
PREFACE.

BEFORE I enter upon the sacred and arduous undertaking, proposed in the title page, (to which, I would fain persuade myself, that the Lord in his providence hath been pleased to call me; and for wisdom to execute which, I do most humbly pray :) it will be highly proper that I should apprise the Reader, with the design which I have in view, and the object I aim to accomplish: not only, that he may the more readily enter into a clear apprehension of the design of the work itself; but also, that no more may be expected from it, than what is really intended.

There are many things in the perusal of the Holy Scriptures, in which one man may be assisting to another, and which, it should seem to have been the gracious intention of the Divine Wisdom, in this particular, to have left to the ministry of successive generations to perform. It is on these points, chiefly, the present Commentary aims to be useful: leaving the high and important truths of God's most Holy Word, to the teachings of God's most Holy Spirit; according to that sweet

promise: ‘ All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.’ Isaiah liv. 13.

I have been long led very earnestly to wish that the truly serious would accustom themselves to read their Bibles in the pure, simple, plain, and artless language, in which, for the most part, the Holy Word is faithfully translated, and handed down to us; depending more upon His blessed teachings, whose province it is, to take of the things of Jesus, and shew them unto his people; than leaning upon the opinion of any man, ‘ whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?’

In all the observations which I have ventured, at any time, to make on the Sacred Word, this direction to the blessed Spirit’s teaching, as a favorite study of mine, is what I have carefully endeavoured always to keep in view. And if I have, in any one instance, departed from it, I pray the Lord to forgive me, and to preserve the Reader from adopting my error. Indeed the several remarks which I have offered, the Reader of discernment will immediately be led to observe, are rather proposed as remarks of enquiry, than as standards of decision; rather in the unimposing manner, of inviting the Reader to form his own opinion upon the passage, than of insisting upon my own. To whatever part of a chapter, I have thought it right to call, more especially, the Reader’s attention, I have done it with this view,

that as it struck me to be more than ordinarily interesting, I would wish him to pause over it, and pray over it, for proof of the same. And if I have ventured, in any particular instance, to add an observation of my own upon it, it hath been done for the express purpose, that the Reader might be prompted to seek the teachings of the Holy Ghost, that he might know the doctrine, whether it be of God.

It hath been an object of the most serious consideration with my mind, while going over the Holy Volume for the purpose of forming this Commentary; (and once for all, I beg the Reader to admit the like impression also) that the Bible is the great Charter of Grace, and containeth the words of eternal life. Never would I lose sight, if possible, of this discriminating character, by which the Sacred Records are for ever distinguished from all other writings; that in them is revealed to the fallen race of men, the covenant-mercies of God, for our redemption, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Here (I would say to myself, as often as I open this blessed Book of God) here is contained all that is truly valuable, or interesting for me to know. Here I find every thing that, strictly and properly speaking, I am concerned to be instructed in, as it relates to my present peace or future happiness. In those sweet pages I learn to discover that plan of salvation which hath called forth the covenant-word, and promises, and oath of Jehovah, for the

rescue of our fallen nature from sin and eternal death; and for opening a new and living way unto everlasting life. Here I read of the everlasting love of the Father, and am taught concerning his gracious designs, and manifestations, in the economy of redemption. Here, also, I am brought acquainted with a thousand interesting particulars, which relate to the Person, characters, offices, and relations, of the Lord Jesus Christ. What he is in himself, and what he was, and is, and ever will be to his people; is here sweetly and tenderly related, so as to call forth towards him, the love, and gratitude, and adoration, of every redeemed soul, to all eternity. And here it is, no less, that I learn, what so highly concerns me to know, respecting the Person and operations of the Holy Ghost; from whose teachings, and influences, alone, it must be, that I can acquire any knowledge of the Father's love, or the Redeemer's grace, or have my heart inclined to the love of either. It is He alone who can direct the heart 'into the love of God, and patient waiting for Jesus Christ.' Precious, precious Book of God, (I would say) be thou my study all the day; and may mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I may meditate in thy Word!

Reader! may the Almighty God, under whose divine inspiration the Holy Word was written; and without whose teachings, the knowledge of it can never be acquired; may He graciously open

both your eyes and mine, that we may see wonderful things of his law. May it be your portion, and mine, to understand more and more those unerring oracles of Divine Truth. And as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Sum and Substance of both Testaments of Scripture, may we be enabled, by the teachings of his Holy Spirit, to search for Him, as for hidden treasure, in the field of his Sacred Word; and never give over, until we have found this Pearl of great price. Of Him, (as he saith himself) Moses did write. To Him, gave all the Prophets witness. He is the end of the law, for righteousness, to every one that believeth. And therefore, may the Lord Jesus draw near, while we are talking of Him by the way, and make our hearts burn within us, while, by his Holy Spirit, he begins from Moses, and all the Prophets, and in the Psalms, to expound unto us in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself. My Brother! will you not join with me in prayer, before you enter upon the perusal of what follows?—Dearest Lord! be with him that writes these lines, and with him that reads them. Shed abroad, on both, the sweetest of thine influences at every renewed opportunity of searching thy Blessed Word. Give me to know the everlasting love, and covenant-mercies of God my Father, made over personally to my own soul, in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. And while thy Blessed Spirit is helping mine infirmities, by his grace, and taking of the things

of Jesus to shew unto me, add this mercy to the vast treasure, and give me to see my own interest clearly therein. May I never rest satisfied, in barely reading what the Lord Jesus hath done and suffered, in obtaining salvation for his people; may I know, by heart-felt application from the Blessed Spirit, that what He did and suffered, was for me. When I behold his Person, give me, Lord, the right of appropriation, to call him mine. When I read his miracles, and works of mercy, may I be enabled to say, this is my Saviour; and when I view him, in all the excellencies of his character, and relations, and offices; like the Church of old, may I have the same well-grounded assurance, to say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am his."

Reader! The Lord give you grace thus to pray, and thus to read. And may the Lord grant that Christ may dwell in your heart by faith; that being rooted and grounded in Him, you may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us: unto Him be glory in the Church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."