

DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN

MURRAY STREET CHURCH

ON SABBATH EVENINGS,

URING THE MONTHS OF

MARCH, APRIL, AND MAY, 1830.

BY

DR. SPRING	DR. CARNAHAN
DR. COX	DR. WOODBRIDGE
DR. SKINNER	DR. RICE
DR. DE WITT	DR. WOODS
DR. MILLER	DR. WAYLAND
DR. SPRAGUE	DR. SNODGRASS
DR. GRIFFIN.	

NEW YORK:
HENRY C. SLEIGHT, CLINTON-HALL.

PRINTED BY SLEIGHT AND ROBINSON.

1830.



SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the eighth day of November, Anno Domini 1830, in the fifty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, William D. Snodgrass, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as proprietor, in the words following, to wit:

“ Discourses delivered in Murray street Church, on Sabbath evenings, during the months of March, April, and May, 1830. By Dr. Spring, Dr. Cox, Dr. Skinner, Dr. De Wit, Dr. Miller, Dr. Sprague, Dr. Carnahan, Dr. Woodbridge, Dr. Rice, Dr. Woods, Dr. Wayland, Dr. Snodgrass, Dr. Griffin.”

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FREDERICK I. BETTS,

Clerk of the Southern District of New York.

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THE DISCOURSES, contained in this volume, were prepared, at the request of the pastor of the church, in which they were delivered, together with other clergymen, residing in the City of New York. It was thought, by them, that a course of Sabbath-evening exercises, on such subjects as are here discussed, and by ministers residing in different parts of the country, could not fail to be interesting and edifying. The result has, in a good degree, justified their expectations. And, in compliance with a wish, expressed by many, who were present during the delivery, the whole series is now presented to the public, through the medium of the press.

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HEBREWS iii. 12.—“Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.”

It has been often and strenuously objected to the religion of Jesus Christ, that it lays a most unreasonable stress on *faith*; that it even makes our entire interest in all the blessings which it proposes, to be suspended upon the exercise of this grace. But another principle in the christian system, still more offensive, and still more strenuously opposed, is, that the want of faith is always represented as a *sin*, and, of course, as referable to the depravity of the heart.

This, however, is the uniform doctrine of the Bible; and it is plainly taught in our text. The Apostle is, indeed, here writing to those whom he calls “brethren,” that is, professed believers in Christ. Even these were

in danger of unbelief: for unbelief may be either speculative or practical, partial or entire. But in whatever degree or form it may exist; whether in the decent professor, or in the profane scoffer; whether in that weak faith which “staggars at the promise,” or that decisive and bold infidelity, which entirely rejects “the record which God has given of his Son;”—it is always criminal, always referable to an *evil heart*, against which every well-wisher to the happiness of man ought to be on his guard.

Although the remarks which I am about to offer, may be considered as referring, as far as they are applicable, to every grade of unbelief, whether in the real christian, or the impenitent sinner,—and which, as was just said, is referable, in *all*, to an evil source; yet my main purpose is to speak of that “unbelief” which is speculative and entire, that is, which rejects the Bible, rejects the religion of Jesus Christ as a “cunningly devised fable;” and to shew that this unbelief ever flows from an “evil heart;” in other words, is always the result of moral depravity.

I am perfectly aware, my friends, that this will be considered by many as a most uncharitable and offensive charge. Yet I am not without hope that it may be substantiated to the satisfaction of every impartial hearer. There may, indeed, be some cavil as to the question, what is evil? For there are multitudes who “call evil good, and good evil.” What, then, ought to be denominated *evil*? Now. I shall feel warranted in

pronouncing to be such, every thing that leads men to "depart from the living God;" every thing which disposes them to make light of his character, authority and law; every thing that tends to diminish the abhorrence of vice, or to take away the incentives to virtue; every thing, in a word, that leads to moral corruption and misery.

It is my purpose, then, to endeavour to shew, that unbelief in God's Bible; unbelief in Jesus Christ, and in that great system of revealed truth, which is the subject matter of the Bible, must flow from an "*evil heart*;"—that unbelief is evil in its NATURE, evil in its ORIGIN, and evil in its EFFECTS.

I. Unbelief in the revelation of Jesus Christ is EVIL IN ITS NATURE.

And here, that we may understand the real, intrinsic character of unbelief, let us attend, for a moment, to that opposite act of the mind which we call *believing*;—*believing the Gospel*. This is the more necessary, because many are fond of considering and representing it as a mere intellectual exercise, in which we simply assent to evidence, and for which we are no more accountable than in yielding our assent to any other kind of evidence. For, say they, as we never consider a man as morally guilty for not being convinced by the evidence presented in favour of a given theorem in mathematics, or syllogism in logic, any more than for not seeing an object beyond the reach of his organs of vision: so neither ought any one to be

held responsible, either to God or man, for not being convinced by the testimony in favour of the Gospel; and, of course, for not receiving it as the foundation of his hope, and the guide of his life. If this representation were correct, it would certainly be difficult to shew that unbelief has any moral evil in its nature.

There are others—and those who bear the christian name—who, though they by no means admit that evangelical belief is a mere assent of the understanding to an array of testimony;—yet maintain, that he is a believer, in the Gospel sense, who cherishes a firm persuasion that he is himself a christian; that Christ died for him in particular; and that he is an object of the Divine love. Now, as a strong confidence of this kind may be supposed to exist, and has often, in fact, been found to exist, without any real subjection of the heart to the spirit of christianity;—it would not be easy, it must be acknowledged,—on the supposition that faith essentially consists in confidence in our own good estate, and the essence of unbelief in doubt concerning it,—to shew that unbelief is intrinsically sinful;—in other words, to establish the doctrine of our text.

But I need not say to those who read and understand the Scriptures, that neither of these views can, by any means, be admitted. Faith, or believing, is every where represented, by the inspired writers, as an humble, reverential, cordial reception of Jehovah's testimony, that is, of his revealed truth. It is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

with the bodily eye. It is that mental exercise, by which the existence, perfections, government and Gospel of Jehovah are made realities to our minds, and respected accordingly ; by which we meditate on his glory, converse with him, and take an affectionate interest in his kingdom and honour. It is evident, then, on the slightest examination, that the faith which is exercised in embracing the religion of Christ, is eminently a moral act. "With the heart," we are told, "man believeth unto righteousness." The Gospel comes to us, not as a system of frigid speculation ; but as a great moral and practical message ; a message of wonderful love and mercy. It addresses us as a race of rebels, alienated from God, and under the condemning sentence of his righteous law. It offers to us pardon and peace, complete deliverance from the guilt, the power and the consequences of sin, and a title to eternal life ; and all this on the simple and easy terms, that we feel our need of these blessings, and humbly and gratefully accept of them, as a free gift, bestowed solely for the sake of the atoning sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Redeemer. Now, evangelical faith is, in one word, this humble and grateful acceptance of the Gospel offer. It is receiving the holy, self-denying joyful truth of the Bible IN THE LOVE OF IT. It is that combined act of the understanding, will, and affections, by which we cordially embrace the whole religion of Jesus Christ as a practical system ; by which we unfeignedly accept of the Saviour as our Teacher.

our atoning Sacrifice, our vicarious Righteousness, our Lawgiver, and our Pattern. In short, the essential nature of faith consists in an unreserved and hearty surrender of the whole mind to the *information* which the Gospel brings, to the *grace* which it unfolds, and to the *duties* which it enjoins. It is that act, or rather that practical habit of the soul, by which we renounce our pride, our prejudices, and our self-righteousness; by which we sit as little children at the feet of Jesus, and learn his humbling and self-denying lessons. This is faith. This is that precious grace which may well hold so high a rank in the christian system; for it is that by which we apprehend, and practically regard all the glories of the unseen world. It is that grace by which, if I may be allowed the expression, we take hold of Christ as our hope; take hold of eternal things as our richest treasures; take hold of the character, the law, and the gracious covenant of Jehovah, as our confidence, and rest, and joy.

Hence christian faith is often spoken of in Scripture in terms which imply the exercise of *moral feeling*, as well as *intellectual assent*. It is represented, by the Apostle, as "receiving *the love of the truth*." In the parable of the "sower," the "good ground," in which the seed was deposited with profit, is said, by our Saviour, to indicate those who receive the seed of his word "into *good and honest hearts*." Again, it is said, by the inspired Apostle, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe *in thine heart* that

God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This grace is also illustrated, by our Saviour, by comparing it with the meek, humble, teachable temper of "a little child." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."*

Now, if such be the nature of faith, then the want of it, which is "unbelief," must be evil, exceedingly evil, in its very nature. Unbelief is the direct opposite of faith. It rejects the glorious Gospel; turns away with indifference, or with aversion, from its condescending offers; opposes its Author; treats Him as a liar; and sets his promises and his threatenings equally at naught. Where there is no faith, the God of the Bible is not recognized or regarded, and, of course, neither loved nor obeyed. In fact, as belief in the great realities which the Bible unfolds, is the vital principle of all piety, without which neither the great Object of worship, nor the duties which we owe Him, can be contemplated as real, or exert an influence on the mind; so unbelief is no less the vital principle of all irreligion, and all disobedience. Its very spirit and essence, as our text intimates, consists in "departing from the living God;" renouncing his authority; despising his word; refusing to listen to his kindest invitations; and practically defying his power and wrath.

* 2 Thess. ii. 10. Luke viii. 15. Rom. x. 9, 10. Matt. xviii. 3.

Unbelief, then, my friends, is not a mere error in judgment; a mere miscalculation of the amount and force of testimony:—but a state of the mind, strongly marked with moral obliquity; a state of the heart involving disobedience to God; aversion to his truth; neglect of his most gracious annunciations; ingratitude for his richest mercies; and taking side with his worst enemies. Only assume that the Gospel is a true, and a gracious gift of God, and all that has been stated inevitably follows. And is not the heart that is capable of all this, an “evil heart;”—a rebellious heart;—a hard, ungrateful heart? Yes, my dear brethren, unbelief is so far from being no sin, or a small sin, that it is the radical principle, the most noxious element of all sin. And if *all* unbelief be thus evil, how pre-eminently evil is that unbelief, which not only refuses to hear, and to yield assent when God speaks; but which sets at naught *such a message* as the glorious Gospel; a message of love and mercy, of peace and pardon and life; a message which proclaims deliverance from all the evils which we feel or fear, and exaltation to bliss and glory eternal in the heavens! O my friends, what immeasurable evil is here! Surely those who refuse to listen when the God of grace speaks; who turn away with thankless indifference from the wonders of redeeming love; who voluntarily close their eyes against the light of life, and their ears against the invitations of heavenly mercy; who, when addressed by all that is tender in condescension, and by all that is touching

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and constraining in Divine entreaty, refuse to hear; refuse to be saved; deliberately prefer "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power" to an "incorruptible crown," an "undefiled inheritance," an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"—who practically say to the Saviour, "We will not accept of thine offered salvation; we will not have thee to reign over us;"—surely if there be "an evil heart" either on earth or in hell, THEY manifest it, in all the deformity which ingratitude and rebellion can impress upon the spirit of a rational creature. Let us next

II. Proceed to show that the heart of unbelief is "an evil heart," by tracing this unhappy state of mind to some of its CHIEF CAUSES. That which is always and essentially evil in its NATURE, cannot be imagined to have any other than an evil SOURCE. Yet it may not be unprofitable, in contemplating the subject before us, to examine some of the SPECIFIC CAUSES which lead to that rejection of the glorious Gospel of which we speak, and which shew it to be as unhallowed in its *origin*, as in its *character*.

And, on this point, the word of God is clear and decisive. It uniformly traces unbelief, in all its forms, to a corrupt source. It represents it as generated and nourished by pride, by prejudice, by unhallowed appetite and passion, by corrupt habits of living, by a desire to be free from all the restraints which the faith of the Gospel imposes. It pronounces with the utmost solemnity and emphasis—"This is the condemnation.

that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." And again; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." And again; "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them." Once more; "He that is of God," said the Saviour, "heareth God's words: ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God;" that is, have not the spirit or the holy image of God.*

There is, perhaps, nothing of more familiar occurrence, in every walk of life, than the fact, that the reception which men give to truth, of any kind, is very much governed by their *feelings*, their *predilections*, their *propensities*, their *prejudices*. The ardent politician, the bigotted ecclesiastical sectary, the pledged philosophical partizan, can easily resist the force even of demonstration itself, when it contravenes the wishes and the interests of their respective parties. Nay, scarcely can the evidence of his own senses overcome the blind prejudice of one who is predisposed and predetermined not to admit an unwelcome truth. Now, the operation of this principle is not only discernible, but it is manifested with peculiar frequency and force

* John iii. 19. 1 Corinthians ii. 14. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. John viii. 47.

in the province of religion. We may imagine a thousand mathematical, philosophical, or other speculative questions, in solving which our minds may be said to be entirely *impartial*. Because the solution of them, in one way or another, can shock none of our prejudices, thwart none of our passions, interfere with none of our pleasures, dethrone none of our idols. But not so with the question, whether the religion of the Bible "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance?" Perhaps it is not going too far to say, that the pure doctrines and spirit of the Gospel are more irreconcilably opposed to the natural feelings and spirit of fallen man, than any thing else that ever came from the Author of all good. The large demand which genuine, undefiled Christianity makes on the submission of the understanding to sublime mysteries; the humiliating estimate which it presents of the moral condition of man; the abasing method of approach to God, and of acceptance with him, which it announces; the mighty transformation of the desires, affections, and habits of the soul which it requires; and the humility, self-denial, penitence, and habitual separation from the spirit, maxims, and practices of the world which it calls upon those who receive it to exercise;—these are all as diametrically opposed as can well be imagined to the taste of the unrenewed heart. They are "hard sayings," which many cannot and will not "bear." Is it wonderful, then, that, with this native and strong bias against the Gospel, its entire rejection, in speculation as

well as in practice, should be an event of frequent occurrence? If the account which the scriptures give of human nature be true, the existence of this corrupt bias is unquestionable. And if it exist, then it must be the grand source of all infidelity. In vain are the evidences of Christianity, in all their extent and power, set in array before a mind under the governing influence of this hostile feeling. Miracles, prophecy, and all the external and internal testimony which the Gospel has to offer in its own favour, are lost upon such a mind. Nay, even when the difficulties of unbelief are palpably made to appear greater, far greater, than those of faith: still he is not convinced. Every thing is seen with a jaundiced eye. Testimony of the most weighty and powerful kind becomes light as air, when thrown into the scale against rooted prejudice, and strong inclination.

I am aware that unbelievers are commonly fond of representing their opinions as derived from *reason*; as the offspring of free and candid *inquiry*. But did you ever know an individual of this class, who really was in the habit of seriously studying the Bible, or who appeared at all disposed to make either the evidences or the doctrines of Christianity the object of close and earnest examination? Did you ever know an infidel who seemed to become such by serious investigation; by sober argument; by carefully weighing the testimony which the word of God presents in favour of its heavenly origin? I will venture to say, you never did. No; when men become Christians—I mean intelligent

and genuine Christians ;—the only class of which the Bible knows any thing ;—they become such, under the Divine blessing, by means of serious thought and consideration ; by anxious inquiry ; by earnest prayer. But men commonly become infidels by ignorance, by thoughtlessness, by pride, by prejudice, by turning away their minds from the Bible, and from all sober inquiry ; by forgetting God ; and by flying from all appropriate reflection on his character, and the claims which he asserts on his rational creatures. They are not willing to cherish the affections, and to perform the duties which Christianity requires, and, therefore, they are not willing to believe its doctrines ; and can scarcely be prevailed upon to read the smallest manual, or to listen to a single serious conversation, intended for their defence.

Perhaps it will be asked, then, whether we mean to assert that the votaries of unbelief are none of them *sincere* in their rejection of the Gospel ? If by the term *sincere* be meant, that they are not gross hypocrites ; but have really succeeded in persuading themselves that Christianity is a fable ; I am far from denying that some of them may be, in this sense, sincere. For “there is a way which seemeth right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” But is this the proper meaning of the word *sincere*, as found in scripture, and in the diction of all sound moral teachers ? By no means. By *sincerity* the Bible means genuine fairness and honesty of mind ; a cordial desire to know and obey the truth ; a spirit of

humble, candid, impartial inquiry ; a faithful use of the best means within our reach for ascertaining the truth. Now, if such real sincerity as this, be generally found in those who reject the religion of Jesus Christ, then all scripture, and all experience, must be abandoned as delusive in their testimony.

If the children of unbelief were really actuated by that spirit of candid inquiry, and rational conviction, which they claim ; can it be imagined that their manner of investigating and treating the religion of Jesus Christ, could be such as it too commonly is ? The great objects of contemplation and inquiry which this religion presents, are the most momentous and awful that can occupy the minds of rational beings. The character of God ; the relations which we bear to Him ; the method of acceptance with Him ; the service which he requires ; and the eternal destiny which awaits us ;—these are the mighty subjects which occupy the pages of the Christian's Bible. Now, is it possible to conceive of subjects which demand more grave and solemn consideration than these ? Can it be believed that levity, sneer, habitual ridicule, and profane scoffing become the discussion of matters so infinitely important ? Is it possible for those who are really candid and in earnest in their inquiries after truth, habitually to assail the Christian Revelation with such weapons ? Yet these are the weapons with which infidelity has been accustomed, in all ages, to assail the Gospel of Christ. If the annals of infidelity ever furnished an

instance of one who was disposed to treat Christianity with seriousness and respect; who read with unceasing diligence what has been written in its favour, as well as against it; who earnestly sought for Divine direction in his inquiries; and who habitually treated the whole subject as one of infinite moment;—I confess it is more than ever came to my knowledge. Now what, I ask, is the indication of such a fact? Is this a symptom of pure, or of corrupt origin? Surely when RELIGION is in question, a spirit of levity and profaneness is an evil spirit, if there be any distinction between right and wrong in the universe.

The same charge of unhallowed origin is still further established against the spirit of unbelief, by the undoubted fact, that while its votaries are unceasing and ardent in their efforts to draw those around them from the religion of Christ; they discover no serious desire either to practise themselves, or to inculcate on others, that which they profess to believe. The greater part of those who reject Christianity, profess to believe that there is a God, who made, and who governs the world; who will finally bring men to judgment; and who ought to be loved and worshipped. But does their professed creed appear to exert the smallest practical influence on their own lives? Was ever an infidel known either to be devoutly strict in *practising* the duties of natural religion himself, or to manifest any anxiety to *inculcate* those duties on his fellow-men? I never heard of such a case; and must be allowed to

doubt whether such a case ever existed. The inference is unavoidable. The spirit of infidelity, in discarding Revealed Religion, practically discards all religion. Its essential, characteristic spirit is that of utter impiety. It does not seriously regard what it professes to believe. Its ruling passion is to pull down, without building up. There is no system of principles to which it honestly and consistently adheres. Now can any thinking man doubt, for a moment, whence such a spirit derived its origin? It cannot possibly flow from any other than an evil source.

Another mark of the unhallowed origin of unbelief, is, that it is so often found unwilling to acknowledge itself; nay disposed meanly to deny its own existence, and perhaps hypocritically to profess an opposite character. A large majority of the most distinguished infidels who have lived within the last two hundred years, during the greater part of their lives denied their infidelity; wished to be thought Christians by the mass of society; and only to confidential friends were willing to avow their unbelief. Lord *Bolingbroke* professed himself a Christian; availed himself, as far as possible, of all the temporal advantages which such a profession could secure; and provided for the full disclosure of his real opinions, by committing to a needy profligate the publication of his writings after his death. The same cowardly and hypocritical course has been pursued by many others, and continues to mark the spirit of infidelity, in our own country, as well as elsewhere, up to the present time. Is it necessary, my friends, to bring

laboured proof that the origin of such a spirit is "evil?" When falshood, meanness, treachery and hypocrisy can be reconciled with manly virtue; when acting over again the conduct of *Judas Iscariot* can be commended to imitation;—then, and not till then, may such a spirit be pronounced honest and honourable.

Again; the *history* of the rise and progress of many of the most common cases of infidelity, plainly demonstrates that its source, no less than its nature, is evil. Thousands of the young, as well as of the aged, have been, manifestly, drawn into infidelity by their evil passions, and their vices. The history of many a youthful victim of unbelief, has been, in substance, as follows. He was taught, from the cradle, to reverence the Bible, and instructed, both by precept and example, to attach importance to the great sanctions which it unfolds. In the outset, and comparative innocence of his course, when his plans were sober, and his habits regular, the instructions of his youth exerted a commanding influence on his conscience. Heaven and hell were to him solemn realities; and, though not truly pious, he revered piety in others, and hoped, one day, to possess it himself. But, by and by, when he entered on the gay world; when false honour began to dazzle, and criminal pleasure to allure; when licentious habits gradually unfolded their attractions, and ungodly companions rendered him familiar with scenes of profaneness and vice;—he was not slow in perceiving that such pursuits were altogether inconsistent with the

principles of his education. This, at first, filled him with deep anxiety. The conflict, however, in its power, did not last long. He felt obliged either to abandon the principles of his youth, or to give up his unhallowed indulgences. He was resolved not to part with the latter; and, therefore, gave up the former. At first he hesitated; then he doubted, or rather tried to doubt; then he disbelieved:—not because he had examined, and found religion false; but because he had made it necessary, for his own peace of mind, to believe it false. He, at length, succeeded in persuading himself that all his former seriousness and scruples were idle dreams; that he might live as he listed without any fear of an hereafter;—until, in the end, he became prepared to take his stand with the most determined enemies of the Gospel, and even to “sit in the seat of the scornful.” Now, can any one doubt, that, in all such cases, unbelief is the offspring, not of sober inquiry, but of corrupt inclination; not of a sincere and candid search after truth; but of a desire to be liberated from the restraints which the religion of Christ imposes?

On the same principle, it has so often happened, to persons of more mature age, that when they were in plain and humble life, they professed to be serious believers in Christ, and appeared to be truly pious. But when they became rich; rose in station and consequence; and were surrounded with the means of luxurious indulgence, and fashionable living;—they not only declined in spirituality; but often abandoned their

old religious connections ;—and either attached themselves to some ecclesiastical body accustomed to allow greater laxity of life ; or, perhaps, still more frequently, fell into entire scepticism, and became openly regardless of all religion.

There is also, another fact, of very frequent occurrence, and strongly illustrative of the same great principle. We have all seen cases, in the buoyant season of health, prosperity and pleasure, when the tide of animal feeling ran high, and the splendour and fascinations of the world captivated the heart ;—we have seen infidelity, in such cases, triumphant. But when the scene was changed ; when the hour of deep affliction, or of death, arrived ; and when, of course, the illusions of appetite and ambition were in a great measure withdrawn ;—then the haughtiness, and even the confidence of unbelief were abandoned ; the Bible was no longer a despised book ; the minister of religion became a welcome visitant ; the voice of prayer was heard with deep interest ; and the Christian's God sought with intense earnestness of spirit. How, my friends, shall we account for facts like these ? The solution is neither remote nor questionable. That spirit which is generated and nourished by "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life ;" which always flourishes most in scenes of licentious pleasure ; and which generally dies, or loses its confidence at the approach of affliction and death, cannot be the product of either virtuous feeling, or sober inquiry. The

“heart of unbelief,” then, is evil, deplorably evil in its origin. **THE GOSPEL WOULD HAVE NO ENEMIES, IF IT WERE NOT THE ENEMY OF ALL SINFUL INDULGENCE.**

But if the **NATURE** and the **SOURCES** of unbelief are “evil”—

III. No less evil are its EFFECTS.

Our blessed Saviour has taught us to judge of all moral professions and claims by this test. “Therefore,” said He, “by their fruits shall ye know them.” And it is a test as reasonable in its character, as it is Divine in its authority. For, as that tree which, in all cases, in every kind of soil, and under every mode of culture,—still brings forth evil fruit,—must, of course, be pronounced evil in its nature; so that system of opinions, which is invariably found, in every variety of situation, to lead its votaries away from all that is good, both in temper and practice; and to render them, if not openly profligate, at least strikingly defective in those virtues which form the essential elements of individual and social excellence; and quite as strikingly prone to those vices which are destructive to all the most precious interests of men;—such a system *must* be evil, *only evil*; and cannot fail of being a curse to society in proportion to its prevalence.

That unbelief really is, and must ever be, thus essentially “evil” in its effects, will be evident to all who impartially consider, either, on the one hand, the *doctrines* which it inculcates: or, on the other, the

practical morality with which it is daily seen to be connected.

With regard to the DOCTRINES which unbelief inculcates, they are, notoriously, as to the great mass of them, radically and essentially corrupt. It has, indeed, been often remarked, and with great justice, that INFIDELITY HAS NO PRINCIPLES. That is, not only is there no one system of doctrine in which its votaries are generally agreed; but it is an equally undoubted fact, that almost every religious and moral principle, however fundamental, has been, in turn, doubted, or explicitly rejected, by the most eminent leaders in their ranks. In truth, there was scarcely the smallest exaggeration in the charge of the satirist, when he said, that the sum of their creed is "to believe in all unbelief." Every thing, with them, if not directly, is at least virtually questioned or denied. The existence, the perfections, and the providence of God; a state of rewards and punishments hereafter; the fixed and immutable distinction between right and wrong; the holy Sabbath; the marriage tie; gratitude; forgiveness of injuries; and the tenderest charities of domestic and social life;—have all been stigmatized and renounced, as weak and mischievous prejudices; and the innocence of the worst crimes boldly maintained. There is, in fact, hardly a doctrinal truth, or a practical virtue, which has not been called in question, if not scornfully rejected, by distinguished leaders in unbelief. Nay, infidelity daily sanctions, as innocent, if not com-

mendable, some of the most pestiferous vices which poison and disturb human society :—pride, ambition, avarice, malice, revenge, duelling, suicide, selfishness, and profligate sensuality, have all found zealous advocates among the enemies of the Bible, and may, indeed, all be said to grow out of infidel speculations. The truth is, infidelity sinks the question of right and wrong into a mere calculation of worldly interest, or political enactment. It has no barrier to present against the raging appetites, and worst passions of men, except some philosophical theories, which are destitute alike of fixed character, and of commanding authority. The direct tendency of its doctrines, of course, is, to take away all impression of the evil of sin, and all sense of accountableness for actions ; to depreciate and discourage all real virtue ; to dissolve every moral restraint ; and to bring men back to the unbridled reign of every brutal appetite, and every ferocious passion. Now, is it possible to conceive that such principles, or rather such absence of all principle,—can tend to promote the order, purity and happiness of society ? When men renounce all belief in the inspection and authority of any power above them ; when no regard for an hereafter inspires either hope or fear ; in a word, when they consider themselves as born, like the brutal tribes, merely to eat and drink, and sleep and die ;—will they be likely, think you, to live any better than brutes, or really to adorn their rational and moral nature ? As well might we dream of darkness begetting light ; or

of committing men to the school of Satan and his angels, to be trained up for the heavenly paradise.

And as the *speculative opinions* of the votaries of unbelief are generally and essentially corrupt; so their *practice* has been, in all ages, worthy of their creed. Who, let me ask, ever since the religion of Jesus Christ has existed in the world, have been most conspicuous for the regularity, purity, and benevolence of their lives—infidels or Christians? No one who has eyes to see, and ears to hear, and candour to weigh evidence, can hesitate a moment for the proper answer. That the effect of unbelief in revealed truth, has ever been to generate moral corruption, is attested by all history. Not that all infidels have been immoral men. Individuals of this class, have, no doubt, now and then appeared, who, from physical temperament, from education, or from peculiar circumstances of situation or pursuit, have been decent and regular in private life. How far, indeed, even *these* may have been moulded and constrained by the Christian influence around them, I shall not attempt to estimate. But it is confidently maintained, that a large majority of those who have adopted the principles of unbelief, have been, in all ages, conspicuous for their licentious practice. Is it not unquestionable, that the great body of avowed infidels have been less pure, less rigid in all their moral habits, less confided in, even by one another, for truth, candour, and incorruptible integrity, than a similar mass of those who are known to be Christians? Do we not

see them, in a word, more frequently and unblushingly than believers, neglecting the most sacred duties, and violating the most solemn obligations of life, whenever it serves their worldly interest or pleasure? One thing is certain, that in every instance in which we have known infidelity to pervade a community, and all Christian restraint, both public and private, to be taken off, the moral result has not only been unfavourable, but dreadful, beyond the power of language to describe!

Let it be remembered, too, that this general representation does not apply only to the lowest and most unenlightened class of unbelievers. It applies no less strikingly to the most eminent leaders and writers of the whole band, from *Celsus* and *Porphyry*, down to the latest of the long catalogue. Read the history and the writings of the most noted of the list; and you will find many of them to have been men of the most unbridled and shameful profligacy, and all of them avowing opinions, which they were, no doubt, willing to have considered as the spirit of their own character, and which, if carried into universal practice, would render the society of earth a foretaste of hell. Read, for example, the "Confessions of *Rousseau*," that wonderful monument of perverted genius, who undertook to paint his own likeness; and you will behold the portrait of one of the most polluted and miserable of men. Read what *Voltaire* and his royal patron and companion in unbelief, the Prussian monarch, say of each other; and you will find one of the most revolting

and loathesome pictures of moral baseness, ever presented by men claiming a decent place in society.* Read the private correspondence of *Voltaire*, with *D'Alembert*, *Diderot*, and others, their contemporary brethren in infidelity; and you will see that there was neither truth nor honour in them all; but such a wretched compound of falshood, envy, malignity, hatred, contempt of one another, and contempt of all the rest of the world, as to give a horrible impression of the spirit of unbelief. Read the account which Mr. *Gibbon*, one of the most decent of the whole number, has given of himself; and you will perceive, amidst all the polish and splendour of literary culture,—no single line of moral beauty; no fear of God; no reverence for sacred things; no regard for the welfare of the human race;—but the most heartless and sordid selfishness, vain glory, desire of admiration, adulation of the great and wealthy, contempt of the poor, and supreme devotedness to his own gratification. In short, I have never happened to know, either in the writings or life of any avowed infidel, a single instance of entirely correct and edifying moral example. Never have I been so fortunate as to see or hear of one who seemed to cherish the least reverence even for those principles of natural religion, in which he professed to believe; or to know any thing of that elevated and disinterested

* See *Voltaire's* works, particularly the first three volumes, 12mo. edition;—the King of *Prussia's* Posthumous Works;—and *Condorcet's* Life of *Voltaire* for ample illustration of what is intended, in the above sentence, and in that which immediately succeeds.

moral excellence, which delights in doing good, and is willing to make sacrifices for the promotion of human happiness.

But further ; who, let me ask, have ever been found, throughout Christendom, most zealous and active in forming and executing plans for the benefit of mankind? What class of persons have ever been most liberal in expending their time, their labour, and their property, for instructing the ignorant, and reclaiming the vicious; for feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and extending knowledge, virtue and happiness in the world ;—what class, I say, have ever been found most ready for every such good work—infidels or Christians?—My friends, it would be an insult to your understandings to suppose a formal answer necessary. You know that ninety-nine parts out of an hundred of these labours of benevolence, are performed by sober, professing Christians ; that for stimulating themselves and those around them to engage in these labours, their constant appeal is to Christian principles ; and that to see an avowed infidel, or even an habitual neglecter of religion, taking any distinguished part in these hallowed efforts and sacrifices, is one of the rarest occurrences that we can witness. Now when it is considered that the class of sober professing Christians do not now, and, with few exceptions, never did, constitute even a moiety of any people—if the general fact be conceded—and it cannot be denied—the argument is irresistible.

On the other hand, by what class of persons are the great mass of the *crimes* which pollute and disturb society committed? Go to the records of our criminal courts, and to the mournful annals of our State-prisons, and ask whose are the blackest names on their humiliating lists? Are they Christians? Are they devout believers in the Bible? Are they those who venerate and love the holy doctrines and precepts which the Bible contains?—No, by no means. They are infidels, either open or secret. Not that they are all speculative, or, what are commonly called, philosophical unbelievers. Many of them have neither intellect nor knowledge enough for this. But they are all practical unbelievers. They are all neglecters, if not despisers of the Gospel. They are, proverbially, those who make light of the Bible, who hate the Bible, who reject and contemn the authority of Him who came “to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Did you ever know, my friends, a wicked man, who was desirous of corrupting the virtuous, of seducing innocence, or of leading on the young and inexperienced to deeds of profligacy and shame;—did you ever know such an one to aim at the accomplishment of his object, by recommending the study of the Holy Scriptures; or by endeavouring to imbue the minds of those whose ruin he sought, with the principles and spirit of the Gospel? No, I will venture to say, never. The very suggestion of taking such a course, would be

deemed, of all things, one of the most preposterous. No, the only method ever thought of by the teacher of wickedness, is to beget in the mind of his victim AS MUCH UNBELIEF AS POSSIBLE ; to place the character of a holy God, his righteous law, the threatenings of his word, his judgment seat, and all those solemn realities which the Bible unfolds, as far out of sight as possible ; to insinuate that they are all a fable ; and to hold up the doctrines, the duties, and the ministers of religion to hatred and scorn. Can either the fact, or the reason of it be, for a moment, doubted ? And does it not establish, beyond all controversy, a connexion of the closest and most indissoluble kind between unbelief and moral corruption ?

Further ; was it ever known that any son or daughter of Adam was reformed from a wicked life, by embracing infidel opinions ? We have all known many and striking examples of reformation from the most degrading vices effected by the power of Christian principle. We have seen the abandoned drunkard made a sober man ; the fraudulent, honest ; and the profligate voluptuary transformed into a model of self-denial, by the converting grace of the Gospel. But have we ever seen or heard of men thus reformed by the power of unbelief ? Nay, is not such an effect of infidel principles, a thing so perfectly unheard of, in all the mutations of human character, as to render the very thought of it almost ridiculous ? Yet, if infidelity be the rational and benign system which its advocates

allege it to be, why should such facts be unknown? or, rather, why should they not be the occurrences of every day? The answer is unavoidable. I can think of no consideration which it is possible to urge by way of reply, which does not deeply fasten upon unbelief the whole charge which I am endeavouring to establish.

Again; did you ever hear a malefactor, about to die by the hand of public justice, acknowledging as a fault, or lamenting as a misfortune, that he had been more attentive than he ought to have been to the great principles and duties of religion; and ascribing the errors and crimes of his life to his having allowed himself to come too much under the power of the Gospel? There is no risk in saying, that, among all the myriads who have expired on the gallows, such a case was never witnessed. But O how often has the dying culprit been heard to confess with anguish and tears, that infidel sentiments led him astray; that the rejection of the Bible gradually led to profaneness, to intemperance, to lewdness, to fraud, to robbery, perhaps to murder,—and at length to the infamy of a felon's death!

I am aware that it will be said, by those who are determined to resist all evidence on this subject, that many *professing Christians* have been *as immoral as other men*; that persons calling themselves Christians, have, in all ages, in the name of Christ, and under the cloak of religion, committed enormous crimes. This is, no doubt, a fact; and yet it does not, in the least degree, weaken our argument, or militate against

the doctrine of our text. On the contrary, it rather confirms every word which has been uttered. Were these persons *real*, or only *nominal* Christians? Nay, infidels themselves are witnesses that they were **NOMINAL CHRISTIANS ONLY**. Why else have they, with few dissenting voices, acknowledged that the morality of the Bible is the best in the world? Why have even those who declined making this concession, ever been fond of stigmatizing such immoral professors of religion, as hypocrites; as acting a part grossly inconsistent with their profession? For if the genuine spirit and tendency of the religion they professed, had been to produce such fruits as these,—then they were not hypocrites, but sincere and consistent. But the fact is, it was because they were *not* real Christians;—it was because they were *not* real believers, as they said;—in other words, were **INFIDELS IN DISGUISE**, that they acted so unworthy a part. Were all men sincere, practical believers in the Gospel of Christ, wars would cease; persecution, fraud, oppression, slander, revenge, intemperance, and every species of licentiousness, would be banished from the earth:—and the universal prevalence of the humility, the meekness, the self-denial, the benevolence, the forgiveness, the equity, and the purity which genuine Christianity every where enjoins would render this world a foretaste of heaven. But, on the other hand, were the principles and spirit of infidelity to pervade the world;—were all belief in responsibility to a holy God. in a righteous judgment

to come, and in the great doctrines of the Christian salvation, to be banished from among men ;—the effect would be, as experience has fully demonstrated, to annihilate all order, and all virtue ; and to assimilate the society of earth to that of demons and accursed spirits in their dark abodes.

Such, my friends, is a brief sketch of the evidence that the heart of unbelief is “an evil heart.” It is evil in its NATURE, evil in its CAUSES, and evil in its EFFECTS. It is the vital spirit of all impiety, and of all moral corruption. It is the natural offspring of pride, vanity, levity, sensuality, ambition, and of every evil principle. It was unbelief that deceived, seduced and ruined our first parents ; and which, from the hour of their fall, has been the grand source of blindness, deception, rebellion, profligacy and perdition among their guilty posterity in every age. Unbelief leads away from God, from truth, from order, and from happiness. It perverts the understanding ; it hardens the heart ; it sears the conscience ; it corrupts the whole moral structure of the man. It unfits men for the noblest enjoyments and services of the present life, and prepares them for that abyss of the damned, “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ; where the smoke of their torment ascendeth forever and ever.”

From the representation which has been given of this subject, we may deduce a number of practical in-

ferences ; to some of which your attention is respectfully requested.

1. We may see the reason why Christian faith is so constantly, in Scripture, ENJOINED AS A DUTY, and the absence of it CONDEMNED AND THREATENED AS A SIN. The fact is,—as you have heard,—faith is so essentially connected with the state of the heart, and the current of the affections ;—its very nature so inseparably involves moral feeling, practical choice, and the spirit of obedience ; that where it is present, it is the germ of all that is good in the soul ; and where it is absent, there is the essence of rebellion. When, therefore, every thing in the religion of Christ is made to turn on faith ; when it is said, “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned ;”—it is as if the language of Scripture were,—“He who humbly, candidly, and gratefully *accepts* of offered mercy, shall be savingly benefited by it ; but he who unthankfully and rebelliously *rejects* it, and turns away from God, and all his gracious offers, shall have no share in its blessings.” Now, is this unreasonable ? Is it not, rather, in accordance with every dictate of reason and equity, and with every known feature of the Divine government ? Yes, my friends, in whatever point of light we contemplate unbelief, it must appear morally criminal, and those who indulge in it altogether without excuse.

2. We may learn, from what has been said, how many and great are the evils which must necessarily

flow FROM THE DECLINE AND THE WEAKNESS OF FAITH IN THE REAL CHRISTIAN. The "evil heart of unbelief" is not confined to that infidelity which is speculative and entire. It exists, and exerts a pestiferous influence, in the case of many a sincere believer. Our blessed Redeemer often reproved his disciples for their unbelief, or the weakness of their faith. He more than once said to them—"Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"—"Wherefore do ye doubt, O ye of little faith?"—Hence, on a certain occasion, they said to him with earnestness—"Lord, increase our faith;" and being "strong in the faith," is emphatically commended and enjoined, as, at once, well pleasing in the sight of God, and connected with rich blessings to him who possesses it. This may appear strange language to an unbelieving world, and may carry with it little that is either intelligible or interesting to the mere formal professor of religion. But real Christians know something of its meaning and force, and often to their painful cost. For, if the foregoing representation be just, then it is manifest, that when their faith is weak, every spiritual feeling, desire, hope and enjoyment must be proportionally weak. When their faith is weak, their hold of Christ, if I may so speak, though still real, is feeble and nerveless; their hearts are comparatively cold; their consolations few and small; their fears many and distressing; and their conversation, generally, less ornamental to religion, and less edifying to those around them. Yes, my friends, when you see Christians cold,

comfortless, declining in hallowed feeling, and relaxing in spiritual activity ;—in a word, when you see them backsliding from what is good, either in heart or in life, —you may sum up the cause of the whole evil in one word—“ It is because of their UNBELIEF.” This is the worm at the root of all spiritual duty, prosperity, and comfort. It is because they have SO LITTLE FAITH that divine and eternal things do not exert a more governing influence on their temper and practice. If they had a sufficiently strong faith, they would never be cast down, and would never be found going astray. In short, faith, among the Christian graces, is like the MAIN SPRING in a well adjusted machine. Its character affects every thing. If this be feeble, every movement must be of like character. If this be wrong, all is wrong. But if faith be in strong and lively exercise, all will be well. The hopes, the self-denial, the daily deportment, and the habitual joys of the believer will be such “ as becometh the Gospel.”

3. We may infer, from this subject, that infidelity is, in every respect, HOSTILE TO THE BEST INTERESTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY. Whatever strikes at the root of moral principle, and moral purity, will ever be found to give a fatal blow to social order, and political happiness. An infidel people, will ever be an immoral, profligate people ; and a people characteristically immoral and profligate, cannot long continue to be a free and happy people. It is, indeed, the fashionable, and ever-repeated watchword of infidelity. that Religion

is about to enslave us. My dear brethren, it would be just as true and rational to say, that the light of the sun is about to spread impenetrable darkness over the earth. Nothing can so certainly lead to the most enormous national corruption, and eventual slavery, as the prevalence of infidelity. Unbelief, as you have seen, is the teeming parent of all those doctrines and influences which form the elements of political disorder, violence, and oppression. And if ever we are prepared, as a people, to bow the neck to a despot, either civil or military, it will be brought about, not by coming under the power of the genuine Gospel; but by closing our eyes against its light; turning away from its blessed influence; and yielding ourselves to the power of that pestiferous unbelief, which is, of all things, best adapted to banish patriotism; to bring society under the profligate reign of ambition and voluptuousness; to undermine every principle of genuine liberty; and to convert our population into hordes of cut-throats, and brutal sensualists. The recent history of one of the most refined and literary nations of modern times, furnishes an exemplification of these remarks which it would be difficult to exaggerate, and which cannot speedily be forgotten. Let every **YOUNG MAN**, then, who wishes to serve and adorn his generation, beware of this evil! Let every **PATRIOT**, who seeks the true honour and welfare of his country, beware of it! Let **EVERY ONE** who does not wish to see our favoured nation sinking into the common grave of all the Republics which have

gone before her, beware of this political, as well as individual destroyer !

4. We are taught, by what has been said, that if we desire to bring our CHILDREN, and others committed to our care, to the knowledge and love of the truth ;— we must not content ourselves with MERE FRIGID INSTRUCTION, with MERE ADDRESSES TO THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS. That the *understanding* of every rational creature is to be primarily addressed on the subject of religion, is certain ; for we desire no one to yield a blind faith to the message which we bring. But if we desire to perform our duty faithfully, and with happy effect, we must address the HEART as well as the HEAD. We must take measures to enlist the WHOLE MAN in the great subject. We must endeavour to make a lodgment in favour of the Gospel in every power of the mind ;—in the memory, the conscience, the affections, and all the moral habits of the soul ;— and that from the earliest dawn of reason. The moral as well as the intellectual powers are gradually developed, and the former no less than the latter require assiduous culture ; nay, they require much *more* assiduous and laborious culture, because this species of tuition has, of all others, the most potent obstacles to encounter. I am sensible that some infatuated parents object to the course here recommended, and decline taking it, on the delusive plea, that every one ought to be left to his own free choice of religious principles, and that the mind ought not to be early pre-occupied with

what many call "prejudice" on this subject. Just as reasonable would it be to decline informing a child, beforehand, that fire will burn him, if he thrust his body into it; or that theft and lying will render him infamous, if he indulge in them;—lest he should be led to the adoption of *narrow prejudices* on these subjects. Can we too soon fill the minds of our children with abhorrence of every thing that we know will injure them, either in body or soul? Why are parents made the natural guardians of their young and tender offspring, but for this very purpose? Let the votary of "unbelief," or of indifference, with worse than heathen folly, refuse to pre-occupy the minds of his children with religious instruction.—Every Christian, it is hoped, will feel *his* obligation to begin this task, as early as the immortal souls committed to his care are CAPABLE OF RECEIVING IT; to watch, with intense interest, for the means of successful approach to their minds by every avenue; and, after having done all, to "pray without ceasing" for the energy of the Holy Spirit to render the whole effectual.

And, let me observe, that, if this duty be such as I have stated, it opens a wide field for the early, the unceasing, and the prayerful efforts of MOTHERS, to "train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." My respected and beloved sisters in Christ, on you devolves, in the present state of the church and the world, a weight of responsibility which can neither be expressed nor measured. Yours is the

task to impress the young and tender mind ; to direct the early workings of the heart ; to pre-occupy and fill those precious powers, of which evil is so apt to take an early and firm possession ;—in a word, to form the opening character of immortal spirits for God and heaven. More *has* been done, and more *may* be done, by enlightened and pious mothers, to erect barriers in the soul against the ravages of infidelity, than by all other earthly powers and influences together. In fact, if these barriers be *ever* erected, in that manner which is most likely to prove effectual, **MOTHERS MUST COMMONLY PERFORM THE WORK.** And can there be a more elevated or momentous employment than this assigned to a mortal ? Tell me not of the intellectual force, and literary achievements of a Madame De STAËL, and others, her compeers, if compeers she had, in her splendid career. The practical wisdom, the elevated piety, and the hallowed usefulness of such an one as ISABELLA GRAHAM, place her as much above the most lauded of those literary females, “as the heavens are higher than the earth.” *They* lived to dazzle, to astonish, or to amuse. *SHE* lived to DO GOOD, in the largest and best sense of the word ;—to dedicate the vigorous powers which her Maker had given her, to the best interests of her family, and her generation ;—to lead her children, and all who came within her reach, to the faith, the obedience, and the blessedness of the Gospel.* While I hold up her sainted image, this

* Few readers need to be informed of, what was perfectly understood by every hearer, when the sermon was delivered,—that the reference here is to the

evening, to all who hear me, I would say to every one of my respected countrywomen—GO, AND DO THOU LIKEWISE. Oh, if we had thousands like her, it would be an incalculable blessing, at this hour, to the American church and nation !

5. We may learn from this subject the reason why the *great*, the *rich*, the *philosophical*, and the *honourable* among men SO SELDOM EMBRACE THE GENUINE GOSPEL ; and also why, when they DO profess to embrace it, they so rarely appear to ENTER HEARTILY AND THOROUGHLY INTO ITS SPIRIT. The reason is—not that there is any deficiency of evidence in the Gospel ; not that there is any lack of those grand and glorious features which are adapted to command the veneration of the most cultivated intellect. But the real and principal reason is, that men “cannot serve God and mammon.” The Gospel is so holy in its character ; so self-denying in its nature ; and so utterly at war with the habits, maxims, and calculations of those who make a god of this world ; that the devotees of fashion, of luxury, and of ambition, must, of course, dislike it ; and either reject it altogether, or, at least, endeavour to hide from themselves its genuine demands. No wonder, then, that in those churches in which the Gospel is faithfully preached ; in which a

late Mrs. *Isabella Graham*, a native of *Scotland*, who, for more than thirty years, resided in the city of *New York*, where her bright and steady Christian example, and her enlightened, active and unwearied benevolence, might really be said to form an era in our annals of female usefulness. The “*Memoirs*” of this excellent woman, published a few years ago, have been so extensively read, as to render any further remark unnecessary.

spiritual religion is constantly insisted on ; and a scriptural discipline maintained ;—separating, as far as the skill of man can go, between the precious and the vile ;—no wonder that, in such churches, the votaries of worldly splendour and voluptuousness are seldom found occupying the place of members ; and that when they *are* so found, they generally appear to feel out of their element, and never really adorn their profession. It is, indeed, no matter of wonder. We ought, perhaps, rather to wonder, that persons of this class, are ever found even stated worshippers in such churches. O my friends, what is commonly termed *fashionable life*, is greatly, nay, irreconcilably opposed to the spirit of the Gospel :—its parade, its toils, its conversation, its vanity, its amusements, (even supposing every form of gross sin to be abhorred and avoided,) are all hostile to evangelical religion. Persons, therefore, who supremely delight in these things, and are resolved not to forsake them ;—will either abandon the worship of God altogether ; or, perhaps, more frequently, resort to those places of worship where a more lax and superficial system is proposed, under the name of Christianity ; some system which frowns very little, if at all, on the licentious indulgences and dissipations of life ; which allows men to “walk in the way of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind ;” and at the same time to bear the name of Christ’s disciples. and to cherish the confident hope

of reaching that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

6. We may see, in the light of this subject, THE ALARMING SITUATION OF INFIDELS. It is not probable that there are any of this class now within the sound of the preacher's voice. But if there *be* any, I would address them,—not in the language of "railing accusation," but in that of unfeigned good will, and concern for their welfare; and would say—men and brethren, hearken! Your situation is a most serious and awful one! If the real character of unbelief be such as I have stated; if it be evil in its nature, evil in its causes, and no less evil in its effects; if it always arise from an unhallowed source, and always carry with it the essence of rebellion against God; then,—I repeat it—your present course is one of awful guilt and danger; and its end, if persisted in, cannot fail of proving most disastrous. "Who hath hardened himself against Jehovah, and hath prospered?" Unto you is the word of salvation sent. Pardon and peace, and life eternal are freely offered you. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath life; but he that believeth not the Son hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Why will ye die?"—Say not, that God has given you rational powers; and that, in the exercise of these powers, you have not been able to believe the Christian revelation to be divine. We ask no one to exercise a blind faith. We call upon no one to believe without

evidence, or against evidence. But, let me seriously and affectionately ask—Have you ever carefully and candidly appealed to the rational powers of which you speak, in examining this great question? Are you certain that pride, prejudice, and corrupt inclination, are not really at the bottom of your unbelief? Have you ever given that precious Bible, which God has sent expressly for a “light to your feet, and a lamp to your path”—one serious, candid reading? Did you ever sit down humbly and impartially to examine the evidences of Christianity? Have you resorted, diligently and patiently, to the best sources of instruction on this subject, within your reach? Are you really *willing* to find the Gospel “a faithful and true saying?” And have you ever laid open your minds, by frequent and importunate prayer, to the God of all grace,—beseeching Him to enlighten and guide you, in your investigation of this most important of all subjects? If you have *not* proceeded in this manner; but have treated the subject with levity and indifference, neglecting serious inquiry, and hardening yourselves against the love and mercy, as well as the terrors, of Him who made you;—then, I can only say, as an inspired apostle said to one in his day—“Repent of this your wickedness, and pray God that the thoughts of your hearts may be forgiven you; for I perceive that you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” What you principally need, then, is not more logical proof; but a

more honest, impartial disposition ;—not new or more potent testimony that Christ was “ a Teacher sent from God ;” but “ a new heart and a right spirit,” inclining you to receive the truth with grateful affection. May God, of his infinite mercy, break the spell of infatuation which binds you, and make you to “ know the things which belong to your peace, before they are forever hidden from your eyes !”

7. Finally ; this subject teaches us the unspeakable importance of **CHRISTIANS SHOWING FORTH THEIR FAITH BY THEIR WORKS**. It has been often and justly remarked, with regard to ministers of the Gospel, that the best way to defend and propagate Christianity, is, not to stand contending with infidels, parrying their objections, and refuting their cavils ; but to hold forth incessantly, in all their genuine simplicity and power, the peculiar and most precious doctrines of the Gospel. So I believe it may be affirmed, with equal propriety and confidence, that the best way for each individual believer to promote the spread of our holy religion, is to **SET AN EMINENT EXAMPLE OF HOLY LIVING**. It was once said, by a Female Martyr, of feeble body, but of firm and undaunted spirit,—when standing before her merciless persecutors, who endeavoured to perplex and confound her by their learned subtleties—“ I cannot meet you in argument for Christ, BUT I CAN DIE FOR HIM.” My dear fellow-professors, we may not be called to “ die for Christ :” but we can all LIVE

FOR HIM. Alas! that this is the very last thing that many, who bear the Christian name, are willing to do! Verily, I FEAR WE OFTEN MAKE INFIDELS BY THE MANNER IN WHICH WE DEFEND AND EXHIBIT OUR RELIGION. Let me call upon you, then, in the close of this discourse, to make it your constant study to “adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour in all things;”—not by high claims;—not by angry contention;—but by holy and exemplary lives. Let it be manifest to all that your belief is sincere and practical, as well as orthodox. O Christians! if our temper and lives were always entirely in harmony with our profession—we should see much fewer unbelievers around us. A distinguished infidel of the last century, after spending a few days at the house of an eminently pious minister, of high literary as well as religious character, was so deeply impressed with his pure, benevolent and heavenly conversation, that he said to a sceptical friend,—“I must leave this house. If I remain here a day longer, I shall become a Christian in spite of myself.” There is a power in genuine Christian example which cannot be expressed. This is the holiest and happiest of all victories! Happy would it be for ourselves and for the world, if such victories could be more frequently celebrated. And they *would* be, if we were not all deficient in our duty. Yes, brethren, were we all such as we ought to be, “in word, in conversation. in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”—we should

“put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” “They, who are all of contrary part, would be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us.” Nay, our light would so “shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, would be constrained to glorify our Father in heaven.” Amen!