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T H E

A D V A N T A G E S

O F

S U N D A Y S C H O O L S;

A

D I S C O U R S E,

Preached for the Benefit of that useful and excellent CHARITY,

At St. MARY'S Church, in MANCHESTER,

On SUNDAY the 2d of OCTOBER, 1785;

*To which is prefixed,*

S O M E A C C O U N T O F T H E

O R I G I N , D E S I G N , A N D P R O G R E S S O F T H I S I N S T I T U T I O N .

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Published by Order of the CHAIRMAN of the COMMITTEE,

*By the Rev. JOHN BENNETT,*

SECRETARY TO THE SOCIETY.

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*I think the rectifying the EDUCATION OF YOUTH, to be a Thing so important, that, till it please God to awaken Men to a greater Sense than they yet have of the necessity and usefulness of that, I shall scarce expect any such Reformation, as I wish, either of Men's Principles or Manners.* BOYLE. Appendix to his Life, by BIRCH.

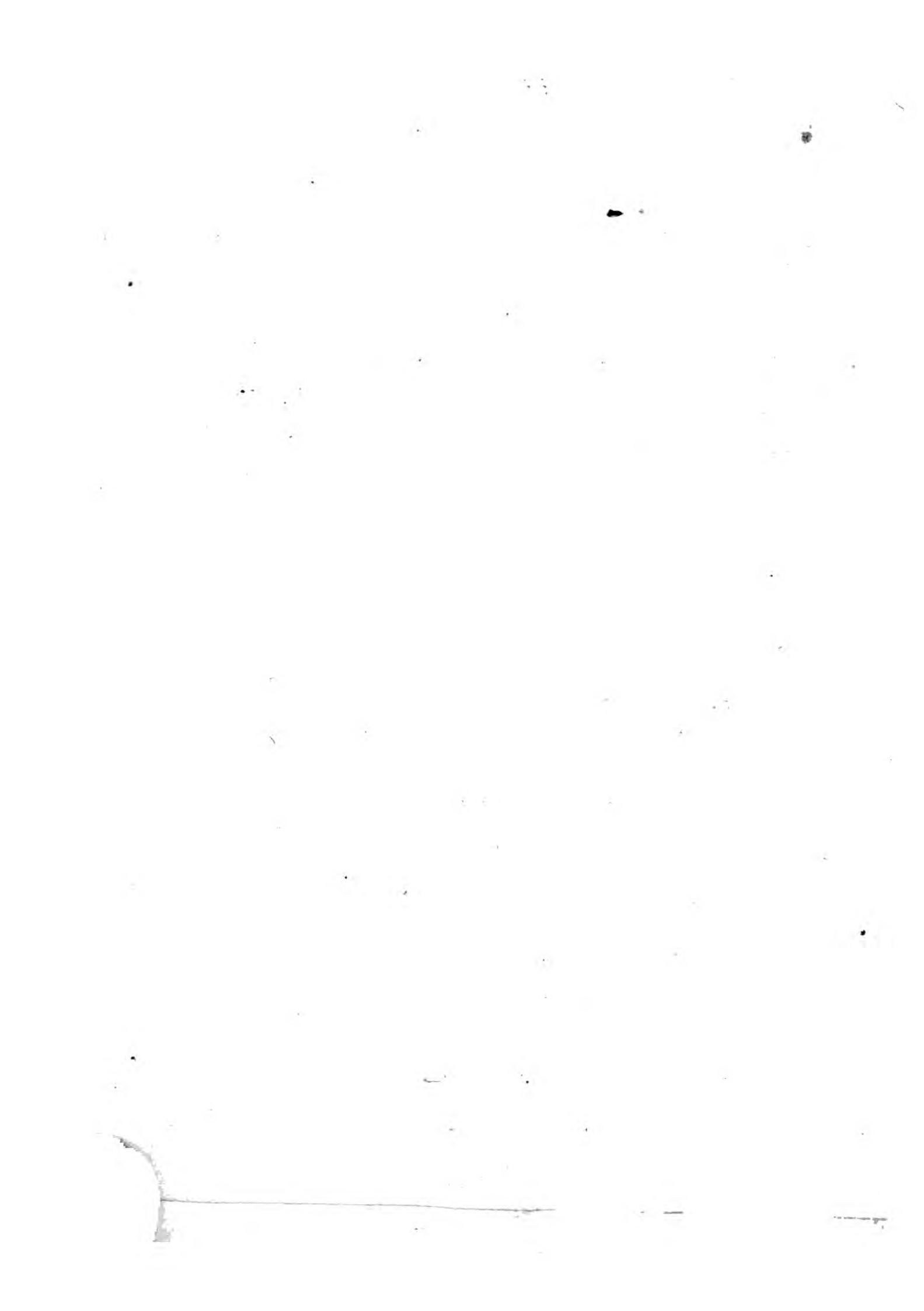
*Feed my Lambs. John 21. 15.*

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# GENERAL REMARKS

ON THE

## NATURE AND PROGRESS OF THE INSTITUTION.

**T**HE Author sends this Discourse into the world without any hopes of emolument or fame, and solely with a desire of diffusing a Charity, which bears, upon its very face, the Glory of God and the best and dearest interests of man.

The ignorance, disorders, and wickedness of our poor are too notorious to have escaped general observation, and too shocking for a person of any tolerable sensibility to behold without a sympathizing tear. But a Christian, from the very nature of his principles, is expected to be much more sensibly affected with this deplorable condition of his brethren; and, whilst he feels the same compassion for them, which his Saviour once expressed for a perishing Jerusalem, he will never have acted up to the sublimity of his character, till he has taken every method to impress upon their minds, “with line upon line, and precept upon precept, the things that belong both to their temporal and eternal peace.” Whilst, therefore, we are engaged in a very arduous and expensive undertaking, to propagate Christianity amongst Savages and Heathens, it seems but reasonable that a primary attention should be paid to the instruction and conversion of our Heathens at home. For we can never expect our efforts amongst foreign and uncivilized nations, to be crowned with success, till they perceive that our religion has accomplished amongst *ourselves*, what it is so laudably attempting abroad; till they see that all orders and degrees of men amongst us, are a living example of the faith they profess;—and, that the Christian rills, with which we wish to water their respective countries, flow from a clear and unpolluted source.

Amongst the most promising schemes for propagating our most holy faith, and diffusing sentiments of piety and virtue amongst the common people,

people, the Institution of Sunday Schools claims a very principal and distinguished place. If it was either necessary or uninvidious, great and very celebrated names might be adduced in numbers, to sanction their strong probability of conducing both to individual and *national* reformation. But, where a case is self-evident, authorities are unnecessary; and indeed the rapidity with which they are spreading through all parts of the kingdom, is the strongest and most irrefragable testimony of the general opinion entertained on this subject.

All agree in admitting the usefulness of the design; and all, as justly argue, that every thing depends upon the prudence and activity with which it is conducted.

It is, indeed, the fate of many human projects to be *specious* in theory, but *impracticable*, or less *happy* in the execution. If this reasoning could be ever applicable to the present undertaking, under any possible form, it might be supposed to operate with its full force in Manchester—where the large, unwieldy size of the town renders one single uniformity of plan, seemingly, impracticable—where remoteness of distance, in the several schools, prevents quickness of information—where little abuses, for a time, may elude particular observation—where the scheme comprizes people of all religious descriptions—where party prejudices have not been supposed to be weakest—and where the vast machine might be stopped by a failure in any of the very complicated, and necessary movements.

This disadvantage, however, has not existed in such a degree, as to communicate any very serious alarm. Twelve months have, now, elapsed since the commencement of this Institution; and, during all this time, experience has more than realized all the warmth of expectation. We have, now, in these Seminaries 2291 Boys and Girls. The diligence of the Teachers has been active beyond a parallel; and their discipline, in general, has done equal honour to their heart and understanding. They have not laboured from merely mercenary motives, but from a principle of conscience; and their singular zeal, thus strengthened by affection, has been attended with as singular and extraordinary success. The Visitors have been, for the *most part*, faithful in the execution of their trust; and the Clergy have generously completed the plan by public Catechising and Instruction. The effects have been such, as might fairly be expected. The improvement of these Children, in learning, has been wonderful; in religious knowledge still more surprising; and, when they sing to the praise and glory of their Maker, they appear a tribe of Embryo-Angels training  
for

for the skies. Every Christian heart glows with triumph; and Heaven seems, for moments, transplanted upon earth.

Still it must be confessed, that so very difficult and comprehensive a business has had its little, temporary obstructions. Still it must be owned, that to carry it on with any vigour and success, will always be a work of so much difficulty and labour, as nothing but truly christian motives will induce us to sustain. Still it wants, and will thankfully acknowledge, the co-operating aids and influence of many, who hitherto have been contented with a bare and speculative acknowledgment of its importance; who, as yet, have watched only with a cold, unaffixing curiosity the exertions of their brethren, and have sacrificed an activity, which, in the christian annals, might have immortalized their memory, to the tranquillity of indolence, and the ingloriousness of retirement.

At present, it may be supposed that novelty has given life to efforts, and vigour to exertion. And it requires no great penetration to foresee, that, without a continuance of those fostering aids, which have brought it into being, and nursed it through its infancy, it never can attain the confirmed bloom of youth, much less arrive to its manhood and perfection. And, if any of the officers, in their different departments, should relax from their *present* industry and zeal; or, if any particular denomination of Christians should display more of a spirit for dominion, or the propagation of their own particular tenets, than the merely furnishing these children's minds with some salutary principles of piety and knowledge, offences will come; separations will ensue; activity will be discouraged; Charity will wax cold; and the system, at large, will immediately sink into ruin or disorder.

But let us, with a truly Christian spirit, avoid, as much as possible, any of these consequences. Fired with the love of the Redeemer, and of souls; conscious of the noble work in which we are engaged, "of training up " sons and daughters to God," let us strive to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove—Let no one say, "I am of Paul, or " I of Apollos," and forget, in little transient distinctions, the general design. Firm in maintaining our own principles inviolate, let us extend the necessary indulgence to the sentiments of others; in particular as the usefulness, the vigour and durability of this excellent institution, so very much depend on the prudence, the vigilance and activity of the Visitors; as these are the very life and soul of the system; the veins through which the blood daily circulating to the heart, and, from that heart sent back to the re-

most members, let me be permitted earnestly to press it on the minds of all Gentlemen, not to think of accepting such an office, unless they have leisure, as well as inclination to discharge it with the becoming fidelity and zeal. In short, as the cause is Heaven's, and our object is divine, let us resolve to work together with one another in love, for the good of the whole; and considering the little difficulties, oppositions, fatigues, or even censures we may meet with, in the conscientious discharge of our respective offices, as the unavoidable tax on every publick undertaking; the never-failing portion of those, who attempt to serve, even in the most disinterested manner, the strange, heterogeneous mixture of mankind, "let us none of us be weary in well doing, for in due season, we shall certainly reap if we faint not."

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MATTHEW 25. 40.

INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE.  
MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.

**W**HATEVER may be the little transitory difference of our allotments in this life, it is certain we are all parts of one comprehensive whole; we are all links of one grand and universal chain; we are all brethren of one family; children of one God; we are all equally subject to sorrow, infirmity, sickness and death; our fortunes and our lives are at the mercy of the elements; fire, storms, hurricanes, famine may quickly rank the rich amongst the poorest of his brethren, and render him an humble suppliant for that favour and assistance, which once he had it in his power to bestow.

With wants and interests thus interwoven; with a relationship thus inscribed on our nature; with the *probability* of sorrow, and the *certainty* of death, we should find it the *general interest* to cultivate a spirit of benevolence and charity, if nature had infused into us none of the softer feelings, and Revelation had prescribed no standard for our actions.

Thus the Heathens, who were guided only by the light of reason, considered the exercise of a \* diffusive philanthropy, as the highest of all moral duties. One of their philosophers uttered this divine sentence—that we can, by nothing, so nearly approach to the gods, as by doing good; † and an

\* Cic. de Offic. *Justitiæ* pars est beneficentia, quam eandem vel benignitatem vel liberalitatem appellare licet. Ea nihil est naturæ hominum accommodatius, et in hominum genere, nulla melior est natura, quam eorum, qui se natos ad homines juvandos, tutandos, conservandos arbitrantur.

† Suet. in Vit. Tit. The case was, the more enlightened of these people saw that the diffusion of happiness through every mode and possibility of life was the one, unvarying end and design of creation. They saw what the scriptures have since, so clearly, taught, that the Almighty “is kind to the evil and to the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;” that mercy was



an Emperor, more distinguished by his virtues than his crown, declared, on the sober recollection of an evening, that he had lost a day, because it had been marked with no act of generosity, and had communicated no blessings to mankind.

But the Christian religion has carried this *natural* duty of benevolence to its highest perfection. It has placed it upon an infinitely more interesting basis, and given it superior expectations of reward. It is no longer left to the precarious impulse of complexional tenderness; to motives of a selfish, interested policy; to speculative refinement, or to a chain of philosophical arguments and deductions. It is principally made the touchstone of our belonging to Christ, and the condition of our final acceptance with him, at the great and closing day. He, who came to enlighten our darkness, \* "to bear our sorrows," and to die upon the cross, as an atonement for our sins, has, with an astonishing pathos and condescension, *appropriated* the sufferings and necessities of the poor; has represented *himself*, as hungering in *their* hunger, as *naked* in *their* nakedness, and *grieved* in *their* grief; and has commanded all his followers, who are blessed with the opportunity, to feed, to clothe, to protect and comfort them, as members of his body; to feel for *their* distresses, in proportion as they would express a sensibility for *his*, or expect his favour in that solemn moment, when every temporal distinction shall be dropped, and riches can afford no pleasure, in the recollection, excepting as they have been spent in acts of charity and mercy to our neighbours.

Do you grieve, then, to see so many almost naked, whilst others are "clothed in purple and fine linen?"—Do you wonder that such numbers succeed in all their wishes—whilst others with equal or superior merit are doomed to a perpetual obscurity or disappointment? Suspend your astonishment, and dry your tears. Fancy, no longer, that the father of mankind has any weaknesses of partiality; any favourites amongst his children;  
or

was his universal aim, and that, therefore, the exercise of it in themselves, was the nearest copy they could possibly take of this amiable, supreme, infallible original. They perceived their mutual relationship and connexion; as men of sensibility, they felt the godlike pleasure of relieving; and as men of philosophical penetration and enquiry, they knew that society could not, otherwise, be supported in harmony and order. For, if attraction be that principle, which keeps the natural world from sinking into confusion, which unites sun, planets, water, air and all the other elements so closely to each other by a reciprocal impulse, charity is the attraction of the moral world, which alones preserves the vast, collective system from ruin and destruction.

\* Isai. 53. 4.

of \* “ that his tender mercies are not equally over all his works.” This world is a disordered mass—It was intended to be so for our discipline and trial. Compared with our *full* existence, it is but a moment. And these distinctions are necessary for the very preservation and order of society. In the mean time, let these poor be happy. Let them exercise the virtues of thankfulness, and resignation. They are the *Wards* of Providence, and intended to have a portion from the fulness of their brethren. But let the Rich tremble. They have many, many talents to account for, and the day is at hand!

“ I was an hungered and ye gave *me* meat; I was thirsty, in *my poor members*, and ye gave *me* drink; *naked*, and ye clothed *me*; sick, and in prison, and ye came unto *me*. And verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the *least* of these my brethren, ye have done it unto *me*.”

Much, therefore, and long, as mankind have disputed, and persecuted one another about sects and opinions; and much as has been the Christian blood, which has deluged the world, yet the † *end* of the Commandment, the very essence, crown and finishing of all Religion, is “ *Charity*, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” Love to our Redeemer, evidenced in works of mercy to his creatures, is the *soul* of this charity; is more, in the eye of God and of impartial reason, than ‡ “ whole burnt offerings and sacrifices,” than all external forms and ceremonies whatsoever: the first is the *end*; the latter, however multiplied, or however understood, can only be the *means*; whilst the sensations we derive from the exercise of this virtue, resemble the sacred source from which it springs, and are, in the literal strictness, rational—divine!

But this Charity has its various degrees of perfection. One species of it riseth above another, as || “ one star differeth from another star in glory.”

That we should relieve the *temporal* wants of our brethren will always, no doubt, be a considerable specimen of Charity, whilst hunger, thirst, and nakedness are so uncomfortable to nature, and so grievous to be born. But, still, as this life, with all its wants and miseries, shall soon have an end; as the poor shall quickly find a respite from all their sufferings in the grave, that is certainly the *sublimest* species of compassion, which extends to their souls, and consults their well being through all that succession of

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innumerable

\* Ps. 145. 9. † 1 Tim. 1. 5. ‡ Mark 12. 33. || † 1 Cor. 15. 41.

innumerable ages, for which they are born. It was this, which called the Saviour upon earth; he, professedly, \* “ came to seek and to save those that “ were lost,” by enlightening their ignorance, and dying for their sins. It is to promote this his heavenly kingdom in the hearts of men, that the Almighty interferes amongst his creatures by his Spirit, by his scriptures, by his messengers, by his mercies, by his judgments, and by all the wonderful train of his providential dispensations. It is for this, that † “ angels are “ commissioned to succour us in this vale of temptation. It was for this, that prophets spoke. It was for this, that martyrs bled. It was for this, that St. Paul sustained his tribulations. It is this, which has engaged the most earnest zeal of the most pious men in all ages and nations—and no wonder, when we consider the sublimity of the intention; ‡ since the real knowledge of God, founded in the soul, promotes happiness, as widely as it circulates; would, if universal, render the present world a Paradise of peace, harmony and joy; and would train up Inhabitants for the kingdom of Heaven, in glory exceeding the stars of the firmament, and, in number, “ the sand that is upon the sea shore.”

To engage, therefore, in any method of saving the *souls* of men, is carrying human nature to its highest perfection. It is emulating the blessed spirits, that are about the throne. It is animating with an angelick soul, these bodies of clay. It is imitating the pattern set us by Jehovah. It is making rays of the Divinity sparkle about man. It is becoming delegates for Heaven; and delegates for Heaven “ shall not lose their reward.”

Every other mode of charity, in short, compared with this, drops its diminished head. It is earth, compared with heaven—It is time, contrasted with eternity—It is a feeble, glimmering taper, opposed to the sun.

When the broken fragments you may have, occasionally, distributed to the hunger of poor people have entirely perished, this immortal food, which you have given to their minds, still shall remain. When the garments you have bestowed to clothe their naked limbs, have waxed old, these principles shall flourish in an unfading bloom—And, when sicknesses, distresses, sorrows, enter their humble dwellings, will administer that fortitude,

\* Luke 19. 10. † Collect for St. Michael and all Angels and Heb. 1. 14.

‡ What an opportunity has every private Christian of any tolerable fortune, to promote the eternal welfare of his poorer brethren, by distributing amongst them some of those little tracts, which are published by the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge in foreign parts. A very little sum of money would purchase a great number of these valuable books; and the reading of them might make impressions upon plain and honest minds, that would never be erased.

tude, which can support its agonies, and smile away its misfortunes—Nay, “when their heart \* and their strength fails,” will point them to God, as “the strength of their heart, and their portion for ever.” † “Whofo, “properly, eateth of this bread, shall live for ever;” and this ‡ “water “shall be in him, a well of water springing up unto eternal life.”

But, if this salvation of the soul be the first object of a Christian’s zeal, it has occurred to every reflecting mind, that it is most substantially and effectually secured by a virtuous education, because all instruction is best received, before the mind has taken any improper bias; before it is polluted by the contagion of example—petrified with vice—seduced by the scoffs and ridicule of companions—or blunted by the world.

|| Hence Charity Schools for the reception of poor children are very general through a kingdom, that is softened by humanity, and enlightened by the gospel; the number and the great variety of these institutions afford to the humane mind a very pleasing contemplation; their good effects, no doubt, have been considerably felt upon the mass of society; if they have fallen gently and *imperceptibly*, like the dew, like the dew, they have promoted moral vegetation. Many of their founders, I trust, are with God; and the memory of those, who continue to support them, deserves to be immortal.

But though charity has done so much, *more* remains to § be done. Though  
it

\* Ps. 73. 26. † John 6. 58. ‡ John 4. 14.

|| There is one regulation in Manchester, which deserves the attention of every other part of the kingdom, where it may not happen to be, already, adopted. It is not unusual, in many places, for the Church-warden or Minister to distribute the offertory money amongst the poor and necessitous people, that may casually attend the service. It was, once, so here. But the benefaction to any individual, in such a case, could be but small; the relief of consequence could be but very transient and inadequate; *clamorous* might take place of *modest* poverty, and artificial sorrow is often louder than real; and it was, sometimes, observed that the sacred pittance was only abused to improper purposes of drunkenness and disorder. Hence a resolution was formed of devoting it to the purpose of educating poor Boys and Girls; one of these Charity Schools is annexed to every church; and, in this decent and orderly town, where the sacraments are monthly, and where it is not uncommon to see 150 communicants at the altar, the fund is, generally, found sufficient for this excellent purpose. The children are, occasionally, catechized by their minister, and grow up into useful members of society, citizens and christians.

§ What forcible reflections in favour of charity schools occur in Spekt. vol. 4, No. 294. Would you do an handsome thing without return, do it for an infant, that is not sensible of the obligation. Would you do it for public good? do it for one who would be an honest artificer. Would you do it for the sake of Heaven? give it to one, who shall be instructed in the worship of him, for whose sake you give it.

it has educated many, though it has carried \* thousands of these lambs in its bosom, still there is much poverty, unrelieved—much ignorance, uninstructed—still there is vice and disorder in the world. Still that happy period seems to be distant, which humanity pants for, and which every real christian should long to accelerate, when † “all the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdoms of God, and of his Christ;” when he shall reign in the hearts and affections of his people; when his name shall be acknowledged from pole to pole, and “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas.”

These seminaries, numerous as they are, are not able to accommodate one third of the children, who are candidates for admission; numberless parents, doubtless, there must be, who, totally insensible to the welfare of their offspring, never think of suing for this inestimable privilege; who, like the † ostrich, leave their young ones in the wilderness, to shift for themselves; amongst the children, that *are* received into these christian Nurseries, many are remanded back by thoughtless, or necessitous parents, so soon as they can earn a morsel of bread; and thousands from this principle, in order to procure a little food for their bodies, have no leisure to lay in any for their minds—and, whether it arises from *unavoidable* poverty, or from the idleness, drunkenness, or extravagance of parents—the fact is—that, through many parts of the kingdom (but, particularly, the commercial and populous ones) groupes of little *beathens* are seen wandering about without any sense or knowledge of their duty—with parents, Orphans—friendless, with Friends about them—loathsome with dirt—still more so with vice—rending the air with blasphemies and curses—profaning the sabbath with every disorder—and touching christian sensibility with unutterable pangs. Like Moses, when exposed to perish in the river, these children are surrounded with the much more dangerous waves of ignorance and vice—§ “And behold the Babes weep”—And longs not every Christian to wipe these tears? Does not his “soul burn within him” for these wandering, distressed young ones of his Redeemer’s flock? ¶ Should he even “give sleep to his eyes, or slumber to his eyelids,” before he has hit upon some happy method of rescuing them from this probable, impending destruction? But why do I declaim? If, in the dark abodes of poverty they have sighed, the sigh has not been in vain. Humanity, like Pharaoh’s daughter, has heard their cries. Charity has taken them into

\* Isai. 40. 11.  
2. 6.

† Rev. 11. 15.  
¶ Psalm 132. 4.

‡ Isai. 11. 9.

§ Job. 39.

§ Exod.

into her sovereign protection. She has consigned them over to Religion, to be nursed for her own.

But (to speak without a figure) to assist Children under all these dilemmas, SUNDAY SCHOOLS have been instituted; and (permit me to say with triumph) seem likely to become universal through the nation. The number of applications, which have been received by the Society at Manchester, for a specimen of our plan, from many parts of this kingdom, and some quarters of Wales, prove, that this \* "grain of mustard seed," is growing into a tree, whose branches may spread around for "the healing of the nations." To dwell on their advantages, would be attempting to demonstrate a self-evident proposition, and affronting the common penetration of mankind. The necessity of education, and of *early* education, is universally acknowledged; and this furnishes the opportunity to those lowest of our people, who, otherwise, might live and die in the grossest ignorance of their God and their Redeemer; who, for want of it, are the bane and nuisance of society, and disgrace the human form, by most *inhuman* and abominable actions. Some of the advantages, however, which are *peculiar* to this Charity, perhaps the nature of the present solemnity calls upon me to sketch out; but I shall do it with that brevity, which supposes them obvious to every persons reflexion.

One grand inlet to all crimes whatever, is confessed to be, a profanation of the sabbath. Amongst the rich, it leads to pleasure, licentiousness, and unbelief; amongst the poorer, to a lethargy and stupefaction of mind, which nothing, but Eternity is able to remove. The vilest criminals, when carried to the fatal tree, amidst the groans of parents, the agonies of friends, and the pity of the world, have owned this to have been the primary cause of all their misfortunes; and have conjured spectators with a last, pathetic energy, to avoid their example, as they wished to escape their melancholy end. This Institution (I need not tell you) obviates this evil. The children are required to come neat and clean to this house of God, which, otherwise, perhaps they never would have entered, excepting to have witnessed the last interment of a friend, or, when carried themselves thoughtless—speechless—motionless—to a grave, for which they had made, alas! little preparation. It is something to prevent the dismal consequences, which always result from a neglect of the sabbath, and from irreverence to the sanctuary of God; and may we not reasonably suppose, that, in some happy moment, good impressions may be made, and that || "the word of God, " which is sharper than any two-edged sword, may pierce them to the heart?"

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If

\* Matt. 13. 31.      || Heb. 4. 12.

If I was called upon to mention *another* evil, which lurks at the bottom of all our ignorance and disorders, I would fix upon the neglect of that public Catechising, \* which is so strictly enjoined by the rubrick of our Church, and so warmly recommended to the Clergy of this diocese, from the highest authority.

The neglect of this duty has been lamented by all truly serious divines, almost from the reformation to the present moment. And it remains to be lamented by every serious Christian, who has the honour of God, the interests of Religion, and the enlargement of his Saviour's kingdom, really, at heart. Hence people, particularly, of the established church, take up an hereditary  
faith,

\* The Catechumens formed one order of the Members of the primitive church. Euf. Dem. Evan. Lib. 7. c. a. p. 323.

A number of people, with the title of Catechists, were set apart for their immediate instruction. These were not, always, clergymen, but, sometimes, chosen from the more pious of the laity; though the office was, occasionally, performed by ministers, and, not unfrequently, by the bishops themselves. Bingham's Church Antiq.

In pursuance of this ancient custom, the 59th canon of our church requires, that every Incumbent shall catechise the young and ignorant of his parish every Sunday. The pious and indefatigable Archbishop Secker had the highest opinion of this mode of instruction, and very warmly pressed it on the observance of his clergy. See his 2d Charge to the Clergy in the Diocese of Oxford. The Bishop of Chester strongly enforces it both by his charges, and his example.

On the necessity and benefits of catechising. See Bishop Stillingfleet's Orig. Sac. vol. 3. p. 628. Bishop Bull's Works, vol. 4. p. 863. Tillot. Fol. vol. 1. p. 534. Burnet's Pastoral Care, p. 166. A discourse lately published by the ingenious and learned Bishop of Carlisle.

If it either became my age or station to hazard a remark, which indeed, has resulted from dear bought experience, I would venture to say, that the practice of catechising would have as good an effect both on the hearts and understandings of ministers themselves, as on those of their people. It is the misfortune of the younger clergy, from their mode of education, to enter on their sacred office, much better stored with classical, philosophical, with polite and elegant literature, than with that sacred knowledge, which is immediately, professional, or with a full understanding of the scriptures. Nothing would, more effectually, remedy this inconvenience, nothing would more speedily furnish them with a copious system of divinity, and a fund of matter for their public instructions, than this methodical study of the principles of Christianity, on which they would be necessarily put by the catechising of their youth. At present, the younger part of them put, so soon as they enter into the church, on the very difficult and arduous task of preparing discourses for the public ear, to write upon subjects which they cannot have digested, and for which they have no adequate stock of materials deposited in their minds, either sacrifice their health in giving us, after all, but very crude and imperfect compositions; or, appointed, some of them, to cures, which require a greater frequency of these productions, than any abilities or experience are equal to, fall into an indolent, servile habit of copying the sentiments and discourses of others, which, as they are not their own, they will never deliver with a becoming warmth, energy or animation.

faith, like an hereditary name, without any previous examination or conviction. Hence “ a gross darkness covers the earth, which, on any other principle, would be absolutely unaccountable in this full, meridian state of gospel light and revelation; hence the ignorance is too much extended to all ranks in society; and hence many, who from their age might be expected to be teachers, need themselves previously to be taught, \* “ what are the first “ principles of the doctrine of Christ.”

If all children could be prevailed upon, if all the poor could be expected to attend divine service, it is impossible that our adopted mode of preaching should be familiar enough to reach their very unopened capacities; if it *was* so plain, † to the Jews it would be a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;” the scholars, critics, and philosophers of the age, would turn away with indignation or contempt, from a repast, that had no sweetness to the taste, and appeared to have no *elegance* in the preparation. But, without this Institution, the children of the poorest, who most need instruction, would not come at all! by it they are obliged; and, if their parents be careful to send them with the exactness, which the rules require—if the Visitors of these schools be conscientious stewards over their little household—if the Teachers perform their duty, by instilling religious principles, whilst they train them to some little rudiments of learning—above all, if the Clergy *crowd* this work by their pious superintendency, and this public Catechising—not only these “ ‡ poor Babes”—but likewise the more adult, the elegant and rich; who will, *occasionally*, attend these lectures, may profit by this “ sincere milk of the word;” and what can be the consequence, but general utility, and general edification?

An harvest of saints may be reaped to God, who would have become an harvest of sinners, ripe only for destruction. The child, who would, otherwise, have affronted his Maker by blasphemies or curses, may, now, approach him with prayers, or praise him with hallelujahs! He, who would have stolen, perhaps, *bas* stolen, may, now, steal no more. The man, who would have robbed us of our money or our lives, may, now, become an honest servant, and a valuable domestick. They, whom their crimes would have plunged into hell, may rise to the highest glories in heaven.

Thus says Religion. But, if there was even no life after this, the civilizing of the manners of the lower kind of people; their being accustomed to cleanliness and decency, and having principles of sobriety, honesty, and industry instilled into their minds, is an object not undeserving the  
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\* Heb. 6. 1.      † 1 Corinth. 1. 23.      ‡ 1 Pet. 2. 2.



the attention of any civilized state. Nor would it be beneath the christian ambition of any monarch under heaven, or to be ranked with the least glorious achievements of his reign, to take such a charity as this I am mentioning, into his more especial protection. What but the awful sanctions \* of futurity, can give stability to any system, or permanency to any government on earth? What else can preserve any throne from tottering, or any ruler from perpetual invasions or alarms? Whence must national successes come, but from national merit, and national integrity? Whence must justice, temperance, fortitude, vigour, patriotism, enterprize, love, peace, unity, and concord spring, but from this celestial source of “ † every good and every perfect gift?” What else can be the basis of all those varied, reciprocal duties, which bind the fabrick of society together, in indissoluble

\* Porro religione remota, civitatum firmitas intrinseca semper in incerto foret; ac ad cives in officio continendos, haudquaquam sufficeret metus temporalis poenae, fides superioribus data, ejusque servandae gloria et gratitudo, quod ope summi imperii a miseris status naturalis defendantur. Johnson's Puffen. Lib. 2. c. 4. p. 211. De Relig. Nat.

Pone seram, cohibe, sed quis custodiet ipsos custodes. Juv. Sat. 6. 346.

Pietate adversus Deos sublata, fides etiam et societas humani generis, et excellentissima virtus, justitia tollitur. Cic. de Nat.

Not a monarch or legislator has arisen in the world, who has not found it necessary to call in the aids and sanctions of religion to the enforcement of his laws, and the security of his dominions. Zoroaster, to whose wise precepts ancient Persia owed her grandeur and riches, and whose book of the Zend is one of the finest projects and monuments of antiquity; the sublime and enlightened Confucius, at once, the sage philosopher and legislator of China; Lycurgus, Solon, Numa; need I say, Mahomet, the Popes, &c. have all endeavoured to establish their supremacy over the minds and consciences of men, *considerably*, upon this basis. See Univ. Hist. Artic. Chinese, Persians. Plut. in Vit. Lyc. Liv. Lib. 18. in Num. Reg. Luc. Flor. in Num. Pomp.

Almost the whole tribe of Free-thinkers have confessed, amidst their sneers, that religion (artful contrivance as they have represented it) was necessary to the existence and tranquillity of states. A few of them, indeed, Machiavel, Hobbes, Toland, and Bayle have maintained, for the sake of cavilling, a different hypothesis, and contended, that government might be supported on the principles of Atheism. But this is a mere Utopian theory, that never could be brought to the touch of experience, as there never, yet, was a nation discovered, unless in a state of uncivilized ferocity (and even this is doubtful) where there did not prevail some notion of a God and of a future state. Beside, these men themselves confess, that, without the sanctions of religion, no government can be so permanent and stable; and one of them, in a political treatise, particularly presses it on the rulers of a republic, to keep the foundations of the national religion, close and compact, as the best expedient for having obedient citizens, and subjects.

In id diligenter incumbere debent, quicumque reipublicae, aut regno alicui imperent, ut ejus religionis, quam ipsi colunt et venerantur, fundamenta facta tectaque conservent; qua quidem re cives suos pios devotosque efficient, et aptos ad concordiam colendam. Mach. de Rep. Lib. 1. c. 12.

† James 1. 17.

indissoluble bonds? What fills *public* life with so much confusion, and embitters *private* with continual feuds, quarrels, animosities—with imperious masters, and unfaithful servants—with oppressive rich, and with dishonest poor, but the want of this all-correcting, all-moderating impulse? What loads \*our parishes with intolerable burdens—what fills our streets with beggars, our prisons with criminals, and our paths with murderers, but the absence of the fear of God, and of the duties to which it naturally leads? What can we depend upon, in *any* station, but principle and virtue? and, till we give this principle, particularly to those inferior people, who will always compose the *majority* of a nation, what are laws, what are penalties, and how defective will be the wisdom of our senators, and the vigilance of all our magistrates, united? They may *punish* crimes; but is it not a Christian's duty, if possible, to prevent them? They may *lop off* unprofitable and pernicious branches; but should we not give health and vigour to the root?

If, in short, Charity be the greatest of all christian virtues, this appears to be the greatest of charities; if our Saviour himself went about doing good, this seems to be imitating the Saviour in perfection; if God can look down with approbation on his creatures, it is *now* that he looks; † “if the gates “of hell shall not prevail against his church,” they shall not, likewise, prevail against a scheme, that has nothing in contemplation, but to ‡ add daily to the church, such as shall be saved; if angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, it is now their sacred harps are strung to harmony, it is now they are chaunting a sublimer song. If it be possible to pluck the sting of death—to give comfort to a moment, which certainly is dread and solemn—when the big, but unavailing tear, trembles in the eyes of friends—when what

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\* The amiable, benevolent, and indefatigable Mr. Howard, who has spent so much time and money in examining the state of all the prisons in Europe, has the following remarks: There are few prisoners in Switzerland, because care is taken to give the children a religious education. App. to the State of Prif. p. 88. Coxe's Letters from Switzerland.

He makes the same observation on Scotland, and assigns the following reason: It is partly owing to the shame and disgrace, annexed to imprisonment; partly to the solemn manner in which oaths are administered, and trials and executions conducted; but, chiefly, to the general sobriety of manners produced by the care, which parents and ministers take to instruct the rising generation. How. St. of Prif. Art. Scot.

† Matt. 16. 18.

‡ Acts 2. 47.

we have spent in pomp, elegance or pleasure, has vanished \* for ever—when the remainder must be left to those, who probably, in secret, are wishing for our death; and, if bequeathed to our *nearest* friends or children, without the divine blessing, may only become a fuel to their pride, or be quickly dissipated in riot and disorder—If it be possible to ease such a moment—is not this the method? Will not these Children surround us with their blessings? Will they not endeavour to support us with their prayers? Will they not embalm our relicks with an eternal gratitude? And, in Heaven, will they not tell our Father, and their own, that, to us under him, they owe the glories of eternity, and the brightness of their crown? Nay, will not even their parents stupified and insensible, as now, they are, gradually catching the influence of their virtue, be brought to use this animated language: “ Bless, O my God, these benefactors of my offspring; Crown, O crown them with the choicest of thy favours; Lead, O lead them to the happiest of thy mansions; this my son was dead, but is alive again; he was lost! but is found.” The joys of such a moment, exceed all description! Imagination sinks beneath the sublimity of the idea! *Heavenly* language is necessary to paint *heavenly* sensations!

Need I say more, to press on *christian* people, this real act of *christian* compassion? I will not endeavour to excite your compassion in favour of these Children; because I wish you to act from a nobler principle, than that of mere animal tenderness; and because I know that impressions of this sort are but temporary and evanescent; quickly perishing in the noise of life, the distractions of care, in the emulations of pride, and the spirit of the world. I will say nothing of their pitiable, and unprotected situation—of their having done nothing, *personally*, imprudent to merit such a lot—I will say nothing of their tender age and inexperience, unequal to conflicts, unequal to temptations—I will not mention their cheerless cellars—without conveniencies—without necessaries—without wholesome air—without cleanliness

\* How beautiful, and how strictly true is that Epitaph, which Mr. Addison, somewhere, mentions, as written on the tomb of a charitable man.

What I spent, I lost;  
What I possessed, is left to others;  
What I gave, remains with me.

The Heathens could reason in the same manner: Cum M. Antonius fortunam suam alio translata videret, et sibi nihil relictum, egregie mihi videtur exclamasse, “ Hoc habeo, quod cunque dedi. Sen. de Ben.

Extra fortunam est, quidquid donatur amicis,  
Quas dederis, solas semper habebis opes. Mart. Epig. Lib. 5. 45.

ness—without a Bible. I will not insult your sensibility by observing, that *your* children might have been in the same situation; that, in the vicissitudes of human things, and in the all-wise councils of him, who putteth down one, and setteth up another, they still may be naked—they still may be poor—and that, in such a case, your tears would stream in showers, your hearts would ache, and your tongues beg, with impassioned earnestness, some pittance of relief—I will not, invidiously, remind you, \* “ clothed, as some of you may be, in soft and gorgeous apparel ”—of your near relationship to the poorest of these poor—as creatures of your God—as members of your Saviour—as brethren—and as friends—but, in conformity to the spirit of my text, I will lead your meditations to that awful day, which is to close all human projects and designs; which shall weigh every action in the balance of the sanctuary; when † “ bags of money shall “ have waxed old; ” when every pleasure shall have vanished, and gaiety shall have left no agreeable impressions; ‡ “ when men’s hearts shall be “ failing them for fear, and for wondering at the things which are coming on “ the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. ” With this solemn moment in view, and all its accompaniments, I will conjure you, by that debt of gratitude which you owe to your Redeemer, “ by his agony and “ bloody sweat, by his cross and passion ”—I will conjure you, by those elements, that will then be dissolving—by yon sun and moon, that will be falling from their orbits, and this world, which shall be wholly wrapped into flames—by § “ the Trumpet, which shall sound, and the dead, which shall be “ raised; ” by the hopes and fears, the joys and torments of an approaching world; that you will relieve, protect, and assist these lowest of your brethren, according to the substance, wherewith God has blessed you, and || “ lay up “ in store for yourselves, by such acts of charity, a good foundation against “ the time to come, that ye may inherit everlasting life. ”

For hear the sovereign, and immutable decision of the GREAT, UNERRING, and UNIVERSAL JUDGE, “ Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of “ these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. And the uncharitable shall go “ away into everlasting punishment, but the charitable into life eternal. ”

\* Luke 7. 25.  
|| 1 Tim. 6. 19.

† Luke 12. 33.

‡ Luke 21. 26.

§ 1 Corinth. 15. 52.

T H E E N D.

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