

THE  
**WORKS**  
OF  
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CONTAINING  
AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE, &C., LETTERS ON RELIGIOUS SUBJECTS, CARDIPHONIA,  
DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT,  
SERMONS PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF OLNEY,  
A REVIEW OF ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY, OLNEY HYMNS, POEMS,  
MESSIAH, OCCASIONAL SERMONS, AND TRACTS.

TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED  
**MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE, &c.**

BY THE REV. R. CECIL, A. M.

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**COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.**

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DISCOURSES.

OR

SERMONS,

AS INTENDED FOR THE PULPIT.

*—the pillar and ground of the truth. And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh:—1 TIM. iii. 15, 16.*

## PREFACE.

THE following Discourses were drawn up about twelve months since, when I expected a speedy opportunity of delivering them from the pulpit. As the views I then had are now overruled, I take this method of laying them before the public; that those who have thought proper to foretell the part I would have acted, and the doctrine I would have taught, if my desires had taken place, may be either satisfied or silenced.

Yet I should not have thought it worth my while, to give either myself or others this trouble, merely for my own vindication. Attempts of this kind usually imply too much of a man's importance to himself, to be either acceptable or successful. Or, at best, it can be a point of no great moment to my real happiness, what the few persons to whom my little name is known, are pleased to say or think of me. Nothing but great inattention to our true circumstances, can afford us leisure either to censure others, or to justify ourselves; unless when the interests of religion or morality are evidently concerned. A few years will fix and determine our characters beyond all possibility of mistake; and till then it would be vain to hope for it.

The true reasons, therefore, of this publication are, the importance of the subjects treated of; and the probability that, upon this occasion, many persons who have not yet considered them with the attention they deserve, may be induced (some from a motive of friendship, and others from curiosity) to read what might appear in my name, the rather for being mine.

Had I written with a design to print, I should have chosen to put my sentiments in another form; and perhaps a desire to avoid the censure of severe critics, would have made me more solicitous about expression and method. But as I profess to publish not what I might, but what I really would have spoken, I could not allow myself to deviate from my first draught, except in a few places where I thought the sense entangled, ambiguous, or defective. For the same reason, I am forced to decline the judgment and correction of my friends, the advantages of which, as well as my own great need of them, I have more than once experienced.

If there is found in some places a coincidence of thought or expression, I hope it will be excused; as I had not the least apprehension, at the time of composing, that what I designed for distinct and separate occasions, would ever appear abroad in one view.

In a word, so far as these Essays are mine, I entreat a candid perusal; and that those who read them in order to form their judgment of the author, do not make their estimate from a sentence here and there, but have the patience to read them throughout. So far as what they contain is agreeable to scripture, reason, and experience, any apology would be impertinent. In this

case they deserve attention. Every particle of truth is valuable in itself, by whatever means or instruments it may be conveyed to us; and, like a torch, displays itself by its own light, without any relation to the hand that bears it.

*Liverpool, January 1, 1760.*

## SERMON II.

### ON THE SAVIOUR AND HIS SALVATION.

*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. 1 TIM i. 15.*

THOUGH the apostle Paul has written largely and happily upon every branch of Christian doctrine and practice; and with respect to his writings, as well as his preaching could justly assert, that he had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God; yet there are two points which seem to have been (if I may so speak) his favourite topics, which he most frequently repeats, most copiously insists on, and takes every occasion of introducing. The one is, to display the honours, powers, and faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ; the other, to make known the great things God had done for his own soul. How his heart was filled and fired with the first of these, is evident from almost every chapter of his Epistles. When he speaks of the mystery of godliness, “God manifested in the flesh,” and the exceeding grace and love declared to a lost world through him, the utmost powers of language fall short of his purpose. With a noble freedom he soars beyond the little bounds of criticism; and, finding the most expressive words too weak and faint for his ideas, he forms and compounds new ones, heaps one hyperbole upon another; yet, after his most laboured essays to do justice to his subject, he often breaks off in a manner that shows he was far from being satisfied with all he could say. This reflection is most obvious to those who can read him in the original: but no disadvantages of a translation can wholly confine that inimitable ardour with which he seems to pour his whole soul into his words, when he is speaking of his Lord and Saviour. And he who can read the first chapters of his epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews, the second to the Philippians, or many similar passages, with indifference, must be, I say, not merely a person of small devotion, but of little taste and sensibility.

And how deeply his mind was impressed with the mercies he had received in his conversion and call, is equally conspicuous. He takes every occasion to aggrandize the goodness of God to himself; to exaggerate and deplore the guilt and misery of his former life, in which he once trusted; and to lament the small returns he was able to make for such blessings; even when he could say, without boasting, that he had “laboured more abundantly” than the most diligent and zealous of his fellow-servants.

A powerful abiding sense of these two points upon the apostle’s mind, have given rise to many sudden, lively, and beautiful digressions in the

course of his writings. The context to the passage I have read is of this kind. Having incidentally spoken of the gospel in the 11th verse, he is suddenly struck with the reflection of his own misery while ignorant of it, and the wonderful goodness of God, in affording him the knowledge of salvation, and honouring him, who was before a blasphemer, with a commission to publish the same glad tidings to others. This thought suspends his argument, and fills his heart and mouth with praise. And having acknowledged, that “the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant” towards himself, he sub-joins the words of the text, for an encouragement to others; assuring us, that his case was not so peculiar, but that multitudes might be partakers with him in the same hope of mercy.

The words easily resolve into two parts:

*1st*, A short, but comprehensive proposition, including the purport of the whole gospel, “That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.”

*2d*, A commendation of this doctrine in a twofold respect, “as a faithful saying,” and as “worthy of all acceptation;” each of these illustrated by the instance of himself, when he adds, “of whom I am chief.”

I. The apostle well knew the different reception the gospel would meet in the world; that many poor, guilty souls, trembling under a sense of sin and unworthiness, would very hardly be persuaded, that such sinners as they could be saved at all. To these he recommends it as “a faithful saying” founded upon the immutable counsel, promise, and oath of God, “that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;” sinners in general; “the chief of sinners;” such as he represents himself to have been. He knew likewise, that many others, from a mistaken opinion of their own goodness, or a mistaken dependence on something of their own choosing, would be liable to undervalue this faithful saying. For the sake of these he adds, “it is worthy of all acceptation.” None are so bad but the gospel affords them a ground of hope; none are so good as to have any just ground of hope without it. There was a time when St. Paul could have made a fair profession of himself likewise; he could say, “circumcised on the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as to the law a Pharisee, as to the righteousness which is by the law, blameless,” Phil. iii. But he has been since taught, “to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ;” and is content to style himself the chief of sinners.

Having thus attempted to show the design and meaning of the words, I propose, somewhat more at large, to unfold the proposition, and point out some of those important and extensive truths it contains. I say some of them; for it is not possible that either men or angels can fully sound the depth of this one sentence, “that Jesus Christ came into the world to save

sinner.” I shall afterwards infer, and enforce the other part of the text, “that it is indeed a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.” And may He, who came into the world to procure salvation for sinners, and is now exalted on high to bestow it, accompany the whole with his promised blessing.

The tenor of the proposition readily suggests three inquiries: *1st*, Who this person is, here spoken of, Jesus Christ? *2d*, What is meant by the salvation he is said to have undertaken? *3d*, By what means he effected it?

Let us, first, speak of this gracious, this wonderful person, Jesus Christ. We already bear his name as professed Christians; and we speak of him as our Master, and our Lord; and so far we say well. But, as he has told us, many will call him Lord at the great day, to whom he will profess, “I never knew you whence you are, depart;” so it is to be feared there are many now, that outwardly acknowledge him, who neither know whence he is, nor who he is. Though we have Moses and the prophets, the apostles and evangelists, continually with us; though it is the immediate aim and intent of all their writings, in every history, promise, prophecy, type, ceremony, and law, to set him before our eyes; and though there is hardly an image in the material creation but is adopted by the scriptures to shadow forth his excellency; ignorance of Jesus Christ, and what he has done for his people, is the great cause that religion appears so low and contemptible to some, and is found so tedious and burdensome by others. Let us, therefore, attend to the record God has given of his Son; for I propose in this article to say little of my own, but to lay before you the express, powerful, indubitable testimony of holy scripture.

And here we are taught, first, That Jesus Christ is *God*. The first words of St. John’s Gospel are full to this point: “In the beginning” (that is, at the commencement of time and things, when as yet nothing else existed) “was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” To prevent a possibility of mistake, and to confirm the eternity of this divine Word in the strongest manner, it is immediately added, “The same was in the beginning with God: all things were made by him.” And lest this likewise should either be contested or misunderstood, it is guarded by an universal negative, “without him was not anything made that was made.” Farther, to prevent, if possible, the surmise that, in these glorious works, the eternal Word acted with a deputed power only, the apostle subjoins, “In him was life,” life essentially; and from him, as the fountain, life and light proceeded to his creatures: “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.” To this agrees the declaration of St. Paul, “For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for

him;” by his power and wisdom, and for his glory and pleasure. “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist,” Col. i. Elsewhere he speaks of him expressly, as “over all God blessed for ever; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” It were easy to enlarge this way; but I shall content myself with observing this general proof of the divinity of Christ, that the scriptures, which were given to make us wise to salvation, do ascribe to him the names of God, particularly Jehovah; the essential attributes of God, such as eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence; the peculiar works of God, as creation, providence, redemption, and forgiveness of sin; and, finally, commands us to pay him those divine honours, and to rely on him with that absolute dependence, which would be idolatry if referred anywhere below the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth.

Again, we learn from scripture, that Christ is truly and properly *Man*. This is indeed wonderful! therefore styled, “the great mystery of godliness,” 1 Tim. iii. But that he of whom we have begun to speak is the very person who came into the world to save sinners, we have abundant proof. The apostle John, whose testimony we have already cited, says, a few verses lower (John i. 14.), “And the Word” (that glorious Word, which was God with God) “was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory;” (that is, we his disciples, whose eyes were spiritually enlightened, for the world in general saw nothing of it;) “as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” In other places it is said, “Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses (Matth. viii 16), and “was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin,” Heb. iv. 15. “As the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same,” Heb. ii. 14. “In the fulness of time, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman,” Gal. iv. Many are the mistakes of mortals, and wide the extremes into which mistaken mortals run. Some have rashly ventured to deny our Lord’s divinity; some have wildly and fancifully explained away his humanity; but may we, through grace, abide by the scriptural truth, and be directed in the midst of the path of judgment.

From this mystical union of the divine and human nature in one person, the scriptures speak of him, thirdly, under the character of a *Mediator*, the “one mediator between God and man.” To this idea the names *Jesus Christ*, which are as ointment poured forth, direct us in their original import. The former, which signifies the *Saviour*, pointing out the success and efficacy of his undertaking; the latter, which is the same with *Messiah* or the *Anointed*, expressing both his divine appointment thereto, and the complete supply of all grace and power, wherewith he was filled for the discharge of it. Thus



much for the person spoken of.

We proceed, in the next place, to consider the design of his appearance in the world, “to save sinners.” And as the idea of deliverance presupposes a state of distress, it will be necessary previously to inquire into the condition of those whom he came to save, which is indeed emphatically implied in the appellation given them, sinners. Man having broken that law under which he was created, and with which his happiness was closely connected, feel under accumulated ruin. The image of God, in which he was formed, was defaced, and a far different image set up in his heart, even of him who had seduced him from his allegiance; darkness in the understanding, rebellion in the will, sensuality in the affections; the justice of God threatening a penalty he could neither satisfy nor sustain; the commandments of God still challenging an obedience he had no longer any power to yield. The very gifts and bounties of God, with which he was encompassed, designed not only for his comfort, but his instruction, to lead him, as by so many steps, to their gracious author, became eventually the occasions of withdrawing him farther from his duty, and increasing as well as aggravating his ingratitude. Thus stood man towards his Maker. With regard to his fellow-creatures, self-love and inordinate desires having raised a variety of interfering interests in the breasts of all, peace withdrew from the earth. Every man’s heart and hand was set against his neighbour, and violence, rage, envy, and confusion overspread the world. Nor could he be easier in himself: hurried by restless desires towards things either unsatisfying or unattainable, haunted with cares, tortured with pains, tired with opposition, shocked with disappointment; conscience, like the hand that appeared at Belshazzar’s feast (Daniel, v.), writing bitter things against him, when outward circumstances allowed a short repose, and vanity, like a worm, destroying the root of every flower that promised the fairest bloom of success. Behold a few outlines of the picture of fallen man! miserable in his life, more miserable in the continual dread of losing such a life, miserable most of all, that neither his fancy can feign, nor his fear conceive, the consequences of the death he dreads, which will introduce him to the immediate presence, to the tribunal, of an incensed, almighty, ever-living God!

Such was the state from which Jesus Christ came to save us. He came to restore us to the favour of God; to reconcile us to ourselves and to each other; to give us peace and joy in life, hope and triumph in death, and after death, glory, honour, and immortality. For he came not merely to repair, and to restore, but to exalt; not only “that we might have life,” the life we had forfeited, but “that we might have it more abundantly” (John, x.); that our happiness might be more exalted, our title more firm, and our posses-

sion more secure, than the state of Adam in paradise could boast, or than his posterity could have attained unto, if he had continued unsinning upon the tenor of the first covenant.

Now, could we suppose it possible that a set of innocent beings, without any default of their own, had sunk into a state of misery, we must confess it would have been great grace and favour in the Lord Jesus to save them. But let us not forget the stress laid in the text upon the word sinners. He came to save, not the unfortunate, but the ungodly, Rom. v. How, then, should every heart glow with love to him, who hath thus loved us! If any of us can hear or speak of this subject with indifference or disgust, it is to be feared we are quite strangers to the nature or the necessity of that salvation with which God has graciously visited his people. Let us no more usurp the sacred words of generosity, sensibility, or gratitude, if this astonishing instance of divine goodness leaves us cold and unimpressed; especially if to this we join the consideration of the third point I proposed to speak of, By what means Jesus Christ affected this salvation for sinners.

In the passage before us, it is only said, that he came into the world on this account; which teaches us, this was the sole design of his advent; and that, coming on set purpose for this, he would leave nothing undone that was necessary to accomplish it. He emptied himself of that divine glory and honour he possessed with the Father from eternity. "He bowed the heavens, and came down" to our earth; and that not with an external glory, as a celestial messenger, to constrain the attention and homage of mankind, "but was made of a woman" (Gal. iv.); not of high and noble extraction in the judgment of men, "but in the form of a servant;" born in a stable, laid in a manger, brought up in an obscure and contemptible place, and reputed no higher than the son of a carpenter. "He was despised and rejected of men; there was no form or comeliness in him" (Isa. liii.), to attract a general regard; on the contrary, "he came to his own, and his own received him not," John i. Farther, as he was made of a woman, he was "made under the law;" the one in order to the other; for this was the way divine wisdom had appointed, and which divine justice required, to make salvation possible to sinners. Eternal truth had pronounced tribulation, wrath, and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil. All men, in every age and place, had corrupted their ways before God; yet his mercy had designed, that where sin had abounded, grace should much more abound, Rom. viii. Jesus Christ was the grand expedient, in whom mercy and truth met together (Psal. lxxxv.), and the inflexible righteousness of God was brought to correspond and harmonize with the peace of sinful man. That justice might be satisfied, truth vindicated, and sinners saved, God so loved a lost world, that, when

no inferior means could avail, when none in heaven or earth were willing, or worthy, or able, to interpose, “he gave his only-begotten Son,” John iii. Jesus Christ, the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, “so loved the world,” that he assumed our nature, undertook our cause, bore our sins, sustained our deserved punishment; and having done and suffered all that the case required, he is now gone before, “to prepare a place” (John iv.) for all that believe in him and obey him. Man lay under a double incapacity for happiness; he could neither keep the law of God in future, nor satisfy for his past breach and contempt of it. To obviate the former, Jesus Christ performed a perfect, unsinning obedience in our stead. To remove the latter; he became “the propitiation for our sins,” yielded up his life, as a prey, into the hands of murderers, and poured forth his precious blood, in drops of sweat in the garden, in streams from his side upon the cross. For this he endured the fiercest temptations of the devil, the scorn, rage, and malice of men, and drank the bitter cup of the wrath of God, when it pleased the Father to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin. His love carried him through all; and when he had finally overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. In few words, he lived and died for us when upon earth; nor is he unmindful of us in heaven, but lives and intercedes on our behalf. He continually executes the offices of prophet, priest, and king, to his people; instructing them by his word and Spirit; presenting their persons and prayers, acceptable to God through his merits; defending them by his power, from all their enemies, ghostly and bodily; and ordering, by his providence, all things to work together for their good, till at length they are brought home, to be with him where he is, and to behold his glory.

II. From what has been said, we may justly infer, in the first place “that this is,” as the apostle styles it, “a faithful saying.” When man first fell, God, in the midst of judgment remembering mercy, declared, unsought and undesired, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, Gen. iii. In every succeeding age, he confirmed his purpose by types, promises, prophecies, and oaths. At length, in the fulness of time, Christ, the desire of all nations, came into the world, fulfilled all that had been foretold, and encouraged every humble penitent sinner to come unto him, that they might have life, pardon, and peace. To doubt, or to deny, his readiness to save, is, so far as in us lies, to make the word of God of none effect; it is, to charge God foolishly, as though, like the heedless unskilful builder in the gospel, he had begun to build that which was not to be finished. If, after all that is set before us, it is possible for any soul to miss salvation, that sincerely desires it, and seeks it in God’s appointed way, it must be because

the Lord Jesus Christ either cannot or will not save them. That he cannot, is flatly false; for, “all power is his in heaven and in earth” (Matth. xxviii); and it is particularly said, “that he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him” (Heb. vii.): and that he will not, is as false; for he himself hath said, “Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,” John, vi.

We may infer, *2dly*, That this doctrine is not only faithful, but “worthy of all acceptance.” And here, methinks, I could begin anew. A point so much mistaken by some, and neglected by most, rather requires a whole, or many discourses, than to be passed over in few words. The most high and wise God has esteemed the redemption of mankind so precious, “that he spared not his only Son,” Rom. viii. And are there any amongst us, in a land of gospel-light and liberty, where the words of wisdom are sounding in our ears every day, that dare make light of this message, just give it a hearing, and return to their farms, their merchandise, and their diversions, as though this unspeakable grace of God called for no return? Alas! “How shall we escape if we neglect this salvation?” Heb. ii. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy. It was dangerous, it was destructive, to refuse him that spoke upon earth; take heed how you trifle with him that speaketh from heaven! To such as neglect this, “there remains no other sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation that shall devour his adversaries,” Heb. x. Let none of us think it is well with us, merely because we were born and educated in a Christian country, have means of instruction in our hands, and enjoy frequent opportunities of presenting ourselves before God in public worship. To thousands these, so far from being advantages, will greatly aggravate their condemnation, and point the sting of the never dying worm. Better were it for us to have been inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon (Luke x.), yea, of Sodom and Gomorrah, than to appear in judgment with no better plea than this. Neither let us speak peace to ourselves, because we are not so bad as others, but perhaps live decently and comfortably, are useful in society, and perform many things that are commonly called good works. If these works spring from a true love of God, if they are framed according to the rule of his word, if they are performed by faith in Christ Jesus our Lord, they are undoubtedly good, and shall be rewarded before men and angels; if otherwise, you have already your reward, in the complaisance of your own minds, and the approbation of friends and acquaintance. The Christianity of the New Testament imports more than all this. It is, to believe in Jesus Christ; so to believe in him, as to obey him in all his commands, to trust him in all his dispensations, to walk in his steps, copying out the bright example of his love, meekness, patience, self-denial,

and active zeal for the glory of God and the good of mankind. It is, from a consciousness of our utter inability to perform these great things, to depend continually upon the promised aid and direction of his Holy Spirit, to seek this assistance by frequent fervent prayer, to offer up ourselves daily as living sacrifices unto God; and, finally, when we have done all, to be deeply sensible of our unworthiness of the least of his mercies, to confess ourselves unprofitable servants. and to place all our hopes upon this faithful saying, "That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners."

Thus, from the consideration of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the greatness of our misery by nature, and the wonderful things he has done and suffered for our redemption, we may learn the complete security of that salvation he has provided, the extreme danger of neglecting it, and the folly and presumption of attempting to establish a righteousness of our own, independent of him who is appointed of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, 1 Cor. i. In setting these things before you plainly and faithfully, I trust I have delivered my own soul. Time is short, life is precarious, and perhaps to some this may be the last opportunity of the kind that may be afforded them. God grant we may be wise in time, that, today, while it is called today, we may hear his voice. Then we shall understand more of the text than words can teach us; then we shall experience "a peace which passeth all understanding" (Phil. iv.); "a joy" which "a stranger intermeddleth not with" (Prov. xvi.); and a hope "full of glory," which shall be completed in the endless possession of those "pleasures which are at the right hand of God" (Psal. xvi.); where sin, and its inseparable attendant sorrow, shall cease for ever; where "there shall be no more grief, or pain, or fear" (Rev. xxi. ); but every tear shall be wiped from every eye.

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