

THE  
**WORKS**  
OF  
**THE REV. JOHN NEWTON**

LATE RECTOR OF THE UNITED PARISHES OF  
ST. MARY WOOLNOTH AND ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH-HAW,  
LOMBARD STREET, LONDON.

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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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# MESSIAH

## OR FIFTY EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE SERIES OF

## SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES

WHICH FORM THE SUBJECT OF HANDEL'S CELEBRATED

## ORATORIO

OF THAT NAME,

PREACHED IN THE YEARS 1784 AND 1785,

IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,

LOMBARD STREET,

LONDON.

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—————Ah!

Tantanne rem, tam negligenter, agere ! TER.

Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this!—DEUT. xxxii. 29.

TO THE  
PARISHIONERS OF ST. MARY WOOLNOTH,  
AND  
ST. MARY WOOLCHURCH HAW,  
LONDON,  
THESE SERMONS  
ON THE  
MESSIAH  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY THE  
AUTHOR,  
TO REMAIN AS A TESTIMONY OF HIS RESPECT  
FOR THEIR PERSONS,  
AND HIS SOLICITUDE FOR THEIR WELFARE,  
WHEN HIS PRESENT RELATION  
TO THEM, AS THEIR MINISTER,  
SHALL BE DISSOLVED.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

### KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

*(And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh, a name written), KING OF KINGS,  
AND LORD OF LORDS. REV. xix. 16.*

THE description of the administration and glory of the Redeemer's kingdom, in defiance of all opposition, concludes the second part of the Messiah. Three different passages from this book are selected to form a grand chorus, of which his title in this verse is the close; a title which has been sometimes vainly usurped by proud worms of the earth. Eastern monarchs, in particular, have affected to style themselves King of kings, and Lord of lords. In the scriptural language, men, whether high or low, rich or poor, one with another, are compared to worms and potsherds of the earth; but they are by nature so strongly affected by pride, that they cannot invent titles of honour answerable to the idea they have of their own importance, without intrenching upon the divine prerogative. Thus sovereignty, majesty, holiness, and grace, and other attributes which properly belong to God alone, are parcelled out among the great. But let the great and the mighty know that wherein they speak proudly, Messiah is above them. The whole verse (of which the latter clause only is in the Oratorio) offers two points to our meditations.

I. How he is represented as wearing his title. It is written, or inscribed, upon his vesture dipped in blood, and upon his thigh; either upon that part of his vesture which covers his thigh, or upon the upper part of his vesture, and upon his thigh likewise.

II. The title itself,—King of kings, and Lord of lords. Whatever power the kings and lords among mankind possess, is derived from him, and absolutely subject to his control.

I. The manner in which he wears his name or title. It is written upon his vesture, and upon his thigh.

1. This name being written upon his vesture, denotes the manifestation and the ground of his authority. It is written upon his outward garment, to be read, known, and acknowledged by all beholders. And it is upon his bloody garment, upon the vesture stained with his own blood, and the blood of his enemies; which intimates to us, that his government is founded upon the success of his great undertaking. In the passage from whence this verse is selected, there are three names attributed to Messiah. He has a name which no one knows but himself (ver. 12), agreeable to what he declared when upon earth “No man (οὐδεις, no one, neither man nor angel) knoweth the Son, but the Father;” this refers to his eternal power and Godhead. A second name, The Word of God (ver. 13), denotes the mystery of the divine personality.

The name in my text imports his glory, as the Mediator between God and man, in our nature, which, when he resumed it from the grave, became the seat of all power and authority; which power we are now taught to consider, not merely as the power of God, to whom it essentially belongs, but as the power of God exercised in and by that Man who died upon the cross for our sins. In consequence of his obedience unto death, he received a name which is above every name, Phil. ii. 9. This inscription his own people read by the eye of faith in the present life, and it inspires them with confidence and joy, under the many tribulations they pass through in the course of their profession. Hereafter it shall be openly known, and read by all men. Every eye shall see it, and every heart must either bow or break before him.

2. It is written upon his thigh. The thigh is the emblem of power, and is the part of the body on which the sword is girded, Ps. xlv. 3. By this emblem we are taught, that he will assuredly maintain and exercise the right which he has acquired. As he has a just claim to the title, he will act accordingly. Many titles among men are merely titular. So the King of Great Britain is styled likewise King of France, though he has neither authority nor possession in that kingdom. But this name which Messiah bears is full of life, truth, and influence. He is styled King of kings, and Lord of lords, because he really is so ; because he actually rules and reigns over them, and does according to his own pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, with an absolute and uncontrollable sway, so that none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? Dan. iv. 35.

II. The title itself is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. Too many of them imagine a vain thing. They take counsel together, and set themselves against him (Ps. ii. 4), saying, Let us break his bands asunder. But he sitteth in the heavens, and has them in derision. He has his hook in their nose, and his bridle in their lips, and the result of all their contrivances is neither more nor less than the accomplishment of his will.

1. The rage they discover, and the resistance they make, cannot weaken this truth, but rather render it more evident. If it be asked, Why does he permit them to resist? we may give an answer in point from the case of Pharaoh. He resisted and he perished. He was often warned and rebuked, but he still hardened his neck, and continued stubborn under repeated judgments, till at length he was destroyed without remedy. Thus the God of Israel was more magnified, and the people of Israel were more honoured, in the view of the surrounding nations, when they were brought from Egypt with a high hand and with a stretched-out arm, and when Pharaoh and his armies were overthrown in the Red Sea, than the nature of the case would have admitted, if Pharaoh had made no opposition to their departure. Yet the obstinacy of Pharaoh was properly his own. It is true, we are assured that God hardened

his heart; but we are not thereby warranted to suppose that God is the author of the sin, which he hates and forbids. It is written again, that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man (James i. 13), and the scripture is to be interpreted consistently with itself. It would be absurd to ascribe darkness or ice to the agency of the sun, though both inevitably follow, if the light and heat of the sun be withdrawn to a certain degree. A degree of heat is necessary to keep water in that state of fluidity which we commonly suppose essential to its nature; but it is rather essential to the nature of water to harden into ice, if it be deprived of the heat which is necessary to preserve it in a fluid state; and the hardest metals will melt and flow like water, if heat be proportionably increased. Thus it is with the heart of fallen man. In whatever degree it is soft and impressive, capable of feeling and tenderness, we must attribute it to the secret influence of the Father and Fountain of light; and if he is pleased to withdraw his influence, nothing more is needful to its complete induration.

2. The kings of the earth are continually disturbing the world with their schemes of ambition. They expect to carry every thing before them, and have seldom any higher end in view than the gratification of their own passions. But in all they do they are but servants of this great King and Lord, and fulfil his purposes, as the instruments he employs to inflict prescribed punishment upon transgressors against him, or to open a way for the spread of his gospel. Thus, under the Old-Testament dispensation (for he was King from everlasting), the successes of Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, and the exaltation of Cyrus, were entirely owing to their being employed by him, as an axe or a saw in the hand of the workman, Isa. x. 15. And they acted under a limited commission, beyond which they could not go. They had one thing in view, He had another; and when his design was accomplished we hear of them no more. Time would not suffice, were I to adduce the many striking instances of the like kind which offer to observation from the perusal of modern history. It is well known, with respect to that great event, the Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century, and especially in our own land, that many of the principal persons who contributed to its establishment hated it in their hearts. But their ambition, appetites, and worldly policy engaged them in such measures, as the King of kings over-ruled to produce consequences which they neither intended nor could foresee, and which, when they did apprehend, they would have prevented if they could, but it was too late. Future writers, I doubt not, will make the like reflection upon the American war, in the origin and progress of which there was such an evident disproportion between the apparent causes and the effects produced by them, between the first designs and expectations of the principal actors on both sides and the final event, that I think they who do not perceive a superintending Providence conducting the whole affair, as a preparation to still greater and

more important revolutions, must be quite at a loss to account for what has already happened, upon any principles of human policy or foresight.

3. That he is King of kings, and Governor among the nations, is farther evident from the preservation of his people, for the world is against them, and they have no protector but him. The wrath of man, like the waves of the sea, has bounds prescribed to it which it cannot pass. So far as he is pleased to overrule it to his own praise, he will permit it to operate, but the remainder, that is not subservient to the accomplishment of his purpose, he will restrain Psal. lxxvi. 10. But he works so secretly, though powerfully, by the agency of second causes, that only they who are enlightened by his word and Spirit can perceive his interference. He permitted Ahithophel to give that counsel to Absalom, which though wicked, was, in the political sense of the word, prudent; that is, it was the probable method of putting David into the power of his rebellious son. David had prayed that the Lord would turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, 2 Sam. xv. 31. Had the Lord instantly deprived Ahithophel of his reason, this prayer would have been more visibly, but not more effectually answered, than by the counter-advice of Hushai, which though rash and extravagant, being suited to gratify the vanity and folly of Absalom (2 Sam. xvii. 14), rendered the other abortive. Sometimes the enemies of his church divide and wrangle among themselves, and then one party, to mortify and oppose the other, will protect those whom otherwise they wish to destroy. Thus Paul escaped from the malice of the Jewish council, by the sudden disagreement which arose between the Pharisees and Sadducees, (Acts xxiii. 7), though they came together equally determined to destroy him. At other times, kings and statesmen act so inconsistently with their professed aims, and take steps so directly calculated to prevent what they wish to obtain, or to bring upon themselves what they mean to avoid, that we can only say they are infatuated. A very small compliance seemed likely to have secured the affection of the twelve tribes to Rehoboam. We are ready to wonder that he could not be prevailed on to speak mildly to the people for one day, with a view of engaging them to be his servants for ever. But when we read that the cause was from the Lord (1 Kings xii. 15), and that, in this way, his purpose of separating the kingdoms of Israel and Judah was effected, the wonder ceases. Very observable, likewise, was the coincidence of circumstances which preserved the Jews in Persia from the destructive designs of their adversary Haman. If the king had slept that night, as usual, or if his attendants had read to him in any book but the Chronicle of the empire, or in any part of that Chronicle but the very passage in which the service of Mordecai had been recorded, humanly speaking, Haman would have carried his point, Esther vi. 1. In this manner, by a concurrence of circumstances, each of them, if considered singly, apparently trivial, and all of them contingent with respect to any human foresight or prevention, the Lord

often pours contempt upon the wise and the mighty, and defeats their deepest laid and best-concerted schemes, in the moment when they promise themselves success.

Many salutary and comfortable inferences may be drawn from the consideration of this subject. Some of them I may perhaps have formerly mentioned, but they will well bear a repetition. We have need to be reminded of what we already know.

1. It should inspire us with confidence. If the Lord of hosts, the Lord of lords, be for us, what weapon or counsel can prosper against us? However dark and threatening appearances may be, we need not tremble for the ark of God. The concerns of his church are in safe hands. The cause so dear to us, is still more dear to him. He has power to support it when it is opposed, and grace to revive it when it is drooping. It has often been brought low, but never has been, never shall be forsaken. When he will work, none can hinder. Nor need you fear for yourselves, if you have committed yourselves and your all to him. The very hairs of your head are numbered, Matth. x. 30. There is a hedge of protection around you (Job i. 10), which none can break through without his permission; nor will he permit you to be touched, except when he designs to make a temporary and seeming evil conducive to your real and permanent advantage.

2. It should affect us with an admiring and thankful sense of his condescension. "Lord, what is man, that thou shouldest be so mindful of him?" He humbles himself to behold the things that are in heaven, Psal. cxiii. 6. But he stoops still lower. He affords his attention and favour to sinful men. His eye is always upon his people, his ear open to their prayers. Not a sigh or falling tear escapes his notice. He pities them as a father pities his children; he proportions their trials to their strength, or their strength to their trials, and so adjusts his dispensations to their state, that they never suffer unnecessarily, nor in vain.

3. How great is the dignity and privilege of true believers! Is the man congratulated or envied whom the king delighteth to honour? Believers are more frequently despised than envied in this world. But they may congratulate one another. The King of kings is their friend. They have honours and pleasures which the world knows nothing of. Their titles are high, they are the sons and the daughters of the Lord Almighty, 2 Cor. v. 18. Their possessions are great, for all things are theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21. They are assured of what is best for them in this life, and of life eternal hereafter. They are now nearly related to the King of kings, and shall ere long be acknowledged and owned by him before assembled worlds. They who now account the proud happy, will be astonished and confounded when they shall see the righteous, whom they once undervalued, shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of God.



4. We may lastly infer the extreme folly and danger of those who persist in their rebellion and opposition against this King of kings, and Lord of lords. Though he exercises much patience and long-suffering towards them for a season, the hour is approaching when his wrath will burn like fire. It is written, and must be fulfilled, “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God,” Psal. ix. 17. Oh the solemnities of that great day, when the frame of nature shall be dissolved, when the Judge shall appear, the books be opened, and all mankind shall be summoned to his tribunal! Will not you tremble and bow before him, ye careless ones, while he is seated upon a throne of grace, and while the door of grace stands open? Once more I call, I warn, I charge you, to repent and believe the gospel. If today you will hear his voice it is not yet too late. But who can answer for tomorrow? Perhaps this night your soul may be required of you, Luke xii. 20. Are you prepared for the summons? If not, seize the present opportunity. Attend to the one thing needful. Seek his face, that your soul may live. If not, remember that you are warned; your blood will be upon your own head. We have delivered our message, and if you finally reject it you must answer for yourselves to him whose message it is.