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"LET US CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO PROVOKE UNTO LOVE AND TO GOOD WORKS."—HEBREWS X. 24.

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## DIVINITY.

THE WITNESSING CHURCH.  
A SERMON,  
BY THE REV. JOHN HARRIS.

"Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God."—Isaiah xliii. 12.

THERE is one important respect in which all objects in the universe, from the atom to the archangel, unite: all are witnesses for God. He who made all things for himself, has so made them, that, voluntarily or involuntarily, according to their respective natures, they distinctly attest the divine existence and character. He has not left it contingent whether they gave such testimony or not. The great name of the Maker is woven into the texture of everything he has made. So that even if the creature possess a will, and that will become depraved, and guiltily withhold its intelligent testimony to the divine existence, an eloquent and incorruptible witness is still to be found in the physical constitution of that creature; if the fool should say in his heart, "There is no God," every pulse of that heart replies, "There is," and every atom of that vital organ adds, "He is thy Maker."

As the nature of the material witnesses differs, it follows of course that the manner in which they render their evidence will vary accordingly. In regard to some of them, the marks of design and beneficence are so obvious, that they may be said to be ever speaking for God, without solicitation,—the divine signature is visibly imprinted on their surface. In regard to others, the evidence lies deeper, and must be sought for patiently. In such cases, while the witnesses are under examination—while the investigation is proceeding from link to link in the chain of evidence—the ungodly sometimes unseasonably exult, and the timid and uninformed believer in revelation trembles for the issue. But he need not. Let him only wait confidently, as God does, till the examination be complete, till the inquiry has reached the last link of the chain, and that link will invariably be found in the hand of God.

Chemistry—once the stronghold of the sceptic—has long since discovered that no substance in nature is simple and unmixed; in other words, that everything is in a *made* state—that even the atom is an artificial, manufactured thing: so that an argument for God lies hid in every particle of which the globe is composed; and a witness is in reserve in every pebble we pass; and a final appeal is lodged for him in the elements, or first principles, of all things: thus demolishing the altar which scepticism had erected, to the eternity of the world, and replacing it by an altar dedicated and inscribed to the Divine Creator. So that, if we hold our peace, or withhold our homage, the very stones will cry out.

Geology—the voice of the earth, the Pompeii of natural religion, the witness now under examination—a witness raised from the grave of a former world, is producing her primitive formations, to shew that even *they* are in a *made* state; and her fossil skeletons, to shew that they bear indubitable marks of having come from the hand of the one Great Designer: leaving us to infer, that, could we reach the foundations of the earth, we should find it inscribed with the name of the Divine Architect—that, could we penetrate to the central atom of the globe, it would speak for God; and thus impelling us to erect, out of the wreck of a former world, a temple to Him who hath created all things new.

Astronomy leads us forth into the vast amphitheatre of nature, to gaze on ten thousand times

ten thousand burning worlds: and are they not all witnesses for God? For are they not all in *motion*? This is not nature, but miracle. The first miracle was the production of matter—the second, to make that matter move. Its natural state is rest; but here are unnumbered myriads of material worlds in motion, out of their natural state, in an artificial, constrained, preternatural state. They are all God's witnesses. The stars in their courses fight against irreligion. Each of them, obediently followed, is a star of Bethlehem—a guide into the Divine presence. Each of them rushes through immensity as a miracle, and a messenger from God to the universe, proclaiming, "There is a God, and the hand of that God is upon me:" and all of them unite—yes, this is the real music of the spheres, the chorus of creation!—all of them unite in proclaiming his eternal power and godhead. In the estimation of the Psalmist, the creation is a vast temple; and often did he summon the creatures, and join them in a universal song of praise. And John heard the chorus. The noise and din of a distracted world may drown their voices here. "But," saith he, "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever." Thus nature, with all her myriad voices, is ever making affirmation and oath of the divine existence, and filling the universe with the echo of his praise.

But since the period of the creation, a new state of things has arisen, and a new order of witnesses has consequently become necessary. Sin has entered the world. Man has fallen away from his Maker, and has renounced the divine authority. To say, therefore, that there is a God, and that that God is wise, powerful, and good, is only to say, in effect, that there is ground for the greatest apprehension and alarm: for sin is a guilty impeachment of that wisdom, a hostile defiance of that power, and a wilful affront of that goodness. The question, therefore, now arises, what is the course which the offended Majesty of heaven is likely to take towards us? What, under these new circumstances, are the new terms on which we stand with him? Will justice have free course against us? And if not, what is to turn it aside? On this anxious topic, nature has received no instructions, and is silent. "The Depth said, 'It is not in me.'" Clouds of gloom have gathered and settled into thick darkness round about his throne,—and whether the light that will eventually burst forth from that gloom will be a fierce flash, to scathe and destroy, or a genial ray, to enkindle hope, nature could not foretell. By the introduction of sin, our condition had become preternatural, and the voice that speaks to us, therefore, must be supernatural. God must become his own witness.

And he did so. Breaking the fearful silence which sin had produced, and which might have lasted forever, he spoke to us. And every accent he uttered was an accent of love. His first sentence contained hope for the world. He signified that it was his divine intention to save, and announced at once a coming Redeemer. Then God is love! The great question is answered—the grand secret has transpired, that God is love! And the world must know it. The veil which sin had raised between God and us has fallen—and, behold, "God is love!" And every creature under heaven must hear of it. The happiness of every man depends on his knowing it. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."

But if the knowledge of the divine character

be thus indispensable, how shall that knowledge be made most accessible and available? As nations multiply, and one generation succeeds another, how shall this sacred treasure be preserved and transmitted? Depravity will tamper with its holiness, who shall guard it from polluted hands? Penitence and fear will question its truth; who shall encourage them to believe it? Unbelief will dispute its authenticity; who shall bear witness for God? All will need it, for it is essential to salvation; how shall it be made accessible?

Now these questions had been anticipated by the eternal mind, and all these necessities provided for, in his purpose of instituting a church—a society of witnesses for God. The design of this divine institution, indeed, is two-fold—partly, to promote the welfare of its own members; but principally, to be a witness for God, an instrument of his mercy to the world. It is first a focus, in which all the light from heaven should meet, and all the sanctified excellence of earth be collected and combined; that it might next be a centre, whence the light of truth might constantly radiate, and pour forth in all directions over the face of the earth.

And, accordingly, the general remarks to which I would now solicit your devout attention, relate to the following important positions:—that the church of God is expressly designed, in its relative capacity, and as the depository of the knowledge of salvation, to be his witness to the world; that in every age it has prospered or declined in proportion as it has fulfilled or neglected this special office; that its motives and its responsibility for answering this end are greater now than at any preceding period of its history; and that this consideration should induce its members anxiously to survey its wants, and its resources for answering that end: and may the divine Founder of the Church be graciously present, by his Spirit, to aid our meditations.

(To be continued.)

## SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATIONS.

### DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

VARIOUS convincing, and unanswerable Treatises have been written on the Genuineness, Authenticity, Inspiration, &c. of the Holy Scriptures—a subject of infinite moment to all men, as the Saviour hath said, "In them ye think ye have eternal life." Many, however, of these admirable works are of considerable extent, and require great attention to the reasoning by which their authors reach the proof, to which their argumentation is directed; and cannot easily be comprehended by juvenile or feeble minds. The following Argument, which Mr. Wesley calls "A clear and concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," while it is unanswerably convincing in its proof, is yet so simple in its form, as to be easily understood by the feeblest capacity, and may be successfully wielded by the most youthful and timid believer, to the confusion of the scoffer and infidel—enabling him "to give an answer to every man that asketh him, a reason of the hope that is in him, with meekness and fear."

There are four grand and powerful arguments which strongly induce us to believe that the Bible must be from God, viz: miracles, prophecies, the godness of the doctrine, and the moral character of the penmen. All the miracles flow from Divine