

## SERMON.

*FOR after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*  
—I. Corinthians i. xxi.

IT is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of the Bible, that, while it exhibits the most luminous and overwhelming evidences of the spiritual ignorance, and moral degradation of man; it inspires the loftiest conceptions of his native dignity, as a sentient and immortal being. To a practical recognition of the human character under these distinct aspects, may be traced the auspicious commencement of the cause of Missions,—a cause which like the orb of day, advances with growing effulgence, and which we believe, will continue to pursue its career of glorious achievement, till the universal diffusion of the knowledge of the Lord; and its accompanying blessings, shall give the reality of actual existence to those scenes of rapture, that floated so oft in visionary grandeur before the mental eyes of the prophets. With a deep sense of man's guilt and exposure as a sinner, the friends of such institutions connect the cheering revelation of the practicability and means of his rescue unfolded by the gospel. They enter with unstifled convictions, and yearning tenderness, into the doctrine of human depravity; but they discover, shrouded in this moral gloom, a mind of heavenly extraction, invested with capacities for limitless progression in knowledge, holiness, and happiness.

Their estimate of these endowments, is however, moderated by humility. Far from concurring in sentiment with those who erect reason into an oracle, and vainly imagine that it precludes the necessity of any preternatural communications of knowledge, they 'lean not to their own understanding,' but convinced of the divine authority of the sacred volume, bow with implicit submission to its decisions. With this view of the imbecility of unassisted reason, the results of experience are in perfect accord. Long, indeed, did philosophy flatter her votaries with the hope of complete satisfaction, in reference to the subjects of their most anxious inquiry; but *when or where* was that anticipation realized? Age after age passed away,—empires rose and fell,—eloquence rolled its thunders,—and learning and art reared their stupendous monuments; but the culture and improvement of the sciences added nothing to man's knowledge of *divine things*; a veil still overhung the attributes of Deity, and the future destinies of mankind, which no hand could withdraw, 'but that which was stretched upon the cross.' *For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

In these words, two momentous and interesting facts are presented to our consideration, each of which is susceptible of the clearest proof and the most copious illustrations. In confirmation of the former, the annals of history,—the dictates of experience,—and the deductions of sound philosophy, unite their attestations; and that the preaching of the cross, which is to them that perish *foolishness*, is to such as believe, both the *wisdom* and the *power* of God, myriads of happy spirits imparadised in immortality, and thousands of regenerate souls on earth, have 'the witness in themselves.'

It is not easy to ascertain with exact precision, the import of the phrase '*wisdom of God*,' with which these statements are introduced to