

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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1830.

# 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.

## SERMON XLVII.

### THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.

*Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.* ROMANS, viii. 34.

THE redemption of the soul is precious. Fools make a mock of sin, Prov. xvi. 9. But they will not think lightly of it who duly consider the majesty, authority, and goodness of him against whom it is committed: and who are taught by what God actually has done, what sin rendered necessary to be done, before a sinner could have a well-grounded hope of forgiveness. For wisdom does nothing in vain. The death of the Son of God would have been in vain (Gal. ii. 21), if the great design in favour of sinful men could have been effected by inferior means. But as he, in the office of Mediator, was the hope of mankind from the beginning; so the great work he has accomplished, and the characters he sustains, when made known to the conscience, are, in fact, sufficient to relieve in every case, to answer every charge, and to satisfy the believer in Jesus that there is now no condemnation to fear. There are many (as we have observed) ready to accuse, but it is in vain; the charge may be true, but it is overruled. Who shall dare to condemn, if things be as the apostle states them in this passage? Whoever would impeach the hope of a true believer, must prove (if he can), that Christ did not die; or that he did not rise from the dead; or that he was not admitted into the presence of God on our behalf; or that he is unmindful of his promise, to make intercession for all who come unto God by him. For if these points are indubitable and sure, it is impossible that the soul which has trusted in Jesus, and put its cause into his hands, can miscarry.

The death and resurrection of our Lord, his appearance in our nature, clothed with glory, seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the High-Priest of our profession, can scarcely be considered too often. These old truths are always new to those who love him, and are the food by which their souls live. Yet I shall not at present repeat what I have offered upon them from former passages, but shall chiefly confine myself to the subject of his intercession, which has not, until now, expressly occurred to our meditations.

The word the apostle uses here, and in Heb. vii. 25,—“Seeing he ever liveth to make intercession,” occurs likewise in Acts xxv. 24, where Festus speaks of the process managed by the Jew's against Paul; and also in Rom. xi. 2, of Elijah's making intercession to God against Israel. From these passages compared together, we may observe that the word is to be taken in a

large sense. He pleads our cause, he manages our concerns, he answers our enemies. Who then shall condemn those for whom the Lord Jesus thus employs his power and his love? He is our advocate (1 John ii. 1), he takes upon him our whole concern. He pleads as a Priest, and manages as a King, for those who come unto God by him.

I. He pleads as a Priest.—His office of intercession has a plain reference to his great instituted type, the high priest under the Levitical dispensation; who, according to the appointment of God, entered within the vail, to present the blood of the sacrifice before the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. We have a clear and infallible explanation of the design of this institution. “Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people. The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,” Heb. ix. 6–12. Thus Jesus is passed into the heavens, entered into the holy of holies with his own blood. His presence there, in our nature, with the marks of his sufferings for us, as the Lamb that has been slain, is an unceasing virtual intercession on our behalf. I meddle not with curious questions on this subject, as to the manner in which his intercession is carried on. It is sufficient to know that he is there and there for us, as our representative. This consideration is of continual use, to animate and encourage sinners in their approach to God. There are three cases particularly, in which the heart that knows its own bitterness must sink, were it not for the relieving thought, that there is an advocate with the Father, a High Priest, who, by his intercession, is able to save to the uttermost.

1. When the mind is burdened with guilt. Great is the distress of an awakened conscience. The sinner now is sensible of wants which God alone can supply, and of miseries from which he cannot be extricated but by an almighty arm. But when he thinks of the majesty and holiness of God, he is troubled and adopts the language of the prophet, “Wo is me, I am undone!” Isa. vi. 5. He dares not draw near to God, nor does he dare to keep any longer at a distance from him. But when such a one is enabled to look to Jesus as the intercessor, what light and comfort does he receive? For the gospel

speaks inviting language. Let not the weary and heavy-laden sinner fear to approach. Your peace is already made in the court above, and your advocate is waiting to introduce you. Lift up your heart to him, and think you hear him in effect saying, "Father, there is another sinner who has heard of my name, and desires to trust in me. Father, I will, that he also may be delivered from going down into the pit, and interested in the ransom which I have provided."

2. When we are deeply conscious of our defects in duty. If we compare our best performances with the demands of the law, the majesty of God, and the unspeakable obligations we are under; if we consider our innumerable sins of omission, and that the little we can do is polluted and defiled by the mixture of evil thoughts, and the working of selfish principles, aims, and motives, which though we disapprove, we are unable to suppress, we have great reason to confess, "To us belong shame and confusion of face," Dan. ix. 7. But we are relieved by the thought, that Jesus, the High Priest, bears the iniquity of our holy things, perfumes our prayers with the incense of his mediation, and washes our tears in his own blood. This inspires a confidence, that though we are unworthy of the least of his mercies, we may humbly hope for a share in the greatest blessings he bestows, because we are heard and accepted, not on the account of our own prayers and services, but in the beloved Son of God, who maketh intercession for us. Thus the wisdom and love of God have provided a wonderful expedient, which, so far as it is rightly understood, and cordially embraced, while it lays the sinner low as the dust in point of humiliation and self-abasement, fills him at the same time with a hope full of glory, which, with respect to its foundation, cannot be shaken; and with respect to its object, can be satisfied with nothing less than all the fulness of God. There are favoured seasons in which the believer, having a lively impression of the authority and love of the Intercessor can address the great Jehovah as his Father, with no less confidence than if he was holy and spotless as the angels before the throne, at the very moment that he has abundant cause to say, "Behold I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" Job xl. 4; xlii. 6.

3. This powerful and prevalent intercession abundantly compensates for the poverty and narrowness of our prayers. Experience confirms what the scripture declares of our insufficiency to order our own cause before the Lord, to specify our various wants, and to fill our mouths with such arguments, as may engage the attention, and enliven the affections, of our hearts. "We know not how to pray as we ought," Rom. viii. 26. And though the Holy Spirit teaches believers to form petitions, which, in the main, are agreeable to the will of God, yet we often mistake and ask amiss; we often forget what we ought to ask, and we are too often cold, negligent, weary, distracted, and formal in prayer. How prone are we to enter by prayer into the Lord's presence, as the thoughtless horse rushes into the battle! (Jer. viii. 6.) to speak to

God as if we were only speaking into the air, and to have our thoughts dissipated and wandering to the ends of the earth, while his holy name is upon our polluted lips! It is well for us, that God is both able and gracious to do more than we can ask or think; but that he actually does so, for such unworthy creatures, is owing to our Intercessor. He knows all our wants, and pleads and provides accordingly. He is not negligent, though we too frequently are. He prayed for Peter's safety (Luke xxii. 31, 32), before Peter himself was aware of his danger. Have we not sometimes been as it were surprised and shamed by the Lord's goodness, when he has condescended to bestow special and needful mercies upon us, before we thought of asking for them? These are affecting proofs of our Intercessor's attention and care, and that he is always mindful of us. But,

II. Jesus the High Priest is upon a throne.—He is a King, King of saints, and King of nations. He is not only a righteous advocate, but he possesses all authority and power. And it belongs to his office as King, effectually to manage for those in whose behalf he intercedes. I have already observed that the original word includes this sense.

1. He is the source and fountain of their supplies. All their springs are in him. The fulness of wisdom, grace, and consolation, out of which they are invited to receive, resides in him. And therefore he says, "If ye ask any thing in my name, I will do it," John xiv. 14. Not merely, I will present your petitions, but I will fulfil them myself. For all things are committed into his hands, and it is he with whom we have to do, Heb. iv. 13. He therefore enjoins us, if we believe or trust in God, to believe also in him, John xiv. 1. His invitations, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink" (John vii. 37);—"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely" (Rev. xxii. 17); equally express his sovereignty and his munificence. On him the eyes of all who know him wait from age to age, and are not disappointed. He opens his hand, and satisfies them with good, Psal. cxlv. 17. Nor is the store of his bounty diminished by all that he has distributed, for it is unsearchable and inexhaustible, like the light of the sun, which gladdens the eyes of millions at once, has done so from the beginning, and will continue to do so to the end of time.

2. He appoints and adjusts their various dispensations, with an unerring suitableness to their several states, capacities, and circumstances. If a skilful gardener had the command of the weather, he would not treat all his plants, nor the same plant at all times, exactly alike. Continual rain, or continual sunshine, would be equally unfavourable to their growth and fruitfulness. In his kingdom of providence, he so proportions the rain and the sunshine to each other, that the corn is usually brought forward from the seed to the blade, the ear, and the full ripe ear. And I believe it would be always so, were it not for the prevalence of sin, which sometimes makes the heavens over our

head brass, the earth under our feet iron (Deut. xxviii. 23), and turns a fruitful land into barrenness. So, in his kingdom of grace, he trains his people up by various exercises. He delights in their prosperity, and does not willingly grieve them. But afflictions in their present state are necessary, and his blessing makes them salutary, But this is their great privilege, that their comforts and their crosses are equally from his hand, are equally tokens of his love, and alike directed to work together for their good. He appoints the bounds of their habitations, numbers the hairs of their heads, and is their guide and guard, their sun and shield, even unto death. Here they meet with many changes, but none that are unnoticed by him, none that can separate them from his love, and they all concur in leading them on to a state of unchangeable and endless joy, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

3. He is the Captain of their salvation, Heb. ii. 10. They are his soldiers, and fight under his eye; yet the battle is not theirs but his. Israel of old were to muster their forces, to range themselves for the fight, to use every precaution and endeavour, as though success depended entirely upon themselves. Yet they obtained not the victory by their own sword, but it was the Lord who fought for them, and trod down their enemies before them; and they had little more to do than to pursue the vanquished, and to divide the spoil. And thus it is in the warfare which true Christians maintain, not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities and powers (Eph. vi. 12), against the spirit of the world, and against Satan and his legions. They fight in his cause, but he upholds them and conquers for them. Their enemies are too many and too mighty for them to grapple with in their own strength; but he rebukes them, and pleads the cause of his people. His gracious interposition in their favour is beautifully set forth, together with its effects, in the vision which the prophet saw, when he was sent to encourage the rulers and people of the Jews against the difficulties they met with when rebuilding the temple. He saw Joshua the high priest, who, in that character, represented the collective body of the people, standing before the Lord, clothed in filthy garments, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him, Zech. iii. 1–4. Such is our attire as sinners, all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and such are the attempts of our enemy, to deter us from approaching to him who alone can relieve us, or to distress us when we appear before him. But when Joshua could not speak for himself, the Lord spake for him, claimed him for his own, as a brand plucked out of the fire, silenced his adversary, clothed him with change of raiment, and set a fair mitre upon his head. Thus David acknowledged the Lord's goodness in providing him a table in the midst of his enemies (Psal. xxiii. 5), who saw with envy his privileges, but were not able to prevent his enjoyment of them. Many a time the Lord thus comforts and feeds his people, while waiting on him in secret, or attending his public ordinances; and were our eyes opened, like the eyes of Elisha's servant, to behold what is very

near, though unseen, we should feel the force of the psalmist's observation. The powers of darkness surround us, their malice against us is heightened by the favour of our good Shepherd toward us; they rage, but in vain; for though they could presently deprive us of peace, and fill us with anguish, if we were left exposed to their assaults, they are under a restraint, and can do nothing without his permission. When he is pleased to give quietness, who then can make trouble? Job xxxiv. 29. He preserves and provides for his sheep in the midst of wolves.

We may close this part of our subject with two or three reflections, which, though as to the substance of them I may have offered you before, are always reasonable and suitable, when we are speaking of the power and grace of Messiah.

1. How precious is this Saviour! How justly is he entitled to the chief place in the hearts of those who know him! In the work of salvation, from the first step to the last, he is all in all. If he had not died and risen again, we must have died for ever. If he had not ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us, we must have been thrust down into the lowest hell. If he did not plead for us, we would not, we durst not offer a word in our own behalf. If he was not on our part, engaged to keep us night and day, our enemies would soon be too hard for us. May we therefore give him the glory due to his name, and cleave to him, and trust in him alone.

2. How safe are the people of whom he undertakes the care! While his eye is upon them, his ear open to their prayer, and his arm of power stretched out for their protection; while he remembers that word of promise upon which he himself has caused them to hope; while he retains that faithfulness which encouraged them to commit their souls to him, it is impossible that any weapon or stratagem formed against them can prevail. There are many, it is true, who will rise up against them; but God is for them, and with them, a very present help in trouble, Ps. xlvi. 1. They are full of wants and fears, and in themselves liable to many charges; but since Jesus is their head, their security, their intercessor, no needful good shall be withheld from them, no charge admitted against them, none shall condemn them, for it is God himself who justifies the believer in Jesus.

3. If these things be so, how much are they to be pitied, who hear of them without being affected or influenced by them? Will you always be content with hearing? "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" Ps. xxxiv. 8. Should you at last be separated from those with whom you now join in public worship; should you see them admitted into the kingdom of God, and you yourselves be thrust out; your present advantages would then prove an aggravation of your guilt and misery. As yet, there is room. Strive to enter while the gate of mercy remains open. Think of the solemnities of that great day. Many will then be condemned, though they who believe in the Son of God will be



justified. Consider who will condemn them, God himself, Ps. 1. 6. From his inquisition there can be no retreat; from his sentence there can be no appeal. And consider what the condemnation will be: a final exclusion from his favour; a never-ceasing sense of his awful displeasure; a state of eternal horror and despair, without mitigation, without the smallest ray of hope! Can you deliberately give up all claim to happiness, and determine to rush upon the thick bosses of God's buckler (Job xv. 26), to defy his power, and to dare his threatenings, rather than forego the transitory and delusive pleasures of sin? And can you do this with the gospel sounding in your ears? May the Lord prevent it! However, observe you are once more warned, once more invited. If now at last, after so many delays, so much perverseness on your part, you will honestly and earnestly seek him, he will be found of you. But if you persist in your obstinacy, your condemnation will be inevitable and sure.