

**FIVE SERMONS, ON THE PARABLE OF THE RICH
MAN AND LAZARUS, PREACHED BEFORE THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, IN JANUARY,
MDCCCXLI: TO WHICH IS ADDED, A
PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE
INTRODUCTION OF A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF
THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY**

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Five Sermons, on the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Preached before the University of Cambridge, in January, MDCCCXLI: to Which Is Added, a Proposed Plan for the Introduction of a Systematic Study of Theology in the University by James Hildyard

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JAMES HILDYARD

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A PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF
A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY,
BY STUDENTS DESIGNED FOR THE CHURCH,
AFTER TAKING THEIR B.A. DEGREE.

BY THE
REV. JAMES HILDYARD, M.A.
FELLOW AND TUTOR OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE.

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TO THE
REV. JOSEPH PROCTER, D.D.

MASTER OF CATHARINE HALL,
AND PREBENDARY OF NORWICH,

THESE SERMONS
ARE INSCRIBED,
WITH SINCERE RESPECT,
BY THE AUTHOR.

SERMON I.

OBLIGATION TO CHARITY.

LUKE xvi. 23, 24.

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame.

THERE is something more startling than ordinary, when compared with similar portions of Scripture, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, as given by the single Evangelist St. Luke ; and it is introduced by our Saviour with an abruptness and decision not commonly observable in his manner. It was to the covetous Pharisees that the application was principally directed : but our Lord's disciples were also present at the time ; and it was clearly designed by Christ as a comprehensive moral lesson to all.

There is no other of His parables, that we re-

member, where He seems to have risen (so to speak) so much above Himself, none where His language is so commensurate with the occasion.

We do not find it to have been His ordinary practice to alarm His hearers by gloomy and terrific pictures of future judgment. He came to bring peace upon earth, and glad tidings of good things; and His general habit appears to have been, in accordance with this, to display rather the riches of His kingdom, and the blessings in store for His faithful followers, than to point out, or at least to dwell long upon, the desperate condition of those who should wilfully despise and reject the offer of grace.

Yet as this last was also no doubt a principal object of His mission; inasmuch as the benevolent purpose of salvation to all, and remission of sins, required no less the warning of the wicked than the encouragement of the righteous, it is far from being altogether overlooked or neglected by Him; though, from His shedding tears upon the foreseen and impending fate of Jerusalem, with His weeping and groaning at the grave of Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, we are led justly to infer how much more congenial it was to His heavenly disposition to feast on scenes of happiness, than to contemplate the darker picture of punishment and death. He simply, when the opportunity arises,—if that can ever be simple which has to tell of an eternity of suffering, as well as of an eternity of bliss,—He simply, we say, as a general rule, states the fact, as One having authority, that so it

is, and so it must be, charging His hearers in solemn but affectionate terms that they believe Him, and repent for their own sakes: "I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish¹."

And thus, on all occasions of His preaching to His disciples or the public on the subject of a future distribution of rewards or punishments, according to the things done in the body, there is no attempt, no effort made on His part to magnify or give a colouring to the account He delivers to them; nor yet on the other hand any studied and unnatural reserve on those points, any casting of the thick veil of mystery over His discourse, in order to excite in the imaginative mind an eager and strained curiosity which might prove the fruitful parent of horrors, greater than the real history was calculated to produce.

His revealed report of that awful day of judgment—the very end and soul as it is of all existence, and to be received, as He knew, thenceforth for ever upon His testimony, as of one speaking that which He alone could "know," and testifying that which He alone had "seen²," since "no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven³,"—this report, strange almost to tell, is principally delivered to us in parables, couched in plain and ordinary language, and the interpretation obvious and simple; certainly altogether devoid of those adventitious ornaments of

¹ Luke xiii. 3. 5.

² John iii. 11.

³ Ibid. iii. 13.

style and circumstance which we are accustomed to look for, and meet with, in tales of eastern origin.

Such, then, being allowed as His almost universal custom, we are justified, we think, in attributing a greater degree of weight and authority to those more rare instances, in which (not without reason doubtless) He appears to have deviated from His usual course, and invested his expressions with an unwonted degree of solemnity. And of this class, in a remarkable manner, is the history now under consideration.

There the words stand in the commanding majesty of truth, uttered by the Son of God Himself, uncontradicted to this day, and to remain a monument of human obstinacy and incredulity to the latest age. Well might our Saviour say, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things¹?"

We need not spend time in detailing the circumstances of a parable more than any perhaps in the Bible familiar to us all.

Which of us does not remember from his childhood the story of Dives in torment, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom? They become almost from our lisping infancy as household terms upon our tongue; a thing heard and received as a matter of course; but alas! like other matters of course, we there dismiss the question from our minds, though treating of a certain and fearful judgment to come, and opening to us the most hidden things of an invisible world.

¹ John iii. 12.

Hence it is, that it has become the conviction of many, that the passage before us is figurative¹, a sort of allegory, exhibiting indeed a mystic shadow of that which is to be, but in no way to be taken by wise men as an actual representation of the truth. And from this delusive, self-flattering conception, has gradually arisen an almost total disregard of the warning here meant to be conveyed; a notion, nay more, a prevailing opinion, that God, who is to be the Judge of all the earth, is a God of mercy and goodness alone, and not also a God of vengeance; and that as He "willeth not the death of a sinner," so neither is it reasonable to suppose that He will hereafter consign him over to *eternal* pains and penalties for his sin.

But whence does it appear to have been any part of our Saviour's character to trifle thus with His hearers? Where else do we find Him indulging in flights of fancy, and entertaining or alarming them by fictitious descriptions? We esteem the report exaggerated, because forsooth we know of nothing analogous to it, except it may be the story-books of children, or the no less childish dreams composing the mythology of Greece and Rome.

And so, because we know of nothing like it, it cannot be true, and it is idle to attach importance to

¹ HOOKER, Ecclesiast. Polit. B. V. 50. "I hold it for a most infallible rule, in expositions of sacred Scripture, that where a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst."