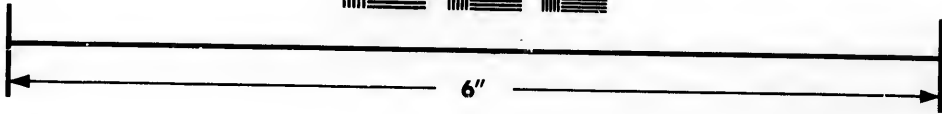
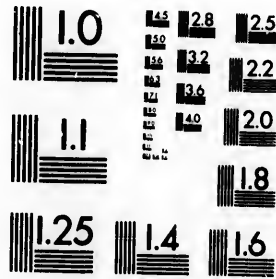


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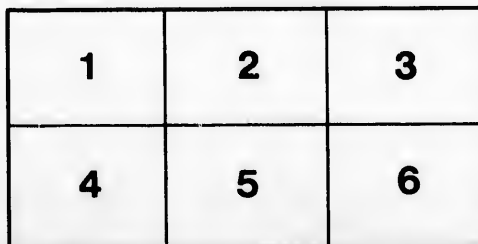
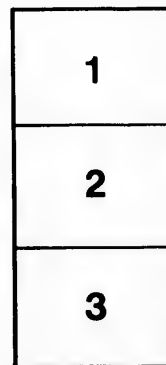
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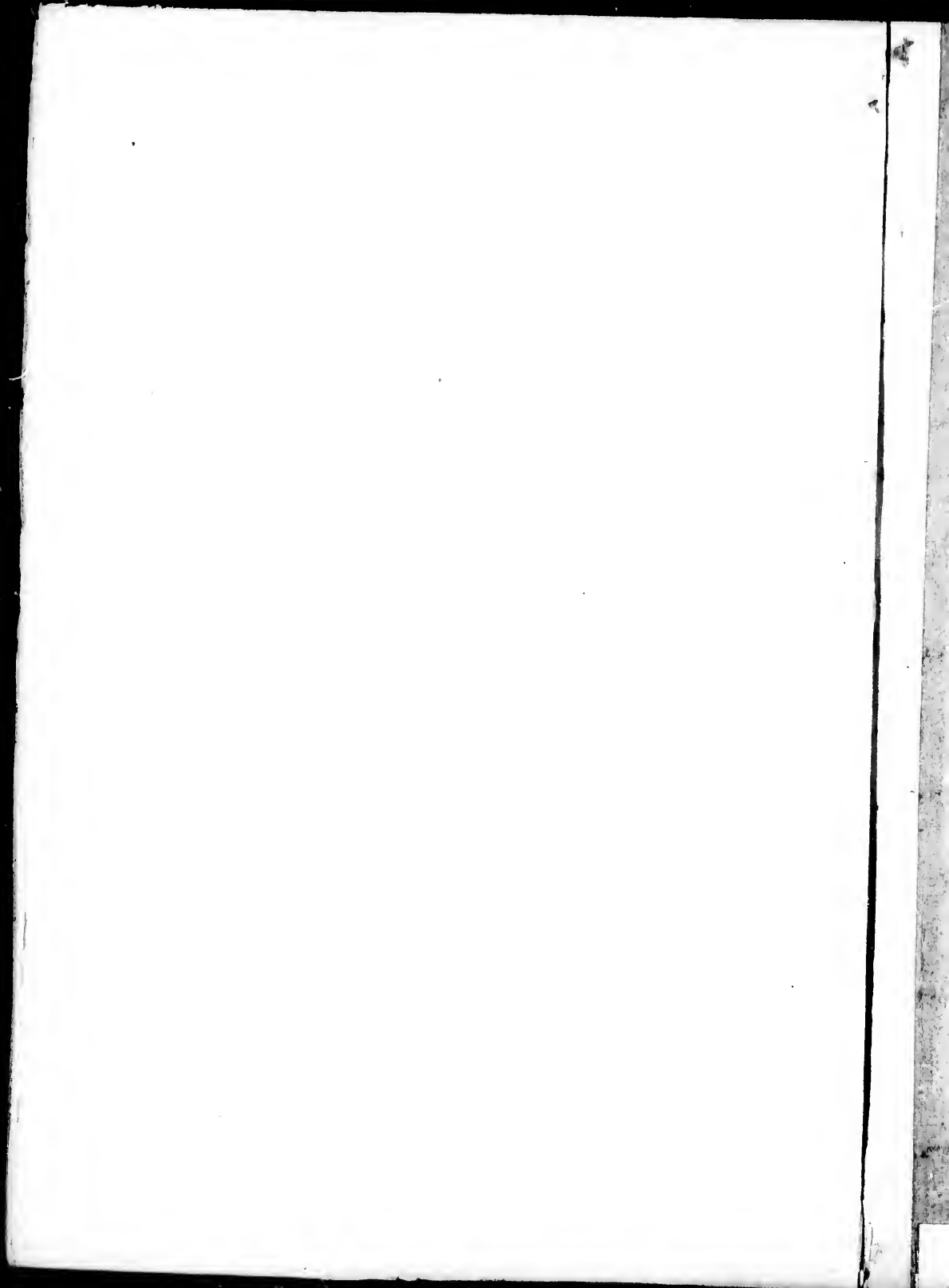
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*J. W. Lawrence 1879 from  
The VICTORY ascribed to GOD. a  
Brook*

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED DECEMBER 2d, 1798.

ON THE LATE

SIGNAL SUCCESSES,

GRANTED TO

HIS MAJESTY'S ARMS.

---

By MATHER BYLES, D. D.  
RECTOR OF ST. JOHN, AND CHAPLAIN  
TO THE GARRISON OF NEW-  
BRUNSWICK.

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TO THE  
CONGREGATION  
OF  
TRINITY CHURCH,

*The following DISCOURSE,*

*Published at their Request,*

*Is most respectfully dedicated,*

*By*

*The AUTHOR.*

*W. Kent.*





# A S E R M O N.

*Battle of the Clouds August 1 1798*

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## P S A L M XCVIII. I.

*O sing unto the Lord a new Song, for He hath done marvelous things, His right Hand and His holy Arm hath gotten him the Victory.*

**W**E are not told who was the author of the Psalm before us: but as *David* wrote so large a proportion of this sacred book, as he was engaged in so many wars, and obtained such frequent and splendid victories, it appears most probable that it was penned by him. It bears the peculiar stamp of the Royal Prophet,—the sweet Psalmist of Israel: and it seems to be an effusion from the heart of that devout Monarch, in consequence of some signal successes which had attended his arms. We cannot conceive



conceive a sentiment upon such a joyful occasion, more proper in itself, or more characteristic of that excellent man. Let *David* then be our example; and while we exult in the illustrious Triumphs of His MAJESTY'S Arms, let us acknowledge, with the humblest gratitude, that it is GOD who has given us the VICTORY! I meet you, my Brethren, this day with particular pleasure, as I see such evident demonstrations of your Loyalty to the KING; a universal, undissembled transport animating every countenance, and sparkling in every eye. I acknowledge the strict propriety of those praises which you bestow upon the intrepid conduct of our Officers, and the unrivalled gallantry of the *British* Sailors. It is but equitable to give honor to whom honor is due: and perhaps it would be difficult to produce an instance in history, of men who had a more just claim to the applauses of their country. But after all, it becomes us, as Christians, to recollect the idea of the text, to look beyond second causes to the *First Cause* of every event, to realize the Divine Agency, and bow our knees in Thanksgiving to God. To assist you in cultivating these dispositions of heart is the proper province of the pulpit, and the design of the present discourse, "O sing unto the Lord a new Song, for he hath done marvellous things, *His* right Hand and *His* holy Arm hath gotten him the Victory."

page 14.

From this passage we collect two propositions, distinct  
indeed,

indeed, but closely connected:—That God always obtains the victory Himself:—And that He gives it to whom He pleases.

God always obtains the victory *Himself*: never did any successfully oppose *Him*. \* “Who ever hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?”

We read of rebel Angels, with Satan at their head, who being lifted up with pride, fell into the condemnation of the Devil. Satan was the first Rebel; the first who disdained subordination, despised Government, insulted his KING, and renounced his GOD: And the same levelling spirit still † “worketh in the children of disobedience.” He deceives and infatuates a distracted world; and under the specious names of *Liberty* and *Equality* introduces anarchy and confusion. These turbulent apostate Spirits, it seems, were not contented with their proper rank in the scale of beings; ‡ “they left their own habitations,” and were driven down, thunderstruck, into the abyss of irretrievable perdition. There they are reserved “in everlasting chains, under darkness, to the judgment of the great Day.” This is the first Victory which Revelation informs us the glorious God obtained over His enemies. *Michael* and his Angels, in the power of God, encountered the Dragon and his Angels: and the Rebel Host fell from Heaven, and their place is no more to be found. To this the

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\* *Job. ix, 4.* † *Eph. ii, 2.* ‡ *Juds 6.*

the Prophet *Isaiab* ultimately refers; though in a secondary sense, that beautiful and elevated passage may be applied to the *Assyrian* monarch, and the enemies of ancient *Israel*; and in the same sense, we may with propriety apply them to those, over whom God now permits us to triumph. \* “How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the Morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the Nations! For thou hast said in thy heart, I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my Throne above the Stars of God.—I will ascend above the heights of the Clouds, I will be like the most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the Pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the Man that made the Earth to tremble, that did shake Kingdoms?”

From age to age, the victories and the triumphs of the ALMIGHTY have been repeated among men. How did *Pharaoh* boast and swell, and oppose the mandates and the terrors of God! His profane language was also something similar to that of our enemies—† “Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?—I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice.” He raised all his numerous army, and was determined to strike the decisive blow. It was now come to a pitched battle between the tyrant of *Egypt* and the God of *Israel*. The Red Sea mustered its waves  
for

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\* *Isaiab*, xiv. 11, 16. † *Exod.* v. 2.

for the onset :—down they rushed upon the proud pursuers, \* “ and buried *Egypt* all in arms.” || “ Then sang *Moses* and the children of *Israel* this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

When our blessed Lord was here below, he exemplified the same triumphs :—He always obtained the victory. So the tempter found it, when he fled vanquished from the field, and descending Angels shouted the Conqueror.

The triumphs of his Grace were alike illustrious. How stubborn the hearts of sinners! but how sharp were his arrows in their hearts! and how were they in multitudes led off conquered! A little company of poor Fishermen sally out, unarmed, against all the forces of Earth and Hell: and lo! Satan falls down like lightning from Heaven, and the kingdoms of the world submit before them. See the Victor on his march, going forth † “ conquering and to conquer.” The heart of every converted sinner is the subject of his triumphs. The ALMIGHTY REDEEMER overcomes all opposition, and every thing which exalts itself against his kingdom. And in the end, he will so subdue all nations, when the mighty Angel shall proclaim, with the trumpet of God, ‡ “ All the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our LORD, and of his

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\* *Dr. Watts.* || *Exod. xv. 1.* † *Rev. vi. 2.* ‡ *Rev. xi. 15.*

his CHRIST, and he shall reign forever and ever."

I now proceed to the second proposition before us; that, as God always obtains the victory Himself, so He gives it to whom He pleases.

The Sovereign God disposes the events of battles, and turns the conquest to the many or to the few, according to his own counsels. His are the second causes, by which the government of the world is, in so mysterious a manner, managed. The exertions of a single Arm, through his influence and assistance, may determine the fate of Nations. A *Sampson* shall be raised up, an inspired champion, to drive armies before him. A son of *Dodo* shall \* "arise, and smite the *Philistines* until his hand be weary, and his hand cleave unto his sword, and the Lord shall work a great victory on that day, and the people return after him only to the spoil." Even a Heathen *Naaman* shall be the instrument in his hand, and by him † "the Lord may give victory to *Syria*."

*David* himself, to whom we are probably indebted for the words of the text, was a remarkable instance of God's giving the victory to whom he pleases. The blooming little stripling was fired by the menaces of the tall monster of *Gath*, when he defied the armies of the Living God: Out ran the indignant youth, with only a sling and a few pebbles, to the rugged encounter. ‡ "Thou comest  
to

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\* i Sam. xxiii, 10. † ii Kings, v, 2. ‡ i Sam. xvii, 45.

to me, said he, with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of *Israel*: He shall deliver you into my hand." And away sang the victor-stone toward the broad front of the enemy:—down fell the insolent boaster, and bit the ground, in blood and rage, and dying agony. Well might such a grand event be gratefully recollected, and devoutly acknowledged long after. § "It is God who giveth salvation to Kings, who delivereth *David* his servant from the hurtful sword."

It becomes us, my brethren, to acknowledge, that our own sword is insufficient for our defence; that our own right hand cannot save us; that it is God "who does marvellous things, whose right hand and holy arm getteth him the victory." † "The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord." Not the united forces of troops by land, and fleets by sea, can command success: but it all depends upon the secret, irresistible scheme of Providence; the regular plan in the counsels of the Divine mind.

How frequently do we see a Sovereign God blasting the most sanguine expectations of men! Our enemies at the present day exhibit a striking example of this. How did their gay armies, a little while ago, march from the interior country, and crowd to their respective ports! How cheerfully

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§ *Psal.* 144, 10. † *Prov.* 21, 31.

fully did they embark! and how proudly did their squadron issue into the ocean, secure of conquest! And, since their departure, how impatiently have their countrymen, friends and connections, waited to hear of their success, and wondered at the delay; while their mangled corpses have been silent and inactive; bloated and disfigured at the bottom of the sea, or covering the waves with blood and carnage! So\* the mother of *Sisera* looked out at her window, and cried through the lattices, "why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot? Her wise ladies answered her, yea, she returned answer to herself, "Have they not sped? Have they not divided the prey? To *Sisera* a prey of divers colours, a prey of divers colours of needle-work, of divers colours of needle-work, on both sides, meet for the necks of them that take the spoil?" At this very instant, when the fond mother, and the flattering court, were preparing their songs of triumph, *Sisera* had done with mortal things: his pale head lay fastened to the earth in the tent of *Jael*, and the quivering corpse bled at a distance. In the fine turn of words, the beautiful *Pleonasm*, of the *Hebrew* poets, "At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell; where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

The *Causes* upon which victory depends, the same Infinite God regulates exactly as he pleases. The courage.

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\* *Judg.* v. 28.

rage of the hero shall inspire a *Joshua*: but when *Achan* commits a trespass in the accursed thing, *Joshua* himself shall be disheartened, and his troops scattered in confusion before the enemy. The conduct of the politician shall dignify *Ahithophel*, that he shall shine, and pronounce, like the oracle of God: and yet this counsel shall be turned into foolishness, if God chooses to disappoint it. How often, to open the way to victory, does the Heaven-bred horror, the panic from God, catch like a contagion through the boldest cohorts, and intimidate the most gallant commander. They start at the shaking of a leaf, and flee when none pursueth. “ \* Five of you,” said the *Jewish* lawgiver to the ancient people, “ shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword.”

The great Governor of the world can make the *minutest* causes produce the grandest effects: or he can work without means, or against means, just as he pleases. When *Jericho* is destined to destruction, the trumpets of the *Jubilee* shall sound:—down fall the lofty bulwarks thundering to the ground, and the invaders march straight forward to the conquest. When the vast army of the *Midianites* spread over the plain, numerous as the grasshoppers, a little handful of men is directed to

go

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\* *Lev.* xxvi. 8.



go out against them : and yet this small number, said the Lord,\* is “ too many for me to give the *Midianites* into their hands, lest *Israel* vaunt themselves against me, saying, “ mine own hand hath saved me.” This little band, therefore, is crumbled away, by one diminution after another, till three hundred men only are retained for the enterprise : and the unnumbered hostile army withers before them, at the blaze of a few lamps, and the crash of a few pitchers. But then, recollect, that was not all—there was the sword of the LORD, and of *Gideon*.

Thus, my brethren, we have endeavoured to illustrate the propositions before us. The Almighty God always gets the victory himself ;—The Sovereign God gives it to whom he pleases. He orders all the second causes of it ; blows the trumpet to encountering fleets and armies ; spirits the hero, or intimidates him, exactly as He chooses ; and decides the event of battles : And to convince us that it is all from Himself, the greatest events are frequently produced by the minutest means. “ † The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.”

I shall now conclude with a few reflections.

From what we have heard, how safe and happy are the favourites of this God ! They are under the best protection,

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\* *Judg.* vii, 2. † *Ecc.* ix, 11.

protection, and are secure of final victory. “ \* Though a troop should overcome them, they shall overcome at the last.” On the other hand, how vain is every attempt to oppose this Glorious God, and to injure and oppress his faithful people! *Rabshakeb* made the absurd and unsuccessful attempt:—let us attend for a moment to his haughty and licentious language. Hear the words of the *Great Nation*. “ † Let not *Hezekiah* deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you out of my hand. Neither let *Hezekiah* make you trust in the Lord, saying, the Lord will deliver us.—Hath any of the Gods of the Nations delivered at all his land out of my hand?—Where are the Gods of *Hamath*, and of *Arpad*? Where are the Gods of *Sepharvaim*, *Hena* and *Ivch*? have they delivered *Samaria* out of my hand? Who are they, among all the Gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver *Jerusalem* out of my hand?”—What insolence, and what blasphemy is here! We learn from this passage, that *gasconades* are not modern inventions: they are as old as the days of *Rabshakeb*. And were our adversaries better acquainted with the sacred Scriptures, we should be apt to imagine, that they had the whole of this conceited rhapsody (which you may read at your leisure) constantly before them; that they considered it as the grand model of military eloquence; studied it closely; and

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\* Gen. xlix, 19. † ii Kings, xviii, 29.

and endeavoured to imitate it, as far as they were able, in their public proclamations and manifestoes. But after all, what was the result of *Rabshakeh's* arrogance and profaneness?—" \*It came to pass that night, that the Angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the *Assyrians*, an hundred four-score and five thousand." A writer of more fire than judgment would probably have described this catastrophe in a different manner. He would have said, the Angel of the Lord *rushed* out upon them like a whirlwind—like a thunderclap—like a flash of lightning: but the inspired historian only tells us, calmly, that the Angel *went* out. It required no exertion: it was a serene, easy, evening walk to *him*, to defeat their united forces. Silent as a midnight damp, he moved on, and the whole puissant army stretched out breathless.— Their souls were licked up in an instant, and the camp was covered with corpses. In like manner, shall all they that rise up against the church of the Living GOD finally perish, " †Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."

The season will not suffer me to enlarge any further upon this point: it is time to draw to a conclusion. From what we have heard, we learn, to whom we must ascribe the victories, in which we rejoice this day. In this sacred place, we have constantly offered our most ardent petitions  
to

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\* ii Kings, xix. 35. † Luke, xx. 18.

Weather cold - No Stoves!

to God, that he would give us the victory over our enemies. And how has God heard us! Let us then acknowledge that the victory is not our's, but the Lord's. With surprise, and with transport, we have seen one welcome Packet after another, confirming, and enlarging our successes. And, my brethren, when have our irresistible Navies, the floating bulwarks of the Kingdom, been more potent, and more formidable? At what period of history, have their victories been more illustrious, complete and decisive? Some have spread the terror of the *British* Arms to the burning line, and others to the Northern Ocean: Some have rode with unrivalled Majesty on these *American* seas: Others have controlled the Eastern world, and anticipated the first blush of the dawning day: and others have recalled to our memories the miracles of ancient times, by turning the waters of *Egypt* into Blood. In this uninterrupted series of prosperous events, is not the Almighty Hand conspicuous? shall we not acknowledge and adore it? It is God alone who gives the victory, and determines the dubious contest, when the fate of an Empire hangs in suspense, and waits for the decision of an hour. Every descending sword is guided by him: and every random shot executes his commission. It is He who over-rules, when contending squadrons dispute the sovereignty of the seas, and involved in smoke and flame, denounce vengeance from the mouth of their cannon. He sits the supreme Arbiter, weighs their different pretensions in His impartial balance:



balance: He frowns and they are defeated; and victory attends his smile.) Let us then, after the example of *David*—But methinks, I am interrupted.—

“What have *we* to do,” says the gay infidel, “with  
 “*David* or his examples? *David* died, and was buried,  
 “three thousand years ago. Had he lived in the present  
 “*enlightened* age, and been acquainted with our astonish-  
 “ing discoveries, he would doubtless have expressed him-  
 “self with more propriety. After paying a delicate com-  
 “pliment to his own courage, and conduct, and military  
 “abilities; he would have attributed his success to mere  
 “chance, good fortune, and lucky accidents. The  
 “doctrine of Divine Agency is now perfectly obsolete:  
 “and nothing can be more unfashionable, than to unite  
 “with solemnity in an act of Thanksgiving to God.—  
 “The ideas of mankind are now more enlarged, their  
 “minds more improved, and their manners more highly  
 “polished: and to revive such antiquated opinions and  
 “practices, would only expose a man to sovereign con-  
 “tempt.”

Happy am I, therefore, that it is in my power to pro-  
 duce more *modern* examples. We are informed that one\*  
 of our Admirals, immediately after a most severe and de-  
 cisive action, which will transmit his name with the most  
 vivid luster to the latest posterity, called all his surviving  
 company

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\* *Admiral DUNCAN,*

company upon the deck, and united with them in humble adorations of that God, who had preserved them when in imminent danger, and given them the victory. It is not easy to conceive a nobler spectacle, than that gallant commander; in one hour, perfectly calm and serene, amidst all the tumult, and horrors, and thunder of the battle; and in the next, melting in grateful tears before the Majesty of Heaven:—in one hour, giving full demonstration, that he feared the face of no mortal man; and in the next, not ashamed to confess, that he was deeply impressed with the fear of his Maker. The mind that is not struck with the exquisite beauty of this sudden transition, must not only be void of all religious principle; but also, totally destitute of all sentiment, and all taste.

The other instance to which I shall point you, is that of the\* triumphant hero of the day; whose astonishing exploits are the immediate occasion of the present discourse. After a naval victory, accomplished with such resistless enterprise, and such brilliant success, as the annals of history can scarcely parallel; when a feeble mind would have been intoxicated with vanity and self-importance; we see, in one of his official letters, this devout sentence dropping spontaneously from his pen. “Almighty God has blessed his Majesty’s Arms in the battle, by a victory over the fleet of the enemy.” How modest and unassuming is this expression! We applaud the  
 Hero,

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\* Admiral NELSON,

Hero, and we love the Man. He does not attribute the victory to his own conduct, and personal bravery, but ascribes it entirely to the ALMIGHTY. He was himself perfectly capable of judging, actually present upon the spot, exposed to every danger, and minutely observing every circumstance: and the result of the whole was, a full conviction that it was God who crowned him with conquest. As an intelligent Officer, he perceived it: and as a humble and grateful Christian, he confessed it.—I have now produced two examples, which none of us need to be ashamed to follow: and let the scoffing infidel blush, if he is capable of blushing, when he sees two men, of such superior character, acknowledging the Divine Agency, and that they owe all their successes to God;—characters highly elevated, far out of the reach of all the pointless shafts of his impotent ridicule.

To close all. How base and ungrateful will it be in any of us to “turn this grace of God into wantonness”; and instead of the rational and religious rejoicing, which should distinguish the Man and the Christian, to substitute the noisy frolick, the unseasonable and mad revel; the momentary *blaze* which is but as the “crackling of thorns under a pot!” Let us make a right improvement of the mercies we have already received, and “continue instant in prayer”: then may we humbly hope for further victories and successes. \* “Go,” said the prostrate Prophet,  
“seven

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\* i Kings, xviii. 43.

“ seven times, and look toward the *Sea*: and lo! a cloud as a man’s hand appeared, and the Heaven’s grew black with clouds”; the answering voice of God sounded at a distance; and the blessing poured down abundant. / So while we wait upon our God, he will still hear us; NEW SONGS shall ascend to him, and “ in his Temple we will speak of His Glories.”

A M E N.

