

# The Church.

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THEREFORE I WILL NOT BE NEGLIGENT TO PUT YOU ALWAYS IN REMEMBRANCE OF THESE THINGS, THOUGH YE KNOW THEM AND BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH.—2 PETER, I, 12.

VOL. I.]

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[NO. XLVII.]

## Poetry.

### MOUNT HOREB.

On Horeb's rock the Prophet stood,  
The Lord before him pass'd;  
A hurricane, in angry mood,  
Swept by him strong and fast;—  
The forest fell before its force,  
The rocks were shiver'd by its course,—  
God rode not in the blast;  
'Twas but the whirlwind of his breath,  
Announcing danger, wreck, and death.

It ceas'd—the air was mute—a cloud  
Came, hiding up the sun,  
When through the mountains, deep and loud,  
An earthquake thunder'd on.  
The frighten'd eagle sprang in air,  
The wolf ran howling from his lair,—  
God was not in the storm;—  
'Twas but the rolling of his car,—  
The trampling of his steeds from far.

'Twas still again, and nature stood  
And calm'd her ruffled frame;  
When swift from heaven a fiery flood  
To earth devouring came:—  
Down to the depths the ocean fled,—  
The sick'ning sun look'd wan and dead,—  
Yet God filled not the flame;—  
'Twas but the fierceness of his eye  
That lighted through the troubled sky.

At last a voice, all still and small,  
Rose sweetly on the ear,  
Yet rose so clear and shrill, that all  
In heaven and earth might hear:—  
It spoke of peace, it spoke of love,  
It spoke as angels speak above;—  
And God himself was near!  
For oh! it was a Father's voice,  
That bade his trembling world rejoice.

Speak, gracious Lord! speak ever thus;  
And let thy terrors prove  
But harbingers of peace to us,  
But heralds of thy love!  
Come through the earthquake, fire, and storm,  
Come in thy mildest, sweetest form,  
And all our fears remove!  
One word from thee is all we claim,—  
Be that one word, a Saviour's name.

[Communicated.]

### SINS OF THE TIMES.\*

A Discourse, delivered in the Presbyterian Church, May street Belfast, on the 20th of August, 1837. By HENRY COOKE D. D. LL. D.

The Rev. Dr. Cooke, of Belfast, has just published a very powerful and eloquent discourse, on the *Sins of the Times*. It is the production of one who does not take slight or superficial views of the events which are passing around him, but of one who is accustomed to think deeply, and to ponder well the results of all those mighty changes which now agitate the world. Before we saw or heard of the production before us, the outcries of the Popish and Infidel press had apprised us of the fact that Dr. Cooke had delivered an effective discourse bearing on the aspect of the times. We are not surprised that either Papists or Infidels should feel annoyed at the exposure of the snares by which they are deceiving multitudes to their ruin, or that they should declaim against the frequent reference made to the agency of Satan; but we feel assured that from this discourse the Christian lover of his country will find new arms with which to resist the attacks of the enemy of mankind, and may derive fresh energy and vigour in maintaining the cause of truth.

The Preface to Dr. Cooke's discourse explains his object and design. After reciting the memorable message of the Lord in Ezekiel iii. 17, he observes:—

"Two departments of ministerial duty are here presented,—the one, to warn the wicked, that he may repent; the other, to warn the righteous, that he may be roused to 'watch and pray' against temptation and sin.

"To these two departments the following discourse is addressed. Certain errors have become so current, that they begin to claim all the deference due to acknowledged truth; and certain sins have become so common, that they are almost represented as duties, or at least palliated as such trifling or unavoidable faults, that they cease to be debited with guilt. These evils would alone justify and demand the loudest voice of warning. But there is still another, and more hopeful reason, for warning—the danger of that 'fatal familiarity' with sin that, in a short time, exposes even 'the righteous man' to look upon it with diminished abhorrence, and at last induces him to join hands with it, to court it as his friend, or employ it as his instrument."

The first part of the discourse is employed in depicting the enmity of man to God, and in demonstrating the fact, that no principle of good is left unassaulted by enemies. Dr. Cooke proceeds to illustrate his general position as to the enmity entertained to what is good, by a reference to the principles of truth, holiness, and peace. In speaking of *truth*, he has occasion to allude to the public press in the following terms:—

"Truth—which is the very life of every social virtue, and the protector of every personal possession—truth finds but little favour with the world. For the imaginative, it is too plain; for the theorist, too stubborn; for the indolent, too difficult; for the

partisan too impartial; for the malicious, too gentle;—and truth, therefore, is neglected, despised, or discarded, as a useless instrument, a troublesome associate, a dangerous opponent, an intractable enemy; and its place in the world is usurped by the partisans of falsehood, from the timid whisperer, retailing the scandal he affects hesitation to believe, to the hardened liar, asserting his inventions for facts, and so counting them the proper business of his degraded life, that he holds them 'still worth telling, should their currency last but for an hour.' Of the correctness of this picture the public press affords the most striking and most melancholy examples; and though there be some noble exemptions from the charge, yet its truth is so generally obvious that, like the monument of a celebrated architect in a temple of his own raising, it is to be seen by every one who 'looks around' him in the world of his daily experience."

In unmasking the great enemies with which the Church has at all times to contend, and peculiarly at the present crisis, Dr. Cooke very strongly urges the necessity of observing, and watching against, the power and influence of Satanic agency:—

"To the Christian, and the Christian Church," says Dr. Cooke, "it must, therefore, be of the utmost importance to discover, not merely what are the visible agencies of evil by which they are assailed and endangered, but whether there be any secret and invisible enemy, by whose cunning, malice, and power, these visible agencies are directed. We are fully aware that in these days, when men boast of 'the march of intellect,' profess to believe in 'the perfectibility of human nature,' and refuse to receive the witness of God, unless it be corroborated by the evidence of their own senses,—the man who shall dare to refer the evils of an evil world to Satanic agency, will be the object either of the pity or contempt of the philosophical sceptic or the rationalizing Christian. But it matters not: 'let God be true,' and his word be true, though 'every man be a liar.' We follow that word, and if the philosophical sceptic and the so called rationalizing Christian, 'speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.'"

"The word of God, then, plainly informs the Church (1 Peter v. 8), 'your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.' The same word as plainly tells us, that our adversary is not a solitary one, directing merely individual malice against an individual believer, but that he possesses a kingdom with all its principalities and powers. To this purpose speaks our Saviour (Matthew xii. 26), 'If Satan cast out Satan, how then can his kingdom stand?' And Paul exhorts us (Eph. vi. 11), 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.' And these 'high places' in which the enemy is seated, signify no less than his usurpation of the name, worship, and power of the true God, as the apostle testifies when he declares (2 Cor. iv. 4), 'But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine upon them.'"

The Reverend Preacher next proceeds to illustrate another of his positions, that Satan, in his wiles and malice, is an observer of appropriate times and seasons. Of these he gives various instances, borrowed both from ancient and modern times:—

"So sought Rome Pagan to devour the Church of Christ in all the helplessness of its infancy. So sought Rome Papal to devour every solitary witness, that from time to time arose within her immediate presence, and every Church that she discovered amongst the recesses of the Alps or Appennines, bearing a combined testimony to Scripture liberty and Scripture truth. And so sought she to devour the Reformation, at the moment of its birth; and, with an appetite still equally voracious and insatiable, she still 'raveneth after the prey;' and, whether it be the temporalities of the churches on the earth, or the spiritualities of the churches in the Bible, she equally lengthen to appropriate the one to her own uses, and imprison the other in her own shackles."

The two great methods by which Satan has sought in all times to carry away the Church of Christ, have been, first, by false doctrine, heresy and idolatry, introduced in a vain accommodation to Heathenism; second, by the spirit of sectarianism rendering her from within, or by the arm of persecution assailing her from without. Our chief business, as Dr. Cooke justly observes, is with the present times. In noticing the false principles advocated in the present day, the following striking remarks occur on the allegation that religion and politics have no connexion:—

"Of these, perhaps, there is none that so much assumes the dignity of a first principle, as the assertion, that 'religion and politics should be kept totally separate.' This broad principle includes within its verge, a variety of subordinate parts. First—It implies that, even Christian kingdoms, as such, have no concern with the avowal, or propagation, or maintenance, of Christianity. Secondly—That even Christian kingdoms, as such, have no concern with discountenancing or eradicating superstition or idolatry; and, Thirdly—It implies, and avows, that in the choice of legislators and rulers, their religion is to be totally disregarded,—that the most faithful servant of Christ may be unworthy of Christian support, and the most avowed infidel, the object of his confidence and choice. And these, be it remembered, are not our imaginings, but the avowed deductions of those who adopt the broad principle upon which they are apparently based. But upon what lower and deeper principle is

this basis itself supported? Ordinarily, upon one single text, ever repeated, and as often misinterpreted and abused—'My kingdom is not of this world.' And what then? Though Christ's kingdom be not of this world, by what logical perversion is it thence inferred, that the kingdoms of this world owe to Christ neither allegiance, homage, nor service? In all the annals of false reasoning, there is not a more 'impotent conclusion.' 'My kingdom,' saith Christ, 'is not of this world;' and why is it not? To show you why it is not of this world, let us see what Christ's kingdom is. The Apostle informs us (Rom. xiv. 17)—'The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' These three principles are not of this world. They are principles that 'come down from above, from the Father of lights and of mercies.' But because they 'come down from above,' are the kingdoms of this world under no obligation to adopt, propagate, or maintain them? Is it come to this, that because a principle is not of this world, therefore this world has no concern with it? Is truth of this world? Is love of this world? Is holiness of this world? No; they must all 'come down from above;' but surely the loftiness of their origin, instead of diminishing their claims upon the men of this world, and the kingdoms of this world, is the very circumstance by which their claims to universal acceptance and patronage are most clearly evidenced, and irresistibly enforced.

"It is truly fearful to contemplate the conclusions to which the wresting of a single text of Scripture must ultimately conduct its authors. Let us furnish them a parallel text; and let them essay its interpretation upon their own principles.—'My kingdom,' saith Christ, 'is not of this world.' What then? The reply is ready.—'The State should have no concern with religion—religion should have no connexion with, or influence on, the politics of the nation.' These are specimens of the ready conclusions that are so frequently, and so publicly, and so confidently, drawn from the words of our Lord. Take, now, the parallel text (John viii. 23), 'I (saith Christ)—I am not of this world.' What then? The reply, if honestly given, must be—'The State should have no concern with Christ!—Christ should have no connexion with, or influence on, the politics of the nations.' That infidels will at once leap into these conclusions, is not strange; but surely they cannot be avowed by any who have not yet renounced their baptism. Yet, avowed they must be, by every separator of religion and politics, or rejected, when he discovers the blasphemous consequences of his error, and is mercifully restored to a right mind.

"But we have not merely to contemplate the fearful nature of speculative opinions; the real world exhibits them working actively in 'high places,' and under the shadow of great names. Will it, in after ages, be believed, that a reverend divine—a learned instructor for the Christian ministry,—a professed descendant of the Howes, and the Henrys, of other days,—could lend at once his talents and his influence, to commend, to a Christian people, a practically avowed infidel!—Yes, a practically avowed infidel, whatever be theoretically professed; for though, as men, we can pardon the vulgarity of the expression, we cannot, as Christians, neglect to denounce the infidelity by which it was dictated—when even a British Senator dares to mock at one of God's judgments, and denominates a legislative reference to his providence, as 'cant and humbug.' We do acknowledge that, before a Christian assembly, it is a shame to repeat such sentiments, conveyed in such language. But the prophet of the Lord hath not shrunk from minutely reciting the blasphemous vulgarity of Nabshakeh (2 Kings, xviii. 27); in which recital, whilst he recorded a fact, he rebuked the infidelity from which the utterance emanated, and exhibited the judgment (2 Kings, xix. 6, 7, 22, 35) by which it was condemned.

"A special example of the result of separating between religion and politics, or rather, of setting up peculiar political opinions and objects above all religious considerations, came, not many years ago, within the compass of my own personal knowledge. I know the recital will scarcely seem credible; incredible, however, as the statement may appear, I pledge my veracity to the Church for its substantial accuracy. Yet, the sentiment was not the utterance of an infidel, but of a man professedly religious,—an authorized preacher of the Gospel, though not the pastor of a particular church. With this man I had often taken 'sweet counsel;' and, judging him by 'sobriety of speech,' exemplary morals, devotedness of life, separation from the world, and piety of spirit, he seemed truly a 'man of God.' One principle, however, he had adopted, from the favourite opinions and political institutions of another land—the total separation of politics from religion; and, on this principle, was he exerting all his powers to influence my mind, on behalf of a political favourite. His arguments were met by a reference to the real or supposed religious principles, or religious partisanship, of his friend. The ready reply was in the broad assertion, that it mattered not what were a man's religious principles, or predilections, provided his political creed were sound, and his pledges satisfactory. After much canvassing of this assertion, I had hoped to demonstrate its absurdity, by exposing its consequences; for I have ever observed, that there is no way by which you will so easily convince a reasonable man, or silence an unreasonable antagonist, as by leading them up to the ultimate and necessary consequences of their own assertions or arguments. For this purpose, therefore, I observed—'If what you affirm be true; if politics are to be totally separated from religion; if the politics of a candidate for office can be right, whilst his religious opinions and practices are wrong; and if a man is bound to choose solely by intellectual and political profession, independently of religious and moral character—then say, were the most religious

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