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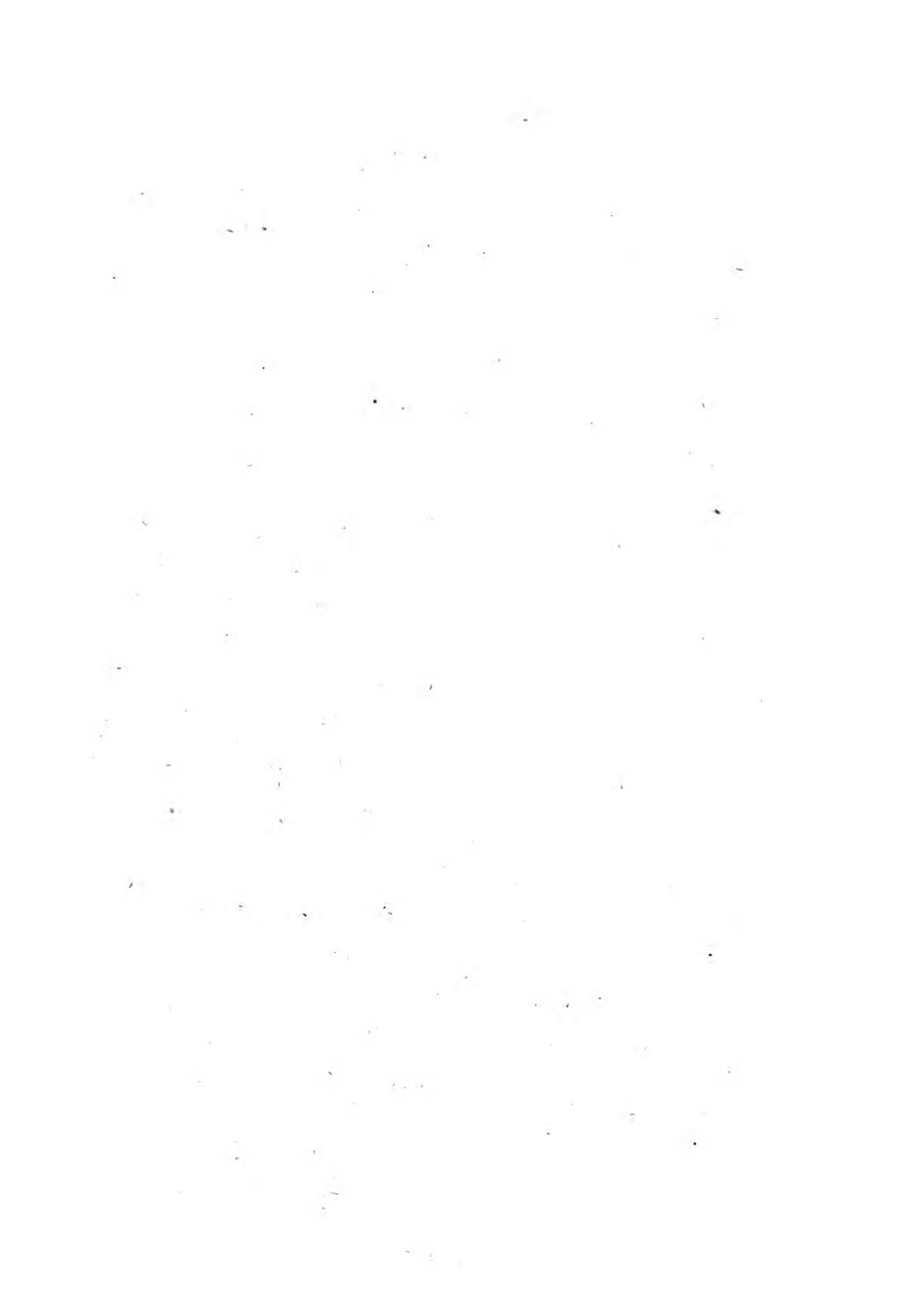
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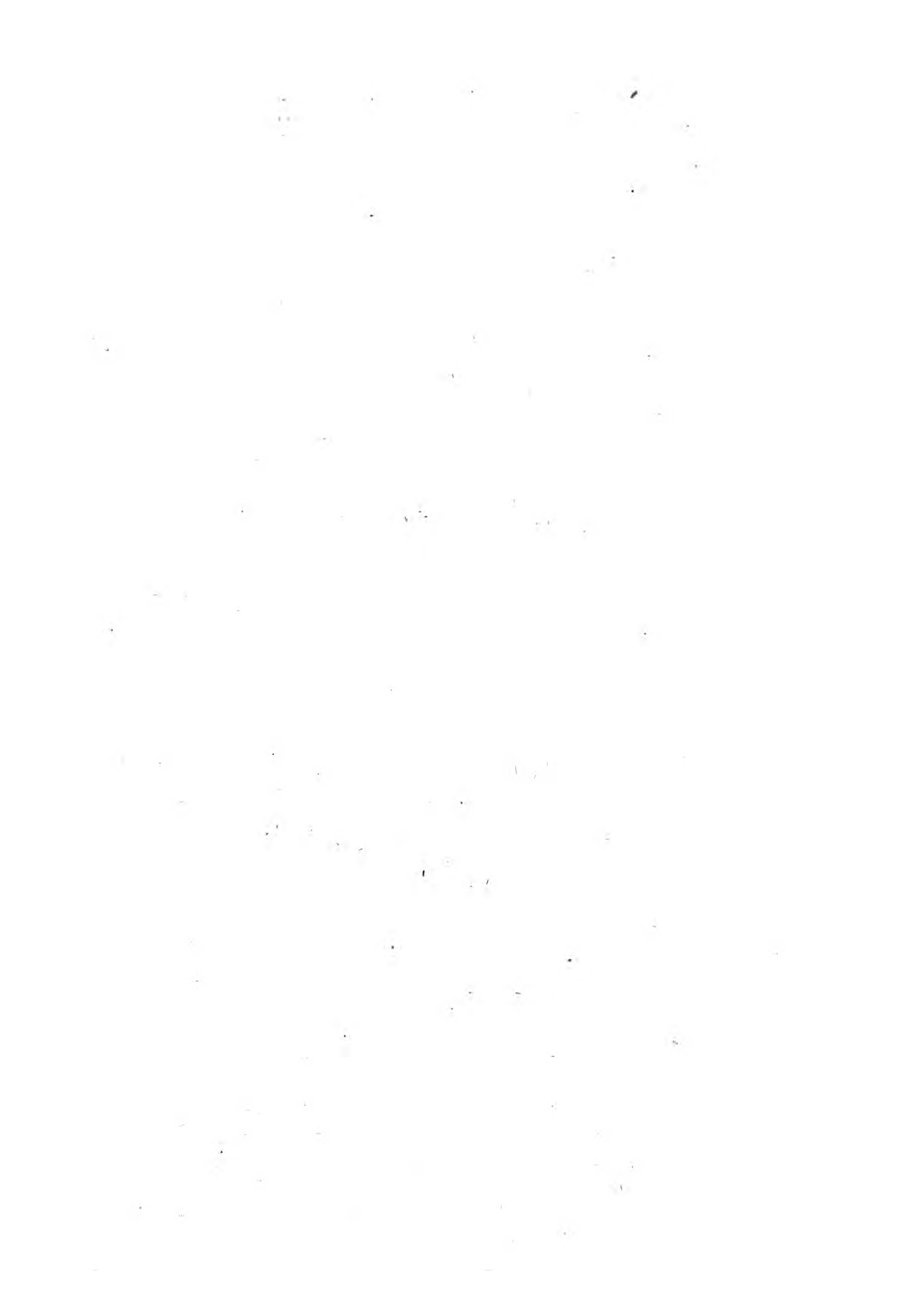
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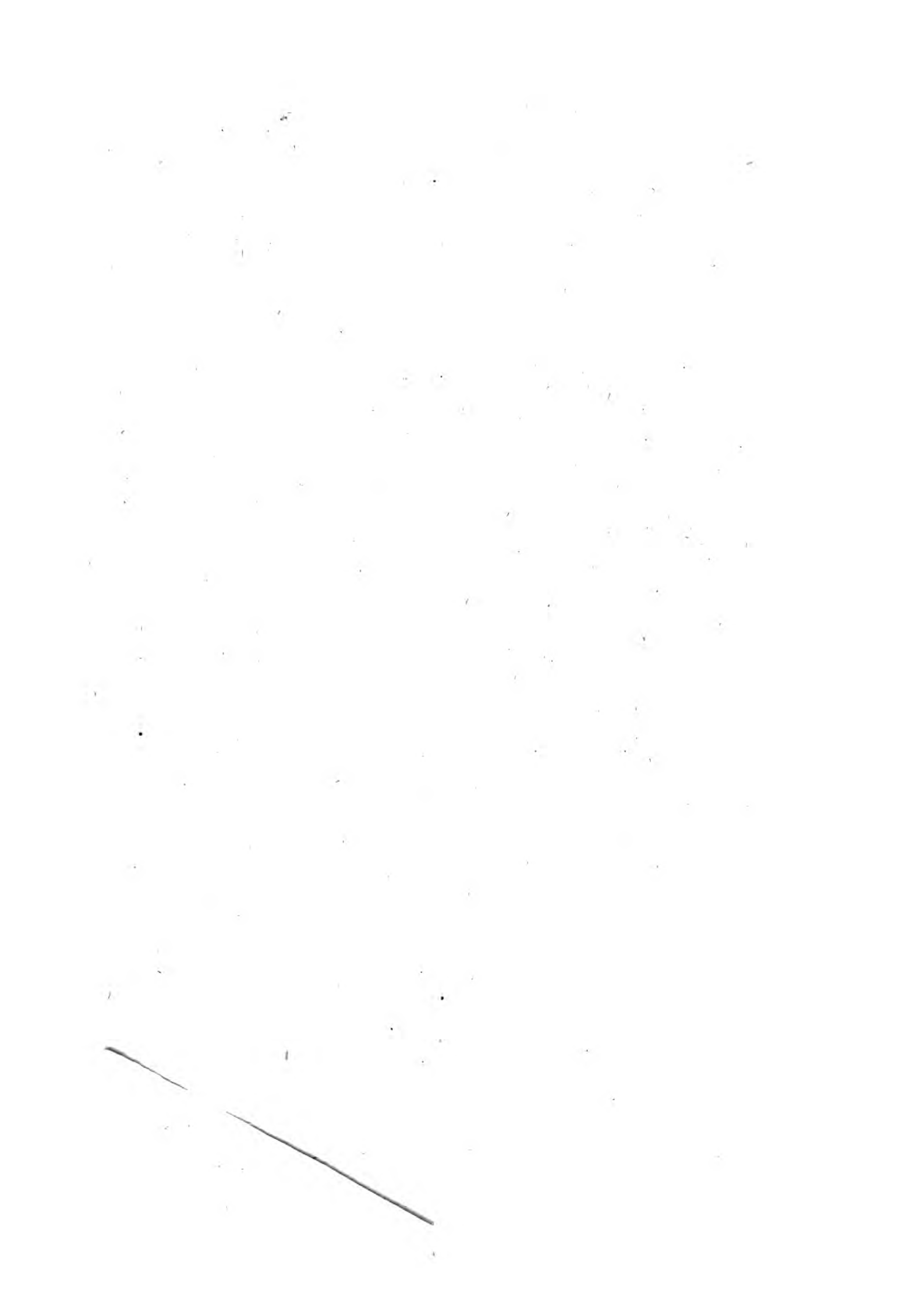


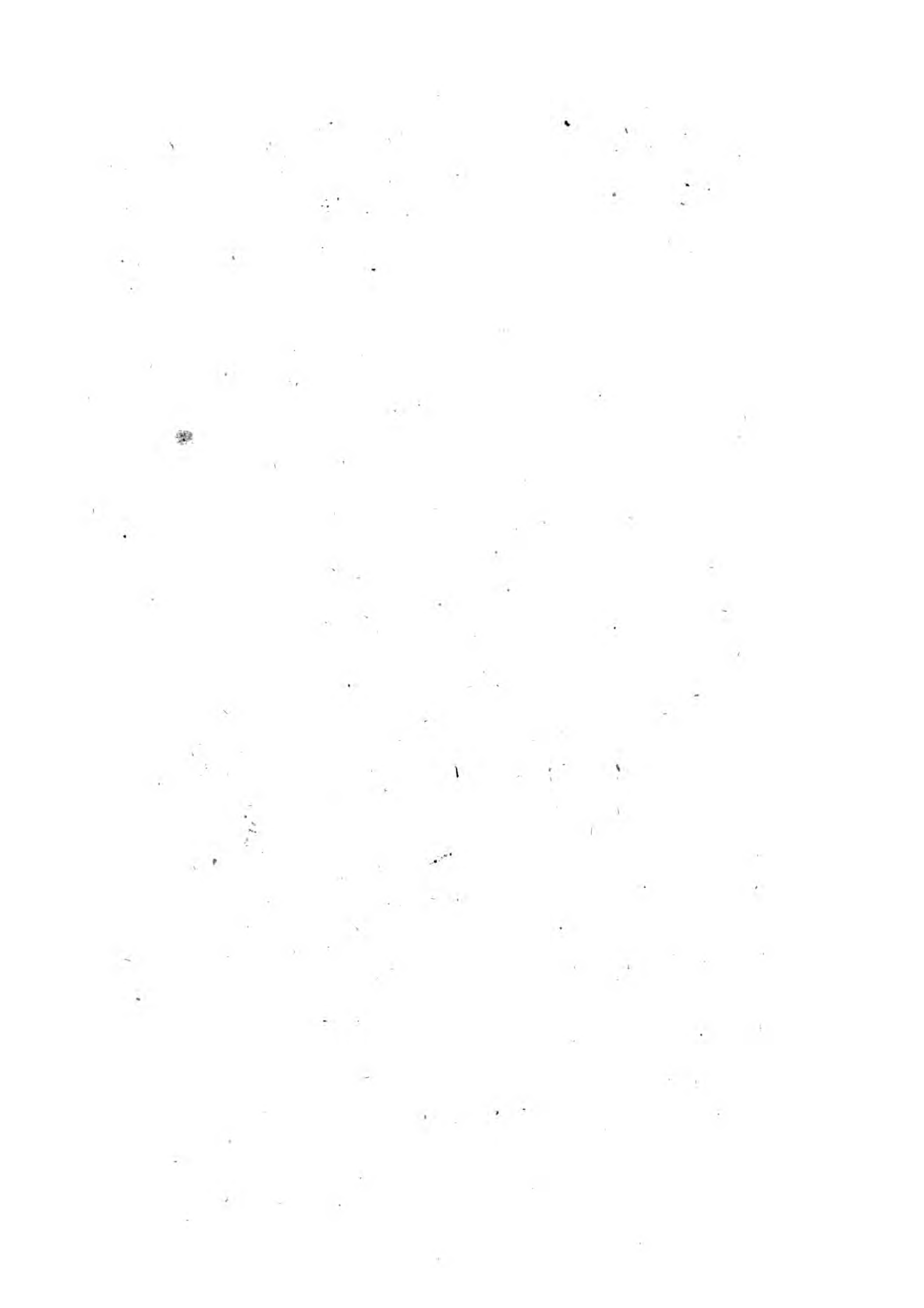




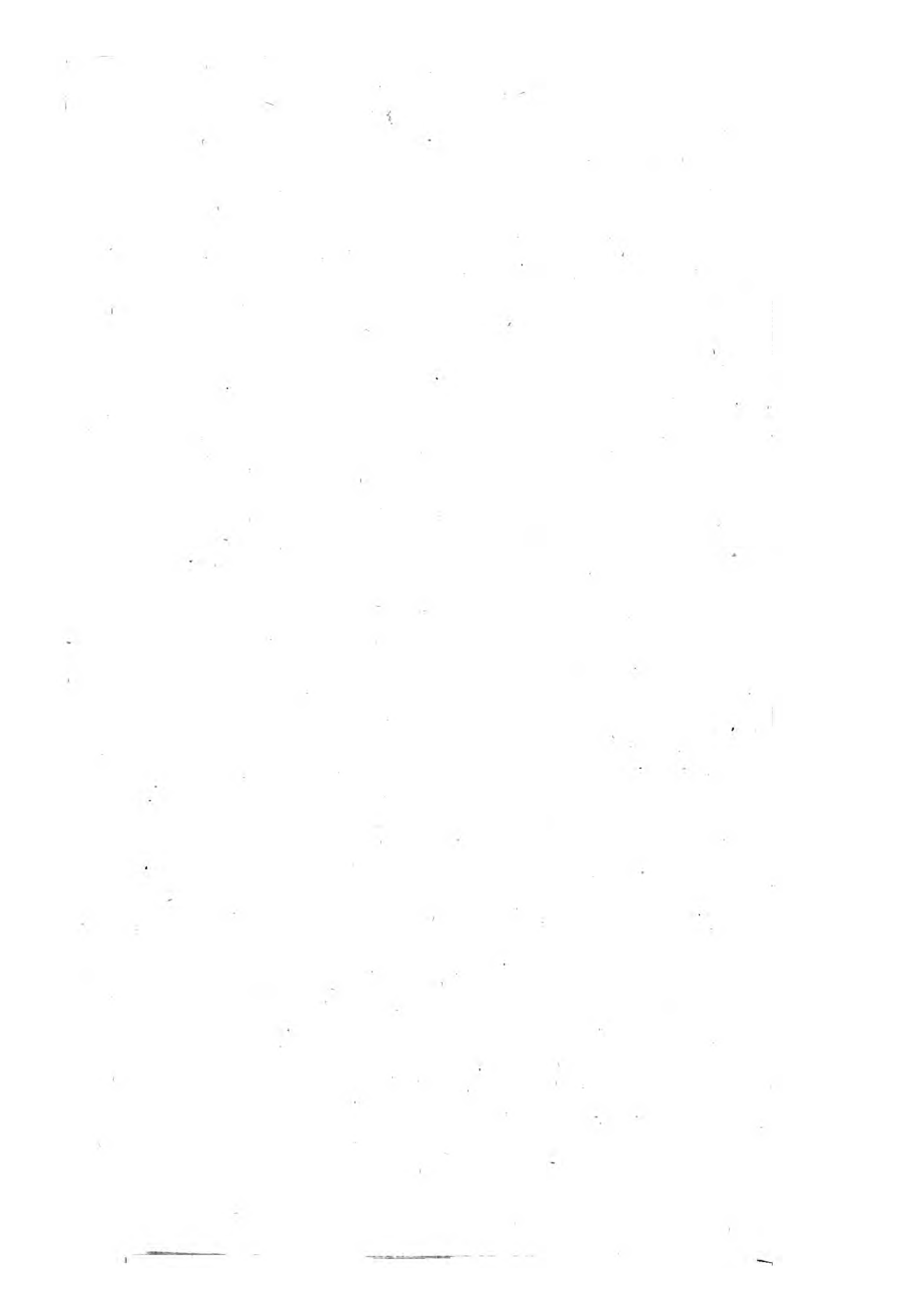












*A. Goddard*  
**SERMONS**

PREACHED TO A  
**COUNTRY CONGREGATION:**

TO WHICH ARE ADDED, A FEW

**Hints for Sermons;**

INTENDED CHIEFLY FOR THE USE OF THE  
YOUNGER CLERGY.

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**By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.**

PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY,  
AND VICAR OF BOLDRE, IN NEW FOREST.

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VOL. III.

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THIRD EDITION.

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1896.





Luke Hansard, printer,  
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TO  
*JOHN HILEY ADDINGTON, Esq.*

JOINT PAYMASTER-GENERAL OF  
HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES.

*Vicar's Hill, Jan. 8, 1803.*

MY DEAR SIR,

It is a pleasure to me, that these little publications afford me an opportunity of giving a testimony of my affection to some of my early friends, whose conduct in life has given me so much satisfaction. With various branches of your family I have had much intimate acquaintance, if I may not call it friendship; among whom I have seen all the duties of private life very pleasingly fulfilled.

It has been the impudent boast of profligacy, that *private vices are public benefits*. I should not think the welfare of my Country ran much risk, under the influence of an opposite maxim.—I dare even venture to conceive, the influence of private virtues will

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still be more beneficial, the more they are exalted into public—Nay, I own, my dear Sir, I am superstitious enough to believe, a religious prince, and a religious ministry, are, even in a political light, among the greatest blessings of a nation. Profligacy, with all its boasted benefits, I should dread to see connected with any department of the Public. It makes a plain man shudder to hear patriots bawling for the public good, while every action of their lives, perhaps, is an addition to the public guilt. Let us rather consider the virtues of a private life, as a pledge to the Public; and think ourselves happy when our friends have given this pledge to their country.

Warmed with these sentiments, I beg you, my dear Sir, to believe me, with the greatest sincerity and esteem,

Your truly affectionate friend and servant,

WILL: GILPIN.



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# SERMON I.

LUKE, ii. 14.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST; AND ON  
EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TO MEN.

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**T**HESE were the notes, which angels sang, at the birth of the Messiah, to a company of shepherds, as they watched their flocks. In the midst of the quiet solemnity of night (that night in which their Saviour was born), a sudden brightness shone around them, and a heavenly form appearing in the midst of it, dispelled their fears. *Be not afraid*, said the angel: *behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*

VOL. III.

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A:

As the angel spake, the light was suddenly filled with a multitude of the heavenly host, who joined their voices in one triumphant song, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will to men.*

These words shall be the subject of the following discourse. But first I should wish you to observe, from the circumstances just related, how little all worldly distinctions appeared in the sight of God. The foolish world admires riches and honours: but you see, God estimates things by other measures. He did not send his heavenly messengers to tell these glad tidings to the princes, and great men of the earth; but he sent them to a humble company of pious shepherds; shewing, that he regards the good disposition, not the station in life—and that, wherever this is found, however humble the condition, there also is found the true favourite of God.

Cloath yourselves therefore with the holy dispositions of these shepherds—their piety, and love for truth, their innocence of manners, and attention to the holy messages of God, and then conceive the same joyful tidings brought to you, which were brought to them. *Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Glory therefore*

*to*

SERMON I.

3

*to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will to man.*

These words let me now explain. The Messiah's coming, you see, is here represented, as producing *the glory of God; and peace and good-will among men*—that is, its first object was to fit us for heaven—its next to make us happy in our passage to it.

The *glory of God* is an expression taken from human things, as all our expressions must be taken that relate to God. We can only explain such things as we do not know, by comparing them with things we do know. Literally speaking, it is impossible that any thing we can do, can advance the glory of God: but God is pleased to consider those things as his glory, which advance the true glory of mankind—their pious and religious lives. And thus in our church service, we properly pray, *that we may live godly, righteous, and sober lives, to the glory of God's holy name.*

Now the Christian religion alone instructs us how to give glory to God. You have often heard in what manner the glory of God was debased in heathen times, by the worship of stocks and stones:



All that glory, which was due to *God in the highest*, was attributed to devils, or to the spirits of dead men.

The Christian religion reformed this great corruption; and drew men, as St. Paul tells the Athenians, from the worship of the *unknown God*, to the worship of that God, *who made heaven and earth*.

We who have been bred up from our infancy in the knowledge of God, are not aware how we gained this knowledge. As we acquired it imperceptibly from our childhood, it may seem as if it had been born with us. But when we consider the blind state of the heathen world, we can give no reason, why we should not be as blind as they were—except our having been favoured with the light of the Gospel. We may take it for granted therefore, that all our religious knowledge proceeds from that source. By it we are informed, that the power, and wisdom, and goodness of God are infinite—that God is kind to us, beyond our conception—that every event is intended for our good; and will certainly produce it, if we make a proper use of it.

It



SERMON I.

5

It is the Gospel also that instructs us to pray to God in a manner the most agreeable to him. It allows us to pray for our temporal wants; but within proper bounds, and with entire submission to the will of God. In spiritual things it leaves us more at large—it instructs us to adore the infinite perfections of God, and to praise him for all his goodness both temporal and spiritual; especially for that great instance of it in graciously shewing us a method of being restored, through Christ, to that happiness, which Adam, and in him all his posterity, had lost. It instructs us also to pray for the virtues of a Christian life, charity, humility, temperance, faith, piety, as the greatest ornaments of the Christian profession; and lastly, to acknowledge our own unworthiness; to pray for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and for the forgiveness of our sins, through the atonement of our blessed Saviour. In short, the Christian religion instructs us to live up to our prayers; to form our lives upon them; and to be in our *actions* the same pious, humble, charitable Christians, that we wish to appear before God in our *prayers*.

It is the incense of these holy prayers—it is the incense of these holy lives, which the Gospel hath

taught us to direct to heaven; and which God is graciously pleased to call, *giving glory to him in the highest.*

Let us next examine the *second* part of the text, and see how the Christian religion promotes *peace, and good-will among men.* Now this it does in several ways.

In the first place, it promotes internal peace. The mind of man is possessed by passions of various kinds. Some of them make it calm and easy; others boisterous and unhappy. He, whose mind is boiling over with rage, or rankling with envy, cannot feel that peace, which he does when his mind is composed. These mischievous passions are not only painful in themselves; but they draw his attention from every pursuit that is valuable.—Now it is the business of religion to remove these restless passions; and to fill the mind with such soothing affections, as throw a kind of sunshine on all our other enjoyments.

Then again, with regard to those great points—the immortality of the soul—the forgiveness of sin—and a future state of happiness—the mind must surely be more at peace, when it is ascertained of  
the

the truth of these things, than when it is labouring in a state of uncertainty.

We, to whom these blessed notices have been familiar from our childhood, cannot have a just idea of the state of a serious mind, harassed with misconceptions on these grand subjects. Amidst all this uncertainty, no doubt the mercy of God through Christ, is extended to all good men, though they had no opportunities of knowing the Gospel. But our great happiness consists in being assured of these things. This is that hope, that security, which the pious Christian enjoys; and which, above all other things, makes good to him the holy promise in the text, *of peace.*

But the Gospel hath not only its effect in producing peace in our own minds, it hath the same good effect in producing peace among each other. All the quarrels between man and man—between nation and nation, arise entirely from some wrong turn of mind—from envy, malice, avarice, jealousy, ambition, or some other bad passion, which it is the very business of religion to restrain. If no man bore malice, or revenge, against his neighbour; or coveted his neighbour's goods; or slandered him; or provoked him by unbridled passions; or was guilty of unjust actions (all which things

oppose Christianity in the most direct manner,) *peace, and good-will* among mankind would immediately, and universally take place. . In short, we cannot injure the peace of each other, without first injuring the precepts of our religion.

Then again, among nations, the same peace and happiness would exist, as between man and man, if they would listen to the precepts of the Gospel. The same divine laws which forbid anger, malice, and envy; forbid also ambition, a thirst after power, and competitions in trade, which lead to every national mischief—unless exalting or enriching a few individuals, at the expence of thousands, may be reckoned among the blessings of a nation.

But now, says the objector, when we look abroad in the world, we see but very little of those blessed effects, which the Gospel was intended to produce.—We see little of men's *giving glory to God in the highest*; but a great deal of cursing and swearing by his name; and of profaning it with every act of irreverence.—We see little of *giving glory to God in his temple*; but much profanation of his Sabbath, and neglect of all the ordinances which he hath appointed.

Then

Then again, as to *peace, and good-will among men*, we hear little more of it now, than we did before the days of Christianity. We see nations equally disposed to quarrel and fight; people every where to cheat and deceive; to plunder and destroy; in short, to be as guilty of every kind of ill-neighbourhood, as they could have been in the worst of times. So that, in fact, continues the objector, a religion, that came into the world with a hymn of triumph, marking so strongly its intention, *Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will to men*, does not, in any degree, seem to have answered the gracious purposes, for which it was intended.

That is false. Much general reformation, and happiness, in various ways, hath been introduced into the world by the Gospel, both among individuals, and among nations.—But even on a supposition it had been otherwise, it proves nothing against the good effects of Christianity, if it were properly obeyed. It only proves that, notwithstanding the purity of the Gospel, and its gracious intention of making mankind religious and happy, there are numbers who will not be made religious  
and

and happy by it. But what could God Almighty do more for man; consistently with leaving him at liberty to act freely? He could only give him a rule, to walk by, and reason to enforce that rule; unless he had changed his nature; and, by giving him a new religion, had wrought a standing miracle to force his obedience to it. So that, of course, the world will always be divided into two sorts of people—such as are deaf to all the calls of religion; and such as live up to its rules. Among these latter only are to be found those who feel the happiness of living under Gospel-laws. It would be a wonderful thing indeed, if those should profit by them, who never trouble their heads about them. The patient, who rejects the medicine, must not hope to remove the disease. Our Saviour himself, you remember, prophesied, in the parable of the sower, of the different reception which his Gospel should meet among different men. Some seed, he tells you, would fall among thorns, and be choaked—others on beaten ground, and be picked up—but that still there would be some which would fall on good ground, and bring forth fruit in abundance.

The Christian religion therefore is not meant to work by force, or like a charm, on the minds of  
men.

men. If it did, there could be no goodness in the observance of it: but it is intended mercifully to guide those to happiness, who will listen to its gracious voice. So that when we look into the world, and wish to see the effects of religion, we must look for it only among real Christians—among those who truly live up to its laws—and not among those who happen to live in a Christian country; and are Christians only in name.

May God of his infinite mercy grant, that all we who enjoy the benefit of its divine precepts may listen to them; and, as far as we can, promote *the glory of God in the highest, and peace and goodwill among men*, through Jesus Christ our Lord!



## S E R M O N II.

2 TIM. ii. 19.

LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME  
OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY.

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**T**HE character of a good Christian may with many people be desirable, merely as it implies an honest man. It is not real Christianity they value. All they wish, is to be considered as men of fair appearance in public—as men with whom the world may deal with confidence.

Now when religion serves merely an appearance, it is what our blessed Saviour so aptly calls the *cloke of sin*. \* it conceals under it whatever we wish to conceal. The knavery of our hearts—our bad designs —our purposes of revenge—our lewd

\* John, xv. 22.

intentions—



intentions— are all concealed, when the man has gotten his religious cloke on. He passes for a good Christian; and all is well.

I hope I need not tell any of *you*, there is no religion in all this. Such a man may be Christian enough to save appearances—but certainly not enough to save his soul. The text gives us another notion of being Christians.—Let us hear it once more. *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.* Let him not rest in the form of religion; but endeavour after the spirit of it.

In the following discourse I shall enlarge upon the apostle's advice; and urge several motives to persuade those, who *call themselves Christians*, to answer their profession.

In the first place, let us consider how disreputable it is to act unsuitably to our profession. Even in common matters—in the business of this world—it is disgraceful. He who professes an art, or calling, and appears totally ignorant of it, is justly thought contemptible.—You know how discreditable it is for a man to take a farm, for instance,

stance, when he knows not how to manage it. He sows wheat where he should sow barley. His grounds are ill prepared for either; and his neighbours see him carrying into his barn a plentiful crop of weeds, intermixed with his corn. They laugh at his ignorance. He feels it, and is ashamed.

Now, if our feelings were as strong in matters of religion as they are in the matters of this world (and it is a grievous thing, and much to be lamented, they are not), we should think it as contemptible for a Christian to fall short of *his* profession, as for a man in any kind of business to be ignorant of that business. A Christian's proper distinction is a holy life. He does not pretend to have more genius, or more learning, than a Turk or a heathen; but he professes to be more chaste—more sober—more just—more charitable—more pious, and more resigned. And if he fail in these, he deserts the art he should live by. He is a mere pretender—plainly unskilled in his proper profession.

To the scandal an unchristian life brings on ourselves, let us add the scandal it brings on religion. Many, who are inclined to undervalue religion, found an argument on its having so little effect

effect on the lives of Christians. And indeed the bad lives of Christians, though certainly no argument against Christianity, form one of the most obvious objections to it. The pretended Christian, were it on this account only, is the greatest enemy to religion. For it will ever be uppermost in the minds of those who wish it ill—"that if the Gospel were really true, it would surely have a better effect on the lives of such as pretend to believe it: but if there were neither a heaven to be hoped, nor a hell to be feared, how could many Christians live worse than they do!"

Unscriptural opinions, my brethren, often give offence; and when they are really unscriptural, they are certainly offensive. But he who merely holds a wrong opinion, if his life be correct, is an innocent member of Christ's church, in comparison with him, whose life is scandalous. His opinions may be right, though we think them wrong. It is not an infallible rule, that things are always wrong, because we think them so. Be they however right or wrong, few people can judge of opinions. But every body can judge of a bad life. Every body can see the injury which that does to religion. A persecuting infidel is indeed not so great an enemy to Christianity as a wicked Christian. Christianity  
defied

defied the malice of its open enemies; but it is greatly injured by the wickedness of its false friends: and it were better that they who cannot bring themselves to live like Christians, should lay aside their profession—should drop the name of *Christians*, than continue a name which, without the reality, injures both themselves and others.

Let me press the matter of hypocrisy a little more. Every one who makes religion a pretence to gain an advantage is, in fact, a knave. In a Christian country the name of a Christian is of service to a man. He enjoys many advantages by it, which he could not enjoy without it. But if he professes it without living up to the rules of his profession, he certainly enjoys a benefit under a false pretence; and is a knave under the garb of a hypocrite.

But you say, the man is not a hypocrite; he is an open and avowed sinner.

Very likely; but still he professes himself a Christian. He would take the sacrament, I suppose, to enable him to hold a good place: or he would take an oath to enable him to make a good bargain.—And is not this an hypocritical imposition? Does not he, who administers the oath, rest his security upon the oath? But you see, he

is deceived. The oath is no security. His only security is the law against perjury.

The last mischief I shall mention, arising from living contrary to our profession, is that of setting a bad example. We are surely answerable for the example we set. Great stress is laid upon example in various parts of Scripture. *Let your light shine before men*, says our Saviour. *I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done unto you.*—*Christ left us an example*, says St. Peter, *that we should follow his steps*;—these, and an hundred other passages shew, what stress the scriptures lay upon example.

And yet some people will cry, Our wickedness hurts only ourselves.

You are mistaken, my friends: the hurt you do yourselves is not half the guilt that attends your bad example. If they, who are yet innocent, did not see the wickedness of others, they durst not break out in the manner they do. Shame would keep them, at least, within the bounds of decency. If it were not for the old finner, for instance, whose daily practice it is to curse and swear, would the young finner, think you, venture so easily on an oath? No: he could not frame his mouth to it. He would dread his neighbours

hearing it: The very sound of an oath in his own ears would startle him. But the example of the old sinner draws him in. He hears oaths continually: and when an oath is made familiar, it becomes common language.

Thus it is also in sabbath-breaking. There were times, in the days of our forefathers, when people went as regularly to church, as they now go to market—when a man could not absent himself, without being enquired after, as we enquire after a sick person. A man could not then follow his pleasures on a Sunday, and leave the church behind him: it would give offence to his neighbours: he durst not do it. But now he sees the sabbath so universally broken, that he is under no such difficulty: he finds himself in a crowd: the example of the old sinner defends him.—And as it is in swearing, and sabbath-breaking; so is it in drinking, gaming, and every other instance of wickedness, which men now commit openly. The old sinner leads the young sinner into it by his example.—And do these wretches, think you, who mislead others, injure only themselves? In the great day of accounts, when you and I shall stand answerable for our deeds, God have mercy on those who corrupt others by their example! Their

*sins*



*sins* make only one wicked person: their *example* makes thousands.

Am I too severe? Let me bring the matter home to your own feelings. Suppose any of you had a son, whom you should see enticed, and led away to his ruin by wicked companions—suppose they should teach him by their example to drink and game, and spend your substance in extravagance—what would you say of the persons who had thus distressed you, and ruined your son? Would you gently say, they had injured only themselves? or would you not rather say, that in your own estimation, they could not have done you a greater injury?—And think you not, that our heavenly Father will consider all wicked corrupters in the same light? and that his all pure eye will see the guilt of corrupting innocence as forcibly as any earthly father can do? No doubt, he will; and call the offender to a very severe account.

Considering then all these things, let me once more exhort every one of you, my brethren, *who nameth the name of Christ, to depart from iniquity*. With what face can we continue in our sins—our known

and wilful sins, and profess seriously we believe a religion, that has, in the plainest manner, denounced damnation upon such sins?—Do you not believe it?—Then indeed no more is to be said. But if you do believe it, and have faith in that Saviour, who threatens it, you see how inconsistently you act.—You fear the laws of the land; and I will tell you why you fear them. You have *faith* in them. You believe they will execute what they threaten. You believe they will punish wicked actions, when discovered: and therefore you do wicked actions as privately as you can.—But if you had the same faith in the Gospel as in the laws of the land, you would be equally afraid of committing a wicked action even in thought. Your actions, you may depend upon it, will always be guided by your faith. Would you know what a man believes; attend to what he *does*, not to what he *says*. The pretended Christian, who leads a bad life, is much more an infidel—a downright disbeliever—than he, who, though in words he deny the Gospel, leads a moral life.

Shew then your faith by your practice. If you call yourselves Christians, live like Christians. Get the better of your sinful habits. Let the fear of  
God



God purify your thoughts. Let the faith of Christ rule in your hearts. Shew it by its fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Be just, and charitable to your neighbour. Do to others, as you would have them do to you.— Let us do these things, and then let us call ourselves Christians: evermore joining, both in heart, and actions, in that expressive prayer of our Church— that *all, who profess, and call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth; and hold the faith in unity of spirit—in the bond of peace—and in righteousness of life.*

## SERMON III.

MAT. XVI. 26.

WHAT IS A MAN PROFITED, IF HE SHALL GAIN  
THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN  
SOUL?

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**I**F you should see a man placed in some dangerous situation—on the edge of a precipice, for instance; while the ground was crumbling away under his feet—and yet totally unconcerned, you would think no name but that of madness could belong to him.—It is not often, however, that we see men running these surprising risks in *worldly* affairs. Danger is commonly an alarming circumstance; and, in general, people are cautious enough to avoid it.

But there is another kind of danger still greater, into which we are all apt to run, without the least apprehension—that of destroying—not our lives in this world; but our souls in the next.

How

How is it then, while we are thus prudent in worldly matters, that we are continually neglecting things of so much greater importance?—that we are, on all occasions, shewing our care for a life that perishes, and pay so little attention to a life which is to last for ever?

Should you be asked, whether you would be at more expence and labour in improving an estate, of which you had only a very short lease; or of one, which you might possess as long as you lived; you would think the question scarce deserving an answer. Yet your souls, and your bodies, you well know, bear the same relation to each other, that these two different kinds of possession do? These bodies, you know, are only leases, which must quickly expire: your souls, if I may so express myself, are tenures for life.

We should be surprized to be asked seriously, whether we believed we had souls to be saved?—And yet if we had full faith in the article—if we were *thoroughly convinced* that our souls can never die, but must live for ever, either in a state of happiness or of misery; and that this state, through God's mercy in Christ, depends entirely on ourselves, we could not well, one should think, be so negligent about them

Let me then endeavour, *first*, to give you a view of the *danger* of a worldly life; and, *secondly*, to shew you wherein the *care* of your souls consists.

First then, if this world and the next were on equal terms—if they could display their several offers with equal force—there could be no competition. This world might display its riches, its honours, and its pleasures, under all their gaudy forms: but the glories of eternity, like the sun shining in his strength, would dazzle and obscure them. The wisdom of Providence, however, hath thrown a veil over the future. We are here in a state of trial. The glories of the next world are therefore purposely hid. We are required to walk by *faith*, not by *sight*. But as *sight* is generally more acute than *faith*, the things of this world have the advantage. They are *seen*; the others, at best, only *believed*.

In this advantage then lies the danger of a *worldly life*. In general it carries away the best part of our attention. In a degree we may fix our attention both on this life, and on the next: but the question before us is, On which ought we *chiefly* to fix it? On both we cannot fix it in an equal degree.

If you should be asked, why the same thing cannot, at the same time, be round and square, you would have a ready answer. These two forms are opposite in their nature: and it is absurd to suppose, things opposite in their nature can agree.

Just as opposite in their nature are the things of this world, and the things of the next. They can never be brought to an agreement. One must have the superiority. You cannot fix an equal degree of attention on both. If your hearts are set on the things of this world, you will make them the *chief* employment of *your thoughts*: you will naturally expect your chief *happiness* from them. If, on the other hand, your hearts are set on the things of the next world, you will make *them* the *chief* employment of your thoughts; and will naturally expect your chief happiness from *them*. It is impossible therefore to expect your *chief happiness* from one; and, at the same time, your *chief happiness* from the other! This is just the absurdity of supposing a square and a circle can agree.

As you see then in what the danger of a worldly life consists, you should frequently examine yourself on this head. How are your *thoughts*  
commonly

commonly employed? Are they, from morning till evening, working, inventing, contriving, and planning your worldly matters? Do the thoughts of another world *never* interfere? Do you never think of that future state, which undoubtedly awaits you. Or, if the thoughts of these things ever enter your minds, are they not immediately jostled out by some more important business; and never suffered to make any lasting impression?

Again, what are your schemes of pleasure? Do the hopes of God's favour—a desire to conform yourself to his will—the mercies of God through Christ—and the enjoyment of a future state, form any part of your ideas of happiness? Do you never say seriously to yourself, This world will soon be over, let me endeavour to make some provision for the next?—Or, is the happiness of this world the only happiness you have any notion of? When you feel your spirits raised or depressed, and examine your heart to find out the cause of all this joy or depression, is it the world that is always at the bottom of your joys and griefs? Does never a hope glow within you, that you are getting the better of some bad habit—that you are fitting yourself more and more for enjoying the blessed company of *just men made perfect?*

- *perfect?*—Or are your joys still founded on some little worldly expectation—some present prospect of pleasure or advantage; and your distress, on some trifling disappointment, some baffled scheme, or little worldly vexation; so that it is always the world that lies at your heart, and is the foundation of all your happiness and misery?

Thus examining yourself, you will see your situation in the world, and the danger that arises from too close a connection with it.

At the same time, worldly business not only agrees with religion, but may indeed make a considerable part of it. It is your duty to provide industriously for your families; and to take a frugal care, that what you get, may answer the best purposes. And if you are honest in your dealings; not murmuring at your losses, but contented with your station, putting your trust in God, praising him for his mercies, and diligently serving him—your industry and care will not only be approved by God, but will be considered as religion.

How far, however, we may mix the world and religion together, and how far we may engage in one without endangering the other, may  
be



be better seen by considering, as I proposed, secondly, in what the care of our souls consists.

In general it consists in fitting them properly for the next world.

You find, that to fit yourselves properly for *this* world, many things are necessary. Whatever your profession is, you must acquaint yourselves with those things which relate to it, or you will be very unqualified for it. Some are employed in trade; others in arts; others in tilling the ground; but among all these different ways of providing for yourselves, and your families, you know there is not one, in which you must not learn many things, before you can be qualified to get your bread in it.

Now in a manner like this, the care of your souls consists in fitting them for that future state, in which they are intended to live. So that whatever the nature of that future world is, you must endeavour to make your souls conformable to it.

Now thus far of the nature of that future world, we well know, that it is a place wherein *dwelleth righteousness*; and from every part of  
scripture



Scripture we are given to understand, that nothing but purity and righteousness can enter that holy place. It is plain, therefore, beyond all doubt, that nobody with bad dispositions in his heart, which he does not endeavour to correct, can find his way thither at any rate. The envious man, who wishes ill to his neighbour; the revengeful and malicious man, who does spiteful actions to his neighbour; the dishonest man, who cheats his neighbour; the hard-hearted man, who never assists his neighbour; the covetous man, who thinks of nothing, but laying up money; the sabbath-breaker, who spends the Sunday in his diversions; the drunkard; the lewd person; the profane swearer; all these, and sinners of all other kinds, in thought, word, and deed; till they have purified their thoughts; till they have thoroughly repented of their sins, and changed their hearts and lives, can never be qualified to enter the kingdom of God.

Attend seriously to what the apostle St. Paul says on this point:—*Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,*

*revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

And here I cannot help mentioning a mistake which men are too often inclined to make; and that is, putting one part of their duty for the whole. I have met with this delusion sometimes at the death-beds of dying sinners: "I never wronged any man," some poor expiring person will cry; "and, therefore, I hope God will save me."

I hope so too: but, at the same time, we have no authority for believing, that wronging nobody will alone save any man. It is a very happy thing, no doubt, when a dying sinner can say, I have wronged no man; and must give him great comfort at his latter end: but he must not think that wronging no man is all that God requires. There are duties to God, and duties to ourselves, and duties to our neighbour, and he who leaves these duties out of his practice; and contents himself with the hopes that his wronging no man is sufficient, will find himself when he comes to die, I fear, but in an ill-prepared state.

Another dying sinner will cry, "I have been constant at church—we all have our faults—I have been my own worst enemy."

Now this is probably a man who has indulged himself in great liberties—has run into great excesses—and has drawn upon himself diseases, or beggary, or mischief of some kind, by his drunkenness and other vices. He says, he has been his own worst enemy; and so he probably has: but then, he concludes, that, as he has been his own worst enemy, and has therefore suffered in this world for his sins, God will spare him in the next. This matter being settled, there remains still his *going to church*, as a sort of balance in his favour, which he hopes will carry him to heaven.—I have had reason to believe, this is not a very unusual way of reasoning among dying sinners, to make their consciences easy.

It is not our parts, my brethren, to set bounds to the divine goodness. These dying sinners must be left to the mercy of God.—To you, who are yet in health and strength, I can speak with more freedom. Depend upon it, that all these methods of arguing with your souls are deceitful. All sin, either against God, your neighbour or yourselves, is contrary to that purity of heart, which is agreeable to the nature of a future state of happiness; and without which we cannot gain an entrance into it. At the same time, all sin, either against  
God,

God, your neighbour, or yourselves, if you sincerely repent, and change your hearts and lives, will be pardoned through the merits and blood of Christ. But if you trust in any other doctrine than this, you may depend upon it, (if there is any truth in the Gospel,) at one time or other, you will find yourselves deceived.

From what hath been said then you see, the care of your souls consists in fitting them for a state of future happiness—and that to this end no forms, no professions, no rites, nor outward observances of any kind will avail—nor any halving of your duty, and taking such parts of it as you like; and leaving out the rest—nor any thing but a plain, uniform, consistent, pious life. This only, through the merits of Christ, can save you; and make your souls happy, when this world is at an end.

This world is gliding past us, like the shadow of a summer's cloud. Our souls are yet scarce entered into life. It is but a little while before we shall all, the strongest and healthiest amongst us, certainly be convinced that the best thing we could  
have

have done in this world was to prepare our souls for a better. Let us then endeavour to judge of things now, as we shall all shortly judge of them; and let us live now, as after a few days, or years, we shall all wish we had lived.

Blessed be God, our time is yet in our hands. Let us thank God that it is so, and make a right use of it. Perhaps we have not yet taken all the care of our souls, that we should have taken. Let us redouble our pains: let our repentance be sincere, and let this great point be the wisdom of our lives—*for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

## S E R M O N IV.

LUKE, xvi. 8.

THE CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD ARE WISER  
IN THEIR GENERATION THAN THE CHILDREN  
OF LIGHT.

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A CERTAIN steward, said our Saviour, was accused of dishonesty; and was required by his Lord to make up his accounts. Being unable, he was on the point of being dismissed. He thought it necessary therefore to take some step to prevent his ruin. To work, or beg, seemed the only expedients now left; but to neither of these he was inclined.—After some hesitation, he fell at length on this expedient. He called his Lord's debtors together, examined their several accounts; and from each deducted about one half: giving them to understand, that for so great a favour he expected their

their kindness in the day of adversity. On the foresight and ingenuity of this wicked man our Saviour grounds his remark, that the *children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light.*

The doctrine therefore pointed out by our Saviour is, that the *children of light* ought to shew the same earnestness in their spiritual affairs, which the *others* do in their temporal.—I shall endeavour therefore in explaining the parable, to shew you, *first* in what the wisdom of the *children of this world* consists; and *secondly* how it should be exemplary to us.

In the first place, the *children of this world* impress upon themselves strongly the value of *wealth*, which is the great end they have in view, and which immediately governs all their actions.

It is necessary for them therefore to make themselves acquainted with every thing required in the business they pursue. Thus, for instance, before they fully enter into trade, they must acquire the art of managing accounts. They must be well informed how to balance the difference between pro-



fit and loss. They must be instructed also in the nature of such commodities as they are chiefly to deal in. Useful connections also are necessary; and a knowledge of the laws and customs that relate to trade. But, above all, habits of industry, and application, must be formed.

Being thus qualified, *the children of this world* begin now to act at large. A prudent foresight directs all their actions. They weigh their words, as well as actions. Every unwary expression, that hath a tendency to offend their best friends, or injure their main purpose, is avoided. The very thought is checked, that doth not terminate in some useful end. Every scheme is maturely weighed, and all the consequences which may attend either the success, or the disappointment of it. In the mean time, they submit to many inconveniences and hardships in the present to obtain good in the future. They run the hazard of dangerous voyages; they venture their money in purchases; they put it out to interest; and submit to all these risks for the prospect of future advantage. They cast up their daily gains, and sum up their yearly accounts, to see how the matter stands with regard to the whole. In short, they have, what they call,  
the

the *main chance* always in view, and consider every circumstance of their lives, only as it tends to promote it.

To this prudent foresight the *children of this world* add a constant vigilance against danger. Locks, bolts, and every kind of security, guard their treasures. All the defences of the law are employed. They eye every man with caution. It is their maxim to consider every man they deal with as a dishonest man, that they may always guard against fraud. Evening, which shuts up the labours of others, gives little repose to them. Their midnight visions are often disturbed; and the morning rises to new anxiety.—Among their greatest enemies they consider a love of pleasure. Every temptation of this kind must be given up: for a life of pleasure, and a life of business, they well know, are inconsistent.

Thus the *children of this world* endeavour with indefatigable pains to pursue the plain, beaten path, the broad way before them, and turn aside neither to the right hand nor to the left. If ever inadvertently they make a false step, it is immediately corrected by additional care. If they have suffered loss in trade upon any article, no one shall ever see

them engaged, under the same circumstances, with *that* article again. If any man hath deceived them once, nobody need caution them against that man a second time.

The last care of the *children of this world* is, after all their labours, to die rich. Though the thoughts of death are not very agreeable to them, yet as they must die, it is at least some consolation, if they can leave their coffers full behind them. They have done their work: their great end is finished: their foresight, their cares, and their anxieties have been successful: they have heaped up thousands upon thousands, and their only consolation now is, that their names will be remembered among the wealthiest.

Such is the wisdom of the *children of this world*. They propose to themselves, you see, one great end, and this they invariably pursue, not only through all the proper means; but in opposition to pleasure, difficulty, and danger. Jesus therefore commended the unjust steward, because, *as a child of the world*, he had done wisely. If his end had been right, he had been a pattern of wisdom in the pursuit of it.

Let

Let me then now shew you, as I proposed *secondly*, in what way his example should be a pattern to us.

We first observed, that the *children of this world* are impressed with a high idea of the excellence of the end they have in view. They think wealth superior to every thing else; and endeavour eagerly to obtain it.—And are the *children of light* as thoroughly convinced of the importance of the end which they pursue? Do you, for instance, consider, (for I hope, my brethren, you would all wish to be called the *children of light*,) do you consider the things of another world as preferable to every thing else? Do you consider religion as the only foundation of your happiness; and wickedness as the only real cause of your misery? Is the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, as much a concern with you, as wealth is with the *children of this world*? I fear it rarely is. You may think yourselves in earnest about heaven: I suppose you all wish to get there—upon your own terms at least; but you would do well to consider the matter a little more attentively; and bring it home to this test, which our Saviour has given you, a comparison with *the children of this world*.

They, you find, take great pains to qualify themselves properly for the end they pursue. But do you exert the same attention? Are you as careful to examine your bibles, as they are to examine their books of accounts? and to inform yourselves as exactly of the rules of the gospel, as they are to gain a knowledge of trade?—If you are not, I fear you are not yet so wise in your generation as *the children of this world*.

Again, have you that prudent foresight, which the children of this world have? Do you weigh, as they do, the consequences of your words and actions? Have you the same faith in a Redeemer, which they have in their funds and securities? and put your money out to interest in charitable actions, with half so good a will as they do theirs in schemes of profit? What an example do they set you in stating and balancing their accounts? If you stated your heavenly accounts with as much exactness, and took the same care to prevent bad habits, which they do to prevent bad debts, you might with some assurance hope, you were as wise in your generation as the *children of this world*.

Again, have you that constant vigilance against danger, which attends all the schemes of the children of this world? Are you as careful to find  
out

out a deceit in your hearts, as they are a mistake in their books? You see with what carefulness they guard against the knavish practices of those they deal with: and are you as careful to guard against the delusions of bad company, or your own wicked hearts? Are *you* as anxious to obtain a good conscience, as they are to get a good security? If not, I fear you are not yet so wise in your generation as the *children of this world*.

- Again, when you make a false step in life, are you as diligent to recover it as the children of this world? Have you that repentance and sorrow for your sins, which they have for their mistakes in business? And are you as zealous to redeem your time, as they are to retrieve their losses? Lastly, do you wish as ardently to die good, as the children of this world to die rich? Are you as desirous to leave good works behind you, as they are to leave stock in trade, and money in bank? If not, you are not yet so wise in your generation as the *children of this world*.

Let us all then, my brethren, who wish to be the *children of light*, copy the example of the *children*



*dren of this world* with a little more attention. Observe—it is not our Saviour's design to preach up a total disregard for the world. Our first father when placed in Paradise, was ordered to dress it, and keep it in order\*. Afterwards he was enjoined to till the ground in the sweat of his brow: and we are told plainly in scripture, that *he who does not work has no right to eat*. Diligence and industry in our callings are, certainly proper. They are both necessary for our well-being, and they keep us from idleness, which leads to vice. It is our duty to act properly in the station in which God hath placed us; and to practise our religion *in* the world, not *out* of it. So that our Saviour never meant we should neglect the affairs of this world; but only that we should consider them as inferior to those of a better: that while we are occupied in our worldly affairs, we should not set our hearts upon them: but in the midst of business should constantly remember that gracious God, to whose goodness we are indebted for all we enjoy. The business of this world, and the business of religion, may very well be carried on together.

\* Gen. ii. 15.

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Let us not then, my brethren, toil for the things of this world, and leave the best part of our errand in it neglected. How absurd does that traveller appear, who having some great end in view, instead of pursuing his journey with alacrity, is carried away by every trifle in his road, till the night comes on, his time is spent, and the grand purpose of his journey lost. And yet see we not how much more absurd he is, who grovels upon earth, when he should be directing his eyes to heaven?

Let us not then be put to shame by the *children of this world* in pursuing the great end of our everlasting salvation, with less attention than they do the trifling affairs of this life. We have a noble end, and pursue it ill. They have a wretched end, but pursue it properly. Let us then shew ourselves as much in earnest as they are, and consider ourselves as much interested in a heavenly pursuit, as they are in an earthly one; always remembering as a consideration of the first concern, that the earthly interest is temporal, but the heavenly one is eternal.

## SERMON V.

MARK, X. 15.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD, HE SHALL NOT ENTER THEREIN.

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**I**T was a custom among the Jews, to present their children to holy persons for their prayers and blessing: and the more eminent the person was who offered the prayers, it was reasonably believed, the more beneficial would be the effect.

To this custom the text relates. As our Saviour was instructing the people, some of his hearers brought their children, and desired he would lay his hands upon them, and bless them.

The disciples, perhaps, thinking this an unreasonable interruption, rebuked the parents for their officious zeal. The mild Saviour of the world was

more gentle. With great humility, and sweetness of temper, he called the parents to him, took the children in his arms, and blessed them.—And then, (as, upon every occasion, he sought to give mankind some useful lesson,) he turned round to the people, and spoke in the words of the text: *Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*

By the *kingdom of God*, (or of *heaven*,) so frequently occurring in Scripture, is most commonly meant the Christian religion in its whole comprehensive scheme, both here and hereafter. When our Saviour therefore tells us, that no man shall enter *the kingdom of heaven*, unless he receives it as a little child, he means, that no one whose behaviour does not bear a resemblance to the behaviour of a little child, can be a member of that spiritual kingdom, which God hath established in Christ—he can neither be a good Christian here, nor inherit eternal life hereafter.

As the character therefore of little children is thus set before us as a pattern of imitation, let us *first* see in what this character consists;—and *secondly*, let us make an application of it to ourselves.

In the *first* place, our Saviour must be supposed to speak only of very young children—such as *he took up in his arms*; for we soon see the seeds of malice, envy, falsehood, and other vices, begin to shoot.

Nor can we suppose our Saviour intended we should imitate the defects of children—their credulity—their ignorance—their want of reason—and want of judgment. His meaning, I think, includes only the five following particulars:—the *innocence of their manners*—their *contented minds*—their *kind affections*—their *teachable dispositions*, and the *trust they repose in their parents*.

We first remark the *innocence of their manners*. This is the most striking part of their character. No malicious intentions harbour in *their* breasts. The injuries they receive are instantly forgotten. Thoughts of revenge, and mischievous designs never keep *them* awake. They quietly lay down their heads, and go to rest in peace with all the world.

They are as free from *fraud*, as they are from *malice*. They have no treacherous intentions—no deceit, no deep-laid schemes of dishonesty, nor shuffling of any kind. All is openness, simplicity,  
and

and sincerity. Every expression they use implies their real meaning; and whatever information they give you, you are sure it is the truth.

Their breasts are equally free from *envy*. They know not what it is to repine at the superior possessions of another; nor to wish mischief to those who stand between them and their desired enjoyments.

And is there nothing, think you, to be learned from all this? What happiness would ensue, were our manners as free from falshood and fraud—from envy and malice, and as pure and innocent as the manners of little children? What security and blessed comfort would even this world furnish amidst all its natural calamities?

Their *contented minds* make another part of the character of little children, which highly deserves our imitation. Their breasts are never distressed with the affairs of this world. No cares of getting—no fears of losing—no anxious foreboding thoughts of any kind oppress their minds. Their easy day runs on, as the Gospel enjoins: they leave *the morrow to take thought for the things of itself: with them sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

Here then the worldly man is called on to take example. You who are solicitous about this world—

world—who suffer it, whether you have small or large possessions, to engross all your thoughts, look here, and see an image of that heavenly mind, which alone can fit you for the kingdom of heaven. Worldly affections suit the world. *Let the dead bury their dead.* But would you wish to acquire heaven, you must copy the composure, the quiet, the disinterestedness, and the contentment of the little child.

But it is not only an abstinence from vice that we are to imitate in little children: there is an appearance also of goodness in them, which highly deserves our best imitation—that affection, which is discernible in all their behaviour. They who are conversant with them, see numberless instances of their strong affection for those with whom they are connected. Their love is overflowing for all the little offices of kindness which are done them. Always, but when in pain, they are in a disposition to please, and to be pleased.

Ye who know not what sweetness of temper is, copy it here. When you are reviling each other—when, on some trifling matter, you let your passions rise so high as to carry you into the extremes of bitterness; or when any little matter goes wrong in your families at home—as something



is frequently going wrong—and you are peevish, sour, and fullen, or violent, storming, and untractable, remember, on all these occasions, what your Saviour says, that unless you copy the meekness of little children, you cannot enter the *kingdom of heaven*.—If the kingdom of heaven indeed were out of the question, it is your interest here on earth to live kindly among each other. If God Almighty pleases to straiten your circumstances, do not add one evil to another. Ill-nature and brutality only make things worse. Let your houses at least be comfortable. Kindness among yourselves will sweeten poverty. A burden borne by many who favour each other, will be less felt by all.

The next thing in which we are to imitate little children, is their *teachable spirit*.—The little child is at least prepared to learn. It has no pride nor prejudice to contend with. The worldly man has often so much pride, that he is above learning from the Gospel. The scribes were above it. They had too high an opinion of themselves to be taught: and there are still many people, though they do not so much fall in your way, who set up their own reason as a light to follow, in opposition to Revelation; and like the Pharisees of old, have too much



pride to believe the Gospel.—There are others again, who are too much prejudiced, and worldly-minded, to obey it: who being fashioned after the manner of this world, prefer *its* customs, and *its* pleasures, and *its* concerns to the precepts of the Gospel. Of this kind of people we have many among ourselves. But if we had about us the humble teachable spirit of little children, we should listen more to religion and less to the world. We should believe the Gospel, and obey its precepts.

The last thing we are to imitate in little children, is that trust which they repose in their parents. In every thing they look up to them. If they want food, they solicit their parents. If they want ease from pain, they apply to them: and from them they receive all the little gratifications of their lives.—Here is an exact image of that trust which we should repose in our heavenly Father. On him we depend for every thing we enjoy, and should therefore receive every thing as his gift. Our very amusements and gratifications should be received as indulgences from him. He permits them, and therefore we should only use them as he allows.—Thus in all things we should throw ourselves

## SERMON V.

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elves as much on our heavenly Father's care, as the child throws himself on that of his parents.

Having thus seen on what the imitable part of the character of little children consists—Let us now, as was proposed, *secondly*, make an application of it to ourselves.

You see then, my brethren, that although the little child hath all these appearances of goodness about him, they are only *appearances*; for, in fact, there is nothing yet in the little child that is either good or bad. All is simple nature; he has neither knowledge of duty, nor conscience of transgression. His actions are neither virtuous, nor vicious. This appearance of goodness therefore is only a want of passions and appetites; and of an intimacy with the world, which hath not yet taken possession of his heart. As his passions arise, the natural pravity of man appears. Children therefore are only recommended to our imitation, as we are sent to learn industry from the ant, and resignation to Providence from the fowls of the air.

These *appearances*, therefore, of goodness in little children, you must improve into *realities*. That

purity—that innocence—that contentedness—that love, that teachable spirit, and that confidence, which the little child appears to have by *not knowing the world*, you are to gain by *conquering the world*. What it has by nature, you are to acquire by grace and religious habit; and what it discovers on some accidental occasions, you are to make the ruling principles of your lives.

There is one thing more I should wish you to consider on this subject. *Receiving the kingdom of heaven as little children*, is not recommended to us as a matter of prudence, or of worldly wisdom: but as a matter of much greater moment: *Except ye receive the kingdom of heaven as little children—consider what follows—ye shall not enter therein.*

Particular characters belong to particular stations. If a man wish to have an interest in the *kingdoms of this world*, he must *receive them* as a statesman, as a lawyer, as a soldier, or under some character which relates to the kingdoms of this world. But if a man wish to *enter the kingdom of heaven*, he may be assured there is no other way of entering it, but by adding to his profession in life the imitation

tion of a little child.—It is humiliating enough, no doubt, to the wise man of this world, to be told, that after the attainment of all his learning, and after all the pains he has taken to accomplish himself, his acquirements are not equal in value to what he may learn from a little child.—But so it is—and so indeed is the whole scheme of the Christian religion. It is entirely founded on man's folly, and ignorance, and wickedness; and he who cannot relinquish his worldly schemes, and his worldly wisdom, so far as to prefer the mild virtues of the Gospel before them;—if he cannot in the midst of the world receive the kingdom of heaven with the innocence, the purity, and humility of a little child, the word of God assures him, that he has lost what the world can never make up to him—his whole title to the promises of the Gospel.

## SERMON VI.

MATT. V. 20.

I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT EXCEPT YOUR  
RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL EXCEED THE RIGHT-  
EOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES,  
YE SHALL IN NO CASE ENTER INTO THE  
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

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**W**E often rest satisfied with a fair outside. To be born in a Christian country—to make a public profession of the Christian faith—and to lead a life unstained by any notorious sin, is enough to make a good Christian. If other people consider us in this light, (and we are very candid to each other,) we are ready enough to take our religion on trust.

There is a fashion in religion, as in every thing; and if we are in the fashion, it is well. In ancient times, when men strictly followed the rules of  
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the Gospel, a different kind of religion was in fashion; and such people as now often pass for good Christians, would then have been considered as *shameful men*. A man may now freely indulge the pleasures of life; he may give the world his heart: he need not trouble his head with the intention, the conditions, the promises, or the threatenings of the Gospel—and yet he may be thought a very decent Christian: he may be like his neighbours: he may be in the fashion.

In little matters all this is well. In the trifling affairs of life, we may conform to the manners and customs of the world: we may suffer fashion to make a change in our clothes. But, for God's sake, let us consider that religion is exactly the same now it ever was: it admits no fashion; and if we take our measures of it from what we commonly see practised in these declining days, we may call it Christianity, if we please; but we may just as well call it any thing else. It is, in general, no more like Christianity, than a modern man of fashion is like an apostle.

The Scribes and Pharisees, under an hypocritical appearance, had these loose notions of religion. Our Saviour therefore holds them out as examples

to us; and tells us positively, that *unless our righteousness should exceed theirs, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* It is proper therefore to examine in what their unrighteousness chiefly consisted; that by comparing ourselves with them, we may see whether our unrighteousness may not be of a piece with theirs.

Let it be remembered, however, that it is not, in general, the most exact way of getting a knowledge of ourselves, to compare our actions with those of others. It is commonly a deceitful method. We ought rather to compare them with the word of God. However, as our Saviour himself, in this case, holds out the Scribes and Pharisees as the objects of a comparison; and has, moreover, given us marks of distinction, we may be assured, that it is right to make the comparison. — In the following discourse, therefore, I shall *first* give you the Scriptural character of the Scribes and Pharisees—and, *secondly*, draw a short comparison between us and them.

In the first place, the Scribes and Pharisees had lost all sense of religion. Our Saviour applies to  
them



them that passage of the prophet, *This people draweth nigh me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* They came indeed to the temple, and nobody lifted up their eyes and hands with more devotion; but they felt nothing of it in their hearts. Our Saviour preached to them, as John the Baptist had done before him; it signified nothing; they never attended to preaching. *They had eyes that would not see, and ears that would not hear, and hearts that would not understand.* Preaching to them was seed sown on stony ground; it made no impression.

What religion they had, if it could in any sense be called religion, consisted merely in a few outward observances: they *tithed mint and cummin*, our Saviour tells them, and performed other little ceremonies of the law; while they omitted the weightier matters of it, judgment, mercy, and faith.

The great end of religion is to enable us to resist the various temptations which arise from our different stations in life, and to fit ourselves for a better world. If we are poor, we should be content with our station—live honestly with our neighbours, and bear our lot with resignation to God. This turns poverty into religion. If we  
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are rich, we should guard against intemperance, vanity, and hard-heartedness to the poor: this turns riches into a blessing to ourselves, and a comfort to others.

All this the Scribes and Pharisees knew well enough. They *sat in Moses's seat*, and had studied the law, as far as *knowledge* went—but with regard to *practice*, they gave themselves little trouble. The consequence was, that knowledge, without practice, puffed them up. They *trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others*.

Instead of obeying what they knew to be the law of God, they made it their business to find out explanations to avoid it—*Honour thy father and mother*, says the law. But, said the Pharisee, if you tell your poor father you intended to dedicate your money to holy uses, you may let him starve.—Again. *Thou shalt not take God's name in vain*, says the commandment. No, not God's name in vain, said the Pharisee: but you may innocently swear by any thing else.—And thus too, when the law enjoined love and kindness to our neighbour, the Pharisee would ask, who was his neighbour? Surely not his enemy; and least of all a Samaritan.

Good

Good men of course these finners always hated, and were ever contriving and venting wicked lies against them. Even the unspotted life of our blessed Saviour did not escape their malice. He was a wine-bibber: he was a glutton: he was a breaker of the law, because forsooth he did good actions on the Sabbath. He was a friend of publicans and finners; because, by mixing with them, he endeavoured to reclaim them.

As for charity, their hearts were strangers to it. Instead of relieving the poor, *they devoured widows houses*; and instead of assisting their neighbours, they were full of *extortion and excess*.

And indeed how should they have charity, or any other virtue? their thoughts were wholly engrossed by their worldly possessions. Covetousness was among their grand vices: they scoffed at all the generous purposes for which wealth is given. When our blessed Saviour was discoursing on the true use of riches, and exhorting his hearers to make their wealth the means of their future happiness—when he shewed them the great mischief offsetting their hearts on worldly things, forewarning them of the danger of a divided love; and shewed them the impossibility of serving God and mammon together—it happened, the text tells us,  
that

that some of the Pharisees were present. Such truths were very ill-calculated to make an impression on them: and accordingly when the divine Teacher was instructing the people, the Scribes and Pharisees endeavoured to draw off their attention by ridiculing him. But we are told the reason why they ridiculed him—*they were covetous themselves.*

And yet with all this corruption, they wished for nothing so much as a good character. They put on sanctified faces—they fasted, they prayed, they would stand praying at the corners of streets, merely that they might be seen of men, and be considered as holy and religious people. Hypocrisy is the grand cover of iniquity. Knavery unmasked is at once detected—We are told, a celebrated knave of our own country, who had long been notorious for his infamous life, used to say, he would give 10,000*l.* for a good character. Not that he affected to have it believed he valued a good character in itself; but he would have given 10,000*l.* for it, because he knew how to make 20,000*l.* by it\*. And this was just the notion of the Scribes and Pharisees. They desired to be

\* This story is told of the celebrated Colonel Charteris.

thought

thought holy and religious men; not that they valued a religious character; but they had private ends to obtain, which could not be obtained without it.—What was still worse, it was the great endeavour of their lives to spread wickedness. *They would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he was made, they made him ten times more the child of hell than themselves.*

After all, one should have hoped, these sinners might have seen their evil ways, and having such a teacher as the blessed Jesus, might have repented. Many applications he made to them; but nothing like repentance appears. *We have Abraham to our father*, was their grand plea of righteousness. Nothing was less in their hearts, *than to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.*

The scorning of divine grace is a signal for every wickedness to enter. During the whole of our Saviour's ministry, these impenitent wretches grew worse and worse; too proud to acknowledge their faults—too hardened to amend them, till at length they filled up the measure of their iniquities by putting the blessed Jesus to death.

Thus,

Thus, my brethren, I have described to you the character of the Scribes and Pharisees, as we have it in scripture: let us now, as I proposed, *secondly*, make an application of it to ourselves—Let us see, whether our righteousness exceeds theirs—or whether at the bottom we may not be of the sect of the Scribes and Pharisees ourselves?

The great use of these bad examples is to shew us, that when people begin to sit loose to religion, there is no point of wickedness, to which they may not be carried. Here and there we see what the world calls a good moral man: but morality is often but a slight tie; whereas religion is an anchor, which holds all fast. Whether the wretched people we have been describing, were ever moral men, may be doubted. It is certain, they had no regard to the religion they professed, but attended only to a few showy ceremonies. Instead therefore of proceeding to greater heights of piety, as their minds might have been opened by the Gospel, they fell from one wickedness to another, and at length to the greatest. Let us therefore try ourselves



elves by our Saviour's rule, and see how far our religion may be corrupted, after the examples before us.

We may all probably think, that if we had lived in those days, we should not have had a hand in putting the blessed Jesus to death. Perhaps not. But do none of us, by living in opposition to his laws, *crucify, as it were, the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame?*—Perhaps none of us would *devour widows houses*: but are we never guilty of doing a hard thing to a neighbour? Or though we would not *compass sea and land to make wicked profelytes*, do we never set a bad *example* to those beneath us; and take that most successful way of making wicked profelytes?

Again. Do we never feel in our hearts that coldness, and indifference to the duties of religion, which the Scribes and Pharisees felt?—Do we feel nothing like their inattention to instruction—hearing the word, and not improving under it?—Do we never imitate them in the vile practice of swearing—or in their hypocritical pretences to religion; or do we never feel in ourselves any thing like their envy, their malice, and defamation?—or like their spiritual pride—their lessening their own offences, and diminishing crimes into errors—or  
perhaps



perhaps like their worldly-mindedness and covetousness—or, what is worst of all, their impenitent hardened hearts, and deafness to all the calls of repentance.—If we do find any thing like these vices and bad dispositions in our hearts, let us not lay it to the Scribes and Pharisees, but consider whether our own unrighteousness may not be of a piece with theirs. Let us repent in time, and do every thing in our power to amend, what is like so bad an example. Let it be our great point to hold fast our religious principles. While we preserve these, through God's mercy, we are safe. But when these give way, we may become mere Scribes and Pharisees in our conduct—*our righteousness may not exceed theirs, and we shall, in no case, enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

## S E R M O N VII.

PSALM lxxvii. 6.

IN THE NIGHT I COMMUNE WITH MINE OWN  
HEART.

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**T**HE night is here taken for those times of solitude and silence,—those calm, and quiet seasons, when the busy mind enjoys some pause—when it is uninterrupted by the restless trade of life, and unsolicited by its vanities. In these happy intervals; which the wise man finds as often as he can, and the thoughtless as seldom; *we commune with our own hearts*—we seek into all the little deceits, which are so apt to get entrance there—we set a watch over our thoughts—we bring the mind home to that best of all pursuits, the knowledge of itself—we consider ourselves as the destined inhabitants of another world—we call our sins to remembrance, and endeavour, by our sincere reso-

lutions of amendment, to have no miscarriages to answer for, but such infirmities as may hope forgiveness through the merits of Christ.—If this be not the frequent employment of our retired hours, we can only say, it ought to be.

In pursuing these thoughts, I shall *first* address myself to such as live in the *known breach* of their duty—*secondly*, to such as lead only *careless* lives—and shall, *lastly*, add a diffusive to both.

With regard to the former, it is a wonderful thing, that men born to inherit everlasting happiness should cast this great inheritance behind them, in exchange for what they call a few pleasant years. We see it, and therefore we believe it. If we did not see it, it would be incredible. Such people, in bargaining for an estate, would at once see the difference between a perpetuity, and a short lease. How wonderful then is it to find them so backward in transferring the idea to an infinitely greater concern—the comparison between time and immortality!

If they wish to see things in a better light, and reform their lives—indeed if they chuse to run the risk of dying in their sins, and of the future

punishment that awaits the impenitent sinner, nothing more can be said—but if they have any intention to reform their lives, their first business must be to examine the state of their souls—what sins they have been chiefly led into—where they have been most open to temptation, and least able to oppose it.

Now this is taking no more care about their souls, than any man of sense would take about his house. If his house were in a crazy condition he would carefully examine it. He would find out where the roof was faulty—where the rain got entrance—or where the wall was likely to give way: and would endeavour, immediately, to remedy the defect. Surely then, my friend, it calls—not your wisdom—but even your common sense, in question, if you would not do as much for your soul, as almost any man would do for his house.

Examine therefore into the repairs wanting in your souls. Recollect your sins, and the occasions that commonly lead you into them, that you may make up your accounts with Heaven, before it be too late. These accounts, you will remember, must be made up at one time. You may defer them; but you will recollect, that deferring a debt is only increasing it.

To recal to memory all the sins of a loose and wicked life, would be impossible. But the difficulty of the task should not hinder the attempt. If you have been inconsiderate, and have run deeply into debt, you cannot perhaps reckon up all the particulars of idle expence that have increased it; yet, if you mean to pay, you will take care to recollect all the great sums.

Now the wickedness of most men runs, as it were, in *great sums*. Though you may have many sins to answer for, yet, in some particular way, you are generally most guilty.—You have been given perhaps to cheat your neighbour, which is done, you know, in various ways—or your chief vice may have been drinking to excess—or, perhaps, swearing or falsehood in your conversation; for though a man's prevailing sin is generally connected with other sins, yet his prevailing sin will at least bring to his remembrance his most common offences. Till you are well convinced of the heinous nature of these habitual sins, there is little hope of reformation in other matters.

Together with your sins, it is proper also to consider the various circumstances which may have attended them, and increased their guilt.—Many of them, for instance, may have been injurious  
to

to your neighbour, beyond your power now to recompence. Can you recal the mischievous slander, which you may have sent abroad; and which, with much ill-natured pleasure, is now retailed by numbers through a country? Or can you recollect the various frauds you may have been guilty of, yet unatoned for by a fair restitution?

It may be proper also to consider, how many of your sins have been committed against the clear knowledge of your duty, and the checks of conscience—against the reproof of friends—and contrary to resolutions and vows repeatedly made.

Lastly, it is a consideration of no little weight, that, instead of *making your light shine before men*, you may have thrown an open scandal upon religion by your wicked lives, and have spread it abroad by your example. Parents often corrupt their children, and masters their servants, by the force of example: and yet example is little considered, though it is more powerful than precept; and leads many into guilt, who might have escaped a more direct application!

Thus far I have addressed myself to those among you, who may have *most* to answer for. But they

who cannot recollect any heinous sins, are not, therefore, to think themselves innocent. A careless life will soon become a wicked one. Indeed it is a wicked one, if it be not daily corrected. Where is the man who has not, with all his care, many a smaller sin to recollect?—his warm passions, which are continually flying out into violence—or a covetous inclination, which must be narrowly watched—or a disposition to indolence and pleasure—or perhaps a hardness of heart towards his poor brethren—or a coldness in his devotions—and a want of all heavenly affection.

Of one or other of these wrongnesses, or of something equally bad, all of us, even the best, if he narrowly watch his own heart, will find frequent intimations. But whatever our failings are, we should often recollect them, if we wish to amend them. Let us always remember our Saviour's parable, and ask our hearts, *From whence have they weeds?* Weeds they will have from the native foulness of the soil: but these *weeds*, (though left to themselves, *they* will penetrate deep,) if taken on their first appearance, may be drawn out with a touch.—This is the husbandman's care, and should be ours.

When



When sinners of all denominations have thus before their eyes a view of their sins, one should suppose the next step an easy one—and that they could not help frequently asking themselves, How all this was to conclude?

To what conclusion enormous wickedness leads, is not difficult to shew. Any finger can point out the broad way to destruction. But on what ground the lukewarm Christian stands—where the line is to be drawn between such faults, as God Almighty knows, we may avoid—and such as are merely the infirmities of human nature—is a more difficult point. This however is certain, that no wrongnesses of temper, inclination, passion, or appetite, in which we *knowingly continue*, can on any pretence be called the infirmities of human nature, or can be safe on any ground of Christianity. Every man has his propensity, no doubt, to some wrong inclination: and let us do the best we can, we may often be surpris'd on this blind side. But there is a mighty difference between this and *allowing* any transgression however small. When the *mind consents*—observe—when the *mind consents*—the wrong thought, or wrong action, whatever it is, becomes guilt.

Let us not then be satisfied with *communing with our own hearts*, and merely making good resolutions. The great point is, to put these resolutions in force. It is easy to resolve; the difficulty is to practise. The case is this; when we make our good resolutions, we make them in private—all is calm—nothing disturbs us—we have no temptations to oppose—and of consequence we see the matter in a clear light.—But when we are to put these resolutions in practice, we are engaged in the world—then comes the temptation—each man's darling sin, which must be indulged in this way or that—his passion, which conquers him—the envy—the pride—or the malice of his heart—or his love of gain, which has taken such hold of him that he is unwilling to give it up. In making the resolution, there is none of these difficulties. The mind itself is honest. It sees what is right, and would pursue it. Our first business therefore is, to impose on ourselves. We are unwilling to think the mischief so great as it really is—we find a thousand excuses—various circumstances, which either our particular way of life—the profession we are engaged in—the company we are obliged to keep, or something, which we are willing to hope  
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will make an excuse before God.—Thus we go on from day to day. The year comes round, and the conclusion of it finds us no more advanced in Christian perfection, than we were in the beginning. The same wrongnesses of temper—the same coldness in religion—and the same attachment to the world which prevailed last year, prevail still. At length mortality sinks under us, and we carry all our bad habits and wrong dispositions down with us to the grave.—This is too true a picture of the generality of men,

Having thus addressed myself *first* to those, who live in the known breach of their duty; and, *secondly*, to such chiefly as lead careless lives, I shall now, *lastly*, add a dissuasive to both.

To this purpose, I shall just lay before you, as the most forcible dissuasive I can think of, our blessed Saviour's\* parable of the ten virgins, who went to meet the bridegroom. Five were wise, and five were foolish. All took lamps; but the wise, knowing the bridegroom's approach was uncertain, took oil with them to be in constant readi-

\* Matt. xxv. 1.

ness to trim their lamps whenever occasion should require. The foolish virgins had omitted this precaution.—Thus situated, they all took their repose. But their slumbers were presently disturbed. At midnight a cry was made, “Behold the bridegroom cometh, go you out to meet him\*.” The wise virgins, who were ready at a moment’s warning, instantly trimmed their lamps, and joined the company. But the foolish, having no oil, were thrown into confusion. It was now too late to procure a fresh supply—the bridegroom came—the procession followed—the door was shut—and the foolish virgins were excluded.

I need not tell you, that under the similitude of the wise virgins, are represented those who are truly religious—those *who have communed with their own hearts*—and are always ready to meet the bridegroom—that is, the time of their death, whenever it shall please God to call.—On the other hand, by the foolish virgins are meant those, who are very ready to make good resolutions—they had trimmed their lamps for the present; but their

\* This representation was agreeable to the customs of the Jews, among whom marriages were commonly celebrated in the night; and the bridegroom was carried home by a procession of his friends.

resolutions

resolutions ended in nothing. They had not the wisdom to take oil in their vessels—and their lamps, of course, were soon extinguished.

In the mean time, while the bridegroom tarried, we are told, they *all slumbered and slept*—that is, during the time of their lives upon earth, both the wise and the foolish went about their ordinary business in this world: only with this difference, that the wise had respect to the future, as well as the present. They were ready and prepared, both to live in the world, and also to leave it. Their lamps were not only trimmed for the present, but they had oil for the future.

This being the case of the wise and foolish, now mark the great event. Behold, at midnight, *a cry is made*. This is meant to express the suddenness of death. It does not so much mean an unexpected death, as a death for which *no preparation hath been made*; and this is what we pray against in our litany, when we pray against *sudden death*. They who have their lamps trimmed, or have oil in their vessels ready to trim them, are prepared to meet the bridegroom, and enter with him at once into the marriage chamber. To them death is no surprise.—But with the unprepared it is otherwise. All with them is confusion and distress. In the  
time

time of their health and strength they had never communed with their own hearts. If they had, a guilty retrospect might not now have alarmed them—but they had run their course—their day was over—the door was shut—vain was their cry, Lord, Lord, open to us: A voice answered, “*I know you not—depart from me all ye workers of wickedness.*”—And yet, you see, these were not among the most heinous *workers of wickedness*. They had lighted their lamps with a full resolution to meet the bridegroom. Had they been desperate finners they would wholly have kept back. But this was not the case. They did make a faint effort, but they had not resolution to pursue it. In short, these foolish virgins represent those chiefly who lead careless lives—who wish indeed to go to heaven; but they wish to go thither along the high-way of the world—and if that be not the safest road, it is at least the easiest, and the most pleasant. Thus, as both heaven and the world cannot equally be enjoyed, the future must give way to the present.

The great conclusion which our Saviour draws from the whole, should be an alarming lesson against finners of all denominations. *Watch therefore,*



*fore, for we know neither the day, nor the hour, when the son of man cometh.*

Since therefore, my brethren, this is an hour which we must all, at one time, meet—since, with all our arts and deceits, we cannot escape it, let us prepare for it in time, when we may do it with ease, and comfort, and security. Let not a morning rise upon us without suggesting the awful question, Whether we are prepared to consider that day as our last? Let not an evening draw its shade around us, without reminding us, that the closing of our eyes this night may be the sleep of death.—Thus let us *commune with our own hearts*. Of all the company we can keep, our own hearts are the most improving. The heart is one of those plain, sincere friends, which, unless it be deceived itself, will never deceive us. In communing with it we find the truth. But the truth is not always agreeable. We go rather to the world for company. Here we pass the idle hour, the careless day, the joyous evening. We deal time away as if it were of no value; and get nothing in return except dissipated habits. But in

*communing*



*communing with our own hearts, we learn true wisdom—we become wise for ourselves, and wise for eternity.—God grant we may all so commune with them—that those hearts, so apt to wander among the sundry and manifold things of this world, may surely there at length be fixed, whose true joys are to be found through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

## SERMON VIII.

LUKE, xxi. 3, 4.

OF A TRUTH I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT THIS POOR WIDOW HATH CAST IN MORE THAN THEY ALL: FOR ALL THESE HAVE OF THEIR ABUNDANCE CAST IN UNTO THE OFFERINGS OF GOD, BUT SHE OF HER PENURY HATH CAST IN ALL THE LIVING THAT SHE HAD.

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**A**S our blessed Saviour was passing with his disciples through one of the courts of the Temple, he observed the people throwing their offerings into the treasury. The treasury here meant was a chest with an opening at the top to collect the alms of the people, which were intended to furnish necessaries for the Temple-service; the overplus was given to the poor. Into this chest many who were rich threw plentifully. But among them came a poor widow, we read, who  
threw

threw in what she had, not more in value than a farthing. Jesus turning to his disciples, said, *Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.*

From these words I shall examine, *first*, what gave so singular a value to the slender offering of this poor woman.—And shall, *secondly*, apply her case to ourselves.

In the *first* place, what gave value to her offering was, her giving *all she could*. But here is a little difficulty. It is said, she gave *all her living*. Now if she had literally done that, it is plain, she would have made herself a greater object than those she wished to relieve, which there is no reason to suppose. Besides, the sum was so small, that she could not possibly have *lived* upon it, if she *had kept it all to herself*. For though the sum mentioned would have purchased considerably more at that time, than the same sum would purchase now, yet it is mentioned as a very small sum, and undoubtedly was not proportioned to a livelihood. It will  
remove

Remove the difficulty, if we suppose this little sum was either all she had about her—or all the provision she had made for her next meal; which she might probably have denied herself for the sake of a charitable action: so that in either sense, she may be said to have given what she had.

But now, all that is mentioned in scripture to the credit of this worthy woman is, that she *gave all she could*: yet as one virtue is generally accompanied with others, it may reasonably be supposed, that in all *other* respects she *did* all she could. God places mankind, for the benefit of society, in various stations. Of course, he gives them various means and opportunities of performing their duty: and according to these he expects a return. So that the poor man, who faithfully discharges the trust, however small, which God hath given him, does all, however little, which God requires. In *giving*, the poor widow gave all she could: but as we have supposed the same good principle ran through all the offices of her life, she was, no doubt, *exemplary* in them all.

Merely, therefore, *doing what she did*, would not have entitled her to commendation, unless she had *done it on a good motive*. It is not so much the action which God regards, as the good motive on

which the action is performed. The Christian religion therefore is a religion of *motives*. Faith in Christ is the great *mean*; and to please God, the great *motive* on which all our actions should be performed. This gives a value to the meanest trifle. Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, if we do it *to the glory of God*—that is, with a sincere desire to please God, it will be accepted. Even in common life, the motive gives a value to the action. If a person does you an act of kindness, you are grateful. But if you have just ground to believe, he did it not to serve *you* but *himself*—or through vanity perhaps—or some other motive, your gratitude towards him decreases in proportion to your knowledge of the unfriendliness of the motive. On the other hand, if you should be received at the time of some extremity, in the cottage of the poorest person, who should set before you the meanest fare, but with the best good-will to assist you, and where there could be no self-interest to serve, your heart would in earnest feel the kindness, and attest it with gratitude.

Our heavenly Father accepts *our* motives in the same manner—only with him there is this difference: He sees all our motives at once; whereas  
men

men only guess at the motives of each other; and therefore ought to be cautious in assigning them.— Thus then, however religious our actions may appear to men, if they do not proceed from a motive of duty, and a desire to please God, they are unacceptable in his sight.—Every action, in short, is made up of two parts—the *deed* itself—and the *motive*, or intention, on which the deed was performed. The law considers only the *deed*. If you commit a trespass against your neighbour, though you had no intention to do it, you must abide the consequence. The gospel is more gentle. It considers the intention more than the deed; inasmuch as it takes cognizance of the heart, which the law cannot do.—In all our actions therefore, it is the motive which gives them value in the sight of God: and this, no doubt, was the case of the widow's mite. It would not otherwise have been accepted

Having thus seen, that the poor widow *did more than they* all, by doing *what she could*, and likewise by doing it on *a good motive*, let me now, as I proposed, *secondly*, apply her case to ourselves.

In the first place we are to imitate her by doing

all we can. But some may say, we can never be certain of doing all we can. A man hardly knows what he can do; and to be always on the stretch to do our utmost, is more than can be expected from *human nature*.

Then God does not expect it from *you*. No doubt, if we go to the rigour of the case, no man does his utmost. We must all therefore trust in God to make merciful allowances for our infirmities; and in the merits of Christ to make atonement for them.—But though it is true, no man does the utmost he *can*, yet it behoves him not to make this an excuse for doing less than he *might*. If the poor widow had said, as I have but little, God cannot expect any thing from me, she would have fallen short of the commendation she received. And we may always be sure we do less than we might, when we offend against our *known duty*. Though a man cannot always, perhaps, practise what he knows he ought to do, yet he may always leave undone what he knows he ought *not* to do. He is under no necessity to swear, for instance—to drink—to cheat—to break the sabbath.—What difference is there among men! Some with much, do little: others with little, do much. When we see a labouring man carrying with him a sense of religion



religion through his busy day—when we see him industrious and content—not looking beyond his station, but behaving properly in it—when we see him careful to instruct his family as well as he can, constant at church, and generally finding a little time in an evening to read his Bible, we see a character of as much dignity as human nature can exhibit. What a contrast between him and numbers whom we see daily abusing the abundance God hath given them, merely in gratifying themselves; and going out of the world without leaving one trace behind them of any good they have done in it! With a single mite the humble labourer has done *more than they all*.

Let us then all do what may reasonably be supposed the utmost we can. Our gracious Master hath set us all our tasks—our several stations in life are our tasks—talents they are sometimes called in scripture—and God expects nothing from us beyond the abilities he hath given. If he expect bounty from the rich man; from the poor man he expects only his mite. All we have is of God's giving. Our best returns are of course his due.

But we farther see, my brethren, that if we wish to please God, we are not only to do all we can, but we are to do it on a *good motive*. The

very same action may be done with a good intention, or a bad intention—it may be done to serve some selfish purpose; or it may be done to serve a poor neighbour, which God considers as if done to himself. But unless our intention be good, we have seen the *action alone* can never be pleasing to God. It is what, according to some false ideas of religion, is called the *work done*—the form or ceremony stands for the duty. The prayer is enough, though the heart is unconcerned. The alms-deed is sufficient, whatever the motive is. And thus, it is to be feared, we dignify many actions with the name of *good*, when perhaps not the least good belongs to them.

When, therefore, you do any action which you wish to be a religious one, consider on what motive you do it. Your heart will tell you its value. As you bring gold to the touchstone, bring the action to the heart. If you are there assured you do it with a good intention; that is, without any design of serving yourself, or gaining praise, but merely to please God, or assist your neighbour, you may hope it *will* be pleasing to God. But still you must not presume upon it, and suppose you derive any merit from doing it. That will again spoil all.—Besides, the heart is very deceitful;

ceitful; and you may easily deceive yourself. A bad motive, without care in examining it, may easily pass for a good one. I have known many unthrifty people spend much of their money in trifles; and when they have been checked, would answer, they did it to encourage trade and industry. Is that your real *motive*, my friend? If not, do not add hypocrisy to folly.

Let it then always be our care to ask ourselves what is our intention in every action which we mean to be religious. For what purpose do I go to church? Is it really out of conscience to pay my devotion to God?—For what purpose do I go to the sacrament? Is it really to remember the death of my blessed Saviour, and to make resolutions against sin? With what view do I give alms to a poor neighbour? Is it really to relieve him, without any other intention but that of pleasing God?—In this way let us call ourselves to account, endeavouring always to please God by the *secret motive*, rather than man by the *outward action*.—I will not say, that a person need think his actions disagreeable to God, if he have not the religious motive continually in his mind. When the benevolent, and religious habit is formed, the action follows of course; and, if we are sure we

have *no interested motive* in view, it may be enough.

Having thus seen what gave value to the widow's mite—and how we ought to apply her case to ourselves, I shall draw the whole to a conclusion, by observing, how very comfortable a doctrine this portion of scripture holds out to people in low condition. We see they have it just as much in their power to render an acceptable service to God, as those in the richest circumstances. If God Almighty accepted the services of those only, who had much to give, the case of the poor would be hard. But he hath enabled the poor, you see, to give a value even to a mite. And in another place, the same doctrine is inculcated, where we are told, even of a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, shall have its reward; the *motive*, not the *value* of the gift, is considered.

Who would not endeavour then to please his gracious Master, when he can do it at so easy a price? When he has it in his power to give a value to a mere trifle. You sow your corn for increase, and are rejoiced if you have a good harvest. But what abundant increase may your good actions produce?

produce? A mite, properly sown, may increase ten thousand fold. However low our circumstances are, we may make them, if we please, as acceptable to God as any circumstances in which we could have been placed.—The story of Dives and Lazarus will illustrate all I have said. Lazarus, who had nothing, but a good disposition, was received into *Abraham's bosom*; while Dives, who possessed every thing, *but that*, was condemned to a *place of torment*.

God grant us all grace thus to lay up our treasure in heaven, and by making every action of our lives, as far as we can, agreeable to him, may we finally obtain the blessed reward of those, who do God's will, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

## SERMON IX.

MATT. V. 4.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS  
IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

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**T**HE *kingdom of heaven* is here promised, you find, to *poorness of spirit*.

In the following discourse I shall, *first*, endeavour to explain to you in what this holy temper consists—I shall, *secondly*, shew you, that it is both a reasonable, and a Christian temper—and, *thirdly*, I shall point out the happiness of those who have attained it.

With regard to the meaning of the expression, *poorness of spirit*, (which may be better translated *humility of spirit* \*,) it hath but an ill name in the

\* See Parkhurst's Lexicon on the word *πτωχος*.

world.

world. In the ears of few people it sounds like a virtue, but rather gives the idea of a low cowardly temper, that will submit to any man's humour, and bear any indignity without feeling it. I know not how interpreters come at this sense of the expression. In no part of scripture, that I recollect, are we forbidden to feel an injury, or to shew a proper resentment\*. What is enjoined in scripture on that head is, to pass over many little matters, which the world is apt to consider as injuries. So that before we allow ourselves to resent, we must be well assured the matter is worth resenting. It is not every trifling offence that should come under the head of an injury. We must, in most cases, *turn the other cheek*—we must expose ourselves again to such little injuries, rather than resent them.—And even with regard to the greatest injuries, we are forbidden to return evil for evil; we are enjoined to be open to the first tender of reconciliation, and to be ready, on the repentance of an adversary, to forgive the greatest injuries.

Again; this humbled spirit hath no necessary connection with a low condition of life. A rich man may possess it, and a poor man want it. Their

\* See John, xviii. 23.—Acts, xxiii. 3.—Acts, xvi. 37, &c.



condition in life makes no difference. Only indeed this virtue, as many others, is not so easily attained by a rich man.

This gentle virtue, therefore, naturally connected with no state of life, is a holy disposition of mind: it is of Christian origin, unknown in any class of *mere moral* duties; and is opposed chiefly to the two great vices of *worldly-mindedness* and *pride*, both which are often dressed up in the garb of virtues.

When we consider *poorness of spirit* as opposed to *worldly-mindedness*, it signifies our fitting loose to the things of this world—it signifies our being so little solicitous about them, that if it should please God to take them from us, we could be well contented without them—or if we have them, that we are ready to resign them, either when God thinks fit to deprive us of them, or when we cannot keep them with a good conscience. *Poorness of spirit*, when thus opposed to *worldly-mindedness*, is neither more nor less than that state so desirable by all Christians, which the apostle Paul calls *being absent from the body, and present with the Lord*: or, as we have it from the same high authority, it is *setting our affections on things above, not on things of the earth*.

Again,

Again, when it is opposed to *pride*, it signifies a low opinion of ourselves—of our understanding—of our acquirements—and religious attainments. The poor in spirit is always ready to prefer others to himself, because he knows more of himself, than he does of others. Nor does he take offence when he sees a preference given to them. And indeed this is so much the case, that it is a kind of proof, whether he possess this Christian spirit. If on seeing any one preferred to him, or more respected, he feels any resentment, he may depend upon it, his resentment is founded in pride. And though he may be so much master of himself as to conceal the *proud looks*, of which David speaks; yet he certainly cannot apply to himself the remaining part of the description, in *refraining his soul, and keeping it low, even as a weaned child*. The poor in spirit hath none of this pride either in his behaviour, or in his opinions. His own deficiencies always come forward in his thoughts, and stifle every rising sentiment of his own importance. He laments them, instead of wishing to see them exalted; and humbly hopes, that by admiring the virtues of others, instead of degrading them, he may improve his own heart, by copying the good which he sees in them.

Such

Such is the *nature* of poorness of spirit. Let us, *secondly*, consider it both as a *reasonable* and a *Christian* temper.

First, if we consider it as opposed to *worldly-mindedness*, it is certainly *reasonable*.—There is one great mistake in life, which men in general are too apt to fall into; and that is to consider themselves as made up only of *body*: they think of their *souls* only as mere secondary parts of themselves—or, if they think of them at all—as mere appendages of the body.—Now, if you allow this to *be* a great mistake in life, as I suppose you all will, you must, at the same time, see how *unreasonable* it is to think of nothing but worldly matters; because worldly matters relate only to your bodies, and have no concern with your *souls*.—Again, the *reasonableness* of this virtue is strongly enforced by Christianity, which enjoins us, in a hundred passages, to *mortify our members upon earth*—to *beware of covetousness*—and to consider seriously, that *if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*:—for as the end of the Christian religion is, to bring straying man to his true happiness—to purify his affections, and fit him for a heavenly state—we should fit loose to the world, and consider ourselves as *strangers and pilgrims*

*pilgrims upon earth, girding up our loins, and being always ready to take our departure to our heavenly home.—Such is the language of Christianity!*

Nor is *poorness of spirit*, as opposed to *worldly-mindedness*, more a reasonable and a Christian virtue, than when opposed to *pride*.—Pride must certainly appear very *unreasonable* to every man, who will be at the pains of considering himself as he bought, in the two lights of a *creature* and a *sinner*.

That man is a *creature*, is a very *reasonable* ground for humility. We usually think it a humbling consideration to remind a person of the meanness of his birth. But as to that matter, we are all much on a level; and may all, with equal justice be reminded of the meanness of our birth, for we all sprang from nothing. The world, it is true, makes a great matter of *birth and family*; and, merely in a political light, some consideration may be due to these distinctions. But *they who possess them*, should always consider them in a moral light; and whatever respect others may pay to these distinctions for the sake of order in society, the possessors should totally disclaim it in their own hearts. With this world the rules of society end. In a moral light, we are all on an equality: and equally depend

depend as much for our existence on the will of our Creator, as the image in the glass on the person who stands before it. And shall such a creature be proud? For God's sake of what? unless we can be so absurd as to be proud of having nothing.—We often laugh at the *appearance of pride* in certain animals of the brute creation. We laugh, because we think such appearances ridiculous in creatures so contemptible; but alas! we only deride ourselves.

Man, therefore, as a *creature*, hath sufficient cause to be humble: but if he consider himself as a *sinner* likewise, he hath then abundant. In truth, the best of us knows enough of himself to make him humble.—Whoever thou art, whose secret thoughts are inclined to pride, review thy past life. Hath none of thine actions been barefacedly wicked? It is well. But let not that raise thy pride.—Proceed a step farther; review thy private intentions—thy absurd schemes of worldly vanity—the motives of *those* actions, which look fair to the world—the envy, the malice, or the hatred, which lodge in thy wicked heart, and that innumerable train of follies which are floating about it from morning till night.—Review all this, and if thou dost not find enough to make thee humble, I fear  
 thou

thou either knowest nothing of the nature of sin and folly, or thou hast taken only a very slight review of thy heart.

Poorness of spirit, opposed to pride, appearing thus to be a *reasonable* virtue, few words will shew it to be a *Christian* one also. It is, indeed, in the strongest manner enforced upon us in Scripture, both by precept and example. In one place, we are told, that *God resisteth the proud*—in another we are enjoined *to cloath ourselves with humility*—in a third, *not to be high minded*—in a fourth, *to be meek and lowly in heart*; and in a hundred others to the same purpose—all which precepts are only different ways of enjoining that duty, which the text calls *poorness of spirit*. Indeed, to say the truth, there is no duty in the Gospel so often recommended to us as humility—both because it is difficult to be attained; and because it is the foundation of all other virtues. Instruction does not easily approach the heart of that man, who already thinks highly of himself.

Again, we have a variety of examples in Scripture of this virtue. John the Baptist was an eminent instance of humility.—Such also was the Virgin Mary, who received the high favours of God with that meek humility, which shewed how de-



erving she was of them.—St. Paul also was a remarkable example of humility.—Many other instances might be produced: but our Saviour himself may stand for all: and indeed from his taking every opportunity to give a lesson of humility in his *own life*, (which with regard to himself was surely needless,) we may judge how very necessary he thought humility in all his followers. Nothing certainly ought to act more strongly upon us than these Scriptural examples. If these holy persons thought humility so necessary to *them*, what ought *we* to think?

Having thus explained the *nature* of poorness of spirit, and shewn you that it is both a *reasonable* and a *Christian* virtue, I shall, *lastly*, shew you the happiness it leads to.

In the first place, from what distresses of various kinds must that man be free, who is convinced of the vanity of all worldly things, and lives entirely to God. He is free not only from the distresses which attend the frequent disappointment of his wishes; but from the distress of finding, when they are obtained, they do not answer his expectations. It is an undoubted truth, that every man,  
sooner.



fooner or later, will find the world to be a scene of disappointment. Some men find out this truth early. Others are many years in finding it out. And many never find it out at all, till at the close of life, it forces itself upon them. Happy is that man, who can learn this great truth at a cheaper rate than by suffering from it—who can be *convinced* before *disappointment* convinces him. Such a man is above the world. The world cannot hurt *him*. To him it is of no consequence, whether it flatters or frowns.—And though it is the height of religion only, which can carry us thus far—much farther than the generality of people go, yet every endeavour is something; and, by the blessing of God, and holy hope in the joys of religion, we may arrive, by degrees, at greater attainments.

Then again, as to *pride*, it is certainly a most uneasy companion. The proud man never meets with that respect which he thinks his due. He has so high an opinion of himself, that all the respect you *can* pay him, falls short of what he thinks you *should* pay him, and all the deficiency becomes matter of distress. In short, no man can enjoy what he really is, when he thinks himself something *more* than he is. Nor can any man enjoy

*himself*, when he puts his happiness in the hands of *others*.

But perhaps example may be instructive in this point also. There is a story in Scripture strong to our purpose. It is the story of Haman, contained in the book of Esther.

Haman was the next person in the kingdom of Persia to the king himself. Every thing that wealth and power could give, Haman possessed. But—there was one thing, which, amidst all his possessions, cruelly hurt him. It is true, he was a bad man, and wanted the joys of religion: but the joys of religion entered not into Haman's ideas of happiness. That was not the matter. His happiness was all centered in the things of this world. He had them all; but yet still was unhappy. What then could be the cause of his unhappiness? —He was ashamed to tell. The text says, he *restrained* himself; that is, he was ashamed, like other fools of the same kind, to let the world see his folly. But, when he got among his particular friends, the mighty secret came out. Mordecai, the Jew, had not paid him that reverence which he expected.

Now, you can all see the folly of Haman, in suffering

fering the happiness of his life to be thus disturbed by such a trifling incident, as the want of a bow from Mordecai the Jew. But yet the case is not so uncommon as to surprise us. There is something in human nature that teacheth us all to believe, we are of more consequence than we really are. Hence arise a number of those little quarrels and disgusts, and offence taken at trifles, which we often see among people even in the lowest stations. Few of us have that modest opinion of ourselves which we ought to have. There is nothing indeed so trifling, my good neighbours, which pride cannot turn into as ridiculous an offence, as the want of a bow from Mordecai the Jew.

Now poorness of spirit, which is recommended in the text, is the proper cure of all these evils. It renders us mild and gentle, and humble and contented. It is the very garb of a Christian—that wedding-garment, which every one of us *must* put on who attends his Lord.

Let us then close with the text—close with it in the fulness of our hearts—*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven—It*

is theirs in every sense of the words. Theirs is peace and quietness on earth—theirs is that holy disposition, which is the foundation of every Christian virtue—theirs is all the happiness of this world; and all those joys which are promised in the next.

## SERMON X.

MATT. V. 13.

YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

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**W**HAT our Saviour means by *salt*, is very plain. As salt is a preservative against corruption, whatever corrects the wickedness of the world, may be called the *salt of the earth*.—This is easy; but there is rather a difficulty in ascertaining to whom the expression is applied. Some think Jesus spoke only to his immediate disciples; and in them, to the ministers of the Gospel. Others suppose, he addressed Christians in general. As all Christians, I conceive, may be of use to each other in correcting their several faults, I shall take the words in their more enlarged sense: and dividing mankind into *higher* and *lower* ranks, I shall *first* shew you how the former; and, *secondly*,

how the latter, are capable of being the *salt of the earth*.

We consider *first* the higher ranks. If any of these are such unthinking and ungrateful people, as to suppose God hath placed them in a higher station merely on their own account—or given them a right to spend *on themselves alone* what they enjoy, we argue no longer with them. They must settle all these accounts with God at the last great day. But if they have such humility and gratitude to their Almighty Benefactor, as to believe their superior stations are given them merely to be of use to others, we can then speak to them with confidence.

We are not however now inquiring so much into their general disposition to do good, as into the peculiar capacity, which their station gives them, of correcting the morals of those under their influence. This they may effect in three principal ways—by *encouraging religion*—by *reproving wickedness*—and by *setting a good example*.

When the man of wealth and power sees an orderly religious family in his neighbourhood, he takes it in a particular manner under his patronage. He does good offices, as he sees opportunity, sometimes to one part of the family, and some-  
times

times to another; and though he does not confine his good offices to such people, yet he encourages religion by shewing his neighbours that he always makes a distinction, in his favours, between good and bad.

Again, in *reproving wickedness*, his *discountenance* alone will go a great way. He can oblige, and disoblige so many, that numbers look up to him, and are afraid of offending him. It is a melancholy reflection, (but a true one,) that man is often more respected than God. Of this, however, the rich man endeavours to avail himself, by discountenancing wickedness. — Among such people as are more nearly connected with him, his reproof has still more the force of authority. “ If you do not leave off swearing, or drinking, you and I must part,” is a reproof, it is to be feared, that will have a better effect than a text of Scripture.

But the rich man's *example* qualifies him still more than any thing else, for being the *salt of the earth*. An orderly family, in a great house, tends much to diffuse a sense of order around the neighbourhood. When the heads of a parish make a practice of going to church, for instance, the lower people commonly lay aside many excuses, which might otherwise be made for neglecting the sabbath.



In many other cases, the *example* of a respectable family hath its weight. We cannot therefore but regret, that the call of pleasure carries such numbers to the Capital, where that influence is lost in a crowd, which might be extensively useful in a parish.

But if the *good example* of the rich and powerful hath not always the effect that might be wished, their *bad example* never fails of having a mischievous one. The wickedness of human nature is always glad of an excuse; and the example of a superior is generally thought a good one. Every vice, or incorrectness of behaviour in him, is multiplied by its effect on others; and how far he may not have the sins of other people to answer for, whom he corrupts by his bad example, is a question I should not undertake to resolve. Wicked people therefore in high stations, instead of being the *salt of the earth*, are among the very worst sources of its corruption.

But the rich and powerful are not the only persons who are enabled to be the *salt of the earth*. Even the lowest amongst us may do something towards amending the world. If every one would

amend himself, nothing more would be wanting. But as that is not to be expected, our Saviour's next rule is, that we should endeavour to amend each other. Let me then point out to you, as I proposed, *secondly*, how the lowest amongst us may contribute to this good end.

It will naturally be expected, that a man should *first* have a regard for religion himself, before he can induce others to regard it. If he have such a regard, he will naturally desire, not only to consort with those who are like himself, but one should hope, would wish to make all like himself with whom he consorts. But it is too true a remark, that the wicked man is more assiduous in corrupting, than the religious man in reforming. Indeed his task is somewhat easier. He has nature on his side. The reformer works up-hill.—A few rules however may be of service to him.

In the first place, he will endeavour, where he can, to *instruct*: and though instructing may not be his talent, yet there are opportunities, when most good people, however low, may throw in a word of advice. If the heart be really impressed with religion, religious sentiments will as naturally flow from it on every occasion, as oaths and imprecations from a profane one. And some of this  
good

good seed may, perhaps, now and then, take effect even in an ill-disposed heart. When a poor young fellow is beginning to frequent the ale-house—or to neglect the church—or now and then swears an oath—before any of these bad practices are formed into habits, a little advice from a person on an equal footing with himself, may sometimes have more weight than from persons of more learning and authority. When he, who gives the advice, is in the same circumstances with him who receives it, he is supposed to know the case better, and to speak more from experience. A little advice therefore from such a person, may often give a happy turn to a wavering mind, and change its direction. When two roads meet, it depends on a very little matter—merely, you know, on the turn of a bridle, whether the horseman get right or wrong; and if any good person happen to give him a right direction at first, he may continue in it to the end of his journey. Thus, by pointing out one road, which led to ruin, and another which led to credit, you may perhaps influence some wavering young man to turn to the right, and escape the mischief which would infallibly have met him on the left.

But

But though every one, my neighbours, may not be able to promote religion by *giving advice*, yet every one may certainly promote it by *discouraging wickedness*. You must often, in the course of business, work with bad people, and it cannot be helped. But if you keep your thoughts to yourself, and do not join in any of the wickedness you see, or hear, there is no harm done yet. On other occasions, I should advise you to *keep company*, as little as possible, with any one who shews a wicked disposition. If all well-disposed people would only go thus far, it would give religion a great advantage. For it is the countenance which wickedness meets with—at least the want of that discountenance it deserves, which makes wickedness, in these days, so bold and impudent. You see your neighbour, for instance, much given to swearing and profaneness—perhaps to drinking—perhaps to profligate idleness, and the neglect of his family—or to some other vice. Now, if such people are treated on the common footing of acquaintance, it certainly encourages them in their wickedness. They do not find they lose any ground in the world; and this takes off greatly from the shame of vice. But if they should see people shy of them, and consider them, while they continue in their  
wicked

wicked courses, as accursed from God, and not fit for the company of sober Christians, it would make them look about, and think their case not quite a desirable one.

If you were to meet a man infected with the plague, you would fly from him as a person dangerous. But in that case, you have only one motive—the fear of being infected yourself : but in guarding against a wicked person, who is infected with a still worse plague, you have two motives for avoiding him. You are not only afraid of being infected yourself, but you wish also to cure him of his infection.

But though in business, or upon particular occasions, it may not be in your power to avoid bad people, yet in their *amusements* they may always be avoided. I should particularly therefore warn you, never to partake with them in any of their diversions. When you are at work, you are intent on your business, and there is less danger : but in the gaiety of diversion, the mind is open, and too ready to receive impressions from the profane oath, or indecent jest. It behoves all, therefore, who wish to be the *salt of the earth*, to avoid such ensnaring intercourse.

There

There is still one way more, in which a Christian, though in the lowest station, may be the *salt of the earth*; and that is by setting a good example.

Now, though a good example in low people does not spread so wide, as when it is adorned with wealth and power, yet still it will have its effect. There is something so pleasing in a good example, that it draws respect even from the wicked. When people see others living as they ought to live, who have had no more opportunities than themselves have had, it makes them (if any thing can make them) ashamed. It holds a glass before them, and by shewing them what they ought to be, must make them, in some degree, think meanly of what they are. Contempt of themselves may draw on reformation. It will at least be some restraint on wickedness.—I have heard of a little knot of cottages, the inhabitants of which were amongst the most regular and orderly in the whole parish. This regularity of behaviour was said to be owing chiefly to an excellent man, a day-labourer, who had long lived among them, and whose example, like a good book, was always open before them. From it they learned, that industry and frugality turned poverty into plenty—that contentment, rather than  
large



large possessions, produced happiness—that frequenting the ale-house was dishonesty to their families—and that the fear of God turned every thing into a blessing.—All this they learned chiefly from an amiable example, which brought instruction closer to the heart, than any language could have done.

Thus, my brethren, we may, in our Saviour's language, be the *salt of the earth*—by throwing in, as we have opportunity, a little advice—by discouraging wickedness—by never joining in diversions with bad people—and by setting, on all occasions, a good example. Now in all this there is nothing, but what every one of you, more or less, are enabled to do. For, as our blessed Saviour knew what was in man, you cannot suppose he would give you any advice, which you were not able to follow.—There is one place, however, where there can be no pretence for not following this advice—and that is in your families at home. Parents may at least instruct their children, and masters their servants—they may discourage wickedness among them, and set them a good example: and if every one, who has a family, would only do this, it would greatly contribute to purify the world from that mass of corruption with which  
our



our Saviour's advice supposes it to be over-  
spread.

Since then, my brethren, we are all, high and low, in some degree, qualified to assist in lessening this mass of corruption, by being the *salt of the earth*, let us not be backward in doing what we can. If any of you should see your neighbour's fences injured, and his corn laid open to trespassing cattle, he would be ready, I doubt not, to give him immediate information; or, perhaps, if he could easily do it, would see the fence made up himself.— This would only be *good neighbourhood*. Turn it into *religion*. What infinitely greater service would you do your neighbour, and at the expence of less trouble to yourself, by endeavouring as earnestly to keep sin from trespassing on his soul, as cattle from his field?

Hereafter, my brethren, when all the blessed meet in a state of happiness, what joy will it be to every one, who can see among them, any whom he has been instrumental in having saved from destruction. With what pleasure he may apply to

himself what the holy apostle says, *He who converteth a sinner from the evil of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

## SERMON XI.

Preached in the Time of great Dearth.

ISAIAH, xxvi. 9.

WHEN THY JUDGMENTS ARE ABROAD IN THE  
WORLD, THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH  
LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

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**G**OD's judgments, my brethren, *are now* abroad in the world. In many parts the calamities of war and pestilence are severely felt. God's judgments are severely felt also among ourselves. The critical state of our public affairs is a heavy judgment. The distress of the poor in this time of dearth, comes still nearer home. Let me then take up the prophet's words, and exhort you all, from the melancholy symptoms of the times, to *learn righteousness*. Let me *first* address you in general; and, *secondly*, the *rich*, and *poor* in *particular*. The admonition belongs to all.

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Let us then, *first*, my brethren, with gratitude to God, look back on happier times. Happier times we all have known; when God blessed us with peace and plenty: when provisions and labour kept pace with each other.—Such times we all remember: but do we remember our behaviour under these blessings of Providence? Can we say, when God's *blessings* were abroad in the world, that we *learned righteousness*? I fear not. Were we thankful to God for his mercies? Did we receive them with that gratitude which leads to a religious life? or did not God's bountiful mercies increase our sins, and tempt us to turn plenty into licentiousness?

As the kindness of Providence therefore hath had so little effect upon us, what should we naturally expect?—Let us answer ourselves. How should we treat a child, who continued to return our indulgence with disobedience? We should certainly, if kindness had no effect, try harsher measures.—And can we not in this, trace the Almighty's behaviour to us? If we will not learn righteousness from his *blessings*, we must surely expect his *judgments*. It is not *justice* merely; it is the same *kindness*, which directs our own severity to an undutiful child.—Let it then, my brethren,

have its effect. If we regard not God's *mercies*, let us at least stand in awe of his *judgments*—let them teach us to obey his laws—to trust in him for our support—to consider this world, and all its afflictions, as our trial—and look up to heaven for our reward.

Thus far the text applies to us *in general*. We all want the *judgments* of God—or, at least, his correcting hand in some shape, to draw us to our duty.—But now, my brethren, in this time of distress, there are *particular*, as well as *general* duties: the *rich* have their peculiar duties, and the *poor* have theirs.—Let us first reason a little with the *rich*.

The first great question is, By what tenure do you hold your possessions?

You answer, By the laws of the land. You have received your property by inheritance; or you have gained it by your own industry; and the laws of the land secure you in the possession of it.

It is true, my friend, the laws of the land secure you from the violence of bad men. They leave you also at liberty to spend your property as you please. You may hoard it—or you may squander it. With all this the law does not interfere.—But

you surely mistake the matter greatly, if you suppose the law of the land is the real tenure, by which you hold your possessions. You do not surely exclude God Almighty; but consider him as lord paramount. You must not therefore, in the pride of your heart, consider yourself as the *real proprietor* of what you possess. God knows, that at best you are only a *poor tenant at will*.— You remember, perhaps, the story of the rich landlord, *whose grounds brought forth plenteously*. He filled his barns with their produce, and as corn did not yet bear a price that invited him to sell, he satisfied himself with glorying in his future prospects. He was fully secured by the laws of the land, which was all the security he wished, and thought of nothing now but of plenty and happiness. Poor wretch! having not taken the great Lord, under whom he held, into the question, he was suddenly dismissed from his possessions, with this short sentence, *Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee* \*.

This point then being acknowledged, that God Almighty is the great proprietor of all we enjoy, the next question is, on what terms do we hold

\* Luke, xii. 16.

our possessions under him? The rich man cannot be so absurd as to suppose, God gives *him* more than he gives to *others*, merely for *his own sake*: or, what is the same thing, that God gives him, for his own sake, the means and opportunities through which he acquires his possessions? Does he suppose that God Almighty has a greater regard for him, because he is rich, than for the poorest man in the parish? Not in the least, he may be assured. God's favour does not follow riches, but goodness. —His own merit therefore being set aside, it follows, that some better reason should be assigned by the rich man, for the peculiar favour which God bestows on him. Let us examine the matter.

God, like other lords paramount, if I may so express myself, prescribes to his tenants certain conditions, by which they hold their several grants or leases; under which the world, like a great estate, is let out, as it were, in farms of different value. These are our different stations in life, without which the world could no more subsist, than a country, if all the property of it were in one hand. The world, therefore, must consist both of rich and poor. This inequality however God equalises, by appointing the rich his stewards, with strict injunctions to attend to the necessities



of the poor, and not only to give them wages for their labour, but to be watchful to prevent their wants. And though God Almighty does not always call his steward to so short an account, as the stewards of this world are sometimes called, but gives them opportunity to repent—yet undoubtedly a time will come, when every rich man must give an account of his stewardship, when his fidelity in his trust will be examined, and he shall be told, *he must be no longer steward.* It is dishonestly to God, if he do not spend what God intrusts to him, in the manner in which God directs. And surely it is as great a piece of knavery to defraud God, as to cheat man. As certainly therefore as the laws of the land will punish one kind of dishonesty, the laws of the gospel will punish the other. The laws of the land may be evaded; but the laws of the gospel never can.

This is a doctrine, however, which the rich man is little inclined to hear. He values his title to his estate from man, much more than his title to it from God; and is readier on all occasions to consult his lawyer, than his bible. The great statute book, which prescribes the conditions of his tenure, may state, *What hast thou that thou didst not receive? and if thou didst receive it, why dost*  
*thou*

SERMON XI. 121

*thou act, as if thou hadst not received it?* Alas! so far is the rich man from acknowledging the conditions of his lease, that he seldom acknowledges even the very title of his great landlord who lets it to him.—As to the man who has gained his affluence by rapine, fraud, or knavery of any kind, he indeed receives nothing from God. He receives wages from another master; and while he continues in *his* service, to *that master* we must refer him for a recompence.

But now, my brethren, in times of scarcity, (I speak now to such rich men as acknowledge their heavenly allegiance,) God expects more from his stewards of all denominations, than this *general benevolence*. Every man should give in proportion to the property which God hath intrusted to him; but no man is so loudly called on to this charitable office as the land-holder. Others give out of their *income*; the land-holder out of his *profit*. He who gets more than double a saving profit from his corn, may well afford to let a few of his needy neighbours have a morsel from his granaries. Corn brought to a market, must be sold at a market price. But as it is high, and beyond the reach of the poor, the compassionate land-holder should give up a little of his profit,  
in

in gratitude to that God, who has given him so much. He will still have a plentiful provision left.—Even letting the poor have a *small* quantity at a *full price*, would be some advantage. They could mix it with other grain, and get their bread cheaper than by going to the shop: but this cannot always be had. The load is often so exactly made up, that not a bushel remains.

But still farther; the land-holder should consider, that whether he holds his lands under God; or, as he perhaps rather puts it, under the law, in both cases he holds them merely for the *sake of furnishing food*. Men have various stations, and various appointments: the only use of *land* is to furnish *food for the country*. The possessor holds it then merely for this very purpose; and, in fact, is as much bound in justice—in *strict justice*—to consider his land in this light, as the labourer is to plough and dig for his wages. When a harvest fails, corn will naturally bear a higher price; and no one can murmur. The reasonable profit of one year may be proper to answer the bad returns of another. But if tricks and arts be used by the land-holder to make the price enormous—if his end be to *feed the market*, instead of *feeding the country*—I fear he is a fraudulent dealer; and we  
may

may with too much justice apply to him the scriptural deprecation, *He that withholdeth his corn, the people shall curse him; but blessing shall be upon the head of him who selleth it\**. Nor alone will the people curse him; he must remember that his knavery has still another sentence to undergo.

Some hoarder of corn, or feeder of the market, may perhaps say, I am obliged to use these arts. My taxes are high, and I must make myself whole by the sale of my corn. It has been said. But, pray, my friend, are not every body's taxes equally high? Is it not for your own security you pay your taxes? and are not you blessed with a security, which hardly any nation, besides ourselves enjoy? Will you then make the poor pay for your security? Will you add to their distresses, by grinding their faces, to make them pay your taxes?—God protect them from such hardened avarice!

I have only one point more to settle with the rich—and that is, with regard to sumptuous and expensive entertainments, in which much, no doubt, is wasted, and much consumed in palatable dishes, which might have given necessaries to the poor. No occasion, even the most public, can apologize for such waste. But in private fa-

\* Prov. xi. 26.

milies,

milies, if an entertainment go beyond the plainest repast—if it lead to vying in expence—if it occasion any waste of victuals—or any ostentatious prodigality—it may be called (without any long deduction of inferences) *injustice* to the poor. It is also insulting them; the comparison between *feasting* and *starving* is cruelly held out.

This idea is strongly characterized in a rich man of ancient time, who is chronicled for *faring sumptuously every day*, and paying no regard to the poor. Let the beggar lie starving at my gate, he would say; if my board be plentifully supplied within, I leave him to the compassion of my dogs. Time ran on. The rich man continued to *fare sumptuously*, and the beggar to *starve*.—At length the day of reckoning came. The rich man died. All his *sumptuous* fare was now at an end. His melancholy note now was, *Give me a drop of cold water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame*.—In this affecting relation, our blessed Saviour gives all rich men a lesson, which they should never forget. It is a fable indeed: but the moral is an awful truth.

In the time of scarcity, however, it is not enough to repress the luxuries of the table. Such moderation indeed will give propriety to a meal in the eye

eye of the world ; but to make it charity in the eye of heaven, the expence of all the overplus should be given to the poor.

Thus far to the *rich*. To the *poor*, it is somewhat more difficult to speak. To those in abundant circumstances we are not so fearful of giving pain. They have their mitigating resources. But poverty requires pity. In the time of dearth, the poor man is always the greatest sufferer.—At the same time, the poor man must consider, that his wickedness will be a great addition to the calamities he suffers. If the *poor* man be a *wicked* man, I know not where to send him for consolation. The distress of the times is correction only to the pious sufferer : to the bad man it is the just punishment of his sins.—He increases them also by fretfulness, and repining at calamities sent by God, which no human power, much less his repining, can prevent.—Too often likewise he brings mischief on himself by joining in riotous bodies. Such disturbances cannot lessen a scarcity, but they may increase it—like a highway robbery, they may procure a present relief; but the mischief will always exceed the advantage.

To



To such poor therefore no consolation can well be given. But to those patient sufferers, who are truly God's servants, I hope, we may speak a more comfortable language. Receive with meek resignation God's holy will. The times are hard: no doubt they are. But it is God's will to make them so; and it is impossible for you to make them otherwise by opposing his will. On the other hand, by resigning yourself to it, you may make them better. When you resign yourself to God's will, you make the act partly your own; and so far as you suffer voluntarily, you make the suffering easier. But when you oppose God's will by repining at it, you add the uneasy fretfulness of your own temper to what you are obliged to suffer.—Be of good cheer, therefore. Make God your friend, and you are in hands that will never forsake you.—Be quiet and peaceable—industrious and frugal—trust in God, and endeavour to please him; and you may hope for his protecting care even in the time of dearth. He who provided a table in the wilderness—he who fed Jacob and his family in the day of famine—will, I trust, raise you up friends, who will secure you at least from the distress of want.

Let



Let us then all, my brethren, rich and poor, attend seriously to the admonition of the text. *When God's judgments are abroad in the world, let us learn righteousness.* These times of scarcity afford means of trial to us all. The rich, in whatever way God hath blessed them, are called upon for their utmost charity and assistance to the poor. It is the office assigned them. In the very beautiful and expressive language of the prophet, they should *draw out their souls to the hungry.*\*—The poor again are called on for quietness—for patience—for gratitude to their friends—and above all, for trust in God.

Let us all then, in our respective stations, do our duty, and we shall at least alleviate the distresses of the times. We shall have a friend, who can occasionally do wonders for his faithful servants. He can prevent the *barrel of meal from wasting*, and the *cruise of oil from failing* †, till he send in his goodness more plentiful times:

On the other hand, severe as the present distress is, if we do not avert God's wrath, it may only yet be the *beginning of sorrows*. This nation may,

\* Isaiah, lviii. 10.

† 1 Kings, xvii. 14.

like many others, be over-run with our enemies, however secure we may think ourselves from the situation of our country, and our triumphant fleets—Or the plague, as in many other nations, at this time, may break out amongst us—Or the scarcity we now feel, may increase still farther to a famine. Events, which at first appear of little consequence, by degrees become evils of magnitude. The war, in which we are now engaged, was thought of little moment when it first broke out. We have had a train of naval victories since that time, but we are still so involved in this pernicious war, that we see not how it may end; and yet it *may* be suddenly ended at once, by some trivial unexpected event. With God it is nothing to *save with many, or with few.*—In the same way the present scarcity may be alleviated, and the poor supplied with food in a manner, which we do not now foresee. In the mean time, let us endeavour to please God, and avert his judgments by amending our lives. If we are good, I trust we shall see happier times: if we continue still farther to provoke God by our wicked lives, it may be feared (as our Saviour threatened the cripple at Bethesda) *that a worse thing may come upon us.*

## SERMON XII.

I COR. XIII. 13.

AND NOW ABIDETH FAITH, HOPE, AND CHARITY, THESE THREE ; BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS CHARITY.

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**W**E do not often, I believe, find in Scripture one virtue set above another. The authority of God, on which they all rest, in some degree equalises them. It was under some idea of this kind, that an inquiring lawyer asked our Saviour, which was the great commandment? Our Saviour mentioned the *first*: but immediately subjoined, that *the second was like* unto it; and that equally on these two depended the law and the prophets. Yet, if he had meant to give the great commandment, at the head of the

decalogue, a distinguished place, it is only an exception we might expect.

Notwithstanding however this general idea of equality, we find, in the passage I have just read, three Christian virtues compared, and one of them placed in a higher rank than the other two.

This is rather singular, as it does not obviously appear, why *charity* should be placed before *faith* and *hope*. I shall endeavour therefore to explain the difficulty.—I shall *first* examine the three virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity* apart. I shall, *secondly*, endeavour to point out a reason for the apostle's giving a preference to the last: and, *thirdly*, draw a conclusion from the whole.

With regard to *faith*, some people include in it the whole range of duty both to God and man. And this is very true: for as all Christian virtues flow from it, they may all be said to be included in it. In this sense, no doubt, every good Christian will subscribe to *faith*, as the *sum of religion*. But it certainly is not always taken in this enlarged sense. St. Paul may sometimes, in a concise argument, consider *faith* as another word for Christianity; but in various passages, and particularly in the

5 passage

passage before us, it seems not to be considered in this comprehensive light, but as a simple act, stripped of all its adjuncts, and means only a belief in the life and death of Christ, and the great work of Redemption. This is sometimes called a mere *historical faith*: and if it proceed no farther it deserves a stigma. But the Christian life, as well as the natural life, must have its first principle, or beginning; and *historical faith*, if it must be so called, is that first principle.

This seems to be the idea which is adopted in our church creeds. In them we are taught, that the Christian's faith consists in believing the circumstances of the life and death of our Saviour, and in the work of Redemption. Christian virtues, no doubt, are supposed to follow this faith. All I mean is, that our public creeds suppose the *faith of a Christian* to originate from *Scriptural evidence*.

But we are sometimes told, that faith is the immediate work of God—that it is impressed instantaneously by divine inspiration on the heart.

If so, it wants no evidence—Nor was it necessary, that our blessed Saviour should *inculcate* what was *spontaneously* given.

Without God's assistance, every good Christian must allow, we can do nothing. We can no more be religious without it, than we can breathe or move without it. But in all these things, our own endeavours must co-operate. He who should sit down with his arms and legs folded, waiting till God should put him in motion, would be ridiculous; and he, who should walk about, and say, I move without any assistance from God, would be impious. It is just so in faith. He who should say, my own good works will do nothing for me, faith is all, seems to me an enthusiast: and he who should say, my own good works are all I want, is certainly not a Christian.

We conclude therefore from the whole, that although faith is *sometimes considered in an extensive sense*, as comprehending *all Christian virtues*, it is sometimes considered *simply in itself*, as grounded merely on *evidence*, and implying nothing more than a *belief* in Jesus Christ. In this sense I suppose the word *faith* is considered in the passage before us. It cannot be supposed to include every virtue, for then it would include *charity*, from which it is plainly distinguished.

*Hope*

*Hope* is the next virtue we examine. Now hope, simply considered, is no virtue at all. I desire to obtain an advantage. I use the best means in my power; and I *hope* they will succeed. But there is nothing here that denominates hope to be virtuous. It is its connection with heaven that gives *hope* a religious value.

It is so in other virtues. Men have only one set of moral qualities: but they differ in value, according to the end they have in view, and the motive that governs them. I am grateful to my benefactor. The affection is amiable. But when my gratitude looks up to God, it is of a much more purified and exalted nature. It is grounded on my trust in an invisible Creator.—I believe what *my friend tells me*. There is not much in that. But when I believe what *God tells me*, my belief becomes religious faith, and God is pleased *to accept it for righteousness*.

It is so in *hope*. Though there is nothing valuable in my hoping for any earthly good, which I think it probable may arrive; yet when I transfer that hope to heaven, it takes a religious cast, and becomes a virtue. My earthly hope is grounded on nothing perhaps but my own prudence, and



may be resolved into mere selfishness; and if there is no harm in it, there is certainly no good. But my heavenly hope rests on my trust in an invisible God, who has promised me certain blessings, if I endeavour to perform the conditions required; which promises therefore, on his word, I humbly hope for.—Faith and hope are thus immediately connected; and thus connected it is, that *hope* becomes the anchor of the soul.

We next consider *charity*. As this virtue is here exalted so highly, many commentators have conceived, that it is meant to include both the love of God and man. But if St. Paul knew his own meaning, this could not be the case: for in the various lights in which charity is placed in the chapter, from which the text is taken, there is not one which does not tend to confine it to our neighbour. By charity therefore, as described by the apostle, we understand, that *general affection*, which prompts us to avoid every thing that can injure or distress another, and do every thing which can contribute to his happiness. In short, it is Christian benevolence.

Having

Having thus considered the meaning, which I humbly conceive the apostle affixed to the words *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*, let us, *secondly*, consider his *argument*, and shew why he places *charity* so much above the other two.

In the 12th chapter he had been reprovng his Corinthian converts for that faulty zeal with which they had exercised their spiritual gifts. At the conclusion he tells them, he would shew them a way of proceeding much more conformable to the spirit of the Gospel. With this view he spends the whole 13th chapter in explaining the nature of charity, which he considers, as his argument led, entirely in the light of benevolence to our neighbour. He considers its *nature* and its *excellence*. It must accompany, he tells his converts, all their spiritual gifts: for though, as it appears, they might exercise those spiritual gifts without it\*, yet it was impossible, that gifts so exercised, could either be of value in themselves, or pleasing to God.

\* Thus Balaam exercised the functions of a prophet though he was a bad man: and we are led to believe, from the tenor of the evangelical writings, that Judas Iscariot wrought miracles, as well as the other apostles.

Among other things, which the apostle urges in favour of *charity*, he speaks of its eternal nature. All the spiritual gifts, he tells his converts, with which they were endowed, were calculated only for this world. Prophecy shall be completed, and at an end—various languages, no longer necessary, shall cease—the knowledge to be acquired in this imperfect state, will be of no use. But charity never fails. It commences on earth, and continues with us in heaven. There it is exalted beyond what this world will allow. It becomes celestial love, and unites in praise to the Creator, with the blessed inhabitants of those regions of everlasting happiness.

It is from this eternal nature of *charity* the apostle, in a great degree, infers its superiority to *faith* and *hope*. In *this world*, says he, *we exercise\** the three great virtues of *faith*, *hope*, and *charity*. But, the two former of these losing their end, and even their existence, after our removal into another world; *charity*, which lasts for ever, is therefore of a nature superior to both.

\* ΝΥΝ ΔΕ ΜΕΝΕΙ.

The great conclusion to be drawn from the whole, which was my *last* head, is to consider faith, and charity, or good works, in their proper light. Faith, no doubt, is the foundation of all religion: and, when firmly established, good works will naturally follow.—But it must be considered, that faith is thus a *mean* not an *end*. The Gospel was intended to purify our nature, and make up the deficiencies of the fall. The whole Scripture therefore, from one end to the other, exhorts us to good works, through faith in Christ. A heathen may be saved, we suppose, without faith: but no man was ever saved, so far as we are allowed to judge, without good works. Laying a stress upon these works, and thinking we merit heaven by them, is a different idea, and cannot be too much discouraged.

At the same time, I think, we should be cautious how we lay the *chief stress* on faith, and leave good works to *follow as they may*. Though this doctrine cannot mislead exalted minds; yet I fear it is a dangerous doctrine for common hearers, and liable to much misconception and self-deceit. There may be many, who, professing they have faith, which they consider as a justifying principle,

principle, are sometimes, perhaps, rather lax with regard to good works.—In short, though faith, when explained in its full latitude, is the most valuable doctrine of Christianity; yet when it is held in all its exclusive strictness, it seems, I think, to contradict the tenor of Scripture, and appears to oppose that superiority, given by the apostle in the text, to *charity*, which is every where represented as *the end of the commandment*.

TWELVE SERMONS  
ON THE  
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I.—*The connection between the fall of man, and the revelation of the Gospel.*

II<sup>y</sup>.—*The preparation necessary for the reception of the Gospel.*

III<sup>y</sup>.—*The truth of Scripture.*

IV<sup>y</sup>.—*The proof of our Saviour's mission from miracles and prophecy.*

V<sup>y</sup>.—*The precise difference between Christianity and the moral law.*

VI<sup>y</sup>.—*The general design of Christianity.*

VII<sup>y</sup>.—*The conditions required of Christians—faith—and repentance.*

VIII<sup>y</sup>.—*For-*

VIII<sup>ly</sup>.—*Forgiveness of injuries—restitution, and advancement in Christian perfection.*

IX<sup>ly</sup>.—*The promises of the Gospel.*

X<sup>ly</sup>.—*The threatenings of the Gospel.*

XI<sup>ly</sup>.—*The sacraments.*

XII<sup>ly</sup>.—*Recapitulation of the whole.*

*The last sermon, No. XXV. is so closely connected with the subject of the foregoing twelve sermons, that the author prints it as a concluding discourse.*



## SERMON XIII.

I COR. XV. 22.

I. FOR AS IN ADAM ALL DIE, EVEN SO IN  
CHRIST SHALL ALL BE MADE ALIVE.

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**W**HEN we look round the world, we cannot but discover in it many marks of imperfection. The earth produces corn and fruits with labour; while it teems of its own accord with weeds and noxious herbs.—The air is the seat of storms and blasting winds; and the ocean often overflows its bounds.

In the brute creation we find the same marks of imperfection. The whole state of animal life is a state of rapine and bloodshed. One half of it preys upon the other.

Nor have we fewer marks of imperfection when we examine mankind, furnished, as we are, with  
reason.

reason. We all know, we have within us a constant inclination to evil. Our appetites and passions are continually leading us into mischief, either public or private.

Now, on considering all this imperfection, it appears probable at first, that the earth and its inhabitants are in some fallen state.

The great question therefore is, How came things into this state? Whence is it, that God's creation here, so fair in many respects, should in others be so deformed? Did God create evil? Did he make a bad world, and stock it with bad inhabitants, for no purpose but to make them miserable?

Alas! these questions have puzzled the wisdom of all mankind. The ancient heathen plainly saw the difficulty, and endeavoured to solve it; but in no way that was satisfactory to himself. He saw how inconsistent it was with the goodness of God to *create evil*: but it was not in the power of human reason to explain the mystery.

Thanks be to Revelation, we are better taught. A book is put into *our* hands—the word of God—which explains these things. Here we find, this world was not originally formed in the state in which we now see it—it was formed originally  
in

in a state of perfection—it produced its fruits without labour—and man was created in a state of innocence and happiness. The sacred story proceeds to inform us of that fatal act of disobedience which the first man committed.

Some have treated the Mosaic account of the fall with disrespect. But let us be satisfied with it, till we get a better—till we get one more consistent with the *moral* and *natural* state of what we observe at present in the world\*.—As to the agency of the devil, we are utterly ignorant of the power of evil spirits—we are ignorant how far they were permitted *then*, or how far they are permitted *even now*, to tempt mankind.—And as to the prohibition of the fruit of a tree, which some call trifling, who dare affirm, that a more proper one could have been suited to the condition

\* It seems no improbable conjecture, in answer to those who object to the short period of a Paradisaical state, that God might chuse to open the new world, meant to be a state of trial, with a melancholy event, which, like a table of contents to a book, might shew the fatal effects of disobedience. As to Adam, no doubt, his will was free, but God made use of *his* disobedience, as he does of *ours*, to bring about his own wise purposes.

of man, placed, as God was pleased to place Adam, in a state of trial? It was a state of trial, no doubt: but very different from ours. All that mode of trial, which arises from an intercourse with society, was excluded.—But we are apt to judge of things by our *own times*. If we could enter fully into the idea of Adam's state, we might perhaps see, that no kind of trial could have been so proper.—Be the prohibition however what it would; by his disobedience, he lost his own happy state, and entailed the mischief on his posterity, though it does not appear that he had any at that time;—as parents, we see, now by their wickedness often entail diseases, infamy, and beggary on their children. It is a course of nature, which God hath appointed as a check to wickedness.

By this sad event death entered into the world: *in Adam all die*, and the world itself became a scene proper for such an inhabitant as man. It was made necessary for him to procure his daily bread by labour, and at an allotted period to mingle again with the dust.—But this was not all; had mere temporal death been the worst he could suffer, the consequence had been less deplorable. But he had an immortal soul within  
him,

him, which could not lie down, like his body, in the grave; and how immortality was to be regained was the great point\*.

Now this is just the Bible-history of the entrance of sin and death into the world. It is a plain account, evidenced by the present state of things; and shews at once, what none of the philosophers, with all their wisdom, could find out—that evil was not of God's sending, but of man's own bringing in: it shews us how man became a sinful creature, and threw himself, by his own fault, out of God's favour.

And indeed this is the only history of our wicked world that is at all consistent. We see it in a depraved state. We ask how it came to be so? Nobody can give us an account in any degree satisfactory, till we open the word of God. There the fatal story is recorded. There we learn, in few words, that *in Adam all die*.

\* I think it appears from various parts of Scripture, that the death threatened to Adam was spiritual, not temporal. *As in Adam, says the text, all die; so in Christ shall all be made alive.* But how? Not in this world, for we see men are here still subject to death. It must therefore mean a spiritual death; and on this sense the grand scheme of redemption is a comment. *We lay hold of eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ.*

The next great question is, in this distressed situation of things, What was to be done? Man could not help *himself*.—One should think then, it was agreeable to the infinite goodness of God to afford him some assistance. A *restoring power*, in many instances, *pervades all nature*; and one should suppose, that in a peculiar manner it would be reached out to man. Without *some* assistance he was lost for ever.

That assistance God graciously afforded through Jesus Christ. *As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* The Gospel was intended as the grand restoration of man. It was intended to restore him, as far as such a creature as man could be restored, to that purity which he had lost. It first makes him acquainted with the nature of God. Instead of that variety of gods, which were before worshipped, the majesty of one divine almighty Creator is now displayed, clothed with justice and mercy, tempering each other—a God, not like what the heathen conceived, unconcerned at human events, but present to all our actions, intimate with all our thoughts, *about our bed, about our path, and spying out all our ways.*

With just conceptions of God, the Christian religion introduces also a rational worship of him.



Instead of lifeless forms and ceremonies, it enjoins its disciples to worship the God of heaven *in spirit and in truth*. Man is permitted to open his wants to his heavenly Father. Prayer is considered as one of the gracious means of intercourse between God and man. It is the means of instruction also. It fills the mind with pious sentiments; and, while we supplicate God's blessing, contributes to render us more worthy of it.

In the government of our lives, the Gospel is as kind a director. Man is no longer left to wander in error, or to walk by the doubtful light of his own reason. His way is plainly marked out, and every kind assistance to lead him on his road is afforded. The aim of his life has a higher direction. A future state is opened to his view; and the great necessity of a holy life to qualify him for that state, is set before him in the strongest light.

To strengthen his endeavours, he is farther assured, that if those endeavours are sincere, he shall be assisted by the holy Spirit of God.

With these aids, he is taught to look on this world only as a state of preparation. Heaven is his great home, and this world only the road which leads to it. As he is shewn the unworthiness of his nature, he is shewn also the dignity of



it. Though *born in sin, and the child of wrath*, by his new birth in Christ, he becomes allied to angels and archangels, the heir of God, and *joint heir with Christ*.

- But unless one step farther had been taken in his favour, all would have been ineffectual. He had his duty indeed plainly pointed out, but he could not live up to it, and yet had no ground to expect pardon for his transgressions. The principal end therefore of Christ's coming, was to obtain pardon for him by laying down his life; and to restore him by that great atonement, if he should not be wanting to himself, to those heavenly hopes, which by the transgression of Adam he had lost.

These are the great events which peculiarly distinguish the Gospel. Of these things the heathen had no idea. They offered indeed in sacrifice the lives of animals, and hoped to appease the anger of their gods, by shedding the innocent blood of beasts; which shewed at least, they had ideas of atonement for sin: but their best hopes were mixed with all the fears and doubts of superstition. *The blood of bulls and of goats*, as the apostle argues, *could never take away sin*. They were yet unacquainted with that great sacrifice, which made an all-sufficient atonement for the sins of mankind.

This

This doctrine is a stumbling-block to all who set up their own reason against revelation. But as it is a doctrine plainly revealed, if I may so speak, by nature, and fully confirmed by Scripture, though not in all its circumstances explained, we must either receive it by an act of faith, mysterious as it is, or give up revelation and Scripture altogether.

I shall conclude this general view of the fall and restoration of man, with two or three observations.

In the first place, we should consider ourselves as sinful creatures—*naturally* depraved, and without any hope from ourselves of a happy immortality. Unless we *feel* our situation, we cannot desire to amend it.

With the sense therefore about us of our lost condition, the next object of our contemplation and gratitude should be God's gracious means of restoring us through Christ.

And lastly, and most especially, we should do our parts in obtaining this restoration. Let us not suppose we may enjoy the light of Christians, and lead the lives of heathens. To be Christians, we must live like Christians. It is not the name of

Christian that will save us. Christ died to redeem those only, who forsake their sins, who change their *hearts*, and become *new creatures* through the influence of his Gospel. In that day, no doubt, many a heathen will stand justified in the sight of God; while many a nominal Christian shall be cast out. In vain may they cry, *Lord, Lord, open to us*. Do we not bear thy name? Do we not acknowledge thy authority?—Hear what the voice, even the gracious Jesus, returns, *I know you not—depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*.

## SERMON XIV.

GAL. iii. 24.

### II. THE LAW WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST.

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**I**N my last discourse I gave you a general idea of mankind in their lost, and in their restored state. I should now proceed to examine the authority on which the Gospel is founded—the obligations it lays upon us, and the promises and threatenings by which it enforces these obligations. But before we enter on these points, it may not be amiss to inquire first into those *means of preparation*, which the Almighty took to introduce it, *first* to the Jews, and *afterwards* to mankind in general. As it was a religion intended for the world, God thought proper to pre-

pare the world for it\*. Let us then trace the several means by which this great preparation was brought about.

The principal of them are, in few words, pointed out in the text: *The law, was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*—that is, the patriarchal religion, and after it the Jewish, were the great instruments, which God employed to introduce the Gospel.

The patriarch Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, had an early intimation given him of God's gracious design. He was informed, that *in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. Some other singular incidents we meet within his history, particularly the command given him to sacrifice his only son. Though withheld from the act, he could not but conceive something very extraordinary and prophetic in the command, and probably saw in it a representation of that great event, which was afterwards to take place on that very

\* Some suppose the Jewish polity to have been established and conducted, merely to preserve a *knowledge of the true God in the world*. (See Bishop Watson's Apology for the Bible, pages 120. 210.) This, no doubt, was one end of its institution: but the grand end seems to have been to introduce Christianity. The text tells us plainly, that *the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ*; of whom the whole Jewish ritual indeed was typical.

spot;

spot, Mount Moriah, where Isaac was laid upon the altar. To this patriarch also the rich country of Canaan was promised as a *land of rest*; and we are assured by St. Paul, that he saw it, not merely as an earthly inheritance, but as figuring out a *city which hath foundation, whose builder and maker is God.*

To the second patriarch of this family the promise of a land of *rest* was renewed; and likewise that greater promise, that *all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him.*

The third patriarch, Jacob, received the promise likewise of a place of *rest* from all the wanderings of his family; and also that hereditary promise, which was now a third time repeated, that in his family *all the nations of the earth should be blessed.*—This patriarch likewise saw, in a vision, a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and angels ascending and descending upon it; which he could not but interpret as a type of some future communication, which was afterwards to be opened between heaven and earth.

This last patriarch, and his family, being driven from home by a famine, settled in Egypt, where their descendants suffered a grievous servitude, till Moses with a mighty hand, under God, redeemed them

them from a bondage, which was evidently a type of that greater bondage, from which Christ afterwards redeemed mankind.

When they left Egypt, the old type of wandering through a wilderness in search of a promised land, was again held out; and during these travels a variety of circumstances pointed out those ideas, which were afterwards realized in the Gospel.— Such were the *brazen serpent*, the manna from heaven, and the stream of water struck from a rock; which rock, the apostle tells us, was an emblem of Christ\*.

The Jews having at length taken possession of Canaan, and their church having obtained a legal establishment, almost the whole scheme of their religion became now a succession of rites and ceremonies, typical of gospel times.

Though sacrifices were types of early institution, prevailing in every part of the earth, yet at Jerusalem this rite appeared in its most significant form. Here it was branched into a variety of different kinds, each of which alluded to some part of that great atonement, which was afterwards made by Christ: such were the sin-offering, the peace-offering, and the sprinkling of the blood towards the

\* 1 Cor. x. 4.



mercy-seat. The real meaning of all these religious appointments could not be hid from the wiser Jews, especially when illustrated by the prophets. They saw, with David, that *sacrifices and burnt-offerings, and offerings for sin, for their own sake, God required not: but a body he had prepared.* This can have no consistent meaning, if it do not allude to that great atonement hereafter to be made by the body of Christ.

How remarkable also was the scape-goat, which the priest turned loose into the wilderness, after having confessed over it the sins of the people.

What, again, was the institution of the pass-over, but a direct setting forth of the Lord's death till he should come? the lamb was to be without spot or blemish: not a bone of it was to be broken.

The vail of the temple, which separated the holy of holies from the more common parts of the building, was likewise a very remarkable type. Its great intention was fulfilled at the crucifixion of our Lord, when it was rent in twain. The holy of holies being laid open, the Gentiles from that time, as well as the Jews, were to be received into covenant with God.

How

How strongly also did the sheaf of the first-fruits, consecrated, and lifted up to God, represent Christ the first-fruits, raised from the dead?

The high-priest also entering into the holy of holies, and making intercession for the sins of the people, was an emblem of that great High-priest, who was to make intercession for the sins of mankind.

To these rites and ceremonies we might add the prophecies of the Old Testament, which still more expressively pointed out the life and character of the Messiah.—But to these, at present, I only allude, as I shall soon have another opportunity of speaking of them more at large.

Thus, all these historical facts, ceremonies, and prophecies, prepared the Jewish nation to *expect a Redeemer*. Let us now see how the Jewish nation prepared the world *to receive him*—how *the law was our schoolmaster also to bring us to Christ*.

As the Jewish nation was at once meant to be the guardian of God's law, and the means of communicating that law to other nations, it was constituted in a peculiar manner. In the ordering  
of

of it, Divine Providence seems to have had two things in view—it was to be kept separate from other nations to preserve the *purity* of religion—and yet, to propagate that religion among other nations, it was to have the means of intercourse with them. For both these purposes it seems to have been admirably contrived.

In the first place, as the Jews were bred up with a notion of being the peculiar people of God (though, in fact, they were acting a part subservient to the rest of the world), their pride kept them separate from other nations. “*Ye know,*” says St. Peter to Cornelius, “*that it is an unlawful thing for a Jew to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation.*”

Other nations were as little inclined to mix with them. Their law had formed a hedge around them; and their many peculiar rites and ceremonies, so opposite to the customs of other nations, made it almost impossible for any nation to unite with them. By their law indeed, they could unite with none, who did not enter into their covenant by circumcision.

The necessity also the Jews were under of worshipping at the temple of Jerusalem, and performing their sacrifices there, kept them much  
together,

together, and tended greatly to enforce the national idea.

But though these causes of separation acted so strongly on the Jews, that they continue even at this very day a separate people; yet the necessity of their affairs, or rather the providence of God, engaged them in a more intimate connection with other nations, than almost any people ever had; and this was the great mean of spreading their religious knowledge.

In early times their opportunities began of communicating with other nations. The patriarchs were in a constant state of travel: and though the earth, it is true, was at that time thinly inhabited; it is plain, these holy wanderers had intercourse with various tribes of people in their several journies; and no doubt deposited among them, in some degree, a knowledge of the great truths of their religion.

The long captivity of the Israelites in Egypt was their next great mean of intercourse. It is plain, the miracles of Moses had not merely a view to the Jewish nation, but to the world at large. That great prophet tells Pharaoh, that God did all these mighty works, that *his name might be declared through all the earth.*

After

After the Israelites left Egypt, and were settled in Judæa, they had great traffic with other nations, particularly with Tyre and Sidon, as we frequently read in Scripture; and the Tyrians, being at that time the most trading people in the world, carried with them, no doubt, in their various voyages, more or less of the Jewish hopes of a Redeemer.

The Jewish wars also tended to spread these notices among those nations with whom they were at variance.

The resort of foreigners also among them, contributed to the same end. The glory of their temple, the splendid mode of their worship, and the renown of their lawgiver's wisdom, attracted the notice of other nations. We often read in the Bible of strangers resorting to Jerusalem; among whom were sometimes very illustrious persons: and many of these strangers, we may well suppose, would take notice of the remarkable rites and customs among the Jews; and might be inquisitive into the hidden meaning of them.

But above all other things, the captivity of the Jews in foreign lands contributed to spread these intimations. And we may the rather believe it, because

because they continued so long under the power of their conquerors, that when their law was, in a manner, lost at home; it was afterwards recovered from Babylon.

After their return from Babylon, they were conquered by the Romans; and this conquest opened a great communication between Rome and Jerusalem. How much the customs of the two nations were known to each other, is evident both from several parts of the New Testament, and likewise from many passages in the Roman writers. —So that as the Babylonish captivity tended to disperse the knowledge of the Jewish law in the East; the Romish conquest tended equally to disperse it in the West.

Thus intimations of the Jewish hopes of a Messiah were scattered over many parts of the earth; and this remarkable people became the means, as Providence designed, of preparing the world for the great truths of the Gospel. They became that leaven, which, according to one of our Saviour's parables, was afterwards to ferment through the whole mass of mankind.

I shall only detain you with a single remark on what hath been said.

We



We are under the greatest obligations, you see to respect the Old Testament, as well as the New. Many serious people pay too little regard to the Old Testament, as if they supposed it had now done its office.—But certainly they lie under a great mistake. Some of the books of the Old Testament, no doubt, claim our attention more than others, on account of their intrinsic worth; and there are many difficulties in various parts of these ancient writings, which we are not able to solve so well as we could wish; yet still they are greatly entitled to our regard on their own account—as they have been the means of preparing the world for the reception of the Christian religion; and as they are still one of the standing evidences of the truth of it.



## SERMON XV.

2 TIM. iii. 16.

III. ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD.

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**I**N my last discourse I explained to you the preparation made by the providence of God for the reception of the Gospel: and in consequence of it, many nations, as well as the Jews, did really expect some divine instructor to appear about the time when Christ actually did appear.

As the great event approached, it pleased God to employ one other mode of preparation.—This was the preaching of John the Baptist. The particular end of John's preaching, as it appears, was to unite, and point to their proper object, the various prophetic notices, which had gone before. All was now fulfilled: and the world was speedily

to

to see that great Personage, who had been, more or less, expected through every age since the fall of man.

What were the expectations of mankind when this wonderful event was to take place? All that is grand, all that is splendid in human affairs, was expected here to be displayed. The Jews had no idea but of a conqueror, riding in a triumphal chariot, destroying his enemies on every side, and establishing his faithful followers in all the fulness of empire.

But God's ways are not like man's ways. The Saviour of the world appeared with very different notions of dignity. His dignity was holiness; his worldly ornament, a meek and gentle spirit. Though descended from David, his birth was obscure; and his life, till the 30th year of his age, when he entered on his public ministry, was spent in the closest retirement.

On his appearing openly in the world, he appealed for the truth of his divine commission to the prophecies, which he fulfilled; and the miracles which he wrought.

These two kinds of proofs we shall consider; but as they both depend on the truth of Scripture, it is necessary, before we proceed, to shew on what

grounds we believe in Scripture—that is, that the book, which we call the Bible, (the Old Testament and the New) was, as the text assures us, *given by inspiration of God*, or written by the holy persons, under whose names we receive them.— This shall be the subject of the following discourse.

The Old Testament begins with the five books of Moses. Let us see how incredible it is, that these books could have been forged.

When the Israelites left Egypt, they amounted to many thousands of people. All the miracles which were wrought, both in Egypt and in the wilderness, are affirmed in these books to have been wrought before this multitude; and, it is evident, they were miracles, of which the senses of men could easily judge. The plagues inflicted on the hardened Egyptians—the miracle of passing the Red Sea—the manna, and quails—the water from the rock—the brazen serpent, were plain to all men's senses. Impostors always perform their works in secret.

Now all these miracles were immediately recorded in the books of Moses, when thousands were alive, who must have seen them; and we  
cannot

cannot conceive, that Moses would have published an account of those miracles, which such numbers could have contradicted, if they had not really been performed. Moses, therefore, could not have forged them. And we cannot conceive, that an account of them could have been forged afterwards, as these records were handed down from father to son from the time of Moses.—Thus the Psalmist, in the 78th Psalm, which is a noble memorial of all these wonderful works, begins it by tracing the remembrance of them through successive generations: He mentions them as things, *which they had heard and known, and such as their fathers had told them—he enjoins them not to hide them from the children of the generations to come—that their posterity might know them, and the children, which were yet unborn—to the intent, that when they came up, they might shew their children the same.*—Wonderful works thus *publicly performed, and thus nationally recorded,* we conclude could never have been forged.

Now on the credit of these miracles the Jewish law was founded. The same books which record the one, record the other. This law was originally received by the Jews with the utmost reverence. It was constantly read in their places

of worship. A body of men had ever been set apart to explain it. Nay, it was in such esteem, that the Jewish learning of those times was entirely confined to the knowledge of it.—Nor was the record of these laws less an object of attention to private people, than to the public in general; for it registered all their tribes, and the origin of all their families; so that every single Jew was interested in preserving the purity of it. It is remarkable also, that every king was obliged, once in his life, to transcribe it.

Now this being the case, how was it possible for a forgery to be introduced in a book, which was from the beginning in the hands of so many people, continually the object both of public and private concern—and at this very day preserved both by Jews and Christians with the most sacred attention?

At what period of the Jewish history could such a forgery have happened? Could it have happened in the wilderness?

That seems impossible, because numbers of people were still alive, who were appealed to, as having seen the miracles, and the Law given with so much awful pomp from Mount Sinai,

Was

Was it afterwards, when the Jewish nation had taken a legal establishment?

That seems equally impossible; for when laws are once established, it is absurd to suppose they can be altered without the knowledge of the people who have long obeyed them; or that fictitious laws can be substituted in their room, without giving a general alarm.

We conclude therefore, that the books of Moses, which are the register of his miracles and laws, are at this day what he left them, and are that word which was given, as the text says, *by inspiration of God.*

The prophets, the Psalms, the moral writings and history of the Jews, make up the remaining part of the Bible; and, taken altogether, are sometimes called in the New Testament by the general name of *The Prophets.* Thus, when our Saviour mentions the law and the prophets, he means the five books of Moses, and the other parts of Scripture. For the historical parts of the Bible, the books of Samuel particularly, and Kings, may very properly be called the books of the prophets, because they were all written by the prophets, who were thus instructed to leave behind them an historical account of God's dealings with the Jews,



to be a standing record, as it were, to the world, that nations have in the end been destroyed, when they forsook the law of God. God's arm is not always bared, as in the history of the Jews; but we have every reason to believe his mode of acting is the same.

Now all these books, as well as the law, were in the highest esteem among the Jews, who laid them up in the Tabernacle among their most sacred treasures. They were in esteem also with the Samaritans, (the books of Moses at least,) who hated the Jews with the most national rancour, and would not certainly have received their scriptures, if they had not been fully convinced of their antiquity and truth.— Besides this, the Jewish scriptures were in high esteem among other nations; who valued them for their wisdom, as well as their antiquity: they were translated by the heathen into the Greek language, (the language then most in use,) and were considered as a great ornament to the polite libraries of those times. And this translation is still held in great esteem. So that, on laying all these considerations together, there hardly appears to be even the possibility of a forgery. We have every reason therefore to conclude, that the whole of the Old Testament was written by the persons, to whom the several parts  
of



of it are ascribed; and that it really is that word of God which it pretends to be.

Let us now consider the New Testament in the same light, and see what grounds we have for believing it also to come directly from the persons whose names it bears.

In the first place, we have books yet extant, written in the very earliest ages of Christianity, which *quote* various passages from it, exactly as we read them. We have it also from the best authority, that the books of the New Testament were *read*, in the manner in which we now have them, in all Christian churches, about the middle of the second century—that is, about 150 years after the birth of Christ.

The account we have of the manner of collecting these sacred books, and putting them into the order in which we now have them, is another very strong argument in favour of their truth. It was found, that many gospels and epistles had been written after the death of Jesus, all of which pretended to the same divine origin. It became necessary, therefore, to make a separation among them: and some writers of good credit affirm, that this separation was made by St. John himself, who lived to a very advanced age. Whether this be  
true,

true, it is certain, a separation was made nearly about his time, and with great discretion. For though many of those ancient writings were very excellent in themselves; yet none of them were admitted, which could not bring proof of having been written by apostolical persons: and this proof might easily have been obtained, as so short a time had intervened, since they were written.

This may be called *positive* proof. We may add also what may be called *negative* proof; that is, we think the matter well proved, because nobody ever denied it. Christianity had always, even in its earliest state, many enemies, who would gladly have taken every method to disparage it. But none of them ever pretended to say, the several books of Scripture were written by any persons, except those whose names they bear. As they lived near the times when the Scriptures were published, they saw how impracticable it was to object on that head.

At what time indeed could a forgery have taken place? A forgery here appears as impossible, as in the case of the Old Testament.—Let us suppose the Scriptures were not written at the time we affirm, but were introduced by designing men in some later age. Can we imagine, this could have  
been

been done without the knowledge of the Christians of that age; or, if it had been attempted, can we imagine they would have acquiesced in it? They would surely have seen at once, that such a book was not what it pretended to be; and that, instead of being handed down from apostolic times, it was produced only yesterday.—It is plain therefore, that either no forgery of this kind had ever been attempted, or, if it had been attempted, that it miscarried.

Even in books of less value, it is difficult to contrive a fraud. When a book is owned by its author, and acknowledged by the world, it is almost impossible for any objector to give the credit of it to another. Even after the author's death, the credit of the book will descend through time with the book itself. Whoever should doubt it, would be well answered by an appeal to the general opinion of antiquity. Since the book was published, no suspicion against it hath arisen.

But the evidence in favour of the Scripture is still stronger than that of any other ancient book, inasmuch as it is more celebrated, and hath been, of course, more enquired into than any other. Its friends enquired into its authority, because it contained the title of all their hopes; and its enemies, because

because it held out the object of all their fears. The former were not more solicitous to find it true, than the latter were to find it false; and both equally contributed to confirm its credit.

But though the Scriptures could not, in the whole, be forged, yet it may be asked, might they not in many parts have been corrupted?

In any material degree they certainly could not. Christianity, from the beginning, was divided into a variety of different sects, as it is now. All these sects owned the Scriptures, and considered them as the foundation of their several religious opinions. They would, of course, therefore have a strict eye upon each other, and would not have suffered any corruption in a matter which equally concerned them all. The papists have, at this day, the same Scripture which we have, and endeavour to prove from it all the tenets of their church. But if, in defence of any of their tenets, they should corrupt the text of Scripture, and put in new passages to support them, we should soon take the alarm, and shew the world, these new passages rested on no authority, but were the mere invention of the papists.—As it would be impossible, therefore, for any set of men, at this time, to corrupt the Scriptures, so would it have been equally impossible

impossible for any set of men to have corrupted them at any other time.

Nor are the few variations, which we find in Scripture, any argument against its truth.—As far as the truth of religion is concerned, no doubt, the Scriptures are under the immediate inspiration of God. Farther than this, there is no necessity to suppose it. These little variations, therefore, are so far from being an argument against the truth of Scripture, that they tend greatly to confirm it. From the *general agreement* of the whole, it appears plain that the same Spirit over-ruled it; and from the *little variations*, it appears as plain, that the writers were not in league together. If all the books of Scripture had agreed in every tittle, the enemies of religion might have called them a contrivance.

It may be added, that, in proof of the authenticity of both Testaments, they are so closely connected, that if you prove either to be true, you prove the truth also of the other.

To conclude then from the whole: when we are convinced of the truth of Scripture, every thing in Scripture becomes, of course, an object of belief.

belief. We must not, after such conviction, pretend to say, this or that doctrine is not *reasonable*, and therefore we cannot believe it. God hath given us evidence sufficient to convince us, that the Scriptures are true; and in examining this evidence, we must use our reason. After that, we must contemplate such doctrines as are above our reason, with the eye of faith.

After all, the best proof of the truth of Scripture, and the best answer to all the objections that can be made to it, is to shew its effects on our lives. This is an appeal to our own feelings. Let us read it—let us meditate upon it—apply it to ourselves—and transfuse the spirit of it into our hearts, and we shall find this to be the best evidence of its coming from God.

## SERMON XVI.

JOHN, v. 26.

IV. THE WORKS THAT I DO, THEY BEAR  
WITNESS OF ME, THAT THE FATHER  
HATH SENT ME.

ACTS, iii. 24.

YEA, AND ALL THE PROPHETS, FROM SAMUEL,  
AND THOSE THAT FOLLOW AFTER, AS MANY  
AS HAVE SPOKEN, HAVE LIKEWISE FORE-  
TOLD OF THESE DAYS.

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**H**AVING proved the holy Scriptures to be written by the persons whose names they bear; and that of course they are those divine books, which they pretend to be; let us now examine the evidence contained in them, arising from *miracles and prophecies*, on which our blessed Saviour rested his authority.

Let



Let us first enquire into the nature of a miracle.

Every thing we see is, in one sense, a miracle it is beyond our comprehension. We put a twig into the ground; and find, in a few years, it becomes a tree: but how it draws its nourishment from the earth, and how it increases, we know not.

We look around us, and see the forest sometimes shaken by storms; at other times just yielding to the breeze; in one part of the year, in full leaf, in another, naked and desolate. We all know the seasons have an effect on these things; and philosophers will conjecture at a few immediate causes: but in what manner these causes act, and how they put nature in motion, the wisest of them know not. When the storm is up, why does it not continue to rage? When the air is calm, what rouses the storm? We know not—but must, after our deepest researches into first causes, rest satisfied with resolving all into the power of God.

Yet, notwithstanding we cannot comprehend the most common of these appearances, they make

no

no impression on us, because they *are* common—because they happen according to a stated course, and are seen every day. If they were out of the common course of nature, though in themselves not more difficult to comprehend, they would still appear more wonderful to us—and more immediately the work of God. Thus, when we see a child grow into a man, and when the breath has left the body, turn to corruption—we are not in the least surprized, because we see it every day. But were we to see a man restored from sickness to health by a word—or raised to life from the dead, by a mere command—though these things are not really more unaccountable, yet we call the uncommon event a miracle, merely because it *is* uncommon. We acknowledge, however, that both are produced by God, because it is evident that no other power can produce them.

This is then, in few words, the nature of that evidence which arises from miracles. The ordinary course of nature proves the being and providence of God: these extraordinary acts of power prove the divine commission of that person who performs them. Thus Elijah, in his controversy with the priests of Baal, rests the matter on a fair issue: *The God that answereth by fire, let*

*him be God*:—of course, you must consider me as acting under his authority.

Now it was to these uncommon events, or what we usually call *miracles*, to which Christ appealed. *The works, says he, which I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.* As if he had said, these works you see, are not according to the order of nature: they are such as could only be performed by that power, which can command nature. As you see me therefore perform them, it is plain, I act under that power. And thus Nicodemus, in his conference with Jesus, properly states the case. *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*—And thus many of the Jews allowed, that if *this man were not of God, he could do nothing.*

Now that Jesus did perform these works, which are recorded in the New Testament, depends on what we have already proved—the truth of the New Testament. The only remaining difficulty is, that some deceit might have imposed on the senses of spectators.—With regard to the miracles of Moses, it appeared, this could not possibly have been the case. And it was just as impossible with regard to the miracles of Christ. All people who  
wish

wish to impose on others, act as privately as they can. But the miracles of our Saviour seem to have been performed with a studied view to lay them open to inquiry.—And indeed every inquiry was made, which always ended in the conviction of the inquirers.

Only consider how you yourself would have acted, if you had lived at that time.—Suppose, for instance, you had heard of the miracle of giving sight to the man who had been born blind\*—you would not have given credit to so surprizing a relation, till you had inquired who the man was, on whom this miracle was said to have been wrought? Whether, in fact, he had been born blind? Whether he actually was blind at the time when our Saviour met him? and, whether it afterwards appeared, that he was really cured?—All these inquiries, you would certainly have made yourself, or have been well informed they had been made by credible people, before you would have believed the miracle.—And if *you* would have made these inquiries, can you reasonably suppose, they were not made by those who lived at that time? or that they would have admitted that

\* See John, ix.

wonderful fact on easier evidence, than you should have done?

By the Scribes and Pharisees indeed we know these inquiries were made, and ended in a full proof. But the Scribes and Pharisees were not to be convinced by a full proof. *Facts*, which they could not deny, through hardened malice they ascribed to the devil.

With regard to the greatest of all miracles, our Saviour's resurrection from the dead, you would certainly have acted in the same way, and never have been satisfied, till you had gotten sufficient evidence of the truth. The apostles did act in this cautious manner. At first we know they paid no credit to what they had heard. But their making it the continued subject of their preaching afterwards, was in itself *a sufficient evidence* of its truth. They would certainly have been silent on the subject, if they had not been assured the fact was well known in the country.

In fine, if a man be *determined*, like the Scribes and Pharisees, not to believe in miracles, we press him no farther. It would be folly. But if he have a mind candid and open, one should think he might, on this point, find evidence enough to convince him.

Having taken this short view of the evidence arising from *miracles*, let us examine the other evidence of our Saviour's authority, drawn from *prophecy*. The purport of prophecy, as our Saviour himself informs us, is *to tell before it comes to pass, that when it is come to pass we may believe.*

When we look into the Old Testament, we cannot but observe, that in many passages, some extraordinary person is described, who was, in process of time, to make his appearance in the world. A prophetic promise was given very early, that *the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.* This was obscure, no doubt; but still it was sufficient to mark the intention of some spiritual good for the consolation of fallen man. Afterwards this prophecy was still made plainer, by a promise given in succession to the patriarchs, that *in their seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.*

As the time of this great event approached, the prophetic language became plainer, and more circumstantial. The character, the actions, the office; in short, the life and death of the Messiah, are all distinctly marked.—He was to be born of a virgin—of the house of David—at the town of Bethlehem—the early part of his life was to be



spent in Egypt—he was to become a preacher of righteousness—to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—he was to be the prince of his people; and yet to appear in the lowest condition, he was to be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.—He is described to be without sin; yet he was to be numbered with transgressors, and treated like a common malefactor.—The very manner of his death is pointed out—his hands and his feet were to be pierced.—Notwithstanding these indignities, he was to make his grave with the rich, and was never to see corruption.

Now the latest of these prophecies had been published between three and four hundred years before Christ—many of them much earlier, and had been in the hands, not only of the Jews, but of many other nations with whom they had commerce.

When we open the New Testament, we see how exactly all these notices were fulfilled. No two things can be more alike than the prophecies of Christ in one Testament are to the history of him in the other. Here we see him born of a virgin—of the house of David—at the town of Bethlehem. To avoid the persecution of Herod, he



he was sent, in his childhood, into Egypt.—Afterwards he became a preacher of righteousness, and turned the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. So far was he from assuming any worldly pomp, that he appeared in the lowest character. The joys of this world had no charms for him; he was literally, as the prophet described him, *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief*. Though his whole life was spent without sin, and in an uniform course of kindness to others; yet he was numbered with transgressors, and crucified like a common malefactor. His hands and his feet were pierced with nails, and his side with a spear.—But notwithstanding these indignities which attended his death, we are told, he was to make his grave with the rich, and was never to see corruption. Accordingly we read, that his body was taken from the cross, and given to Joseph of Arimathea, who is expressly called a *rich man*; and by him it was deposited in his own tomb. On the third day, Christ rose from the dead without receiving the least taint from corruption.—Thus we see exactly fulfilled all these prophecies of the Old Testament. With the history of Christ they perfectly correspond, and have no similitude to the history of any other person.—To

a candid mind, perhaps, no proof can be stronger than these wonderful coincidences, which we call *prophecies*.

The argument still runs on. Besides these prophecies to which our Saviour directly appealed, as relating immediately to himself, and describing his character and office; there were others in the Old Testament, which related to him, as he was connected with the Jews. To these indeed he could not directly appeal in his own life-time, but he referred his followers to the completion of them.

Among these, the two great leading prophecies were those which foretold the calling of the Gentiles, and the dispersion of the Jews.

The calling of the Gentiles—that is, the reception of the Gentiles into the Christian church, was one of the most early prophecies of the Old Testament. Those promises, which were repeated to the patriarchs, were plainly not confined to their posterity. It was not said, the Jewish nation alone should be blessed, but *all the nations of the earth*. And when the latter prophets, as the great event approached, spoke a plainer language, the whole Jewish people might have understood, as Simeon did, *that a light was now sprung up to lighten the Gentiles*.

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The great prophecy of the dispersion of the Jewish nation was equally remarkable. It makes a very early appearance in the Old Testament, being attributed by Moses to the patriarch Jacob: *The sceptre shall not depart from Israel, nor a law-giver from between his knees, until Shiloh come.* Shiloh is universally understood to mean the Messiah. The prophecy therefore plainly implies, that the Jewish government should continue till the time of Christ, and no longer. This prophecy, and others pointing to the same event, were exactly fulfilled. Soon after the death of Christ, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans; and the Jews being no longer wanted as an introduction to the Christian religion, are now by their dispersion, converted into a standing proof of its truth. The Gentiles are called in, and the *nations of the earth are blessed.* What still remains to complete these prophecies among those nations, which have never had the Christian faith among them, we hope, and doubt not, will in due time be fulfilled. We have seen large advances made in our times, towards the introduction of Christianity, both in the east, and in the west; and doubt not, but all those vast continents of Asia, Africa, and America, will,  
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in a course of ages, be civilized\*, and planted with the Gospel. The sincerity and piety of men, it is true, will never be answerable to the means, which God hath graciously vouchsafed; and it will always be a real grief to good men, that among many, there exists little more than the name of Christian.—But God Almighty does not work miracles to make men religious. He only means to set the truth before them. In all places men may embrace it if they please—or if they please, they may reject it. God does his part by placing it before them.

Having thus taken a view of the two grand evidences from *miracles* and *prophecies*, by which Christ proved himself to be the Messiah, and the Christian religion, of course, to be true; we cannot but observe, with what wonderful equality God, in his infinite goodness, hath divided the force of

● Since miracles have ceased, civilization seems to be the only human means, through which the Gospel can make its way among savage nations. Missionaries, I fear, have been of no great service. They have cost the charitable societies large sums of money, but we hear of little effect. Indeed, what can an ambassador do without credentials?

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these two kinds of evidence between us and the Christians of early ages. They were eye-witnesses of the *miracles* of Christ, and his apostles—or, at least, living nearer apostolic times, they lived nearer the source of evidence.—But with regard to *prophecies*, we have a stronger force of evidence than they had, because in our time more of these wonderful predictions are fulfilled. Thus, for instance, with regard to the dispersion of the Jews, though the early Christians saw the Jewish government destroyed; yet for any thing that appeared, it might again recover new strength. It had done so before on similar occasions. But *we* have seen that great prophecy completely fulfilled. Seventeen hundred years have elapsed since the destruction of Jerusalem; and though attempts have been made to restore it, they have all miscarried; and the Jews remain, at this day, an unsettled wandering people, scattered over the face of the earth, and carrying with them every where, a wonderful monument of the truth of the Christian religion. Thus again, the falling away of many, the desertion of the Gospel, and the corruption of principle and practice among Christians—are prophecies which, both among individuals, and in the vast regions of modern infidelity, we have unhappily

pily seen more completely fulfilled, than the ancient Christians ever saw.

May God grant, that from these great evidences of our religion, we may be fully convinced of its truth, and shew our conviction by leading such pious lives, as may be an honour to it, and a comfort and happiness to ourselves!

## SERMON XVII.

ROMANS, X. 3.

V. CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS TO THEM THAT BELIEVE.

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**H**AVING thus proved the truth of the Christian religion, I shall now endeavour to shew you its peculiar excellence, by pointing out the great difference between it and every other religion that hath appeared in the world.

The words of the text, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe*, naturally point it out. They imply these things—that there had always been a law given to man—that this law was insufficient to save him—but that Christ came into the world as the *end of the law*; that is, to do what the law could not do, namely, to save mankind.—This seems to be the doctrine of the text;  
and



and this doctrine I propose to explain in the following discourse, by inquiring, *first*, into the nature of that law, which was given to mankind before Christianity—and, *secondly*, in what essential point Christianity differs from it.

I am first to inquire into the nature of that law, which was given to mankind before Christianity.

The *law of nature*, as it is called, and the *law of Moses*, are the only species of law we are acquainted with before that period: and if we inquire into what *promises* they make, or what *hopes* they furnish, we shall find very little on either of these heads. *Promises of future happiness* even the law of Moses made none. Mankind, in all ages, might have had *hopes*, that God would reward virtue with future happiness. But they had no certain knowledge of it, and no ground even to *hope*, unless they should conform to the exact tenor of the law, which was *perfect obedience*. Pardon they had no ground to expect. Every sin was a debt against them, of which they had no means of payment. Repentance might make them more cautious; but they had no room to suppose it could wipe off a score already contracted. Sacrifice  
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was the only idea of atonement they had, and to it they had recourse. And this, by the way, shews they had full apprehensions of their own insufficiency, and wished to rest on something better than their *own moral attainments*, for their acceptance with God.

In short, man had the bare letter of the law before him. If he could live up to the tenor of that law, it was well; he might hope: if not, he had not the least ground to assure himself of the divine acceptance.

Thus then, the most comfortable language, which the best religion before Christianity, even the Jewish, could speak, was barely this. Here is a rule of life given you. If you can live up to it in all particulars, you may reasonably claim salvation as your reward. *Moses*, saith St. Paul, *describeth the righteousness which is of the law, saying, the man who doth these things shall live by them.* And again, *to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned as grace, but of debt*: that is, he who can fulfil the whole law—he who can perform his whole duty, the apostle supposes has a *right to claim everlasting happiness* for his reward.

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But the melancholy question is, who could do this? Who could look into himself, and say, I have kept the whole law—I have governed my appetites and passions by the strictest rules of reason—my thoughts have been pure—my words and actions inoffensive and innocent. *All sin*, the apostle tells us, *is the transgression of the law*; and what man is there who hath not committed sin?—who hath not of course transgressed some part of the law, and lost that title to everlasting life, which he had not the least reason to expect, but from the observance of the whole?

Thus then, as we see the impossibility of keeping the whole law, we see the impossibility likewise of obtaining salvation by the law. *For*, as the apostle again speaks, *by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified, for by the law is the knowledge of sin*.

The law then—observe—that is, the Jewish, and every other religion before Christ, give us no hope of salvation but through our own merits; and this hope must be founded on *perfect obedience*. *This do, and live*, is the tenor of the law. There was no provision made for deficiencies. The *whole law* was to be kept. Men were to be perfect.

fect. The law could not pardon. Every transgression subjected men to punishment.

Let us now, *secondly*, consider, in opposition to this, what comforts Christianity holds out; or *in what essential points it differs from the moral law.*

This matter is well opened in the text: *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to them that believe*:—that is, Christ came to make up the deficiencies of the law, and to save mankind through *his merits*, as they could not be saved through their own.

Christ gave us indeed a more perfect law to direct our lives: but this was not the great purpose of his coming. His great end was to make an atonement by his death for the sins of mankind—for the sins of *all* mankind; not of those only, who lived since his time, but of those of all nations and all times, even from the beginning of the world to this hour. He was *the lamb slain from the foundation of the world*—a remedy provided by the merciful goodness of a gracious God, immediately to take place as soon as the transgression was committed. Every one, it is true, shall be

accountable for the advantages he hath had, and shall be judged accordingly: let those advantages however be as little as they may, if he hath lived up to them, be he Jew, Turk, or Heathen, it matters not, we have every reason to believe, that *Christ was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world, for him, as well as for us.* Christ was the promised Messiah, in whom, as was anciently prophesied, *all the nations of the earth were blessed*—not this, or that nation, which hath enjoyed the Mosaic law, or the light of Christianity; but, we are told, *all the nations of the earth.* And thus St. John expresses it: *Christ is the propitiation for our sins—and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.* And St. Peter, to the same purpose, assures us, that *God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

The text seems to restrict salvation to those *who believe*: but it can only apply to such as live *in a Christian country*—not to those who never heard of the Gospel.

Thus then, we see, the moral law speaks to us as being capable of preserving ourselves through its influence, in that state of perfection in which we were created. But after the fall, the moral

law became no longer sufficient. Sinful man wanted something more. Let his rule be ever so perfect, if he could not comply with it, a deficiency still remained.

The Gospel therefore kindly intervening, makes up that deficiency—speaks to men not as they once *were*, perfect creatures, but as they now *are*, fallen, lost, and miserable sinners—and in the room of that absolute obedience, which the law exacts, accepts, through the merits of Christ, our penitence and sincere endeavours.

Here then we see the precise and essential difference between Christianity and the moral law. Both acknowledged the existence of a Deity, though Christianity opened the divine attributes more clearly. Both give excellent rules for the direction of our lives, though the Christian system was greatly more perfect. Both had a sense of God's spiritual assistance: one had conjecture at least, if the other gave assurance. Both acknowledged the immortality of the soul, and a future state; though a clear revelation on these points was only made by the Gospel. This much at least may be said, that on all these grand articles of religion, mankind, before the times of Christianity, were not totally uninformed; some notices they certainly



had. But the atonement of Christ for the sins of the world was wholly new. Men had no idea of it, but through the rite of sacrifice, which did not so much tend to give them any rational idea of the sacrifice of Christ, as to prepare them more readily to acquiesce in it, after they should in fact become acquainted with it. That mankind, conscious of their frailties and sins, could be restored to God's favour, and have those sins forgiven, was a doctrine of which the world had not the least idea before the Christian religion.—This is, therefore, the great and distinguishing mark, which points the difference between it and every other religion that hath appeared in the world:

We enter not into the *manner* in which the death of Christ saves us from the effects of sin. This is a matter solely with God. Our reason cannot comprehend it, and it is presumptuous to examine it. If we are convinced that the Scripture is the word of God, we must take such of its doctrines as are above our capacity, on its credit.—And as the Scripture informs us as plainly as words can speak, that Christ came to *save us from our sins*; with this simple truth, which is all we can comprehend, we should rest satisfied,

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To conclude then from the whole, it behoves every one who believes in the immortality of his soul, to look well into this matter, and consider whether the moral law—the law of nature—or the law of reason—let him call it what he will, gives him any hope of salvation—whether in the first place, he can obey it—or whether it gives him any hope of pardon, if he transgress it. If he find it is not in human nature to live without committing sin; and that no religion but Christianity, gives him any hope of pardon, if he do commit sin, why then it is certainly safest for him to look round for some better source of comfort than the moral law can furnish. Though we have every reason to believe, the unenlightened heathen will be the object of God's mercy through Christ, if he live up to the little knowledge he hath; yet we have no ground to conclude that any man shall be accepted, who hath had opportunities of examining Christianity, and yet still rejects it.

## SERMON XVIII.

GAL. vi. 15.

VI. IN CHRIST JESUS NEITHER CIRCUMCISION  
AVAILETH ANY THING, NOR UNCIRCUM-  
CISION, BUT A NEW CREATURE.

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**I**N my last discourse I shewed you the grand distinction between the Christian religion, and all other religions. It consisted in the atonement, which our Saviour Jesus Christ made for the sins of mankind.—This was an idea perfectly new to the world, except in the typical representations of that atonement, which had, from the beginning, been held out in sacrifice.

But now, though salvation be thus offered to mankind, by the free grace of God through Jesus Christ; yet we must carefully remember, that it depends

depends on our performance of the conditions, on which it is offered.

What those conditions are, I shall endeavour to explain, and shall open the subject, by shewing you *the general intention of the Christian religion.*

As its *particular distinction* consisted in the atonement it offered for sin, so its *great intention* was to restore man to a state of happiness, by purifying his affections, and drawing him, as much as possible, to that holy innocence of life, which he had lost by the fall of his first parents.

The effect of the great atonement took place, we suppose, immediately on that event; from which time, we apprehend, God graciously accepted all mankind, who lived up to the light they enjoyed. The poor unenlightened heathen, if he governed himself by such notions of right and wrong, as nature had impressed upon him, we doubt not would meet the mercy of God. The more civilized heathen, who had better notices of things, would be expected to follow better rules; while the Jew, who had the law of Moses to guide him, was expected still to lead a more holy life.

But with regard to God's mercy, and the manner in which he may think proper to treat the different situations of mankind, we have nothing to

do—except merely, as we humbly endeavour, to vindicate his justice.—What concerns *us* in this matter is, not to attend so much to the situation of other people, as to our own.

Now in whatever manner God pleases to treat the heathen world, it is an undeniable truth, that he will treat *us* by the rules of the Gospel. Whatever mercy he may grant to those, who never heard of the Gospel, we, who are acquainted with it, have not the least title to expect favour, but by conforming ourselves to its rules. By the rules of the Gospel we are to live—under its promises or threatenings we are to die—and by its laws we are to be judged after death.

Whatever part of Scripture we examine, we find the great stress is every where laid upon, what is called, a *new life*. In the text it is called a *new creature*. And in other passages, though the words may vary, the meaning is the same. Sometimes we are instructed *to crucify the old man*; sometimes to be *buried with Christ*; and sometimes *to put on Christ*. But all these, and other similar expressions, unite in signifying that the Gospel is intended to make some great change in mankind.

Before

Before Christianity, when man knew not, with certainty, that he had a connection with any future state—when he conceived, that this world might be the only place of his abode—that here he was to live, and here he was to die; and there might then be an end of him for ever—it is no wonder if this world, in a great degree, engrossed his affections. Here lay his interest; and here, of course, would be his heart.

But now, since Christianity hath assured us, these are mistaken notions—that this world is *not* intended for our abode—that it is intended for a state of preparation only for a future world—that although we perish here, we shall live eternally hereafter—one should think it required but little argument to convince us, that other rules, and a different manner of life, should appear necessary.

Now there is nothing more in the precepts of Christianity than this. It just instructs us how to prepare ourselves for another world. It reveals the immortality of our souls, and forbids us to pay our chief attention to our bodies. It displays the glories of heaven, and it instructs us not to give up ourselves entirely to the world.—It denounces God's wrath against disobedience, and  
presses

presses these instructions upon us on this interesting consideration, that this life, which is but for a moment, bears no comparison with that, which is to last for ever.

Thus, you see, the certain knowledge of immortality changes the nature of every thing. It turns this world, and all its concerns, into things of trifling importance. What was before an habitation, becomes now a pilgrimage. Wealth and power, which before might have their charms, become now vanities and temptations. Pleasure, which hath always led the world after it, becomes, in this view, one of the snares of the devil. While misfortunes, poverty, and sickness, which were before considered as the worst of evils, are represented in a Christian light, as the happy means of drawing those, who will make a right use of them, from the vanities of this world, to the glories of a better.

Thus, according to Christianity, you see nothing is a good, but what purifies our nature; nothing an evil, but what injures our souls. So that, in short, it knows nothing, that deserves the name of good and evil, but what relates to another life. And thus our Church, with great propriety,



propriety, makes it absolutely necessary, when we become Christians, to renounce *the pomps and vanities of this wicked world*—as well as *all the sinful lusts of the flesh*.

Thus, then, Christianity is neither more nor less, than a rule of life fitted for the use of creatures, now in a state of trial and suffering, but in hope of living hereafter in a state of happiness: it is a holy institution, intended for the restoration of man, by perfecting his nature, so as to make him an object of God's favour.

In conformity therefore to this intention, the Gospel enjoins a devotion of ourselves to God—a steady inclination to act agreeably to his will—and a gradual progress from one degree of perfection to another. *We are buried*, we are told, *with Christ by baptism into death*, so that *as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*. As if the apostle had said, our *life*, in imitation of Christ's *death*, should consist in a deadness to the world. When we become Christians, we are to bury our worldly inclinations: that as Christ was raised from the dead, so should we be raised above the things of this world: or, as the apostle phrases it, *we should walk in newness of life*.—We enter upon



upon new engagements. Our connections and relations become new. We have new hopes, and new fears, and ought therefore to give a new direction to our lives, and conform ourselves entirely to that new state which Christianity hath opened to us.

Now these, my brethren, are very serious truths; but, I think, not more serious than the Gospel makes them. By living in the world, and having its concerns continually before our eyes, we become so prejudiced in its favour, and form such close connections with it, that, alas! to numbers of us, nothing seems really serious, in which the affairs of the world are not concerned. Numbers indeed think this life the grand point, and consider religion rather as an intrusion. I can only tell you this will never form the *new creature* of the text; nor is, in the least, conformable to the design and intention of Christianity. Pray listen to the words of an apostle. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world; and the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will*  
of

*of God, abideth for ever.*—That is, we cannot set our affections equally on this world, and on the next, because the nature of one is wholly different from that of the other; to which this strong reflection is added, that they who conform themselves to this world, must expect only the short-lived portion it bestows; but they who labour for the next, labour for eternity.

But this world, alas! is a busy scene. I am so immersed in its affairs, says the man of business, that I have not a moment to spare. If I had double the time, I could employ it. I have hardly leisure either for amusement or rest. Whenever I remit, my affairs get wrong.

Then again the labourer cries out, I have my bread to get in this world—I have a family to maintain, and this cannot be done without employing all my time—I must either apply myself wholly to the things of this world, or I must starve. Let our betters, who are well provided for, and have not their daily bread to get, employ themselves about heavenly things.—We are straitened.

It is very true, my brethren, you may be straitened; and it is also very true, (with regard to your superiors,) that from those, to whom much is given, will be expected the more. But  
 however,

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however, be that matter as it may, their negligence is no excuse for you: and that you may have no other excuse, let me just remind you, that Christianity was preached to the lowest as well as to the highest. You must suppose it therefore to be such a religion as is meant for the benefit of all mankind; such as the poor, as well as the rich, may practise; and that your worldly concerns need be no hindrance to it. What were the apostles, think you? Were they men of large fortunes? They were tent-makers, carpenters, fishermen, and other low craftsmen and labourers, and had nothing more than barely the means, which you have, of getting their daily bread. Many of them, we know—probably all of them, worked at their business, even when they were apostles; and yet they could devote themselves to God, and mix the world and religion together; and so may you.

Both the man of business therefore, and the man of leisure, may be addressed in the same language. God never gave the Gospel, you may be sure, without the means of using it. It is certain therefore, that you either have the means of attending to your religion, and your business at the same time; or the Gospel is a useless thing.

How

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How will it hinder business of any kind, to consider, for instance, that you are always in the presence of God Almighty—and that you ought always to act in your several stations uprightly and conscientiously, as *unto the Lord, and not unto man?*

How will it hinder business, to be resigned to God in all your distresses, and to consider them, without repining, as sent by his appointment? This will certainly tend to lighten your afflictions; but I see not how it need interfere with your business.

To have also a thankful and a grateful heart to God Almighty for his goodness to you in many instances, which all religious people experience, cannot certainly hinder any kind of business.

The busiest man also may have time frequently to consider himself as a miserable sinner—to lament his own unworthiness—to beg pardon for his sins—and to trust in the merits of Christ for his acceptance with God. Thoughts of this kind never prevent business. They are consistent with any of your concerns.

None of your concerns need hinder your devout prayers to God, which may be offered up *occasionally*, even in the midst of your business—nor your resolutions

resolutions and endeavours to correct anger, malice, hatred, envy, and every bad inclination, which you feel within yourselves—nor will any business be interrupted by your being kind to each other, as opportunities fall in your way.

Such of these duties as employ your *thoughts* only, may be performed, you see, in the midst of business, without the least loss of time. But if a morning and evening prayer to God call for some little portion of each day, you must be hard driven indeed, if you cannot for God's sake, and your soul's sake, afford that little.—Sunday, at least, you may reckon on. Sunday, you know, is the Lord's day; and if you are so strict in taking six days to yourself, one should hope you would be as strict in giving his own day to the Lord—in spending it in his service—in going regularly to church, and reading the Scriptures.

Now in all these duties consists chiefly that devotion of yourselves to God—that *newness of life*, of which the Gospel every where speaks, and which is the great intention and end of its instructions.—You have no pretence then to say, that the business of life prevents the duties of religion. The most laborious man has time enough to be religious, if he have only an inclination

clination.—Speak honestly: if any of you heard of some diversion going forward, which your mind was much set on, would your first thought be, that your business would prevent your pleasure—or would you not rather cast about, how you might contrive to make your business and your pleasure agree?—If you were equally inclined, you might just as easily unite your business with your religion.

Let us then lay all excuses aside, and whether we are engaged in business or labour, if we desire to be more than Christians in name—if we desire, when we leave this world, to go to a better—let us keep always in mind the great *end and design* of the Gospel—that it was intended to draw us to eternal happiness hereafter, by making our lives pure and holy here. The less any of you hath of this world's goods, let him make it up by having more of the next; assuring yourselves that he who has religion has every thing; but that he who lives without religion, whatever else he may possess, *is dead while he liveth*. He is in a constant dream, mistaking falsehood for truth, and fancies for realities; or, as it is well expressed, in Scripture, he is *walking about in a vain shadow, and disquieting himself in vain*.



## SERMON XIX.

MARK, i. 15.

VII. REPENT YE, AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.

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**H**AVING considered the *general* intention of the Christian religion, I shall now shew you, how we are to meet that *intention*—or, in other words, what those *conditions* are, which God Almighty expects from us as Christians.

The Christian religion is often represented in the New Testament, as a covenant, which God hath been graciously pleased to make with man. God promises his holy spirit, pardon, and everlasting happiness; if we, on *our* part, perform the *conditions* which he requires.

These *conditions* are commonly reduced to two words, *faith* and *repentance*; or, which is the same thing, *faith* and *obedience*; because true  
repentance



repentance produces obedience, and obedience includes repentance.

Now *faith*, in the first place, is the ground of Christianity. Many people include trust in God, resignation, and other virtues, in their idea of faith. And so indeed they may, in one sense; because, if our faith be sincere, it produces them all. But I am here speaking of faith, merely as it implies *belief*: and, in this sense, we must first believe in Christ—we must take him for our Lord and Master, before we can obey his commands. Simple faith therefore, founded on evidence, is necessarily the first step towards being a Christian.

It is necessarily the first step, not only in the Christian religion, but in every other religion. The heathen, who worshipped many gods, would never have performed that worship, if he had not believed in those gods. And the Jew, who worshipped the God of Israel, according to the law of Moses, would never have paid that worship, if he had not believed in the lawgiver who enjoined it.—In the same way, faith, or a belief in Jesus Christ, the divine author of our religion, is the first step required of Christians.

Now, in the early times of Christianity, when men had been bred up in false opinions of religion, and had been long prejudiced in favour of those false opinions, it was a matter of some difficulty to bring them to reject, what they had so long valued, and to give themselves up to a new master. It was no easy matter to make them believe, that Jesus Christ, the son of a carpenter, who was crucified like a common malefactor, was the Saviour of the world: and, therefore, Christ not only laid a great stress on faith, but thought it necessary to work many miracles to command, as it were, the belief of mankind. This was indeed one great end of the miracles he wrought; and, accordingly, on his working a miracle, we are generally informed, that such and such persons believed through the evidence of it.

In these later days, though we have not the evidence of such mighty works performed before our eyes to command our faith; yet, on the other hand, we have all the evidence we can reasonably desire, and have none of those prejudices to get over, which the early Christians had. We are bred up from our infancy in the faith of Christ, and have little knowledge of any religious opinions,  
except

except those of the Gospel. One should think, therefore, it were no difficult matter for us to believe in Christ: and indeed, I doubt not, but every one of you believes, in general, that Jesus Christ came into the world to die for our sins—that he rose again from the dead—and that through the merits of his death we shall be saved, if we earnestly repent, and endeavour to obey his laws.

But still you may believe all this, without having that faith, which makes so great a part of religion:—that is, your faith, or your belief, may be so general, so undetermined, so weak, as to make no impression upon you. The Scriptures speak of a *dead faith*—that is, of such a faith, as hath no effect upon our hearts.

Now faith, without practice, in matters of life, as well as in religion, is very common. The intemperate man, for instance, really believes, that by eating and drinking to excess, he must necessarily lay the foundation of disease; yet he still indulges. His belief is not strong enough to get the better of the temptation. Nay, in many cases, when our belief amounts even to demonstration, we are still uninfluenced. Though we all as firmly believe we shall die, as we believe we are

now alive; yet how few live in a way in which they should wish to die!

A Christian, therefore, you see, may have a sort of general faith, which is not strong enough to exert itself in religious duty. True Christian faith *must* produce a good heart, and a good life. As the great end and design of Christianity was to purify our nature, and make us, in the Scripture language, *new creatures*; so faith is the great mean by which this holy renewal is to be effected. If our faith be *sufficiently strong* in Jesus Christ—if we *firmly believe* all that he did and suffered for us—if we *receive him in our hearts*, as our Lord and Master, and *thoroughly believe* that without him we have no title to everlasting happiness—we shall then be ready to obey all his commands—we shall receive his holy Gospel, and steadily endeavour to conform our lives to it—we shall practise all the refined precepts of Christianity—we shall love our neighbour as ourselves—we shall love our enemies—we shall be humble, and ready to take up our cross after Christ—we shall be dead to the honours and wealth of this world—and do our duty in all stations of life, *as to the Lord, and not unto man.*

We may be good moral men, as the world goes, without faith; we may be upright in our dealings, generous,

generous, and friendly, and possess many amiable and pleasing qualities—we may be temperate and sober, and regular in our deportment: all this may be attained without faith.—But we cannot be Christians without it. We cannot practise those refined duties I have been mentioning to you, without it; because, as these are taught only in the Gospel, they must spring entirely from faith in the Gospel.—Nor indeed can we practise any duties in a Christian sense without it: for if they are not practised on Christian motives, however a gracious God may accept them, they are not Christian virtues.

Thus then, you see, faith is the great mean of purifying our nature, by making us conformable to the spirit of the Gospel. Unless we believe firmly in the truth and importance of what our Lord has taught us, we cannot in earnest conform our lives to the practice of it.

Hence, therefore, the great dispute about faith, and works, seems a matter that might easily be adjusted. One lays the stress on faith, another on works; whereas, in fact, they cannot be separated. True faith *must* produce works; and if the works be truly Christian, they *must* spring from faith.

But now, my brethren, in this sinful state, no man, with all his faith, and all his works, can attain that height of purity which Christianity enjoins. The Gospel therefore generally uses the word *repentance* instead of *obedience*, as being more conformable to the nature of this world. We are enjoined to obey the Gospel as well as we can; but the best of our obedience is but a state of continual repentance; I shall endeavour, therefore, to explain to you the Scripture-doctrine of repentance, which is so often considered as one of the great conditions of our salvation.

Properly speaking, there are two kinds of repentance. One belongs to great and notorious sinners; that is, to the worst of men: the other (of which we are now speaking) belongs to all mankind, even to the best.

When a man has been guilty of any great and crying sins, as murder, adultery, perjury, or theft, which a man can hardly commit, without being lost to all sense of God and religion—or when a man, though he have not been guilty of any of these crying sins, has never thought of religion at all, nor of the care of his soul, nor of any thing of a serious kind, but hath given himself wholly



• wholly up to a life of pleasure, or a life of business, as his worldly circumstances may have led him — the repentance of such people, means an *entire* change of life — new principles must be laid — every thing they have learned must, in a manner, be unlearned; and their hearts and behaviour must all take a new form. This, mixed with high degrees of contrition, is the repentance of the notorious sinner, or the worldly man. A total conversion must take place; he is yet in a heathen state. *The Ethiopian must change his skin, and the Leopard his spots.*

This severe repentance however, I hope, none here, who attend the house of God, have occasion for. But, in a less degree, even the best of us, my brethren, stand in need of daily repentance. The best man, when he looks into himself, sees evidently enough, that he has *followed*, in the words of our church-confession, *too much the devices and desires of his own heart — that he has left many things undone, which he ought to have done; and done as many which he ought not to have done:* or, in other words, that his whole life must necessarily be a constant course of repentance.

But now, in this matter, there is an opening to mistake — I hope only to wilful mistake. However,



ever, let us guard against it. The loose Christian may be willing perhaps to think, that as his whole life must thus necessarily be a course of repentance, and that it is even supposed in Scripture, that it must be such, he may, under that idea, take liberties in practice, which are very inconsistent with his religion; if he be only careful, that his repentance shall follow the transgression.

If he seriously make this excuse, let him consider, that if he sin *wilfully*—with his *eyes open*, or *continue* in any *habitual sin*, he is not in a state of religion: he requires that first kind of repentance mentioned—an *entire change of life*.

The sins here meant, of which a Christian ought to be daily repenting, are such as, through the frailty of human nature, he cannot avoid—*ignorances and negligences*, as our church-service calls them—not taking proper care perhaps, at all times, to inform ourselves—inattention to our duty—surprizes on our temper and passions—coldness in our prayers—worldly anxieties—too much love for earthly things, and a variety of other offences, which, more or less, will insinuate themselves; and cannot, with all our care, be totally avoided. All these corruptions of nature, however, may hope for pardon, through the  
merits

merits of our blessed Redeemer, if we strive against them, and endeavour to check them, before they form into habits. But such is the deceitful nature of sin, and such our aptness to deceive ourselves, that without constant attention, this cannot be done. The great point is sincerity. The repentance of many people is little more than a sense of the present inconvenience of sin. Their sins occasion some distress, which they are willing to avoid; and, therefore, they repent, as they call it. A man gets drunk, for instance, and feels in consequence the inconvenience; so he resolves to be sober, and never to run into such mischief again.—Another man has been sometimes a little dishonest, but has thus far fortunately escaped discovery. He has lately, however, heard of some others, who have been found out in their knavish tricks, and have suffered for them—so he resolves in good time, to be an honest man. And indeed it is well, if a man can keep himself sober and honest at any rate.—But give me leave, my brethren, to tell you, that this is not repentance. For if the first could get drunk, or the latter be a knave, without any worldly inconvenience, there is no principle yet in these men, that would deter  
them.

them. There is nothing yet, you see, that leads to the *repentance of the heart*. I have heard of many a penitent in a gaol, and on a sick-bed, who returned to their bad courses. That repentance alone is sincere, which is grounded on a real hatred to sin, and a real desire to obey God; and shews its sincerity by a reformation both of heart and life.—Our repentance may even, for a time, be sincere, and yet not be effectual. We may be heartily sorry for our sins, and may be thoroughly determined, at the time, to leave them; but new temptations may arise, and get the better of our resolutions, and betray us again into our old vices. Our Saviour's parable of the seed scattered upon the surface of a weedy soil, applies directly to such penitents. Their resolutions are good, but they cannot hold them; they are entangled in the cares and pleasures of the world; and all their good intentions are choked: so that we cannot watch ourselves in the article of repentance too closely.

Thus then, my brethren, *faith* and *repentance*, through the merits of Christ, are the grand conditions

SERMON XIX. 221

ditions and terms of our salvation.—May we all seriously consider them as such, and make it the great business of our lives to strengthen our *faith*, and, through its efficacy, to purify our *lives!*

## S E R M O N . XX.

MATT. VI. 15.

VIII. IF YE FORGIVE NOT MEN THEIR TRESPASSES, NEITHER WILL MY HEAVENLY FATHER FORGIVE YOUR TRESPASSES.

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**T**HOUGH a correct life, founded on faith and repentance, is thus, in general, held out in the Gospel, as the great ground, through Christ, of our acceptance with God; yet as there is great stress laid in Scripture on certain marks or evidences of the sincerity of our repentance, I thought it right, before I close this part of my subject, to lay them particularly before you. What I would chiefly call to your attention, is the forgiveness of injuries—restitution—and the necessity of increasing in habits of goodness.

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The duty of forgiving injuries is so expressly required from Christians, that it was in ancient times one of the distinguishing marks of Christianity. The passions of malice and revenge, which the heathen nations indulged without scruple, the Christian was ordered entirely to conquer; and God Almighty, to shew his particular displeasure against an unforgiving temper, has made our forgiving others an express condition of our own forgiveness. The text is full to this purpose; and in many other parts of the New Testament, we are told, that unless we forgive others, we must not expect forgiveness ourselves. But there is one passage, in which our Saviour seems to have dwelt on this point with more than ordinary particularity. The passage, I mean, is the parable of the servant, who was indebted ten thousand talents to his lord. His lord was well inclined to forgive him, but the servant prevented his lord's goodness by his own implacable temper. His lord therefore punished him, we read, in the same way, in which he had treated his fellow-servant.—And that we may not make any misapplication in this matter; but know exactly for what purpose our Saviour delivered the parable; he adds, *so likewise shall*

*shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.* — Observe the expression, *from your hearts.* It is not only forbidden to abstain from all *outward acts* of revenge, but to abstain from all *inclination* to it.

Thus we find, that if we allow malicious and revengeful thoughts, let our repentance be what it will, it wants that mark of its sincerity, without which it cannot be accepted by God.

Even in the Lord's Prayer, short as it is, this doctrine is strongly inculcated. *Forgive us our trespasses, AS WE forgive them that trespass against us.*

I could wish you also to be convinced, that this doctrine is not only *scriptural*, but *reasonable*. For God enjoins us no duty in Scripture, which, truly considered, is not equally enjoined by reason: for the same God is the author both of reason and Scripture.

Now, as heaven is a place where only the kind affections prevail, anger, malice and revenge can, of course, have no existence there. As the Christian religion therefore is meant to prepare us for heaven, it forms in our minds such dispositions, and gives us such directions as are suited to that



blessed place. It is certainly therefore as *reasonable* that we should exercise ourselves in those things which are to fit us for heaven, as that a man should learn the arts of husbandry, before he attempt to till the ground; or study the law, before he can practise it: for a man who has been bred in one business cannot be more disqualified for another, than he who indulges the passions of anger, and hatred, and malice, can be prepared for the happiness of heaven.—The forgiveness of injuries is likewise a reasonable duty, as it tends to calm the mind, by ridding it of those boisterous passions, which, above all other things, disturb it.

The next duty which may be considered as a necessary part of repentance, is *restitution*. By restitution is meant, restoring again to another whatever we may have taken from him by any fraudulent or violent means. This must surely appear necessary, as otherwise a man must live in the *constant practice*, if I may so call it, of the crime he has committed.

Now a particular stress is laid upon restitution, because the nature of *injustice* is somewhat different from that of *other sins*. Such sins as are committed

merely against God admit no restitution. You swear—you blaspheme—you prophane the Sabbath: all these are offences against God. But they admit no *restitution*. All you can do, is to repent. To God you can make no other *restitution*. But acts of injustice to your neighbour *may* be farther atoned for. The damage may be repaired, and therefore certainly ought.

In the Jewish law restitution was strictly required, even with the addition of a fifth part\*. And though in the New Testament so much stress is not laid upon it, as on many other things; yet it is only because it is one of those first principles of justice, which needs not to be insisted on.—When it is casually mentioned in the New Testament, it is mentioned only as the first step of repentance, and that too in great sinners.

We have a remarkable instance in the case of Zaccheus. This man had been bred to the business of a publican; that is, a collector of the Roman tribute; which was thought one of the most disreputable of all employments. It was a business full of temptation; and, of course, of knavery: and it appears that Zaccheus had given into many of the temptations of his profession;

\* See Levit. vi. 5.

and

and seems indeed to have been a very ordinary man\*. On hearing, however, of Jesus—the doctrines which he preached, and the miracles which he wrought; this misled publican was somewhat staggered in the enjoyment of his dishonest gains, and began to consider in earnest the danger of the wicked life he had spent. Full of these thoughts, he longed much for an opportunity to see Jesus, and converse with him. At length his inclination was gratified. He conversed with his Saviour, and became a new man.—On his conversion, we find the first step he took, was to stand forth, and make open confession of his wicked life; and to promise, by way of atonement for the many acts of injustice he had been guilty of, not only to make restitution, but to restore four-fold.—Now this case of Zaccheus is no way particularly commended in Scripture; but is rather considered as a *thing of course*, on his resolution to become a real Christian.

Another great sinner, who stands recorded in Scripture for making restitution is Judas Iscariot.

\* Some people think his character was good; but the whole tenor of the narration, I think, makes it otherwise; the people immediately said, Jesus was *gone to be a guest with a sinner*. And our Saviour says, *This day is salvation come to his house, and that the Son of Man was come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

He had long lived in the habit of cheating his blessed Master and his fellow-disciples of the little stock they had for their daily expences. *He was a thief, and carried the bag, and took out for his own use (for so it should be translated) what was put therein.* These thefts, however, did not touch his hardened conscience. At least, we meet with no account of his restitution. But when, from these steps he went on to greater—when he carried his wicked love of money to so dreadful a height as to betray his blessed master, for the sake of thirty pieces of silver; though it is the common opinion of divines that he carried his repentance no farther than horror and despair, yet he surely carried it far enough to make restitution. He brought again the thirty pieces of silver, and threw them down in the temple, as unjust gains. So that, you see, restitution is considered here as no such mighty matter. When you have *made restitution*, you have yet gone only as far as Judas Iscariot went.

Upon the whole, restitution appears to be so much a part of repentance, that we may venture to say, no repentance can be truly sincere without it, when it is in our power to make it.—Perhaps you may say, your whole fortune, in a manner, has  
has

has been acquired by ill-gotten gain. If you restore it, you reduce yourself to little or nothing.— As to that, you are at option. You must judge, whether you think your ill-gotten gain, or the kingdom of heaven is more valuable: but I see not how you can enjoy both. If you have a true sense of religion, you will submit even to beggary, rather than die under the guilt of knavery.

Lastly, the sincerity of our repentance should be shewn by our increasing in habits of goodness. A Christian should never be at a stand: he should always, as the Apostle speaks, be *pressing towards the mark of his high calling*. The New Testament is full of exhortations to this purpose. We are exhorted to *grow in grace—to go on unto perfection—to add one virtue to another*; and, in short, never to suppose, we are perfect, as there is always a state of perfection beyond what we can possibly have attained. It is not an easy matter to conquer the bad habits of corrupt nature. We have much to do, and should always be endeavouring to do what we can. It is the great advantage of our having in the Scriptures a perfect rule, which the best of our endeavours cannot reach; because there

will always be a point still higher to excite us farther. A Christian ought always of course, therefore, to be endeavouring after a state of higher perfection than he has yet attained.

Indeed if a man does not *endeavour* to grow better, but *suffers himself to be at a stand*, he cannot be in earnest. When we are truly in earnest, we never set bounds to our inclinations. Did you ever hear of a covetous man setting bounds to his desire of getting money? Never, certainly, if he be in earnest. Neither should we, if we were in earnest, set bounds to our endeavours to grow better.—We may take it for granted, therefore, that it is expected from us, as a proof of the sincerity of our repentance, to make it our endeavour to *grow in grace*—to get the better of our bad inclinations by degrees—and to be advancing continually more towards perfection.

Thus, I have endeavoured to explain to you the terms of our acceptance with God. It is a weighty subject, my brethren, and you will one day find it to be so. And yet, alas! how little does it affect the best of us! How much more are we inclined to try a thousand arts to *bargain*, if I may so call it,  
with



with heaven, and endeavour to gain salvation, not on God's conditions, but our own. We seem to think God Almighty should rather come to our terms, than we to his. The young man in the Gospel seems to have had sentiments of this kind. He came to Christ to inquire what he was to do to inherit eternal life? He had a desire to inherit eternal life, (as, no doubt, every body in his senses must have,) and he wished to get the authority of Christ on his side, in order to his inheriting eternal life *in his own way*. But his experiment failed. Christ tried him on the article of love to the world. He did not like the terms, and therefore chose rather to go on in his sins.

Let not us follow so bad an example; but in *our* inquiries on this great point, let us assure ourselves that no terms but those of the Gospel will be accepted—and that on these alone, through the merits of Christ, we must depend for all our hopes of everlasting salvation.



## SERMON XXI.

2 PETER, i. 4.

**LX.** WHEREBY ARE GIVEN UNTO US EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES: THAT BY THESE YE MIGHT BE PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE.

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**H**AVING, in my two last discourses, treated on the *conditions* which are enjoined on *our* part of this covenant, I propose now to shew you what God has been graciously pleased to promise on *his* part—the *assistance of his Holy Spirit, pardon of our sins, and everlasting life.*

He hath first promised us the *assistance of his Holy Spirit.* Even in heathen times it was an opinion, that mankind was assisted by the Deity.  
When

When any action greater than common was performed, it was always ascribed to the assistance of the gods; which shews the idea of heavenly assistance to be, at least, agreeable to the rude opinions of nature. However opposite it might be to the prejudices of men's senses, they still believed it.

That the Jews held the same opinion we need not wonder. Their continued intercourse with heaven, and the frequent appearance of angels, through at least their early history, made ideas of this kind familiar to them.—And indeed it seems very probable, from the reason of the thing, and the general opinion of mankind, that God always did assist his faithful servants, in all ages of the world. If the Jew, and even the heathen held this opinion, surely the Christian has still better grounds for believing it. On this head the Scripture is very full; it every where insists on two great points—our want of assistance, and God's readiness to afford it.

In the first place, it impresses on us the melancholy truth, that through the great corruption of our nature, we stand in daily need of assistance. We are assured, that *in us dwelleth no good thing*, and that, at best, *we are only unprofitable servants*. And indeed, if the Scripture had  
been

been silent on this head, we need only look into ourselves to know the truth. We all know how much readier bad thoughts are to rise in our minds than good thoughts—how prone our appetites and passions are to intemperance, to self-love, to anger, to lust—how inclined our hearts are to falsehood, to hypocrisy, to pride, to envy, to hatred, and revenge.

Now these bad dispositions continually working in us, have nothing to counterbalance them but the grace of God. Our reason, we see, is certainly insufficient. God hath graciously therefore promised, that if we strive to get the better of these wrongnesses of our nature—if we are humble Christians, and endeavour to please him, he will assist us with his Holy Spirit, which (as it is well expressed in one of our church collects) *will put into our hearts good desires, and bring the same to good effect.*

Even among us frail creatures, when we see a person teachable, and modest, and desirous of assistance, it is a great inducement to give it. And can we conceive a holy and merciful God will do less? Can we conceive that he will refuse to assist his pious servants, who are endeavouring, as much as they can, to please him? That he will see them  
wandering

wandering faithfully and painfully, amidst the difficulties and self-denials in which his service engages them, and yet lend them no assistance? It is against reason to conceive it.—We have every proof, therefore, that Scripture and reason can give us, first, that we want assistance; and, secondly, that God will afford it.

But then we must ever carefully remember, that the Holy Spirit of God is not forced upon us. We must make ourselves worthy of it, before we can receive its assistance. We must make our hearts *temples of the Holy Ghost*, before it will dwell in them; and must *draw nigh to God*, before he will draw nigh to us.

In what way the Holy Spirit of God acts upon us, we know not. Our whole life, indeed, is only one invisible union with God. If he withdraw that power, whatever it is, that keeps us alive—we die. How this power acts, we know not; yet we are assured it does act. God's intercourse with us by his Holy Spirit, is equally certain, and equally inconceivable. A question of this kind was once brought to our Saviour, and he answered it thus: *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: so is every one who is born of*  
the

*the Spirit.* As if he had said, the Spirit of God works invisibly upon the minds of men, something like the operation of the wind, which you cannot see, however violently it may blow; yet you are well assured it does blow, from its effects.

Thus much for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, which I have considered as the first promise of the Gospel. But this would have been of little use, unless God had farther promised us the pardon of our sins; for after all our endeavours, the best of us have many offences, which call for pardon from the throne of God. The pardoning of sin, therefore, was the great point, in which, I have repeatedly told you, the Christian religion differs from all other religions. No other religion ever pretended to offer it. It was the language even of the Jewish religion, the only religion which claimed, in any degree, the promises of God, *This do, and live: do your whole duty, commit no sin, and you may be saved.*—But God, who knew what was in man, knew this rigid condition could never be performed—that man could never do his *whole duty.*—The Gospel, therefore, is a gracious abatement of this rigid condition; and though we have every

every reason to believe Christ's death will avail to the pardon of all mankind, both before and after his death, yet we Christians alone have these blessed hopes secured to us by a promise. If we are only sincere in forsaking our sins, they shall not, we are graciously assured, prevent our salvation. So that the door of mercy is not shut against the greatest sinner. If he is brought at length to a full sense of his sins, and a steady resolution to forsake them, he need not despair.—Only he must remember, that his repentance *must* be sincere; and that he may be deceived in this matter, without great care. It is not a sorrow for the bad consequences of sin in this world, nor a fear of punishment in the next, that is repentance; but a thorough change of life—of heart, and life.

In what way the death of Christ made atonement for us, and procured our pardon, we know no more than we do in what way the Holy Spirit of God acts upon us. It is one of those difficult questions in religion which we can never understand: it does not therefore concern us. If God had thought it necessary for us to know, he would either have given us faculties capable of understanding it, or have made it plain to such faculties as we have. But he has thought it proper to do  
neither.



neither. In the Scriptures this doctrine is fully contained; and if we believe in the Scriptures, the truth of which I have endeavoured to prove to you, we must believe in this doctrine also. If we give up the Scriptures, we give up Christianity, and there is an end of all argument. We often trust the promise of an honest man, though we may not clearly understand the force of the promise: let us at least pay equal regard to the promises of God.

But neither the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, nor the pardon of sin, would be of use to us, unless God had been graciously pleased to promise us the last great blessing of our religion, everlasting happiness.

In what the happiness of that great change from this world to the next consists, we know not. And what is more, the grandeur of the idea consists in our not being able to fathom it; as those parts of the ocean are of course the most profound, which the mariner's line cannot reach. We have less than a mariner's line in fathoming the depths of eternity; we can only reach the shallows that lie around us—the grandeur of eternity we must look

at



at with the eye of faith. But though God Almighty hath thus spread a curtain between us and that world of happiness he hath graciously provided for us; yet we are enabled to see enough through it to engage all our gratitude and affection. We know, in that world we shall at least be eased of all the distresses we meet with here. These distresses arise either from the mind, or the body—from the false pursuits of our passions and appetites—or from the unavoidable circumstances of a state of trial. Our distresses from both these sources must of course be removed, because we know that all their causes must cease. We shall have no ungoverned passions and appetites to disturb us; all will be serenity and peace. We need fear no improper objects to lead us astray, nor any thing to discompose or interrupt that calm and tranquillity which we shall then feel.

The distresses, again, which arise from sickness, infirmity, and decay, will all be over. All these arise from our mortal state, and when mortality ceases, all its casualties and unavoidable evils will of course cease with it.

Lastly, the distresses which arise from low circumstances, from hard labour, from poverty, and that contempt which often attends it, will no longer disturb

disturb us. All will then be equal: those distinctions only will remain, which different degrees of virtue and vice occasion. The poor, who have borne their poverty as they ought, and turned it by resignation into religion, will then be superior to those who had better advantages, and made a worse use of them.

Thus, as the happiness of a future state must, at least, consist in the removal of all those distresses which afflict us here, let us look up to it as the end of all our labour—the sweetener of all our toils—our comfort in every affliction—and our great defence against the fear of sickness, old age, and death.—We cannot conceive that God will take us from a better place to a worse, when he promises to reward us; but certainly from a worse to a better.

How much higher the happiness of a future state may be carried beyond the removal of all our worldly distresses, we know not; but we have reason to suppose, that in this great change many new kinds of happiness will be opened to us, of which we have now no conception. The infinity of God's power, and the various modes in which infinite power can produce happiness, though not within the compass of our comprehension, should be a constant source of our grateful contemplation.

Since

Since therefore, my brethren, God Almighty, in his goodness, has been graciously pleased to enter into these conditions with us, let us endeavour to make ourselves worthy of them.

Are we promised the assistance of his Holy Spirit? let us always endeavour to keep our hearts pure for the entrance of such a guest. We put our houses in order to receive an earthly visitant, and shall we make no preparation to receive the Spirit of God? Or can we suppose that blessed Spirit will inhabit any heart, where passion, and violence, and worldly thoughts, and envy, and malice, bear sway?

Again, Are we promised pardon and grace? let us always, with the promise, remember the conditions; and make ourselves as worthy of pardon as our most contrite repentance can make us.

Lastly, Are we promised everlasting life? let us live as if we believed ourselves on our journey towards our everlasting home; and may God of his infinite mercy grant, we *may so pass through things temporal, as finally to obtain the things that are eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord!*

## SERMON XXII.

ROM. ii. 8.

X. INDIGNATION AND WRATH, TRIBULATION  
AND ANGUISH, UPON EVERY SOUL OF MAN,  
THAT DOETH EVIL.

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**I**N my last discourse I considered the promises of the Gospel. But if promises alone had been held out, it is much to be feared they would have had little effect on the bulk of mankind. The generality of men have no relish for the happiness of another world. They are careless about its promises; and if they could enjoy the happiness of this world to the end of their lives, it is all they desire. They would be contented after death to give up all claim to the promises.

As this is the case with great numbers of mankind, it hath pleased God, besides the promise of  
future

future happiness to those who obey him, to add the threatening of future misery to those who do not obey him. It hath seemed good to him to work upon their fears as well as their hopes, and to threaten *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man, that doeth evil.*

In the following discourse, therefore, I shall *first* endeavour to give you the Scripture account of future punishments; and shall *secondly* point out the effect which this doctrine is intended to produce.

And first, with regard to the *nature* of future punishments, I shall just set before you a few passages from Scripture. We have no other authority. There we are told, *the wicked are reserved to the day of destruction—they shall be turned into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched—they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, and have no rest either by day or night; and the smoke of their torment shall ascend up for ever and ever—there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth—the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, shall say to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne.*

Now these, my brethren, are just *plain Scripture expressions*. Numberless other passages of the same import might easily be added to them; for this is a very small collection of what might be produced. They are not the opinions of this or of that divine—they are not descriptions wrought up from fancy—but they are the plain *literal* words of Scripture.

And now, let me ask any of you who pretend to have the faith of a Christian, What are we to suppose such expressions as these mean?—Are we to suppose that the word of God throws them out to terrify weak people?—that, in fact, they mean nothing, or next to nothing, and are merely intended to keep the world in awe by vain fears?

I suppose none of you will believe this; or conceive that the God of truth could have recourse to such low, paltry expedients, as would disgrace even a human government.

If then we are to suppose these threatenings have a real meaning, the next question is, What is that meaning? What is the sense which we are to put upon such expressions? Are we to put the *literal* sense upon them, and suppose that future punishments will consist of lakes composed of fire and brimstone, as described in Scripture?

I sup-



I suppose not. I should not contend for such an interpretation. Many things which the Scriptures think proper to mention, cannot, as I have often told you, be exactly described. Our faculties could not comprehend them; and therefore the Scriptures are obliged to describe them *by* such things, and to compare them *to* such things as we *do* understand. Thus when they describe the happiness of heaven, if they spoke of it exactly as it is, we could no more comprehend it, than a child could comprehend the beauties of a fine picture. Its faculties are not adapted to understand them. In order, therefore, to make the happiness of heaven, in some degree, intelligible, the Scriptures compare it to such things as we *do* understand. They compare it to *a fountain of living water, or a crown of glory, or the brightness of the firmament, or to something of which we have the clearest conception; and which, at the same time, either from its purity, its splendour, its grandeur, or other quality, gives us some idea of the nature of it.*

It is thus also, we may suppose, they describe the misery of future punishments. As they cannot explain to us exactly the *nature* of future punishment, because we could not understand it, they compare it to such things as we do understand.



Well then: on a supposition the Scriptures are not to be interpreted literally in this matter, let us consider next in what way they are to be interpreted.

We may lay it down as an unexceptionable rule, that when they mean to inform us, they give us the clearest ideas they can. In the case before us, the ideas they raise are certainly of the most dreadful kind: we must suppose, therefore, that they mean to give us the idea of something very dreadful. Less than this we cannot suppose. We conclude, therefore, that when the Scriptures compare future punishments to our being plunged into a lake of fire and brimstone, they mean, at least, to make us understand they are of a very dreadful nature; and that, whatever the *real* nature of future punishments may be, nothing can explain them better to *us* than these horrible ideas.

But now in the passages which I have just read to you from Scripture, there is another idea suggested, besides the *greatness* of the punishment; and that is, the *continuance* of it. It is called, *the worm, that never dieth—the fire, that is never quenched*; and so forth.

The next question, therefore, is, How are we to interpret *these* passages? Are we to conceive them

them as expressing only some long period of time? Or are we to consider them in a literal sense? And that their meaning is, that future punishments are really to last for ever?

Many people, it is true, have been led (but I apprehend chiefly by their own wishes) to consider them in the former sense. I own, I see no grounds for such an opinion from any rules of interpretation that I know. The *exact nature* of future punishments could not be literally explained to us; so the Scriptures were obliged, as I have just told you, to compare it to things that could be explained. But though there seems to have been a necessity for this in explaining the *nature* of future punishments, there seems to be none in explaining the *duration* of them. We can comprehend well enough what is meant by a thing's lasting for an hundred years, for instance; or for a thousand years, or for ten thousand. The Scriptures, therefore, had no occasion here to use any language but the plainest, because the *plainest* would be the *most intelligible*. So that by telling us that future punishments are to last for ever, if nothing more was meant than to express a long period, the Scripture only misleads us by a *figure*, when the *exact truth* would have been very plain.

But perhaps you will say, the Scripture purposely leaves it doubtful to keep us the more in fear.—Of that we know nothing. For myself, I should not suppose such a fallacy consistent with the word of God: it generally, I believe, speaks the plain truth, and if men will not believe it, they must be left at liberty.

But farther, the very same word in the original which is used to express the duration of future *punishments*, is used also to express the duration of future *rewards*\*. Are we then to suppose that it here likewise means only some long period? Or are we to consider future rewards as eternal, and future punishments as temporal, though the very same word is used to express both? This, no doubt, in the opinion of many people, would be the most commodious way of interpreting Scripture; but whether it would be most agreeable to the just rules of interpretation, I much doubt.— Upon the whole, therefore, we seem to have every reason (at least so far as I can see) to believe from the words of Scripture, that future rewards and future punishments are both eternal.

\* Απελευθέρωνται υτοι εις κολασιν αιωνιον· οι δε δικαιοι εις ζωην αιωνιον. Matth, xxv. 46.

One thing is very plain, the heathen nations before Christianity, believed, as far as they had any knowledge of these matters, that future punishments were eternal. Of this we have many instances; which shew, at least, that this doctrine is agreeable to the natural sentiments of mankind\*.

After all, however, it is our business to leave this great matter in the hands of God Almighty, whose *wisdom* and *justice* govern all his works, and who will undoubtedly *do what is right*. There are different degrees of punishment, no doubt, as there are of reward, suited to the different degrees of virtue and vice; and *that* God, who holds the balance of the universe, will not only do us justice; but we ourselves, we may be assured, in that great day, shall acknowledge that justice.

Whatever difficulties, however, may attend our reasonings on this subject, one point is very clear, that nothing can be more imprudent than to run any risk in a matter of such awful consequence. It is certainly the safest way to *believe* that future

\* See the sixth book of Virgil, in which Theseus and other wicked persons are represented as suffering eternal punishment in Tartarus.

punishments are eternal, so that on this side of the belief, at least, our interest lies.

Having thus shewn you what is revealed to us with regard to a future state of punishment, let us now consider, as a conclusion from the whole, the great effect which these awful denunciations are intended to produce.

There are serious moments in the lives of the most hardened men, when wickedness has run its course, and brought on misery, as in some shape it always does—or when disease and the apprehensions of death have worn down the spirits—or when afflictions and distress have put men out of love with the world.—In these moments they may look into themselves—their consciences may begin to stare them in the face—to set before them their guilt; and they may begin to think there is something more in the terrors of damnation than they had before apprehended. Thus awakened by the judgments of another world, they may see things in a different light; they may deplore their sins, and God may touch their hearts with his grace; and what was at first only fear and horror, may end in a sincere and lasting repentance.

Others

Others again may have no great crimes to answer for, but are totally given up to the world, and seek all their happiness from it. They believe indeed in God; but their belief has little effect upon their lives. They have no trust in God—no gratitude. They receive every thing, not as if it were given by him, but as if it were merely of their own procuring, or as if it were their due. They neither reverence him, nor pray to him. They believe also in a future state, but they do not much like to think about it; they just believe it enough to fear it, but not enough to give up their thoughtless, or their pleasurable, or their busy lives, to obtain the happiness of it. They believe in Christ, but they do not think it necessary to observe his laws. Yet still many of these, it may be hoped, when they have run their giddy course, and have found that life, after all, has been a scene of folly and vanity, having nothing to draw them *back*, may begin to look *forward*. It may now perhaps be a startling thought, that they are just upon the edge of eternity—their consciences may begin to take an alarm in earnest—their fears proportionably to arise. To enter eternity with that guilt about them which they now feel, is a thought which deserves attention; and, by the mercy of  
God,



God, it is never too late for repentance. With these reflections, and these fears, they may in earnest be awakened into repentance—they may see God's mercy, and their Redeemer's love, and become sincere penitents.

Thus then we see the natural effect of the fear of future punishment. It should work upon us, as fear of every other kind does, to alarm us, and put us in a situation to avoid the threatened mischief.

But now, my brethren, I hope you are enough informed, that if your repentance go no farther than fear, it is no repentance at all. It is nothing yet, you see, but the fear of damnation; and there is no more goodness in such fear, than there is goodness in avoiding a precipice.

We all have our sins, and must all, no doubt, more or less, have our fears. But still the truly good man is not good through fear. Fear may have awakened him; but he would be good, whether future punishments existed, or not. He obeys God, not because he threatens, but because it is the supreme happiness of man to devote all his actions to an infinitely wise and good Being, and to seek the guidance  
of



of his Holy Spirit. He trusts in Christ, not because of the condemnation which the Scripture threatens to all who despise their Saviour; but because he feels the want of a Redeemer's mercy, and feels the excellence of Gospel laws; so that, as much as he can, he endeavours to make *his love so perfect as to cast out fear*.—It is just thus in human affairs. You do not call him an honest man, who is honest merely because he fears a gaol? By no means. You know well enough that such a man has not even the seeds of honesty in him. Remove the law, and he is a knave. Him only you call an honest man, who would be honest, whether there were a law against knavery, or not. Just so, he is the only good man in the eyes of God, who would wish to live a pious life, whether there were future punishments, or not.—May we truly consider these things, and may God of his infinite mercy grant they may have a proper effect upon our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

## SERMON XXIII.

I JOHN, V. 6.

XI. THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER AND  
BLOOD, EVEN JESUS CHRIST.

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**H**AVING thus given you a *general view* of Christianity, I shall not enter minutely into its precepts, as these have been the ordinary subjects of my discourses from this place. One point, however, farther, I think it necessary to touch upon,—the doctrine of the sacraments; which shall be the subject of the following discourse.

Our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, are duties, you know, which in their own nature are right. That it is right to worship and obey God—that it is right to be just and kind to our neighbour—and that it is right to be sober, and temperate, with regard to ourselves, no religious man ever doubted.

But

But besides these duties, there are two observances enjoined by our religion, which are not, like the duties just mentioned, of value in themselves; but are rendered binding from being expressly appointed by our blessed Saviour. These are the two rites of baptism, and the Lord's supper. Now though it be an indifferent thing in itself to be sprinkled with water, or to eat and drink bread and wine; yet when these actions are enjoined by divine authority, as solemn parts of religion, they are rendered as binding as any other duties.

But though baptism and the Lord's supper receive their chief authority from a divine institution, we are not to suppose they have no use in themselves. I shall endeavour, therefore, to shew you their end and use.

The Christian religion, humanly speaking, may be called a covenant between God and man. Conditions, on both sides, are promised.

Now in making a human covenant, you know certain outward forms are always thought necessary, to render it binding. If you and I enter into an agreement, in which we both promise certain conditions, the law requires there should be some open act or ceremony, to specify and confirm our agreement.

agreement. It must be written on stamped paper, for instance; it must be signed and sealed, and executed before witnesses.

Now in this covenant which God hath made with man, he hath graciously condescended to confirm it by these outward acts of baptism and the Lord's supper. On our part, they are the signs of our humbly accepting the gracious conditions of the Gospel; and on God's, the merciful pledges of his performing that part of the covenant, which he hath graciously promised.

When God entered into *covenant* with Abraham, he appointed the rite of circumcision, as we are expressly told, for the same purpose. By that rite he assured Abraham, and it was a standing pledge to assure his posterity also, that God *had* entered into covenant with him, and would undoubtedly fulfil it.

The rite of baptism, therefore, which was instituted in the room of circumcision, has the same intention with us that circumcision had with the Jews. It is meant as an assurance, or seal, of God's entering into covenant with us.

The Jews used to accompany circumcision with a sort of baptism. It is probable our blessed Saviour

viour, (who in all things, as far as he could, accommodated his institution to the prevailing practice) took baptism, as the easier part of the Jewish ceremony, to be the sign of the Christian covenant. In the same manner, it is probable, he adopted bread and wine in the Lord's supper from the passover. Indeed the sacrifice of a lamb, after the completion of the type, would have been improper.

Some of you, perhaps, if you were asked what baptism is? would answer, that it is giving a name to a child. It is no such matter. Giving a name to a child, is so far from being the baptism of the child, that it is not even so much as the least part of baptism. We do indeed give, what we call its Christian name, to a child at baptism; but this does not make the giving of the name any part of the sacrament. The baptism of the child had been still the same, if no name had been given. And indeed I am apt to fear, that the giving of a name at baptism has had a great tendency towards bringing this holy sacrament so much into abuse. People conceive it means nothing else; whereas baptism, I have told you, is that rite by which we enter into the covenant of the Christian religion, and express by it our humble acceptance of the

VOL. III. S conditions,

conditions, which God is graciously pleased to offer; and on God's part, it is, in St. Paul's language, *the seal* of his covenant.

Now, at first sight, one should imagine, that children, who cannot understand the nature of this covenant, should not enter into it; but should wait till they come to man's estate, and can understand it.—And indeed this hath often been said, and many good Christians do not baptize their members till they are of age. You know I mean the Baptists. It is not our part however to judge our brethren for differing from us in this, or indeed in any other matter, where there is no absolute and special direction given in Scripture, which is the case here. Only we expect the same forbearance from them.

For the propriety of infant baptism, as we use it, we reason thus:

As this rite seems to have been instituted in the room of circumcision among the Jews, and as circumcision was administered to children, it seems proper to admit children also to baptism, and present them to the Lord, as our blessed Saviour, you know, when a child, was presented to the Lord in the Temple.

Farther,



Farther, as a child is very capable, we hope, of receiving the great end of the covenant, namely, eternal life; we see not why it may not be admitted to the ceremony also. If it receive the greater, there seems to be no reason why it may not receive the less.

Then again, we may remember, that our blessed Saviour took children in his arms, and declared, that such only as resembled them, were fit for the kingdom of heaven. And though this is not an express command for infant baptism, yet, perhaps, it comes as near it as any thing can do, less than an express command.

In this matter, however, the Church demands the security of sponsors, who are intended, if the infant should be left an orphan, or neglected by its parents, to see it properly instructed in the *advantages promised*, and the *conditions required*.

How shamefully this duty is neglected I need not inform you. You know, as well as I, how many come as sureties for children, who are themselves as ignorant of all the duties of religion, as the very children, whom they represent. So that in fact, it is now neither more nor less than a good institution degenerated, like many others, into a mere thing of course. Ministers may be



grieved at this abuse; but they cannot help it, while their congregations will not be at the pains of receiving those means of instruction, which they have in their power, and shew so little attention either to preaching or catechising.

As baptism is thus a rite enjoined to all Christians, as a sign of our *entrance* into covenant with God, so the Lord's supper is enjoined as a sign of our continuance in it. It is that outward token which Christ hath required us to give of our continuing to be his disciples; and of our resolving to maintain that faith, and those laws, which we have received from him. Of course, therefore, we can only once be baptized, because we can only once enter into this covenant: but the Lord's supper we receive frequently, to shew we steadily continue in it.

Now these are the great ends and uses of baptism and the Lord's supper. They are the signs you see, of our gratefully accepting that gracious covenant which God hath been pleased to enter into with man, and of our continuance in it. They are pledges too, that God will perform his part of the covenant.

But

But besides these gracious ends, the two sacraments are so contrived, as to impress upon us in a *visible form*, the two greatest truths of our religion.

The first of these truths, and the very foundation of our religion is, that we are fallen, lost, and sinful creatures, and have need of a total change of nature to make ourselves acceptable to God. Of this, water is a sign. As it washes away the filth of the body, it marks the intention of that religion, which washes away the impurities of the soul.

The other great truth of our religion is, that as we *are* fallen, lost creatures, we can only be saved by the atoning blood of Christ. This great truth is set forth in the Lord's supper, which we are enjoined to receive in remembrance of what Christ did and suffered for our sakes. As water, therefore, is an outward sign of that purified nature, to which baptism was intended to lead us; so are bread and wine of that body which was given, and of that blood which was shed as an atonement for those sins, which, notwithstanding our purified nature, will always beset us.

Thus then you see, that baptism and the Lord's

supper are, at the same time, our securities for the performance of the great covenant of grace; and also set *visibly* before us two of the greatest truths of the Gospel. We may add, also, that they are a strong proof of the truth of Christianity. If they were appointed at the time we fix, which cannot be disproved, they establish both the origin of our religion, and point out some of its principal doctrines.

A few remarks with regard to your practice, shall conclude what I have said on this subject.

As to baptism, I doubt not, but you all bring your children regularly to be baptized; and when a child is ill, you are very solicitous that it may not go out of the world without baptism. And all this is very right. I should only wish you to be as solicitous about receiving the Lord's supper, as you are about baptizing your children. I should be glad to ask, *why* you are so solicitous about the baptism of your children? I hope it is not through fashion, and merely because your neighbours do it. I hope you could answer, that you bring your children to be baptized, because baptism is a holy institution of religion, the visible entrance into it, and enjoined as such by our blessed Saviour.—But  
then

then let me ask you, why you do not, for the same reason, as regularly attend the sacrament of the Lord's supper? For this is likewise a holy institution of our religion, and is equally enjoined by our blessed Saviour. So that if you brought your children to be baptized from a real principle of conscience, one should think that principle would carry you to the Lord's supper also. There is no reason for one that does not urge likewise for the other. Nay, there is even more reason for your frequenting the sacrament of the Lord's supper, than for your being solicitous to have your children baptized. For if the child should even die without baptism, nobody, who has worthy notions of God, can conceive, that it would suffer hereafter for the neglect of other people. But you who abstain from the sacrament, sin with your eyes open. You will do well therefore to consider what reasons have weight with you for so wilful a neglect. —But pray observe, they must be very extraordinary reasons indeed, which will allow you to live in the constant breach of a positive command of God\*.

\* See the subject of the Lord's supper, treated in the XXXI. sermon of the second volume, in which some of the more popular scruples against it are answered.

## SERMON XXIV.

JOHN, xiii. 17.

**XII. IF YE KNOW THESE THINGS, HAPPY  
ARE YE IF YE DO THEM.**

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**H**AVING given you, as I proposed in the foregoing discourses, the grand outlines of the Christian religion, I shall conclude the whole by a summary of the particulars.

These discourses opened with a short account of the fall of man. In him, and in the world which he inhabits, we every where see evident marks of imperfection, though amidst wonderful beauty and contrivance.

The air, the water, and the land, produce storms, and floods, and earthquakes.

Every animal seems created, as it were, for destruction. The life of one is upheld by the death of another.

The

The same imperfection we find in man. He is continually distressing either himself or others. Look where we will, we every where see the effects of his irregular passions and appetites; of his violence, or his fraud.

What could induce the great Lord of heaven and earth, to create a world abounding with all these circumstances of imperfection, hath ever been one of the most difficult of all questions.—Nor could this difficulty have been solved, if the Scriptures had not solved it for us. They inform us, that the world is not now in that happy state in which it was at first created—but that man, by transgressing the law of God, brought this mischief upon himself—upon his posterity, and upon the world which he inhabits.

From this view of the imperfection of all things here, we are led to consider God's gracious means of restoring man, by sending Jesus Christ into the world. This divine Saviour came to give us just notions of God and of religion—to give us just notions of ourselves—and to stamp God's authority on the precepts he enjoined. But chiefly he came to die for our sins—to obtain pardon for us—to restore us to God's favour, and open to our hopes everlasting life.

This



This great end, we have every reason to believe, was extended to all mankind, under whatever name distinguished, (heathen, gentile, or barbarian,) from the very instant of the Fall. They who lived up to the lights given them, however mean those lights might be, we doubt not, were all saved through the blood of Christ. The promise of restoration was *immediately* made to Adam; and Christ is called *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*.

From this view of the fall of man, and of the gracious intention of God to restore him, we were led to examine the scheme of our redemption more at large.—We examined, first, the preparation with which God thought it necessary to introduce this Holy Saviour into the world. By the time the world was well peopled after the flood, it was overwhelmed and sunk in idolatry and wickedness; and could not, one should suppose, at once bear so immediate a change as the Christian religion was intended to introduce.

There seem to be only two ways in which this change could be made—either by preparing man gradually for it—or by giving him a new nature; which must have been brought about by a miracle. God, in his wisdom, chose the former method;



method; and it appeared, that the Jewish nation and religion, were the means which God used to prepare the world for the reception of Christianity. Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, had a promise made him, that in his posterity *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. To his immediate descendants the same promise was renewed. The offering of Isaac—the promised land—the bondage in Egypt—the redemption from that bondage—and a variety of circumstances which befel the Jewish nation in the wilderness, were all representations of the Messiah's kingdom.

Again, after the Jews were formed into a regular government, and their temple was established, a new set of types, or representations of the Messiah, took place. Every part of their worship, their various sacrifices—the passover—the veil of the Temple—the scape-goat—the high-priest entering the holy of holies—the censer of incense—the several purifyings of their law, and many other parts of it, were all lively representations of the Messiah.—To these we may add the predictions of their prophets, many of which were so plain, that they almost seemed the very history of those events, which we well know, happened many hundred years afterwards.

Having

Having thus seen in what way the Jews themselves were prepared for the reception of the Gospel, we examined next, how their intercourse with other nations was contrived to spread these preparatory notices throughout the world. The patriarchs led a wandering life among several nations; and, no doubt, instructed them, in some degree, in religious knowledge.—Afterwards their posterity remained long in Egypt, where, we may well suppose, the miracles wrought by Moses had left behind very awful impressions of the Jewish religion. As the Jews became nationally established, their traffic, their wars, their captivities; and, lastly, their conquest by the Romans, all tended to spread their religious knowledge in various parts. And, in fact, through all these means, there was a general expectation among the civilized part of mankind, of some great deliverer, who was to arise about the time, when Christ really appeared.

We proceeded next to consider the miracles and prophecies, to which our blessed Saviour appealed for the truth of his coming from God.

But as we know the truth of these things *only through the Scriptures*, it seemed necessary, before

we

we proceeded, to shew on what grounds we believe the truth of Scripture.

The books of Moses could not be forged, because they contained the law by which the people were governed, which law was confirmed by a number of miracles, performed before many thousand people. These miracles were plain to all men's senses, and might easily have been contradicted, if they had been false. If the Jewish nation had not believed the miracles, they certainly would not have received the law, which depended on the miracles. But they did receive the law; therefore they believed the miracles, and the book in which these miracles were contained.—As for the Jewish prophets, the *events fulfilled* have sufficiently proved their authority.—We next examined on what proofs the rest of the books of the Old Testament depended.

With regard to the New Testament, as it was written and published nearly at the time, when the events which it records were performed, it could not possibly be forged. If it had, it must have been detected. But none of its early enemies ever spoke against its truth, as they knew very well it could not be attacked on that side. *Their* objections were of another kind. They left it to  
unbelievers,

unbelievers, who lived later in the history of the world, to deny the truth of Scripture.

From proving the truth of Scripture, we proceeded to consider the miracles and prophecies to which our Saviour appealed. We first examined the nature of a miracle. As it is a work which human power cannot perform, it follows, that whoever was enabled to perform it, proved plainly, that he acted under the authority of God, who alone was able to perform it. It appeared also, that the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and could be fulfilled in no other person; and that many of his own prophecies had been fulfilled in after-ages, which brought new matter of proof to us in these later times.

Having thus seen on what ground the *divine authority* of our blessed Saviour rested; we considered next the *nature of his religion*. We examined it as a gracious covenant between God and man, and pointed out how it chiefly differed from every other religion that had ever appeared in the world. The only foundation of hope men could have had from any other religion was, by uniformly obeying the precepts of it; because no religion, except the Christian, ever professed the privilege of pardoning sin.

SERMON XXIV. 271

The general scope and design of Christianity was the next object of our inquiry. It was intended to restore man from the lost condition, in which the fall of his first parents had involved him, and to prepare him for everlasting happiness; the great design of it, therefore, was to purify his nature—to make him a new creature—and to qualify him for a future state of purity and perfection.

The means by which this great end was to be attained were *faith* and *obedience*. The Gospel contains all those holy laws and instructions, which we must observe, in order to purify our nature. It is absolutely necessary for us, therefore, to have such an ardent faith in Christ, as will enable us for his sake, and the sake of his promises, to practise these laws. We must first believe, before we can obey.

In treating this part of the subject, some points of duty were mentioned, on which a particular stress is laid; as, the forgiveness of our enemies—restitution, in case we have defrauded any one—and improving more and more in goodness. If we are not sincere in these things, which are the strongest tests of our faith, we may be assured, we have no sincerity about us.

Having

Having thus considered, in general, those conditions of the Christian covenant which *we* are to perform, we considered next those conditions, which God hath been graciously pleased to promise on his part—the assistance of his Holy Spirit; pardon for our sins; and everlasting life.

On the other hand, to those who break the conditions of this covenant;—that is, who lead wicked lives,—he hath threatened future misery; the nature of which, as far as we have Scripture-grounds, was explained.

Having thus taken a view of the great end of this gracious covenant—its conditions, and its sanctions, we proceeded to explain those outward acts and ceremonies, which confirm it. These are, baptism, and the Lord's supper, which imply our humble acceptance of the gracious conditions which God hath offered, and are likewise pledges on his part of the performance of them. They are intended also to remind us of the two great truths of the Gospel; first, that we are lost and sinful creatures—and, secondly, that we can only be restored through the death and mediation of Christ. The former of these truths is set forth by water in baptism: the latter, by bread and wine in the Lord's supper.

Thus



Thus I have endeavoured, my brethren, in a course of Sermons, to instruct you in the nature of our Religion; and have laid the whole before you with method and connection, that you may have the clearer view of it.

But, though I have endeavoured to set these things before you, yet my endeavours go but a very little way. The great matter is, what you are to do for yourselves, in order to obtain God's blessed assistance upon your endeavours.—I have attempted only to set before you the knowledge of your duty. But knowledge, without practice, is nothing. You are not made happy by knowing these things. *If ye know them*, says the text, *happy only are ye if ye do them*. Let this then be the lesson, that is to sink deep into you—that it is *doing* these things, not *knowing* them, that is to make you happy.

Remember your Saviour's parable of the seed. It is an easy business for the ground to receive it. It takes it as it falls.—It is just as easy to hear the word.—But to bear fruit, is another matter.

In that parable, you read, there are various soils. There is first the hardened soil, which the



seed could not penetrate—there is, secondly, the stony soil—there is, thirdly, the soil choked with weeds—and, fourthly, there is the good soil; that is, in plain language, there are three parts in four of mankind, that make little use of the knowledge they receive. And then their knowledge only arises in witness against them.—What avails it to know you are lost, and fallen creatures, if you still suffer your natural corruption to continue?—if you never strive, nor pray to remove it?—What avails it to know, you can expect salvation only through Christ; if you do not, by holy lives, make his death efficacious in taking away your sins? Will the knowledge, think you, of these things save you?—Are the truths of the Gospel intended to enlighten the understanding, or to improve the heart?—The goodness of the tree is known by the fruit it bears—And so is the goodness of a Christian. We must know our duty, it is true, before we can practise it: but if our knowledge do not lead to practice—if it do not produce in us good lives, we are fruitless trees, and *only cumber the ground*. You remember what was said of him, who knew his master's will, and did it not: his sentence was deservedly severe.

Let

SERMON XXIV. 275

Let me then conclude as I began. I can add nothing stronger; and let it be deeply imprinted in your minds. They are your Saviour's own words—*if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them:* and may the grace of God, through Jesus Christ, impress them upon you!

## SERMON XXV.

JOHN, vii. 46.

NEVER MAN SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN.

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**T**HE chief priests and Pharisees being determined, if possible, to destroy our blessed Saviour; and having gotten, as they supposed, some handle against him, sent their officers to apprehend him. The officers were so struck with what Jesus said to them, that they returned without him. "Never man," said they, "spake like this man." What our Saviour said to these officers does not appear; but we may be sure, from his answering on other occasions, it was something, which they thought extremely uncommon and affecting.

As we are often apt to pass over things slightly which deserve great attention, many of us, in the

present case, may not consider in so strong a light as we ought, the extraordinary power with which our Saviour always *spoke*. In the following discourse therefore, I shall endeavour to explain the text, by shewing you, *first*, the *great wisdom with which he* opposed his adversaries—*secondly*, the *divine precepts he gave his disciples*—and, *thirdly*, the *grand scheme of redemption which he opened*; in all which *he spake as never man spake*.

We first admire *the great wisdom with which he opposed his adversaries*. Thus when they asked him, whether it were lawful to give tribute to Cæsar? they wanted only a handle against him.—If he had said, it was lawful, he would have offended the Jews, who thought themselves naturally free from all tribute. If he had said, it was not lawful, he would have offended the Romans, who had imposed the tribute. An ordinary man might have held his peace; or have answered, he was no judge of the case: the wisdom of Jesus meant to confound these malicious enquirers. He asked for a piece of money with which the tribute was paid. Whose image, said he, does this coin bear? On their answering

Cæsar's, he bade them give it then to Cæsar, if it was Cæsar's. But, as his manner was, always to introduce some moral instruction, he bade them remember, they had a heavenly power to serve, still superior to Cæsar. His enemies, astonished at his wisdom, left him in confusion.

The same snare was laid for him, when the woman taken in adultery was brought before him. If he had said, they ought not to put her to death, he opposed the law of Moses; and if he had advised the contrary, he laid himself open to the Romans, who forbade the Jews the power of life and death\*. Here again he might have avoided the difficulty by silence; but he chose rather to confound his wicked adversaries, by setting their consciences and their practice at variance. Let him, said he, among you, who hath never been guilty of this crime himself†, throw the first stone. This roused the conscience of each, especially as they were probably conscious of each other's guilt, and they retired in confusion. He then told the woman, it

\* See John, xviii. 31.

† This appears rather to be the meaning of our Saviour's expression, than our translation of it; for sin of *some kind* they had all undoubtedly committed.

was not his part to pass any *judicial sentence* upon her; but only exhorted her to sin no more.

Among other instances of the wisdom with which he reproved his adversaries, we may remark some of his parables. Such was that of the man, who had two sons whom he ordered to work in his vineyard. The elder pretended to go, but afterwards refused. The younger at first refused, but afterwards went. In the elder was held out the perverseness of the Jews in rejecting the Gospel: in the younger, the penitence of the Gentiles, who should now be received. But though the parable was very severe, the chief priests could not take hold of Jesus, because the wisdom, as well as the severity of it, lay in their own application.

Of the same kind was the parable of the guests invited to the marriage. As they who had been invited would not come, the master of the feast sought for such as could be found. The chief priests had sense enough to understand the feast meant the Gospel—the guests who refused to come, the Jews; and those invited from abroad, the Gentiles. If Jesus had said all this plainly, his enemies would soon have raised an accusation

against him: but as he told them only a fable, the application was their own.

Of the same kind also was the parable of the householder, who let out his vineyard to husbandmen. On their using his servants ill whom he had sent to gather the fruits of it, he at length sent his son, but him they put to death.—In the preceding parable, Jesus had shewn the chief priests what they *had done*; in this he shewed them what they *intended to do*. But still each parable was wrapped up in so much prudent caution, that his enemies were their own accusers.

Having given you *a few* instances of our blessed Saviour's wisdom in reproofing his adversaries, I shall now shew you, that in giving instruction also, *no man spake like this man*. In the first place, he laid a stress on many virtues, which other lawgivers did not value—on humility, for instance, gentleness, meekness of spirit, the forgiveness of enemies, contempt of the world, and universal charity. It was his design to draw men *from* this world, to which they are always too much attached. Other lawgivers wish to fit men *for* it, and therefore



fore give them worldly instructions. But as our Saviour intended to qualify men for heaven, he taught them such virtues as were suited to that blessed state. No man ever spake in that way but himself.

Again, our blessed Saviour, (as his forerunner, John, had foretold,) *laid the axe to the root of the tree.* Other instructors enjoined *virtuous actions.* Jesus went farther, and laid a restraint on our *thoughts*, well knowing that if the heart were pure, the actions would be pure of course: and if impure, nothing good could spring from it.

Another great principle which he held out, and which was given by no other lawgiver, was to do every thing to please God. This was a directing principle on all occasions, for every man must know in his heart, whether he wished to please God.

Again, our Saviour did not draw his instructions into length, by shewing the ground and reason of each precept: he gave them, as the Jews observed, *with authority, and not as the scribes.* His instructions frequently were couched in short sentences; such as, *Love your neighbour as yourself. Do to others as you would have them do to you. Let not your right hand know what your left hand*

*hand doth.* All these, which are in fact the law reduced to a portable size, are so plain and easy—so readily remembered, and so obvious on all occasions, that it must be a man's own fault, if he be ignorant of his duty. His duty is thus brought home to his feelings.

We remarked some of our Saviour's parables as great instances of that wisdom, with which he avoided, or reprov'd his enemies: we may remark others as very beautiful pieces of wisdom and instruction, such indeed as are no where met with, but in the instructions of him, *who spake as never man spake.* In the prodigal son, with what wonderful tenderness is represented the happy state of a repenting sinner?—In the rich man, who laid up his goods for many years, how striking is the folly of trusting to earthly possessions?—In the self-exalted Pharisee, and the humble publican, how strongly is spiritual pride reprov'd, and humility inculcated?—How affectingly are we taught to love our enemies, by the parable of the good Samaritan? and how awfully are we shewn, in the story of Lazarus and the rich man, the end to which our riches bring us if we employ them only in gratifying ourselves?—In the parable of the seed sown on various soils, how aptly are we

shewn

shewn the necessity of cultivating our minds with the heavenly instruction of the gospel?—The parable of the talents delivered to different servants, shews us that God hath appointed different stations among mankind; and that every man should act faithfully according to his station; while the parable of the ten virgins, who waited for the bridegroom, and of whom five were shut out, reminds us of that constant vigilance, which we all ought to use in these several stations. But it would exceed the bounds of a discourse of this kind, to quote all our Saviour's uncommonly instructive lessons. I hasten therefore to shew, as I proposed, *thirdly*, in what way, above all others, he *spake like no other man*. I mean, in his opening *the grand scheme of the redemption of mankind*.

From the history of Moses, it was well known, that our first parents had fallen from their original purity. But people knew not in those early times the extent of the mischief; nor in what way restoration was provided; except from the notices of certain prophecies, which were not clearly understood, till they were fulfilled; and from what they could gather of the nature of atonement from the rite of sacrifice. When he came,  
 who

who *spake as never man spake*, he opened to mankind every thing that was necessary to be known on this subject. He shewed us the nature of a future world. He informed us also of the nature of that world, which we now inhabit. He shewed us, that one world was meant only to lead us to the other—and that in a future state, rewards and punishments should be finally adjusted, so as to rectify every appearance of inequality which might strike us here. He discovered to us the nature of God—informed us that his providence extended to the smallest parts of his creation—that he was merciful, and kind to man; but, at the same time, just and righteous. He shewed us how we were to please this holy God.—The sacrifices of the heathen, and ceremonies of the Jews, which were meant only as types, were not the kind of devotion in which he took most delight.—A sincere and humble heart—a pious life—and holy prayers, were the most acceptable offerings that could be made to him.—The same gracious friend to mankind promised also, that the endeavours of his faithful servants should be, assisted by his Holy Spirit. He farther explained the kind intention of his coming into the world, not only to restore us by his divine precepts, to that state of purity, as far as human frailty would admit,

admit, which we had lost; but chiefly to lay down his life to procure pardon for our sins, and to obtain that happiness for us, which we had forfeited by the fall of our first parents. Even our bodies, he informs us, should not for ever mingle with the dust, but should rise again from the grave—be united to our souls—and take part with them in the rewards and punishments of a future life.—And that we might not doubt the truth of all this, he confirmed it, by rising himself from the grave, of which he hath left us the soundest evidence in the truth of Scripture.

Now all this information was perfectly new to the world. Conjectures men might have, and certainly had, on many of these subjects: but their best philosophers ran wild in all their opinions. It could not but give great comfort, therefore, to all serious people, to see light thrown, by degrees, on all these interesting questions—to find their conjectures cleared of all their absurdities—and formed into sacred truths by him, who proved his divine commission before their *eyes*, by such mighty works as never man wrought; and to their *ears*, by speaking as never man before him spoke.

I shall

I shall detain you farther only by two or three observations.

If our blessed Saviour *spoke as never man spake*, it is so far an argument, that he was *more than man*: and we add this to our other arguments to prove his divinity. We do not rest our conviction on what the officers reported; but we have proved, from various instances, that what they reported was the truth.

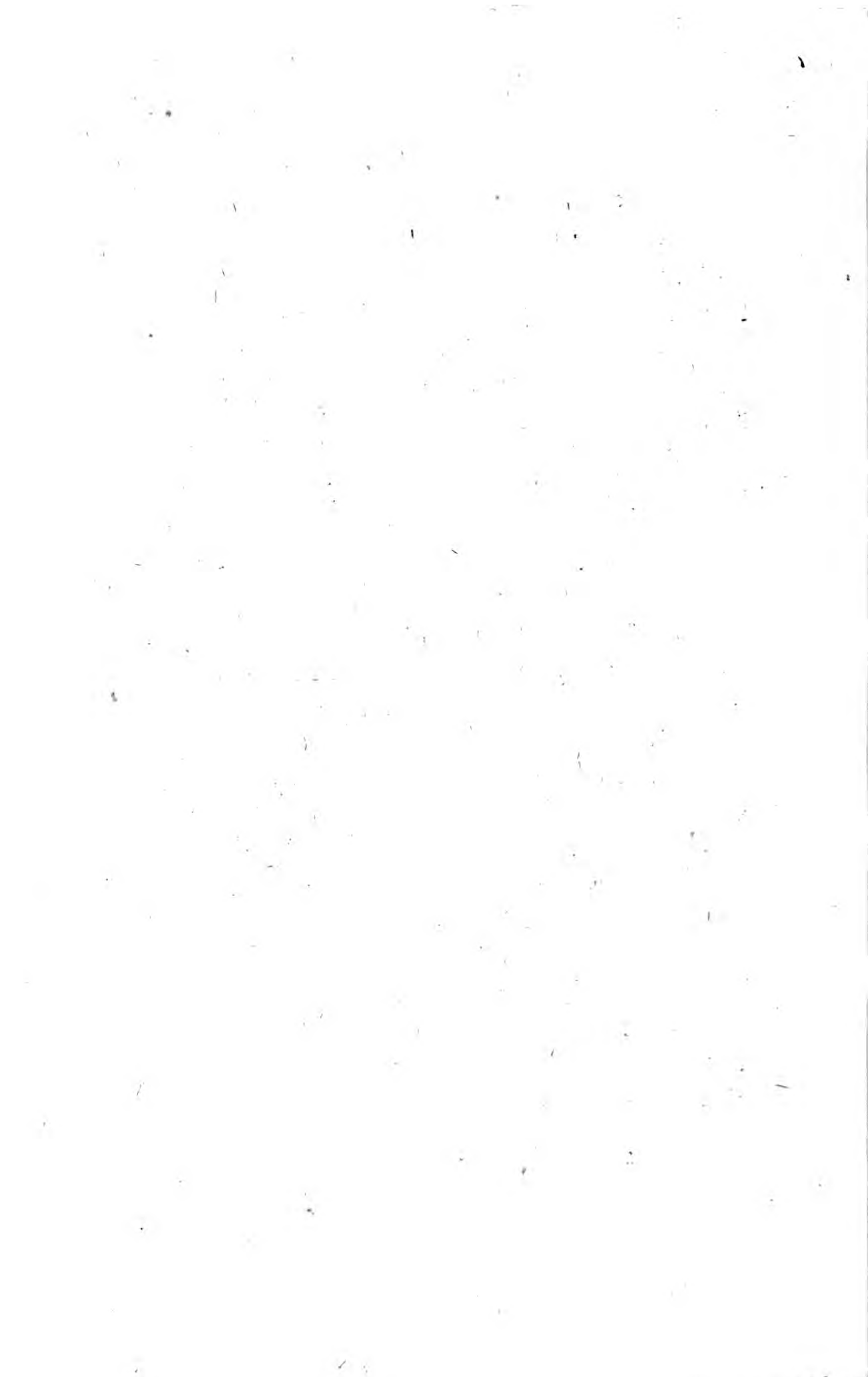
Secondly, if our Saviour *spoke as never man spake*, we may justly wonder, that no more attention is *now* paid to what he said. When our Lord lived on earth, he was the admiration of all men. People crowded from all parts to hear him. They were astonished both at what he spoke, and at the authority with which he spoke.—Whence is it then that, since, in his own time, he was so much admired both by friends and enemies, we should now read the Scriptures, when we do read them, with so much coldness? His divine sayings are the same now they ever were. We read them just as he spoke them. His wisdom is the same. He reproveth his enemies with the same admirable prudence. His heavenly instructions are the same, and his infinite kindness in laying down his life  
for



for mankind. Why are we then less struck with these things than they were, who lived in our Saviour's time?

When we read the Scriptures therefore, let us endeavour to be more attentive. Let us place ourselves in the circumstances of those, to whom he spoke. Let us bring before our eyes, as it were, the blessed Jesus instructing us, as he did those who crowded round him. His instructions are, in fact, as much directed to us, as to the Jews. The precepts he gave them, are the precepts he gives us. His instructive parables apply to both. Our minds, like theirs, are the various soils in which the seed is sown. The repenting prodigal is not more held up to them than to us. The rich man who *lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torment*, is a dreadful warning to us all, who spend the bounty of heaven in self-indulgence: while the good Samaritan sets the Christian, as well as the Jew, a noble example of charity; and the ten talents instruct both equally how we ought to proportion our good offices to our abilities.—Let us then thank God for all this holy instruction. *He that hath ears to hear, let him hear; and listen, with a full purpose of obedience to that voice, which spake as never man spake.*





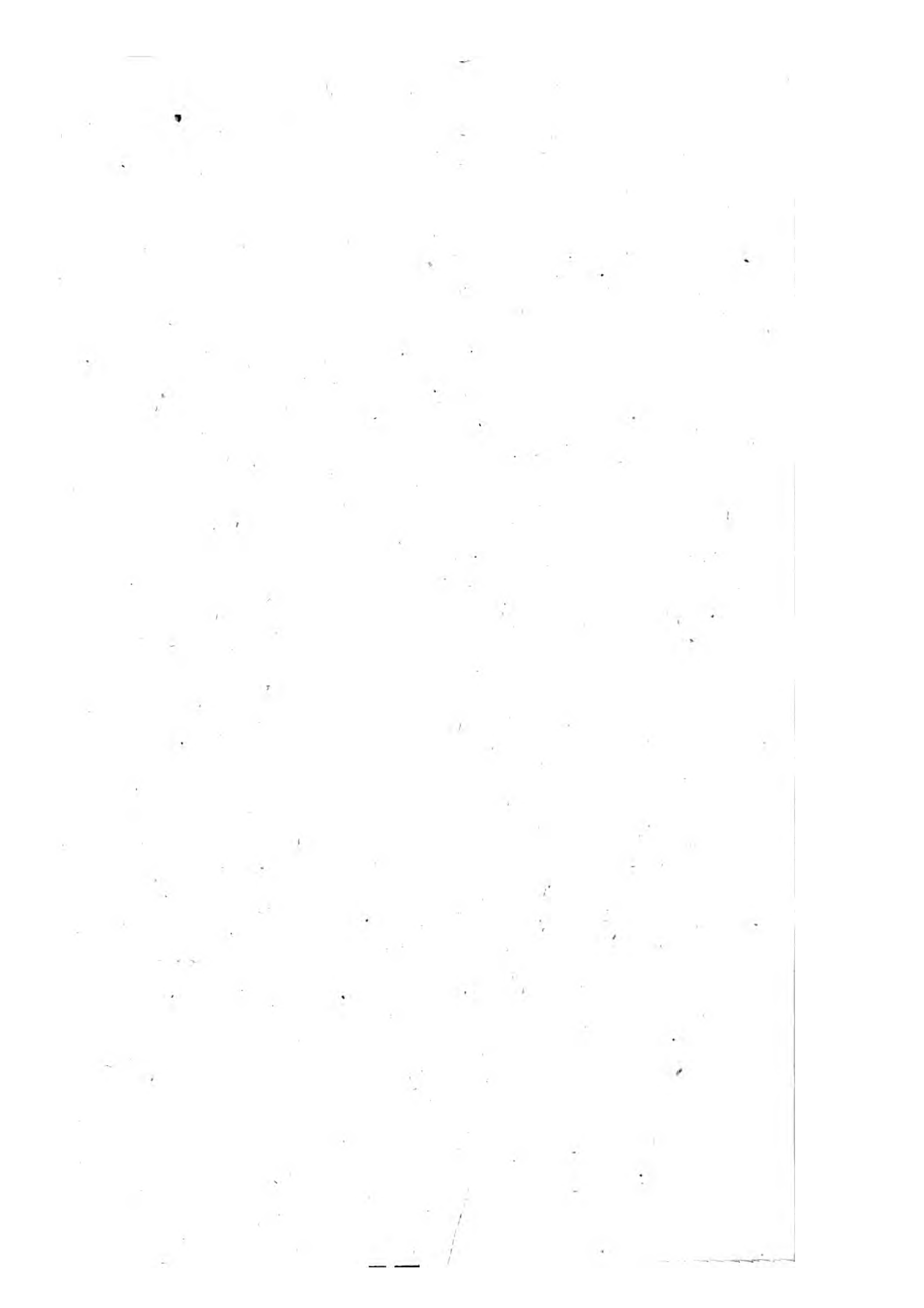
H I N T S

FOR

S E R M O N S.

VOL. III.

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I.

ACTS, ii. 47.

AND THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH  
DAILY SUCH AS SHOULD BE SAVED.

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**T**HIS text is often brought as a proof of predestination. But if the context be examined, it will appear, that such as *should be saved*, were not to be saved by the absolute decree of God, but by *continuing stedfast in the apostle's doctrine*.

The doctrines of predestination—election—and reprobation, which are all nearly connected, receive their chief force from the *supposition, that the fore-knowledge of God cannot be reconciled with the freedom of man's will*. That this is an awful, deep, and to us an incomprehensible subject, may well be allowed. But are we not told, in various parts of Scripture, of the *deep things of God*? Are

we not told, that things which are *impossible with men, are possible with God?* Are we not forbidden to be *wise above what is written?*

The predestinarian, in support of his opinion, quotes a number of texts, which seem to serve his purpose.—All of them, however, either by the context, or some other mode of interpretation, admit of easy answers. One of the strongest is the apostle's celebrated allusion to the *potter and his clay*\*. This passage is taken from the eighteenth chapter of Jeremiah. By the prophetic sign of the potter and his clay, (according to the common mode of eastern instruction) the prophet instructs the Jews, that God exercised the same power in receiving *one nation*, and rejecting *another*, as the potter does over his clay. And it is very remarkable, that the translators of our Bible, who were not thought to be very averse to these doctrines, tell us in the contents of this chapter, *that under the type of a potter is shewn God's absolute power in disposing of nations*. Now, it is evident, that the apostle makes exactly this use of the allusion. He has not the least reference to *individuals*, nor to a *future state*: but merely threatens the Jews with the completion of those prophecies which hung

\* Rom. ix. 21.

over them—the rejection of their nation, and the acceptance of the Gentiles.

But the strongest appeal against this doctrine, is to the *nature* of the *Gospel*, and to the whole *tenor* of *Scripture*. What can be more absurd, than to suppose God offers salvation to man in the *Gospel*, which can be of no service to him? What can be more absurd than for the *Scripture* to exhort—to threaten—to encourage—and to promise—unless these modes of application mean to treat men like creatures, who have it in their power either to obey or transgress? Even on a supposition, that certain passages on this subject are *not* easily explained, whether is it more natural to conclude, that the *whole Scripture* is founded on absurdity, or that a *few texts* are not clearly understood?

II.

ACTS, XXIV. 16.

HEREIN DO I EXERCISE MYSELF, TO HAVE  
ALWAYS A CONSCIENCE VOID OF OFFENCE  
TOWARD GOD, AND TOWARD MAN.

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**T**HOUGH every one who reads the Scriptures, must confess, that our own righteousness cannot save us—that, imperfect as it is, and mixed with transgression, it can at best only qualify us for obtaining the effects of Christ's atonement; yet, on the other hand, it seems agreeable to the whole tenor of Scripture, that we may do works pleasing to God, and that they may therefore have some good in them. I shall at present only deduce an argument to this purpose, from the passage before us.

*A good*



A *good conscience* can mean nothing, if it do not mean that pleasure which we feel from our own endeavours to live uprightly, and please God—or, in other words, that complacence which we feel in our own good works. I do not mean, in the *whole* of our moral conduct, for, after all, we are *unprofitable servants*, and have much to deplore; but in certain actions, wrought, as we conceive they are, on good motives.

As, therefore, we are encouraged by example and precept, to endeavour to obtain the happy *feelings* of a good conscience, we must suppose that good works, which are the foundation of these *feelings*, must have *some kind of merit* in the sight of God. I am cautious in using the word *merit*. But I mean it in a very restrained sense. We cannot surely be exhorted in Scripture to *feel a satisfaction* in any thing which is not pleasing to our Almighty Father.—If a *conscience void of offence towards God and man*; that is, if *good works* were of *no avail*, why should the apostle *exercise himself in them*? Faith was all he needed to have insisted on.—But, in short, the Scripture supposes both faith and good works so necessary, as to be equally insisted on. *Faith* as the *mean*—*good works* as the *end*.

If it be said, the apostle rejoiced in a good conscience, only as it was *a test of faith*, it is not easy to say, why he should leave the *cause* out of the question, and speak only of the *effect*. It would have been a more natural mode of expression, to say, herein do I exercise myself to have always a sound faith.

### III.

LUKE, XXIV. 45.

THEN OPENED HE THEIR UNDERSTANDING,  
THAT THEY MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE  
SCRIPTURES.

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**W**HETHER the *opening of the understanding*, which is mentioned in the intercourse which our Saviour had with the two disciples at Emmaus, was supernatural—or it consisted only in shewing the *prophecy* and the *completion* together in so strong a light, that the reason of the disciples could not but close with it—does not certainly appear. At any rate, however, the *understanding* must be taken for *human reason*, as the medium through which the sense of Scripture, either naturally, or supernaturally, was conveyed to them.

But

But whatever might have been the case of the apostles, *we* have no ground to believe, that our *reason* will be supernaturally assisted. The Holy Spirit of God, we conceive, assists the pious Christian rather in his *heart*, than in his *understanding*.

——N.B. This subject might be considered by examining, first, a few rules, that may assist us in understanding Scripture: and, secondly, by shewing how greatly men have erred in all ages, by not attending to what St. Paul calls the *simplicity that is in Christ*.

## IV.

I PET. V. 8.

BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT; BECAUSE YOUR ADVERSARY, THE DEVIL, AS A ROARING LION, WALKETH ABOUT, SEEKING WHOM HE MAY DEVOUR.

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**H**ERE are two *rules* given us, enforced by a *reason*.

We must first be *sober*. This word, in the original, relates chiefly to temperance in drinking\*; but it may easily be extended, and was probably meant to be extended, to all things in which temperance is concerned. This gives it a great range among Christian virtues.

We must next be *vigilant*. The usefulness of vigilance arises from the proneness of human na-

\* See Parkhurst's Lexicon.

ture

ture to negligence. Temperance, which acts as a restraint on all our passions and appetites, is very apt to relax. Such desultory temperance forms no habit. It is *the habit of temperance*, which religion requires; and which it is the office of *vigilance* to produce.

Lastly, to awaken us to this vigilance, these two rules are enforced by a reason. *Our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.*

Whether the devil, as a tempter, has power over mankind, at this time, is a question, which hath often been decided with more boldness than argument. It is certain the Scriptures seem to favour the opinion of such existence; and it is as certain, that we know nothing of the nature of spirit, except from Scripture. Good men also often experience such subtle temptations, as they cannot account for on any principle, except that of a seducing agent.—But whether we take the lion of the text for some wicked agent, or for temptation in general, still it forms an argument very conclusive, We are always in the midst of temptations, and cannot be too much on our guard against them.

V.

JOHN, iii. 3.

EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT  
ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

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**W**E are here instructed to prepare ourselves for the *kingdom of heaven*, in opposition to that preparation, which the magistrate thinks sufficient for the *kingdoms of this world*.

The good of society alone is his object. Keep your desires, he cries, within such bounds as not to injure your fellow citizens, and I am satisfied.

But religion goes deeper. We are members, it informs us, of a higher kingdom, into which we must be *born*, as it were *anew*. We must not be satisfied with restraining the *outward act*; we must purify the *inward affection*.

Thus



Thus then we are, in fact, members of two different societies, for which two different modes of preparation are required.—Which of these modes of preparation is superior, may be seen, by considering the first as qualifying us only for *one* society—the other for *both*. The soldier may fight for glory, or plunder—and the statesman may court popularity. Each may benefit society; yet as neither has yet made any ground in the doctrine, which enjoins him *to be born again*; so neither, of course, is qualified for the *kingdom of heaven*.—Whereas, he who is *born again*—whose actions are governed by the laws of the *kingdom of heaven*, not only qualifies himself for that kingdom, but promotes more uniformly the good also of that inferior society of which he is a member. Thus the soldier who fights for glory or reward, if he have reason to believe he shall attain neither, withdraws from the service as soon as he can; he has no other motive to push him on: while the soldier who acts under a sense of religion, has nothing to do with the motives of glory and reward. He acts under higher influence, and obeys the call of his country, as long as his services are required.

Such

Such a character, we are told, is ideal. It does not exist. We all mix glory, or reward, or other worldly motives, with our pursuits.

In a degree, no doubt, we do: but perhaps not in so full a degree as the objector may suppose. However, on a supposition the *objection* were true, it is still no argument against the *doctrine*. We are not contending how *many*, or how *few* observe the doctrine; but only assert simply, that if the doctrine were observed, the effect would be, as it is here represented.

This again the objector denies. The maxims of the Gospel, he observes, are so opposite to the maxims of the world, that they are unfit to qualify men as soldiers, statesmen, or members of a community in any shape; and that no man, who strictly adheres to them, can exert himself properly in any civil department.

This is a bold assertion. But in order to settle it, the doctrines of Christianity must be well examined—they must be compared with the interests of mankind—and the impossibility of a union must be shewn from examples, which have failed, not through want of abilities, (for religion cannot secure abilities,) but through mere adherence to religious principles.—We assert, therefore, that on a supposition two men have *equal abilities*, he who  
has

has *more religion*, will serve his country better in every station. It seems a natural conclusion, for he will be less influenced by those private impulses, which generally draw men from a public sense\*.

\* Examples are necessary to prove this. I shall mention therefore two or three Soldiers, who were amongst the most eminent of their profession, yet were men of great piety. The late Prince Eugene was one. He was esteemed the first captain of his age. The battle of Peterwaradin was one of the boldest actions, and completest victories on record. Immersed as he had been from his earliest youth, with little intermission, in the horrors of war, he never lost sight of Religion. The following Prayer was found among his papers:

PRINCE EUGENE'S PRAYER.

"I *Believe* in Thee, O my God! Do thou strengthen my *faith*: I *hope* in Thee, confirm my *hopes*; I *love* Thee, inflame my *love* more and more; I *repent* of all my sins, but do thou increase my *repentance*. As my first *beginning* I worship Thee; as my last *end*, I long for Thee; as my eternal *benefactor*, I praise Thee, and as my supreme *protector*; I pray unto Thee, that it may please Thee, O Lord; to guide and lead me by thy *providence*; to keep me in obedience by thy *justice*, to comfort me by thy *mercy*, and protect me by thy almighty power. I submit to Thee all my thoughts, words, and actions, as well as my afflictions, pains, and sufferings; and I desire to have *Thee* always in my mind, to do all my works in thy name, and for thy sake to bear all adversity with patience. I will what thou wilt; O God, because it is agreeable to *Thee*. Oh, give me *grace*; that I may be attentive in my prayer, temperate in my diet; vigilant in my conduct; and unmove-  
I able

able in all good purposes. Grant, most merciful Lord, that I may be true and faithful to those who have entrusted me with their secrets; that I may be courteous and kind towards all men; and that both in my words and actions, I may shew unto them a good example. Dispose my heart to admire and praise thy goodness, to hate all error and evil works, to love my neighbour, and to despise the world. Assist me, good Lord, in subduing lust by mortification, covetousness by liberality, anger by mildness, and lukewarmness by zeal and fervency. Enable me to conduct myself with prudence in all transactions, and to shew courage in danger, patience in adversity, and in prosperity an humble mind. Let thy grace illuminate my understanding, direct my will, sanctify my body, and bless my soul. Make me diligent in curbing all irregular affections, zealous in imploring thy grace, careful in keeping thy commandments, and constant in working out my salvation. Finally, O God, make me sensible how little is the world, how great thy heavens, how short time, and how long a blessed eternity. Oh that I may well prepare myself for death! that I may dread thy judgments; that I may avoid the torments of hell, and obtain of Thee, O God, eternal life, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

The life of Baron de la Motte Fouque; was published at Berlin by Monf. G. A. Ruttuer. He was general of the Prussian infantry: and of his professional merit, no other testimony is necessary, than that he enjoyed, through life, the particular esteem and friendship of Frederick II. who held a correspondence with him during many years.

At the same time, he was remarkable for his attachment

to religion, which he sometimes indeed carried to a degree of enthusiasm. The particulars of his death, as recorded by his biographer, are singular; and though somewhat enthusiastic, at least marked strongly his sense of religion.—As he found his end perceptibly drawing nearer, he took an opportunity, one Sunday morning, after attending divine service at the French church at Brandenburgh, where he resided, to fix on a spot for his grave. He next ordered his coffin to be made; and when he heard it was brought into a chamber adjoining to that in which he slept, he entered the room with two or three of his servants, and seating himself in it, he uncovered his white hairs, and ordered one of his servants to sing a favourite German hymn, which is an address to the grave. When this ceremony was finished, he settled his affairs.—A little before his death, he sent for a minister, and desired his whole family, and others of his friends, to join with him in receiving the holy sacrament. He then solemnly blessed his children, and took leave of all his friends. On the second of May 1774, as his servant had continued some time reading to him, in a book of devotion, his son, the present Baron, asked him, if he might not relieve the servant? The general, imperceptibly dying, made a faint endeavour to grasp his son's hand, and expired in the action.

To these religious soldiers might be subjoined the late Colonel Gardiner. His early life had been spent freely. He was converted, it is said, by receiving a musket ball through his mouth and cheek, as he was swearing an oath. From that time he became as eminently religious, as he had always been exemplary in his profession. At the battle of Preston-pans he led his regiment against the  
Highlanders ;

Highlanders; and when his dragoons, involved in the general panic of that day, fled from the field, he continued at his post, calling out to them, and endeavouring to rally the few that remained, till he was surrounded, and cut in pieces by the enemy. The life of this eminent soldier was written by his pious friend, Dr. Doddridge.

THE SUM OF RELIGION.

*Written by Sir MATTHEW HALE, Lord Chief Justice of England.*

HE that fears the Lord of heaven and earth walks humbly before him, thankfully lays hold of the message of redemption by Jesus Christ, and strives to express his thankfulness by the sincerity of his obedience. He is sorry with all his soul when he comes short of his duty; he walks watchfully in the denial of himself, and holds no confederacy with any lust or known sin. If he fails in the least measure, he is restless till he has made his peace by true repentance. He is true to his promise, just in his dealings, charitable to the poor, sincere in his devotion. He would not deliberately dishonour God, although with the greatest security of impunity. He hath his hopes and his conversation in heaven; he dares not do any thing unjustly, although never so much to his advantage; and all this because he sees him that is invisible, and fears him because he loves him; fears him as well for his goodness as his greatness. Such a man, whether he be an *Episcoparian* or *Presbyterian*, or *Independant*, or *Anabaptist*; whether he wears a *Surplice*, or wears none; whether he hears *Organs*, or hears none; whether he kneels at the *Communion*, or for *Conscience* sake stands or sits, he hath the life of religion in him, and that life acts in him, and will conform his soul to the image of his Saviour, and go along with him to eter-



nity, notwithstanding his practice or non-practice of things indifferent.

On the other side, if a man fears not the eternal God, he commits sin with presumption; he can drink to excess, lie, swear vainly and falsely, live loosely, break his promises. Such a man, although he cries down *Bishops*, or cries down *Presbytery*; although he be rebaptized every day, or declaims against it as *Heresy*; although he fasts all the lent, or feasts out of pretence of avoiding superstition, yet notwithstanding these, and a thousand more external conformities, or zealous opposition of them, he wants the life of religion.



## VI.

I JOHN, ii. 15.

LOVE NOT THE WORLD, NEITHER THE THINGS  
THAT ARE IN THE WORLD. IF ANY MAN  
LOVE THE WORLD, THE LOVE OF THE FA-  
THER IS NOT IN HIM.

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**I**T is no easy matter to ascertain, at least in practice, the relative degrees of love to God—our neighbour—ourselves—and the world. Each of them is entitled to our love in a certain degree. The great point is, to fix that degree. At present, however, we are led by the text only to consider the love of God and the world.

To these two great sources, the happiness of every man may be referred. They form the whole contest between spiritual and temporal—between our souls and our bodies—between life and eternity.

nity. It is our business, therefore, to enquire which produces the greatest sum of happiness. And one should think, we had data sufficient to form an easy comparison.—But, alas! even the religious man will find it a difficult matter to keep his affections right. The world will impose upon him in a thousand shapes, and court him under various *forms of allowable amusement, and innocent pleasure.* Let him look well therefore into the deceit, and not contribute to deceive himself. Let him suffer no suspected pleasures and amusements to pass without giving a fair account of their end—their effect upon his mind—their connected consequences—and their agreement with the word of God. Still, as we live in the world, to which so great a part of our composition is adapted, and with which we have so much necessary intercourse, we cannot avoid straying sometimes into its crooked paths. *God be merciful to me a sinner!* is a prayer which suits every man's condition; and if we add our steady endeavours to get right, no doubt God will be merciful to us; he will hear our prayer, and assist us by his holy spirit.

## VII.

I JOHN, V. 19.

THE WHOLE WORLD LYETH IN WICKEDNESS.

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**T**HE wickedness of the world, taken for its inhabitants, is a position which few, I suppose, are inclined to contradict. Whether we examine mankind in a savage\*, or in a civilized state—in society, or as individuals, still we see so much corruption of every kind, both public and private, that we must acknowledge there is not much exaggeration in what the apostle advances, that *the whole world lyeth in wickedness*.

\* In general, the savage nations that have been discovered, are ferocious, cruel, and treacherous, or weak, enervated, and sensual. The inhabitants of the Pelew islands are the only virtuous people we have ever heard of in a state of nature. We have every reason, however, to believe, that the accounts we have of them are overcharged.

I mean not however to enter into the discussion of a point so little contradicted: the use I would make of it, is to consider it as an argument that might well be dwelt on, in proof of the Christian religion.

In the first place it seems highly necessary, that man should have something better than his own reason, to teach him how to please and worship God. This seemed necessary even to the heathen philosophers; among whom Plato, in particular, speaks more than once of the necessity of a divine instructor.

If therefore we believe, that a divine instructor is *necessary*, if even the heathen themselves thought so; there can be no *difficulty in our believing* that God *would do* what appears to us so *necessary*.

Secondly, it seems necessary, that man in so corrupt a state, should have some other merits besides his own—some intercessor besides himself, to plead his pardon. It is the *natural idea of man*, that when he offends, he should endeavour to get some powerful intercessor to stand between him and the just indignation of the person he hath offended. Hence sacrifices and other expiatory rites found such ready reception in the heathen world.

world.—As this idea likewise is *natural*, there seems to be no difficulty in *closing with it*; and, of course, no difficulty in closing with Christianity.

In fact, Christianity may be considered as a grand act of that continual restoration, which we see constantly before our eyes in the natural world. The same gracious providence which is continually restoring to nature its decaying powers, may be supposed likewise to provide for, and restore the moral decays of man.

The great objections to this argument are first, the late appearance of Christianity—secondly, its want of universality—and, thirdly, its want of full effect.—N. B. These objections are very capable of being refuted, and might be considered, if the discourse were drawn into length.

## VIII.

JAMES, ii. 18.

A MAN MAY SAY, THOU HAST FAITH, AND I  
HAVE WORKS: SHEW ME THY FAITH WITH-  
OUT THY WORKS, AND I WILL SHEW THEE  
MY FAITH BY MY WORKS.

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**T**HIS whole chapter of the apostle James is so good a comment upon those parts of St. Paul's epistles, which the solifidian has drawn to his own purpose, that one should think it might prevent any misconstruction of them. Indeed some reformers, who favoured the solifidian scheme, wished to exclude this epistle from the canon of scripture. It still however, maintains its ground. The text contains a sort of challenge to those who hold *faith* independent of *works*. *Shew me thy*  
2 *faith*

*faith without thy works; and I will shew thee my faith by my works.*

In the following discourse, I shall consider the two opinions which the apostle characterizes—*faith without works*, and *faith by works*; and shall endeavour to shew which has the more charitable tendency.

The solifidian maintains, that faith is the *end*, or *sum* of religion—that it is this which justifies—and that as to *works*, they should be considered merely as the *test* of faith.

The opposer of these doctrines allows, that faith is the true source of good works; but he contends, that it is a *mean*, not an *end*. Indeed he asserts, that *neither faith*, nor *good works*, can be said to *justify* any man, but the *merits of Christ* alone; for which good works, wrought *through the agency of faith*, are the special qualification.

Let us now from this state of the two opinions, which, I apprehend, is a fair one, see what effect they *naturally seem* to have on the mind.

The solifidian trusts in faith solely for his justification, and conceives it therefore to be the sum of Christianity. Of course he allows no person, who has not *his idea* of faith, to be a good Christian; and if he speaks out, he will say, (indeed I have heard



heard him say it,) that he does not believe such a person to be in a state of salvation.

On the other hand, he who considers faith not as an *end*, but as the *mean* of a good life, considers that person only as a bad Christian, whose life is wicked. He may believe the solifidian, and many others, to be in error; yet still he considers them as good Christians, if their lives be without reproach.

We are far however from supposing, there are not many enlarged minds, which may hold the doctrine of faith, without any of these prejudices about them. All we mean is, that among the low and bigotted people of this persuasion, there is often found a want of charity.

IX.

I COR. i. 21.

FOR AFTER THAT— THE WORLD BY WISDOM  
KNEW NOT GOD, IT PLEASSED GOD BY THE  
FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING, (that is, *by the  
simplicity of the Gospel,*) TO SAVE THEM THAT  
BELIEVE.

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**W**E have here a contrast between the heathen world, depending on its own wisdom—and the Christian world, depending on the simple truths of the Gospel.

The philosophy of the heathen was carried to a great height. Their wise man, in lofty language, allowed himself inferior only to the gods. And yet, with all this pride and self-consequence, he was in fact ignorant of all those truths which *most* concerned him. He knew little of the nature of God—little of his own nature here—and still less  
of

of his future state hereafter. In the mean time the Gospel gives him sufficient information on all these subjects.

From this contrast may be known, in what the simplicity of the gospel consists ; and how much better it is adapted to inculcate our duty to God and man, than any system of human ethics. Happiness is the great end we all aim at : and when the truths of the Gospel find a soil prepared for them, they produce, it may be shewn, every happiness that can be enjoyed in this world, and hoped for in the next. Whereas, the virtues of *the world* are often among the greatest sources of misery ; and at best, cannot carry us beyond the world.

X.

ROM. XII. 4.

FOR AS WE HAVE MANY MEMBERS IN ONE BODY, AND ALL MEMBERS HAVE NOT THE SAME OFFICE; SO WE BEING MANY, ARE ONE BODY IN CHRIST, AND EVERY ONE MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER.

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**T**HE apostle here compares a *state of society* to a *human body*. The general health of both consists in the health of their respective members. If each member performs its functions properly, the whole is sound.

If we try this nation by the apostle's criterion, I fear we shall not find it in perfect health.

The first person we call upon is the gentleman of independent fortune. No man's station in the community is more honourable and useful:—you  
have

have it in your power, in a great degree, to *set the fashion*, if I may so speak, of religion in your neighbourhood. Your tenants—your labourers—and servants—all look up to you. From *your station* therefore we expect not only a decorum of manners—but we expect to see the poor relieved—the injured redressed—order and regularity established—and a true sense of religion encouraged.

Instead of this, what is your common behaviour? How often do you fleece the country to carry a purse to the capital? There you consume it in various modes of extravagance. If you serve your country in parliament, you have your *party*, not your *opinion*. The whole is a *job*: from hence you expect a return for the money spent on your election.

When the heats of summer drive you for a few months into the country, it is happy, if you do not spread among your neighbours the dissipation and profligacy of the town.

Let us next call the merchant, together with the man of trade and business. You may be very useful members of the community: you are profitably employing numbers in procuring an honest livelihood:

hood: you are benefiting your country, by introducing foreign commodities, and disposing of your own. You connect mankind in a bond of amity and civilization. And though you may not act immediately under these motives, yet while you are carrying on an honest trade within proper bounds, you are worthy instruments, for these purposes, in the hands of God.

But now what is the fact? Do you at all consider yourselves as performing this moderate and useful part in society—or, is the amassing of riches the grand purpose you have in view?—Let us see what this leads to. There are only three channels in which wealth can flow. It must either flow into the chest, and be hoarded—or it must be consumed in exorbitant expence—or it must administer to our own moderate wants, and the necessities of others. The grand stream, it is to be feared, will flow in unnecessary expence. The bounds of moderation are soon exceeded; and the great inlets to corruption opened. When this is the case, the rich merchant not only corrupts himself, but his abounding wealth tends to corrupt all around him.

From the merchant, and man of business, let us turn to men of profession. Let the lawyer be called. You are the advocate of truth and justice. It is your great part to oppose law to oppression—to stand up in defence of innocence overawed by opulence; in short, to be that respectable character in a community, which endeavours strenuously to make law, without fear or favour, a barrier against wickedness.—This is the noble light in which you ought to appear, when acting conscientiously in that station in which you are placed. This would make you a most useful and respectable member of society.

Let us now try you by your usual conduct.—Is not your profession considered merely as the means of obtaining wealth? Do you not take either side as your fee directs? Do you never make yourself a partner with guilt by defending it? There may be doubtful cases; of these I speak not. I speak only of cases in which guilt is palpable. Do you never then, I repeat, make yourself a party with guilt by defending it? You justly consider, in your pleadings, the *thief*, and the *receiver of stolen goods*, in the same light. Are you then, who defend an injury, at all better than he who commits it? In



my judgment you are worse. The knave is guilty of a simple fraud. You are guilty of a fraud under the sanction of law. Besides, you act on a more determined principle: you have more knowledge, and less temptation.

Let us next call the physician. You have studied the human body, and the nature of such disorders, as afflict it; and you may often be an instrument, in the hands of Providence, to restore health, and prolong life. But are these the great ends to which you pay attention? Do you consider yourself in the light of an instrument of God, administering to the health of mankind, and honestly and fairly discharging your duty in that station? Or is the idea of a fee always uppermost in your mind? To continue it, do you never protract disorders? Do you never prescribe unnecessary medicines to assist such of your profession as may afterwards assist you? Do you continue hanging about a sick-bed, when you have no hope of doing good without informing some relation of the hopeless state of the case? If you do any of these things, consult your conscience on the occasion, and if it be not a hardened one, it will

inform you, you are acting as dishonest a part, as if you had taken advantage of your neighbour's ignorance, and had sold him a bargain for a pound which was not worth a shilling.—But is it not astonishing, my friend, that you who attend the death-beds of so many, and see in so strong a light the vanity of all human things, should not, above all others, get hold of this obvious truth, that honesty and fair dealing, and simplicity of behaviour, should be dearer to you than a thousand fees?

Let us next call the soldier: Yours is a generous profession. One should suppose, the world by this time might have found its happiness best obtained by quiet and peaceable intercourse—that war and bloodshed, and rapine, and devastation, were general calamities—and that mankind would be most happy in the enjoyment of social commerce, imparting to each other what one wanted, and another had in profusion.

But this is not the case. Mankind cannot be brought to think in this manner. So many furious and ungoverned passions abound in the world, that, when aided by power, they are continually  
working

working up quarrels, and committing acts of outrage. As this is the case, people must be on their guard, and opposition becomes necessary.

Here the gallant soldier steps forth. Give me, says he to his country, only a bare maintenance, (it is all I desire,) and I will devote myself to your service. I will study the various ways in which your enemies can attack you; and I will endeavour to find out proper methods to oppose them. In the mean time, I shall never consider my life as my own, but be always ready to risk it for your sake.

This is the language of a true soldier, than which nothing can be more exalted. It was this character, which, in ancient times, attained the name of *heroism*. But does the modern soldier, in general, possess, in any degree, this noble spirit? Courage, I presume, he has: but unless his courage be founded in religion, I should fear its temper would be very unequal\*. It is founded on a warm constitution—on a sense of shame—on the pomp and noise of war, which dispel reflection.

\* Who combats bravely, is not always brave;  
He dreads a death-bed like the vilest slave.    PAPER.

Remove these incentives to his courage, and he becomes a mere coward: impress him with such sentiments, as the world calls honourable, and it is equal to him, whether he risk his life in the field, or in a brothel. He swears, he drinks, he swaggers, he games, he blasphemes, he gives a loose to all his passions, and though he has not only the common chances of mortality against him, but the chances also of war, with the courage of a hero he braves the terrors of damnation.

In the rear of this group let us call the churchman. You have dedicated yourself to the service of religion. You have engaged to make the Scriptures your study, and that you will deliver them as purely as you can to the people. You engage that you will discourage sin, and promote religion by all the means in your power; and particularly, by setting an example, as nearly as you can, to the purity of that Gospel you teach.

Let us see how you perform all this. In the first place, how have you prepared yourself for  
your

your employment? Did you spend your chief time in studying the Scriptures, and the best books that have been written on religious subjects? or, were you satisfied with just being able to pass an examination? Are less time and pains, think you, necessary to qualify a man to teach the Gospel, than to learn some trade or profession? With what views did you enter the Church? Did you conscientiously mean to perform your duty faithfully; or merely with some secular view, as the best way of getting forward in the world?—If, however, the early part of your life has been inconsiderate and faulty, now you have entered the Church, and have had time to reflect on what you have so seriously undertaken, do you endeavour, by a proper behaviour, to make amends for what is past?—What is your common employment? Do you conscientiously discharge the duties of your profession? or is it the great business of your life to go on, as you began, and to employ yourself chiefly in taking such steps as may advance you in the Church?—Part of your time perhaps may be employed in study: What are your studies? Do you make up for the deficiencies of your youth, by studying the Scriptures now in earnest, and such books as may furnish you with

knowledge proper for your profession? Or are your studies entirely thrown on such subjects as are foreign to it? You are a grammarian, perhaps, or a critic, or a chemist, or a poet, or a painter, or any thing but a divine. To be any of these merely for amusement, is allowable; but to be any any of them more than for amusement, deserves a severe rebuke.—But perhaps your amusements are still less creditable. Instead of being quiet or domestic, they may be noisy and riotous; your time may be spent among hounds and horses, and in company discreditable to a clergyman—or your time may be spent in a round of idle engagements—in cards or other dissipating amusements—while every hour, perhaps, as far as your good example is concerned, had better been annihilated.

Thus we have examined several characters; which, if they do not make up the greatest part of the community, will at least, whether good or bad, give the ruling colour to the manners of the whole. Many, no doubt, there are of each class who live up to their duty; yet there is ground to fear, there is leaven enough remaining to infect a very great proportion.

It

It may be added farther on the subject—that as God has formed individuals for society, their mutual happiness is so connected, that the individual will always find his own interest the best served, by honestly serving the public; and the public in the end will infallibly be ruined, if it be deserted by the individual\*.

\* Now see him launch'd into the world at large :  
If Priest, supinely dosing o'er his charge :  
Their fleece his pillow, and his weekly drawl,  
Though short, too long, the price he pays for all ;  
If Lawyer, loud whatever cause he plead :  
But proudest of the worst, if that succeed :  
Perhaps a grave Physician, gathering fees,  
Punctually paid for lengthening out disease ;  
If Arms engage him, he devotes to sport  
His date of life, so likely to be short ;  
A Soldier may be any thing, if brave.

COWPER.



## XI.

MATT. XXVI. 26,

AND AS THEY WERE EATING, JESUS TOOK BREAD, AND BLESSED IT, AND BRAKE IT, AND GAVE IT TO THE DISCIPLES, AND SAID, TAKE, EAT; THIS IS MY BODY. AND HE TOOK THE CUP,—AND GAVE IT TO THEM, SAYING, DRINK YE ALL OF THIS; FOR THIS IS MY BLOOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, WHICH IS SHED FOR MANY, FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

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**J**ESUS Christ being now about to perform the last great act of divine love, in dying to make atonement for sin, instituted this holy sacrament the day before he suffered. The plain, and short account of it, as collected from the several evangelists, is this.

As

As he was commemorating the Jewish passover, which (as a type now fulfilled) was henceforth to be abolished, he took bread, and, giving thanks\*, he brake it into portions, and gave it among his disciples; ordering them to eat it *in remembrance of his death*. Wine he distributed in the same manner.

From this plain account of the Lord's supper, which is all the account we have of its institution, much mystery hath been deduced, and much hath been said, that hath tended perhaps greatly to obscure it—to draw it from its original simplicity—and to affright well-meaning people from partaking of it. It appears, from this account, to be merely and solely a *rite of commemoration*. In a humble

\* The two words used to signify this act, are *ευλογησας* and *ευχαριστησας*, which seem to imply the same thing, as the evangelists use them promiscuously. St. Matthew uses the former word; St. Luke the latter; St. Mark and St. Paul use both. These words also are used on various other occasions—as before the distribution of the loaves and fishes—in blessing children—and in giving thanks to God before a common meal. It does not appear, therefore, that any peculiar holiness was meant to be conveyed by either of these words to the simple elements; and therefore, perhaps, the title of the prayer of *consecration*, as it is called, might be advantageously changed into some word taken from either of the original word *ευλογεω* or *ευχαριστω*.

sense

senſe of our fallen ſtate, and of our bleſſed Redeemer's meritorious atonement, we eat bread and drink wine in a ſolemn manner, in *remembrance of his death*.—St. Paul adds, *As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this wine, ye do ſhew forth the Lord's death till he come*;—that is, the wine and the bread are to be a kind of *viſible* memorials of the death of Chriſt, through every age of the church. St. Paul's words allude to a Jewish cuſtom at the paſſover. It was uſual for ſome younger perſon to aſk an elder, what was the meaning of that rite? the other informed him; and this was called *ſhewing it forth*.

Now this ſeems to be the whole ſcriptural account of the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper. As to the paſſage of St. John (vi. 53.), learned men, I think, have ſufficiently ſhewn, it has no relation to this ſubject\*.—St. Paul, indeed, in the paſſage above cited, (1 Cor. xi. 20.) ſays many ſevere things to the Corinthians on their mode of receiving it. But theirs was a particular caſe; and, unleſs that caſe had exiſted, would probably not have been ſaid at all. The Lord's ſupper was at that time adminiſtered in private houſes, and accompanied with what

\* See Dr. Bell on this ſubject.

they

they called *love-feasts*, which introduced much intemperance; so that what the apostle says to the Corinthians in this passage is by no means applicable to the Christians of these days.

Pious divines have spoken much of the frame of mind in which this holy rite should be received. And all this is well. The Lord's supper naturally suggests deep contrition for sin, and thankfulness for the great atonement of a Saviour's death. This is clearly implied in the words of the original institution, *do this in remembrance of me*: in remembrance of what I have done for you. At the same time, I doubt, whether pious formularies, which recommend seclusion, and other strictnesses, before the Sacrament, are of much use. They imply some mysteriousness in the institution; and may also, from too much tension at one time, lead the mind to remit too much at another. A well-disposed Christian coming on the sudden to the Lord's table, may surely, with only such pious thoughts about him, as the emergency suggests, be a very acceptable communicant.

## XII.

### AN ANALYSIS of the SCHEME of CHRIS- TIANITY.

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HEB. xii. 14.

WITHOUT HOLINESS, NO ONE SHALL SEE THE  
LORD.

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**A**DAM, though placed in a state of trial, was created perfect; and therefore wanted no Saviour. By his fall, he lost his purity and innocence, and forfeited his hopes of everlasting happiness. To restore this *loss*, a Saviour was, in the adorable goodness of God, immediately promised and to this promise the rite of sacrifice was added, to preserve among mankind an idea, that this salvation was to arise from some mode of atonement.

As

As the world advanced in age, the Jewish nation was set apart, as the great mean of continuing these ideas. It was the uniform endeavour of the law and the prophets, to raise man to his *original holiness*. "*Cease to do evil; learn to do well,*" was the open or implied language of both: while a variety of rites, as well before as after the Jewish establishment, continued the great idea of an atonement.

In due time, the promised Saviour appeared. The constant tenour of his discourses and example was the counter-part of what the law and prophets had taught: "*Purify your affections; change your hearts and lives; become new creatures;*"—thus restoring yourselves, with the assistance of God's grace, as nearly as you can to that *state of purity* you have lost.—Then too the type of sacrifice was realised, and the great atonement made.

After Christ's resurrection, his disciples, inspired by the Holy Ghost, continued to unfold their Master's doctrines. The *purified heart* was still the great object, though in itself ineffectual to salvation, (because necessarily imperfect,) without the merits of a Saviour. As a mean of attaining this *purified state*, they insist on *faith* and *holy prayer*.—Thus, the Old and New Testament are  
connected,

connected, and the great intention of both appears to be the *restoration* of man, as far as can be, to that purity of life, which he had lost.

This view of Christianity is, I should think, an argument of great weight against all those opinions, which lay the *stress of religion* on any thing but a *holy life*, through *faith* in Christ.



## XIII.

HEB. xiii. 18.

WE TRUST WE HAVE A GOOD CONSCIENCE.

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**I** SHALL consider this subject under the heads of a *bad* conscience, a *good* conscience—and an *easy* conscience.

By a *bad* conscience, we mean a conscience harrowed with guilt—restless—distressed—rejecting all enjoyment.

By a *good* conscience, we mean a conscience not perfectly at rest; for the most religious man lives in a state of continual strife with himself: but a conscience, however, not disturbed with those boisterous storms, which affect the *bad* conscience, though its surface is seldom perfectly unruffled.

The *easy* conscience, on the other hand, is always undisturbed. Nothing affects it. It is in constant repose.

Of these three modes of conscience, which is the *best*, is easily determined. But perhaps a wise man would prefer a *bad* conscience to an *easy* one. The *bad* conscience may be drawn by its restless and insupportable feelings to a state of repentance; but the *easy* conscience, arising either from *hardened guilt*, or a *careless life*, having nothing to rouse it, puts its possessor into a very dangerous situation.

Let no man therefore, without careful examination, judge of the *security* of his case, by the *ease* of his conscience. No good man can have a conscience at *perfect ease*. The best must say with the apostle, *we trust we have a good conscience*;—that is, we hope, through the mercy of God, and merits of our blessed Saviour, we have nothing upon it, which will endanger our salvation.

## XIV.

MARK, xvi. 16.

HE THAT BELIEVETH, AND IS BAPTIZED,  
SHALL BE SAVED; BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH  
NOT, SHALL BE DAMNED.

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OUR bleſſed Lord, a little before his aſcenſion, gave his laſt charge to his diſciples in the words of the text, which ſeem to bear this meaning: “ I ſend you out to preach the Goſpel to the world. They who accept the gracious offer it makes, ſhall be ſaved. But they who reſuſe it, whether through negligence or wickedneſs, muſt take the conſequence of their reſuſal.”

This text, however, though it is capable of ſo natural and eaſy a ſenſe, has often, I think, been miſapplied by well-meaning Chriſtians. Our Saviour ſays ſimply, *he that believeth*. But theſe religioniſts tell you *precifely what you are to believe*.

Nor is there much amiss in that, if they did not bind it upon you with an anathema.

Mr. Locke, after examining all the passages of Scripture which relate to faith in Christ, asserts, that no proposition is held out as a *necessary article of belief*, but barely that *Jesus Christ is the Messiah\**. And indeed the *apostle's creed* seems to be little more than this idea dilated ; to which every one may add his own private creed, on such articles as he thinks have sufficient foundation in Scripture. But he has perhaps no right to go farther. By putting his own opinions into Scripture language, (which may easily be done without attending to contexts,) he may unhappily mislead others, even on Gospel authority.

The prejudices of mankind (cleaving to them from numberless circumstances, which they often cannot help) are so various — their modes of thinking so different — and the sense of Scripture often so undetermined — that there can be no orthodoxy in *opinion*, according to any one man's standard.

In *practice* we may all be orthodox : the rules of life are laid down so precisely, that no true believer in Jesus can err or vary from another.

\* See his Reasonableness of Christianity.



mankind; but I shall at present only consider the precept of the text: *look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of other.*

The common maxim among men now is, for every man to look after his own things, knowing that if *he* do not look after them himself, *nobody* else will. But if all men lived by the precept before us, our affairs would always be in better hands than in our own. On every emergency a number of people would be ready instantly to assist us, and would give us more effectual assistance, than we could give ourselves.

We have an image of this kind of benevolence in the early state of Christianity, when *the multitude that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed were his own.* Of course it followed, as we read farther, that *there was none among them that lacked.*

A state of equality among *pious Christians*, would certainly be a state of the greatest *happiness* on earth: but as the world is *now constituted*, it would be a state of the greatest *misery*.

## XVI.

MARK, xii. 37.

THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD HIM GLADLY.

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**I**T is surprizing that all people did not *hear him gladly*. But prejudice and vice are deaf: they *refuse to hear even the voice of the charmer*; wisdom is no charmer in their ears.

This subject might be treated by considering what qualities are required to hear the *Gospel gladly*—and what are the chief obstacles which *prevent its* being so heard. The conclusion might be drawn up in the form of a consolation to the *common people*.



## XVII.

ROM. vii. 24.

O WRETCHED MAN THAT I AM! WHO SHALL DELIVER ME FROM THE BODY OF THIS DEATH?—I THANK GOD, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

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**I**N this passage is held out the great contrast between the voice of *Nature* and the voice of *Grace*.

Nature begins with lamentable complaints. I feel myself subject to a variety of wayward passions and appetites, which are continually misleading me; and I live in a world which abounds with objects suited to them. Every sense hath its gratification; and every gratification leads to sin. I resolve one day, and fail the next. I am overwhelmed with iniquity. Wherever I look, I see the gloom of misery,—nowhere the beam of hope.

If

If there be a righteous Ruler, and a state of retribution, what have I to expect but eternal perdition! *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

To these despairing moans of *Nature*, *Christianity* graciously replies, I will deliver you. Take refuge under the promises of the Gospel. Taste and see, how gracious the Lord is. The Gospel will teach you how you came into this miserable state. The Gospel will shew you the remedy which God hath provided to deliver you from it. It will furnish you with motives, and with assistance also, to calm your passions, and moderate your love for the world. It will shew you the necessity of repentance. It will grant you pardon for your sins, through the death of a Saviour.— It will teach you how to die—and conduct you after death to everlasting happiness.

In this view of things, nature revives, and Breaks into a song of praise. I am satisfied—I am happy—I thank my God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!—

## XVIII.

LUKE, vi. 26.

WOE UNTO YOU WHEN ALL MEN SHALL SPEAK  
WELL OF YOU !

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**T**HIS text is sometimes applied by divines to modern times \*. Whereas, I apprehend, it should chiefly be applied to the Christians of the first age.

Our Saviour, with a view to fortify the early preachers of the Gospel against the ill-usage of the world, tells them plainly what reception they should find after his departure. Mankind in general should be armed against them—should hate them—should separate from their company—should reproach them, and *cast out their name as evil*. He soon after adds the text, *Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you !* As they were

\* See a sermon by Bp. Hurd on this subject.

about

about to establish a new institution, intended to overturn all the religious prejudices, and idolatrous practices of the world, it would certainly follow, that if they and their doctrine were received with *general respect*, they must have been remiss in the execution of their commission. In the parallel place of St. Matthew, we find *persecution* coupled with defamation: *blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you.* We may as well, therefore, suppose a *woe* pronounced upon all who do not suffer persecution.

The whole history of the apostles shews religion, in those early times, to be always under the same cloud of defamation. *Do I seek,* says St. Paul, *to please men? If I pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* And this is a language which all the apostles might have held, as well as St. Paul.

Upon the whole, I would observe, it seems to be of no service to religion, to draw passages of Scripture from apostolical to modern times. Error is often engrafted on such violent applications. The application of the *woe*, therefore, to modern times, may mislead weak Christians to form undue estimates of their own lives, and false judgments of the characters of others. For, in truth, the  
text

text taken literally, seems to *oppose experience*. Though all men may not *spea*k well of the good Christian, who may have his various failings, and indiscretions; yet *in a Christian country*, the *woe*, I think, chiefly belongs to him of whom all men *spea*k ill.

It may be added, that a man's character is a pledge to the community; and it is not agreeable to the Gospel to destroy any bond of union among men.

## XIX.

MATT. XV. 9.

TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMAND-  
MENTS OF MEN.

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**I**N many parts of Scripture a distinction is made between the *commandments of God* and the *commandments of men*.

But why? says the objector; which of the commandments of God is carried higher than the commandments of men? He then boasts, that Christianity hath done little in explaining morals; and will readily quote Socrates, Tully, Antoninus, and other philosophers, to shew how far human reason was able to carry the commandments of men. In what, he asks, lies the difference?

In the first place, the Christian law is in many instances more refined and pure. Gratitude and  
love

love to God is a principle of action never before held out. Universal charity, the love of our enemies, humility, and heavenly-mindedness, were never the commandments of men, though highly productive of human happiness.

But even on a supposition, the heathen and Christian morality were in themselves of *equal value*, let it, secondly, be considered, that the elevated sentiments of the philosopher (which we wish not to depreciate) were never calculated for *general use*. They were intended merely for his own school, and were indeed written in a sublime language, beyond the intellect of the vulgar; whereas, the precepts of Christianity were intended for all mankind—for the lowest orders, as well as the highest.

Besides, the philosopher had no power to enforce his precepts; whereas the precepts of Christianity are the general code of all Christian people, and sanctioned not only by human laws, but by such penalties as no human laws can provide.

Lastly, let it be observed, that while the commandments of men chiefly *forbid* crimes, the commandments of God *prevent* them. The commandments of men reach only the *action*; the commandments of God reach the *heart* and the *motive*.



*motive.* And this is one of the most peculiar characteristics of the commandments of God.

N. B. A sermon of this kind, enforcing the morality of the Gospel beyond the morality of natural reason, when carried even to its highest extent, might be useful in some congregations.

XX.

EXOD. XXiii. 2.

THOU SHALT NOT FOLLOW A MULTITUDE TO  
DO EVIL.

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**W**HEN we view man in a pleasing light, we consider him as formed for society, from which he draws his greatest comforts; mutually giving and receiving benefits.

But we *may* consider man in a very different light. Moses, from whom we have the lesson of the text, knew enough of the Israelites, to think a precept of this kind highly necessary. Their great propensity in following a *multitude to do evil*, appeared on various occasions. The affair of the golden calf—of Corah and his company, and many other rebellious incidents in their history, shew how inclined they were to run into mischievous associations.

The rule before us, however, has a deeper foundation than the history of Moses. It is founded in human nature. Man, in his worst light, may be considered as a gregarious animal, naturally running in herds. And as he is also (*naturally* too, we believe,) a noxious animal—like wolves, and other noxious animals, he is most mischievous in a herd.—The danger of his getting into mischief, by following a multitude, arises from these considerations:

First, a multitude have no principle of action. They are led by strong prejudices and passions, but without reason or judgment, which are always lost in a crowd.

Secondly, as a multitude have no principle of action in themselves, they are disposed to follow an artful leader into mischief of any kind.

For, thirdly, it must be remembered, that these artful leaders have always some private end of their own, which is commonly very different from the general interest of the multitude.

Fourthly, all sense of shame is lost in a multitude. It can fasten on no single person. So that even well-disposed people, thus dispersing their guilt among others, never own it themselves,

though, in fact, the guilt is not *dispersed*, but *multiplied*.

Fifthly, there is no knowing what lengths a multitude may go. As reason and judgment are given up, men may be led, in the madness of party, to do things, which in a temperate hour might have shocked the worst of them.

Lastly, it should be considered, that although it may be easy to avoid a multitude, yet when a man has once joined it, he cannot easily escape. He forms connections with his party; and if he leave it, he is thought a renegade by one party, and is always suspected by the other.

These remarks chiefly respect riotous and lawless assemblies; but, in a degree, they affect all associations of men that are not warranted by some useful end.—A sermon on this subject might be preached at the time of an election.

XXI.

I JOHN, iii. 9.

WHOSOEVER IS BORN OF GOD, DOTH NOT COMMIT SIN :—HE CANNOT SIN ; BECAUSE HE IS BORN OF GOD.

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SOME well-meaning people have conceived from this text, and others of a similar cast, that the *elect of God*, as they are called, may arrive at a sinless state of perfection. The more enlightened of these sectaries, to whom this opinion is ascribed, hold it probably in some qualified sense; though in its most unqualified sense, it is often held, and preached by some enthusiastic people\*.

\* The following fact was related to me by a person of great truth. A sectary of this description had put an end to his own life. When some of his neighbours were lamenting his case to his brother, and particularly the unhappy circumstance of his going out of the world with such a crime on his head, "It is of no consequence," said the other, "he was *sealed*."

Now in opposition to this doctrine, (though to oppose it has something of the air of fighting a shadow,) I should *first* observe, that *it seems false*—and, *secondly*, that if it were only *doubtful*, it could answer no good end to teach it.

In the first place, it seems to be *false*. This, one should think, might sufficiently appear from a knowledge of ourselves, which must be very superficial, if it do not convince us, that we are sinful creatures—that the best of us have much to answer for *at all times*, either in thought, word, or deed—and very little positive goodness to balance against so much sin.

The *falsehood* of this doctrine appears farther from the nature of a state of trial, in which the Scriptures suppose all mankind to be placed. The Christian life is represented as a state of continual warfare, in which we are instructed to put on the whole armour of God—and to be always wrestling against our spiritual enemies. It would be endless to quote all the passages of Scripture that excite us to *constant* care and watchfulness. These rules are given to *all* without restriction; while the Gospel promises happiness to those only who *endure to the end*.

The

The falsehood of this doctrine appears from *fact*, as well as from *reasoning*. We have examples of some of the greatest Scriptural characters betrayed into sin—Moses—David—St. Peter—and many others. St. Paul speaks of himself as under a possibility of being a *castaway*. And shall the modern professor suppose himself more infallible than all these eminent characters? Can he hear undismayed the text, pronouncing, *Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall*, and not be terrified at his own presumption?

But, says the maintainer of this opinion, there is no contradicting a plain declaration of Scripture. St. John expressly says, *that whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*.

Surely not, while he continues to be *born of God*—that is, while he is under the influence of religion. But it does not follow, that he cannot commit sin, when he is *not born of God*—that is, when he is not under the influence of religion.—Or, if that explanation be not satisfactory, the text certainly admits an explanation from that common mode of speaking among the Jews, of putting the impossibility of a thing for the improbability of it. So that when it is said,



*whosoever is born of God cannot commit sin*, nothing may be meant, but that it is improbable.

If neither of these explanations please, and the literal sense is still insisted on, we may oppose it with other texts, which speak a language directly opposite.—St. John tells us, that *if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*. In this passage, the apostle not only asserts, that no man is free from sin; but by using the first person plural, seems to unite himself with sinners.—The same apostle tells us, *that the whole world lies in wickedness*. And again, *that in many things we offend all*. And if these texts are not sufficient, we could follow them with numberless others, which either directly, or by fair implication, say the same thing.—Lastly, the very words of this text itself seem to militate against the conclusion drawn from it. *Whoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him*—that is, because he perseveres in the true faith. But if his seed doth *not* remain in him—that is, if he gives up his faith, he certainly is not born of God, but is in a capacity to commit sin.

More than enough, I think, has been said, to shew the doctrine of *attainable perfection* to be *false*.

But

But if this be not allowed, it must surely be granted, that enough has been said to prove it to be *doubtful*. In this case it will follow, secondly, that it can answer no good end to advance it.— A *good* end it cannot answer, for it certainly cannot make a man *safer* than he was before. He will not pretend to say, he shall be judged by his own opinion. It was more at least than St. Paul would venture to affirm.

On the whole, it seems to be a doctrine only calculated to swell a man with pride and self-consequence—to put him off his guard, and to stop all his farther pursuits of improvement. If he really believe he cannot sin, what need he require more? A careless life is just as effectual as the most attentive one.

## XXII.

PHILIPP. ii. 3.

IN LOWLINESS OF MIND LET EACH ESTEEM  
OTHER BETTER THAN THEMSELVES.

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**I**F we take this precept *literally*, it plainly leads into absurdity. He who feels he endeavours to live a conscientious life, cannot but think himself better than he whom he sees living in an openly irreligious manner. The precept therefore must be limited. It was given by the apostle to his Philippian converts—that is, to people whom we may suppose to have been well-disposed Christians, and all equally, at least in appearance, regular in their lives. Still however, notwithstanding this outward appearance of equality, there might be great difference in their hearts; and as the heart is the seat of religion, there was still room for one man to be more religious than another.

But,

But, as no man knows the heart of another so well as he knows his own, in which he cannot but be acquainted with many things amiss, humility will naturally incline him to suppose the hearts of others are better than his own, and of course *to esteem his neighbour better than himself.*— The apostle's injunction therefore is given, we see, to people nearly of the same condition, and chiefly indeed respects *the heart.*

It may however, in part, have a reference to *actions.* An action, evidently vicious, is out of the question; but as all actions take their colour from the motives which produce them, no man can judge truly of the *motives* of others. Of course he can know as little of their *actions.* But as he knows his own motives, it is humble in him to think better of the *actions* of others, which are not palpably wrong, than of his own.

XXIII.

MA TT. XXIII. 23.

THESE OUGHT YE TO HAVE DONE, AND NOT  
TO LEAVE THE OTHER UNDONE.

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**O**UR Saviour applies these words to the Scribes and Pharisees, who neglected the precepts of religion through an attachment to its ceremonies. But the rebuke is equally applicable to all who neglect matters of consequence for the sake of trifles.—In the following discourse, therefore, I shall not apply it in a religious sense, but merely as relating to the two points of *employment* and *amusement*.

Every man has, or ought to have, some employment in life; and if he be born exempt from the *necessity* of it, still he ought, in some shape,

to find it for himself—that is, he should fill up, in *some useful manner*, his station in society, and not be what the very heathen thought an abominable character—a *mere consumer of the fruits of the earth*.—This employment, whatever it is, should be considered among the things that *ought to be done*.

But besides the *employment*, most people have also their *amusement*, which may be reckoned among the things which need not *be left undone*, on a supposition it is *innocent*, and not carried to excess. It has been observed, that however busy our lives may be, we always find some time for a favourite amusement. But the mischief is, the amusement often usurps the upper hand. Thus, a clergyman may be fond of music or painting. Both are liberal and innocent amusements, and may be properly indulged. But he ought always to have in his mind the useful caution of the text. His parochial duties are the things that *ought to be done*, though he need not *leave the other undone*. The *employment* is the object, the *amusement* the relaxation: but in proportion as the amusement gains too much ground, the employment is neglected. Even science is only an amusement; when it stands in competi-  
tion

tion with the grand duties of the clerical profession.

In looking into the world, however, we sometimes find, that, contrary to the general bent of mankind, the *employment* stifles the *amusement*. One of the strongest antidotes against this general *love of amusement*, is a passion equally disreputable, and that is, the *love of gain*. If we examine the generality of *employments*, we shall find those are the most steadily pursued, and receive the fewest avocations from *amusement*, in which the emolument depends most on our industry, and the exertion of our abilities. The profession of physic furnishes a strong instance—the law furnishes a stronger—and trade the strongest. While the clergyman—the foldier—and beyond both, the country gentleman, whose incomes depend less on personal industry, give more into amusement.—It is a piteous view of mankind, no doubt, that one bad propensity should be corrected by another. But the more we look among men, the more truth we shall find in the Gospel account of the natural pravity of human nature: while one half of the world is immersed in its business; and the other half misled by its pleasures; the moderate in both can hardly find room between.

In



In the mean time, if we consider things in their true light, we shall see the goodness of God, in ordaining *business* and *amusement* to relieve each other. Business of every kind, but especially where gain is concerned, has a tendency to contract the mind, and draw it to *one point*. Amusement again, on the other hand, has a tendency to relax the mind; or, in other words, to *dissipate* it. But when they are properly mixed, the bad tendency of each is corrected. A little amusement refreshes the mind intent on business, and loosens the prejudices it contracts from being conversant only with one object; while a proper employment strengthens the mind, and relieves it from that languor which attends constant dissipation.

N. B. This might be wrought into a good clerical sermon, with the addition of a little more Scriptural sanction; and might be preached at a visitation.

## XXIV.

MATT. VI. 2.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, THEY HAVE THEIR  
REWARD.

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**O**UR Saviour is here considering the motives of prayer, and ascribing to each motive that return which it must expect. The pious prayer, which is poured out to God in secret, finds its way directly to the throne of Grace; while the prayer of the hypocrite meets also with its reward; but that reward consists only in the praise of men.

Now what our Saviour observes of prayer, may be observed of every action of our lives, in which morality is concerned. It may be dedicated, if I may so speak, either to God or man. An act of temperance, for instance, performed on a principle  
of

of pleasing God, becomes an act of religion. But if it is performed merely for the sake of procuring health and spirits, the motive is not bad, and it may still have its reward ; but it is a reward of a lower kind. It may procure us health and spirits, but it has no connection with religion.

Thus again, when a man behaves decently merely for the sake of his character, the motive is allowable ; but there is no religion in it. Nothing will be carried to a religious account, but what proceeds from a religious motive.

The great conclusion is, that if we could persuade ourselves to make all our actions, in which morality is concerned, acts of *religion*, as well as *acts of prudence*, they might receive, at the same time, both their *heavenly* and their *earthly* reward.

XXV.

PSALM ciii. 13.

LIKE AS A FATHER PITIETH HIS OWN CHILDREN ; SO IS THE LORD MERCIFUL TO THEM THAT FEAR HIM.

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**T**HE *justice* and *mercy* of Almighty God are those attributes, with which our future hopes and fears are most concerned ; and the great danger lies in resting on the latter, without paying a sufficient attention to the former.

But yet, on the other hand, many a pious soul, full of sensibilities, may be more dejected with the fears of the Almighty's justice, than it reasonably need be.

Far should I be from suggesting false hopes to any person on a subject so near him, as the salvation of his soul ; and, to say the truth, it is a more  
dangerous

dangerous extreme to indulge false hopes than false fears. Yet when we see pious people making their lives miserable with fears, which seem to have no foundation in religion, we cannot help, in Christian charity, endeavouring to administer some comfort to them.

Now the text I have just read, and many other passages of a similar kind, may be offered as cordials to a mind thus distempered with superstitious fears.—From such passages we may speak in this language:

Consider how you yourself would act as a father. If your son's filial piety, in the general conduct of his life, led him to be affectionate and obedient to you; though he might, in some instances, either not comprehend your meaning, or be somewhat remiss in his observance of it, would not you be inclined to pass over such negligences, if you saw plainly, that in his *general conduct* he endeavoured to please you, and was always hurt when he found he had displeased you?

Can you conceive then, that the *God of mercy* will treat you with less kindness than you would treat your son?—God calls himself our Father. Our blessed Saviour, in the prayer he has given us for daily use, enjoins us to call God our Father:

and shall not we believe he will act like a Father? are we to suppose he is a mere nominal Father, without the affections of one? It is, in a degree, impious to believe it. It is calling God's word in question.

If then you are conscious that you live in the *habitual practice* of no known sin—if you feel that in the *general conduct of your life* you are desirous to *please God*, and always *hurt* when you do any thing that you think will *displease him*, why may you not trust his mercy with your salvation? The merits of Christ are of no avail, if they do not atone for those ignorances and negligences, which are inherent in human nature. *Like as a father, therefore, pitieth his own children; so is the Lord merciful to them that fear him. Pity and mercy belong to failings.* If we had no *failings*, we should want *neither*.

XXVI.

EPH. iv. 26.

BE YE ANGRY, AND SIN NOT: LET NOT THE  
SUN GO DOWN UPON YOUR WRATH.

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**S**OME divines, I think, have gone rather too far, when, describing our blessed Saviour's character, they will not allow him to have been ever discomposed. We are told\*, *he had at the same time to struggle with the prejudices, the mistakes, and misconstructions of his friends, and the inveterate rancour of his enemies; but yet he never suffered either the one or the other to disturb the composure of his mind.*

If the excellent prelate, from whom this passage is taken, means only that our blessed Saviour's *mind* alone was undisturbed, it is most probable it

\* See Bishop Porteus's Sermons, vol. i. p. 308.



always was. But as we can judge only from outward expressions, it is certain, that on different occasions he shewed such signs as indicate *our* discomposure.—In one place, (Mark, iii. 5.) we are told, *he looked round him with anger.* In other places, we are informed, he treated the Scribes and Pharisees with great asperity of language; and the rebuke he gave St. Peter, was a strong expression of indignation.

It may be added, that his shewing a proper discomposure of temper throws a necessary light on various circumstances in the lives and writings of his apostles, who likewise, on different occasions, expressed their displeasure. Though there are instances, in which some of them might carry their resentment too far; yet they should not be deprived of their Master's example, as far as it might serve them.

It may be added also, that as our Saviour intended to give all his followers an example in every thing, he might likewise intend us an example in regulating the passion of anger. The passion of anger surely was not implanted in us without reason; and it is an excellent lesson to us, that our Saviour was never *discomposed*

by any of the *trifling accidents of life*; but only where *truth, religion, and virtue* were concerned. —By throwing these lights on our blessed Saviour's discomposure, I think cavillers are in the best manner silenced.

## XXVII.

2 COR. X. 5.

BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT  
TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.

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**T**HIS text may be illustrated, by considering the nature of a state of captivity. A captive is a vanquished enemy. He hath made resistance; but, all resistance being now over, he is subdued; and, having forfeited his life by his opposition, in order to redeem it, he now submits to the mercy of his conqueror.

Let us apply this to religion, and we shall have the general meaning of the text. We have all resisted our blessed Lord, and maintained a war against him, under the banners of sin. Some with the folly of madmen, obstinately continue a war, which they know must end in their ruin.

Others

Others in time submit, accept their forfeit lives from their conqueror, obey his will, and are received into mercy.

The captivity of our *wicked thoughts* is implied, as well as of our *actions*. Religion hath made no conquest over us, till, in the language of the text, *we bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

## XXVIII.

PROV. xii. 26.

THE RIGHTEOUS IS MORE EXCELLENT THAN  
HIS NEIGHBOUR.

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**T**HIS implies, that his neighbour *is not righteous*; for if they had both been righteous, there could have been no difference in point of excellence.

The word *excellence* implies *general superiority*: but at present, I mean only to consider that superiority, which the righteous man enjoys over his unrighteous neighbour, in *point of character and esteem*.

However inclined men are to knavery themselves, they all like to deal with people of character; for religion is always supposed to be the best guard to honesty. When men of licentious  
manners,

manners, therefore, laugh at the religious man, it is only with a view to take off the edge of obloquy from themselves, and to bring down his character to a level with their own. When things come to proof, and they have any dealings to settle, the righteous man is the person they wish to employ. In *business* of any kind, in which knavery may be practised, it is evident the righteous man (unless under some disqualification) is the man to be employed. The greatest knave would think the religion of his merchant, or his attorney, a great security to him. Perhaps, indeed, the knave, judging by himself, will consider the appearance of religion as hypocrisy. But this brings no discredit on the righteous man; because, if the knave had *really believed* him righteous, he *would* have employed him.

It is not however in business only, in which the righteous man is more excellent than his neighbour. Religion throws a glory round every character. The religious soldier, for instance, is a character in high esteem. Religion interferes with none of the duties of his profession, but gives a polish to them all. The good centurion Cornelius\*, we have no reason to doubt, was as

\* Acts, x. 1.

good an officer as any in the *Italian band*.—How exemplary a part does the naval commander exhibit, who discourages vice in his ship, by his own example—the vice of swearing particularly, which is so prevalent; and enforces on his crew, as far as he can, all those duties of religion, which his country enjoins!—The country gentleman too will always meet with high esteem, who, instead of a life of dissipation and attachment to his pleasures, spreads the example of a religious and useful life among his tenants and dependents.

As for the clergyman, he is out of the question, If he be an irreligious man, he is of all characters the most detestable.



XXIX.

I TIM, vi. 6.

GODLINESS, WITH CONTENTMENT, IS GREAT  
GAIN.

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**W**E have here the whole sum of human happiness, both here and hereafter, comprised in two words.

*Contentment* draws in all our unruly desires, which are the great disturbers of life—it makes us satisfied with what we have, which riches alone cannot do—it roots out envy, anxious care, competitions, and other invaders of our quiet; and, in short, sets us at rest with the world.—When *godliness* is added to *contentment*, the ladder reaches from earth to heaven. Our affections are purified, and our thoughts are expanded with the hopes of a blessed immortality.—The result of this union between *godliness* and *contentment* is certainly great gain. What can be more? It is the gain both of heaven and earth.

XXX.

LUKE, viii. 18.

TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR.

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THE Scriptures are the great source of all our *religious knowledge*. They are also the great source of all our *religious errors*. We are cautioned therefore *to take care how we hear*, or how *we read*, as we find we may imbibe *error*, as well as *truth*. In short, the difficulties of Scripture seem to be among the means of a state of trial, and, like the other means of a state of trial, should continually exercise our diligence, integrity, and care.

Now the most probable means of reading the Scripture with advantage is, constantly to attend to the *general scope* of it—not to *particular passages*. It is an attention chiefly to *particular passages*,  
which

which gives occasion to most of the errors that men have fallen into.

In order, therefore, to have such a fund of scriptural knowledge, as may enable us to collect the *general sense* of Scripture on every occasion, we should read it over and over, and make it so familiar to us, that when any doctrine is touched, the *general scope of Scripture*, on that subject, may rise at once to our memory.—The primary use of reading Scripture, no doubt, is to improve our hearts by the precepts it enjoins. It is, however, of great use to read it, in the manner here recommended, with a view to obtain a general knowledge of the contents of it.

Thus, for instance, the doctrine of *predestination* rests on a few texts, scattered about in different parts. These texts are capable of easy interpretation when considered apart.—But the grand answer to this mischievous doctrine does not so much lie in explaining texts, as in opposing to it the *general sense of Scripture*. We find every where exhortations to purity and holiness, which are absurd, if every man's fate is already determined.

The same mode of answer may be given to those who consider faith, and other evangelical doctrines,

doctrines, as *ends*, rather than as *means*. The general scope of the gospel shews us, that all its precepts are intended to lead us to that state of purity from which our first parents fell. On that great event, Christianity was introduced. *As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* They must be restored to that purity of heart and life, which alone can make them acceptable in the sight of God. Hence therefore we should listen with *caution* to such doctrines, as lay the *stress* of religion on any thing but a *holy life*, through faith in Christ.—If Christians would keep this point constantly in view, and lead holy lives in conformity to it, they might vary, and perhaps err, in matters of less moment, but could never fall into any fundamental errors.

## XXXI.

MARK, VI. 12.

THEY WENT OUT, AND PREACHED THAT  
MEN SHOULD REPENT.

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A Passage, which I think rather exceptionable in an excellent book, (and therefore the more exceptionable,) gave occasion to the following remarks. *Holiness*, says this pious writer, *does not precede a man's reconciliation to God, and is its cause; but follows it, and is its effect* \*. This seems to be saying, in other words, that God will be reconciled to *unrepenting* sinners. If not, holiness must precede reconciliation.

The whole tenour of Scripture, from one end to the other, is an exhortation to repentance.—But,

\* Mr. Wilberforce on the Christian Religion, p. 328. second edition.

says

says the finner, (reasoning on the position above quoted,) it can have no effect. My listening to the exhortations of Scripture can avail nothing in reconciling me to God. I am still an impenitent finner, till after my reconciliation. Your exhortations therefore to repentance, and the exhortations of Scripture, have no force with me. *I must wait God's time.*

I own, I know not what answer could be given to the retort of such a finner. Indeed, as far as I can see, this doctrine rather urges against the necessity even of a Saviour's atonement: for if we have no merit of *any kind*, I see not how we can have any demerit. God does every thing. We do nothing.

What appears to me the truth on this subject is, that God gives all mankind opportunities of repentance, fitted to their several stations; and these opportunities we may either close with, or reject: we have our option. He who closes with them, draws the grace of God upon his endeavours, by fervent prayer. And he who does not, must take the consequence. The two thieves upon the cross had each the same opportunity: and he who accepted it was saved.

Of

Of the nature of motives, through which one chuses and another rejects, we know nothing. But of this we may be assured, that if God means any thing by styling himself *no respecter of persons*, he gives an option to every man. The difficulties of the question let us leave with God, and satisfy ourselves with the plain Scripture-doctrine of *working out our own salvation*, and depending on the merits of Christ, in making what we do acceptable to God.



## XXXII

ACTS, XV. 9.

PURIFYING THEIR HEARTS BY FAITH.

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**T**HE apostle is here speaking of the conversion of the Gentiles, whose hearts, he says, were *purified by faith*.

Now the hearts of converts were *purified by faith* in two ways.

In the first place, when the convert, renouncing his idolatry and other sins, professed his faith in Christ, and his resolution to lead a Christian life, we are assured, in various instances, that his heart was *purified by faith*—his past sins were forgiven—and he was placed in a state of innocence.

Thus far his faith acted with a kind of *atoning power*, under the authority of the great Author of our redemption. But it was afterwards expected, that his heart should be purified by *faith*.

*faith*, acting as a mean to lead him into that purity of life, which he had *professed*. His *first purification by faith*, signified nothing as to his *future life*, without the *second*. If indeed he had died immediately after his *first purification by faith*, before he had committed sin, he should have been saved. But if he lived afterwards, he was obliged to secure his salvation by a holy life.

The thief upon the cross seems to have been an instance of the former mode of *purification by faith*. On his first conviction, he received absolution, and dying immediately after, he carried with him a blessed viaticum.

Simon Magus was an instance of the necessity of the *latter mode of purification*. His heart had received its first *purification by faith*, in consequence of which he had been baptized. But afterwards relapsing into his old depravity, the apostle St. Peter treats him with great severity. After this relapse, he could not be saved without repentance, and the purification of a holy life.

Some pious people seem to conceive this first mode of purification by *faith* as the general mode of its operation, supposing that *faith alone* is all that sanctifies a Christian, leaving good works to follow merely as a test of it.

XXXIII.

HEB. xiii. 5.

BE CONTENT WITH SUCH THINGS AS YE HAVE.

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**T**HE language of the world to its votaries, on the subject of contentment, is somewhat in this strain:

Your great end in life is to push forward, and make your fortunes. The precepts of religion are, in some things, too strict for a trading country. Indeed, without a little allowance they cannot be observed. Keep however within the nicest rules of what *the world calls honesty*. Do nothing openly knavish—nothing contrary to the common practice of men of character. Theft, forgery, false evidence, are all abominable, and will deservedly ruin your characters. At the same time, there are several things commonly practised in your profession, which you must conform

conform to. All fair traders allow them, though among precise puritanical people they would not readily be admitted. In selling or buying, you must often praise and depreciate beyond the truth. You must, now and then, take advantage of some for the losses you may have sustained by others. Trade might otherwise be a losing bargain. It is fair also to speculate, and, by monopolizing, to keep the price of some useful commodity in your own hands.—Or if any person oppose you in business, and stand between you and the accomplishment of some favourite scheme, you may undermine him, and privately attack his character. It is self-defence. He attacks you first.—With regard to mercantile and qualifying oaths, I know not what to say. I must leave you in those matters to your own judgment. If by any casuistry you can avoid the force of them, it is all I desire. My great instruction, on the whole, is to raise yourselves in life. Let that thought be always uppermost. Never be satisfied with what you have, but always look forward to something more. You may *talk of contentment*, if you will, and of being satisfied with moderate things. You will make your way easier under such declarations. Only take care never to

make such sentiments, the sentiments of your hearts.

Thus the *World* speaks on the subject of contentment. Let us now hear what *Christianity* says:

When I enjoin you to be *content with such things as you have*, I mean to enjoin you literally to shut in all your desires. I allow industry and frugality in your several employments; but I strictly forbid you to be solicitous about the *event of things*. Leave that entirely in the hands of God. He may ordain you to lead a life of poverty. Bear it with resignation, depending upon that God, who has declared he will never forsake *you*, if you never forsake *him*. Recollect also, that if you can be content in your low estate, contentment is real happiness. On the other hand, it may please God to prosper your industry with great success—or raise you, in other ways, to a state of affluence. In these cases, still draw in your desires. Your riches are not given you merely for yourselves. Except what a *conscientious respect* to your stations in life may fairly require, your wealth is, in fact, no more your own, than if you did not possess it. It engages you only in a more arduous employment. You are taught to consider yourself as a steward of God's bounty, for  
the

the good of others. Guard therefore against the temptations of riches, and make to yourself a *friend of the mammon of unrighteousness*. This indeed should check your desire of riches; because if you consider them in a true religious light, they only engage you in more arduous employment.—Draw in therefore all your desires, and consider yourself merely as a person travelling through a country, in which you have no property, to your great home, where, at length, you will meet with every comfort.

If this be thought too strict, let us hear St. Paul's opinion in the case:

“ I have learned,” says he, “ in whatever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and how to abound. Every where, and in all things, I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need.”

Thus differently the World and Religion, accost you on the subject of contentment, and you have an option to which you will listen.— But observe one thing, (adds Religion,) the advice of the World is calculated only for a *few years*—mine for *eternity*.

## XXXIV.

I COR. XIII. 12.

NOW I KNOW IN PART; BUT THEN SHALL I  
KNOW, EVEN ALSO AS I AM KNOWN.

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**T**HE apostle is here drawing a comparison between several circumstances in this world and the next; and, among other instances, mentions the imperfections of our knowledge here, and the enlargement of it hereafter.

I shall first *explain the text*, and then make a few *reflections* upon it.

The apostle says *we know in part*—that is, our knowledge is very confined. It is indeed best characterized by negatives—not so much by what we know, as by what we do not know. The wisest and most learned men have been the most ready to acknowledge their ignorance. In what branch of  
know-



knowledge can any man say, he knows more than *in part*?—But the ignorance of man is ground so well known, that it is unnecessary to run it over. I shall only observe, that as no exception is made, we may suppose this confined knowledge relates to religion, as well as to science. The great work of redemption in all its parts and extensive range, (except those parts which immediately relate to ourselves,) is most probably just as much hidden from us, as the nature of the heavenly bodies—the mode of vegetation—or of animal growth.

For our comfort, however, we are told, that although we now only *know in part*, yet hereafter *we shall know, even as also we are known*. Our faculties shall be enlarged, and opened into a knowledge of many things, of which we have now no conception.

Spirits hereafter may probably have the same disposition for diversity of pursuits, which is found on earth. Variety in the works of God is one of its principal characteristics.—Some may employ themselves in tracing the various causes and chain of events in human affairs, which we call evil, and in acquainting themselves with the reasons of those perplexing circumstances in the government of the world,

world, in which the good man piously acquiesces, and which the bad man turns into arguments against Providence.—Others again may examine, what we are told, *angels desire to look into*, the secrets of God's revelations to mankind—his early communications to the first race of men—the various peculiarities of the Jewish dispensation—and the still greater wonders of the Gospel.—While some may examine the works of creation, and trace the amazing grandeur, contrivance, and beauty of every part, from the least to the greatest—from the reptile of the earth to the orb of the sun.—But in whatever way these glorified spirits pursue their various enquiries, they turn them all in the end into themes of gratitude and praise to the great Creator.

Let us now examine a few of such *reflections*, as arise from the short span of human knowledge in this world, and its extensive range in the next. The most useful of them perhaps are these.

In the first place, we exalt our ideas of a future state. What can be conceived more grand, or more agreeable to the nature of the human soul, than to have all those corporeal and earthly ob-

stacles removed, which are, in part, the sources of its ignorance—to have all its faculties enlarged—at liberty to act freely—and to stray among all those wonderful parts of knowledge, which will most probably be opened in a future world. To this may be added, the probability of our happy intercourse with the beatified spirits of all ages, and all nations; communicating mutually the fruits of our several pursuits—and enjoying all that happiness, of which rational researches and philosophic ease give us but a faint idea in this world. The expression of *seeing through a glass darkly, but then face to face*, is full of that grand obscurity, which is in the highest degree sublime; and raises of course the most exalted conceptions of our intercourse with the Divine Being in a future state\*.

Secondly,

\* ————— How great  
 To mingle interests, converse, amities,  
 With all the sons of reason scatter'd wide  
 Through habitable space, wherever born,  
 Howe'er endow'd! to live free citizens  
 Of universal nature! ———  
 ——— to rise in science, as in bliss,  
 Initiate in the secrets of the skies!  
 To read creation; read its mighty plan  
 In the vast bosom of the Deity:

The

Secondly, we ought to think modestly of our earthly knowledge. As we have it from such good authority, that we *know only in part*, we should be so far from supposing that we know *every thing*, that we cannot suppose we thoroughly know *any thing*.—And if, in the more trivial branches of human science, we can know only *in part*; in matters of the highest importance, we should still be more humble. In the redemption of the world by Christ, we must conceive that such parts of it as *appertain to God*, must needs be above our comprehension.

Lastly, as human knowledge is so confined, it is not really of that great consequence which we are apt to make it. As the intellects and knowledge of children born into this world, are of the same size; so it may, perhaps, be in the next.—There may be little or no difference between the knowledge of the philosopher and of the peasant.—

The

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The plan and execution to collate!  
 To see, before each glance of piercing thought,  
 All cloud, all shadow blown away, and leave  
 No mystery!—

YOUNG, NIGHT 6.

The great point therefore should be to value *religion* more than *knowledge*. As our knowledge here is so very imperfect, and as religion leads to the full enlargement of it, a real thirst after knowledge will incline us to cultivate chiefly what in the end will tend most to the improvement of it.

XXXV.

2 COR. IV. 4.

THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HATH BLINDED THE  
EYES OF THEM THAT BELIEVE NOT.

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**N**ATURE never produced an atheist. God Almighty left the heathen nations without excuse for atheism, in giving them rain and fruitful seasons, from which they might, at least, have collected his being and government. And, in fact, we find that with whatever falsehoods the old heathen creeds were filled, there was very little atheism in any of them.

By analogy we reason, that when God gave man the revelation of the Gospel, he afforded every candid mind sufficient evidence of its truth. And, indeed, we find, that every candid mind, every fair examiner, both when it was first preached,  
and

and ever since, hath been convinced of its truth.—  
When the mind is not candid, or the truth not fairly examined, infidelity springs from two sources—the perversion of our *passions*; and the perversion of our *reason*. In other words, as the text expresses it, the *God of this world*, that is, some worldly motive, *hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not*.

The man of pleasure has an interest to serve, wholly opposite to the nature of the Gospel. The rules of the Gospel oppose every action of his life. It is natural for him, therefore, and the only thing indeed he can do, while he continues to be a man of pleasure, to endeavour to overturn the Gospel. If he cannot overthrow the Gospel, the Gospel will certainly overthrow him.—But the man of pleasure is by no means a formidable enemy. He cannot reason, and therefore he cannot injure the Gospel by argument. For the same reason, he is also unaffailable. In desperate cases men often fight with such weapons as come first at hand. With such, the man of pleasure commonly attacks Christianity. They are ordinary weapons indeed, but they are the best he can get. His arguments are made up of scraps of wit—obsolete objections, which have been answered over and over—



over—and of misconceived and misinterpreted passages of Scripture, which have no force when explained, or when compared either with the context, or with the general scheme of Christianity.—Poor however, as his objections are, they suffice him, because he neither chuses to examine such answers as would overturn them, nor to come in the way of such evidence as would bear them down. In short, it is his studious endeavour, that the *God of this world* may *blind his eyes*. He is an infidel through choice.

The man of *reason* opposes Christianity on other ground. Though he too, now and then, condescends to listen to the calls of appetite, his grand attack is founded on the all-sufficiency of reason. Reason is given him to be the touchstone of right and wrong—of truth and falsehood. To this he brings all religious truth. And as objections may be made to every thing, his objections, if he be an acute man, may be subtle: though sometimes they are trifling enough, as he never vouchsafes to look into those writers, who have examined and resolved his objections, probably long before he made them.—But, what is most perverse in his attack on Christianity, he has different modes of judging between religious and scientific truth. In  
many

many parts of science, he is obliged to confess his ignorance. But he has not that candour, when he meets with a difficulty in religion. This we call unfair. He should certainly acknowledge his own confined understanding in religion, as well as in other parts of knowledge—unless he think he can more easily grasp the difficulties of a divine revelation, than of a human science.

The man of reason is under another bias, which leads him into infidelity. He often forms a system of his own, which the pride of his heart will not suffer him to abandon. Or, perhaps, he is under the influence of some infidel society, and has all their scorn to encounter, if he draw back. When he once, therefore, becomes an infidel, he generally continues one\*.

\* The Abbé Barruel has written a history of Jacobinism, from which it appears, that Voltaire, and all the French philosophers were of this class. Their horrid watch-word was, *Ecrasez l'infame*, (*crush the wretch*,) meaning Christ. And in their *blasphemous system*, as far as we know, they all died.

## XXXVI.

2 CHRON. XXXII 31.

HOWBEIT IN THE BUSINESS OF THE AMBASSADORS OF THE PRINCES OF BABYLON, WHO SENT UNTO HIM TO ENQUIRE OF THE WONDER THAT WAS DONE IN THE LAND, GOD LEFT HIM TO TRY HIM.

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**W**E are to suppose the writer of this book to be inspired, and the doctrine contained in the text to be scriptural; though I do not remember any where a parallel passage.

God had blessed the good king Hezekiah with more riches than any prince of his time; infomuch, that he was the wonder of all those nations which bordered on his dominions. Among others, the king of Babylon sent messengers to congratulate him on his recovery from a dangerous illness; but, in fact, to examine into the truth of what he had  
heard

heard of his great opulence\*. Hezekiah seems to have indulged the pride of his heart too much on this occasion; and God, to humble him, no doubt, *left him to himself.*

Now this probably may be one method of God's dealing with mankind, in a state of trial. In some circumstances, *he may leave even good men to themselves,* to try and exercise their humility, by shewing them how faint their own endeavours are without *his* assistance. And although this doctrine is not found any where, that I recollect, except in this passage of Scripture, yet it seems very agreeable to the nature of a state of trial.—Many expressions there are in Scripture, which speak of the dereliction of God's holy spirit; that is, when bad men are hardened against it, and persist in rejecting its gentle admonitions—but this does not amount to the doctrine of the text.—Both doctrines, however, are excellent lessons in a state of trial. The former should be an awful warning to lead the bad man to repentance: the latter should be a standing caution to the good man, to keep his mind in that humble state; which alone can make him acceptable to God.

\* This appears from laying together the three separate passages in which this transaction is mentioned; 2 Chron. xxxii. 31.—Isa. xxxix. 1.—2 Kings, xx. 12.

## XXXVII.

HEB. ii. 10.

IT BECAME HIM, FOR WHOM ARE ALL THINGS,  
AND BY WHOM ARE ALL THINGS, IN BRING-  
ING MANY SONS TO GLORY, TO MAKE THE  
CAPTAIN OF THEIR SALVATION PERFECT  
THROUGH SUFFERINGS.

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**T**HIS passage seems to have been sometimes  
misunderstood, as if the character of Jesus  
Christ could be made more *perfect by sufferings*.  
In the *words*, no doubt, there is some ambiguity,  
but none in the *sense*.

The great dignity of Christ, as the son of God,  
is set forth in the beginning of the chapter in the  
strongest manner. The world is put in subjection  
to him ; he is crowned with glory and honour,  
and set over all the works of God. Such a be-  
ing, therefore, had no need *to be made perfect  
through sufferings*.

It is evident, the apostle, therefore, speaks of our Saviour in the passage before us, merely as the *redeemer of mankind*. In the first light, Christ wanted nothing to perfect his nature. It was in the second light only—that of being *the captain of our salvation*, that he needed to be made *perfect through suffering*—particularly the suffering of death; as it was *necessary*, in this great work, that he *should taste of death for every man*.

## XXXVIII.

MATT. V. 17.

THINK NOT I AM COME TO DESTROY THE LAW  
OR THE PROPHETS; I AM NOT COME TO  
DESTROY, BUT TO FULFIL,

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**T**HIS expression of our blessed Saviour contains the whole connection of the Old and New Testament.

The subject may be discussed, by considering, *first*, in what the Law differed from the Gospel—and, *secondly*, how the former was fulfilled by the latter.

The Law may be explained as an institution requiring perfect obedience, and threatening judgment on every transgression; at the same time, accepting, in mercy, certain sacrificial atonements.

The



The Gospel, on the other hand, with the mildness of a kind indulgent father, speaks in a gentler language; and shews us, that the Law was only a preparatory institution to a full and complete revelation of God's will.

We may examine, secondly, in what way it is thus preparatory; or how the Law was fulfilled by the Gospel.—In the first place, our Saviour refined the *morality* of the Jewish law. Many roughnesses, if I may so express myself, deformed it. The Jews were a stiff-necked race; and our Saviour mentions several things, particularly the latitude between the sexes, which was suffered by Moses only for the *hardness of their hearts*. And St. Paul tells us, God *winked at them* in those early days.—All these things the Gospel morality refined, and seated religion where it ought to be seated, in a purified heart.

The next point, in which our blessed Lord fulfilled the Jewish institution, was in the completion of those prophecies which related to the Messiah. These prophecies are among the most remarkable parts of the Bible, and, having been authenticated by the completion of many occasional and temporary prophecies, relating merely to the captivities, and other events among the Jews themselves, they

preserved the hopes of the Messiah, till he himself appeared. Afterwards the completion of those prophecies which related to Christ, confirmed the faith of all such as were seriously and honestly disposed.

Jesus, lastly, fulfilled the law and the prophets by fulfilling the ceremonies of the Jewish ritual. The mysterious meaning of the various sacrifices, and other parts of it, were probably hidden from many of the Jews themselves. They were a sort of dead carcase, till the coming of Christ put life, as it were, into them; and shewed plainly, they were all intended to figure out the great sacrifice and atonement, which he made for the sins of mankind.

## XXXIX.

I JOHN, iv. 1.

TRY THE SPIRITS, WHETHER THEY BE OF GOD.

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**S**OME of the best clergymen of our church, I fear, are called methodists, merely because they are in a peculiar manner serious and attentive to their duty. Some opinions, however, are held by people under this denomination, which seem to be unscriptural and misleading: and these opinions alone are what I should wish to combat.

Of these, the first is *predestination*, which, though receiving a colour from a few insulated texts of Scripture, is totally discredited by a candid review of the whole. Nothing can be more absurd than the revelation of the Gospel, if the fates of all people are already determined.

Another

Another misleading tenet held by some of this persuasion, is that of *assurance*, as they call it. They suppose they may arrive at such a sinless state, as may *assure* them of salvation. This doctrine is discredited by the very nature of a state of trial; and by the whole tenour of Scripture, which exhorts us every where to care and watchfulness, and *to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling* \*.

Pretences to sudden *illuminations*, and *illapses of the spirit*, seems also to be very *unscriptural* and *mischievous*. They are *unscriptural*, because the few texts they depend on may be much more naturally interpreted in another sense. Nor have they the least countenance from the general tenour of Scripture.—They are *mischievous* also, because they have often led people to do very unwarrantable things, under the pretence, or perhaps under the persuasion, of being guided by the spirit.

The doctrine of faith seems often to be carried too far. It is too much perhaps separated from works, when works are left to follow, merely as *tests of faith*. If faith be well established, works will follow without question; yet by throwing an ap-

\* See Hint XXI.

parent slight on works in comparison with faith, a mode of preaching is adopted, different from the usual mode of Scripture; in which good works are at least as much insisted on as faith. A door also, I should fear, is opened to self-deceit among lower people; as it is a much easier matter for a man to persuade himself he has faith, than to practise the duties of a Christian life.

Some people throw a still greater slight on good works, by applying, as they say, the merits of Christ to themselves by an act of faith, which they consider as the grand doctrine of Christianity\*.

We are sorry also occasionally to find among the strict professors of this sect an uncharitable temper. Many good men are addicted to *this*

\* Bishop Burnet, speaking of the sectaries of his day, tells us, "the independents were raising the old Antinomian tenets, as if men, by believing Christ, were so united in him, that his righteousness became theirs, without any other condition besides their faith; so that, though they acknowledged the obedience to his laws necessary, they did not call it a condition, but only a consequence, of justification. In this they were opposed by most of the presbyterians, who seemed to be sensible, that this struck at the root of all religion, as it weakened the obligation to a holy life."—BURNET'S *History of his own Times*, vol. ii. p. 247.

*zeal*, for I should gladly derive it from *that source*. They make their own definitions of faith, and other virtues; and, if you do not receive them in their way, you are no Christian. But this uncharitable opinion rests only among the most bigotted of this persuasion.

I should also tax the itinerant and unauthorized preacher of this sect, and the conventicle in which he preaches, but I am doubtful, however fanatical he may be, whether his fanaticism may not work on ignorant people, and rouse their consciences to a sense of guilt more forcibly than the instructions of a better divine.—Besides, they often avail themselves of such places as are very distant from churches; and, it is surely better to hear Christ preached in a conventicle, than nowhere at all.

XL.

PSALM lvi. 3.

NEVERTHELESS, THOUGH I AM SOMETIMES  
AFRAID, YET PUT I MY TRUST IN THEE.

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**T**HIS whole psalm is a beautiful and natural picture of the conflict in the mind of a good man, between the fears of the world and a trust in Providence.

The Psalmist begins with a lamentable complaint of the distresses he underwent from the violence of his enemies. *Be merciful unto me, O God; for man goeth about to devour me. He is daily fighting and troubling me.*

Then, a gleam of hope, and trust in God arising in his heart, yet still accompanied with a degree of fear, he cries out, *Nevertheless, though*  
*I am*



*I am sometimes afraid, yet put I my trust in thee.*

In the next verse, his hope and trust arise still higher: *I will praise God, because of his word. I have put my trust in God, and will not fear what flesh can do unto me.*

But in the following verses his fears again preponderate. *Mine enemies daily mistake my words. All they imagine is to do me evil. They hold together, and keep themselves close. They mark my steps, and lay wait for my soul.*

In the seventh verse, he looks up again to heaven, and hopes that God would protect his innocence, and baffle the designs of his enemies.

One devout thought introduces another. At the ninth verse, he feels conscious that God has heard his petitions: *Whensoever I call upon thee, mine enemies shall be put to flight. This I know, for God is on my side.*

This raises in him a joyful hope: *In God's word will I rejoice: his word will comfort me.*

Roused by these holy sentiments, he banishes at length all his fears—trusts fully in God; and in this holy hope he ends the psalm. *In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can*

*do*

*do unto me. Unto thee, O God, will I pay my vows: unto thee will I give thanks. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, and I will walk before thee in the light of the living.*

A good man may make many pleasing reflections on the various feelings of this psalm, which might be pointed out in a discourse.

XLI.

GAL. i. 1.

JESUS CHRIST, WHOM GOD THE FATHER  
RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

JOHN, X. 18.

I HAVE POWER TO LAY DOWN MY LIFE,  
AND I HAVE POWER TO TAKE IT UP.

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**I**N these passages, and in others of the same kind, there is a variation in the accounts given us of the resurrection of Christ. In some passages, he is represented as raised *by God*; in others, as *raising himself*.

We reconcile this variation, as we do others, in which there is the appearance of the same contradiction, by considering the divine Emanuel, as *he is always represented in Scripture*, under the two natures of divine and human. When God *is said to raise him*, his *human* nature is considered, and his *divine* nature when he is represented as raising himself.

## XLII.

PSALM IV. 5.

OFFER THE SACRIFICE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,  
AND PUT THY TRUST IN THE LORD.

---

**T**HIS is a Jewish precept, but may be as well addressed to a Christian.

The Jew is directed to offer the sacrifice of a holy life, but not to put his trust in his own righteousness: he must put his trust only in the mercies of God.

The Christian also is directed to offer to God the sacrifice of a holy life. But he must not put his trust in it. He cannot indeed be saved without it; but he must *trust only in the merits of Christ*.

Such is the similitude between Judaism, the ancient stock, and Christianity, which was ingrafted upon it.

## XLIII.

I PET. iii. 8.

BE YE ALL OF ONE MIND, HAVING COMPASSION ONE OF ANOTHER.

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**T**HAT we should all be of *one opinion*, is impossible, and therefore the apostle could not mean *opinion* by the word *mind*. The apostle's rule, however, is still observed, if the difference in our *opinions* does not appear *in our behaviour*. No difference of opinion should occasion a breach of charity. This is all that religion seems to require; and on this principle, that as we all may have our errors, we should treat what we suppose the errors of others with compassion; so that, although we cannot all be of *one mind in opinion*, we should all be of one mind *in having compassion one on another*.

XLIV.

PSALM ix. 18.

THE POOR SHALL NOT ALWAY BE FORGOTTEN:  
THE PATIENT ABIDING OF THE MEEK  
SHALL NOT PERISH FOR EVER.

---

**B**Y the *poor* are not meant those merely in indigent circumstances; but such as bear indigence with religious resignation. To them the Gospel (for David's remark is purely evangelical) thus speaks: "Though, ye patient sufferers, ye appear to be thus forsaken, depend upon it, your gracious Father has you in his eye. He afflicts you no farther than is necessary. Envy not those whom you see, in appearance, happier than yourselves. Be resigned, and receive with piety all the dispensations of your heavenly Father, and your time of alleviation will certainly come.

That merciful God, whom you serve, will not suffer the *patient abiding of the meek to perish for ever.*"

N. B. Some such encouragement as this might be detailed from this text, under two or three useful heads.



## XLV.

ISAIAH, xi. 9.

THE EARTH SHALL BE FULL OF THE KNOW-  
LEDGE OF THE LORD, AS THE WATERS  
COVER THE SEA.

---

**T**HIS is an ancient prophecy, among many others, denoting the universality of the Christian religion; and in the New Testament we have various corresponding passages, in which the progress of Christianity, from one end of the earth to the other, is held out.

But, says the objector, we do not see these prophecies and intimations realized. Great part of the world is now in a heathen state—great part of it receives the koran—and several countries of the East have a religion of their own.

We answer, that we conceive the prophecies are fulfilled, when all parts of the world shall have

*had the offer* of Christianity; but, by no means, that it shall be upheld among them *by a miracle*. That is contrary to the whole analogy of nature. God gives increase to the tree, but does not prevent its decay. He gives increase to a man, but does not prevent his growing infirm. Thus religion, when planted in a country, is left to the natural course of things; and if that country grow supine, and does not cherish the blessing, it must take on itself the consequence. We conceive, therefore, that with regard to all those countries which receive the koran, where the Gospel once flourished, the prophecy hath already been fulfilled. Great part of Germany, France, and Italy, may be in the same state of dereliction. They *have had* the Gospel, and if they should nationally expel it, as in France they seem to have done, it is their own fault: the prophecy has been fulfilled.

As to those countries which never have received the Gospel—great part of America, Asia, and Africa, we have no doubt but it will be offered to them all. We see Christianity has made great strides in those countries, even in our own times, and given us a sufficient earnest that prophecy will be fulfilled in every one of them.

In

In the meantime, let us, my brethren, look to ourselves. If we value religion, let us take care to preserve it. But it is not a blessing, we see, entailed upon us. It may be lost, and we may be left in such miserable darkness, as at this time overspreads the Turkish empire.

## XLVI.

I COR. XV. 22.

IN ADAM ALL DIE.

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**A**S God created man in a state of perfection, it has been asked, Why He did not allow him to continue in it? The abruptness of a paradisaical state looks like (what we cannot conceive) a sort of hasty change in the counsels of the Almighty. We must either, therefore, answer this objection, we are told; or must give up the Mosaic account as a mere allegorical composition.

Of the abruptness of a paradisaical state, (on which the objection is founded,) we can form no opinion, unless we were perfectly acquainted with the whole of God Almighty's plan in the redemption of the world by Christ. It may relate to other worlds as well as to ours. We see a *natural* con-

nection between our world, and the sun, the moon, and (for any thing we know) the planets and stars. Why may there not then be a *moral* connection also? As far as we can trace God Almighty's works, there is a connection *among them all*. In this view, then, the fall of man may be considered only as a part of some vast plan—perhaps only as the opening of it. This dissolves the objection so far, at least, as to drive the objector to take refuge in his own ignorance.

Another probable supposition is, that as the world is meant to be a *state of trial*, the history of the fall was a good introduction to it. It was like a table of contents at the beginning of a book. It shewed at once the fatal consequences of miscarriage in a state of trial, and tended to put men on their guard.—Something of the same kind, our blessed Saviour thought proper to present to mankind, on the opening of the Gospel. As the world was then more advanced, and become a wider scene of trial, our Saviour, in his temptation in the wilderness, gave his followers a view of those temptations they were afterwards to encounter, and of the proper mode of opposing them by the truths of Scripture.

But,

But, whatever were the Almighty's reasons, (which it behoves us not to scrutinize too deeply,) for opening the world with the fall of man, whom he had just created; of this we may be assured, that as far as Adam himself was concerned, his will was as free as ours. At the same time, God made use of him as an instrument, as he does of all his creatures, bad and good, in forwarding his own designs.

## XLVII.

LUKE, X. 26.

WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW  
READEST THOU?

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**T**HESSE two questions our Saviour proposed as an answer to a curious inquirer, who had the means, he thought, of answering himself. They were proposed to a Jew; but are equally adapted to a Christian. *What is written in the Gospel? How readeſt thou?*—Both questions require a very serious consideration.

We are first asked, *What is written in the Gospel?* Though the Gospel contains all our hopes of eternal life, and instructs us in all the means of obtaining it; there are numbers who never look into it, nor have the least knowledge of what is written in it.—Numbers again, though they may casually look into it, or hear it read in churches,  
rarely



rarely make it the subject of their thoughts. If they should be asked, *What is written in the Gospel?* What are you to believe?—What are you to practise?—What provision does it make for sinners?—What assistance does it offer? They have nothing to answer: they know little of its contents.

The second question, *How readeſt thou?* may be proposed to those, who do indeed read the Scriptures—but in an improper manner. They read them carelessly perhaps, and merely as a task—or with the prejudices of some sect about them—or to seek objections—or to find arguments to enforce a favourite tenet—or, perhaps, under some ambiguous text to get a licence to sin.

All these modes of reading Scripture turn religion into mischief.—An honest man sees his path plainly before him. He knows that by reading the Scriptures, he must *first learn his duty*; and that when he has learned his duty, *his only business is to practise it.*

## XLVIII.

JAMES, i. 26.

IF ANY MAN AMONG YOU SEEM TO BE RELIGIOUS, AND BRIDLETH NOT HIS TONGUE, THAT MAN'S RELIGION IS VAIN.

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THE Scripture proposes various *tests* of religion. Charity is a test; the forgiveness of injuries also, and many other virtues and duties, may be called *tests*; that is, if a man possess any of them in a Christian manner, it may well be presumed, he possesses others also.

In this light St. James, in the text, makes *bridling the tongue* a test of religion. How properly it may be called so, may appear from running over the effects of a *bridled* and an *unbridled* tongue.

The *unbridled* tongue shews itself in deceit, tricking, blasphemy, swearing, and lying. In a neighbour-

neighbourhood it is a firebrand. It defames, and inflames. Spiteful speeches, detraction, and malice, and venomous shafts, which it shoots in all directions. Where interest is concerned, it can flatter as well as defame. In state matters, it whispers treason. In matters of religion, it can be loud in the cause of infidelity.—An unbridled tongue, therefore, is the great source of wickedness; and, of course, when a man pretends to religion, without bridling his tongue, *his religion is vain*.—It may be added, that the unbridled tongue is the great bane of conversation and social intercourse. When it is most innocent, it often abounds with nonsense and folly—repeating things over and over, and fatiguing every body with tedious details of unimportant circumstances.

On the other hand, *the bridled tongue* is one of the choice instruments of religion and social happiness. It is never so much in its proper office, as when engaged in the duties of religion—in praise, thanksgiving, petition, and confession, to the great Creator.—The bridled tongue is the instrument also of kindness to man. It comforts the afflicted—it encourages the diffident—it advises and instructs the ignorant. It speaks always the language of mildness and affection. It praises, but  
never

never inflames; and even when harshness is necessary, it softens the reproof by gentle expressions. In the common intercourse of conversation, it never talks at random; and treats such subjects only, as are pleasing to others. Every syllable it utters, except when it indulges acknowledged jocularity, is truth. If it express friendship, it feels it. If it offer to serve you, you may assure yourself the offer is sincere. In short, a bridled tongue is generally connected with a good heart.

## XLIX.

PSALM CXIX. PART IV. I.

MY SOUL CLEAVETH TO THE DUST: O, QUICKEN  
ME ACCORDING TO THY WORD.

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**I**N the Jewish prophets, we often find a mode of sentiment and expression purely evangelical. In David, this is particularly conspicuous. We have here as strong a picture of a state of nature and of grace, as an apostle could have given.

*My soul cleaveth to the dust.* The cares, the vanities, and pleasures of life, draw me to the world. I am not only drawn—I cleave to it. This world and I are become, as it were, one substance. I am dead to all other concerns.

Nothing but the grace of God can assist me. *O, quicken me according to thy word.* Thou hast promised to assist those who desire thy aid. O, my God, let my sincere endeavours claim that gracious promise. *Quicken me, quicken me, according to thy word.*

L.

HEB. XII. 21.

— COME TO MOUNT SION—TO THE HEAVENLY  
JERUSALEM—TO AN INNUMERABLE COM-  
PANY OF ANGELS—TO THE SPIRITS OF  
JUST MEN MADE PERFECT.

---

**W**E are here invited to meet a very illustrious  
assembly—the wise and good, who have  
lived in all ages of the world. These holy persons,  
having deposited all those imperfections to which,  
as human beings, they once had been subject, are  
now in a state of angelic happiness; and receive  
with joy, all those who have passed religiously  
through their state of trial upon earth\*. The in-  
habitants of all countries unite. Their modes of

\* Luke, xix. 7.

communication, no doubt, supersede the use of human language. The language of heaven is universal. What infinite gratification will it be to meet, on equal terms, all the great characters which have been admired in the world, in ancient and modern times!

But as only the good can mix in this glorious assembly, it may be one, among our many incentives to holiness, to consider how far we may be qualified to unite with them. Both reason and Scripture assure us, that we shall carry with us the same frame of mind, with which we leave this world, into the next. Learning and abilities are not the leading parts of a heavenly character. Our worldly knowledge, we have it on record, *shall vanish away*. A holy life alone, through the mercy of God in Christ, is what we have to depend on. This only will procure us admittance to this illustrious assembly, where all those distinctions will be lost, which render human societies formal and unpleasant; and all those topics advanced, which are most interesting and delightful. Different degrees of superiority, it is probable from analogy, a heavenly state will exhibit, yet still all those repelling circumstances we may believe



lieve will be removed, which on earth make so great a chasm between high and low.

If we may descend to particulars, we all have some virtuous friends, whom we value. How joyous will it be to meet them again in full felicity after all their toilsome trials on earth! On the other hand, how dreadful the thought of being secluded for ever from those whom once we so tenderly loved!

LI.

PSALM lxii. 10.

IF RICHES INCREASE, SET NOT YOUR HEART  
UPON THEM.

---

**A**T first sight, this might be thought an unnecessary caution. If riches increase, one should suppose there were less occasion for that care and anxiety, which imply setting our hearts upon them. But the rule is accurately formed on a knowledge of human nature. An *addition* of more commonly generates a *desire* of more; as, when a man has gotten a habit of drinking, thirst always creates thirst.—In conformity to this natural pravity of the human mind, our Saviour framed the parable of the rich man, who pulled down his barns to build larger. As his riches in-

6 creased,

creased, his desires and his store-houses increased with them.

The obvious conclusion is, that the more it pleases God to bless us with abundance, the more we should guard against this vicious propensity; and, instead of increasing our desires to get more wealth, we should increase our endeavours to be of more use.

## LII.

ROM. i. 20.

THE INVISIBLE THINGS OF HIM FROM THE  
CREATION OF THE WORLD ARE CLEARLY  
SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD BY THE THINGS  
THAT ARE MADE.

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**T**HIS world may be considered in many grand and instructive lights. The most obvious idea it presents, is that of *a state of trial*, in which they who are desirous of improvement, are disciplined as in a school, with good and evil, as the means of correcting their faults, and preparing them for a better life.

This world may likewise be considered as a *natural proof of a better*. From the inequality of reward and punishment, which we observe here, we may well suppose, a just God will rectify all this inequality hereafter.

But

But at present, I mean to consider the world in neither of these lights, but to hold it out merely as a kind of exhibition of the *nature of a future world*. Of this, it is true, it gives us but a dim reflected image; but yet enough to engage our admiration, and stimulate both our hopes and fears. *The invisible things of God*, the text tells us, *are clearly seen by the things that are made*—that is, we may clearly make out the analogy between them.

In the various modes of animal enjoyment here, we see enough to convince us of the inclination our great Creator has to promote our happiness hereafter.—On the other hand, we see enough of evil, to convince us, that as misery, as well as happiness, is held out in this world, it may naturally be expected in the next.

We see, farther, various instances of beauty and deformity, both in the animal and vegetable world. We are led therefore to conceive highly of the beauty of angelic forms; while, on the other hand, the various degrees of deformity furnish us with conceptions of the great power of an Almighty hand, in giving wickedness hereafter those hideous appearances which may best suit its nature.

Lastly, though the best of men have much ground for unhappiness, when they consider their inability to act up to their known duty; yet sometimes such heartfelt joy—such bright rays of hope spread over their minds; that if their depressions are the sensations of future misery, their happier moments give them a foretaste of future happiness.

Thus God hath given us various emblems in this world, of what we may expect in the next. They are lessons, which certainly have useful morals. The world is full of analogies; and analogy is one of the best comments on the works of God.

## LIII.

LUKE, XIV. II.

HE THAT HUMBLETH HIMSELF, SHALL BE  
EXALTED.

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**O**F course, he that exalteth himself shall be humbled. Indeed, if this rule were only a precept of worldly prudence, it would be highly useful. He who exalts himself, is sure to lose his end. People like to abate pride and self-sufficiency. When the soldier trumpets his own gallant actions, he may probably meet ridicule, when he expects praise: or when a man boasts of his generosity, he sets his own value upon it, and nobody will be disposed to bid over him.

But though self-exaltation in a worldly sense is very disgusting, yet when it appears in religion, it destroys the very essence of all religious duty.

The



The true Christian temper consists in a humble mortified sense of ourselves; and in a full reliance on the grace of God for assistance, and the merits of Christ for pardon. Humility is indeed the grand point of Christian ethics. On no subject does our blessed Saviour dilate more: and indeed his whole life was only one great comment on his instructions. A life humbled to the last degree on earth preceded his exaltation in heaven. The amazing condescension of the example, certainly shews the great importance of the precept.

## LIV.

THIRD COMMANDMENT—EXOD. XX. 7.

THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN: FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTY, THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.

---

**T**HIS awful commandment has a wider extent than many people are inclined to give it. Swearing, cursing, blasphemy, and perjury, are out of the question. Nobody can pretend to the name of a Christian, who does not hold in abhorrence these deterring modes of taking *God's name in vain*.

But many who would wish to be thought good people, allow themselves, without scruple, to invoke their Maker's name on various trifling occasions. On some little surprize, they will cry out, Good God! or Gracious God! or, if they make any  
little

little request, they will supplicate for God's sake; or, if they would shew reluctance to any trifle, they will cry out, God forbid! or, if they make any affeuration, they will usher it in by telling you, God knows.

Now any of these modes of exclamation, if uttered on a solemn occasion, may be considered as an act of devotion. On hearing of the sudden death of a friend, if you cry *Good God!* you may mean it as a sort of prayer: Thou, O God, art good; and I submit, with pious resignation, to all thy appointments. But if you make the same exclamation, when you meet your friend suddenly, the idea is entirely changed.

Upon all trifling occasions, therefore, it is calling God to be a witness of your mirth—your joy—or your surprize;—which is surely taking his name in vain. It is treating that sacred name with irreverence—it is lessening that respect that is due to it—and it is giving great offence to such serious people as consider the matter in its true light.

You may, thoughtlessly, suppose these light exclamations of no consequence. But *your* conceptions of their innocence will not make them innocent. God Almighty has given you a rule.

*Thou*

*Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain:* and if these light invocations should be transgressions of that rule, (and it will be very difficult for you to range them under any other head) consider what follows—*God will not hold you guiltless.*—Never, therefore, suffer these light exclamations to come again out of your mouth. Leave them off—leave them off. They may *hereafter* appear against you—they cannot *here* answer any end.

LV.

ACTS, iv. 32.

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AND THEY WERE OF ONE HEART AND  
ONE SOUL.

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**T**HE New Testament was composed by eight persons—Matthew—Mark—Luke—John—Paul—Peter—James—and Jude. All these persons wrote at different times, and in different places. Their writings consist of various subjects—of historical narratives—of accounts of the early establishment of the Christian church—of explanations of the religion they taught—and of the several rules it inculcated. And yet, notwithstanding they all treat, more or less, on the same subjects, and under such a variety of circumstances; yet both in the historical and doctrinal parts, they all agree so faithfully, as to constitute one history,  
and

and one system of religion. What little variations we find among them, are of no consequence in themselves; but of great consequence in proving the authenticity of the whole. They plainly shew, the several writers did not write in concert.

If all this do not amount to a full evidence of the truth of Scripture, I know not what can. Were shall we find eight persons coming forward from different places, and at different times, uniting so circumstantially in a falshood? Falshood always falters, and is continually shifting its ground, and labouring to make out a consistent story. One lying witness, on being closely questioned in many particulars, can hardly escape detection. But when eight lying witnesses are examined separately on the several pretended facts of a falshood, it is impossible they should all agree.

## LVI.

JAMES, ii. 23.

HE WAS CALLED THE FRIEND OF GOD:

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**T**HIS was spoken of Abraham. But as we all may have the same access to God which Abraham had, we may all, in a degree, be, as he was, the friends of God—or rather (to express ourselves in more modest language,) we may hope to make God our friend. If we can fix this hope on good grounds in our minds, we want nothing more to secure our happiness, both in this world and the next. The friendship and protection of an Almighty God are so great, that every thing in the world must appear as nothing in the comparison.

*Are* our circumstances straitened? He who has a reversion of infinite value in view, cannot, or ought not, to be much depressed on the trifling circumstances of a journey to receive it.

*Are*



Are we sick, or perhaps approaching our latter end?—But should not we be cheered on arriving at the very threshold of our Friend's door? Let us not then think of the storm without; but of the kind reception and comfort we shall receive within.

Are our services less requited than we think they should be?—Let us think the more of that potent Friend, who will not suffer the least of our good actions to pass unrewarded.

Or do we think ourselves neglected by our friends, and less respected in general than we hoped to have been?—Alas! let not our minds run on such trifles. Have we the consolation to think our great Friend looks favourably upon us? Then let us turn round with complacency, and smile at the neglect of the world.

Thus too, when we have received an injury—when our characters have been maligned—or when we have met with ingratitude from those we have assisted—let us recollect we have a Friend, to whom we may bring all our complaints, and who will, in due time, redress all our patient sufferings.—It may, therefore, be our constant consolation, on every occasion, *If God be with us, what matters it who is against us!*

LVII.

GAL. i. 16.

I CONFERRED NOT WITH FLESH AND BLOOD.

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**T**HE Apostle particularly means, that he held no conference with flesh and blood in religious matters. He attended only to the revelation of God. And indeed it is in religious matters, in which flesh and blood are chiefly the most miserable advisers. But they are vile counsellors on all subjects, as well as in religion. There are very few actions of our lives which they do not, in some degree govern, and, in general, mislead. With all the pleasures of the world they go hand in hand. They easily silence the voice of temperance; and if not severely checked, soon lead us into sensuality. A man under the influence of flesh and blood, is, in fact, a brute.

In all ambitious views, they are also our great seducers. That humble mind, which is satisfied with the station in life appointed by God, and looks for nothing in this world but to pass religiously through it, is soon corrupted by a conference with these insinuating instructors. The Gospel may tell us, that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted; but such Gospel rules agree ill with the importunities of flesh and blood. Exaltation alone is their pursuit.

All our domestic habits also and duties they pervade. Indolence, inactivity, and inattention to the proper business of life, are only conferences with flesh and blood, which are continually displaying the happiness of sloth and indulgence.

N. B. Thoughts of this kind might be formed into a sermon, under two or three proper heads. Such as an explanation of the apostle's meaning more at large—the great mischief of conferring with flesh and blood in various instances—and, lastly, a few rules might be laid down to regulate the proper interference of flesh and blood.

## LVIII.

## FIRST COMMANDMENT:

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BUT ONE.

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**M**AN is naturally a helpless creature. Unfurnished in himself for happiness, he is continually seeking it abroad. As his search however is commonly ill-directed, it is generally made in vain.—In religious matters, the search of nature, before it was guided by Christianity, was truly deplorable. As man acknowledged his own helpless condition, he acknowledged also the want of some superior assistance. But as he had little acquaintance with aught but worldly things, he generally sought his protector among visible objects. He ransacked the heavens above, and the earth beneath, for objects of worship. So infatuated was

he, that he had recourse even to the works of his own hands.—Such was the source of idolatry.

But now, my brethren, you must not think idolatry is confined merely to the worship of idols. St. Paul gives us a more enlarged idea of it, and tell us, that *covetousness, or a love of money, is idolatry.*

On this ground, every thing may lead to idolatry, in which we put that trust for happiness, which we should repose solely in God. Thus, the ambitious man, who places all his dependence for happiness in the attainment of power, is in fact an idolater. He removes his confidence in God to another object.—Thus pleasure may lead us into idolatry—or, in fact, every worldly object, which we substitute as the ground of our dependence, in the room of the great Creator.

On apostolic authority, therefore, as we enlarge the bounds of the commandment, we may easily know how far we may be guilty of transgressing it. We have only to ask our hearts, what we trust in for happiness? And we shall perhaps find, that although we call ourselves Christians, we must not lay idolatry entirely to the charge of heathen nations, but may probably find that we also are idolaters ourselves.—

Let

Let every one of us, therefore, put away the *idolatry of his heart*—whatever it is. In the heart the idol is enthroned and worshipped.—Let us then reject every species of idolatry, make our hearts temples of the Holy Ghost, and put our trust only in the *God of our salvation*.

END OF THE HINTS.

A C R E E D.

**I** BELIEVE in *God*, the Creator and Preserver of all things—infinite in power—wisdom—justice—mercy, and goodness—the disposer of all events, and the great source of every thing we enjoy here, or hope for hereafter.

I believe in *Jesus Christ* the son of God, and Saviour of the world—in the history of his life, contained in the Scriptures—in the atonement he made by his death for sin, on the conditions of faith and obedience—in his resurrection from the dead, which assures us of a future life—in his mediation, which carries all our petitions to God—and in his finally judging the world.

I believe also in the *Holy Spirit* of God—in its influencing the prophets of the Old Testament, and the writers of the New—and in its assisting all well-disposed Christians in the conscientious discharge of a good life.

N. B: When we pray to *God* indefinitely, we mean the awful word to include the three powers of the Trinity.



## POSTSCRIPT.

**T**HE author cannot close these three Volumes without an apology for introducing the same subject sometimes in different discourses. Topics of the first importance in religion — as the evidences of Christianity — miracles — prophecies — the atonement of Christ — faith and works — the promises and threatenings of the Gospel, &c. the author took frequent occasion to inculcate from the pulpit. These topics, therefore, naturally, more or less, fall in with the subjects of different discourses. The author however believes, that although the same subject may be introduced, a different light is generally thrown upon it. — In the HINTS likewise, two or three may be taken from the same text, but the subject is always treated under a different view.



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F I N I S .

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