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THE
RIGHT USE OF MONEY,
SCRIPTURALLY STATED,

OR AN
ANSWER TO THE QUESTION,

“Ought Christians to Save Money?”

A
SERMON

PREACHED IN THE NETHERGATE CHAPEL,
DUNDEE,

On Sabbath Afternoon, 17th February, 1833.

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P R E F A C E.

IF the *duty* examined in this Sermon, is sustained by Scriptural arguments, the Christian reader will discover ample reasons for its publication. If the sentiments it contains are *right*, the practices of wealthy Christians are *wrong*, and require to undergo a complete change before they can either be as acceptable to God, or profitable to man, as *enlightened benevolence* demands.

A few things have been added, which were omitted in the delivery. through want of time, of which the audience was then apprized.

If it shall be blessed in leading one Christian into that way of usefulness, in which God requires him to walk, the author will be more than recompensed for any opposition which it *may* excite among those who may feel unwilling to make the sacrifices required in the command,—“THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.”

Dundee, April 10, 1833.

SERMON, &c.

MARK X, 21.

“ Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.”

WE sometimes feel, that it is difficult to understand such passages of Scripture as that which I have read as a text; not because of the obscurity of the passages themselves, but because we do not know how to reconcile them with the opinions and practices which prevail among Christians. Accordingly, we are prone to judge of what is our duty, rather by the practices of Christians and the opinions of commentators, than by the plain declarations of the word of God itself. This mode of ascertaining our duty is dangerous, inasmuch as the practices of Christians are sometimes opposed to the requirements of the Scriptures; and commentators, as well as private Christians, may be swayed to a considerable extent in forming their views of God's word, by the maxims and practices of the professed followers of Christ.—Therefore, if we wish to be “taught of God,” we must come to the study of his word, with a determination to practise what it enjoins. Whatever sacrifices we may have to make in acting upon this determination, and however much our practice may differ from that of other Christians, as new-born babes we must desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby. In consequence of departing from the plain meaning of the word of God

fairly understood, Christians have divided and subdivided the church of the Saviour—have involved in obscurity some of its plainest institutions and laws—have marred its beauty—have enfeebled its energies—and have involved it in difficulties from which it can only be delivered by reverting to the teaching of Christ and his apostles.

As we are going to explain the way in which CHRISTIANS OUGHT TO USE THEIR MONEY, it ought to be our aim to be guided by the Scriptures, and rich men need be reminded that they are in danger of misinterpreting the Scriptures—that they are interested parties, and that it is difficult to convince such of the truth. There is however, not much to fear if those of you who are rich are determined to follow Christ's teaching; even if it shall be found that it requires you to give a great portion of your possessions to his cause and to his poor. But if you are determined to keep your possessions whatever Christ may have taught to the contrary, we have no hope that you will profit either by this, or any other of his counsels. Your eyes are closed by the love of money, which is the root of all evil. Cecil shrewdly remarks, that, "A man may be liberal to the full extent of his means, while his possessions are comparatively slender; but when the sweets of accumulation begin to breathe over him, he finds it exceedingly difficult even to part with his superfluities." Every day's experience evinces the truth of this remark, and it is corroborated by the case of the young Jewish Ruler, to whom our Saviour gave the command in the text. This young man came to the Saviour with a momentous question: "Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He came with great earnestness, "running." He came most respectfully, and "kneeled to" the Saviour. We shall not stay to inquire whether the young man's question was evangelical, or whether what he said was strictly true, when he told the Saviour, that he had "observed" the law "from *his* youth?" It is sufficient for us to know that the instructions which Jesus Christ gave him were suitable and evangelical. "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, one thing thou

lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come take up the cross and follow me."

I. LET US CONSIDER THE DUTY ENJOINED IN THE TEXT.

II. CONTRAST THE EFFECTS WHICH RESULT FROM THE PRESENT PRACTICES OF RICH PROFESSORS OF RELIGION, WITH THOSE WHICH WOULD FLOW FROM THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY.

III. BRING FORWARD SUCH MOTIVES, AS MAY TEND, BY THE BLESSING OF GOD, TO LEAD YOU TO ITS PERFORMANCE.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE DUTY ENJOINED IN THE TEXT. "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor."

Jesus Christ applies this subject in such a manner as to determine his meaning in this command,—a meaning which ought to be apparent at first sight to every unsophisticated reader. "And Jesus looked round about, and saith unto his disciples, how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth them again, and saith unto them, children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they were astonished out of measure, saying, Who then can be saved? And Jesus looking upon them saith, with men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible." *Jesus Christ here says of all the rich,* "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." These and the following words are spoken generally, and cannot be fairly interpreted to apply only to this young man.

Christ repeats this sentence again in the 24th verse, with an addition which fixes his meaning in the 23d verse. "How hard is it," says he "for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God." And who are the persons that *trust in riches*? Those who, like this young man, prefer them to eternal life,

and will not part with them for its sake, but confide in them for happiness rather than in the Author of Eternal Life. To shew the difficulty of rich men being saved, who are unwilling to part with their riches he adds, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Some MSS. read *cable*, and it is surely impossible for a *cable* to go through the eye of a needle; but this is "a mere gloss," says Dr. A. Clarke, "inserted by some who did not know that the other was a proverb common enough among the people of the East."

The following examples of this form of speech will convince every candid hearer, that it is never used but to signify an impossibility. In the Koran it is said, "The impious, who shall accuse our doctrine of falsity, shall find the gates of heaven shut: nor shall he enter there till a camel shall pass through the eye of a needle. It is thus that we shall recompence the wicked."*

Among the Jews it always signified a thing impossible. Hence this proverb, "*A camel in Media, dances in a kabe,*" a measure which held about three pints. Again, "*No man sees a palm tree of gold, nor an elephant passing through the eye of a needle.*" Because these are impossible things. "Rabbi Shesheth answered Rabbi Amram, (who had advanced an absurdity), *perhaps thou art one of the Pambidithians who can make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle;*" that is, says the *Aruch*, who speak things impossible.†

These examples viewed in connexion with the scope of the passage convince me, that the rich men, who know their duty and yet refuse to sell their possessions and give "to the poor," cannot "enter into the kingdom of God;" nor have I been able to find a single illustration or comment on this text, differing from this sense, but what was either ineffably ambiguous, or decidedly absurd.

Christ says to you that have riches, "sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have

* AL KORAN. *Surat 7*, ver. 37.

† See *Lightfoot, Schoetgen, and Clarke, on this place.*

treasure in heaven : and come, take up the cross and follow me." If you reply, "No ! it is unreasonable, it cannot apply to me." I would ask you if it is not unreasonable in every case as well as yours ? Or has Christ lowered the standard of obedience ? Did he require this young man to do a thing without which he could not have eternal life ; and will he allow you to have eternal life without doing that thing ? Perhaps you will say, "But this young man set his affections upon his riches." True, the command of Jesus Christ was of such a searching nature as to elicit this disposition. And does not every man set his affections upon his riches ; who is unwilling to part with them when required to do so by the Lord Jesus Christ ?

Farther, if the disciples considered the words of Jesus Christ from the 21st verse to the 26th verse, as only applicable to the solitary case of the young ruler, would they have said, among themselves, "who then can be saved ?" It is obvious, from this question, that they regarded the words of their Heavenly Teacher as applicable to all rich men, nor can they be legitimately taken in any other sense. In addition to our text we allege in favour of this duty,—

1. *Other Scriptural commands.* Jesus Christ, in his sermon on the mount, says, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal : for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

* Matt. vi, 19---21.

I am aware that some have said, that, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth," is a mere *Hebraism*,—meaning that men should *rather* lay up treasure in heaven than on earth. I am willing to allow that *Hebraisms* of this kind occur frequently in the Scriptures, as in Matthew 15—24. "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel." Also in John 5, 34. "I receive not testimony from man." Also in Luke 14, 26. "If any man come to me and hate not his father," &c. Also in Matthew 9, 13. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Also in the following, among many other texts, Psalms 50, 8 ; 51, 16 ; 40, 6. Prov. 8, 10. Jer. 7, 22. John 1, 11 ; 7, 16 ; 12, 44. Rom. 9, 13. In these passages the word "not," expresses a meaning which the original was never intended to convey ; for instance, in Luke 14, 26, a disciple of

In this passage we have a prohibition. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." We have also a reason given for this prohibition: "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." You may indeed lay up treasure on earth, but then your heart will be with your treasure. Here then is a weighty reason for not laying up treasure on earth. No man can do so, according to Jesus Christ, without setting his heart upon it. "The only way," says Quesnel, "to render perishing goods eternal—to secure stately furniture from moths—the richest medals from canker—and precious stones from thieves, is to transmit them to heaven by acts of charity. This is a kind of bill of exchange which cannot fail of acceptance, but through our own fault." Luke records this injunction as well as Matthew. "Sell that ye have, and give alms."*

Let my hearers compare these words with our text, and then let them say, whether the command, "Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor," can be interpreted as applying only to the rich youth. Nay were we to grant you all the advantage of a private interpretation of the text, which we cannot for reasons already given, you would still be as far from the kingdom of heaven as ever, since you cannot deny a general meaning—a universal meaning, to the command in Luke. "Sell that ye have, and give alms." Does this apply to you? or will ye say that our Lord

Christ is required to hate his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and his own life also; whereas, in other places he is required to love his father and mother, and also his wife, even as Christ loved the church. (See Eph. 5, 25.) The meaning of Christ in Luke, 14, 26, is obviously this, that a man could not be his disciple unless he preferred his Saviour to all his relations, and loved him *rather* than them. The word *rather* might be substituted for "not" in some of the above mentioned passages, and it would give the true meaning. As in Matthew 9, 13. I will have mercy *rather than* sacrifice. And in Matthew 15, 24, &c. &c. If any should inquire why I have not applied this rule of interpretation to Matthew 6, 19, I answer, 1st because Luke 12, 33, forbids it, for the same duty is required in Luke as in Matt. although a different mode of expression is adopted. 2dly, The general tenor of Scripture does not require it, but rather harmonizes with the view given by both the sacred historians.

* Luke xii, 33.

intended it only for the rich men in his day. How hardly can a rich man understand the Scriptures! How fearfully does he wrest them to his own destruction!

Again, (for we have not yet done with the commands of Jesus Christ), the doctrine of the text is enjoined in that well known command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"* concerning which Paul said, "All the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love," &c.† Here then we are furnished with a plain and easy rule of duty; we have only to ask ourselves, How we love ourselves? in order to ascertain how we ought to love others. We love ourselves so well that should we want bread, or clothing, or medicine, having at the same time money in the bank or elsewhere; we should not think it our duty, I apprehend, to let the money alone, and be content to hunger—or starve—or die,—rather than take what might be sufficient to obtain food, or raiment, or medicine. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," as Satan said in reference to Job, and it is true; then, all that a man hath ought he to give for the life of his neighbour.

"If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst give him drink."‡ And unless we do this, we do not love our neighbours as ourselves. We transgress one of the primary articles of Christian law. We may call ourselves Christians; but Christians we are not. Is that man loving his neighbour as himself, think you, who possesses more than he needs by some hundreds, or thousands a year, and either saves the whole, or only gives some few pounds to charitable and religious institutions, while his poor brethren and enemies are almost perishing for lack of bread? You cannot answer this in any other way than in the negative. Let us apply this law to the *spiritual* as well as to the temporal necessities of our fellow creatures. We have the Bible, Sermons, the Sabbath, and Christian ordinances, while millions of our race have them not. Have the Bible, Sermons, &c. done us incalculable good? We have reason to conclude that they would do for millions of them what they have done for us. We have

* Matthew 22—39. † Gal. 5—14. ‡ Rom. xii, 20.

the ability to send them that Bible which is our guide, and that Gospel which is the power of God unto our own salvation. But, printing Bibles and sending them to the heathen, with Missionaries, to publish "peace on earth and good will towards men," would cost considerable sums of money; therefore, Christians content themselves with giving drops when they ought to give showers; with *tens* they are satisfied who ought to give thousands; consequently, through this love of the world four hundred millions of pagans are left to perish in ignorance, guilt, and misery.

Oh! my hearers, be not deceived, by the practices of men, calling themselves Christians, rather look at the commands of your Master and hasten to understand and obey them. Listen not to the world within the church, nor to the world without the church; mind not your unconverted relations, when they attempt to drive back the flowing tide of your benevolence—when they regard you as loving your neighbours over much—when they say that you are doing more for the bodies and souls of men, than others are doing, say unto them as Peter said on another occasion, "We ought to obey God rather than men,"*—show them that you are acting according to the commands of Jesus Christ, and if they persist in wishing you to set aside his authority, treat them, whatever they profess to be, as the real enemies of Christ's kingdom.

Again, the doctrine of the text is enjoined by the Apostle Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, he says, "Let no man seek his own: but every man, another's wealth."† Had this passage read thus, "Let no man seek another's wealth, but every man his own," we should have had a practical exemplification of it constantly before us; in the lives of thousands of professing Christians. But reading as it does, we look at it, and then we gaze upon those who ought to be "living epistles," and we are struck with nothing so much as their inconsistency. "How is the fine gold become dim!"

Again, "Charity," says this Apostle, "seeketh not her own." She seeketh not her own *wealth, honour, or prosperity*. She seeketh not high things for

* Acts v, 29.

† 1st Cor. x, 24.

herself. She seeketh rather than her own, the wealth, honour, and prosperity of others. To his son Timothy, this Apostle gives this injunction, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willingly to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."* Timothy was not to hold out the prospect of "eternal life" to the rich men of his day, on another principle than that which was laid down by Jesus Christ; who, when the young man referred to in our text, inquired what "good thing" he should do in order to obtain eternal life, directed him to sell whatsoever he had, and give to the poor.

Dr Whitby thinks, that as Paul mentions rich men in the Church, we ought to conclude that the text before us was limited in its application to the person to whom it was addressed. But admitting that the first Christians were habituated to give all their possessions to the poor, it by no means follows, that they could not be rich, and that the advice, "Charge them that are rich, &c." was superfluous. A man might have wealth when he entered the church—and members might possess it by their success in business, or by their relations, and hence the command "Charge them," &c.

2. But we pass from Scriptural commands to Scriptural *examples*. Let us see if the first Christians practised what Christ and his disciples taught. No sooner had Christ finished the remarks occasioned by the young man's case, than Peter could say of himself and of his brethren, "Lo we have left all, and followed thee," verse 28. And so well acquainted with their duty were the converts of the Pentecost day that "all that believed were together, and had all things common and sold their possession and goods, and parted them to all men as every man had need."† They *did* the very thing which our text enjoins. Was this wrong? Did the whole multitude of believers and apostles err while they were made the recipients of

* 1st Tim. vii, 17—19.

† Acts ii, 44, 45.

one of the most signal outpourings of the Spirit of God, that the church ever witnessed? Among us infidel professors exist, prepared to charge those disciples with enthusiasm, who possessed so much of the Spirit of their Master, and exemplified so remarkably his commandments? I fear many such exist in the world, and upon them we urge in vain inspired precept and inspired example. For the sake of mammon they have already sacrificed eternal life, and having given up *that*: Christ and his apostles may preach, and saints may practice what is taught, but both precept and example are disregarded for the sake of money. I cannot pass over this passage of Scripture without remarking the effect produced by the instructions and example of the first Christians, and this remark is the more necessary, as some think, that the practice in question would shed around the Christian character no friendly influence. Let us read to the end of the chapter from the close of the last quotation: "And they continued daily in the temple, and, breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart; praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as were saved."*

Their conduct did not produce scoffing: it did not make men turn away from them with disgust: they were not denominated enthusiasts. Their disinterestedness was apparent—it was clearly seen—none could deny it—none could misunderstand it. It is in this way too, and in this way only, that we can have favour with all the people, and daily add to the church saved men. The benevolence of those men of God, did not evaporate in a day. It was not like a shallow stream, but it resembled a majestic river, whose waters spread far and wide bearing down all opposition and fertilizing and fructifying whole countries. We find this powerful benevolence again sometime afterwards, producing effects equally as grand and signal as those already narrated: "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and

* Acts ii, 46, 47. See the translation by Doddridge.

laid them down at the apostles' feet : and distribution was made unto every man, according as he had need ; and Jesus who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation,) a Levite and of the country of Cyprus, having land sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet."* Not a word do we find here about idleness being produced, or the money being misapplied or any of those benevolent men being reduced to the want of the common necessaries of life. Not a word is said of any rich Christians refusing to sell their possessions : " As many as were possessors of lands, or houses sold them." We do indeed discover in the next chapter, that the " love of money is the root of all evil," which hath since overspread the world called Christian. " Ananias, and Sapphira his wife, sold a possession and kept back part of the price." Did they intend to preserve it until they should become old? Alas! that never happened. Or did they wish to carry on trade with it? Trade was never more carried on by them. Or did they hope to keep it for their own advantage? Whatever their motives might have been, their money profited them nothing ; it exposed them to temptation, one sin led to another, and one evil brought on another. Their covetousness produced lying, and lying brought them to an awful but monitory end. We might prove to your satisfaction, that Christians of one country did not confine their liberality to their own church or province, but that they extended it to distant regions : This we must omit at present, and proceed to observe,—

3. *That the benevolence of the Primitive Christians during three centuries, corroborates the Scripture facts which have been stated.* It is candidly and freely granted, that facts recorded in Ecclesiastical history, subsequent to the close of revelation, ought not to be adduced as a rule of faith and practice. You know that we acknowledge no other law, than that which the King of Kings hath given us in the Sacred Scriptures ; and we glory in this. Accordingly the examples which I am about to adduce, of primitive charity must be weighed in the balances of the sanc-

* Acts iv, 34---37.

tuary, and if in aught they be found wanting, in *that* we must not imitate them.

In the time of Tertullian, the charity of Christians was proverbial; and it was said of them, “*See how they love one another* ;”^{*} insomuch, that the heathens, surprised to see a union so affectionate, ascribed it to supernatural causes. They said, Christians had some unknown characters printed on their bodies; and these characters had the virtues of inspiring them with love for one another.[†] Lucian, that satirical writer, who died in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, in a discourse on the death of the Philosopher Peregrinus, who burnt himself at the Olympic games, in attempting to satirize Christians, passed a high eulogium on them: “It is incredible,” says he, “what pains and diligence they use, by all means, to succour one another. Their legislator made them believe, that they are *all* brethren; and since they have renounced our religion, and worshipped their crucified leader, they live according to his laws, and all their riches are common.”[‡]

Julian, the apostate, one of the most subtle persecutors of the primitive Christians, did not attack Christianity with open violence: he attempted to clothe Paganism with Christian charity, the virtue which rendered primitive Christianity venerable. Thus, he wrote to a Pagan priest, “Let us consider, that nothing hath so much contributed to the progress of the superstition of Christians as their charity to strangers. I think, we ought to discharge this obligation ourselves. Establish hospitals in every place; for it would be a shame for us to abandon our poor, while the Jews have none, and while the impious Galileans provide not only for their own poor, but also for ours.”

Having considered the duty enjoined in the text, let us,—

II. CONTRAST THE EFFECTS WHICH RESULT FROM THE PRESENT PRACTICES OF RICH PROFESSORS OF RELIGION, WITH THOSE WHICH WOULD FLOW FROM THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS DUTY.

We may consider the effects of riches, in con-

^{*} Tertul. Apol. xxxix, Sawrin's Sermons, vol. iv.

[†] Minutius Felix.

[‡] Lucian, tom. ii, de la mort du fil. Peregrine.

nection with *their* possessor—*his* family—the church—and the world.

1. We begin with the possessor of riches himself. St. Paul says, “They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Charge them that are rich in this world that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches.”*

(1.) Riches tend to make men “high-minded.” The high-mindedness of rich men is evinced not only by holding the poor in contempt, but by the peevishness and fretfulness of their dispositions. They “pierce themselves through with many sorrows,” that others never feel. “Many years ago,” says the Rev. John Wesley, “I was sitting with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly, and generally gave away every year nine-tenths of his yearly income. A servant came in and threw some coals on the fire: a puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair, and cried out, ‘O, Mr Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily! Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty instead of five thousand pounds a-year?’” †

(2.) A rich man is exposed to the “snare” of *flattery*. His friends are commonly aware of his impatience, under contradiction; and, through fear of both making him and themselves uncomfortable, they endeavour to flatter even when they ought to reprove.—He is peculiarly exposed to think of himself more highly than he ought, and to take those into his friendship who are the greatest adepts in the hypocritical art of flattery.

(3.) He is more liable than others to be taken in the “snare” of *indolence*. He has enough wherewith to supply his own wants and those of his family. “Why should I work?” he inquires. You should “Labour with *your* own hands, we reply, that *you* may have to give to him that needeth.”

* 1st Tim. vi, 9, 10, 17. † Wesley's Sermons, vol. ii, 417.

(4.) He “falls into *many foolish and hurtful lusts:*” Such as the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” All these riches hoarded up, have a tendency to beget and increase: hence, says St. James to such men, “Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton.”*

(5.) Riches “choke the seed of the word,” and thus “drown men in destruction and perdition.” When the Great Teacher was expounding the parable of the sower, he commented on the thorny ground, in this significant language: “The cares of the world,” said he, “and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.”†

Behold, then, the reason why our sermons are disregarded, disbelieved, and disobeyed. The thorns spring up with the seed, and choke it. The love of money in the heart keeps out the love of Christ, and the glare of the riches of this world has more attractions than the radiant lustre of the imperishable inheritance.— Thus, God is abandoned for mammon, heaven is given up for earth, and the soul is drowned in perdition for the sake of riches.

Let us now, for a moment, look at the other side of the picture. What would be the result of the benevolence which Christ inculcates? It would promote humility, contentment, and patience: it would deter flatterers, and invite the friendship of the disinterested and uncompromising: it would promote habits of frugality and industry, as its professor would hold himself bound to *do good* to the bodies and souls of men, and to consecrate his time and talents as well as his property to God: it would lead to self-denial, and to the mortification of sin, duties to which the indulging worldling is an utter stranger: it would throw no impediments in the way of salvation; but, on the contrary, leave the soul open, to receive and practice the requisitions of Jehovah. Jesus Christ, who, will be allowed to have been sufficiently evangelical, said to the young man, “Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and THOU SHALT HAVE TREASURE IN HEAVEN.”

2. Consider the influence of riches upon a man's *family*. Upon them they exert as baneful an influence as

* James v, 5.

† Mark iv, 19.

upon the man himself. Brought up in indolence, luxury, and prodigality, as the sons and daughters of some rich men are, they may be seen flirting about like a number of insects, spending their lives without employment, and without being of any service to the community. Habits of intemperance and sensuality are confirmed,—money is wasted,—the health of the body exhausted, and beggary or an untimely death often concludes the disgusting scene. And how can those parents who train up their children in indolence, expect any thing else than evil to befall them.

The human mind, ever active, if not trained to virtuous actions, resorts of course, to those of a vicious nature. Yet what parent thinks while he is indulging his children in their wishes of pride, gaiety and pleasure, that he is preparing the way for their ruin? What parent believes that in amassing wealth, to be afterwards committed to his children, that he is doing them a deadly injury? But experience and observation prove that wealth conveyed to a family reared in habits of indolence and pleasure, generally accomplishes its ruin. Even a heathen understood this: Philip, king of Macedon, attempted to bribe Phocion, the Athenian general, by offering him a large sum of money; and pressed him to accept it, if not for himself, for his children. “If my children,” replied Phocion “resemble me, the little spot of ground, on the produce of which I have hitherto lived, and which has raised me to the rank and estimation which you mention, will be sufficient to maintain them comfortably; but, *if it will not, I do not wish nor intend to leave them wealth to STIMULATE AMBITION and FOSTER FOLLY AND VICE.*”

But what effects would be produced upon the family by the system advocated in this discourse? The sons and daughters of the wealthy would be taught betimes to work for their own maintenance, some in one sphere of life and some in another, and having been accustomed to frugal and industrious habits from early life—having seen these habits in their parents, associated with benevolence to the souls and bodies of men—having witnessed the pleasure and joy with which acts of charity were accompanied and followed, and having seen the gladness produced in many poor

and miserable families by the exercise of an extended beneficence—such children, would be more likely to be a blessing to their generation than those brought up under the present system.

Rich *parents!* At least let your children have the benefit of a *good example*. If you leave them this it may do them more good than all the wealth which avarice can ever enable you to confer. When Seneca, a celebrated heathen philosopher, received the message of death from the brutal Nero, he heard it with firmness and composure. He is said to have expressed a wish to dispose of his possessions and goods; and when he heard that this favour was refused, he turned to his weeping friends, and told them, “That since he could not leave them what he considered to be his own, *he would leave them at least HIS OWN LIFE FOR AN EXAMPLE.*” Christian parents! live in such a benevolent manner, that when you come to die you may at least be able to adopt honestly the words of this virtuous heathen. “I leave you my own life for an example.”

3. Upon *the Church*, the present system produces the most lamentable effects. I will not call your attention to those parts of our own realm where Christian teachers are lolling in wealth obtained from those who never heard them. But among the ministers of nearly all denominations, the love of money has become proverbial. Happily there are some exceptions—some disinterested men who give evidence, that they love Christ and the flock more than the fleece. But still we fear the majority are maturing by their example those principles of worldly affection, which grow so rankly and luxuriantly in the people over whom they preside. Through the love of money an undue importance is attached to the persons and services of those in the Church who possess wealth. The poor are despised—overlooked—and left without due provision. The energies of the church are almost paralyzed by the want of pecuniary aid, while some of its members “Roll in wealth and soar in fame.” On the contrary, were Christians to display their disinterestedness by their liberality, who can estimate the full amount of good which would follow? Ministers might occasionally be removed from one sphere of usefulness to another of greater extent; but then, by giving away

every pound that they could spare, they would not fail to impress the members of the Church with similar principles and a similar spirit. And in vain do they teach, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," while they obviously oppose their instructions by their own example and thus foster and nourish in the Church a spirit of deep rooted selfishness.

The disinterestedness of Christians, and above all of ministers of the gospel, should be *transparent*; all should see it, and be constrained to acknowledge it,—then could ministers say without blushing, "we seek not yours but you." Then would men of merit, rather than men of money, be esteemed in the church—then too would the poor be carefully and amply provided for—then the church would extend the knowledge of the Redeemer to earth's remotest bounds—sinners would be converted both abroad and at home; ministers of the gospel, no longer afraid of losing their respectability by offending their rich members, would go out into "the streets and lanes of the city," and preach the gospel to those who never hear it within the walls of the church. This leads us to contrast,—

4. The effects of the two systems upon the *world*. Blind as the world is to its own eternal interests, it distinctly comprehends and loudly condemns the inconsistencies of Christians. And it knows full well that many of those that go by that name are as covetous and selfish, as its own acknowledged votaries. Thus the men who ought to be conciliated are prejudiced. The enemies of Christ are made to blaspheme and he is wounded in the house of his friends. To such an alarming extent has the worldliness of professors proceeded, that some, unhappily for themselves, will not believe that there is any true disinterestedness in the world.

On the 12th of this month, (Feb., 1833,) I came in the coach from Forfar, along with a gentleman who said, "every man acts from self interest,—this is the ruling motive with all ranks of men." We had just been conversing about the state of the Clergy in Ireland England and Scotland. I endeavoured to show that humanity had often induced men to hazard their own lives, in order to preserve those of others. I gave one instance. "Humanity," he said, "might do this."

“ Well,” I rejoined, “ I must now endeavour to convince you that Christianity can produce benevolent men. I shall give you two cases: the one refers to a Layman, the other to a Minister of the Gospel. The layman lived in Yorkshire, and only died a short time ago. He was a village blacksmith; and the fact which I am going to narrate is recorded in his life.”*

“ Samuel Hick,” for that was his name, “ was returning from the pit one day with a load of coals, a little girl seeing him pass the door, ran towards him, and asked him for a piece of coal, stating that her mother was confined and the family without fire. He stopped the horse, went into the house, made inquiry into their circumstances, found the tale of the child correct, brought the cart to the door, and poured down the whole of the load free of cost. Having no money upon him to pay for an additional load, and being apprehensive of a lecture at home for the *abundance* of his charity, he returned to the coal-pit, where he knew he had *credit* for twenty times the quantity, re-filled his cart, and returned home, with his soul hymning its way up to heaven, like the lark breasting the morning breeze, and gladdening the inhabitants below with its song.”

The other is the case of John Elliott, the Indian missionary, who used to give away nearly all his salary to the poor Indians. “ One day, having received his salary from the parish treasurer, who knew the benevolent disposition of this apostle to the Indians. The treasurer tied up the money in a handkerchief with many knots, to prevent his giving it away before he got home. On his way home he met with a poor woman, and finding it difficult to untie the knots, he gave her the handkerchief, and said, ‘ I believe the Lord designs it all for you.’ ‘ Now,’ said I, turning to my companion, ‘ it would be impossible to prove that either of these men acted from *mere selfishness*.’ ”

My hearers, I do not wonder at this gentleman’s opinion. I acknowledged to him, and I confess to you, that professors have afforded so many plain evidences of selfishness, that it is not surprising that some men should deny the existence of Christian love; thus they are prejudiced against the gospel. Arise! Christians, and dispel the gloom of mist that envelopes you.—

* Life of Samuel Hick, p. 117.

Arise, and convince the world, that such men as Elliott and Hick are produced by Christianity: not once or twice in a century, but every day: then, and not till then, may we hope that Christianity will spread and fill the whole earth.

Let us suppose that time arrived, when the followers of Christ shall lay aside their party names, and *cordially unite* to convert the world; when they shall consecrate wholly to the cause of Christ,—their *time; talents, influence, and property*. Then what immense sums of money would be given into the treasury of the Lord from every part of the Christian world. Every wealthy church might then undertake missionary operations, and support them more liberally than some of our large missionary associations are now supported. Thus Bibles and missionaries would be sent out on a grander scale than hath ever been witnessed. And, if the Lord should sanction the extensive operations of his church, by his Spirit and blessing, how would the hearts of Christians be gladdened by witnessing the prevalence of Christianity over the earth. And while the beneficence of the church would produce astonishing results abroad, it would exert a friendly and attractive influence upon our population at home. How amiable would Christians then appear! How disinterested! And how much would they resemble the Son of man who became incarnate, not to be ministered unto but to minister. Christians, if these remarks are founded in truth, then how imperatively binding is the duty of benevolence? and how much evil might have been prevented had it been always practised in the Church.

III. I SHALL BRING FORWARD SUCH MOTIVES, AS MAY TEND, BY THE BLESSING OF GOD, TO LEAD YOU TO ITS PERFORMANCE.

1. Consider *what* Jesus Christ hath done for you: For you he became man. Although he was incomprehensibly rich; yet for your sakes he became poor: and in accomplishing your redemption he gave his back to the smiters—cheerfully submitted to the loss of reputation—to the odium of crucifixion, and to the pain of dying on the cross. Do you think that he asks too much, when he requires you to consecrate to his service and glory the pro-

perty of which he hath made you stewards? When your case came before him, and he foresaw that satisfaction could not be made to divine justice, and your salvation procured without an immense outlay of suffering,—did he evince any unwillingness to submit to the humiliation and sufferings which he knew he must encounter, or was he unwilling to pay the whole price? Or after enduring a part of the chastisement due to your transgressions, did he manifest any symptoms of retraction or give the least indication of unwillingness to go the whole length of suffering which the claims of divine justice required? You are too well acquainted with his life, and with the circumstances attending his wondrous and unparalleled death, to believe that he desired to keep back part of the price. Go then to the history of his life! Go to the trying and never-to-be forgotten scene of Calvary.—Behold! the man of sorrows opening his veins and his heart, that his blood might atone for your sin. He asks you “to feed the poor” with your wealth,—you are unwilling.—Go then, I say again to the cross, and tell us whether he has deserved this at your hands? What is your reply? Let it be ingenuous; let it be well digested, and then you *cannot* but say,—

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life my all.”

2. Consider the *immense good* which will result from the practice here enjoined. We cannot fully estimate the amount of good which will be done to the family—to the church, and to the world. Eternity only can *fully* declare it. Something however might be known in time, enough to operate upon a benevolent mind. It will confer upon our fellow creatures positive good, both of a temporal and spiritual kind. Supposing a Christian worth £2000, per annum, and the money he requires for the use of his family, to be £100 per annum, or perhaps £700 this gentleman feels that he is bound to devote the rest to God and to his generation. Then should £100 a year serve his family; he has £1900 for be-

nevolent purposes. Thus many poor people would be gladdened by his bounty, and who can say, how many sinners might hear or read the word of God—and be saved through the medium of his liberality? In this way he might win souls, and then what pleasure would he feel in this appropriation of his wealth? incomparably more than could be experienced in adding house to house and field to field; such a man would enjoy the luxury of which Job speaks: “When the ear heard me, then it blessed me: and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me, because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came on me: And I caused the widows heart to sing for joy.”† Who can read these verses without admiring the benevolence of which they treat, or without having his soul filled with holy ardour, longing to enjoy similar feelings and honours.

Your liberality would not only do good by conferring positive benefit upon others, by yielding yourselves great delight; but, also by *stimulating others to copy your example.*

3. A regard to *your own eternal happiness* should induce you to exercise this duty. I do not say that you can merit eternal happiness by it. Nay this cannot be merited by your obedience to any, or all, of the commands of Christ. Yet we are not authorized to tell you that you shall have eternal life, if you disobey them. On the contrary, we assert that Christ is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. And it is one of the invariable evidences of true obedience, that it yields *to*, and embraces *all* the commands of Christ, even those which are the most unfashionable and difficult, and which require the greatest sacrifices.

I would remind you with all seriousness that your condemnation or salvation will be determined at the last day by an appeal to your liberality: “Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and

† Job 29, 11---13.

ye gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me. I was in prison, and ye came unto me." And we are informed why Christ will adopt this mode of expression: "Verily, I say unto you, In as much as ye have done *it* unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Let us now proceed to ponder the awful sentence which shall pass upon those who have neglected Christ in the persons of his poor members: "Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not," &c. "Verily, I say unto you, In as much as ye did *it* not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."* Let these solemn words be viewed in connection with our text, and then say whether you are likely to escape perdition, unless you comply with the Saviour's injunction?

In conclusion,—

1. From what has been said, Christians may learn how to *employ their wealth*.

(1.) They are not required to give away what should clothe and feed their families. St. Paul says, "For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children."†

(2.) They are not required to give away what is necessary for carrying on their trade or worldly business. For Christianity was not designed to injure the interests of trade and commerce. It must of course be left with every Christian to determine for himself, how much capital he ought to invest in trade; and if he should err, through an avaricious spirit, there is a God in heaven who judgeth righteously, and to his own Master we leave him. But after the wants of the family are supplied, and provision is made for carrying on trade, the remaining part of a Christian's property should be benevolently employed.

2. If the duty which we have considered does not apply to the rich in all cases, then, it is obvious, that

* Matt. xxv, 34---46.

† 2d Cor. xii, 14.

Christianity undermines itself. A Christian must be just, sober, and blameless; consequently, he will be respected for his morality,—men will have confidence in him, his trade will prosper through his care and attention, and his riches will increase, especially as he is not at liberty to squander them in dissipation. Thus if Christians are not bound to devote their riches to God, then wealth must accumulate. But we have seen, in one part of this discourse, that riches are very dangerous, and expose their possessor to many temptations, consequently, if, after a man is converted, he may grow rich under the sanction of the Christian religion, then as riches tend to vitiate his mind, and drown him in “destruction and perdition,” Christianity first saves and then destroys, and thus trains up men within itself to its own hurt. But, on the contrary, if Christians are not allowed by the laws of their religion to amass wealth, but are obliged to employ it in benevolent purposes, then does their religion provide for its own growth and purity, and also the blessedness of its subjects: for it is more blessed to give than to receive.—“Give,” said the Saviour, “and it shall be given unto you; good measure pressed down, shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom.”

3. We may learn from this subject, the *necessity of regeneration.* “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”* If man’s depraved heart is not purified by faith,—if he does not believe in the efficacy of the blood of Christ to cleanse from all sin,—and if his sins are not washed away, and his love of self and sin rooted out, and new principles implanted, he will remain in his sins, and be unwilling to adopt the benevolent practice recommended in this discourse. It is only from those who are born again—born of the Spirit—that we expect the exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit. The good tree, and the good tree only, brings forth good fruit. Let the tree be made good, and the fruit will be good also. Let the heart be regenerated, and the life will be replenished and adorned with all the fruits of holiness. This brings me to observe,—

4. That our subject may enable us to ascertain at least one reason why so few rich men are religious.—

* Matt. xii, 35.

The gospel calls for a sacrifice, which they are unwilling to make, and which, if they did make, they would incur the charge of singularity. Holy and benevolent living is a rare thing among the wealthy part of the community, especially in this country. I will only refer to one fact, in proof of this remark, viz: The state of religion among the legislators of this country. It is difficult to obtain a religious Parliamentary representative, especially if one is needed, whose political sentiments are liberal. The few religious representatives, that have appeared in this country, by some strange fatality, have been opposed to those measures which are now almost universally regarded as of the greatest importance to the prosperity and well-being of this great empire. Whether this may be accounted for, on the principal of their education, or whether the connection at present subsisting between the church and state, furnishes a reason for it, we stay not to inquire. Certain it is, that in America, there are far more religious men connected with civil government than in our own country. But one thing is apparent. "When the age is marked by strong and striking features of depravity; when every species of ingenuity and industry is encouraged, but that which is employed in the work of him that sent us; when every excellence of character is esteemed and admired but the beauties of holiness; when wealth, and splendour, and pleasure, and power, and fame, are the objects of universal pursuit: it is no wonder that the love of many waxes cold, and that the fire of heaven, which warms, and melts, and purifies the hearts of the true disciples and friends of Christ is extinguished."

Rich men are not religious, because they are pursuing the phantoms of worldly wealth and glory.— They are too busy with the things of time to attend to those of eternity. They are too much set upon making provision for their own bodies, to attend to the bodies and souls of others. Oh! that they would moderate their earthly attachments, and pray with Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord?" &c.*

Rich men, behold the reason of your irreligion: you are not religious because you are "full;" you may

* Prov. 30, 8---9.

follow Christ and have treasure in heaven ; but no man —no angel can ever alter *the terms* ; “ Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor.”

5. If the doctrine which you have now heard discussed is the doctrine of the Bible, there can be no *reasonable objection* against it. Does one ask “ what will become of my children ?” The answer is, you must provide for them according to the directions of the apostle.† Does another say, “ what will become of me when I am old, who will support me then ?” If the church do her duty she will support you, and if not ? If her present comparative selfishness continue ; should you live to old age which is uncertain, God can and will support you. The kingdom of heaven you have sought, and he has promised you all other things. He may provide for you through the medium of your children or Christian friends. And what if you should be exposed to want, and to death, will there be no honour in dying a martyr for charity ? I would as soon die a martyr for charity as for any other virtue.

6. In *what disposition* are you now, about to go away ? The young man to whom our text was addressed, “ went away *sorrowful* for he had great possessions.” He did not call in question the wisdom of the command : he did not deride the Saviour, or impugn the justice of the requisition : he saw that it was good : but his love of money prevailed, and prevented him from following out his convictions. Do not go away I intreat you, setting at nought Christ’s words or making light of them : this would indicate a very depraved and unbelieving soul. Do not go away “ sorrowful,” except you sorrow for your past sins after a godly sort : but go away to search the Scriptures—to believe the Scriptures—to obey the Scriptures, and thus to enjoy the favour of God : the approbation of your own consciences : and finally “ eternal life ;” for which, may Almighty God, in infinite mercy, daily prepare you, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

† See 2d Cor. 12, 14.