

**THE THREATENED FAMINE A DIVINE
JUDGMENT FOR NATIONAL
UNFAITHFULNESS, A SERMON: A
SERMON, PREACHED IN THE PARISH
CHURCH OF KENILWORTH, ON SUNDAY
MORNING, OCT. 25, 1846**

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The threatened famine a divine judgment for national unfaithfulness, a sermon: A Sermon, preached in the parish church of Kenilworth, on sunday morning, Oct. 25, 1846 by E. R. Eardley-Wilmot

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E. R. EARDLEY-WILMOT

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A S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF KENILWORTH,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCT. 25, 1846,

BY THE

REV. E. R. EARDLEY-WILMOT, B. A.
VICAR.

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THE THREATENED FAMINE.

PSALM cvii. 34.

"A fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

It is a hard thing, Brethren, to be an atheist: to go abroad into the beautiful walks of nature, and observing the construction and the purposes of the objects around us, to return home with the deliberate belief that there is no God. Creation is a living testimony against us, affording convincing evidence of the work of an Intelligent Mind: for "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, even His eternal power and Godhead."*

But *who* is an atheist? Is it only the man who, finding the belief of the existence of God inconsistent with his own wishes and plans of self-indulgence, forces his mind to the rejection of this truth? who, as the apostle expresses it, "does not like to retain God in his knowledge?"† Atheism of this kind, perhaps, is rare. But there may be a *practical* atheism, where the existence of

* Rom. i. 20.

† Rom. i. 28.

the Supreme Being is not denied; and it is difficult to draw the distinction between atheism *in heart* and atheism *in practice*. We are *practical* atheists when we overlook the providence of God; when we act and live as if things were produced by secondary causes; when we fail to observe God's moral government of the universe, and to perceive, in the control and direction of events, the instruments of His dealing with those over whom His moral government is exercised.

And if *this* be atheism, are there not many of us atheists? Common observation of the habits and expressed feelings of individuals confirm the truth, that atheism of this kind, offensive as it must be to God, is very prevalent; nay, that it is the character of very many of us, who would feel indignant at the thought of our christian principles being questioned.

Now the Psalmist in our text, as well as in the preceding and following verses, declares the providence of God; the control of the Supreme Being over the materials of creation; and *more*, that such control is exercised by the Divine Intelligence according to the uprightness or re-fraction of that creature, who alone, amid the wonders of His power, He has endowed with reason, made conscious of His government, and capable of a higher existence. The purport of the Psalm, indeed, is beautifully set forth in the argument which stands at the head of it—" *The Psalmist exhorteth the redeemed in praising God to observe His manifold providence over travellers, over captives, over sick men, over seamen, and in divers varieties of life.*" And four times there is interspersed, at suitable intervals, a fervent call upon us to make the wonders and the goodness of God the subject of our praise:—" Oh! that men would therefore praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men."

Thus, in this revealed account of the manner of God's providence, the inspired Psalmist declares to us a principle upon which God acts in His moral government: "A fruitful land He turneth into barrenness for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." This is God's way. He takes away the promise of the earth. He punishes the iniquity of the inhabitants of a land by sending amongst them what is called in Ezekiel* "the evil arrows of famine."

Let us, then, consider the text—

First, as a truth.

Secondly, as a truth applicable to ourselves.

As a truth, the language of the text is capable of the clearest proof. If indeed *there be a God*, it is reasonable to suppose that *He should thus act*. The supremacy of His being is inseparable from His attributes; and the truth of His attributes is inseparable from their exercise. If He made the world, He must know the world; and further, He must be concerned about the world. If He knows the world, He must know the transactions of the world. *He must know, for instance, man's sin in the world.* If holiness be a quality of Him, who made the world, the *sin of man must be very offensive to Him*; so that, if power be one of His attributes, it is not unreasonable to suppose that He will *punish sin*. For God carries on his moral government of the world. What are called the natural consequences of sin, are only part of that government. He is not a visible God.* "No man hath seen Him at any time, the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him."† And though God is visible in Christ, and visible in the written will which we possess, still God carries on an invisible government of

* Ezekiel v. 16.

† John i. 18.

the world. And this invisible government is in a sense distinct from the written revelation of truth, yet so in harmony with it, that so far from the one contradicting the other, Revelation furnishes us with the statutes and ordinances of the Most High; with the very principles upon which He acts; and with His manner of dealing in the daily government of the universe. Of this the text is an example. It cannot, indeed, be denied, that God uses the very frame of His creatures as the instrument of His punishment: sickness, pain, and suffering; or the misery of the intelligent part of man's compound, the mind; or He afflicts them through the means of those daily blessings upon which they depend for sustentation, and for which they labour. It is difficult to conceive how otherwise His government could be carried on. We are compelled to feel, that though He is an invisible God, "we are at present under His government in the strictest and most proper sense;" and "that the whole course of nature is a present instance of His exercising that government over us."*

But the text, as a truth, is fully supported by scriptural example. It is true in a more extended as well as in a limited sense. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when He hideth His face, who then can behold Him? whether it be done against a nation or against a man only."† We have only to call to mind the history of Sodom and Gomorrah to see an illustration of the text to a most fearful extent. When Lot in the day of his separation from Abram cast his eyes upon the country, "it was well watered everywhere, as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar."‡ It was sufficient that the inhabitants

* Butler's Analogy. † Job xxxiv. 29. ‡ Gen. xiii. 10

of that fruitful plain "were sinners before the Lord exceedingly."* He stretched forth upon it in consequence the arm of His power. "He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground ;"† and so perpetual is the desolation, that even at the present day, travellers bear testimony to the fact, that "it remains a vast lake, so impregnated with noisome and sulphureous substances, that no fish will swim in it, and that scarce a bird will hover over it."

You cannot, my brethren, be strangers to the fact, that in the inspired book of God's truth, famine, or what the Psalmist calls the barrenness of a land, is ordered by Him, who ruleth in the heavens and the earth, as a punishment of the nation which presumes to reject and despise Him. The sin of David was so mixed up with the people over whom he ruled, that seven years' famine was one of the three punishments from which he was to choose. And the same chastisement was called for in the days of Abab. But why should we speak of the past ? Is there no existing verification of this manner of God's dealing ? Let any man turn his eyes to that land, which to Abraham and his posterity was the fair and fertile subject of God's promise. Its beauty and fertility had given rise to a scriptural proverb, expressive of its abundance and productiveness : it was "a land flowing with milk and honey." In prophetic language it was "a delightful land." There is not a traveller, who has gone through the length and breadth of the land of promise, but bears testimony to its former state of cultivation and fruitfulness. Its great natural capabilities, indeed, are set forth by Moses : † "The land is not as the land of

* Gen. xiii. 13. † Gen. xix. 25. ‡ Deut. xi. 10, 11, 12.