



THE EARLY SUCCESS OF THE GOSPEL AN EVIDENCE OF ITS TRUTH,  
AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO ZEAL FOR ITS  
UNIVERSAL DIFFUSION.

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# A SERMON,

PREACHED AT CRAVEN CHAPEL, LONDON,

ON TUESDAY, MAY 20TH, 1823,

BEFORE THE

HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY;

AND PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF ITS DIRECTORS.

By RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

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"The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but  
mighty through God."— PAUL.

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1823.

EXTRACT FROM THE PLAN  
OF THE  
**HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY.**

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RESOLVED,

That its design be the evangelization of the unenlightened inhabitants of the towns and villages of Great Britain, by the preaching of the gospel, the distribution of Religious Tracts, the establishment of Prayer Meetings and Sunday Schools, with every other scriptural method for the accomplishment of this important object.

That no person shall be employed as a Missionary, by this Society, till the Committee shall have obtained full satisfaction respecting his character, talents, and fitness for the work.

That this Society, in furtherance of its object, shall co-operate with Country Associations, and extend assistance to zealous country ministers, whose labours are impeded by the want of pecuniary resources.

That this Society, being formed on the most liberal principles, shall send Missionaries into those places only, where the extent and moral condition of the population may appear to require assistance; and the Society will hold itself in readiness to resign any of the stations occupied by the Missionaries, to neighbouring ministers and district Associations, whenever the Committee shall determine that the interests of religion may be best promoted by so doing.

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The Institution was formed at the City of London Tavern, in August, 1819. It has now *twenty four* stations, and the Missionaries preach in nearly *two hundred* destitute towns and villages, which embrace a population of about 106,000 souls, and in which they have *fifteen thousand* hearers, who would otherwise be destitute of the word of life. They have also about *three thousand children* in their village *Sunday Schools*, and have distributed, since the commencement of the Society, more than *two hundred and fifty thousand Tracts*. Their labours have been made useful to many, some of whom have died in the Lord. Places of worship have been, in some instances, erected, towards which the grateful villager has liberally contributed, and has sometimes given of his labour, where he had no gold or silver to bestow. Applications have been made to the Society in behalf of more than a hundred thousand more villagers, who are in danger of perishing for lack of knowledge; but, though the Committee have been encouraged by the spirit of the religious public, the pecuniary means intrusted to them are, as yet, very disproportionate to the extent and necessities of the field for useful labour that has been opened before them.

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*Subscriptions and Donations are received at the Society's Rooms, 18, Aldermanbury, London; by Sir James Ferring, Bart. Shaw & Co. Bankers, Cornhill, London; and by Ogle, Bookseller, Glasgow; and Oliphant, Edinburgh.*

## A SERMON.

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1 COR. i. 26—29.

26 “ *For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many  
wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble,  
27 (are called :) But God hath chosen the foolish things of  
the world to confound the wise ; and God hath chosen the  
weak things of the world to confound the things which are  
28 mighty ; And base things of the world, and things which  
are despised, hath God chosen, (yea,) and things which are  
29 not, to bring to nought things that are ; That no flesh  
should glory in his presence.*

THE verses immediately preceding contain a brief statement of the great subject of apostolic preaching ; together with the false and unworthy views of it entertained by the pride of the worldly Jew, and the wisdom of the philosophic Greek ; and the true estimate of its nature and value, by “ those who are called, both Jews and Greeks,”—an estimate confirmed in their minds by the experience of its saving efficacy :—“ For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : but we preach

Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

For a period of four thousand years, "the wisdom of this world," on subjects connected with God and the soul, and eternity, had been put to the trial: It had been weighed in the balances, and found wanting. The experience of all ages and nations, under all varieties of condition, had yielded the same negative result,—no satisfactory discoveries of Deity, no radical and thorough renovation of the hearts and characters of men:—"After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching, (or, 'by the preaching of foolishness') to save them that believe."—By thus interposing, after the inefficacy of worldly wisdom had been made manifest, and accomplishing, by what that wisdom esteemed foolishness, effects which it had never been able to produce, God "made foolish the wisdom of this world,"—"destroyed the wisdom of the wise, and brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent,"—and made it strikingly apparent, that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men."

Of this general sentiment, the verses which form our text contain at once an amplification and a proof:—and, in directing your attention to them, we shall consider, *the facts stated, the design of God in them, and the argument arising from them for the truth of the gospel.*

I. Let us shortly notice, THE FACTS STATED.

"Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called."—"Not many *wise men after the flesh*"—men of celebrity for their attainments in human science, in the knowledge of the secrets of nature, in the elegancies of polite literature, in the depths and intricacies of metaphysical speculations;—the scholars and philosophers of this world:—"not many *mighty*,"—high in the possession of the objects of human ambition, of earthly power, authority, and influence:—"not many *noble*"—of ancient and honourable lineage, and exalted rank in society:—"not many such *are called*." These words, in our translation, are a supplement; for which some have proposed, as agreeing better with the context, to substitute "*call you*."—This appears, no doubt, to accord well with what immediately follows; where the sentiment chiefly expressed is the utter insufficiency, in every worldly view, of the instruments employed by God in effecting his purposes. It is liable, however, to no slight objections.

In the first place;—the expression "*not many*" most naturally signifies *comparatively few*. But amongst the "ambassadors of Christ" referred to in the subsequent verses, and represented by the proposed supplement as *calling* sinners, it could not be said that there were *comparatively few* of the wise, the mighty, and the noble; for there were actually *none*.—It is *possible*, indeed, for the phrase to mean, that the instruments employed were not only neither wise nor mighty nor noble,—that they were, at the

same time, *few in number* ; that they were *not many*, and they were *also* not wise, not mighty, not noble. But the other is by far the most natural sense of the words; and in this sense they express, with the ordinary supplement, a matter of fact.

Secondly:—the ordinary phraseology of the scriptures seems hardly to warrant the ascription of *calling*, in the sense in which the word is evidently to be understood in the passage, to *human agency*. In verses 23, and 24, the apostle says, “ We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are CALLED, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” It is very manifest, that the *calling* here is more than the mere outward call or invitation of the gospel; for to many that was addressed, by whom the gospel continued to be esteemed foolishness. It means what we are accustomed to denominate *effectual calling*—calling by Divine grace into the faith and fellowship of the truth. It corresponds to the word *saved* in a parallel verse a little above,—“ the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are *saved* it is the power of God.” The same calling continues to be meant in the 26th verse: and *this* calling is uniformly ascribed to the agency of God, or of Christ. Thus in verse 9th of this chapter, “ God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord.” 1 Thess. v. 24. “ Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” 2 Tim. i. 9. “ God—who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling,

not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Rom. i. 6. “ Among whom are ye also, the called of Jesus Christ.”—It is true, indeed, that what is equivalent to this calling is at times ascribed to men, as instrumental agents; as when the exalted Saviour gives Saul of Tarsus his commission to the Gentiles, “ to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.” Acts xxvi. 16, 17. Effectual calling *might*, on the same principle, be spoken of in the same way. Of this, however, there is no instance: and the proposed amendment is, therefore, a departure from the customary phraseology of the scriptures.

On these grounds, I should prefer giving the translation of the verse the same *general* turn with the original:—“ For ye see your calling, brethren, that (there are) not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.”

It is, without question, a general fact, that the great body of the people of Christ is composed of the poor, the unlettered, and the ignoble; that although there are, and always have been, *some* of the opposite descriptions, yet the proportion has been but small. The *genius* of the gospel, in this respect,—its design and tendency to “ hide pride from man,” was remarkably exemplified in the fact, that those who were to be the very highest in the church were selected from among the lowest in the world. To *them*, no doubt, the passage has a special reference:—“ YE SEE,” says he, “ your calling,

brethren." Now, in this circumstance they did, most strikingly, see the nature of their calling.\* It was a calling into the fellowship, not of "the wise, the mighty, and the noble," but of "the foolish, the weak, and the despised." Such were the men, under Jesus himself, (who was also despised as having never learned, whose immediate parentage was mean, and who "had not where to lay his head,")—such were the men, who were appointed the heads on earth of the Christian fellowship.† The words then, express a general truth, but with a primary reference to the apostles:—and to *them* without scruple or hesitation, we apply the declaration which follows:—"But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, (yea,) and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence."

"God hath chosen the FOOLISH things of the world, to confound the WISE."

The apostles were not only *esteemed* foolish by men;—as far as regarded the learning, the philosophy, the wisdom of this world, they *really were so*. I need not stop to prove this, with respect to the

\* Some would render the word *βλέπετε* imperatively: "For look at—or consider—your calling, brethren." It may be so rendered: but the alteration does not seem very material.

† 1 John i. 1—5.

fishermen of the lake of Gennesaret, or the rest of the twelve, chosen during our Lord's personal ministry.—The only one of the apostles who has been supposed an exception, is the writer of this epistle himself—Saul of Tarsus.

On this subject, there is, perhaps, a tendency to extremes on both sides. That Paul was a proficient in *Jewish* learning, we are not left to doubt. He was "brought up in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel, (and) taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers."\*—That he might enjoy, otherwise, a good ordinary education, is very likely. But of the eminent learning, and high accomplishments, which some have fondly ascribed to him, the evidence has always appeared to me exceedingly scanty. I have little idea that he would at all have been admitted to rank as a learned man, by the philosophers and literati of Greece or of Rome; and I cannot but think the attempt injudicious, to fix upon him a character, to which he is so far from laying any claim, that, in the words before us, he evidently includes himself amongst the foolish and the weak, as distinguished from the wise and the mighty. I have called the attempt *injudicious*; because, in proportion as we invest this apostle with the attributes of extensive human erudition and captivating eloquence, we necessarily deduct both from the truth of his representation in this passage, and from the force and conclusiveness of the argument in support of the gospel, drawn

\* Acts xxii. 3. Gal. i. 14.

from the inadequacy, in a worldly point of view, of the instruments of its first propagation.

It is true, this apostle, two or three times, quotes from the Greek poets. But the inference from this as to his general learning, has been too strongly drawn. Suppose a person, born of English parents, in a country where French was the prevailing language, were able to write and speak French, and on two or three occasions, were known to have quoted a line of French poetry,—should we think ourselves warranted, on such slender evidence, to pronounce him a man of erudition, an eminent literary character, an accomplished scholar? No, surely: even although to this he should add, in writing to Frenchmen, an occasional allusion to some of their public spectacles, and well-known customs, as Paul does in writing to Greeks. Yet it is on grounds such as these, that the tent-maker has at times been so liberally complimented on the score of his learning.

As to his eloquence, I have no doubt that he

\* An esteemed literary friend, a minister of the English Church, who heard this discourse delivered, and who perfectly concurred in the views here given of the apostle Paul's supposed learning, mentioned to me, in conversation, immediately after, two things which had occurred to him; one of them fitted to confirm, and the other somewhat to modify, the aptness of the comparison here used. The first was, that the Greek language occupied at that time, as the general vehicle of international communication—the common language of Europe—a place similar to that which the French holds now. The second, that the art of printing and the state of society, in our times, had rendered the treasures of literature, of every description, so much more easily accessible than formerly, that the cases were not precisely parallel, and the inference from the one to the other might be too strongly drawn. I acquiesce in the correctness of both these remarks. I have no wish, that any argument should have more weight given to it than the truth of the case admits.

spoke with much of the natural eloquence of affectionate persuasion and fervid zeal. Yet we know for certain, that by the admirers of Grecian oratory his speech was pronounced “contemptible;”<sup>\*</sup> and that he himself disclaims “the excellency” (i. e. what was deemed by men the excellency) both “of speech and of wisdom.”<sup>†</sup> And with regard to his pleading before Agrippa and Festus, so often and so justly quoted as a master-piece of address, I fear we are too apt to give the credit to the natural powers of the speaker, and to forget the promise of the Master in whose cause he was engaged,—a promise made to his apostles with especial reference to such situations as that in which Paul then stood, namely, when they were to be “brought before rulers and kings for his Name's sake”—“Settle it in your minds, not to meditate beforehand what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist”—“for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.”<sup>‡</sup>

Am I taking laurels from this apostle's brow? The text convinces me, that he would have nobly disdained to wear what did not belong to him, and that his eye would have glistened with delight to see them placed on the brow of his Master.

It is very worthy of notice, that the particular kind of learning—the sacred learning of his own nation—which we know he *did* possess, was of a nature far from being fitted to recommend or assist

\* 2 Cor. x. 10.    † 1 Cor. ii. 1.    ‡ Luke xxi. 12—15.    Matth. x. 20.

him in that ministry, to which he was peculiarly appointed—as the *Apostle of the Gentiles*. By the Greeks and Romans it was held in supreme contempt. And it is surely a remarkable fact, of which the design was the same with that mentioned in our text, that this thorough-bred Jew, whose education, we should have thought, so eminently qualified him to be the apostle of the circumcision, should have had his commission “far hence unto the Gentiles.” Was not this, that, both among Gentiles and Jews, “the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men?”

“God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise.”—This “confounding” may be viewed in two lights. *First*, as to the effect produced on the minds of the wise themselves. These “unlearned and ignorant men” preached doctrines in direct opposition to the tenets of their philosophy; yet these doctrines were declared with an undaunted boldness, and an unaccommodating independence, and were accompanied with a power and an evidence, such as confounded and disconcerted, though it did not convince or convert them. —*Secondly*, as to the effects produced by the preaching of the cross from the lips of those “babblers,” as the wise men of this world esteemed and called them;—effects on human character so unprecedented,—so sudden, so striking, so complete; entire renovations of heart and life; new creations, old things passing away, and all things becoming new:—effects such as human wisdom had never been able at all to rival; to which it had never produced any

thing even bearing a resemblance: effects not secret, but open and manifest; not rare, but frequent and numerous; not confined to one description of men, but embracing persons of every character, every age, and every condition. It is to this confounding display of the superiority of the wisdom of God to that of men, that the preceding verses, as I formerly noticed, refer. It was thus that God “destroyed the wisdom of the wise, brought to nothing the understanding of the prudent”—“made foolish the wisdom of this world,” and showed “the foolishness of God to be wiser than men.”

Further. “God hath chosen the WEAK things of the world, to confound the things that are MIGHTY.” The instruments employed by Him were “weak :” that is, they were utterly destitute of all earthly power and influence. Yet, they “confounded the mighty;” accomplishing the wonderful effects before alluded to, setting up everywhere the spiritual kingdom of their Lord, and gathering a willing people around his throne, not only without the aid of men, but in the very face of all the combined efforts of human power. The prediction was fulfilled, “The kings of the earth set themselves; and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision.”\* We can only, at present, no-

\* Ps. ii. 2—4. compared with Acts iv. 24—30: v. 27—33. 41, 42.



tice *the fact*. To affirm the attending power of God, by which it was accomplished, would be to anticipate the latter part of our discussion. The fact resembled the discomfiture of the mighty hosts of Midian, by Gideon and his little band of chosen followers ; or the success of their arms promised to Israel by Moses, if they proved faithful to their God—"Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred shall put ten thousand to flight:"—and we shall afterwards see that in all the cases the *power* must have been the same.

"And *BASE* things of the world, and things which are *DESPISED* hath God chosen ; yea, and things which *ARE NOT*, to bring to nought *THINGS THAT ARE.*"

As the "*foolish* things of the world" are opposed to the "*wise*," and the "*weak*" to the "*mighty*," so the "*base* things of the world" stand in contrast with the "*noble*," in the preceding verse.—The first heralds of the cross were publicans, fishermen, tent-makers ; men of no lofty lineage ; no blood of royalty or nobility flowing in their veins ; no titles of rank adorning their names ; no courtly equipage attending their journeys, dazzling the eyes of envy, opening the lips of adulation, and commanding the ready homage of selfish servility. No.—They are further characterized as "things that are *despised*." They possessed no renown for worldly greatness ; no hereditary reputation ; nothing attractive to the earthly eye, nothing captivating to the carnal mind ; no secular recommendation whatever. Had they continued at their respective worldly occupations,

they would probably have passed unnoticed in the crowd of ordinary men ; but their high pretensions, contrasted with their mean condition, exposed them to scorn and contumely. How strongly is this expressed in the fourth chapter of this epistle, verses 9—13 : "For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death : for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ ; we are weak, but ye are strong ; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; and labour, working with our own hands : being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we entreat : we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day."

The last expression on this subject in the text, is one of great energy—"Yea, and things which *ARE NOT*, to bring to nought things which *ARE.*"—They were, in themselves, so destitute of notoriety, that, in regard to any influence they could possess, they were as if they *had not been*. They were persons, respecting whom, on contemplating them as instruments for such a work, we should have been disposed to say—"It were quite as hopeful to employ none :—there would be as good prospect of success as from these : they are 'less than nothing and vanity' for such an enterprise." Yet, these foolish, weak, base, despised agents, these *non-entities* in point of worldly influence, did God employ,

“to bring to nought,”—to make of no effect, to abolish—“THINGS THAT ARE,”—all the wisdom, might, rank, authority, and influence, of the world ; all that engages the attention, excites the desires, kindles the ambition, commands the admiration, draws forth the applause, and secures the homage of mankind. Yes : and to the wisdom and the power of men we should add the subtlety and the might of the god of this world, and all his hosts of infernal agency. They “wrestled not with flesh and blood only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”\*

The simple fact then is, that by means of such incompetent instruments, Christianity triumphed over all opposition. The nature, varieties, and strength of that opposition will more fully appear, when we come to consider the argument furnished by it in support of the truth. At present, I notice only the fact.

The original number of our Lord’s associated disciples was a hundred and twenty. They were timid, apprehensive of their enemies, and courted concealment and secrecy. About a week after his ascension, the rapid increase commenced. The sacred records, which in this respect stand uncontradicted, state the first addition, in one day, as amounting to three thousand. Immediately after, on another remarkable occasion, “many of them who heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about

\* Eph. vi. 12.

five thousand.” Soon again we read of “believers being the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Still “the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly : and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” In a few years, we find James and the elders of the church at Jerusalem, saying to Paul, “Thou seest, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who believe.”—Scattered abroad by persecution, and after the manifestation of the Divine will respecting the calling of the Gentiles, impelled by zeal for the glory of Christ and the salvation of souls, the heralds of the cross “went everywhere preaching the word.” In thirty years after the ascension, the gospel had spread over nearly the whole extent of the Roman empire, embracing a large proportion of the then known world ; and had penetrated even to Parthia and India. There were large assemblies of Christians in Rome itself, and in all the cities of any note in lesser Asia, and in Greece.—Eighty years after the ascension, is dated the well-known complaint of Pliny to Trajan, that this superstition had diffused itself through the country, as well as established its influence in both the greater and smaller towns ; that the Pagan temples, in his proconsulate, were almost deserted—the solemnities of heathen worship suspended—and the victims that were wont to crowd their altars left without purchasers. Thus, Christianity went forward, “conquering and to conquer ;” bearing down, in peaceful and bloodless conquest, all that opposed her progress ; till, after

three centuries, (for time will not admit of our tracing the steps of her advancement with minuteness of detail) the empire of Rome became (to use the customary phrase) Christian, and, invested with the purple, she took her seat on the throne of the Cæsars. Truth and conscience oblige me to add, that I have mentioned this last triumph only to show the extent to which her growing power prevailed; not because I consider it a triumph that was favourable to the true, that is, to the spiritual interests of her cause. Whatever other advantages may be conceived to have accrued from the event to the Christian Church, it is on all hands admitted, that *these* were far from being benefited by it. Much corruption had crept in before; and therefore it is wrong (as some interpreters of the prophecies, and churchmen too, have done) to date the commencement of corruption from this period. It widened the door for its entrance, however, to a most alarming degree; introducing it, as it were, upon system, and giving it stability and permanence. The temptations to hypocritical profession were fearfully multiplied,—the church became secularized and worldly, through the whole extent of her concerns; and (to use the words of Archdeacon Woodhouse) “the consequent extension of the Christian religion among the heathen nations, was, as Mosheim observes, *in name, not in reality*.”—Still, however, it was an event that strikingly showed the extent of progress attained at the time by that gospel, which commenced its career under the auspices of the foolish, the weak, the despised men of Galilee.

II. I proceed now, very briefly, to notice, in the *second place*—the DESIGN OF GOD IN THIS ARRANGEMENT. It is stated in the words of the 29th verse—“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

On this part of the subject, observe—

1. The *wise*, the *mighty*, and the *noble*, were thus taught not to glory before God.—In the choice which he made of the foolish, the weak, and the despised, he poured Divine contempt on such qualifications. However dazzling in the eyes of men, they attract no special favour, no admiring regard, from Him. He is infinitely above being influenced by the petty distinctions of outward condition amongst his creatures. He is no respecter of persons. He is incapable of giving preferences on any such grounds. They confer no pre-eminence in his sight. He thus stamps the brand of folly on the fondness of the human mind for such distinctions, and its disposition to glory in the possession of them:—“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.”\*

2. No flesh must glory in the *invention* or *discovery* of the doctrine from which such effects arose.—Human wisdom had been long and thoroughly tried.

\* Jer. ix. 23, 24.

It had put forth all its powers, and had proved itself inefficient; and God selected such men as those described in the text, to be the vehicles of instruction to the world, in order to make it manifest that the instruction itself was from HIM. Thus, on the one hand, the wise were put to shame; and, on the other, the instruments actually chosen had no ground of glorying in themselves, as if the doctrine they preached had been the product of their own understandings. On the contrary, they “had nothing which they had not received.” “The treasure was put into these earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men.” Their wisdom was not their own; it was “the inspiration of the Almighty that gave them understanding.”

3. No flesh had cause to glory before God, in the *reception* of the gospel. Those who received the truth in the love of it, owed the difference between them and others to the free operation of the Spirit of God. In his uncontrolled sovereignty, the God of all grace might have called the wise, the mighty, and the noble. *One* reason of his doing otherwise is made known in this passage of Scripture. But nowhere is there any thing said to warrant the sentiment, that the distinction between those who receive and those who reject the gospel, has been owing to any moral superiority in the former,—to any thing better, any thing previously commendatory, in those who are called, above others. Instead of *glorying* over their fellow-sinners, they all feel what cause they have to say, with their mouths in

the dust, under an abasing sense of guilt and unworthiness,—“By the grace of God, we are what we are.”

4. There is a perfect harmony between that part of the Divine procedure which we are now considering, and the general nature and design of the gospel doctrine. There is *one end* kept in view—the utter exclusion of self-glorying on the part of sinners. “The lofty looks of man are to be humbled, and the haughtiness of man to be bowed down, and the Lord alone to be exalted.” Boasting is, first of all, by the constitution of the gospel, excluded from the *ground of hope*. It is of it the apostle is speaking, when he says—“Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.”\* And *grace*—(I use the simple word, because *free grace* is a tautology: it is not grace at all but in proportion as it is free)—*grace* is the character of the gospel throughout. It is not enough that boasting be shut out from the foundation of hope, it must also be excluded from the *cause of difference* between one sinner and another: for if I owed this difference to myself, I should still have whereof to glory. But what saith the Scripture? “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. For by grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created

\* Rom. iii. 27.

in Christ Jesus unto good works, to which God hath before prepared us, that we should walk in them.”\* Boasting is further, as the text particularly teaches us, excluded, from the *agency employed* in the progress and triumphant efficacy of the truth: —“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God who giveth the increase.”† The same thing is strongly implied, or more than implied, in the verses which follow the text: —“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” This disposition, to “glory in the Lord,” is a distinctive feature in the character of the true Israel: —“In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory.”‡—And is it not right that it should be so? What fearful pride there is, what presumption and impiety, as well as unreasonableness and folly,—in a sinful creature trusting and glorying in himself! And how pitiable is it to see a creature, who, in regard to spiritual things, is absolute weakness and impotence, vainly trying his fancied strength, to deliver himself from a ruin, from which nothing can effect his recovery, but sovereign and omnipotent grace!—grace too, which, blessed be the

Divine name! is always ready, for the salvation of the chief of sinners.

III. I am now, in the third place, to consider the ARGUMENT, ARISING FROM THE FACTS IN THE TEXT, IN SUPPORT OF THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

The very name of an APOSTLE is, in our minds, surrounded with a glory. There is attached to it a sacredness, a sublimity, a veneration, above what can be associated with any other created title. We regard the apostles, and justly regard them, as, beyond all comparison, the greatest men the world ever saw:—greatest in station, as the vicegerents on earth of the exalted and glorified Redeemer;—greatest in usefulness, as the commissioned agents of heaven, in the accomplishment of the most wonderful and most blessed revolution in the state of the world, and in the sentiments and characters and prospects of immortal beings, that had ever taken place;—nay, that were saying but little—a revolution, with which nothing that had ever preceded it could bear, even for a single instant, to be put in comparison.—But, if we would properly estimate the force of the argument we are about briefly to state, we should endeavour, as much as possible, to divest our minds of such impressions. We ought to conceive to ourselves, a few individuals, of a despised nation, poor, illiterate, obscure, toiling for their daily bread, mean in station, utterly destitute of worldly power and influence;—a few men, in short, not superior, if even equal, to the average of

\* Eph. ii. 8—10. † 1 Cor. iii. 5—7. ‡ Isa. lxxv. 25.

our own fishermen, on the banks of any of our Southern or Northern rivers.

Such are the persons, whom, if Christianity be not of God, we are to contemplate as the *inventors*, and as the *propagators* of the new religion.

1. Let us, *in the first place*, then, consider them as its INVENTORS.

I must not, perhaps, say, the inventors *entirely*: for it might be alleged that some of their views, and the principal of them, they obtained from the Jewish Scriptures. But this would have no injurious effect upon our argument. It would only shift it a step back. The vast superiority, for example, in dignity, and purity, and loveliness, of their views of the Divine Being, to the puerile absurdities and the disgusting abominations of heathen mythology,—would come, on this supposition, to tell in favour of the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures:—and this would bring us to the same conclusion; for the claims of the Old and the New are inseparable, their fates bound up indissolubly together.

But, without dwelling at all on the pure, sublime, and throughout consistent views of the Divine Being, allow me to call your attention, for a few moments, to one topic, which belongs exclusively to the New Testament writers—which is strictly their own:—I mean the *conception* and the *practical development of the character of Jesus Christ*.

This is a character that stands quite alone. It is altogether unique;—such as “eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had it entered into the heart of

man to conceive:”—a character, which had no preceding picture from which it could be taken; and for the *invention* of which therefore, supposing it had no real prototype, these writers have the full merit of originality. It is a character, moreover, than which, were it once invented, it is impossible to imagine one more difficult to support, with any thing approaching to consistency:—a character, uniting in it all that is truly and properly *divine* with all that is truly and properly *human*.—The difficulty of framing, and far more of consistently supporting, any feigned character, has, you are well aware, been powerfully felt by all the writers of romantic and of dramatic fiction. A human character absolutely perfect, it were a task of no trifling difficulty to maintain in full and unimpeachable consistency, so that nothing which any one could charge as a violation of propriety, should be thought, or said, or done, amidst all the varying circumstances, prosperous and adverse, of private and of public life, amongst friends, and amongst enemies; friends and enemies, too, distinguished by every diversity of temper and behaviour.—But how transcendently superior the difficulty, of maintaining a feigned character, which combines all the might and purity and majesty of the Godhead, with all the corporeal infirmities, and all the mental affections, personal and social, of the human nature, untainted by the slightest admixture of human corruption!—to blend all these in perfect and unbroken harmony; so as that nothing, in word or in act, shall ever present itself, unsuitable to either part of the complex con-

stitution of this singular person;—nothing that shall excite even a momentary feeling towards him, in the slightest degree out of congruity with either view of his character;—nothing beneath the God, —nothing above the man;—nothing that interrupts a tender fellow-feeling with him as a partaker of our own nature, and yet nothing that lowers our veneration of his deity; nothing extravagant, nothing mean!

Again :—without entering into a detailed discussion of the peculiar doctrines of the New Testament, and of the perfect system of practical religion and morality founded upon them;—let me only entreat my hearers to consider for a moment the history of this wonderful little book.—It has now stood the test of 1800 years, and men have never been able to improve upon it: they have never got a step beyond it: on the subjects of which it treats, they have made no new discoveries—about God; about man, as a moral and accountable agent; about a future state; about the principles or the practice of personal or social morality. So far from getting beyond it, it has still left them in the distance, far behind; and all the superiority of the speculations of modern philosophers, on such subjects, over those of the men of ancient times, has been owing to its unacknowledged light and influence. It is not that their powers are greater, their understandings more penetrating, their researches deeper and more discriminating; but that they possess advantages, of which their brethren of antiquity were destitute. The experience of thousands of

years, during which human wisdom was tried without revelation, fully warrants us to conclude, that, but for its assisting light, they should have continued to grope as the ancients did, in the darkness of ignorance, or the twilight of uncertainty. They shine with a radiance that is not their own. Instead of humbly adoring “the sempiternal Source of light Divine,” they have sacrilegiously stolen the light of heaven, to surround their own heads with a borrowed glory.—Consider further: the New Testament has been the text-book of the Christian Church for nearly eighteen centuries; myriads of discourses have been preached from it; thousands of commentaries, entire and partial, have been written upon it; volumes without number have been published about it; and still it is fresh,—still as interesting as when it was first given to the world;—it still possesses all the charms and all the raciness of novelty; its treasures are still being explored, and are still as far as ever from being exhausted. Nor is this all:—whilst it has thus, in successive generations, given ample employment to the powers of its friends, who have all, though many of them distinguished for intellectual eminence, bowed to its authority, felt and owned its inestimable worth, and, after all their researches into it, still found reason to confess their ignorance;—it has also kept in incessant occupation all the varied talents of a host of enemies. They have spoken against it; they have written against it; they have conspired against it; they have striven, by every possible means, to suppress and to destroy it. They have made it the butt of their

ridicule, exhausting upon its contents the entire quiver of refined wit, and envenomed sarcasm, and vulgar buffoonery; and expending against it too all their mighty but ill-directed powers of argument.—One human production has followed another, each in its turn giving place to a successor; the works of one generation have improved upon and superseded those of the preceding, detecting their imperfections and errors, and taking their place.—How few books are there that will bear more than a first reading! how very few more than a second! We feel that, in one or two readings, we have got all that the writer has to communicate, all that is valuable or peculiar in his pages; and we lay the book aside. But the New Testament has been read and studied for century after century, in churches, in families, in closets. It has been perused again, and again, and again, without intermission. When we have gone through it the twentieth time, we begin to it the twenty-first with as eager an appetite, with as fresh an interest as ever;—and the Christian who has read it the most frequently, and with the greatest care, is the man who reads it anew with the greatest pleasure and the greatest wonder!

Let me put it to the common sense of every one present, if the fishermen of Galilee are for a moment to be supposed the unassisted authors of such a book. Let me put it to the conscience of every infidel and sceptic, whether there would not be here an intellectual and moral miracle, not inferior to any of the marvels recorded in the book itself; and whether he who can bring himself to believe it, be

not more credulous than those weak and well-meaning enthusiasts whose credulity he affects to despise.

Were it not, indeed, for the seriousness of the subject, it might not be unamusing, to remark the trouble which these poor unlettered men of Galilee have given to our sceptical and infidel philosophers;—how these “wise men of the world” have expended, and continue to expend, their wits, in treatises and in volumes, directly and indirectly against them; how our Voltaires, and Bolingbrokes, and Humes, and Gibbons, and other chiefs of literature and science, have exhausted themselves, in labouring to show, how these poor men might have done what they did, without aid;—that is, how they might, without aid, have produced something superior to all preceding efforts of human wisdom!—to show, in a word, that they were the most astonishing men the world ever saw;—whilst yet they strangely persist in holding them in contempt.

2. Let us now consider these “foolish and weak and despised things of the world,” as the PROPAGATORS of the new religion.

If the religion promulgated by them be false, then these men had, first of all, to impose upon the minds of immense multitudes of people, a belief that they had been the spectators of what they never at all had witnessed;—of innumerable matters of fact, of which their senses qualified them to be competent and infallible judges. The apostles, immediately after the alleged ascension of their Master, came forward publicly, and thus addressed their



assembled countrymen :—" 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."—What they thus proclaimed with their lips, they by and by published in writing.—Such statements were either true, or they were false. If they were false, all who heard and read them were witnesses to their falsehood. They *knew*, that no such person had appeared, and that no such things had been done.—The record bore, that this remarkable person had, for the three preceding years, been well and publicly known in Jerusalem ;—that he had travelled through the length and breadth of the land, preaching everywhere ; that wherever he came, in city or village, or country, vast numbers of sick persons, under all varieties of disease, were brought to him, and that by a look, a word, or a touch, he healed them all ; that these things were not done in a corner ; that he had at length been tried and condemned to death by the rulers of the Jews, and delivered to their will by the temporizing policy of the Roman Governor ; that he had been publicly crucified, and that certain strange natural phenomena, exposed to the view of all, had accompanied his death ; that he had been buried ; that

the Jewish Sanhedrim had procured from Pilate a guard to watch his tomb, and had taken the further precaution of sealing the stone at its entrance ; that he had, notwithstanding, risen from the dead on the morning of the third day ; that the chief priests and rulers of the Jews bribed the Roman soldiers to conceal the truth, and dictated to them what they should say ; and that their story of the theft of the body of Jesus while they slept continued to be currently reported among the Jews at the time of the publication of the narrative.—Is it, think you, possible, that all this should obtain credit, if nothing of the kind had ever taken place ? It is not, you will remark, the case of persons practising on the force of human self-love, and the weakness of human credulity, by flattering promises of future wonders. It is the testimony of past facts,—facts palpable to the senses, and of public notoriety. And you may fancy to yourselves, what reception would be experienced by a dozen of fishermen, who, on occasion of a great public concourse, should stand up and tell such a tale in the centre of this great metropolis. The nearest hospital for the insane would be thought the fittest place for them.

Further ; the doctrines which these men taught, in connection with the facts of their statement, were not doctrines flattering to the pride, or gratifying to the corruption, of the human heart. If a system of tenets be of *this* description, it is wonderful to what an extent the evil inclinations may bias and blind the judgment. But it was, as we have seen, far otherwise. All that these men preached was in per-

fect opposition to the self-consequence, and to all the varied corruption, of the mind of man. It was opposed too to all the peculiar prejudices of the Jew and of the Greek ; to the one a stumblingblock, and to the other foolishness.—The claims of Jesus of Nazareth were a death-blow to all the worldly and high-minded expectations of the Jews, laying in the dust all those towering imaginations, which had so long been fostered in their minds by false interpretations of the prophecies, dictated by the spirit of this world.—Among the Gentiles, the populace were attached to those superstitions, which not only had connected with them the sanction of antiquity, and the sacredness of paternal tradition, but which gave full indulgence to all the polluted lusts of their fallen nature.—Christianity, moreover, was unaccommodating and exclusive in its pretensions ; demanding not only to be received as from God, but as alone from God, to the denial and setting aside of every other system ;—and the priests, and many more than the priests, who had their livelihood from the existing superstitions, were inflamed against the gospel by all the bigotry of self-interest :—and you are well aware, if you know aught of the history of the nations of the world, of the almost unlimited influence, which, in such circumstances, is possessed, by a crafty and infuriated priesthood, over an ignorant people.—The philosophers affected to scorn, and, in reality, hated it with a perfect hatred, as setting aside all their favourite speculations, precluding research and discovery, and requiring from them, as well as from the weakest of mankind, the

entire submission of the mind to Divine dictation ; and that too, conveyed to them through a medium which they could not but regard with indignant and ineffable contempt.—Of the rulers, too, the power was, to a very great degree, founded in superstition. This was one of the chains of despotism ; one of the bonds by which they held the common people in subjection.

Opposition, the most inveterate and determined, was, from all these quarters, by all these descriptions of persons, directed against the gospel ; and the only means employed to overcome this opposition was “ the foolishness of preaching.” Plain men stated plain facts, and published obnoxious and unpalatable doctrines ; and we have seen how they succeeded. Their own account of their success is very striking. “ For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh : (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds :) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”\*

It ought here to be observed, that *mere success*, even extensive and long continued, is not, when taken by itself, a *certain* evidence of truth. *Mahometanism* has prevailed, as you all know, very extensively, and has kept its ground, over no inconsiderable portion of the world, for successive centuries.

—But the two cases, are, in every respect, different :—different as to the nature of the doctrines, different as to the facts of early progress, different as to the means of subsequent extension.—Mahomet was a man of rank, of a powerful and honourable family, and possessed, by marriage, of great wealth. He indulged in the grossest pleasures, gratified his passions without control,—laying claim to a special license from heaven to riot in unbounded sensuality. In his temper and behaviour, too, he was violent, impetuous, and sanguinary. He courted the weaknesses, and humoured the evil propensities, of his followers; allowing them, in this world, a liberal indulgence to their animal appetites, and their natural fondness for sensual gratification; and holding out to their hopes the promise of a paradise of voluptuous sweets.—In addition to these things,—whilst Mahomet employed argument and persuasion only, his success was small indeed; his converts in three years, amounting to fourteen, and in seven, to little more than fourscore. It was not till he began to use another and a very different weapon, that the rapidity of his progress commenced. So long as the weapons of his warfare were *not carnal* they were *not mighty*. But he afterwards proclaimed the Koran at the head of his armies. With the book in the one hand, and the sword in the other;—a prophet, and a warrior; the alternative which he offered, proselytism, or death!—In all these points of view, Christianity and Mahometanism, and their respective histories, stand in contrast. Respecting the agents in the Christian cause, the means which

they employed, and the success of their labours, I have already said enough, to bring the contrast fully before your minds.—Considering the nature and the circumstances of Christianity, (and in this argument these ought always to be taken into account) Gamaliel's criterion was a just one—"If this counsel, or this work, be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God."—It has *not* been overthrown. It has stood its ground. And never was it in a more flourishing state than at this moment;—a state of unprecedented progress, and unexampled promise. Never, did it bid more fair to become speedily the religion of the whole world!—"THIS IS THE FINGER OF GOD."

This subject leads me to remark—

*In the first place*, That no inference is at all deducible from it, unfavourable to the value and desirableness of human learning in the ministers and missionaries of the gospel now.—The case of the apostles can never, without the most palpable inconsideration, be adduced by any in opposition to the claims of such learning to cultivation. Their very ignorance—their want of human instruction and aid, is one of the proofs of their having been otherwise and supernaturally qualified for the fulfilment of their commission. Let the same qualifications as they possessed be now evinced; and we shall give up, as far as their possessor is concerned, our plea for any thing beyond them. Let the divine gifts be shown, and we shall cease contending for

the human. Procure for us the gift of tongues, and we shall instantly close our classical seminaries. Put us in the way of obtaining men fitted for their work by supernatural communications, and no more time shall be lost, and no more money expended, on preparatory studies.

The world was at first deeply indebted to the gift of tongues; which enabled the first preachers of the cross to proclaim to all, of every country, in their respective languages, the wonderful works of God. But, for the Bible in our own tongue, we have been indebted to human learning. And but for learning, what, at this day, would have become of the various nations of the world? The blessed volume of inspiration must have continued to them all a sealed Book.—I enter not into particulars; but merely lay down a single general principle. It is an incontrovertible maxim, that whatever fits a man for more fully understanding, and more clearly, engagingly, and forcibly communicating, the knowledge contained in the Bible, it is supremely desirable that every one should possess, whose business it is to unfold to others its sacred contents. And the question respecting such qualifications ought to be—not *How little will do?* but *How much can we obtain?*

Let me not be misunderstood, as pleading for the necessity of extensive erudition, in every instrument now employed to do good to the souls of men. No. There are cases in which it is far from being requisite. There are thousands and tens of thousands of the population of our own country, who are ignorant of the first principles of the gospel of Christ,

to whom essential benefit might be done by agents not thus amply endowed. The man who can state and impress the great truths of God with clearness, simplicity, and earnestness; the man who can read, with propriety and feeling, a village sermon, to a company of ignorant fellow-sinners; may be the instrument of real and extensive benefit. And no instrument is to be despised by Christians, none to be left unemployed by them, whose labours God may bless for the ends of his grace. It was the simple tale of the cross, the testimony of "Jesus Christ and him crucified," as the atoning Sacrifice for the sins of a lost world, that effected the wonders of conversion of old; and it is this that effects both at home and abroad the wonders of conversion still: and he who can tell this tale, and exhibit the record of salvation by free grace through the merits of a suffering Redeemer, may be honoured to "turn many to righteousness," who may be nurtured and carried forward afterwards, in Christian light and purity, by the more enlarged knowledge, and regular instructions, of a stated ministry. The great truths by which the consciences of sinners are awakened, their understandings spiritually illuminated, their wills subdued, and their hearts won over to God, are few and simple. And when sinners have once "*tasted* that the Lord is gracious," they will "desire the pure milk of the word, that they may grow thereby:" they will "leave the principles of the oracles of Christ," and, under the tuition of "scribes well instructed unto the kingdom of heaven," "go on unto perfection."

*Secondly.* This subject holds out strong encouragement to missionary exertions,—exertions for the evangelizing of the world, for the conversion of sinners, at home and abroad.

We have proof before us, as we have seen, of the cause of the gospel being the cause of God;—and evidence of the power of God to give success to every effort in its behalf. Jesus has said—he to whom “all power is given in heaven and in earth” hath said, for the encouragement of his servants and people in this great cause, not certainly in the apostolic age alone, but through *all* ages—“Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” And mark the assurances of that God with whom it is “impossible to lie”—“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree:

and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign, that shall not be cut off.”\*

It is true, the exalted Lord, who, when his apostles “went forth and preached everywhere,” “wrought with them, confirming the word by signs following,” does not now help forward his cause in the same way. We have not now “signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” But the early age of the gospel, when such evidence abounded, affords convincing proof that it was not in itself sufficient to overcome the prejudices of the human mind, and the deep-seated hostility of the human heart. Even then “it was not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts,” that the great spiritual changes were effected in the characters of men.—We have still the evidence of miracles, resting on such testimony as no man can disbelieve, without doing violence to his reason, and overthrowing every ground on which credit can be attached to the word of a fellow-creature. We have, in addition to this, the continued miracle before our eyes of the fulfilment of prophecy. And we have also internal and experimental evidence to the truth of the scripture testimony; the inexpressible superiority of its discoveries to all the absurd fooleries, and disgusting and sickening abominations, of pagan mythology, and to all the results of uninspired wisdom,—the perfect correspondence between the provisions revealed by the gospel, and the dictates of conscience, and the felt necessities of

human nature,—and a searching energy, that enters into the sinner's very heart—that reveals him to himself, tells him all things that ever he did, shows him his guilt and his misery, and sets before him a suitable and adequate remedy, sought elsewhere, perhaps long and painfully sought, in vain.—Wherever we find understanding and conscience, there are materials for the truth of God to work upon; and the Divine Spirit, is still, as of old, a Spirit of illumination and power,—opening the understanding, melting the heart to contrition, renewing the will, bringing sinners “from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.”—Experience has refuted the opinion, that civilization is necessary, as a preparatory step, to the introduction and success of the gospel. “I am debtor” said the apostle Paul of old, and, in the spirit of them, we may use his words still, “I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise.”—It seems, indeed, a disputable point, which of the two states of society is the more unfavourable and unpromising,—a state of high luxurious refinement, and of proud and self-sufficient learning, or a state of ignorant and savage barbarism. The former, perhaps, presents obstacles at least as numerous and as powerful as the latter. So far from preparing men's minds for the reception of the truth, it may, in some respects, increase, and that not a little, their natural aversion to its humbling and holy dictates.—It may be granted, that a medium state of society affords the greatest *facilities* for the propagation of the truth : but to men of all kindreds

and of all characters, in every degree of civilization or of barbarism, we have the warrant of heaven, wherever we can find access, to proclaim the tidings of mercy through a Redeemer; and we have the promise of heaven, that it shall not be in vain.

Let zealous, combined, and persevering efforts, then, continue to be made, for imparting, in our own and in every land, to all who are in darkness, the light of truth,—the “light of life.” “The Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, nor is his ear heavy, that it cannot hear.” Into that ear, which is open to our cry, let us pour our united prayer, for success to all our efforts, “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.”

Here is the highest and most appropriate field of Christian benevolence.—I mean not that its liberality or its exertions should be confined to the spiritual and eternal interests of men. By no means. It ought to embrace also the comforts and accommodations of time. The “Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift,” comprehends both, in the exercise of his kindness: he is at once the God of providence, and the God of salvation. The blessed Jesus combined both in the discharge of his ministry upon earth:—he “preached the gospel, or glad tidings of the kingdom, and healed all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease among the people.” The faith of his gospel will dispose us to follow his example, inspiring us with the same spirit which animated him, and inducing us, with tender sympathy and active kindness, to relieve the wants, and mitigate the trials, and soothe the sorrows, of destitute and

afflicted humanity.—But if we act like him, we shall make every thing temporal subservient to what is spiritual and eternal; improving our opportunities of doing good to the bodies of men, to open an avenue to their hearts, to win their favourable attention, and benefit their souls. *This*, I repeat, is the peculiar, the appropriate field of *Christian* benevolence. It was for the eternal, not the temporal interests of men, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world. It was for these that the Son of God suffered, and bled, and died. On these the stamp has thus been impressed of inestimable value, and impressed by that wisdom that cannot err. These, therefore, we ought most of all to prize, and most of all to labour to promote.—Your liberal gifts and pious deeds in this department of benevolence, in the support of Bible, and Missionary, and other institutions for the spiritual good of men, are gifts and deeds, of which the fruits are not confined to time. Even here, indeed, you may see them,—the precious and lovely fruits of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, of spiritual and temporal, personal and social happiness. But the full effects are to be witnessed and enjoyed in eternity. You are sowing seed, of which the harvest shall be reaped in heaven.

The obligation to Missionary labours, to labours for the spiritual instruction and salvation of men—rests on a ground the simplest and most conclusive. We are, through the kindness of heaven, in possession of a blessing, which others need as well as we, and which providence puts it into our power to communicate. This should be to us sufficient indi-

cation of the will of Him from whom the blessing comes. On the great principle of the divine law—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” we are bound not to withhold what we have the ability, and opportunity to impart. We are debtors to all, in every thing in which it is in our power to profit them. Such is the generous law of Christian charity. “Freely ye have received, freely give.”—“If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain;—if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not: doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? And shall not he render to every man according to his works?”

And surely, my brethren, if the obligation of Christian benevolence extends to men of every tongue and people and nation, its claim must possess peculiar force *at home*. The claim begins with family, and enlarges its range progressively, to kindred, and friends, and country, and mankind. If it be the fact, that there are many thousands of our own countrymen, who pass under the common name of Christian, and yet are living in the ignorance of heathens, and dying in this ignorance, and going down to the grave with a lie in their right hand; are we not acting a miserably inconsistent part, a part that admits of no vindication, if we are working, and contributing, and associating, and praying, for the salvation of the heathen, and yet are putting forth no efforts, raising no funds, forming no combinations, and sending up no prayers, for those who are, at our very doors, perishing for lack of knowledge!—who are to be found by hundreds in many

of our country villages, and by thousands in the streets and lanes of our populous cities! What a field for unostentatious but useful labour is presented in this vast metropolis itself!

Christians have often been reproached, and sometimes the reproach has not been without foundation, for zeal abroad, and negligence at home. The Home Missionary Society, whose cause we this day plead, has contributed, along with other home institutions, to wipe away this reproach. I need not say, that I consider it as having a most imperative and paramount demand on the countenance and support of British Christians. I wish not an abatement of their zeal for foreign missions: I wish not the abstraction of a single farthing from that hallowed cause: I wish their zeal to burn with a still more ardent flame, and their liberality to flow in a still more copious stream. But neither their zeal nor their liberality must be exhausted abroad. Perishing fellow-countrymen must have their share in both.—

The Society for which we plead supports the gospel in twenty-four stations, in various destitute parts of the country, comprehending in their range a population of about 106,000 souls, of whom an average of 15,000 attend upon the preaching of their missionaries. They have under their charge forty-seven Sunday-Schools, containing 2803 village children. They add to the preaching of the gospel and the institution of Schools, the circulation of the Scriptures and religious Tracts, and the formation, wherever it can be effected, of village libraries.—The hands of the Society are fettered by deficiency of pecuniary means; they have had to refuse many applications

for village preaching; and to meet even their present demands would require double their present income. I rejoice, and so will you, to hear of such demands. They are a token for good. They are a pledge of the Society's usefulness. And they are, moreover, the voice of God in the ear of Christian charity, and of British patriotism. It cannot be, that the voice should be unheard when it is God that pleads, and when those for whom he pleads are not "men of Macedonia," calling from a distance, but "brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh," living and dying amongst us. Let the voice reach your hearts; and let the sympathy of your hearts open your hands to kindness. And although this Society has, in point of time, at this anniversary season of Christian philanthropy, allowed many others to take precedence of it, you will not, I trust, think yourselves warranted to meet its imperious claims and its earnest entreaties, with the mere dregs and gleanings of your beneficence.

To the Directors of the Society I would conclude by saying, in the name of the Lord—Go on, and prosper;—be zealous, be prudent, be self-diffident, be prayerful: and commit all your work to that God of grace, who hath "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; the weak to confound the mighty; the base and the despised, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are:—that no flesh should glory in his presence."

"To Him be honour and power everlasting!—Amen."



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