

The Gospel a revelation of mercy to the guilty : a sermon, delivered in Charlotte Episcopal Chapel, on January 22, 1818; for the benefit of the Magdalene Asylum / By ... Reverend Gerard Noel.

Contributors

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THE GOSPEL A REVELATION OF MERCY
TO THE GUILTY:

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN

Charlotte Episcopal Chapel,

ON JANUARY 22, 1818;

FOR THE BENEFIT OF

THE MAGDALENE ASYLUM.

BY THE

HONOURABLE AND REVEREND

GERARD NOEL, A. M.

VICAR OF RAINHAM, KENT.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE DIRECTORS.

EDINBURGH:

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SERMON

LUKE VII. 50.

“ And he said to the woman, thy faith hath saved thee : go in peace.”

WHEN our blessed Saviour condescended to visit the world, he came in a manner calculated, in every possible way, to benefit its inhabitants. His doctrine and his miracles arrested the attention of the rich, while his mean and destitute condition claimed the notice and sympathy of the poor ; and thus he touched, as it were, the whole circumference of human society. “ Harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” both in principle and feeling, he could penetrate every dwelling, and ask for intercourse with every character, with entire safety to his own purity. No scene was, in

the sense in which we use the word, a *temptation* to him, because there was no corresponding evil in his heart. He could associate where it would be dangerous for us, perhaps, to hold communion, on account of the corrupt state of our affections. And in all this intercourse with men, he had one great object in view. The schemes of politicians, and the theories of men of science, never occupied his mind, or guided his conversation. *The salvation of immortal souls, was the central point* to which all his labours, and all his instructions tended. Yes! he, whose eye could survey, in the same moment, the interests both of this world and the next—and whose hand could weigh, in the scales of unerring truth, the conduct and the thoughts of men—he declared, that to mankind but “one thing was needful;” that the loss of the soul would be poorly counterbalanced by the united possession of all this world’s treasures; and that hence the real source of joy and solicitude to benignant minds, will ever be the repentance and salvation of a sinner: “I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth!”

The benevolent efforts of Jesus Christ, to raise the fallen, and to save the guilty, escaped not the observation of those who were generally the prejudiced witnesses of his daily actions. His compassion was made the occasion of calumny and scorn: "This man receiveth sinners"—"The friend of publicans and sinners." Oh, well was it for a wretched world, that he refused not this appellation! But for this purpose did he become incarnate: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"—"This is a true and faithful saying, and worthy of all men to be received, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." We have upon record, in the Evangelic History, the account of many in whom this blessed design was actually accomplished; but, perhaps, there is no detail of any individual case more affecting, or more illustrative of the doctrine of God's unmerited mercy, than the case detailed in the latter part of this seventh chapter of St. Luke's Gospel.—The history is briefly this:

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And,

behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee, which had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty: and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she

hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace."

Omitting to notice many valuable lessons which might be drawn from this short but emphatic history, I shall limit myself, on the present occasion, to the consideration of three points, which, though detached from each other, appear to me the most prominent. I am led, by the subject before us,

I. To state the real nature of the Gospel dispensation.

II. To notice a very false estimate of virtue and vice, which is prevalent in the world. And,

III. To shew, that any institution of mercy, such as the one in behalf of which I am this day to speak, is in full accordance with the principles of the Gospel.

I would then implore the blessing of Almighty God, upon my endeavour to mark out to you, in the *first* place, the *real nature of the Gospel of Jesus Christ*.

By some men, Christianity is thought to derive its chief excellence, from its having offered to us a far purer system of morals than can be derived from any other religion ever known in the world; and, likewise, from its having ascertained to us the rewards and punishments of a future world.

When revealed religion is the subject of contemplation with such persons, many great peculiarities of the system are altogether removed from observation; and its *moral beauty*, and its *assurance of immortality*, have the exclusive possession of their thoughts. They admit the absurdity of those speculations, on

the subject of religion, which deform every Pagan theory—they admit the deficiency of every code of morals, which the most enlightened philosophy has at any time produced—they confess the uncertainty which attached itself to the best hopes of an eternal existence formerly entertained—and they thank God for the benefits which Christianity has conferred, in these respects, upon the world. They value the doctrine of the unity and perfections of God—they admire the adaptation of the Christian precepts to the best interests of society—the kindly influence of its humane, and softening, and compassionate sentiments, upon the conflicts of domestic intercourse—and the direct tendency of its patient and forgiving spirit, to melt down the ruggedness of many unkind passions, and “to generate a lasting and productive benevolence.” They gladly welcome the doctrine of a future world, and herein fondly cling to the assurances which Christianity contains. Many a ray from heaven now gleams upon the darkness of the sepulchre; and many a thought of no very distant reunion mingles with the painful memorials of friendship! But this is all their notion of the Gospel. The

awful portrait drawn of the human character is denied—the divinity and incarnation of Jesus Christ is disbelieved—the way of acceptance with God, through his sacrifice, is rejected; and, in the strength of their own excellence, they approach the ineffable glory of the Deity.—The regeneration of the soul, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, is consistently added to the number of discarded truths; and thus, in their view, the Gospel takes its stand by the side of other systems of belief, pre-eminent indeed among them, but shorn of all its peculiar lustre, and reduced to the level on which corrupted reason may measure its whole elevation! By *others*, the Gospel meets with a very different interpretation. They receive, as an undeniable truth, the doctrine of a partial degradation and depravity of mind in the human race. They admit the mercy of God, in sending his blessed Son to be a sacrifice for iniquity, and, by his obedience unto death, to procure for offenders the possible remission of their sins. They honour him as a Divine Being; and they look for the succour of his Holy Spirit, to aid them, in part, against the operation of evil, which they experience within their

breasts. But they add to this, their religious system, an opinion which mars the beauty, and destroys the value, of all which they believe. They imagine, that since Christ has died for sin—since the merits of his sacrifice, and the voice of his intercession, are all prevalent with God—therefore the Divine Being will relax the rigour of his law in their behalf; therefore, looking upon the work of Christ, on the one hand, and on their frailty, on the other, he will be satisfied with the requisitions of a *mitigated commandment*, and accept a *sincere*, in the place of a *perfect*, obedience at their hands. If they violate, habitually, no striking obligation of social life—if they are, upon the whole, sober, just, honourable, and benevolent—if they reverence the outward forms of religion,—they now securely cast themselves upon the divine goodness, and look to the merits of Jesus Christ, as ready to make up the deficiency in what may be the requisite amount of their moral worth. This is, I fear, a view of the Gospel widely prevalent among all classes; and it contains so much plausibility, that the errors by which it is maintained are the more difficult of detection.

Yet does this opinion, in its actual operation, undermine the whole fabric of revealed truth—dishonour the purity of God,—and derogate from the glory of Christ. If God can now accept what is very improperly called *sincere* obedience, in the place of perfect obedience, then has Christ's death become, in its effects, an inducement to sin—a relaxation of the authority of God—a dishonour put upon his righteous government—a license to contemn his law. If men are to be accepted upon the *joint* ground of their good deeds and Christ's merits, then is confusion and disorder introduced into the whole scheme of revealed religion; then, to use the words of an apostle, “work is no more work,” and, “grace is no more grace;” the all-sufficiency of the Redeemer is made void; and He submitted to humiliation, to reproach, to agony, to death, only that man might still boast before his God, and plead the *sincerity* of his desires, in mitigation of the *pollution* of his practice!

It is, however, perfectly intelligible, that this view of the Gospel should be very popular. For this scheme *saves the dignity of man*, while it affords a *remedy for his fears*. If much that

is really and spiritually good is allowed still to remain in his character, he can bear, without pain, the imputation of partial evil and general frailty. He has still a foundation, on which he can build up the edifice of self-importance. "That imperfection attaches to all," is a concession which does not carry with it any sensible feeling of degradation. Such a scheme of religion is, therefore, quite tolerable, even to the "natural man:"—while the belief of the sacrifice of Christ is too healing a consideration, whenever he glances at his frailties, not to be gladly accepted as a stay to his mind. It is a balm to the wounds of conscience; and hence is readily added to the former notion of general integrity of character, in order to make up, by their united strength, the needful asylum for the soul, when contemplating the tremendous destinies of eternity!

I would repeat, (for the subject is of the deepest moment,) that this interpretation of revealed religion *requires not a converted mind* in those who value it. They may find full scope within the notion of *sincere* obedience, for the gratification of every worldly desire. Having no notion of the spirituality of the di-

vine law, they can “be of the world, and the world can love her own.” They unite the irreconcilable services of God and Mammon—and never would “*they* be persecuted for righteousness sake;” because, though they may shun the profligate, the general designs and spirit of the worldly quite fall within the range of their own pursuits. They are still “the friends of the world,” and conformed to its spirit. It ought, however, to be added here, that there may be some persons, who, while, from the operation of prejudice, the influence of names they respect, and early associations, they cling nominally to the foregoing theory, are in actual feeling and practice arrived far beyond the limits to which the force of their own system would carry them. They appear, and “charity would fain hope all things,” to be far more lowly in their own eyes—to value the hopes of the Gospel with greater simplicity of attachment, and to feel the emptiness of the world with a much greater power than generally results from the system in question. But, though such persons may walk for a time in the world’s circle; if they are indeed, under a divine influence, seeking “a better country,”

they will not always linger where they now have rested,—they will, ere long, “come out, and be separate from the world.” A clearer view of the spirituality of God’s law will lay them low in the dust; and *then the merits of the Redeemer’s cross will be their exclusive confidence.* That *blessed cross will fill the whole sphere of vision*; and their grateful ascription will be, “not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name be the praise!”

There is a *third* distortion of the Christian religion, even more fatally deceptive than the two former, to which I can now simply refer. It is the deadly opinion, that, since the Son of the blessed God has entirely undertaken the salvation of the sinner; therefore he may sin, that grace may abound. As if the cross of Christ marked out no abhorrence of iniquity on the part of God! as if salvation was possible, while the heart is the abode of allowed evil! as if happiness was attainable, in either earth or heaven, while no one element of which happiness is composed, resides in the hearts of those by whom it is to be enjoyed!

Now, the view of the Gospel given in the history before us, is very different from any of

those already stated. It is very true, that the morality of the Gospel claims more than all the admiration which the most enlightened mind can bestow ;—it is very true, that Christianity has chased away the gloom which encircled the regions of the dead, and thrown upon that dark valley many a blessed beam from heaven, “having brought life and immortality to light;” —it is very true, that the incarnate Son of God has made atonement for sin, and placed salvation upon a different foundation from that on which eternal happiness originally stood;—it is very true, that Jesus Christ has undertaken this great work ; abolished death ; brought in an everlasting righteousness ; and effected a redemption complete in all its parts, and requiring nothing in the way of merit to be added by the person redeemed. But it is likewise true, that other statements require to be made, other sentiments require to be unfolded, in order to pourtray the Gospel in its beautiful and just proportion. In the hands of the Socinian, the Pharisee, or the Antinomian, its harmony and its efficacy are destroyed. Let us observe its character, as delineated by its gracious Author, in the verses connected with the text.

Our Saviour was, at this time, a guest in the house of Simon, one of the Pharisees, who appears to have laboured under the prejudices common to that self-righteous sect, in reference to the claims of Jesus Christ as the long-promised Messiah. The mild reproach addressed to him by Jesus Christ, that he had denied to him the customary marks of hospitality due from the host to his guest, implies, that his reception into his family, on the present occasion, was not to be attributed to respect and attachment, but to curiosity, or some similar motive. While thus a guest in Simon's house, a poor but notorious sinner, drew near to Jesus, and fell at his feet, in all the humiliation and sorrow of a conscious offender against God. It is evident, from the benediction which concluded her present intercourse with the Saviour, that she had been more than a listener to his earnest addresses to the guilty ; that she had been convinced of sin ; that she had recognised the divine power of the Son of God to forgive sin ; and that she had yielded up her agonised mind to the doctrine of mercy and of grace ; and that, from the belief of these glad tidings, she

now “loved,” and that “much,” the Redeemer, in whom she trusted.

The Pharisee, ignorant of his own heart—ignorant of God’s perfections—ignorant of the object of the Messiah’s promised advent into the world—judged it impossible that even a prophet, under the inspiration of God, should receive the voluntary homage of so infamous a character. Our Lord, “who needed not that any should testify what was in man,” knew the thoughts passing in Simon’s mind, and immediately explained the reason of his conduct ; or, in other words, explained *the nature of the Gospel*, by a brief, but most intelligible parable—“There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty ; and *when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.*” We are here taught, *that as man is entirely ruined by sin, so he is entirely saved by the free grace of God. When he has nothing to pay, he is frankly forgiven all.* The Gospel is thus a revelation of pure mercy—it is a declaration, on the part of God, that he will magnify the inexhaustible riches of his goodness, in the free pardon of the guilty, and in the full safety of

the lost. The sinner pardoned, shall owe all to the boundless love of God. His own claims shall be utterly annihilated, and God shall have all the glory. "Oh, Israel, thou hast ruined thyself; but in me is thy help." "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but by his mercy he saved us." Whether the debt be fifty, five hundred, or five thousand pence, the obligation to punishment is the same, and the way of escape the same. No human being shall tread the courts of heaven but through this undeserved act of favour. No human being shall partake the blessedness of the just, but as he receives the qualifications for that blessedness simply as a gratuitous benefit from God. No human being shall breathe forth the hallelujah of adoring gratitude, but in complete renunciation of his own worthiness; and in unreserved ascription "of praise unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood."

This process may seem very simple—this method of pardon very easy—this road to heaven very broad—this statement very degrading

to the human character. But simple as is the process—easy as is the way to pardon—broad as is the road to heaven, as far as any requisite in man is demanded, “for whosoever will may come, and take of the water of life freely: yet as it respects Jesus Christ, as it respects the harmonious display of the divine attributes, the plan was most complicated—the road was inconceivably difficult—the price would have been still *unpaid*, if the treasures of the universe had been offered and exhausted—“it cost more to redeem their souls;” and such captives must let that hope alone for ever.

The mystery of the Gospel is this, “God manifest in the flesh”—the Godhead uniting itself to the nature of man, in order that the nature of man might be raised to the nature of God—the Son of the Most High appears as the substitute for the offenders—sin is imputed to him—he is dealt with as the malefactor—he is “wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. God will shew unutterable mercy—he will display his name and nature to be *Love*; but he will make this discovery of love in a manner glorious to his

Justice, and honourable to his *Purity*. When he then proclaimed a free pardon—when he published reconciliation—when he said to the bankrupt, “be enriched”—when he said to the dead, “live!”—when he said to the degraded heir of hell, “take possession of the realms of bliss;” lest it should be presumed, that rebellion against the majesty of heaven is, in its consequences, any thing less than *perdition*; lest it should be presumed, that the exercise of one attribute should cast a stain upon the inactivity of another; lest it should be presumed, that God is, in his essential holiness, any thing but a consuming fire to the guilty; the sword of justice pierced through the *Surety’s* heart, and the Son of God bled beneath his Father’s hand! Oh, most astonishing, but most blessed and effectual display of divine love! Now is the fountain of mercy opened, never to be closed again! now are the glad tidings of great joy sounded through the world! now may the most worthless, abandoned, lost, degraded of human beings lift up his downcast eyes, and exclaim, “*God can be just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;—for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*”

But in the delineation of the Gospel salvation, we must not pause at this point; we must ask what the term *salvation* does in fact imply? To elucidate the question, a previous question must be asked; what is the *destruction* to which salvation stands opposed? Now that destruction refers to two evils; *the loss of happiness*, as arising from *internal* and *ungodly passions*, which, like the troubled sea, cannot rest; and the loss of happiness as arising from the *wrath of God* revealed, and at length to be *inflicted* on all *unrighteousness of men*. Any deliverance, therefore, which shall be effectual to the end proposed, must meet these two disasters. It must avert wrath; and it must dry up the source of ungodliness. It must remit the penalty; and it must give back the dispositions which insure repose of mind. Nor can one of these blessings to fallen creatures be made the condition of the right to the other. To suspend salvation from wrath, upon the condition of repentance and holy affections, would be, in fact, to shut men up in endless despair—would be to bid a bankrupt come for the remission of his debt, whenever endless wealth should be found in his possession. Now the

Gospel does meet, and that fully, both these evils. We have already seen how it provides *a pardon for the guilty*—how it delivers from *wrath*. It will immediately appear how it *recovers to holiness*, or to a disposition for happiness, all those from whom *it averts wrath*. There is a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which exactly expresses the statement I wish to make. “But now,” saith the Apostle, when contrasting the Levitical priesthood with the priesthood of Christ, “but now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.—For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will *put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people*. And I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and *their sins and iniquities I will remember no more.*” In this passage of Scripture, the engraving of the law on the heart, or the restoration of holy love to God, is as much described to be *an act of the divine prerogative, as the oblivion of offences*. Both are the dis-

tinguished and peculiar blessings attached to the covenant, of which Jesus Christ is the mediator; and both are essential to the very notion of salvation. He who should separate the two, and cling exclusively to either, can never find peace. If he should embrace the offer of a *free pardon*, and forget to implore that *holiness* which is necessary to the enjoyment of God's favour, he turns the grace of God into licentiousness, and deludes his soul to perdition. If, on the other hand, he should labour to work in himself the dispositions which are pleasing to God, and should reject the gracious promise of a *full and unconditional remission of offences*, he robs Christ of his glory, and perishes beneath the ruins of the self-righteous fabric he is proudly endeavouring to rear! Let it then never be forgotten, that the Gospel promises both *favour* and *holiness*—that at once it tells us, that “*we have an advocate with the Father*,”—and that “*we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them*.” This is the undeviating process of the divine compassion. Never does pardon cheer the guilty, where sanctification does not cleanse the polluted.

Holiness is the element of happiness ; holiness is the evidence of forgiveness. The possession of these blessings draws the grand line of demarcation between the real and nominal church of Christ. They who compose the true church are “justified by faith ;” and “the spirit of the Son is put within their hearts, whereby they cry,” in the awful familiarity of affection, “Abba, Father !”

The history before us confirms the one part of this statement, as strongly as the other. The parable we have considered proclaimed the grace of God. The actions of the penitent on whose account the parable was spoken, attest the accompanying gift of holiness—“her sins which are many are forgiven, for she *loved*,” or, to suit our Lord’s own argument, rather, “she *loveth* much ;” that is, *her love is the evidence of her pardon*. These actions of love were manifest. Her’s was that broken and contrite heart “which God will not despise”—her’s was that sense of shame, which sank her down to the very dust—her’s was that desire of mercy, which led her gladly to the only *fountain* of mercy—her’s was that gratitude which wanted language to unfold its feelings—her’s

was that faith which kept her at the Saviour's feet, lest hope should abandon her for ever—her's was, in fine, that love which, shed abroad in her heart by the Holy Ghost, inspired her with new and resolute desires, to live no longer to herself, but to God! Thus she stood a wondrous monument of divine compassion and power!—"And he said unto the woman thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace!"

But lest any humble child of God, through weakness of faith, and the subtlety of Satan, should draw a conclusion from this statement destructive of his own consolation, I must yet add to it a few words. I have said that *holiness* uniformly accompanies *forgiveness*. I would remark farther, that this holiness, though *entire* as to its *principle*, is not *complete* as to its *operation*. It is in heaven that "the spirits of the just are made *perfect*." On earth, there is a mournful conflict between "the law in the members" and "the law of the mind;" between the carnal and the spiritual nature. Let no one, therefore, "who is hungering and thirsting after righteousness," and to whom the Gospel salvation is infinitely "precious," be discouraged, because he experiences this

conflict. “It is through much tribulation he is to enter into the kingdom of heaven;” but his final victory is not doubtful. “He shall be made more than conqueror, through him that hath loved him, and given himself for him.” For God hath said, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee;”—“The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee!”

II. This history will lead me, in the next place, to advert to a very false estimate of virtue and vice *which is widely prevalent in the world.*

The standard to which men very generally apply sentiments and actions, in order to ascertain their moral quality, is *the detriment or benefit of civil society.* Their definition of sin would not have been, that “*it is the transgression of God’s law;*” but that it is “*the violation of the peace of society.*” Simon, the Pharisee, evidently used this standard of good and evil. He knew well, that crimes, such as belonged to the woman now before him, tear away all the decencies, and cut asunder all the

ties which bind human beings together in the connections of domestic life. He knew that licentiousness, in a female, is, in general, the first step to every other sin—the first of a fatal series of actions, which, leading down to the lowest degradation of character, prepares the mind even for the perpetration of drunkenness, and robbery, and murder ! He looked, therefore, with aversion upon this penitent. But, measuring *himself* by this same standard, he found abundant ground for self-complacency and self-esteem. He was wise and good in his own eyes. He had no convictions of guilt, because, disturbing by no gross attack the repose of social life, he never brought his sentiments to any other test.

My brethren, this same rule of judgment widely prevails among ourselves. Those actions are *uniformly condemned* which *insult the institutions of society*, but those are *lightly passed over* which *insult the majesty of God*. The man who speaks much of integrity and truth—who abhors deceit and chicanery in the conduct of life—who is jealous of his honour, and ready to wash out any imputation upon that honour in his own or his brother's blood !

—this same man will profane the name of his God with the most thoughtless levity—will despise the sanctity of the Sabbath—will contemn and cast aside the guidance of the Bible—will live without prayer, and act as if he were the arbiter of his own destiny. This same man will even prey upon the virtues of others—will sacrifice, and that without remorse, the peace, and reputation, and ultimately the life, of many a female, allured by his artifices from the path of rectitude ! And notwithstanding all this irreligion, and this inhumanity, he will still maintain his character in the world, and be esteemed a man of probity, and a man of honour !

Oh ! my brethren, how different will be the rule which will regulate the proceedings of the great assize, at which, ultimately, all the inhabitants of the earth must take their trial, from that which now guides the tribunals of the world ! Human laws, and human opinions, generally speaking, take cognizance only of crimes which affect the order and government of a temporal magistrate, and have no kind of reference to the moral government of God ; but a day is coming, when a higher standard

of good and evil will be erected. Mean time, alas! the delusion in question widely spreads; and all that class of actions which respect the immediate authority of God, are swept from observation. To take one, out of many illustrations. It may not occur, for instance, to the judge of an earthly court, when passing sentence on some violator of the public peace, that the crime, for which that individual is about to suffer, merited condemnation, is perhaps a less crime, when referred to the Majesty of heaven, than many which have harbour in the judge's own bosom. He descants, and he does this very justly, on the atrocious inroad made by the criminal on the happiness and security of his neighbour: but never once glances, it may be, in any time of reflection, at his *own* contempt of God's authority; at his secret pride and irreligion; at his awful rejection of that method of mercy revealed to him by the Ruler of the universe! How will the last judgment, my brethren, confound the previous judgment of mankind! How will characters rise and sink, at that day, in direct opposition to the opinions formerly entertained of their worth! Many, in that day, who died

amidst the plaudits of surrounding associates, “will awake to shame and everlasting contempt;” while many, who bore the world’s scorn, and went down to death under the load of calumny and reproach, will rise from the dust the accredited servants of God, and will shine as the stars in the firmament, in the possession of “glory, and honour, and eternal life!”

III. But I must hasten to the third and last selected subject of remark, as afforded by the passage of Scripture under our present notice. I must go on to shew you, that an Institution of mercy, such as the one in whose behalf I am this day to speak, is in full accordance with the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and, as such, claims your kind countenance and support.

We have seen, that the great subject of divine revelation, is the mercy and compassion of God to the inhabitants of this revolted world. We have seen, that all stand in urgent need of this compassion; and that though the sins of men may acquire more or less of aggravation and guilt, yet that we all stand upon one level, as it respects the way of our acceptance with

God. We have seen, that God willeth the death of no one sinner of our fallen race, but rejoiceth in the exercise of mercy to the most rebellious. But, in blessed addition to this *theory* of grace, we have noticed its *practical application*, by our Saviour, to a case of the most notorious kind. We have seen our gracious Redeemer in the very act of welcoming again the prodigal to his protection, and receiving back the outcast to his bosom! We have seen him delighting over the new creation by his Spirit in her heart—accepting her contrition—approving her faith—and remitting her offences. We have seen him *blessing her* whom *yet man despised*, and, pouring the balm of heavenly consolation into the soul, *wronged* as well as *polluted* by the vices of the world! My brethren, does not this example say emphatically to us, “Go, and do likewise”—go, and be the instruments of snatching the youthful transgressor from the errors of her way—go, and save her soul from death, ere she has grown hardened in her sin and her shame! My brethren, the Magdalene Asylum is, then, an Institution in direct accordance with this example of our divine Redeemer. It does “go

and do likewise :” and if the penitent’s history, now considered, is an *encouraging* instance of the Saviour’s compassion, so are the instances recorded in the annals of this Society, *encouraging* memorials of the benevolence of its conductors !

The Society was formed in this city in the year 1797; and, after twenty years have rolled away, I am enabled to tell you the following plain and simple facts :—At the end of the year 1816, 273 females had, since the commencement of the Society, been received into the house. Of these unfortunate women, while many have gone back to their shame, and been the instruments of evil to others, it is cheering to be able to state, that 91 have been placed out in service, and proved, I trust in many instances, useful and industrious members of Society—54 have been returned to their friends, and received back, in penitent sincerity, to parental care—34 are at present within the walls of the Asylum ; while some have died within its shelter, affording many a hope, that they were departing to a world where sin and suffering are alike unknown !

A few years since, the embarrassments of the funds led the Directors to fear, that they would be compelled to diminish the scale of their exertion, and to send back many of the applicants to the abodes of their iniquity. But, through the kind providence of God, these fears have not been realised—they have, by the liberality of the public, been nearly carried through their difficulties. Their funds, however, at this moment, are not only exhausted, but a debt of L. 200 is pressing upon the Institution.

I simply state these facts to you, my brethren, and I beg you, as far as your *ability* and your *consciences* shall direct, to give gladly and liberally to the support of this Asylum. Place before your minds the good it has imparted, and the evil it has remedied. The majority of those claimants upon your compassion are very young—from fifteen to twenty-five years of age. How early to be sunk in crime!—to be degraded in character—to be outcasts from the good—to be hastening to untimely death—yea, to eternal destruction! How mournful their case, even if remorse and contrition should wring them to the heart!—They

have no character—they have no friends—the doors of their dishonoured home are generally shut against them ! Whither shall they turn—whither shall they escape from the evils that crowd upon them ?—who will lead them back to decency—to industry—to God ? This compassionate Institution gives a healing answer to these inquiries. *Here, they may find* those who will correct, and watch, and instruct their minds—who will bend their knees in prayer to God—who will carry them to the pages of his word, and lead them to the lessons of his love ! *Here* they will find those who will train them again in the paths of industry—who will place them in the families of the upright—or who will prepare the way for their restoration to the home they had so madly quitted. *Here, finally, they may find* those who will soothe the sorrow, and mitigate the shame, of the offended parent, and dispose him to press once more to his heart the child, cut off from his intercourse, not by the solitude of the grave, but by the publicity of infamy and crime !

FINIS.



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to these inquiries. Alas! they only find those
who will correct and warn and instruct their
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God—who will carry them to the pages of the
Word and lead them to the lessons of his love!
Few they will find those who will train them
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the home they had so cruelly quitted. Alas!
Finally, they say that those who will soothe the
sorrow, and mitigate the shame of the offended
parent, and direct him to press once more to
his heart the child, torn off from his infancy,
not by the solitude of the grave, but by the
publicity of infancy and crime!

