
BISHOP HOPKINS' DISCOURSES
ON THE
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF THE POOR.

THE
IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION FOR THE POOR:

CONNECTED WITH
THE TRUE PRINCIPLE OF ALL CHRISTIAN CHARITY.

TWO DISCOURSES,

PREACHED BY REQUEST,

IN THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF QUEBEC,
BEFORE THE QUEBEC DIOCESAN COMMITTEE, OF THE SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

ON SUNDAY, THE TWENTY-FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER,

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DISCOURSE I.

ISAIAH XXXII, 17.

The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.

To an Episcopalian of the United States, my brethren, who looks with affectionate veneration to the parent Church of England, a formal request to deliver the annual discourse before one of her most useful Colonial Societies, is a circumstance of peculiar interest. And when, through the friendly agency of the venerable Archdeacon, (who is the Rector of this Church, and one of the Vice-Presidents of the Society), I received the intelligence, that the first instance of such a request had fallen to my lot, I acknowledge that I hailed it as a new pledge of that kind and fraternal spirit, which had been extended to us in so many other forms, before. Personally a stranger to you all, I was conscious that the selection was chiefly attributable to the fact of my being your nearest neighbour: and I accepted the invitation, not so much because it was my own individual concern, but rather because I viewed it as an act of Christian courtesy to the Church of which I am officer, and which I wish I were able to represent on this occasion in a manner more worthy of her claims.

But the place, the time, and the office which I bear, alike forbid the work of apology or deprecation. Such as I have of knowledge and of skill, I give unto you; and if it be but little, the blessing of God upon his own truth, is able to make it prosper.

My first object shall be to state briefly the origin and operations of the Society, on behalf of which I appear before you; and secondly, I shall shew, from the language of the text, the motives to exertion in its support.

On the eighth day of March, 1699, Dr. Thomas Bray, and four other excellent men, met at London, under the sanction of Bishop Compton, to consult upon the best method of *promoting Christian knowledge*; and formed a little society for that purpose. In a few years, their numbers increased so greatly, and the sphere of their operations became so widely extended, that it was found necessary to separate the institution into two distinct branches. One of these was incorporated by a Charter from King William the Third, under the name of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and directed its exertions to the establishment of Christian ministers in the Colonies of North America and the other Foreign dependencies of the British Empire. These exertions were blessed with so much success, that the Episcopal Church of the United States may be truly said to have derived its existence, and the Clergy of the Dioceses of Canada and Nova Scotia to have drawn their support, mainly from the zeal and liberality of that society.

The other branch of the original Institution retained the name of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and continued to prosecute its first design by the foundation and encouragement of public Charity Schools, and by the distribution of the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, the Homilies and other religious books and tracts, in accordance with the principles of the Church of England. In these departments of benevolent Christian effort, it is impossible to survey without astonishment the vast amount of good they have effected.

Within the first half century they had established two thousand catechetical schools throughout the Kingdom,

of which the schools of London alone reckoned 5000 children. This branch of their labours resulted in the formation of the great National Society for the Education of the Poor upon the principles of the Church of England, in the year 1811 : and the number of children now receiving education in the schools of that society, is computed at almost one million.

The other branch of its operations, in the distribution of the Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, and religious tracts, has not only kept pace with the demand created by these schools, but has extended its blessings to the hospitals, the army, the navy, the prisons, the workhouses, and even to the Colonies of Great Britain, in every part of the globe. In the prosecution of their admirable designs, the Scriptures and the devotional forms of the Church have been scattered far and wide, not only in the English tongue, but in Danish, in Welsh, in Irish, in the Manx language, in Gaelic, in Arabic, and in several dialects of the Indian empire.

Their zeal, however, has not rested here. In 1710, they took up the Danish Mission at Tranquebar, then languishing for want of support : and under their auspices it was, that the celebrated Swartz laboured for fifty years with such success among the heathen. His converts alone were between six and seven thousand : and not less than two hundred congregations were established by their other missionaries in Southern India.

Nor is this all. In the words of the eloquent Bishop of Nova Scotia, “ Scarcely a settlement can be found in the wide forests of Nova Scotia or New Brunswick, or in the Islands of Prince Edward, Newfoundland, or the Bermudas, where some of their treasure is not deposited. Many, very many pious members of the Church, too, in those distant Colonies, have been taught to look to the society as the chief source, under Providence, of sound religious knowledge and improvement for themselves and their chil-

dren and their children's children, and as a centre and bond of union for the whole British Empire."*

Of this admirable Institution, your late eminent Bishop recommended the establishment of a branch or committee for Quebec, in the year 1818, which was zealously effected with the ready co-operation of the officers of the Royal government, and the active aid of your present venerable and exemplary Diocesan. And since that period you have seen commodious buildings erected for your national schools, you have witnessed the Christian education of children, whose numbers amounted at the period of your last report, to no less than 5925, you have attended their examinations, and must be familiar with the expressions of deep solicitude, and the cares of personal superintendence, by which your excellent Rector and your other clergy manifest their sense of the importance of the institution. But yet, I am instructed to say, that there is a positive necessity for increased liberality and effort, especially in the maintenance of these national schools; since otherwise there is imminent danger, that the future operations of the society will be clogged with embarrassments and difficulties; the current of good will be checked; and the comparison of what might and ought to have been done, with the actual result, instead of filling your hearts hereafter with humble thankfulness for the blessing of God upon your labours, will depress you with the feelings of disappointment and regret.

2. Let me then, in the second place, ask your attention to the motives which should arouse your best efforts in the liberal support of this institution, derived from the principle of the text, that 'The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.' And to this end I shall pass over, for the present, the more enlarged and full sense of the passage, and con-

* See the Report of the Society for 1833.

fine myself to the shewing, that upon your implanting the principles of righteousness in the minds of the poor, so far as you have ability, may depend, under God, not only their peace but your own; as it respects, first, the quietness and assurance of government, next, your social comfort in the community, and lastly, your condition in the judgment of the great day.

1. The age in which we live, my brethren, is full of fearful warnings. The spirit of insubordination—of revolution—of the overturn of all most sacred and most dear—seems to be abroad throughout the earth; and the instruments of that spirit, every where, are the lower orders of the people. Excited by the oratory of demagogues, filled with impracticable notions of liberty and equality, taught to band together for the correction of alleged abuses, ready to destroy every government which hesitates to adopt such changes as may please the popular will, and encouraged to look with suspicious jealousy upon their superiors in earthly rank, as if those superiors were all trying to monopolize their rights, and trample upon their privileges, the labouring classes of every community exhibit a growing hostility to law and order, which the arm of government cannot always repress, and which can only be effectually prevented by the early inculcation of sound religious principle. In this aspect of the question, there is a serious difference between the rich and the poor, in all communities. The rich may be destitute of piety, and yet be the friends of government and of the public peace; because they have usually every thing to lose and nothing to gain by the work of revolution. But if the poor have no religious principle to guide them, they are always prepared for disturbance and commotion. They have no property which they fear to hazard. They have no ties of pleasure, or of fashion, or of connexion, or of character, or of worldly honor, or of refinement, which can

operate in the absence of the checks of conscience. The fear of the law is easily silenced when they have the appearance of numbers on their side ; and as for all the rest, the chances of public agitation seem rather in their favor, for they have nothing to lose, and in the general wreck they may gain something. Plainly then, the peace of governments demands the religious training of the poor. Make them Christians, and they will be, on principle, lovers of law and order. Make them Christians, and you will make them abhor mobs and insurrections, with their horrid accompaniments of oaths, and curses, and violence, and blood. The Gospel is the religion of peace. It inculcates the spirit of obedience to all lawful and settled authority. It renders the poor man honest, and industrious, and temperate,—the lover of his home, and of his Church, and of his Bible,—the lover of his country and of his government, and of mankind. And hence in this respect it might be truly said, that ‘The work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.’

2. But the same principle applies with equal force, to the social comfort of every community. The rich and the poor are bound together by a chain of positive necessity, for the support and aid of each other. The rich could not live without the bodily labour of the poor. The poor could not live without the mental efforts of the higher classes, and the wages which they receive for their own labour. Hence there is an indispensable connexion, which renders the upright principles of the poor a primary element in the peace and safety of every family. If servants are destitute of religion, where is the guaranty for their honesty, their fidelity, or their truth? The property of the higher classes is entrusted to them. They attend the sick ; they nurse the children ; they look after and regulate the concerns of every household ; and if they are false or

treacherous, or profligate, or profane, they do not suffer alone, but poison every domestic circle around them. If there be many of them in one family together, without the motives of religious principle, quarrels and strifes, intrigues and corruption, disturb the peace of their employers as well as their own: nor is it possible for all the restraints of interest and law to keep them in the track of duty, if the fear of God and the sense of religious obligation be wanting. Hence we see how large a mass of domestic trouble grows out of the impiety of the poor. Locks and bolts to guard against dishonesty—suspicious watchfulness to prevent the contamination of children and youth—and a general expression of distrust and dissatisfaction, with frequent and painful discipline and rebuke,—all does not suffice to secure family peace from constant invasion: and therefore it is, that a thoroughly good servant is a rare jewel, seldom found; and when found, almost invaluable.

Now it is manifest that this fruitful source of vexation and disappointment in domestic life would be cut off, if the poor were faithfully trained in the principles of the Gospel. Make them Christians, and locks and bolts, and suspicion and watchfulness, would all be unnecessary; because a far higher and stronger principle would govern them. No longer eye servants, but doing for you as they would have done for themselves,—affectionate and obedient, attentive and punctual, sober and self-denying,—preserving your property from waste, your character from detraction, your children from corruption, and your temper from provocation,—in this respect also it would be found true, that ‘The work of righteousness would be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.’

3. In the third place, however, I have said that on your implanting the principles of religion in the minds of the poor, according to your ability, depends, under God, your

own peace, as it respects your condition in the judgment of the great day: and this I think can be easily demonstrated, from the inspired declaration, that though you had all faith, so that you could remove mountains, and yet had not charity, you would be nothing in the estimation of God. The blessed Redeemer, in his description of the judgment, represents the accusation brought against the wicked, in these words: ‘I was hungry 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.’ And when they ask him saying, ‘Lord when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or a stranger, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee,’ he replies, ‘Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.’

Now can it be believed that the Saviour will thus condemn the neglectors of these duties of charity to the bodies of men, and yet not punish with equal severity the neglect of a still higher duty to their souls? If we are bound to supply the flesh of the poor with food convenient for them, are we not equally bound to supply their immortal spirits with the bread of life? Must the lips of the thirsty receive drink, and shall the soul be denied the waters of salvation? Shall the nakedness of the body be covered, and the nakedness of the spirit be overlooked or disregarded? Is the stranger to be taken into a house of hospitality, and shall those who are aliens to the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise not be taken into the Church of Christ? Shall the sickness of the mortal frame be relieved with medicine, and shall not the leprosy of sin upon the soul call for the balm of Gilead, and the divine Physician there? Shall the prisoner in an earthly dungeon be visited, and shall not those who are in bondage to Satan be brought into the glorious

liberty of the children of God? Nay, my brethren, it would be a most absurd perversion of the principle of the divine judgment to think, that the Lord will punish the neglect of the lesser duties to our fellow creatures, and yet suffer the greatest of all to be despised. If we have not the spirit of Christ, saith the Apostle, ‘we are none of his,’ we are solemnly bound to be like-minded with him—to be followers of his steps,—to walk so as he left us for an ensample. And as it was the chief business of his blessed life to preach the gospel to the poor, in vain may we hope for his approbation, if we do not, according to our utmost ability, follow him in the same work of mercy. In this respect then, in a far more eminent and important sense,—if prosecuted with the pure aims and motives of religion,—this ‘work of righteousness would be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.’

But specially imperative is this application of our subject when we remember that we cannot provide effectually for the religious education of the poor, without setting before them the light of a Christian example. The lower orders of our fellow men look to the higher in all things. The poor ape the rich, as well as they can, in sentiment, in dress, in language, in manners, in pleasures, and in the whole economy of life. And how should it be otherwise, when we reflect that we are of the same blood, possessing a common nature; the same appetites, passions, faculties, belonging equally to us all. So long, therefore, as the rich are dissipated and profligate, lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God, we can expect no great progress of good amongst the lower orders of society. If the master despises and laughs at the restraints of the Gospel, the man will do the same. If the mistress gives her heart to personal decoration, and her hours to idle reading, neglecting the Church, and preferring the society of

the gay and thoughtless, to that of the sober and the wise, her maid will copy the example. There was a time in the early ages of Christianity, when, in the language of prophecy, Kings were the nursing fathers, and Queens the nursing mothers of the Church. The famous Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, had a Chapel in his palace; and often read to his courtiers from the oracles of God. Theodosius, surnamed the Great, submitted to the public penance imposed by Ambrose of Milan, and gave the testimony of his personal obedience to the power of the gospel. And Alfred the Great—perhaps the brightest name in English story—translated the Scriptures into Saxon for the use of his subjects; and composed hymns, like another David, for the worship of that Lord, ‘by whom Kings reign, and Princes execute judgment.’ O, blessed would be the transformation throughout all lands, if the great, and the wealthy, and the powerful, would thus set themselves to the work of practically exemplifying the excellency of the Gospel. Then, National Schools for the religious education of the poor would indeed fulfil the object of their institution, for every family would carry on the work which they began, and cherish the seed of Christian truth until it brought forth fruit fit for the harvest. Then the spirit of discontent and insubordination, of faction and intrigue, of impiety and ambition, would cease to threaten the stability of the throne and the security of the altar. Then the fearful scourge of pestilence, and the horrors of war, would no longer desolate the nations. Then the favorite occupations of earth would tend to fit mankind for heaven: affection, and confidence, and holiness, and truth, would govern all the relations of our race: ‘the light of God’s countenance would shine upon us; and the work of righteousness would, indeed, be ‘peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.’

For the sake then, my beloved brethren, of every interest

that should be dear to your hearts—as patriots, as husbands, as fathers, as Christians—cherish the Society for the promotion of Christian knowledge,—do your share of the great work, so much required,—support your establishment for the religious education of the poor, and let it not languish for want of any encouragement or assistance which you are able to bestow. The objects of such a charity are of inestimable worth. These children are the future men and women of the state. Talents, energies, powers, may now lie dormant within them, which shall hereafter prove a blessing or a curse to the world, according to their present training. It is not for me to say what destiny may be prepared for them in the mysterious Providence of that God, who often works such wonders by the humblest instruments. It is not for me to tell the consequences, even to *your* posterity, of your neglect or fulfilment of this very duty. But be all this as it may, of one thing we are certain : The children of the poor are immortal beings ; equal to the highest of our race, as well by nature, as by the privileges of redemption. If trained up to piety and virtue, they may never rise to any earthly honor, but they shall one day stand in the presence of the King of kings. If consecrated to the service of Christ, they may never rise to any earthly rank, but they will one day be crowned with a diadem of glory, when the brief distinctions, the fleeting riches, the empty pomps and vanities of this world, shall have fled for ever. Think, then, I beseech you, that to your hand they are committed. Think that of your hand they will be required. And do on this and every similar occasion, whatsoever you shall find in your heart ; not grudgingly, nor of necessity ; but remembering that ‘the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.’

But I am aware that in the views of many, the engrossing anxieties which cluster round the exciting crisis of Public affairs, as well as the pressing calls of private necessity, serve as a sort of apology for neglecting such

charities as this. Other work is to be done, far more important—other opinions to be expressed, far more interesting—other duties to be fulfilled, which will brook no delay. Alas! how hard we find it to practise the precept, ‘Take no thought for the morrow, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’ How hard to trust Providence with the government of nations; and quietly, in humble reliance on his wisdom and his power, to go on fulfilling cheerfully and faithfully our own circle of allotted effort. And yet, can *we* resist the encroachments of misrule and disorder, without the Divine blessing? Is it *our* prerogative to rule ‘the raging of the sea, the noise of his waves, or the madness of the people?’ Is it the voice of poor mortality, though decked in all the greatness of this world’s dominion, that can say to the tumults of anarchy, Peace, be still? Nay, my beloved brethren, after all we can do, God is the Ruler of nations. The powers that be, ARE POWERS only because they are ordained of Him who is the source of all power. And if ever there is a time which more than all others calls for humiliation, and the zealous performance of every Christian work which our hand can find to do, it is when the elements of the social world are in danger, and the moral pestilence of confusion and discord is abroad throughout the earth.

May you, then, my brethren, suffer nothing to hinder your partaking in this and every other labor of Christian beneficence. May that blessed Saviour, without whom nothing is strong, nothing holy, inspire you with such zeal for this and every other good work, that in the last, the final day, you may lift up your heads with joy, and behold many of these children, saved by your instrumentality, and hear them, in the presence of an assembled universe, invoke blessings on your name.

NOTE.—The author is perfectly aware that the principles touched upon in this discourse are by no means developed nor enforced as their importance deserves; nor

was it his own opinion that so slight and hasty a production merited the trouble and cost of publication. He would avail himself, however, of the occasion to say, that while he disclaims all reference to any particular system, he is thoroughly convinced that political economy will never be understood, until *National Christianity* is adopted, as its fundamental principle. National education, if not sanctified by religious truth, will only qualify mankind the better for the work of discord. Reforms in governments will be worthless, unless some better mode is provided for the training of the people in the knowledge and love of the Divine Will: and no union will ever preserve national prosperity or national peace, until men learn to be united in the service of the Almighty.

DISCOURSE II.

MAT. XXV, 45.

Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

IT has pleased the directors of the Society in whose behalf, my brethren, your liberality was exercised this morning, to request that such as were not then present, or who were, probably, unprepared for the collection, might have an opportunity to contribute on this occasion. It will not be expected, however, that I should enter again on the specific objects of the Society. Leaving these to your own unbiassed principles and feelings, let me rather apply myself to the higher aim of instruction, on the great principle of good works in general, which is to regulate the final judgment of the last day. The ministers of Christ may indeed, lawfully reiterate their plea, for any object of Christian benevolence or Christian morality: but the peculiar end of their office is of a more comprehensive kind. It is to implant the character of pure and undefiled religion in the soul—to explain to the understanding and press home upon the heart the true influence of that celestial faith, from which, as from a perennial fountain, all charity must flow, if it would claim the elevated rank of Christian virtue. May the Spirit of God be present with us, that we may set before you aright the exalted standard of religious obligation, and that you may seek to attain it with sincerity and truth.

‘When the Son of man,’ saith our blessed Saviour, ‘shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and 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. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink: when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee: or when saw we thee sick and in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.’

‘Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred 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. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them saying, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch 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.’

There are several questions here involved, worthy of our

consideration : First, how is it that we hear nothing of faith but only of works, in this representation of the judgment ? Secondly, how is it that Christ himself is looked upon as the party interested, whenever we assist or neglect his people ? and, thirdly, how shall we be exposed to condemnation, merely for omitting a certain class of Christian duties, rather than for the perpetration of gross crimes ? To each of these we shall endeavour to give a satisfactory reply.

1. First, then, how is it that the great Redeemer takes no notice of faith in the striking and important detail here given us ? Was it not himself who said ‘Whoso believeth in me shall not perish, but shall inherit everlasting life ? Does not his Apostle expressly tell us, that salvation is of grace through faith, and not of works, lest any man should boast ? Are we not told to forsake our own righteousness, which is of the law, and rely solely on the merits of Christ, who is made of God, to us, righteousness and sanctification and complete redemption ? And is it not certain that justification, by faith alone, is the standing article of belief, among all the reformed churches ? How then, is it, that in this most interesting passage of his revealed word, we read not one syllable about faith, but are referred to works altogether, as the decisive test of our title to the kingdom of heaven ?

This question, my brethren, would truly present to us a serious difficulty, if it were not for one circumstance which is all important to the proper interpretation of the passage. Observe, then, that our Lord is not speaking at all of the general performance of moral duties or benevolent actions to mankind at large, but simply of those duties and actions as they concern him, and him only. He does not say, Your neighbour was hungry and ye gave him meat ; your fellow creature was sick, and ye visited him ; but he says, I was hungry, and ye gave me meat ; I was sick, and ye

came unto me : and when the righteous say unto him, Lord, when saw we thee, in this condition ? he replies, If ye saw not me, yet ye saw and relieved my brethren, for my sake ; not my creatures, not mankind at large, but **MY BRETHREN**. Now who are his brethren, we learn from his own lips, in a very remarkable passage, related by St. Matthew, when being told by one of the company that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him ; he answered and said, ‘ Who is my mother and who are my brethren ? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren : for whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother.’

Precisely parallel is the passage where the Saviour saith, ‘ Whosoever shall give to one of you a cup of cold water only, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward,’ and again, ‘ He that receiveth you, receiveth me, and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.’

Now with this clue, we shall have no difficulty in discovering the true interpretation of the principle of the judgment : namely, that the works on which it will turn are not the works of morality nor of natural benevolence, but the works of faith. They are works which have respect to Christ Jesus—works done for him and to him—if not to him in person, yet to those who belong to him, and done because they belong to him, that is, for his sake. True, we do not understand by this that it is not the Christian’s duty to be merciful, compassionate, and charitable to all men. So far from it, that we are expressly commanded to be kind, even to the unthankful and the evil ; and St. Paul, in like manner, admonishes us to do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith. But these are not the works referred to in the passage before us. On the contrary the limitation is clear ; the works of which our Lord

speaks are **WORKS CONNECTED WITH HIMSELF**; and that, so closely, that he counts them as done to him in person, because done for his followers in his name.

This being understood, we proceed to answer the question, Why is faith not mentioned as the ground of acceptance, instead of works? Because our Lord intended to guard his people from a very common and destructive error. There are two kinds of faith, my brethren, a dead faith, and a living faith—a false and a true. The dead faith produces no works. The living faith is an active principle, for it works by love, saith the Apostle; it purifies the heart; it overcomes the world; it is the good seed sown on the good ground, which brings forth thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold. Hence, at the judgment, our Lord puts the great and final decision, not on faith in profession, but on faith in fact. He rests not on the faith which might be shewn without works, but on the faith which was shewn by works; and in order to set the question in the strongest light, he calls for the works of faith at once, and makes their presence or their absence the ground of his sentence. The same principle is clearly inculcated in other places, where the general judgment is called the harvest of the world. For although every husbandman knows that it is the plant which produces the grain, and the tree which produces the fruit, and that the processes of ploughing, and sowing, and grafting, and pruning, and watering, together with much watchfulness and careful cultivation, must be bestowed on the plant or the tree, if ever he would expect to see the harvest; yet when that time arrives, the inquiry is not for plants and trees, but for grain and fruit. The plant and the tree are hardly named, but the question is solely about product. The field which produces, is reaped; the orchard which is fruitful, is gathered with joy; while the barren and unfruitful are condemned and forsaken. Now in the things of God, faith is the plant—faith is

the tree: green leaves and blossoms, indeed, look well, and promise fairly, and they may represent to us the common outside of a religious profession; but good works are the grain and the fruit, without which, plant, tree, leaves, and blossoms, are all worthless and unavailing. Therefore, in the judgment—the harvest of souls—Christ speaks of works only, not because it is possible to save us without a living faith, but because the only unquestionable mode of proving that we had this faith, is by shewing the good works produced by it.

2. Seeing, then, through this simple analogy, that the passage before us is in no respect inconsistent with the doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith, but rather confirms it; we proceed, in the second place, to consider how it is that Christ considers himself personally interested, whenever we assist or neglect his people. ‘Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it not to me.’ Now this is easily explained, on the same principle with one of the most common feelings of human nature, in cases of family connexion, or strong attachment, or even in the union of national partiality.

Thus, for instance, suppose my child to be in danger or in want, and one of you should step forward to protect or relieve him, do not I acknowledge the benefit, as if it were done to myself? So of my brother, or any other near and dear relation. Again, what is more universal than to introduce our friends by letter, to strangers at a distance, asking their kind offices, for our sakes; and in all such cases, are not the acts of attention or benevolence felt by ourselves as a personal favor; do not we say, Inasmuch as ye did it to this, my friend, ye did unto me? Again, consider the character gained by the man, who, in foreign lands, exerts himself to shew kindness to our countrymen, though they may be personally unknown to us. Even in

this case, do we not find our hearts drawn to him? do we not feel ready to say to such an one, Inasmuch as thou didst it to these, my countrymen, thou didst it unto me? On the other hand, let our child, or our brother, our relation, our friend, or our countryman, be neglected, injured, or oppressed, and who does not understand at once the operation of the same principle? Do we not all feel it as a personal wrong? Nay, is it not harder to pass by and forgive an injury or insult offered to those we love, than if it had been done to ourselves alone? And where is the heart or tongue in such a case that is not prepared to adopt the language of the text, and say, Inasmuch as thou hast done it to one of the least of these, thou hast done it unto me? Here then is a simple explanation of this interesting truth. Christ Jesus in his Divine nature, is one with our Father in heaven. The benefits conferred on his children, shall he not acknowledge? the neglects and wrongs offered to them, shall he not avenge? Christ Jesus, in his human nature, is our elder brother, the head of the whole household of faith. Can we be aided or injured, without his affectionate sympathy, and tender concern? Christ Jesus in both natures, is the Sovereign Governor of his Church; and can we, the subjects of his government, be protected or oppressed without his repute! Shall the governments of earth be more just and watchful, than the government of heaven? Manifestly, then, my brethren, reason demonstrates, and even nature approves, the gracious principle announced in the text: that in every benefit conferred, in every wrong inflicted, on the children, the brethren, the subjects of Christ, he should say, 'Verily inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, ye did it unto me.'

3. We come now, in the third and last place, to consider Why the wicked shall be rejected in the great judgment, not so much for what they have done, as for what they have neglected. 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me no

meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; a stranger, sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.' Here is not a single act of positive crime: no idolatry, no blasphemy, no Sabbath breaking, no disobedience to parents, no murder, no adultery, no theft, no perjury, no falsehood, no covetousness; but simply and merely the want of those good works of a living faith, which Christ commands, is set forth as alone sufficient for our eternal condemnation. A more solemn truth can no where be found than this, nor one which merits a more practical examination from all who bear the Christian name. Listen then, my brethren, while we endeavour to shew you the justice and necessity of such a sentence, on the grounds of the precepts and the example of the Saviour, and the nature of heaven.

First, then, let it be observed, that the table of the ten Commandments is chiefly concerned with forbidding sin, and was not designed to furnish, except by necessary implication, the full and positive rule of duty. Hence we see, that at the very period of its promulgation to the Israelites, the Lord added a vast number of other precepts, shewing them what they should do, as well as what they should not do. Of these precepts our great Redeemer places two in the first rank, on which all the rest depend. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself.' Now this love, of itself, provides for the whole circle of duty. 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour,' saith the Apostle, 'therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.' But more than this: it is of the nature of love to be active, busy, and anxious to please and to serve the object beloved. Thus a parent loves his son: is he content therefore with not killing, not robbing, not slandering his child? and when he abstains from positive wrongs, does he think that he has done his duty? Far from it. If he commits any actual crime against his offspring, he is regarded

as a monster: but he may not commit any such crime, and yet be a very bad and worthless parent still. And how so? Why, simply by not providing for his child as he ought to do: by not instructing, feeding, clothing, and watching over him in the spirit of fatherly affection. These things are the acts of love. Every kind, friendly, benevolent look, word, and deed, proceeds more or less from the same fountain: and the precept of Christ could not insist more plainly on the rendering our whole life one round of active beneficence, than by saying ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ or as it is expressed elsewhere, ‘Whatsoever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets.’ Now there is no man that does not wish to be beloved by those around him: therefore he must love them in turn. There is no man who, if in want, from hunger and thirst, cold or nakedness, would not wish his fellow men to supply his necessities: therefore he must supply the necessities of others. There is no man who is a stranger, that does not wish to receive hospitality; therefore he must render hospitality: neither is there any who, being sick or in prison, would not wish to be visited in kindness: therefore let him do the same. Here, then, is the simple principle of social obligation, as applied to the world around us, and especially to our Christian brethren, by the express command of the Redeemer; and the love of the Lord, on a still higher scale of duty, would plainly mingle the spirit of piety with all our actions towards each other. If we loved him with all our hearts, we should delight to commune with him in prayer and praise. If we loved him with all our hearts, we should find our chief pleasure in conforming to his word and his will. If we loved him with all our hearts, we should count no sacrifice great that he demanded, no service irksome which he required; feeling his present acceptance and his future favour more than an ample reward for

hardships greater by ten thousand fold than his service requires. How plain then is it, that if, at the last day, we be found not to have performed the actions of kindness and benevolence towards our brethren according to our opportunities, it must be because we have not loved either Christ or our neighbour: and hence, although we may think that we have done no positive harm, and broken none of the ten Commandments, is it not manifest that we shall have lived in perfect violation of the two greatest Commandments of all, and therefore must be worthily cast out amongst the condemned who love themselves too well to feel any proper love either towards Christ or towards each other.

Equally clear is this point, if we view it in connexion with the example of our Saviour. His whole mission—his mortal life, his miracles, his sufferings, his death,—all exhibit a stupendous and almost inconceivable wonder of love—love unlimited, perfect and divine. He taught the ignorant, fed the hungry, healed the sick, wept with the mourner, and continually and without cessation or rest, went about doing good. He lived for others, not for himself. While he restored to others, ease, and health, and earthly comfort, he wandered without a place to lay his head, gave his back to the smiters, his cheeks to them that buffeted him, his temples to a crown of thorns, his limbs to chains, his soul to agony, his body to the cross. Now we are expressly told again and again, that if we would be his disciples, we must follow his steps, so far as the difference of our condition and circumstances would justify. At least we are bound to live for others, to go about doing good, to sympathize with the distressed, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to minister to the sick, to visit the widows and orphans in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. And if these easiest and most obvious parts of our Lord's example be not fol-

lowed,—if we refuse to look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, even in those points where it requires the smallest self-denial to imitate him,—if our faith cannot manifest itself even by these works which are the most readily performed,—how can we lay any claim to his great salvation in the judgment of the great day? How can we escape the just sentence due to those who not only disobey the precepts of the Saviour, but disregard his example also?

Still more conclusive, however, does the argument appear to my mind, when we look at the nature of that heaven which Christ died to obtain for his people. It is a place of holiness, and purity, and love. The glory of God is the light of it. The Redeemer is there in person, to lead his followers by the still waters and pleasant fountains of the river of life, and to wipe all tears from their eyes. The Cherubim and Seraphim are there, casting their crowns before the majesty of his throne, and saying, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, who art, and wast, and art to come.’ The multitude of the angelic hosts are there, with harps of gold, and voices of celestial harmony, to swell the high hosannah of holy triumph and enrapturing praise. The spirits of the just made perfect are there, Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and all the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and reformers, and confessors of the faith, all the holy and humble men of heart, all the virgins, and matrons, and widows who were sanctified in spirit, all the little ones in Christ who were taken during infancy out of this world of danger, all the servants and followers of the Lamb of God, united in peace, in love, in happiness and glory. And is there any selfishness, unkindness, uncharitableness, illiberality, covetousness, parsimony, or cold hearted insensibility, to be admitted in such society as this? Can two walk together if they be not agreed? And can we walk with Christ, and

with the angels and saints who rejoice to do his will with their whole heart, unless we too deliver ourselves without reserve to his guidance, and make it our privilege and bliss to follow his steps, by a life of active usefulness, untiring beneficence, and Christian affection? Thus then, again, we justify the sentence of the last day; and clearly see how impossible it is, from the very nature of heaven, that an unchanged, illiberal, churlish, uncharitable soul, can ever be received there.

From all this you may readily perceive, my brethren, how erroneous and dangerous is the common notion of the world and worldly Christians, that if they live without any gross and discreditable criminality, pay their debts, and maintain passable characters in the eyes of society, they are at liberty to do in other respects as they please. No opinion can be more false, nor more utterly opposed to the principles of the Gospel. ‘Christ died for us,’ saith St. Paul, ‘that we might henceforth live not for ourselves, but for him.’ And ‘By this we know that we have passed from death unto life,’ saith St. John, ‘because we love the brethren.’ If then we would have a living faith, we must have that which shews itself by works of continual beneficence. ‘We must not be weary in well doing, for in due time we shall reap if we faint not.’ We must spend and be spent in the service of Christ and his people; we must remember that we are not our own, but are bought with a price: and whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God, and the advantage of our brethren.

But some of you will say, perhaps, that this is an extravagant view of the subject; which, carried to its full extent, would leave us no time to attend to our business and our families; no time for the acquisition of literary knowledge, and no time for wholesome recreation. The objection is plausible, my brethren, but it is not correct. The

Gospel itself charges us to be not slothful, but diligent in business ; yet in suchwise that we may be also ‘fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.’ The Gospel commands us to take care of our families, expressly saying, that ‘He who provideth not for his own, and specially for those of his household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.’ The Gospel further warrants, and indeed demands as large a stock of literary knowledge as we can obtain, so that it be capable of a useful, religious, and moral application. But it is true that Christ gives no encouragement to the waste of time and means, in the perusal of that worse than idle literature, which cannot profit, but must inevitably weaken and vitiate the mind. It is true that Christ does not sanction the indulging of our families in luxury and extravagance, while his houses are unfinished or unpaid for, his ministers but half provided, or his poor wanting bread. It is true that Christ does not authorize his servants to waste their evenings and their property, in profanity, riot, levity, revelry, and noise, while there are widows to comfort, orphans to relieve, sick to provide for, or any other good work to perform, within the reach of means and leisure to accomplish. Yea, it is true that Christ authorizes nothing which we cannot justify before his final tribunal,—nothing which his example, if present, would not sanction—nothing which his SPIRIT, WHICH IS PRESENT, would not approve. A better and simpler rule cannot be laid down in uninspired language, than this: that the Christian should always act and speak as in the sight of God ; and should never engage in any occupation whatever, on which he cannot ask a blessing.

Remember then, my beloved brethren, the great principle of the text, in its connexion with the sentence of the last day. Have you faith ? See that it be not the dead and barren faith of the worldling, the formalist, or the hypocrite ; but the living faith which produces the fruit of love

and good works towards all around you. Have you hope? See that it is connected with zeal for the service of the great Redeemer, and with those Scriptural evidences of its power in your life and conversation, which shall prove its steadfastness and truth. Have you charity? See that it does not stint itself to a few miserable acts of alms-giving, or a few forced subscriptions, bestowed not so much from the love of God, as from the fear of man. But let it be the internal motive of Christian affection, supreme towards Christ and warm towards his people, flowing into every channel of beneficence with constant readiness, and anxious to promote every good work to the glory of your Lord. True, you cannot merit heaven by this. Most true, that your salvation must be at last 'by grace through faith;' and that the only righteousness on which you can rely before God, must be the perfect righteousness of your Lord and Saviour. But then though this be true,—though after all you can do, you will still find reason to mourn over the hardness of your heart and the coldness of your affections, and be forced to acknowledge yourselves unprofitable servants,—still is it equally true that your blessed Redeemer will prosper all your humble efforts by his holy Spirit—will help your infirmities—will kindly record every one of your works of faith in the book of his remembrance, and count it done to himself, in the presence of angels and of men.

May the Lord grant you grace both to will and to do of his good pleasure. May no soul amongst you ever hear addressed to him the awful sentence of rejection: 'Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; a stranger, sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not; for verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me.'

But may Christ, the King Eternal and Immortal, welcome you as the blessed of his Father, and give you the Kingdom prepared for his people from the foundation of the world!

And now to God the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit, be ascribed all honor, power, dominion, glory, and praise, world without end. AMEN.



