

BARTIMEUS

AN EXPOSITION ON LUKE V. 46-52, IN TWO PARTS.

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PART I.—TRUE EARNESTNESS.

If there is one mark more than another which characterizes the miracles of our Lord and distinguishes them from all the lying wonders by which men have gone about to deceive, it is the manifest absence of contrivance or previous arrangement which prevents in every case the suspicion of collusion or deceit. The occasion of every miracle is so manifestly forced on him not sought out by him, they are so public and at the same time so evidently (if we may so say) of accidental occurrence that all supposition of confederacy is at once excluded and each stands forth an unequivocal manifestation of the mighty power of God. But while all idea of contrivance as between man and man is thus excluded, it is impossible to overlook the evidence of contrivance of a higher order and springing evidently from a higher source by which the character and effect of the miracles is determined, and, ceasing to be mere signs and wonders, they become most beautiful and touching parables, speaking to us of man and his wants, of God and his mercy, of the Saviour and his offices, and richly suggestive of higher and more spiritual aspects of these than the miracles themselves do, or indeed could directly and immediately present. That the miracles do possess this character cannot be doubted by any attentive and devout reader of the narratives, but it may be thought that this is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that our Saviour, sternly repudiating the demand for mere wonders, chose to exercise the mighty powers with which he was invested in the way of alleviating human suffering, and solacing human woes. While, however, all due weight is given to this circumstance, it is impossible

to avoid observing that there is generally a something about the subject of the miracles and the incidents connected with them, which is so eminently suggestive of those higher spiritual truths which it is the object of revelation to inculcate, that it is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that we have here a manifestation of that contrivance and arrangement with which an overruling Providence has encircled all things. It is here as in the case of those great analogies which exist between the physical and spiritual creations, between the phenomena of life and death in both for instance, or between salt and sanctity, leaven and living principle. In observing the use which is made of these in Scripture, we cannot bring ourselves to look upon them as mere afterthoughts so to speak of inspiration, but feel constrained to view these after applications as one at least of the manifold designs of the original arrangements of creation. So in tracing the narratives of these miracles and observing how the circumstances and incidents of them impressively and almost irresistably suggest the higher and more spiritual aspects of man's position and relations to his Saviour, we feel that it would be as absurd as it would be unphilosophical to suppose that these, so obvious and so instructive, analogies are the creatures of accident, or that, in following them out, we are following the light of our own fancy, rather than the direction of the finger of God. Unscriptural and unwise as it would be to attempt, by a process of what has been called spiritualizing, to gild the fine gold of Scripture by covering it over with fanciful and wise drawn analogies, and still more to rest on these the proof of dogmatic truth; not