

But the *propagation* of Christian truths indispensably requires the aid of reason, and requires no other *human* aid. And reason can never be fairly and vigorously exerted, but in that favourable interval which precedes the appeal to the passions. These were the causes which forced the masters of eloquence to confess, that the utmost perfection of their art consists in keeping it concealed; for that the ostentation of it seemed to indicate the absence of TRUTH. Truth, (says the most candid and able of them all,) seems always to be absent when art is displayed*. Hence so many various precepts to make their most artificial periods appear artless. Now surely, that was a very suspicious instrument for heaven-directed men, which to preserve its credit, must pretend absence, and labour to keep out of sight†.

But after all, if eloquence may be consi-

* — *Ubiqunq̄ue ars ostendatur veritas abesse videatur.*

QUINT. l. ix. c. 3.

† Bishop WARBURTON.

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dered as false and true, as good and bad, it will follow, that Christian eloquence cannot exist without *sincerity*; and we may safely affirm, that fundamental quality in good speech never appeared more conspicuous than in the preaching of Jesus Christ.

TRUE ELOQUENCE, said a considerable judge* of composition, I find to be none, but the serious and hearty love of truth: and that, whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, WHEN SUCH A MAN WOULD SPEAK, his words, like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places.

This beautiful passage I could not resist bringing forward upon the present occasion. How far it agrees with the eloquence of Jesus

* MILTON.

Christ, or may tend to give us just notions of Christian eloquence, you will deliberately consider.

3. Our Lord taught with *authority*.

There was something so sublime in his doctrines, prophecies, parables, sentiments, and temper ; he was so completely master of every subject on which he chose to speak ; he was so conscious in every thing he did and said of pleasing his Father, of his seeking the salvation of his people, of his being the Messiah, Mediator, and Son of God, and that his whole conduct corresponded with his mission, that it was no wonder the people who heard him were astonished, or to find it said by better judges, that he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Authority is either official, personal, or united. But it is to be lamented, that *mere* official authority should be so much admired, while personal authority is so little esteemed.

Personal

Personal authority operates by knowledge, and by love; official authority, by a power which is sometimes as remote from knowledge, as it is distant from benevolence. The force of the latter is coercion; of the former, conviction. Mere official authority only commands outward homage; but personal authority gains the heart. To *this*, all may aspire; to *that*, few can make a fair pretence. How beautiful when both are united! In Jesus Christ the union was strict and lasting; yet was he despised and rejected of men!

4. Our Lord taught with *affection*.

Had he not softened his authority by that tenderness, compassion, and good will, which were so conspicuous in his public and private ministrations, his authority must have been very forbidding, nay tremendous, to the sinful sons of men. But when they listened to his invitations, saw his joy for the conversion of the meanest mortals, his grief when the impenitent rejected his mercy with contempt; when they observed how frequently he preach-

ed to the most abandoned at the peril of his life, and considered how many miracles he wrought from the most benevolent disposition, they could not wish his authority should be diminished, or that of it there should be any end.

Authority is essential to human happiness. Where it is not, there is confusion and every evil work. Yet it cannot be supported to the content³ of the people, unless it is used for their real advantage. Every other scheme must fail; and the sooner it fails the better; provided that when noxious authority is suppressed, anarchy, that worst of external evils, is not suffered to succeed. But, unhappily for mankind, they who rule are not always well disposed; and they who are ruled are not always competent judges what are the proper limits of legal liberty, and when their claims for greater indulgence are lawful and expedient.

5. Our Lord taught with great *applause*.

What less could be expected from the subjects

jects which he taught, and from the manner in which they were delivered. His subjects were so salutary, his manner so gracious, his motives so pure, and the effects of his discourses so beneficial, and so different from every thing which the misinformed among the Jews, and the sophists among the Gentiles, were able to produce, that when they who heard him with serious attention, compared his teaching with the tenets propagated in the schools of HILLELL AND SHAMMAI*, or with those instructions which the STOICS or EPICUREANS spread abroad, or with the effects of each, they were convinced he was a teacher sent from God.

But our Lord was not only superior to those teachers who had made void the commandments of God by their traditions, and vexatious disputes, and to those also who never knew the way of God in truth, but to the best informed instructors in the Jewish Commonwealth.

* The heads of the two grand schools of the Jews, when Christ taught in Judea.

The excellence of that gospel which first began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto Jews and Gentiles by those that heard him, is much insisted on by the Apostle Paul. To the believing Gentiles he said, If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious. To the believing Jews he said, Ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto the blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words.—But ye are come unto the mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,

covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel's.

Whence this transition? Whence this important change? By the teaching of Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel; through that gospel which is the power of God unto salvation; and in which we perceive that of God, HE is made unto us who believe, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

I know not how to conclude the present discourse in a manner more suitable, or in words more solemn, than these: See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for 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. Whose voice then shook the earth: but yet now hath he promised, saying, Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven: and this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are

shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken, may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire. AMEN!

POSTSCRIPT

P O S T S C R I P T

TO THE SERMON

ON THE PREACHING OF CHRIST.

AS the word AMEN, at the close of this sermon, may strike some readers as being harsh and improper, it may perhaps be excused, if I here give a short exposition of that very serious quotation which precedes that significant term.

SEE THAT YE REFUSE NOT HIM THAT SPEAKETH : Jesus Christ, that now speaketh by his Spirit, in his Apostles. FOR IF THEY ESCAPED NOT, the Jews, WHO REFUSED HIM THAT SPAKE ON EARTH, that is, Moses ; who was only a typical Mediator, and not without sin ; MUCH MORE SHALL NOT WE ESCAPE, who profess to believe the gospel, IF WE TURN AWAY FROM HIM THAT SPEAKETH

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ETH FROM HEAVEN; as the only real Mediator between God and man, and who speaks to us as Jesus Christ the righteous. WHOSE VOICE THEN SHOOK THE EARTH; when Moses spake by him, and of him; for, at at the giving of the law, as it was then given, and connected with the Sinai covenant, not only Horeb trembled at his presence, but that law, with the ceremonial and judicial laws, made a wide, a lasting, and awful separation between Jews and Gentiles: BUT NOW HATH HE PROMISED, SAYING, for the benefit of mankind, of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, YET ONCE MORE, I SHAKE NOT THE EARTH ONLY, BUT ALSO HEAVEN; for his gospel was not only to be attended at first, with portentious signs from what is commonly called heaven, but was to dissolve the THEOCRATICAL state among the Jews, and to annihilate their *ecclesiastical state*; AND THIS WORD, YET ONCE MORE, SIGNIFIETH THE REMOVING OF THOSE THINGS THAT ARE SHAKEN, AS OF THINGS THAT ARE MADE; that is, of those shadows which were made to exist for an appointed season;

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THAT THOSE THINGS WHICH CANNOT BE SHAKEN, by any art, argument, or force, MAY REMAIN. For though all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; though the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; yet the word of the Lord, that is his gospel, abideth for ever. WHEREFORE, WE RECEIVING A KINGDOM WHICH CANNOT BE MOVED, LET US HAVE, or retain, the doctrines of GRACE, and pray for the Spirit of grace, WHEREBY WE MAY SERVE GOD ACCEPTABLY, WITH REVERENCE, or with blushing, or a sense of shame for our former follies, and present infirmities; AND, at the same time, with GODLY FEAR that maketh not ashamed. FOR OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE; not only to them who die impenitent, but to every thing in us which is absurd and foolish, or which is contrary to that grace which bringeth salvation. He that believes this, and who approves of such wisdom and goodness, may safely say, AMEN!

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

CHRIST CALLING OTHERS TO PREACH.

MATTHEW iv. 18, 19, 20.

AND JESUS, WALKING BY THE SEA OF GALILEE, SAW TWO BRETHREN, SIMON CALLED PETER, AND ANDREW HIS BROTHER, CASTING A NET INTO THE SEA: FOR THEY WERE FISHERS. AND HE SAITH UNTO THEM, FOLLOW ME, AND I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN, AND THEY STRAIGHTWAY LEFT THEIR NETS, AND FOLLOWED HIM.

WE have often heard those speak with propriety, and with unction, of Jesus Christ, who had very little to say on any other subject. Others we have heard preach the gospel, who gave sufficient proofs that they were possessed of talents, which would have raised them to notice in very different situations.

How

How are we to account for these things? Our reasonings are happily prevented. For, we are assured, there are a diversity of gifts by the same spirit; and that to each of the primitive ministers of the gospel, grace was given according to the measure of the gift of Christ. When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. These are thus enumerated in the epistle to the Ephesians. And he gave some, Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers. If you ask, For what end? We are told, For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. If you enquire, How long those gifts are to be subservient to these ends? the answer is, Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: and of course, to the end of the world.

But what! it may be replied, we all know that the Apostolical order was of short duration,

tion, that, strictly speaking, Prophets and Evangelists, have ceased to appear amongst us, and are we to believe they yet continue?— Yes, in their writings, and in what is written of them in the scriptures. For though dead they yet speak; and as their sound went out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world, so by the record which we have of their acts and doctrines, they continue to have a real, increasing, and beneficial interest over all inferior teachers, and will be revered in the church of Christ to the end of the world

Pastors and teachers could not be what they are, had they not the doctrines of the Apostles to consult, the words of the Prophets to inspect, and the narrative of the Evangelists to read. In a course of almost eighteen hundred years, it has been abundantly evident, that as artificial divinity has been most admired, the writings of the Apostles have been most of all neglected, and that, in those periods when barren systems were of the greatest consequence, the majesty of
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of the scriptures was neither relished, nor regarded. The Reformation laid the axe to the root of that folly; but again wearied with what is truly excellent, men have relapsed into trifles, and seem more industrious to beat off a few barren leaves, than to strike at the root of those evils under which they almost love to languish.

Let us now go back to the first exertion of that divine power which our Lord manifested in calling others to preach the gospel, and continue the account, in some of the leading evidences of that fact as far as it may be convenient.

Previous to his ascension, he called twelve Apostles to preach the gospel of his kingdom, first to the Jews, and afterwards to the Gentiles; by which call he made them, as it is expressed in the text, fishers of men.

When Judas, by his horrid transgression, fell from his apostleship, and went to his own place, Matthias was chosen by lot, and numbered

bered with the eleven. How long he continued in his office, what he did and suffered, when or where he died, as this very much depends on uncertain tradition, I shall not attempt to say.

But we must not forget another Apostle, of whom, though it is said he was born out of due time, was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles : yet, in his own eyes, he was *nothing*. This was Saul of Tarsus ; afterward much better known by the name of Paul. A man of all *mere* men the best acquainted with the œconomy of our salvation ; and we may add, the most learned, laborious, holy, zealous, faithful, and humble servant of Jesus Christ, that was ever called out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Besides the twelve Apostles, and the great Apostle of the Gentiles, Christ called Seventy Disciples, and sent them two and two, before his face into every city and place whither he himself would come. These disciples had a spiritual, though it was a confined

finest commission; and it appears they were very successful in the discharge of their duty. For the Seventy returned again with joy, saying, LORD, even the devils are subject to us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan, as lightning, falling from heaven. He added, Behold, I give *you* power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you: notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.

Now, as our Lord had power while on earth to call effectually whom he would, and frequently exercised such transcendent authority, we may be confident, that by his resurrection from the dead he has not suffered the least diminution of his dominion. The plenitude of his authority after that event, is strongly marked in these words: ALL power is given to me in heaven and earth. What better proof could we have of this than the amazing commission which he immediately

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granted to the adoring twelve? Go ye therefore, said he to them, 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 to the end of the world.

When the twelve disciples received this last command of their departing Lord, this extraordinary commission to the eye of human reason, might well appear the most romantic and visionary.—Every thing around them wore an appearance dangerous to their persons, and hostile to their cause. In the execution of their extensive office, they had not only to contend with the jealousy of power, and the persecution of authority; their progress was impeded by foes still more formidable; by the deep-rooted prejudices, the favorite superstitions, and the darling vices of a corrupted world. From their countrymen in particular, as they had nothing to hope, they had every thing to fear. They had
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had to oppose the inveteracy of custom ; and what was more formidable, the prejudices which arose from that distinction which the Jews had long enjoyed as the favoured people of the most high God ; a distinction which had been supported by a train of events equally gracious and wonderful ; and in some particular instances, confirmed by miracles, that carried with them the very stamp and seal of omnipotence*.

Such were their difficulties. How then was this extraordinary commission fulfilled ? By virtue of this promise, Lo ! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world. With authority to teach, he gave them ability to execute their commission with wonderful, and with lasting success. Thanks be unto God, said Paul, (speaking of himself and other Apostles) who always causeth us to triumph in CHRIST, and maketh manifest the savour of HIS knowledge by us in every place. This triumph was not confined to their personal mi-

* WHITE'S SERMONS.