

THE Home and Foreign Record

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF THE LOWER PROVINCES.

SEPTEMBER, 1867.

A SERMON

Preached before the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces, at New Glasgow, June, 1867.

BY REV. JAS. BENNET, A.M., MODERATOR.

[Published by request of Synod.]

LUKE XXIII, 14.—“Behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him.”

Pilate, looking on the accused with the eye of a Roman judge, and seeing his innocence of the charges which affected the outward weal of society, and the authority of his sovereign, as well as the unacknowledged yet apparent envy of his accusers; discerning under all the colourings of malice the hues of innocence, urges again and again “I find no fault in him,” and yet with weak and wicked inconsistency, pronounces Jesus guilty and delivers him to be crucified.

Pilate is not alone in his inconsistency. There are many even in the present day who after examination of the charges which have been brought against Christ, have pronounced his character faultless, and yet with strange conclusion they condemn his claims. They would not crucify him, but they would consign him to a place in which he will hurt the world no longer with his superstitions. Covering him with the mockeries of royalty they even pretend to bow to his sceptre, and, while acknowledging his superiority, they reduce him to a rank to which he refuses to descend, coupling his name with that of Con-

fuscus, Zoroaster, Socrates or Mahomet. Such judgment Christ deems only another sentence to crucifixion, and he will hold those who pronounce it guilty of his shame.

Only one of two courses is open to his judges, either to condemn him altogether, or to acquit him fully. It cannot be concealed that the charges brought against him by the Jews were founded on claims which he made. He *did* intend to take the place of Moses; to break the shell of Judaism that the beautiful truth which it contained might come forth in plumage and in song, to raise the temple of his body from its ruin in the grave; to establish a kingdom in which all kings should be subjects; to make himself worshipped, as the Father who was one with him, to sit chief in the affections of man, as the very God of his life. All this he claimed, all this he has done. These claims were just if there be no fault in him. If unjust, he is one of the highest criminals or the greatest madmen the world ever saw. There was no legitimate course for the Jews to pursue but either to concede his claims or to condemn his conduct. In what form should that condemnation have been made? The Jewish law demanded death for such crimes. According to the charity of christianity, punishment for them is remitted to a higher tribunal. But conscience must ever condemn such false claims while refusing to assume the weapons of justice to destroy him who makes them. The Jew however, had to acquit him altogether or besides condemning his assumptions, he must condemn him to death. Pilate might have acquitted him