideas of the import of the fact which they testify.

Now we find from their writings that they advance it in proof of the following important particulars: that Jesus is the Messiah, that he is the Son of God, that he has finished the work which the Father gave him to do, that there is a future state, that he is Lord of conscience, and that he will judge the world.

First. The witnesses state this fact as a decisive proof of the Messiahship of Christ.

The proper name of our Redeemer is Jesus, Matt. i. 21, by which the evangelists generally call him; his characteristic name is Christ, John ix. 22, a Greek word answering to the Hebrew term Messiah, signifying *anointed*. The apostles preached that Jesus is the Christ, Acts ix. 22; xvii. 3; that is, the Messiah, whom God had promised. The grand proof which they adduce, that on which they lay the greatest stress, is his resurrection. See a specimen of Peter's reasoning on this subject in Acts ii. Paul also, who was afterwards called to the apostleship, adopts the same argument in Acts xiii.

Now the strength of this argument will appear, if we consider three things: that in his resurrection the Divine power was illustriously displayed; ancient predictions respecting the Messiah were wonderfully accomplished; and that decisive test was given to which our Lord directed the incredulous Jews in proof of the Divinity of his mission.

1. In his resurrection the power of God was illustriously displayed.

That power which controls the established course of nature must be Divine. None but He who formed the laws of the universe can suspend their operation. Omnipotence only could break the massy gates of death, and loose the prisoner's bands. To raise the dead requires the exertion of an energy, with which no created

being is endowed. This effect comes not within the sphere of finite power. In this stupendous work which no subordinate agent could perform, the power of Deity appears in full splendour. When speaking on this subject, the capacious mind of Paul seems to labour in search of terms sufficiently expressive to convey his sublime ideas of that exceeding grandeur of power, of that energy of the might of strength, which God displayed in raising Christ from the dead. He prayed for the Ephesians, that they might know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead,” Eph. i. 19, 20.

Now, it is natural to ask, Would the Supreme Being have exerted such unbounded power, in overruling the laws of nature, but for some great and good purpose? What then is this purpose? To give success to a deceiver, by affixing to his scheme the broad seal of Heaven? That cannot be, God will not authorize imposture, by giving it the stamp of truth. This we may safely infer from the acknowledged rectitude and benevolence of the Divine character.

But if Jesus be not the Messiah, he was an impostor. For this character he claimed. “I know,” saith the woman of Samaria, “that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.” “I,” saith Jesus, “that speak unto thee am he,” John iv. 25, 26. For claiming this character he was persecuted as an impostor.

But, in his resurrection, he was justified from the charge of imposture. A miracle is the voice of God. In this magnificent event, the Author of nature speaks with commanding authority; and what does he declare? He proclaims, in language which ignorance cannot easily mistake, which sophistry cannot successfully evade, that Jesus is what he professed to be, the Messiah. Thus the great transactions of the illustrious morning of his resurrection authenticated the Divine mission of Jesus.

2. The resurrection from the dead is, in the prophetic writings, one of the characteristic marks of the Messiah.

The prophets spoke, not only of the sufferings of the Messiah, but also of “the glory that should follow,” 1 Peter i. 11. In all the pomp of language, they announced his triumphant reign. In the most glowing colours, they described his victories. Of the immortality which was decreed him, of the increase of his empire, and of the perpetuity of his dominion, they speak in the most animated style. Their predictions respecting the future glories of Him who was to make his soul an offering for sin, who was to be cut off, but not for himself, who was to die with the wicked, and be

buried with the rich, could not be realized, if the Messiah were not to rise. The spirit of prophecy, therefore, is the testimony of his resurrection.

The prophetic representations of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow, are strikingly exemplified in the history of Jesus. It is not necessary, therefore, to have recourse to the fiction of two Messiahs, in order to reconcile apparent contradictions in the writings of the prophets. No: for though holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, were obliged to search what “the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify,” 1 Peter i. 11, in those various predictions, his resurrection sheds such light upon them as to render their meaning eminently conspicuous. Yes, this great fact elucidates what was obscure, obviates many difficulties, and perfectly harmonizes those accounts which seemed to clash. See how the witnesses reason on this topic from express prediction. The address of Peter to the Jews requires no comment. “ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved: therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope, because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,” Acts ii. 22—36. Equally explicit, nervous, and conclusive, is the address of Paul. “We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise, which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten

thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore, he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: but he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins,” Acts xiii. 32—39.

3. This is the decisive test to which Christ directed those incredulous Jews, who were not convinced of his true character, by the excellence of his doctrine, the holiness of his life, the splendour of his miracles, and the exact fulfilment of many striking predictions in his person and history.

The captious Jews demanded signs upon signs, and prodigies upon prodigies. Christ confined himself to one as decisive. When “certain of the Scribes and of the Pharisees said, Master we would see a sign from thee—He answered and said unto them. An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so,” reckoning a part for the whole by an easy figure of speech, familiar with the Jews,” shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,” Matt. xii. 38—40. When Jesus had purged the temple, the Jews said unto him,” what sign showest thou unto us seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them,” laying his hand upon his breast, or using some other significant action,” destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” He spoke of the temple of his body, John ii. 18—22, in which the fulness of the Godhead dwelt, and of which the ancient residence of the Shechinah was a type.

Now this sign, of which Jesus often spake to his disciples in plain terms, saying that “he should rise from the dead on the third day,” Matt. xxvii. 63; xvi. 21; xvii. 23; xx. 19, etc., has been accomplished. We see the antitype of Jonas. We behold, re-edified, a temple far more glorious than Solomon’s. On the third day Christ burst asunder the bonds of death, and arose from the tomb. Then there is no room to doubt of his being the Messiah, since this truth is established on such clear evidence. The most incredulous of his enemies, treating him with cruel insult in the midst of his bitter sufferings, dared him to descend from the cross, and they would believe, Matt. xxvii. 39—43: but how much stronger ground had they for their faith to rest on when he came, not from the cross, but from the grave?

Of the three arguments arising out of the resurrection of Christ in favour of his Messiahship, the first addresses itself to the reason of every man; the second is a forcible appeal to the Jews, who admit the Divine inspiration of their own prophecies; and the last possessed peculiar strength in regard to those who attended our Lord's personal ministry.

Secondly. The witnesses advance this fact as an evidence of Christ being the Son of God.

Remarkable on this subject is the language of Paul. Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," Rom. i. 3, 4. Here, as in some other places, the two natures of Christ are contrasted. "according to the flesh," or in reference to his humanity, he was "of the seed of David," but with respect to his superior nature, denominated "the spirit of holiness," his resurrection declared him to be Divine. His resurrection did not constitute him the Son of God, but exhibited his true character, by declaring him to be what he always was.

Here three particulars must be noticed. 1. He was put to death on the charge of blasphemy.

When the Jews took up stones to cast at him, they said," for a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy," John x. 33. On his trial before the Sanhedrin, the high priest, who presided in his examination, precipitately exclaimed, in a manner calculated unduly to influence the decision of the other members," he hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy. What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death," Matt. xxvi. 65, 66. That Christ was condemned on the charge of blasphemy, is, then, a fact which will not be controverted.

2. The blasphemy with which he was charged was said by his accusers to consist in calling himself the Son of God. This also is a fact which no one will dispute.

Blasphemy consists either in denying the Divine attributes, or in arrogating them to oneself. With blasphemy in the first sense, the enemies of Jesus did not charge him. They did not accuse him of representing the Deity as mutable or dependent, as impure or unkind, as defective in his knowledge, or bounded in his power. When speaking of his Father, he used what may be called a filial language, a language full of respect, of veneration, and of delight. He communicated the most refined and sublime ideas of his character. His natural attributes, and his moral excellences, he presented in the most striking, and, at the same time, the most lovely point of view.

The awful glories of his holiness, and the milder beams of his mercy, he equally displayed.

Under what pretence, then, did the Jews accuse Jesus of blasphemy? Under what pretence did Caiaphas, the high priest, exhibit against him the odious charge? Under what pretence did the members of the Sanhedrin acquiesce in his decision? The answer is obvious. It was upon the second sort of blasphemy that their charges were grounded. They pretended, not that he denied the Divine attributes, but that he arrogated them to himself, by declaring himself the Son of God; and that, in assuming this august title, and requiring men to “honour the Son, even as they honour the Father,” John v. 23, he made himself equal with God. This fact is clearly stated. When Jesus said, “I and my Father are one,” the Jews took up stones to cast at him, saying, “for a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God,” John x. 33. On another occasion, the Jews sought to kill him, because he said, “that God was his Father, making himself equal with God,” John v. 18. “I adjure thee by the living God,” said the high priest, “that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said,” Matt. xxvi. 63, 64. Hence his judges concluded that other witnesses were unnecessary, as they had heard his blasphemy. The president of the Sanhedrin could not conceal his malignant pleasure under the veil of affected horror, at the pretended insult offered to the Deity. He rent his clothes, not his pontifical garments, which the law prohibited, but his common vestments, as was customary at the hearing of blasphemy. Thus the officers of Hezekiah, when they heard the blasphemous words of Rabshakeh, rent their clothes, 2 Kings xviii. 37. The enemies of Jesus, on his explicitly declaring himself the Son of God, inferred that he was worthy of death. But, on account of their then subjection to the Roman government, they said they could not put him to death, John xviii. 31; and therefore they exhibited a charge against him at the bar of Pilate, a Roman governor. “we have a law,” say they,” and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God,” John xix. 7. The law is express,” he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death,” Lev. xxiv. 16. 3.

In his resurrection, the spirit by which he was raised vindicated him from the charge of blasphemy, under which he died. “god was manifest in the flesh, was justified in the Spirit,” 1 Tim. iii. 16. The controversy which had subsisted between him and his enemies, was terminated in his favour. The Divine Father interposed, and, by a splendid miracle, declared him to be, in the most sublime sense, his Son. Is it conceivable that God would have raised him from the dead to a glorious life, if he had impiously assumed the exalted character of the Son of God, and thus arrogated to himself Divine honours? We cannot suppose it. Christ, then, is the Son of God. Thus,

though he set like the sun under a dark cloud, he arose like the luminary of heaven in full glory. His resurrection rolls away his reproach, and illustrates his supreme personal dignity, by showing, that, in a sense peculiar to himself, he is the Son of the Blessed, his own Son, his beloved Son, his Son in truth, and his only begotten Son, Mark xiv. 61; Rom. viii. 32; Matt. iii. 17; 2 John 3; John iii.16.

It is not in virtue of his office that this sublime appellation is bestowed on him. For as Mediator he acted in a subordinate capacity, and sustained the humble character of a servant; but, in the language of Scripture, son and servant are terms of opposition. The householder having sent his servants, at last sent his son, Matt. xxi. 36, 37. Moses was faithful as a servant, Christ as a Son, Heb. iii. 5, 6. Angels are ministering spirits, but Christ is the Son, to whom the Father saith, "thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," Heb. i. 5, 8, 14. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews employs the term son in a manner that naturally leads to the conclusion, that Jesus was a Son before he was set up from everlasting as a servant; and that in assuming the character of a servant, he displayed the most astonishing condescension and the richest grace. "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience," Heb. v. 8. Substitute the term servant for son, and the spirit of the passage evaporates. The sense of it is gone. The language is unworthy, I will not say merely of an inspired apostle; it is unworthy the pupil of Gamaliel: it is unworthy a man of common intellects. No one who is acquainted, in the smallest degree, with propriety of speech, would say, Though he were a servant, yet learned he obedience. But if Christ were a creature, though superior in the rank of finite beings to Gabriel, the character of servant would, in virtue of his derived and dependent nature, necessarily belong to him. Yes, an archangel of the sublimest genius, of the highest dignity, of the most extensive power, is a servant of God: but Christ is the Son, in a sense in which no created being can be so denominated.

The apostle Thomas seemed to enter into the spirit of this truth, when, on seeing Jesus after his resurrection, he exclaimed, "my Lord and my God," John xx. 28. For this is to be considered not merely as the language of a mind fully convinced of the great fact, and agitated by strong passion, such as love, joy, gratitude, admiration of an unexpected and extraordinary event, and shame for having disbelieved his Master, dishonoured his brethren, and laid down an unreasonable principle as the basis of his faith; it is also to be regarded as an animating declaration of his sentiments respecting the essential and supreme dignity of his risen Master. "my Lord, and my God!"

Thirdly. The witnesses represent this fact as a glorious proof of the efficacy of Christ's work.

Here we must consider what his work was, when it was finished, and how the resurrection of Christ proves that his work was finished.

1. What was the work which the Father gave him to do? The gospel replies, He came into the world to save sinners. “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” He came to seek and to save that which was lost. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved,” 1 Tim. i. 15; Luke xix. 10; John iii. 16, 17.

2. When was this work finished? When he died on the cross. By making himself a sacrifice for sin, his gracious undertaking was completed. On this subject the language of the Bible is remarkably explicit and forcible. Christ died for us. “He died for our sins,” says St. Paul, “according to the Scriptures;” intimating that this is one of the leading doctrines of Scripture. “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” 1 Cor. xv. 3; Rom. v. 8.

He endured the punishment which we deserved. “surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.— He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” He who knew no sin, was made sin for us. He suffered the just for the unjust, Isa. liii. 4— 6; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Peter iii. 18.

Our salvation is represented as the effect of his death. Are our iniquities pardoned? “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” are we justified? His blood “cleanseth us from all sin.” are we sanctified? He “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” are we reconciled unto God? It is “by the death of his Son.” Have we access to God? “We are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Do we rejoice in God? It is “through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.” Is the sting of death taken away? “Through his death he destroyed him that had the power of death.” Shall we be happy in heaven? We shall gratefully attribute our felicity “to Him who hath washed us from our sins in his own blood,” Eph. i. 7; 1 John i.7; Tit. ii. 14; Rom. v. 10; Heb. ii. 14, 15; Rev. i. 5.

The death of Christ is the substance of the ancient Jewish sacrifices. They were shadows of good things to come; the body is of Christ. He is the true Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. His

one sacrifice takes away sin, purifies the conscience of the believer from dead works, and perfects for ever them that are sanctified, Heb. x. 1; Col. ii. 17; John i. 29; 1 Cor. v. 7; Heb. ix. 26, 14; x. 14.

This account of the nature of his death illustrates the history of his sufferings. If Christ died as a martyr only, or to seal the truth of his doctrine, or to set us an example of patience and resignation, of fortitude and benevolence, how can we account for the horrors of his soul? No one ever had more reason to die with firmness. His submission to God, who required his death, and his love to men, who, in any view, would be benefited by it, were perfect. His confidence in the goodness of his cause was unshaken. His consciousness of the innocence of his life could not be disturbed. The prospect of a future state of immortality opened to his view was truly glorious. He anticipated the happiness he was going to enjoy, and the dignity to which he would be soon raised. Yet, with all these causes of firmness, which in a mere martyr might have produced heroic fortitude, and ecstatic joy, his soul was sorrowful, exceeding sorrowful, sorrowful even unto death, Matt. xxvi. 38. Such was the agony he felt that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," Luke xxii. 44. With strong crying and tears, Heb. v. 7, he thrice prayed that the cup, the bitter cup, might pass from him, Matt. xxvi. 44; and, on the cross, in all the depth of woe, he exclaimed, in language that must rend the heart of sensibility, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46. If he died as a martyr only, upon what principles can we account for the horrors he endured? But if, as we have seen, his soul was made a sacrifice for sin, the reason is evident. Now,

3. His resurrection from the dead is the bright evidence which God has given us of the perfection and efficacy of his work.

If God had not raised up his Son, Jesus could not have delivered from the wrath to come, 1 Thess. i. 10; remission of sins could not be preached in his name, Luke xxiv. 46, 47; nor could the justification of the ungodly be effected, Rom. iv. 25. Blessed, therefore, be his glorious name for ever, because, as he was delivered for our offences, so he was raised again for our justification. Well, then, might the apostle exclaim, in the language of triumphant faith, "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again," Rom. viii. 34. His resurrection proves that he finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; that iniquity is expiated, that the demands of the law are answered, that Divine justice is fully satisfied, and that death hath no more dominion.

Atonement was made by our great High Priest on the cross: but his death, unconnected with his resurrection, could not have satisfied us. If he had not arisen,

the hopes of his disciples would have been for ever buried in his tomb. For it is his resurrection which shows that God is well pleased with him for his righteousness' sake. Hence "the God of peace," Heb. xiii. 20, is said to have "brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." In dying, Jesus satisfied every demand; and in rising again, he received his acquittal. He was released from the prison of the grave, as by public adjudication. When justice ceases to punish, it is satisfied. Justice, provoked by our rebellious conduct, inflicted death upon him, under the charge of our sins which he took upon himself; justice, appeased by his one offering, restored him to life. His death, therefore, pleased God; and his resurrection, by expressing the good pleasure of the Father of mercies, assures men of the perfection and efficacy of the Saviour's work.

Hence, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless us, Acts iii. 26. "It behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day,—that repentance and remission of sins might be preached in his name among all nations," Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Agreeable to this is the language of Paul, when addressing the Jews at Antioch," we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again.—Be it known unto you therefore men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things," Acts xiii. 32, 33. 38, 39. Christ finished the work of redemption, before he was exalted to bestow its blessings. His resurrection, therefore, is the grand proof of the completeness of his work.

This will, perhaps, more fully appear, if we consider, that his resurrection was the first link in the chain of his exaltation. He was raised to glory. Now it is natural to infer, that he finished his work before he received his reward. "Having been obedient unto death, God hath highly exalted him," Phil. ii. 8, 9.

Once more: In his resurrection he triumphed over his enemies. It is natural, therefore, to conclude, that he conquered them in the field of battle. Yes, he hath gained the victory. Sin, death, and hell lie vanquished at the foot of the cross. In his resurrection he triumphed over them. When he arose, he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, Psa. lxviii. 18; Eph. iv. 8. In allusion to the honours of a triumph, which were granted to Roman generals after splendid victories, Paul says, that Christ," having spoiled principalities and powers, made a show of them openly, triumphing over them," Col. ii. 15. "who is this that cometh from the tomb? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength?" It is he who is "mighty to save. He hath trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him," Isa. lxiii. 1, 3. With the blood of the slain he hath stained his garment; and now, as an illustrious conqueror, he meets the morning of the resurrection, and arises

victoriously from the tomb. He returns with blessings from the world of spirits. He brings salvation for the sons of men. Never before did the revolving sun usher in a day so glorious. "It was the jubilee of the universe." "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." The Father of mercies, well pleased, looked down from his throne in the heavens. With complacency he beheld the world restored. "He saw his work that it was good." Then did the deserts rejoice and blossom as the rose, and the whole face of nature was gladdened.

Here, then, we see the power of Christ's resurrection; and hence we infer that it is rational to hope for life, for eternal life, from him who died on the tree, seeing he rose again. The salvation which he accomplished by his labours and sufferings, is eternal in its duration. He "obtained eternal redemption for us," Heb. ix. 12. This leads us to remark, that,

Fourthly. The witnesses state this fact in proof of a future state.

See how Paul speaks on this subject in 1 Cor. xv. 12—22," If Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then 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: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and 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. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

This great doctrine, reason, unassisted by Divine revelation, could not authoritatively teach. When we reflect, indeed, on the nature of man, on the present constitution of things, and on the attributes of Deity, the doctrine of a future state seems highly probable. On earth, the soul of man, which appears capable of endless improvement, wants scope for exertion. Splendid talents, demanding an unbounded theatre of action, are often buried in obscurity. The heart finds no object that can fully satisfy its vast desires. It feels a restlessness which nothing here can fix. It pants for an infinite good. It longs after immortality. At the bare apprehension of falling into naught, it trembles. Man, considered as a mere mortal, seems to have been made in vain. The present state of things corresponds not with his progressive reason, and his unbounded wishes. Nothing here realizes those sublime expectations, which his intellectual and moral nature permit us to indulge. In this world there does not appear

that proportion between sin and misery, on the one hand, and holiness and happiness on the other, which, from the Divine character, implying moral government, we might reasonably expect, were there no future state. Society here is not so assorted, as that persons of congenial minds may always derive fulness of pleasure from friendly intercourse," thought meeting thought, and will preventing will, with boundless confidence." Hence, and from other considerations, we infer the probability of a future state. But simple probabilities, where the prolongation of our being is the object of inquiry, cannot afford satisfaction: we want certainty.

Those to whom we are united by the cords of friendship and the ties of nature, bid us farewell, and return no more. They die, and bring no tidings of their destiny. When we follow to the silent grave the cold remains of a friend, a brother, a parent, or a child, how natural the inquiry," if a man die, shall he live again?" When we anticipate our own death, were reason our only guide, with what anxious and hesitating expectation should we look towards the land of night? The hopes of nature, however strong they may appear when no danger threatens, are much too feeble to support the labouring mind, sinking under the weight of mortality.

Under these distressing circumstances, Whither shall we flee for support? The ray which the light of human wisdom darts, is too faint to penetrate, to enlighten, to animate the mind, hovering over the grave. Without the cheering beams of revelation, we are like blind men feeling for their way. Thus it was with the most celebrated philosophers of Greece and Rome. Now, if the wise could not succeed, what could the ignorant do? If the aged were at a loss, what must have been the condition of the young? If men of leisure could make no progress in these pursuits, what could be expected from those who procured their daily bread by hard labour?

The best informed among the heathen, who had some vague notion of a future state, never imagined that the body would rise again. Yet, as the body is one of the constituent parts of man, solicitude respecting its destination is by no means unreasonable. But so little did the doctrine of the resurrection enter into their most improved conceptions, that, when at Athens, the very seat of science, Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, the philosophers said "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods," Acts xvii. 18. They supposed that the second term was, like the first, the name of a new divinity, called Anastasis.

The insufficiency of reason should induce us gratefully to acknowledge the obligations we are under for Divine revelation, which teaches us all that is necessary to be known on this important article.

Let us, then, say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life," John vi. 68. That there is a future state, that men will arise from the dead, and that they will exist for ever, Jesus Christ taught his disciples. To be convinced that he inculcated these truths, we have only to read the book which contains his religion.

The doctrine of a life to come, in the system of revealed religion, is to be regarded not as an essential point, incidentally introduced, but as an article of prime importance, interwoven with every part, and constituting the perfection of the whole. Lose sight of this doctrine, and the leading facts of the New Testament will be involved in mysterious darkness, for hence their lustre is derived. Without this, the threatenings will strike no terror, the promises will impart no comfort, the precepts will possess no force; the strength of the system is gone, its beauty is marred, its connecting principle is broken, its importance is annihilated; for the whole system proceeds on the ground of a future state. Why had Christ, the Lord of the universe, a stable for his palace, and a manger for his cradle? Because his kingdom is not of this world. Now, this supposes a future state. Why should we not fear tyrants, who may confine us in dark dungeons, stretch us on the rack, or cause us to expire on a cross? Because, though they may kill the body, they cannot destroy the soul. Now, this supposes its immortality. Why should we consider ourselves as losers, were we, to resist conscience, to gain a world? Because the loss of the soul nothing can indemnify. This supposes immortality. Why were not the primitive Christians the most miserable of mankind? Because their hope in Christ was not confined within the boundaries of time. On earth, the state of believers corresponds not with their sublime privileges, as redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and adopted into the family of heaven. Now, this supposes a world to come. Pursue the inquiry, and you will see that this doctrine is essential to the strength, to the beauty, and to the perfection of the Christian system.

Now, of this important doctrine, the resurrection of Christ is the grand proof. Nor is it merely a proof, but also a striking exemplification of the doctrine. Christ has passed through the fire without being consumed; He descended into the grave, but the grave restored him to life. Do you not feel the force of this argument? Christ arose from the dead to authenticate a system, of which the immortality of man is the basis; then there is no reason to doubt of a future state. In the view of those who believe the resurrection of Christ, this doctrine is placed beyond the reach of controversy. Christ demonstrated it to the senses of his apostles, who were the chosen witnesses of the momentous fact. By raising himself, he gave at once a proof, and a specimen, of the great doctrine which he had previously taught. Do you disregard his testimony? If one were to arise from the dead, would you believe?

Then, come, see the place where the Lord lay. What will you say to so plain a fact? By bursting the bands of death, he has shown himself to be the Resurrection and the Life. He has proved that he can save others from the dishonours of the grave, as he has saved himself. His resurrection is represented by the witnesses as the proof, the cause, and the pattern of ours, 1 Cor. xv. 20, 22; Phil. iii. 21.

Fifthly. The witnesses adduce this fact as a proof that Jesus Christ is the Lord of conscience, the Head of the church, the King whom God hath seated on the hill of Zion.

The mediatorial kingdom of the Son of God is founded in his voluntary humiliation. Because “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,” Phil. ii. 8, 11. “To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and Living Rom. xiv. 9; that “they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again,” 2 Cor. v. 15. When Peter, on the memorable day of Pentecost, bore testimony to the resurrection of Christ, he thus addressed the Jews,” therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ,” Acts ii. 36.

One of the charges exhibited against Jesus, when he stood a prisoner at the bar of Pilate, was, that he made himself a king. The multitude “began to accuse him, saying, we found this fellow perverting the nation,” stirring up the people,” and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King,” Luke xxiii. 2, 3, 5. Pilate asked him,” art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king;” but “my kingdom is not of this world,” John xviii. 33, 36, 37.

Christ is a spiritual monarch; not such a sovereign as the Jews vainly expected. In the person of Messiah, they looked for a temporal prince, adorned with worldly splendor, and attended with numerous armies. They supposed that the king of Israel would assert their civil rights, redress their political grievances, and rescue them from their ignominious subjection to the throne of Cesar. They thought he would command their hosts, fight their battles, conquer their enemies, and introduce the fifth general monarchy. But the humiliating circumstances of the birth of Christ, the poverty of his life, and the meanness of his followers, blasted these ambitious hopes. The means by which his kingdom is founded, supported, and enlarged; the purposes of his reign, the enemies he opposes, the subjects of his empire, the laws he enacted,

the motives by which they are enforced, and the rewards he bestows, are all suited to his character as a spiritual sovereign. His appearance was not that of a temporal prince. He assumed not the character of civil magistrate. The offices of an earthly judge he never exercised. He displayed the wisdom with which he was eminently endowed, in escaping the snares which were artfully laid for him by his crafty foes: I allude particularly to the case of the woman taken in adultery, John viii. 11; to that of the man who said to Christ, "master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me," Luke xii. 13; and to the manner in which Jesus answered the captious inquiry of the Herodians and Pharisees, relative to the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cesar, Luke xx. 20—26. Political discussions the Prince Messiah always avoided. He did not come to teach his subjects the science of civil government; for his kingdom is not of this world.

Pilate, knowing that Jesus Christ did not interfere with the claims of Caesar, would have released him; but say the Jews, "if thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar," John xix. 12. They did not say, "if thou let this man go, thou wilt, by an act of flagrant injustice, degrade thy character, dishonour thy office, and sully the lustre of thy administration; thou wilt countenance vice, embolden criminals, and endanger the rights of society;" but "thou art not Cesar's friend." This alarmed his fears, and made him tremble for his own safety. "When Pilate heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and saith to the Jews, Behold your king!" John xix. 13, 14. Then, in opposition to the dictates of his conscience, he condemned him to be crucified. Yes, to the envy of the priests, to the jealousies of the Sanhedrin, and to the madness of the populace, he basely sacrificed his conscience, by pronouncing an iniquitous sentence against Him whose innocence he repeatedly acknowledged. The Roman soldiers insulted the King of Israel, by dressing him in mock majesty, putting on his head a crown of thorns, and a reed, for a sceptre, into his hands; then, bowing the knee before him, they insolently said, in terms of bitter derision, "hail, king of the Jews!" Matt. xxvii. 27—29. The title, King of the Jews, as specifying one of the charges brought against him, and for which he suffered death, was affixed to his cross, John xix. 19.

Now, the Spirit, in his resurrection, justified him from the charge of sedition, and proved that he is a King. When he arose, he led captivity captive, triumphed over his enemies, received royal donatives for his subjects, and erected that spiritual kingdom which will never be destroyed, but which will continue to increase till it cover the whole earth. When Christ arose, he entered on his government. "all power," saith our risen Lord, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and,

lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen,” Matt. xxviii. 18—20. Here Christ appears invested with royal authority. In his regal character he enacts new laws. He speaks with the voice of a sovereign. With supreme dignity he issues forth his edicts. As King in Zion he now reigns over the understandings, the consciences, the hearts, and the lives, of all the subjects of his holy empire; and he will continue to reign till all his enemies be made his footstool. “Of the increase of his government there shall be no end. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed,” 1 Cor. xv. 25; Isa. ix. 7; Ps. lxxii. 8,17.

Sixthly. The witnesses state this fact as a proof that Christ will judge the world.

Very express, on this subject, are the words of St. Paul, when he stood on Mars’ Hill, and addressed the members of the supreme civil and ecclesiastical court in Athens. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead,” Acts xvii. 31. God, being invisible in his own nature, a Spirit, whom no man hath seen, nor can see, hath wisely appointed that the important concerns of the last judgment shall be transacted by his Son, who, for the purposes of our salvation, assumed human nature. The office of Supreme Judge could not be properly discharged by a person of inferior dignity. Such is its great difficulty, and such its high importance, that no one but our Lord Jesus Christ is equal to the task. He alone is qualified to sustain the august character of Universal Judge.

Now, that he will judge the world, his resurrection proves, as it establishes the truth of what he had repeatedly declared upon this subject. “The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son,” John v. 22. “The Son of man shall come in his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations.” He, as King, shall say unto the righteous,” come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:” And to the wicked,” depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” Matt. xxv. 31, 34, 41. To this superlative dignity Christ will be elevated, as a reward of his humiliation. His resurrection was the first step of his exaltation; the first-fruits of his subsequent honours. It is the ground of assurance that he will, ere long, appear in all the dignity of the Son of God, with all the authority of the Sovereign of the universe, with all the majesty of the Judge of men and angels. Then he will judge those by whom he was judged, and finish the work which the Father gave him to do, John xvii. 4, in the final destruction of his enemies, and the complete salvation of his people.

CHAPTER III.
**ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION OF
CHRIST.**

TRUTH derives its importance, principally, from its effects. The most beautiful hypothesis, the most refined theory, the best connected speculative system, are of little worth, if attended with no beneficial consequences. Small, in moral calculation, is the value of those sentiments, which have no tendency to pacify the guilty conscience, to regulate the operations of our depraved will, to spiritualize the affections, and to reform the conduct. To ascertain the true excellence of religious doctrine, we must investigate its tendency. For, though tendency does not always rise into effect, it is the best criterion by which our judgment can be formed, in regard either to the absolute, or the relative importance of truth.

By this rule let us proceed in our inquiries respecting the resurrection of Christ. The power of the belief of it, proves the worth of the fact.

The witnesses of the resurrection do not content themselves with bearing testimony to the fact; they do not content themselves with showing its import; they do more: they illustrate its great utility in an experimental and practical view. They represent it as the ground of faith; the basis of hope; a stimulus to obedience; an argument for glorying in the cross of Christ; an inducement to heavenly mindedness; and a source of consolation under various trying dispensations of Providence.

First, the resurrection of Christ is the ground of faith.

Faith requires nothing more for its support. This is firm footing; this is solid rock. On this certain fact the Christian religion securely rests. The resurrection of Christ, once established, proves all the other truths which we are required to believe; for, by authenticating his Divine mission, it sanctions all he taught. His resurrection establishes other facts inseparably connected with it, gives authority to his commands, renders his threatenings awful, confirms his promises, and justifies our expecting the accomplishment of his predictions.

If Christ be risen from the dead, our faith in the apostolic testimony is well grounded; for the apostles were not false witnesses of God; their preaching, therefore, was not vain. From Jesus Christ—whom his resurrection proves to be a celestial envoy, to whom we owe the obedience of faith—the witnesses derived their commission, to “go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,” Mark xvi. 15. Their

credentials,” the signs of an apostle,” 2 Cor. xii. 12, the miracles which they wrought in the name of their risen Lord, attested the high authority under which they acted. Men who healed the sick, expelled demons, and raised the dead, were certainly entitled to credit. Their writings, therefore, which have been carefully transmitted to us, demand our faith.

To suppose that more regard was due to the preaching of the apostles than we owe to their writings, is unnatural. It was as necessary that they should be true witnesses of God in what they wrote, as in what they spake: for few, comparatively, could hear their transient voice; but many may read their immortal writings. Their personal ministry was of short duration; but their writings have been handed down to the present day, and will be conveyed from generation to generation, till the end of time. The arguments which prove the necessity of any revelation, prove the necessity of either a constant miraculous interposition, or of revelation being committed to writing, by men divinely secured from error; so that the facts which they relate may be admitted as true, and their reasonings upon them justly considered as conclusive. That the writings which bear their names are the genuine productions of the apostles, there can be no reasonable doubt. To suppose otherwise, we must violate all those rules by which the genuineness of any ancient composition is ascertained. We have, certainly, much more evidence in this case than can be adduced to prove that Homer, for instance, was the author of those sublime poems which have procured him an immortal reputation. He, then, who receiveth the testimony of these witnesses, in the written word, receiveth Christ; and he who receiveth Christ, receiveth Him that sent him, John xiii. 20; who also “raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God,” 1 Peter i. 21.

Thus, the resurrection of Christ is the ground of our faith in the New Testament, as a Divine revelation. The belief of this capital fact induces us to receive the sacred volume,” not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God,” 1 Thess. ii. 13. As such, it demands the profoundest reverence, the most ardent gratitude, and unbounded confidence.

Secondly, the resurrection of Christ is the basis of hope.

That man is a depraved being, is, alas! a melancholy fact, attended with the most abundant evidence. All things rise in proof. On this humiliating subject, observation and experience confirm the decisions of Scripture. “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” If God, therefore, were to mark iniquity, who could stand before him, Rom. iii. 23; 1 John i. 8; Psa. cxxx. 3.

But though it be an undeniable fact, that every individual of our species is a sinner, and though conscience be enthroned in every breast to testify against all sin, yet every man is naturally averse to the humiliating doctrine of human depravity and guilt. The sinner will not readily admit the idea of his blameworthiness. He cannot allow his guilt to be great. He does not suspect himself in danger. Though conscience, at times, starts from its slumbers, and loudly proclaims the multitude of his transgressions, the enormity of his crimes, and the awful attributes of God; yet soon it is lulled to sleep, charmed to a delusive rest, and its occasional rebukes make no impression, but fall," like arrows shot against a shield of adamant."

But when the Bible is regarded as the voice of God, as the infallible word of the supreme Legislator," who is able to save and to destroy," Jam. iv. 12, it comes with all the authority and majesty of the Almighty Speaker, proclaiming, in the conscience of the sinner, the holiness, the justice, the sovereignty of God, and the certainty of "judgment to come." Then it overthrows, at once, all those sophistical arguments, by which we before attempted to pacify the mind. The word of the Lord, operating with Divine power, awakens the conscience, empowers it to speak without reserve, and confirms its just but painful decisions. It exhibits to its view enormities before concealed, exposes to the light of truth "the hidden things of darkness," reveals the profoundest secrets of the heart, brings all the principles, purposes, and conceptions of the mind to the test of Scripture, and makes the conscience feel and acknowledge what sin is, when stripped of all its disguises. Then, convinced of our vileness, we tremble before the majesty of God. Divested of every pretence to righteousness, left without even the shadow of an excuse before our Maker and our Judge, we fall prostrate at his feet, with this mortifying confession on our lips," behold, I am vile!" Job xl. 4. Pricked in our hearts, we exclaim," what shall we do? What shall we do to be saved? Who shall deliver us from the wrath to come?" Acts ii. 37; xvi. 30; 1 Thess. i. 10.

To whom, in such distressing circumstances, shall we have recourse? Whither shall we flee for consolation? From what source can we derive hope? From our own obedience? Alas! it is defective. From the law? It condemns us. From Divine justice? It demands vengeance. Blessed be God, his gospel, which is perfectly suited to our state, satisfactorily answers our most solicitous inquiries. It informs us, that his Son Jesus," whom he raised from the dead," 1 Thess. i. 10, has, in virtue of his resurrection, power "to save to the uttermost," because he ever liveth to make intercession for transgressors, Heb. vii. 25. He was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" Rom. iv. 25. Hence, says the apostle," who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he

that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again,” Rom. viii. 33, 34.

The belief “of the operation of God, who hath raised Christ from the dead,” Col. ii. 12, quickens us to a new life, a life of hope; and induces us to adopt the language of Peter,” blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” 1 Pet. i. 3. The import of this fact, brought home to the heart, is efficacious to raise the dead,—the “dead in trespasses and sins,” Eph. ii. 1, by giving hope to those whose circumstances would otherwise be desperate. For, it is impossible that the mind of a sinner, when thoroughly awakened, can be animated with the least solid hope from any other quarter. “The answer of a good conscience” can be no otherwise supplied, than “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,” 1 Pet. iii. 21. This fact, which is a striking display of Divine power, proves that God is well pleased with his Son, for his righteousness’ sake, because he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable, Isa. xlii 21. His resurrection presents to our view a righteousness already finished, by which God can be just in justifying the ungodly, Rom. iii. 26; iv. 5. Faith in this righteousness, in its perfection, in its all-sufficiency to answer the gracious purposes for which it is intended, and in the sovereign freeness with which it is bestowed, is unspeakably precious, 2 Pet. i. 1. For this, and this only, affords complete relief to the pained conscience.

Nothing can satisfy the conscience, when thoroughly awakened to a sense of guilt, but a view of that work which satisfied Divine justice. Consequently, the resurrection of Christ, which displays the perfection of his work, is admirably adapted to satisfy the mind. Yes, this splendid proof that justice is satisfied—this grand fact, which exhibits the Supreme Being under the endearing character of “the God of peace,” Heb. xiii. 20, is excellently suited to afford peace to the troubled conscience. That peace which the Holy Spirit produces in the consciences of those whom he enables to believe, is derived, not from abstract reasonings, not from the feelings of their hearts, nor from any real or imaginary difference between themselves and others, but from a view of that Divine character which this fact reveals,” a just God, and a Saviour,” Isa. xlv. 21: just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. This is the ground of our encouragement to trust in Christ for salvation.

Who, then, that believes this fact, and its delightful import, can possibly despair? For, however numerous our sins, however complicated our guilt, however great our distresses, the resurrection of Christ affords effectual relief. This, this is the sovereign antidote for the anguish of human guilt. This will satisfy the conscience that would otherwise be plunged into all the horrors of darkness, and all the wretchedness of desperation. For this gives an answer, a decisive answer, to the most

interesting, and yet the most perplexing of all questions,” what must I do to be saved?” Acts xvi. 30. The righteousness which it reveals “speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” Rom. x. 6 —9.

Thus, this certain fact, by displaying the efficacy of Christ’s death, and so illustrating the Divine mercy and justice in their admirable union, exhibits an object to the mind of the sinner, on which it may lay firm hold for the security of its hopes. The language of the gospel to the sinner is, “Son, or daughter, be of good cheer. Behold the grand remedy which grace has provided. Who is He that hangs on yonder ignominious tree? Nay, rather, who is he that revived, and left the tomb? It is He who died, and rose again, for the justification of the ungodly. Look to him, and be saved. Trust in him, and be blessed for ever. His righteousness will justify thee from every charge, which the Divine law, thy own conscience, or the great enemy of souls, can bring against thee. In the most humiliating view thou canst have of thyself, in the most awful light in which thou canst appear to the eye of Him who searches the heart, and who hates iniquity, the resurrection of Christ exhibits a righteousness which is fully adequate to thy complete justification.”

Thirdly, the resurrection of Christ is a powerful stimulus to obedience.

“God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless us, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities,” Acts iii. 26. To accomplish this important purpose, the resurrection of Christ is admirably adapted. For in what light does this fact represent him? We have seen that it proves him to be the Messiah, the Lord of conscience, the Son of God, the Saviour of sinners, the Resurrection and the Life, and the Judge of men.

Is he the Messiah? A Divine Messenger? The Prophet like unto Moses? Acts iii. 22. Then his counsels are important, his precepts necessary, and his institutions sacred. To that form of religion which he hath established, we must submit. For “it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed,” ver. 23.

Is he the Lord of conscience? Then, “whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living,” Rom. xiv. 8, 9. Viewing

his resurrection in this light, we shall bow to the authority of Jesus, seek his approbation, and make his will the rule of our conduct. We shall say, "Lord, what wilt thou have us to do?" Acknowledging his right to command, and desirous of obeying His precepts, we shall apply for instruction to his word.

Is he the Son of God? His supreme personal dignity supplies new motives to obedience. For, to whom shall we attend, to whom shall we pay homage, to whom shall we yield obedience, if not to Him, who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person," Heb. i. 3; who bears Divine titles, possesses Divine attributes, performs Divine works, and receives Divine honours?" If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven," Heb. xii. 25.

But motives of a more generous kind than those of terror arise out of the resurrection of Christ. For this grand fact presents him to our view as the Saviour of sinners. Beholding him in this light, every feeling of the heart is touched, hope springs up in the soul, love to God is kindled, and repentance for sin is excited. This is the source of good hope. To the hope of pardon, to the hope of acceptance with God, to the hope of eternal life, we are "begotten by the resurrection of Christ," 1 Pet. i. 3; and "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure," 1 John iii. 3. We are taught to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ," Tit. ii. 12, 13. Hence love to God takes its rise. For, "we love him, because he first loved us," 1 John iv. 19. Here we behold him as "the God of peace," bringing from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep, Heb. xiii. 20. As the God of peace, he sanctifies; and a view of him under this character is essential to our holiness. This reconciles us to him, fills the soul with gratitude, encourages us to draw near to him in prayer, makes us resigned to his sovereign will, and renders his service delightful. From this source repentance flows. We look to Him who "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities," Isa. liii. 5; and we mourn for sin after a godly manner, Zech. xii. 10; 2 Cor. vii. 9. The mercy manifested in the atonement melts the hardest heart, produces true contrition, and excites ingenuous sorrow. The grand proof that sin is expiated, is the only effectual security against the commission of sin. The conscience must be purged from "dead works," before we can "serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14.

Again; here Christ is set before us as the "Resurrection and the Life," John xi. 25. What a powerful inducement to obedience! The doctrine of immortality is the animating principle of religion. It is the soul of virtue. It gives energy to that hope which the gospel inspires, warmth to our gratitude towards the Redeemer, who hath

“obtained eternal redemption for us,” Heb. ix. 12, ardour to our zeal in his service, and vigour to our exertions in promoting his cause. This is the sublime motive which Paul employs to induce us to be “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord,” 1 Cor. xv. 59.

Once more; this fact leads us to anticipate the solemn transactions of the great day: the sounding of the archangel's trumpet, the rising of the dead, the descent of the Judge, and all the events which follow. We see the risen Jesus seated on his great white throne, the world assembled at his bar, and the books opened. We hear the charges specified, the evidence to support them adduced, and the final sentence pronounced. In prospect of this day, we exclaim, “What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!” 2 Pet. iii. 11. It was the belief of Christ's resurrection, and of the general judgment, as established by it, that induced Paul to exercise himself “to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men,” Acts xxiv. 15, 16.

Thus it appears, in some measure, how the principles of religion are formed, and a course of obedience is supported, by faith in the resurrection of Jesus.

The belief of this fact, and of its true import, will make us desirous of “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,” Luke i. 6. Entering into the spirit of this subject, we shall be conscientious in the discharge of moral and positive duties. Yes, a proper regard to the resurrection of Christ, in which his glorious character is exhibited, will prevent us from trifling with Divine institutions.

It will not suffer us to neglect any duties, merely because they are positive; or, in other words, because they derive all their authority, not from the nature of things, but from the sovereign commands of Him, who is the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the soul; to whom we owe all our hopes, and all our consolations, who now governs the church, and will soon judge the world.

Fourthly, the resurrection of Christ is an argument for glorying in his cross.

The change which the resurrection of Jesus operated in the minds and conduct of his apostles, is peculiarly deserving of notice; as it furnishes us with additional argument in proof of the fact, and conveys to us, in the clearest and most forcible manner, their ideas of its supreme importance.

When Christ spake of his approaching sufferings and death, “Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee,” Matt. xvi. 22. In the near prospect of his crucifixion, Jesus suggested various

important considerations to fortify the minds of his apostles against the scandal of his cross, John chapters xiv, xv, xvi, but, because he said he must shortly leave them, “sorrow filled their hearts.” When he was apprehended, they “forsook him, and fled.” Peter, indeed, “followed him,” though “afar off, unto the high priest’s palace;” but, while his Master was interrogated by the Sanhedrin, thrice, without any apparently powerful inducement, did he deny that he was his disciple, Matt. xxvi. 56, 58, 69—75. When their Lord was condemned, executed, and entombed, their expectation from him seemed to be blasted. “We trusted,” as they said, “that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel,” Luke xxiv. 21; but his tragical and ignominious end annihilated all their hopes, surrounded them with midnight darkness, and penetrated their souls with the most pungent distress.

But when he arose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and, agreeably to his promise, poured down upon them the gift of the Holy Spirit, all the dark clouds which hung over their minds were scattered, hope revived, joy dilated their souls, their courage was re-animated, and we hear them speaking, in various tongues, “the wonderful works of God,” Acts ii. 11. In the presence of Pharisees, Sadducees, and priests; before the populace, and before the Sanhedrin, they spake boldly in the name of the crucified and risen Jesus. Threats, stripes, imprisonment, and death, lost all their terrors. None of these things now move them. By the cross of Christ, the world is crucified unto them, and they unto the world. The crucifixion of Christ is the delightful theme of their meditation, the principal topic of their discourse, the constant subject of their ministry. They will know nothing, “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” 1 Cor. ii. 2. They will glory in nothing, but “in the cross of Christ,” Gal. vi. 14.

Whence this astonishing revolution in their sentiments and feelings? What could possibly induce the apostles to glory in the weakness, the ignominy, the distress, the wounds, the death, of their Master? His resurrection was the all-powerful cause. Was he “crucified through weakness? yet he liveth by the power of God,” 2 Cor. xiii. 4. Was his death ignominious? Yes; no terms in our language can convey an adequate idea of the infamy of the cross.

It was the punishment of the vilest slaves, for crimes of the most atrocious nature. The cross in itself, therefore, was an object of shame. To a Jew, and to a Roman, the cross presented a more disgusting spectacle, than the gallows exhibits to an Englishman. What, then, could induce the apostles to glory in the cross of Christ? His resurrection! For this rolled away his reproach, caused the offence of the cross to cease, and fully vindicated those honours which seemed tarnished in the field of blood. The infamy of the cross, great as it was, is more than counterbalanced by those scenes of unrivalled glory which his resurrection began to disclose. If the

majesty of his character, as the Christ of God, the king of Israel, the Saviour of the church, and the Judge of men; if the supreme dignity of his person, as the only begotten Son of the blessed, cannot be reconciled with his cross, they may with his resurrection. This astonishing event teaches us to regard the awful transactions of Mount Calvary, not with confusion and dismay, but with admiration and comfort; as it assures us that the distress which the Redeemer felt is the spring of our consolation, that “with his wounds we are healed,” and that his death is the fountain of life to our souls. How are the scenes reversed! What a lustre does the resurrection reflect upon the cross! So that what was in itself an object of shame, becomes an object of glory.

All the reasons for glorying in Christ, and in his cross, derive their force from his resurrection. Do we glory in the honours of our Lord? It is because “he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” that “God hath highly exalted him,” Phil. ii. 8, 9. His humiliation was the basis of his exaltation. Do we glory in the triumphs he obtained over the enemies of the church? It was by dying he destroyed “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” Heb. ii. 14. When his own heel was bruised, he bruised the head of the serpent. It was on the cross he gained the victory, in consequence of which he, in his resurrection, “led captivity captive,” Eph. iv. 8, “spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them,” Col. ii. 15. In virtue of the splendid conquest effected on the cross, the grave was opened when he rose, and heaven when he ascended. Hence the reiterated shouts of acclamation by the glorious hosts above, saying one to another, “lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory,” Psa. xxiv. 7—10. “His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory,” Psa. cxviii. 1. Hence, “the voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous for the Lord is their strength and song; he is become their salvation,” Psa. cxviii. 14, 15. Do we glory in the cross of Christ, because on it the great work of our redemption was accomplished? It is his resurrection that affords the decisive proof of the merit of his death.

Do Christians glory in his cross, on account of that view of the Divine character which thence arises? It is his resurrection which illustrates this character. Here we see the God of peace, of love, of holiness, of wisdom, and of power. Is the cross of Christ an object of glory, because it furnishes believers with powerful motives to religious action? It is from his resurrection their energy is derived. This inspires immortal hope.

Whether, therefore, we reason from the nature of the case, or from the experience and conduct of the witnesses, we must be convinced, that from his resurrection result all the grand arguments for glorying in the cross of Christ.

Fifthly. The resurrection of Jesus is an inducement to heavenly mindedness.

God raised up Christ, and gave him glory. The heavens have received him until the times of the restitution of all things. Jesus, as our forerunner, is entered into the most holy place. By faith of the operation of God, who raised him from the dead, believers are risen with him. They are raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, 1 Pet. i. 21; Acts iii. 21; Heb. vi. 20; ix. 12; Col. ii. 12; Eph. ii. 6. This argument Paul uses, when exhorting the Colossians to heavenly mindedness. “if ye then be 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,” Col. iii. 1, 2. How cogent the motive! The resurrection of Christ illustrates the natural dignity of man, by establishing his immortality. Thus it elevates the thoughts, the affections, and the pursuits of every true Christian. The belief that the spark which the Deity has kindled in his soul, will outlive the splendours of the sun, lifts him above the world. It convinces him of the supreme folly of those, who, though “winged by heaven to fly at infinite, pinion all their wishes here.”

“A soul immortal, spending all her fires,
Wasting her strength in strenuous idleness,
Thrown into tumult, raptured, or alarmed,
At aught this scene can threaten or indulge,
Resembles ocean into tempest wrought,
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly.”

The gospel sets before us an object worthy our noblest ambition—eternal life. It opens to our view a prospect, the sight of which elevates the soul. When heaven constitutes the prominent figure in the scene which our enraptured eyes behold, this terrestrial globe is thrown into shade. As the faint glimmering of a taper, or the feeble rays of a glowworm are extinguished, when the great ruler of the day shines forth in all its lustre, so the light reflected from the New Jerusalem, the city illuminated by the beams of the Sun of righteousness, eclipses the brightest glories of the world. How insignificant does this present state appear, to one who has eternity in view! For there the riches of earth are not valued, its honours are not regarded, its pleasures are not enjoyed. The more we realize eternal bliss, the less shall we be influenced by “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” 1 John ii. 16.

Yet how strangely are men enamoured with this present state! One is charmed with getting a little wealth which he cannot long enjoy; another puts forth all his energies in pursuing phantoms of honour, which will, in a moment, vanish away forever; and a third is seeking, with the utmost avidity, the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season. Yes, such is the native blindness of the mind, such the perversity of the will, such the carnality of the affections, that these objects of sense will fix the attention, fire the passions, and engage the restless pursuit of men, till they know Christ, and “the power of his resurrection,” Phil. iii. 10. Then, and not till then, they will seek the durable riches, the exalted honours, and the refined pleasures of the heavenly state; and where their treasure is, there will be their hearts.

By faith in his resurrection, they will rise with Christ. On the wings of contemplation, they will soar to that world where Jesus lives. In him their best, their noblest, their warmest affections will centre. By faith, by hope, and by love, they will be where he dwells. The dispositions which abound in heaven, they will cultivate. In the exercises which employ the blessed above, they will delight; and the enjoyments of the celestial state, they will anticipate. In some happy moments, when, entering into the spirit of Christ’s resurrection, devotion elevates the soul above the uncertain possessions, the fading glories, and the empty pleasures of the world, they enter “within the veil,” “lay hold on eternal life,” and seize “the prize of their high calling,” Heb. vi. 19; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Phil, iii. 14. That superiority to the world which is essential to Christianity, is produced by faith in the risen Jesus.

What, then, are we to think of those persons who always grovel on the earth, wholly attached to its interests, immersed in its pleasures, and enslaved by its objects? Do they partake with Christ in his resurrection? Are they risen with him? No; they are not present with him in spirit. Their conversation is not in heaven; they mind only earthly things, Phil. iii. 19, 20. They know not, therefore, the power of his resurrection.

Sixthly. The resurrection of Jesus is a source of consolation under various distressing events.

The resurrection of Christ is a cause of joy. “Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord,” John xx. 20, after he was risen from the dead. They saw a Friend whose society had gladdened their hearts; a Friend, whom they did not expect to see; a Friend, restored to life, no more to die, and with whose life their own was bound up; for, because he liveth, they will live also, John xiv. 19. His resurrection was the solace of their minds in times of uncommon trial; and to this great fact they directed the attention of others as a spring of consolation in seasons of distress.

Did their attachment to Christ, and to his cause, expose them to persecution? They were animated by the consideration that, if they suffered with him, they would be “glorified together and they justly “reckoned that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” For He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies, deliver us from the bondage of corruption, and introduce us into the glorious liberty of the children of God, Rom. viii. 11, 17, 18, 21.

Did they mourn the death of Christian relatives, and friends? “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,” said Paul, when addressing the Thessalonians, “concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him,” 1 These, iv. 13, 14.

Not to be affected, greatly affected, is impossible, when Providence takes from us the delight of our eye, and the joy of our heart, with a stroke. On such sorrowful occasions, our “grief becomes us, and our tears are just.” Religion neither annihilates, nor hardens the delicately tender feelings of nature; but it gives to our virtuous sensibility a keener edge. It requires us, not entirely to refrain from sorrow, but to moderate our grief. To this purpose, it not only speaks with the commanding voice of supreme authority, but it condescends to assign suitable reasons. It affords good hope, and so administers strong consolation.

When standing by the dying bed of a Christian, to whom we are closely united by the ties of nature, or of friendship, we behold, for the last time, his much loved countenance; when we see his face livid, his lips quiver, his eyes rolling in death, and his whole frame convulsed; when we hear his faltering voice, labouring to utter an affectionate farewell; when we witness the final struggle, and perceive that the pulse of life has ceased to beat, that he breathes no more; when we see him, a cold corpse, stretched on the bed of death, or lying in a coffin, covered with a shroud; when we follow his precious remains to the grave, and behold them committed to the dust, to worms, to corruption; we shall, we may, we must, be sorrowful: but we should not indulge sorrow “as those who have no hope;” for we have hope—hope that the immortal spirit is with the Lord, in the unseen world; hope that the body will be delivered from the dishonours of the grave; hope of a joyful meeting at the last day. This hope rests on the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Finally; in prospect of our own dissolution, the belief of this fact will support and animate our minds. Death, in itself, is terrible. Justly is it styled “the king of terrors,” Job xviii. 14. Death is terrible in the view of nature. The afflictions which generally precede it, the sorrowful circumstances with which it is oftentimes attended, the

stroke itself, and the humiliating events that follow it, render death terrible. But in the apprehension of conscience, it is still more terrible, on account of the judgment to which it leads. The thought of this, were there no hope, would fill the soul with horror. When we realize our mortality, when we lie on our dying pillow, when the spirit hovers over eternity, we need, for our support, better instructions than Socrates, or Plato, or any modern philosophers, unacquainted with the gospel, are able to administer. Blessed be God, the resurrection of Christ furnishes us with all we want. Does nature tremble at the apprehension of falling into naught? The resurrection of Christ, by bringing life and immortality to light, dissipates the fear of annihilation. Does a deep sense of guilt cause us to fear lest, in consequence of sin, immortality should be to us a curse? The resurrection of the Son of God proves that sin is expiated, and thus begets us to a lively hope of “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” 1 Pet. i. 3,4.

Thus the resurrection of Jesus dispels the gloomy horrors of the tomb. In the tomb I see a dark night, through which I cannot penetrate; in his resurrection I see the light of life. In the grave I behold the punishment of sin; in his resurrection I behold sin expiated. In the tomb the sad destination of Adam, and of his miserable posterity, presents itself to view; in his resurrection the scene appears reversed, for death is swallowed up in victory.

In this subject all men are deeply interested; for, as we travel through the wilderness of life, we drop, one after another, like leaves in autumn. With what pleasure, therefore, should we listen to the voice which says, “I am the resurrection and the life?” John xi. 25. At the sound of this voice, the Christian takes courage; and he goes down to the grave, not as if he were afraid of falling over a precipice to rise no more, but he descends the valley of the shadow of death with a firm, steady, and unhesitating step. He knows whither he is going, and the way he knows. He is willing to die; for he dies in hope of being restored to eternal life. Hence, when death and the grave are full in view, his faith enables him to exclaim, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1 Cor. xv. 55, 57. His resurrection from the dead is the light of our darkest days, the sweet solace of the heart in times of trouble, the prop of declining age, and the firm support of the dying believer. In the hour of expiring nature he may, with rapture, thus address his soul:

“The stars shall fade away, the sun himself
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years;
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,

The wreck of matter, and the crush of worlds.”

Such, and infinitely more than our feeble conceptions can reach, is the power of Christ’s resurrection. The power which it possesses, is the support of religion; it is the support of those grand doctrines which constitute the object of Christian faith, and it is the support of religion in the soul; for personal religion, in its rise, in its progress, and in its consummation, depends upon this momentous fact,

CONCLUSION.

FROM the resurrection of Christ, we may infer the propriety of a remark, the importance of a command, and the reasonableness of a requisition, with which we meet in the apostolic writings.

The remark, to which we allude, is in Paul’s epistle to the Romans, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” Rom. x. 9. The belief of this fact, and its import, as illustrated in the New Testament, is the criterion of a Christian. He is distinguished, by faith in the fact, from a Jew, a Heathen, and a Mohammedan; by the belief of its import, from a man who receives the testimony of the witnesses as to the fact itself, simply considered, but not as to the important inferences which they deduce from it; and by an experience of its influence, which is the effect of faith, from all those whose minds speculate, but whose consciences and hearts do not feel.

The command, to which we advert, is in Paul’s first epistle to Timothy; “remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead,” 2 Tim. ii. 8. For the devout remembrance of this fact, and of what, according to the apostolic representations, it certainly implies, the first day of the week was set apart by the ambassadors of Christ. The custom of assembling for social worship on this day, may be traced up to the age of those divinely inspired men; and the resurrection of Jesus will naturally account for its origin.

Finally; the requisition, of which we spoke, is in the first epistle general of Peter; “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,” 1 Pet. iii. 15. If we know the power of Christ’s resurrection, we can render the most substantial reason; for this furnishes us with the answer of “a good conscience,” 1 Pet. iii. 21. Do any ask, What is the ultimate object of our hope? We reply, Eternal life. Do they inquire, How we know there is eternal life? We

answer, “Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,” 2 Tim. i. 10. Do they further interrogate us, as to the manner in which we ascertain the truth of what Christ taught on this article? We inform them, that Jesus, by his own resurrection, at once established and exemplified the important doctrine of a future state. Do they ask, How we, who deserve to perish, can expect eternal life? With joy we say, It is “the gift of God,” Rom. vi. 23. If any object that God is just as well as merciful, we cheerfully add, that in the bestowment of this gift, “grace reigns through righteousness, by Jesus Christ our Lord,” Rom. v.21; “who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification,” Rom. iv. 25. “Blessed,” then, “be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,” 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

THE END.