

DISCOURSE TWENTY-SECOND.

BENJAMIN KEACH.

THIS old divine, rendered famous by his sufferings for the truth's sake, and his "Scripture Metaphors," "Travels of True Godliness," etc., was born in Stakehaman, Buckinghamshire, February 29th, 1640. He died in London, July, 1704; where he had held the pastoral office, as Baptist minister for thirty-six years. There were published of his writings, before his death, forty-seven different works; three in folio, six in quarto, and many in octavo and smaller forms; all of which are now exceedingly rare.

Keach was a bold and zealous preacher during the reign of Charles the Second, and his influence was so great that he incurred the most bitter persecution. Frequently was he seized and committed to prison; and, on one occasion he came near being put to death by means of the trampling under foot of dragoons of horsemen. In 1664 he was sentenced to the pillory for publishing a work called "The Child's Instructor, or a New and Easy Primer." While in the pillory, he said, "The way to the crown is by the cross." "This is one yoke of Christ's, which I experience is easy to me, and a burden which He doth make light." He added, "I do account this the greatest honor that ever the Lord was pleased to confer on me." Keach was a strong writer, exceedingly rich in Scriptural illustration, and in the clear and forcible presentation of the Gospel doctrines. The sermon which follows, besides its intrinsic merit, has an additional value at the present time, when pretended revelations are foisted upon society, to gainsay or supersede the word of the living God. Some preliminary and inferential matter is here omitted.

THE SCRIPTURES SUPERIOR TO ALL SPIRITUAL MANIFESTATIONS.

"And he said, If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."—LUKE, xvi. 31.

I shall endeavor to prove from these words that the Holy Scriptures, in the ministration thereof, have far more efficacy to bring

men to believe and repent than immediate revelation, or apparition from the dead.

I. For the proof of this truth I shall first show the uncertainty of the evidence of all other pretended ways.

1. Suppose a man *pretends to immediate inspiration or revelation*, by which he says he knows the truth, or the only way to be saved, and how to worship God. How can we be assured that what he says is a true and infallible revelation? For perhaps twenty men may all teach contrary doctrine one to the other, yet all pretend to immediate revelation, or inspiration of God: how then shall any inquiring person be assured which of these are truly inspired? One may say, I witness it in myself and know it is of God. Well, and so all: how then is the doubting person left at an utter uncertainty!

For unless one or another of this sort who pretends to immediate inspiration can do such things to confirm his mission which no imposter can, he is not in the least to be regarded. What must he do? He must work real miracles, as raise the dead, or open the eyes of one that was born blind, by that Spirit of which he pretends to be led. And if he can not do such things, he can do no more than any deceiver can pretend to.

Consider that Almighty God Himself, who is a free Agent, and under no obligation to His creatures, never gave forth but two religions, or two sorts of public worship, laws and ordinances—the first was the Jewish religion, and the second the Christian—neither of these He imposed on His people without confirming them by signs and wonders.

The first was given forth by Moses. And what amazing miracles and wonders did he work in Egypt before Pharaoh, and at the Red Sea, to prove his mission, or that he was sent from God! None could do the like. Though Jannes and Jambres withstood him, and strove to do the like, yet at last they were forced to cry out it was “the finger of God.”

Moreover, when the time of the Jewish worship and their Church-state was expiring, and our Lord was sent from heaven to give forth the doctrine of the New Testament, what wonderful miracles did He work to prove He was sent from heaven! He also said, “If I do not the works that no other man can do, believe Me not. The works that I do, they bear witness of Me.” They proved that the Father sent Him, and that His doctrine was of God. “Or else believe Me for My works’ sake.”

2. Suppose a man should say *he is come from the dead*, either from

heaven or hell, who will believe him? He may be an imposter, a liar. He is not to be regarded unless he works miracles. To confirm what he says, he must raise the dead and open the eyes of such as were born blind, or such like wonderful works which no deceiver can do. For the devils and all lying spirits can work no *real* miracles; they are all "lying signs and wonders." Were not this so, the world were left in a woeful condition. Besides, then the miracles that our Lord wrought could be no infallible evidence that He was the Son of God, and sent by Him, and His doctrine was from heaven.

3. Suppose one *should really come from the dead*, and preach to sinners, and tell them what they should do to be saved, yet his testimony could be only the testimony of a *mere human creature*. But the sacred Scriptures are the Word of *God*. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Nay, the doctrine of the Gospel, or word of the New Testament, was spoken by Christ Himself, the Son of God from heaven. He, in His own person and with His own mouth, gave it forth as He received it from the Father, and confirmed it by wonderful miracles. Which should we soonest believe, or is of the greatest authority, what the Son of God Himself spake, or what a human spirit should declare?

II. But the grand argument is, *that that way or that means which God hath ordained or appointed*, as the ordinary and most effectual way or means for the conversion of sinners, hath a Divine power and efficacy in it above all or any other way or means whatsoever to effect that great end. But God hath ordained the sacred Scriptures as read, especially as preached by His faithful ministers, as the ordinary way and most effectual means for the conversion of sinners: therefore the Scriptures, as so read and preached, have a real and Divine power and efficacy above all or any other means whatever to effect that great end. Will God leave His own ordinance, and own an ordinance of man's devising, or cause that to succeed, to answer to the end proposed by Himself in His own institution? No. The rich man in hell magnifies the apparition of a spirit, concluding that what one that riseth from the dead might declare could have more effect on his brethren than the written Word. But certainly that way or means God hath ordained to such or such an end, He will bless, and own for the effecting of His own gracious design, above any way or means beside.

For the confirmation of this, see what the Apostle John saith: "Many other signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written that ye

might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name." The reason why the doctrines and miracles of our blessed Saviour are written in the book of the New Testament, is that we might believe. "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?" 1. Faith comes by hearing the Gospel preached, as the ordinary way God hath ordained. 2. They must be such that preach it whom God hath ordained and sent. Now, either He hath ordained His angels or mortal men to preach it; or else the spirits of them who are dead. But God hath not ordained His angels to preach it, nor the spirits of men that are dead; wherefore He hath ordained and sent mortal men, whom He hath gifted to that end, to be the preachers thereof. First, He chose the twelve disciples, and sent them forth to preach it; afterward He sent out the seventy. He said to them, "Behold, I send you the promise of my Father: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." Also it is said, "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men"—not to angels, nor to the spirits of the dead. "And He gave some apostles, and some prophets and evangelists, and some pastors and teachers." The first had an extraordinary mission and call; such offices as apostles and extraordinary prophets and evangelists none can pretend to have since the extraordinary gifts ceased; but pastors and teachers remain in the Church to the end of the world, and they preach by virtue of those gifts Christ received and gave when He ascended up on high.

III. That "word" that is more sure than "the voice which came from the excellent glory" in the holy mount, must be of the greatest authority and most powerful efficacy to believe and repent. But the Holy Scripture is "a more sure word," and hence is of the greatest authority, and hath more power and efficacy in it to bring men to believe and repent. "For we have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came to Him such a voice from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice, which came from heaven, all heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until

the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." Well, and what is that more sure word? See the next verse: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy came of old time, not by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Know this then first, namely, the rule of your faith and practice; first and principally, above all things, as the great article of your faith, that the Holy Scripture is of divine authority; and is to be preferred above that glorious voice heard in the mount; and hence far above all pretended visions, new inspirations, spirits, or any other means whatsoever that any can pretend unto.

And this doctrine, contained herein and as a sure rule, remains until Christ, the morning star, comes in His glory, when our hearts shall be perfectly illuminated. No one place of the Scriptures is to be interpreted by men's own spirits, or is of any private interpretation, contrary to what is confirmed by other Scriptures. God being the Author of it, all agrees and sweetly harmonizes, though from the ignorance of men and the delusions of Satan, some understand them not, and others wrest them to their own destruction. But not that we are to conceive no man is to interpret the Scriptures unless he hath received extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, or the knowledge of the tongues; for the Scripture may be understood of the ignorant, by comparing one Scripture with another, and the Scripture itself is the best interpreter of Scripture.

IV. If we read of *many thousands that have been converted by preaching the Gospel*, or by the unerring word of God, and not one converted by the spirit of any of the dead, or by any spirit whatsoever teaching directly contrary to those sacred oracles, or by pretended immediate inspiration, not referring to them; then the Scripture, or the preaching of God's written word, hath the only authority or efficacy in it, through the Spirit of Christ, which always teaches according to it. But we read of thousands this way converted; and not of any converted by the spirit of any that came from the dead; nor by immediate inspiration; or by a spirit that teacheth directly contrary to those sacred oracles.

Such as pretend that they were converted by any spirit, light, or inspiration, of or by any spirit that speaks not according to this word, it is a lying spirit. No light is there; but they are deluded and deceived by the devil.

V. If the Holy Scriptures *be not* the certain way and means of faith and practice, or of faith and repentance, *then God hath left us no certain rule or means.* And be sure that can not stand consistent

with the wisdom, goodness, mercy, honor and faithfulness of the holy God. If any say God hath left a certain rule for our faith besides the Scriptures, let them *prove it* by such evidences as are infallibly certain; that no man led thereby can be deceived. I deny not that God may convert men by afflictions, etc.; yet He makes use still of the written word in the light and promises thereof.

If no man or spirit is to be regarded, unless they speak according to the written word of God, then the Holy Scripture is the only rule and ordinary means answering the great end pleaded for. But that this is so, see Isaiah, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not people seek unto their God? To the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

If the Holy Scriptures are every way sufficient in respect of faith, practice and salvation, then the Holy Scriptures have the only efficacy in them for this great end. That this is so, see what the Apostle says to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished with all good works."

I might add that the personal ministry of our Saviour, could it be enjoyed again, would be ineffectual to them on whom the written word hath none effect. He Himself says: "Had you believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me; but if you believe not his writings, how shall you believe My words?" O how doth our Lord magnify the written word! There is the same reason why Christ's word should not be believed by such as believed not Moses's writings, who confirmed his mission by miracles, as our Saviour did His. You, therefore, that despise the written word of God, should Christ come again and preach to you in such a state and condition as He appeared when on earth, you would not believe on Him.

Let us then highly prize the word of God, and beware of Satan's designs in laboring to render it of little worth, by stirring up some to magnify natural religion above that holy religion revealed in the blessed Gospel of our dearest Lord; and in stirring up others to cry up the light in all men, as the only rule of faith and practice, and their foolish and erroneous books above the blessed Bible. "God hath magnified His word above all His name." Though perhaps the

incarnate word may be chiefly meant thereby, yet what way of revelation of God to His creatures hath God magnified as He hath His written word, as above all manifesting God's name, by which He is made known? For all other ways by which He is made known to us fall short of that revelation we have of Him in His word.

Let us all learn from hence to bless God that He hath afforded us the best and most effectual means to believe in Him, and to turn our souls from our evil ways that so we might be eternally saved. And let none once think in their hearts that if God would raise one from the dead to preach unto them, that they should be persuaded to leave their sinful ways and receive Jesus Christ, or that that would be a more effectual means to awaken them, and work upon their hearts and consciences. "For if they will not believe Moses and the prophets (or Christ's written word) neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."