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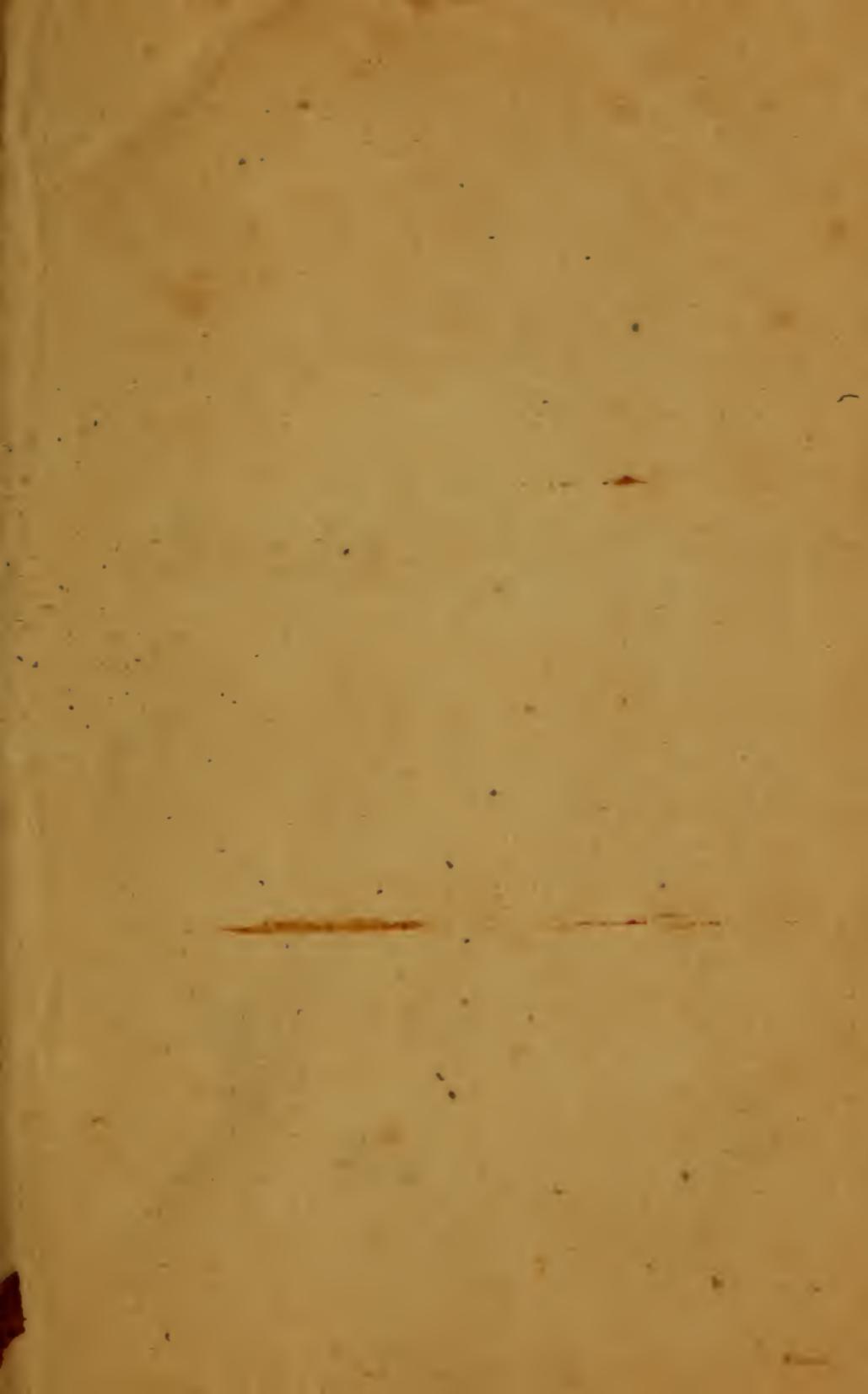
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5  
*Reformation upon the Gospel-Scheme.*

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A  
S E R M O N

PREACH'D TO THE

S O C I E T I E S

F O R

*Reformation of Manners,*

A T

S A L T E R S - H A L L,

*On Monday, June 30, 1735.*

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By *J O H N G U Y S E*, D. D.

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H E B. ix. 10.

-----Until the time of reformation.

**O**F all the reformers that have appeared in the world, there never were any comparable to our Lord Jesus Christ, the great *apostle and high-priest of our profession*; and of all the *schemes* of reformation that have ever been advanc'd, none are worthy to be nam'd the same day with his. Neither the celebrated † *Numa, Lycurgus, Solon, Confucius*, nor any other among the  
A 2 heathens,

† *Numa* was the second king of the *Romans*, who instituted many sacred ceremonies, and enacted useful laws; and to give them the greater credit with the people, pretended that he receiv'd them from the Nymph *Ageria*, who recommended them as most acceptable to the Gods. *Lycurgus* was the famous *Lacedemonian* lawgiver, who reform'd the government, enacted good laws, and pretended a divine sanction for them. *Solon* was one of the seven wise men of *Greece*, who being governor of *Athens*, abrogated *Draco's* cruel laws, and enacted better in their stead. And *Confucius* was a *Chinese* Philosopher, whose superior abilities in politicks and morals gave him a great influence in the establishment of their laws; and he is still held in vast veneration among that people; tho' they don't idolize him, he having opposed that doctrine.

heathens, no nor even *Moses* himself, the inspired prophet and law-giver of *Israel*, could ever pretend to a dignity and ability like our Saviour's, who *was God manifested in the flesh*;\* or to an attempt so excellent and successful as his, who gives life and efficacy to all that is worthy to be called a reformation, as he is *head over all things to the church, and is ascended far above all heavens, that he might fill all things* †.

What a refined and perfect scheme of doctrine did he publish and injoin! what a clear light did he diffuse thro' the minds of his followers! and what a surprizing alteration did he make in the world, which lay in wickedness at the time of his appearing in flesh! What a spiritual, reasonable and holy service did he set up among the *Jews*, instead of their carnal ordinances and figurative institutions, and instead of their corrupt traditions! and how prevalent was his gospel to reclaim some of the most obstinate among them, and to triumph in its glorious conquests over all the secular interests and opposition of *Gentile* nations! Where can we find an account of such wonderful changes, in the religious and moral temper and behaviour of mankind, in all the volumes of sacred or civil records, of antient or modern date, as are collected in one short epitome, chiefly of the *acts* of two of Christ's *apostles*, as a specimen of what was done by the  
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\* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† Eph. i. 22. and iv. 10.

the rest, within the compass of about thirty years after his ascension to heaven?

There you see that these apostles themselves became quite other men than they were before: The apostle of the *circumcision* was no longer weak or timorous in the cause of God and goodness, or aiming at temporal dominion and worldly grandeur; but was bold and resolute, bravely exposing himself to hardships and sufferings for the honour of Jesus and the salvation of men: And the apostle of the *Gentiles* was no longer raging with fury against the church, and violating all the laws of religion and humanity in cruel persecutions; but became meek and merciful, and trod in the steps of his great Lord and Master, who went about doing good. And there you see how the word of the Lord ran and was glorified; what numerous converts were made among *Jews* and *Gentiles*, to the overthrow of the superstitions of the one, and the abominable idolatries of the other, together with all the errors and prejudices, lusts and passions, immoralities and profaneness of both. This is the *time of reformation* pointed to in our text, as the fruit of the priesthood of Christ, who *entered once by his own blood into the holy place, having obtain'd eternal redemption for us*, as it follows in the next verses.

This reformation gathered strength, and spread its vital powers for several ages through the nations of the earth; but there was afterwards a gradual decline, by means of the  
 corruptions

corruptions of men, till at length an anti-christian spirit and temper defaced the simplicity of the gospel, and the complicated abominations of Popery, in doctrine and practice, exalted themselves upon its ruins: However, a little above two centuries ago, this gospel, attended with the power of God's Spirit, displayed its illustrious light and virtues again in the *Protestant* reformation; then a new face appear'd upon the religion and morals of the people, to the honour of God, the benefit of human society, and the salvation of multitudes who were turned to the Lord. Whilst the first principles of this reformation subsisted and prevailed, immorality and profaneness were put to the blush, and forc'd to hide their heads in a corner; religion was in fashion, and wickedness was accounted, what it is, the worst of reproach. But, as the fact appears to me, when the purity of the gospel came to be corrupted, a degeneracy in practice ensu'd, and gradually sunk into the various forms of depraved manners, which have been the just complaint of good men for many years past, and are the growing burden and disgrace of the present age.

To oppose this swelling tide, several worthy gentlemen form'd themselves into a society, under the patronage of *Queen Mary*, of glorious memory, in the year 1691.† From this original we may date the *Societies for reformation*

† See the account of the Societies for reformation of Manners, p. 6.

*mation of manners*, which continue to this very day, and which consist of generous public-spirited Protestants of all denominations, who, breaking through their lesser differences, unite like Christians in the common cause of God and religion: And, as they are sensible that all their own attempts will prove unsuccessful unless God be with them, they have order'd a religious solemnity, twice in the year, to implore his blessing on their righteous design, and to subserve it by suitable instructions, encouragements and enforcements from the sacred oracles. Their commands have now put the honour of this important service upon me; may God enable me to answer the present call of his providence, with some advantage to the noble cause they are engaged in!

What I wou'd attempt on this occasion, is,

I. To state *the notion of reformation*.

II. To shew *the advantages of the gospel-scheme* to promote it. And

III. To point out some proper methods of *improving this scheme* for the reformation we are aiming at; which may serve for a practical improvement of the subject.

We will begin with the first of these, which is,

I. Briefly to state *the notion of reformation*.

The word ( $\delta\iota\sigma\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) rendered reformation in our text, signifies a correcting, or setting things to rights that were out of order before, and directing them to their proper scope

scope and end; and the reformation here intended relates to such a regulation of doctrine, worship, discipline and obedience, in religious concerns, as makes a happy and holy change in the heart and life.

All things were defective and out of order, when our Saviour appear'd to set up a new dispensation of grace; the worship of God had very much consisted in ceremonial and typical institutions, which, as they sanctified to the purifying of the flesh for legal cleansing, are called *carnal ordinances*; these were abus'd and perverted by the additions of men, and the principles and manners of the people were grossly corrupted: But Christ came to fulfil the antient types, to throw off human impositions, to establish a more pure and spiritual worship and government, and to give a system of doctrines, which, by the power of his Spirit, should make a blessed alteration in the church, and in the world. Then was *the judgment of this world, and the prince of this world was cast out*\*; a reformation was set on foot, Satan was dethroned, and the last and best dispensation was introduced for raising up a kingdom of grace and holiness, which is to continue, without any other to succeed it, to the end of time: Hence it is called *a kingdom which cannot be moved*, and it contains provisions of *grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*. †

But

\* John xii. 31.

† Heb. xii. 28.

But the reformation, which the present occasion calls us to consider, most directly relates to a regulation of the external conduct of life; and yet, as a reformation of the life will be attended with insuperable difficulties, and the corruptions of mankind will prove too hard for all human laws and restraints, unless there be a change upon the heart, it is very necessary to take this into the account; which leads us to the next branch of our discourse, and that is,

II. To shew *the advantages of the gospel-scheme*, to promote a reformation in the heart and life.

And concerning this, we may observe the following things.

1. It represents the *atonement of Christ*, as the *ground or basis* of reformation.

I the rather begin with this, because it is the chief argument which our apostle labours in this epistle, and leads our thoughts to in the next verses to our text, where he speaks of *Christ's being come as an high-priest*, and of his *having obtained eternal redemption for us by his own blood*, when thro' the eternal Spirit he offered himself without spot to God, that he might *purge our consciences from dead works to serve the living God*\*. Upon man's apostacy from God, all holy intercourse was cut off between them, and all grace was forfeited, whereby the sinner might be enabled to return to him; divine justice might have seized upon the transgressor,

\* Ver. 11, 12, 14.

gressor, and insisted that he should die for his iniquity, and divine mercy might have withdrawn so as never to influence and accept his return; and what must have been the consequence of this, but that we should have been as irreclaimable from our evil ways as the Devils themselves? But our *Emmanuel* has appear'd to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, that an honourable way might be opened for communications of divine favour to us, and for our effectual and acceptable return to God thro' him; for *he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God\**, in a way of obedience and acceptance here, and in a way of compleat enjoyment hereafter; and he *gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works †*.

But, besides this great design of his death for the conversion and salvation of a peculiar people, God was thereby so far reconciled to the whole human race, as to preserve it from utter confusion, and to bestow upon all mankind such common gifts of moral goodness, as are necessary for the benefit of human society. In this respect, says an excellent writer ‡, “ Christ upholds all things by his mediatory as well as divine power ||, which else would have sunk into the abyss: By virtue of this mediation, some power is given back to man,

as

\* 1 Pet. iii. 18. † Tit. ii. 14.

‡ Charnock, Vol. 2. edit. 2d. p. 105. || Heb. i. 3.

as a new donation; yet not so much as that he is able by it to regenerate himself; and whatever power man has, is originally from this cause, and grows not up from the stock of nature, but from common grace; hereby those divine sparks in their understandings, and what ever is morally praise-worthy in them is kept up by the grace of God; which was the cause that Christ, *by the grace of God, tasted death for every man\**; or, as this author had before express'd it, in this sense he may be said to taste death for every man; whereby the apostle seems to intimate, that by this grace, and by this death of Christ, any remainders of that honour and glory wherewith God crowned man at first, are kept upon his head, as will appear if you consider the *eighth Psalm*, whence the apostle cites these words, which are the ground of his discourse of the death of Christ."

Without this appeasing death of the Son of God, our apostate world would have sunk in its own ruins, and there would have been no room for a reformation; but this has laid a foundation for it, that, by divine aids, the peace and order of human society may be maintain'd in a regulation of its manners, and that many sons may be brought to glory; hence natural virtue, as well as special grace, is called the gift of God, as the apostle speaking of *continence*, says, *every man has his proper gift of God* †; and our Lord tells us, that they only *to whom it is given* ‡, could receive a suggestion

\* Heb. ii. 9.

† 1 Cor. vii. 7.

‡ Matt. xix. 11.

tion which the disciples had made against marrying.

2. The gospel-scheme gives us the *most excellent plan of righteousness*, as the rule of reformation.

It has furnished us with the finest draught of morals that ever was seen in the world; and all our modern Deists, however they reproach it, are beholden to this for their more refin'd systems of morality, than the wisest of the heathens could ever work up. It explains the duties of the eternal law of nature, in their utmost spirituality and widest extent; and divinely inforces their obligations by the immediate authority of Christ. Here, as the doctrines of religion toward God, so the doctrines of self-government, and of righteousness and goodness toward men, and every personal, social, and publick virtue, are set out with vast variety and exactness. Here every thing is prescribed, that is worthy of human nature in its own constitution, and in all its relations to God, and fellow-creatures. There is no good but it enjoins, and no evil but it condemns, from the highest to the lowest instances of each that can be imagin'd; for the gospel of the *grace of God teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world\**; and that *whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,*

\* Tit. ii. 12.

*praise*, we should *think of these things*†, so as to observe and practice them.

Here we are called to humility, meekness and patience, temperance and sobriety, self-denial and chastity, even in our inmost thoughts, as well as outward behaviour: Here we are obliged to a regulation of all our passions and appetites, even unto the suffering of injuries with patience, forgiving of enemies, and praying for them that despitefully use us; and to all dispositions and acts of love and charity, of brotherly-kindness, courteousness and beneficence, of mercy, fidelity and righteousness; or, in a word, of doing to others as we would that in like circumstances they should do to us: And here holy zeal and courage for God and religion, resignation to his will, a manly behaviour, and proper diligence in our respective callings, together with all the duties which result from the various relations of life, such as neighbours and acquaintance, friends and foes, rich and poor, parents and children, husbands and wives, brethren and sisters, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, are explain'd, recommended and inculcated upon us.

And, on the other hand, all their contrary vices are expos'd in their odious forms, and strictly forbid; such as wrath, anger, clamour and evil speaking, with all malice and revenge, cursing and profane swearing, and the like. Here all rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness, fornication and uncleanness,

† Phil. iv. 8.

cleanness, adultery, effeminacy, and the monstrous unnatural wickedness of sodomitical practices, are severely censured: And here are prohibitions of all hypocrisy and pusillanimous fear, fretting and murmuring at God's disposals, extorsions and oppressions, lying and stealing, knavery and cheating, hatred, variance, emulations, envyings and murders, and every kind of injury to the persons, reputation, liberty and property of others.

All these things, as every one that reads the New Testament may see, are laid down in a clear and easy light; and our obligations to square our conduct by them are put upon the plain and well attested authority of God, which enjoins or forbids them: They are not left to work their way to our minds and consciences by the laboured deductions of our own thoughts concerning the fitness and reasons of things, which is a more tedious way of being convinced of them; and which, in many instances, not one in a hundred is capable of going into, or perhaps of seeing the force of; and concerning some of which there might have been endless disputes and different sentiments about their obligation, as was in fact the case among the heathen, who had not the benefit of a divine revelation: But the gospel-scheme places all these moral duties in a strong point of light; and after it has done so, our own judgment and conscience, unless dreadfully corrupted, can't but yield their consent, that the *law* of God, about them, is  
*holy,*

*holy, just and good\**; and that, as in their own nature they are *good*, so in their use *they are profitable to men*†.

But divine revelation don't stop here, it goes much further still; it puts a *religious* respect upon every moral duty; in order to which, it not only represents them as the will of God, and lays an obligation upon conscience to perform them with a reference to his authority as enjoining them, but also to his glory as their highest end, and to his well-pleas'dness with them thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour. *We beseech and exhort you brethren, says the apostle, by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have receiv'd of us how ye ought to walk, and to please God, so ye would abound more and more; for ye know what commandment we gave you by the Lord Jesus, for this is the will of God, even your sanctification, &c.* ‡ And whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God ||. And Christians are call'd a *holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ* †.

The law of God has likewise, as appears by the foregoing account, a further reach than all the laws of men: These are only conversant about external actions, which are all that can fall under the cognizance of man; but God's law has a sovereignty over the inmost thoughts, designs and dispositions of the soul; it commands that they be clean, and makes

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\* Rom. vii. 12. † Tit. iii. 8. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 1—7.  
 || 1 Cor. x. 31. † 1 Pet. ii. 5.

us accountable for them to him, who is the only Lord of conscience, and searcher of the heart. And whereas the direct view of human laws, in commanding virtue and forbidding vice, chiefly refers to the good of the community, under the guardianship of the civil magistrate; the divine laws, by their hold upon conscience, most effectually answer that view, whilst they proceed upon still higher principles: They command all righteousness, and forbid all sin, under the formal notion of their being so, and that because of their own excellence or deformity, their own correspondence or contrariety to the nature, authority and will of God, and their being honourable or dishonourable to him, and beneficial or injurious to ourselves, as well as others. And, to shew that human nature is capable of the practice of all moral virtues, they have been exemplified with shining beauty, and to the utmost perfection, in the temper and behaviour of the blessed Jesus, who *was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*; and have been exemplified in very remarkable degrees by his holy apostles. What a perspicuous and extensive, what an engaging and awful, strong and binding plan of righteousness is this, to be the rule of all reformation of manners in ourselves or others!

3. The gospel-scheme leads us to the *best means and assistances* for reformation.

It is a constant monitor in our hands, to which we daily may and ought to have recourse,

course, to shew us our way, and to impress our consciences with a sense of our obligations to walk therein. It confirms the original constitution of civil government, as the ordinance of God for the good order of society, and continues the rights and powers of magistracy to be *a terror to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well\**; and under this consideration of our rulers, it adds a demand of subjection to them for conscience sake. It gives us rich advantages of a religious education as well as example; it has provided a standing ministry to explain and enforce its holy doctrines, and to remind us frequently of them, that we may be not only hearers of the word, but doers of the same; and it directs us to God in Christ, for his Holy Spirit to make a change upon our hearts and ways, and to enable us to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

Our blessed Saviour promis'd to send his Spirit to *reprove or convince the world of sin, of righteousness and judgment†*; and the gospel-dispensation is by way of eminence called *the ministration of the Spirit‡*; he breathes in it and works by it, he owns and honours it with a gracious influence, and usually wrestles more or less with sinners that come under it, to bring them back to God. He often shews them their sin and danger, and their need of pardoning and recovering mercy; he often checks, and warns, and wounds their spirits in reflection upon their evil ways, makes them afraid of persisting in them, and restrains them from many a practice

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\* Rom. xiii. 3, 4, 5.

† John xvi. 7, 8.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 8.

Etice of iniquity, which they had ventur'd upon, and otherwise would continue to indulge; and he sometimes makes them resolve to abandon their vicious courses, and to seek after God and Christ, heaven and holiness, that they may be converted and saved.

But alas! many of them so frequently, and at length so obstinately, resist the Holy Ghost in all these motions upon their hearts, that he righteously takes his leave of them, and will no longer strive with them; and so they shut themselves out from all the benefit of the gospel-scheme for their reformation. However, there are others with whom he strives till he gets the mastery; he carries on their conviction by his word and providence to a thorough conversion; he humbles them from their sins, enables them to believe in Christ for the remission of them, and turns them from disobedience to the wisdom of the just; so that they are no longer the servants of sin, but the servants of righteousness to God; and they dare not sin, as they formerly used to do, because of the fear of God. They pass under the *washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost\**; their souls are purified in obeying the truth, thro' the Spirit †, and they thro' the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body and live ‡: He purifies their hearts by faith ||, and inspires them with that love of God, which inclines them to keep his commandments \*\*, and not to think them grievous: And he continues a gracious influence to enable

\* Tit. iii. 5.      † 1 Pet. i. 22.      ‡ Rom. viii. 13.

|| Acts xv. 9.

\*\* 1 John v. 3.

ble them to hold on in his ways: This makes duty our choice, the way of the Lord our delight, and every difficult self-denying service easy to us: This work of God's Spirit, by means of the gospel, upon our hearts, changes us into new creatures, alters our principles and views, our resolution and taste, and draws after it a suitable alteration in the course of our lives; so that we detest and fly from the evil ways we formerly lov'd and practis'd, and on the contrary esteem and pursue the ways of virtue and religion, which we before disrelished and neglected; and by the continued aids and assistances of the Holy Spirit, we soon find that all wisdom's *ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* \*.

4. The gospel-scheme affords us the *strongest motives and encouragements* to a reformation.

If the common providential goodness of God leads to repentance, how much more must *the kindness and love of God our Saviour which has appeared toward man* †, and not toward the fallen angels? How inviting and engaging are gospel-displays of the divine *philanthropy*! What strong attraction of the heart toward God is there in the rich discoveries he has made of his abounding grace to all sorts of sinners, and in the matchless love and tender compassion of a dying redeemer; in proclamations of pardoning mercy to relenting rebels, and of the kindest entertainment to returning prodigals; and in the assurances the

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Saviour

\* Prov. iii. 17.

† Tit. iii. 4.

Saviour has given, that *whosoever comes to him he will in no wise cast him out!* And when such thoughts as these are set home upon the heart by the Holy Ghost, who comes to glorify Christ, and to take of his things and reveal them to us, how do they melt and overcome it, and what powerful constraints have they upon us to love and live to God!

Tho' we have grievously sinned against him, yet a way is opened thro' the great propitiatory sacrifice, for an acceptable return to him; and tho' we are naturally prone to evil, and unable to recover ourselves, yet the purchase of Christ, and the grace of the gospel are encouraging grounds of hope for relief; for *where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds; the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;* and there are promises of the good Spirit of God, who takes pleasure in making an effectual change upon such as feel their need of him, and can't be satisfied without him. Hence our Lord himself hath said, *Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened:* And for our further encouragement, he adds a beautiful illustration, from earthly parents, saying, *If ye being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him\**. And then, as to the final issues of things, we are assured, that he who has begun

gun the good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; and that to them, *who have their fruit unto holiness, the end shall be everlasting life*, tho' not as the wages of their righteousness, in like manner as death is the wages of sin, yet as the *gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord\**, according to his free promise on Christ's account, and the sure connections of his covenant.

On the other hand, another part of this scheme tells us, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; but that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power †*. In short, it plainly tells us, that in the day of judgment God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour and immortality, eternal life; but to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul that doth evil ‡.

And

\* Rom. vi. 22, 23.

† 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, 9.

‡ Rom. ii. 6—9.

And even as to this present life, if our time would allow, it were easy to shew that the gospel-scheme confirms all which the light of nature and antient revelation suggest, and supplies additional evidence, that *destruction and misery are in the ways of sin*, and that *godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is*, as well as of that *which is to come*: It shews the conveniences and inconveniences, the joys and sorrows, the safety and the danger, the happiness and the miseries of these different courses respectively, even whilst we are here, as well as what must be expected hereafter. And so, with relation both to the present and future world, it touches the two grand springs of human action, our hopes and our fears, to influence us by them; it works upon our fears to keep us out of the way of sin, and upon our hopes to bring us into, and keep us in the way of duty, and thereby affords the most powerful motives and encouragements of every kind to a thorough reformation in heart and life. This leads us to the last general head, which I design as the application of the foregoing; and that is,

III. To point out some proper methods of *improving this scheme* for the reformation we are aiming at.

The best scheme in the world will be of no advantage, unless it be improv'd and applied to answer its beneficial design; and what remains, is to direct the method of doing this, which, by the blessing of God, may be effectual

tual to promote the reformation so much needed among us, and so much desired and aimed at by the worthy gentlemen of the societies for reformation of manners, and by all that have a due concern for the glory of God, and the good of their fellow-creatures. For this purpose I would suggest the following hints.

I. We should be *deeply affected with a sense of the great degeneracies of the age*, which need to be reformed; and of the *rich advantages of the gospel-scheme*, which encourage our hopes of a reformation.

Unless we are feelingly touched with a sense of these things, we shall have little concern about a reformation, little heart to endeavour after it, and little prospect of succeeding in it: The work, in my way of thinking, must begin here, if ever it comes to a good issue. The degeneracies of the age are too notorious to be concealed; and a short sketch of the advantages of the gospel-scheme, for a recovery from them, has been attempted in this discourse. But I am afraid that a disregard to this glorious scheme in some, and a contempt of it in others, has not a little contributed to a defeat of the hopes we might otherwise have had from it.

Some will submit to the authority of Christ, only just as far as they like it; others would deprive us of the peculiar glories of his gospel; and others would lead us into an indifference to all its distinguishing principles. How far each of these, tho' undesignedly, weaken the gospel-scheme for *reformation*, they would do  
well

well to consider. But there are still others, who either throw up the whole of Christian religion, or else make a tool of it for indulging their own vicious inclinations, or for carrying on worldly views to the total subversion of the design of this reforming scheme. The shocking errors of infidelity are making head against us on one hand, and the senseless errors of Popery on the other: Among the friends of these two parties, some are labouring to unsettle our religious principles; and others to settle them by uniting us under a pretended infallible head: Some would entirely reject the authority of Christ, and others would impose the authority of anti-christ upon us; some treat the whole gospel as a fable, and others would put us off with the most ridiculous legends instead of the gospel of Christ: Some are endeavouring to bring us to no religion at all; and others to a religion as bad as none. What are the tendencies of these struggles, on the one side and the other, but to downright scepticism? And if people once turn scepticks, they are in a fair way to be deists, or atheists, Papists or debauchees, or any thing, to serve their own pride, or humour, irregular appetites, or secular views.

And alas! in what various shapes do impiety and immorality stain the consciences and characters, and threaten the ruin of a people which are called by Christ's name! How do profanations of the Lord's-day, a neglect of publick, family and closet worship, and an irreverend and abusive treatment of the lovely  
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and yet tremendous name of God abound in a Christian nation! How do cursing and swearing, lying and cheating, luxury and extravagance, drunkenness, lewdness and debaucheries cause our land to mourn! What contempt of magistracy, and insults on publick authority; and what horrid outrages and cruelties, robberies and murders, and even self-murders too, do we often hear of! How hardened and daring are many in the practice of all these, and numberless other abominations, even to a committing them with greediness, and without fear or shame! What vengeance may we not expect to burst upon our heads from heaven, if we continue to fill up the measure of our iniquity, according to the example of former nations, whom God has destroy'd! And as many professing Christians amongst us, who should stand in the gap to avert impending judgments, have gone too far into the provocations of the age, to bring them on; what but repentance and reformation can prevent them? *Except ye repent, says the Saviour himself, ye shall all likewise perish\**: And *if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? †*

But how can we ever hope to be reduc'd from these detestable crimes and apostacies, and skreened from the vengeance they provoke, unless, thro' the merits of God's own Son, and by the aids of his Holy Spirit, our hearts be divorced from sin, and engaged to

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\* Luke xiii. 5.

† 1 Pet. iv. 17.

have a respect unto all his commandments? In what other way can our grievous wound be cured? In this we may, and in this only we can, warrantably hope for it: If God, for Christ's sake, has not mercy upon us to animate our returns to him, we certainly shall remain impenitent and polluted; and sooner or later, God only knows how soon, we must perish in our sins; But blessed be his name, there is yet room in the gospel-scheme for hope, that we may be reformed and saved, if we don't continue obstinately to abuse it.

2. We should be *earnest in prayer* to God for his Spirit to reform us.

Without this, all our attempts will come to nothing: If we begin without God, we shall end without success; for as all iniquity and compliance with temptation is from our selves, so *every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the father of lights*: And the way to obtain such gifts as we need, is to *ask them of God, who gives to all men liberally and upbraideth not\**. We should ask them with all humility of mind, under a sense of our own insufficiency and unworthiness, with faith in the mercy, power and promises of God, and in the mediation of Christ, and with importunity and holy fervour, like necessitous and yet encourag'd supplicants, that will not let him go till he has blessed us.

In this manner we should cry mightily to the Lord, and strive together and apart in our prayers

\* Jam. i. 5, 13, —17.

prayers to fetch down help from heaven; we should humbly implore a plentiful effusion of his Spirit, as a Spirit of truth and holiness, upon reforming societies themselves, and upon all ranks and degrees of men, whether they be more or less infected with the contagion of the age: We should beg that a right spirit may be given to such as profess to be engag'd in reforming work, whether by their civil or sacred office, or by voluntary association; that they may be united together in love, and may have wisdom, zeal and courage, and a hearty concern for the glory of God, and the good of human society, with a tender compassion to immortal Souls: And we should be earnest in our pleas that God would assist, and command a blessing upon their laudable endeavours, and that by their means a return to him may be as general, as our revolt has been; and so iniquity may not be our ruin, but God may delight to dwell amongst us.

3. Every one should be *seriously concerned* about *personal* reformation upon the foot of the gospel-scheme.

As none of us are already perfect, or got beyond need of amendment, so we should not set about reforming work like *heathens*, who know nothing of Christ and the gospel of the grace of God, or of the blessed Spirit and his promis'd aids, or of the hope of glory and the encouragements that arise from thence; but should set out upon the great principles of Christianity, and take heed that we don't grieve the Spirit of God, and thereby defeat

their happy effects upon us. We should labour after a true acquaintance with these principles, should consider their vast importance, and pursue their peculiar advantages for a reformation of the whole man, till we find that we are thoroughly moulded into that holy form of doctrine which is delivered to us in the word of God, and are enabled to depart from all iniquity. Every one, that is desirous of a reformation, should in this manner begin first at home, that we may be reformed one by one, till the good leaven shall spread itself thro' the whole community: For example is the life of counsel and precept; and when this shines in a man's own character, it gives a decorum to the execution of righteous laws against vice and profaneness, and it keeps him in countenance, and gives him weight in all his wise, compassionate and faithful strivings against sin in others.

But what signifies bewailing their abominations, and endeavouring to reform them, if we ourselves are still in our sins, and are unaffected with our own condition, and lead the van in the like or some other instances of immorality? With what heart, or with what face can we set about reforming others, or what likelihood is there that we shall be faithful and vigorous in our attempts for it, or that God will own us in them; or of what advantage will it be to us in the great day of account, even to have had a hand in reforming the world round about us, in case we continue to love and live in the practice of the wickedness

ness from which they are recovered? If we ourselves are strangers to faith in Christ, and repentance toward God, to a work of heart-changing grace, and a regular course of life, all will turn to our own confusion at last. We must first cast the beam out of our own eye, as ever we would see how to help the eyes of others; and if we are careless how things stand with ourselves, while we shew abundance of zeal to correct what is amiss in others, we cannot answer it to God, to them, or to our own consciences; but must one day feel the stinging reproach, which the apostle justly urged upon the vain-glorious Jew, who *made his boast of God, and confidently called himself a guide of the blind, and a light of them which are in darkness: Thou which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou which preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, thro' breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, thro' you\**.

4. We should take the *best care and pains* we are capable of, in our respective stations, *to promote the reformation of others* together with ourselves.

Tho' we must begin with ourselves in so excellent and necessary a work as this, we should not stop there; but, as we are fellow-creatures,

\* Rom. ii. 17—24.

creatures, fellow-members of civil society, and fellow Protestants and Christians, we should study and labour for the good of others, and should spare no time, nor thought, nor pains, nor cost, consistent with our circumstances in life, to promote it. And our way of managing this important design should be with such condescension and humbleness of mind, and with such prudence and caution, tenderness and compassion, together with a becoming resolution and faithfulness, as may convince every offender, that it is not out of pride or passion, humour or prejudice, self-interest or self-applause, nor from any contempt of them, or ill-will to them, that we trouble ourselves about them; but that it is merely from a conscience toward God, and a concern for his glory, and from a sincere aim at their own good, and the good of the community.

To make this the more evident, the gentlest methods of kindness and persuasion should be tried, as long as there is any room for them; and our first efforts should be among the children and servants of our own families, and among those that we are most conversant with, or have the greatest interest in, or influence upon. And where-ever we have opportunity for it, our attention should be turned especially to the rising generation, to form their temper and conduct while their hearts are yet tender, and before they have taken the infection of bad company, or have contracted strong habits of wickedness, and are hardened in it. *Principiis obsta.* Watch the first sproutings  
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and appearances of evil, and labour to root them out, before they have got an establishment in the heart, and become familiar in practice; for when once the taste for loose company and defiling pleasures becomes eager and confirm'd, it will hardly admit of restraint; and, according to the ordinary methods of divine and human procedures, it is found to be with terrible convulsions, if ever, chang'd. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil\**. We have heard how we are to deal with *God* in our prayers about a reformation; and every one who fears his name, of whatsoever profession or character he be in life, should heartily join in doing what he can with *man* towards it, in a dependance upon divine grace to assist and accept the honest well-meaning service, and to crown it with success.

In subservience to this great design (*absit invidia*) the *peculiar* province of the *ministers of Christ*, is to explain and inculcate every part of the gospel-scheme; to direct their hearers to the grand springs of reformation; to lay out the rule of duty in all its branches; to enforce the necessity of observing it; and to recommend the encouragements there are to attempt it, as they find them in the word of God. They are to preach the terrors of the law, and the endearments of the gospel; to shew men their transgressions, and their only remedy; to let them know, that if they go on in their trespasses,

\* Jer. xiii. 23.

trespasses, they must unavoidably perish; but that there is merit enough in the blood of Christ, for the pardon of the very worst of returning sinners, and power enough in his Spirit to enable them to return; and so they are to call them to faith and repentance, whilst a *door of hope*, through Jesus Christ, stands open in the gospel before them, *as he is exalted to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.\** They are to paint out the awful solemnities that relate to death and judgment, heaven and hell, and the miseries or happiness in *this* world, and especially for ever in the *next*, that are entailed upon the sinner's persisting in his evil ways, on one hand, or upon his turning from them to God, thro' the only Mediator, on the other: And they are to shew them the *necessity* of divine grace to make an effectual change upon them, and of the Redeemer's righteousness to recommend them to God's acceptance, that they may be hereby put upon going into the gospel-method for a recovery, and may seek after such a reformation, as begins in the heart, and spreads thro' the life.

The *peculiar* province of the *Legislature* is, to enact such laws for the honour of God, and the good of the community, as may be best adapted to the restraint of vice in those, who, having no fear of God before their eyes, can only be aw'd and influenc'd by the fear of the civil magistrate. Blessed be God, we have many excellent laws for these purposes

\* Acts v. 31.

poses already : But there is room to wish that he might put it into the hearts of the Legislative Powers of this kingdom, still further to improve them, by adding such others, with respect to masquerades, plays, and disorderly houses, and other nuisances, as may put a stop to their defiling influence ; and by giving more power for an easy execution of such good laws as are in force. By this means the worthy societies for reformation of manners, and any others, who are capable and inclined to see that the laws be duly executed, would not struggle with so many difficulties as now encumber them.

The *special* province of *civil magistrates* is, faithfully to execute our good laws against immorality and profaneness ; and not to brow-beat or discountenance such as would bring criminals to justice, nor make their work more tedious, expensive, or laborious than necessity requires : On the other hand, it greatly redounds to the honour of those who are in authority, to encourage them in it with commendation and dispatch, and to act up to the dignity of their own office-characters, as the ministers of God, *who are not to bear the sword in vain* ;\* but are sent by him for *the punishment of evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well*.† By this means, our excellent laws would be no longer lifeless, impotent forms, as they have been in too many instances of late ; but living oracles that speak with vigour, and will be obey'd. May the

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\* Rom. xiii. 4.

† 1 Pet. ii. 14.

late glorious stand \* of the *Lord-Mayor* and *Court of Aldermen*, against the Corruptions of *Bartholomew-Fair*, be a precedent for all succeeding ages, and stir up a noble emulation in each of our magistrates to excel in their fidelity and zeal against every form, and every nursery of immorality and profaneness.

The *common* province of all these ranks and orders of persons, and of *every one* who wishes well to a reformation, is to do their utmost, according to their respective stations and capacities, to subserve the design of the Christian dispensation, and of the laws of our land, for the suppressing of impiety and vice, and for the encouragement of religion and virtue. They should do this singly, or in conjunction with others, as opportunities offer, labouring to strengthen the hands of one another, and particularly of the worthy gentlemen, who have formed themselves into societies for the reformation of manners, and have taken great pains in the momentous service; and thanks be to God, it has not been without some good success.

## Things

\* Last *Tuesday*, being *Midsummer-day*, the *Lord-Mayor* [Sir *Edward Bellamy*] and *Court of Aldermen* came to a final resolution touching *Bartholomew-Fair*, that the same shall not exceed *Bartholomew-Eve*, *Bartholomew-Day*, and the day after; that is, the 23d, 24th, and 25th of *August*; and that during that time, nothing but stalls and booths shall be erected for sale of wares and merchandizes usually sold in fairs, and no acting to be permitted. *London Journal*, June 20, 1735. I have since found that, on the same day, they made a like order, with respect to the Fair, called *Lady-Fair*, in the Borough of *Southwark*. *Daily Journal*, July 7, 1735.

Things are indeed deplorably bad still, but must have been much worse, were it not for their indefatigable labour, by night and by day, to rout the nests of debauchery, and thin the swarms of notorious criminals, that infest our streets. I find \* the number of persons, which they have been concerned in prosecuting in or near *London* for debauchery and profaneness, within the compass of the last *forty years*, is computed at *ninety-nine thousand, three hundred and eighty*; and in the *last year but one*, for lewd and disorderly practices, and sabbath-breaking, *four hundred and ten*. The services for the *last year* are not come to my hands. In this good work they have encountered many difficulties, not only from the offenders themselves, but even from some that should have encouraged the reformers: They have expos'd their persons to danger, have gone thro' *evil report*, as well as *good report*, for their fidelity; and have been loaded with injurious reproaches, as if they made a gain of godliness. But on the other hand, I am well assured that it is a matter of great expence, and no manner of profit to themselves; that they have only their trouble and loss of time for their charges and pains; that they don't so much as take, or know of any, who act for them, that do ever take to themselves the moiety of the mulcts or fines, which the law allows to such as convict offenders, but give all away to the poor; and that they never

\* *Drew's Sermon to the Societies at St. Mary Le Bow.*  
Jan. 27, 1734.

suffer a bribe to blind their eyes, or to buy off a prosecution, or procure an escape.

How kind and self-denying, how honourable and generous is all this ; and how deserving to be applauded, encourag'd and assisted by all good men ! Persons of a *vigorous* active temper should make themselves members of these societies, to join with them in their noble publick-spirited work : Persons of *substance* in the world should bear a part in the credit of these societies, and assist them with their purses, that the necessary charges of prosecutions, of distributing good books, and of providing other means for carrying on their important design, may not be too heavy a burthen upon the societies themselves : Persons of *observation* should furnish them with accounts, especially of gross delinquents, should put them into proper methods of apprehending them, and bringing them to justice, and should be assistant to them in it : And *every one*, who would favour their righteous cause, should recommend them and their labours in their prayers to God.

And you, gentlemen, of these societies, who are embark'd in this great, and good, and honourable work, acquit yourselves like men and Christians ; be courageous for the Lord your God, and set your faces as a flint against all the hardships, opposition, and reproaches, you may meet with in it. And, as I perceive you find yourselves cramp'd with inextricable difficulties in some prosecutions, according to the laws as they now stand ; perhaps if you were  
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to unite in an humble application to parliament, their wisdom and goodness might find ways to remove them: In the mean while, make the best of all the good laws, which favour the design of your valuable association, and see that they be well executed. You are engaged in a glorious cause; it is the cause of God and religion, the cause of Christianity and humanity, the cause of equity and mercy to your country, and the cause of the kindest beneficence to every one that shall be reclaimed, and of necessary justice to them that continue obstinate in their wickedness; and while you are faithful in it, God and all good men will own and honour you, however others may scandalize and oppose you.

Go on then, in the name, and in the strength of the Lord God, to put a stop to the horrible profanations of the Lord's-day. Here is the flood-gate, which lets in all the impieties that rush upon us, and swell to an overflowing outrage: To shut up this, is doing business by wholesale; and therefore I beseech you, Sirs, to try the utmost that can be done to clear the streets of shoe-blackers, and the publick-houses of crowding guests, who are profaning God's time, if not abusing themselves there; and to overturn the stalls and baskets of the costermongers in the places of publick resort, which, to the shame of our Christian profession, are much more throng'd on the Lord's days than on other days: And don't forget the shops of butchers, barbers, and other traders,

ders, who run away with the profits of conscientious observers of the sabbath, and put some of them under a temptation to violate their own consciences, that they may not lose their share of business. It is pity that vice should be thus rewarded, and virtue put under such discouragements; many honest and industrious tradesmen would be very thankful to God and you, if by a due execution of the laws you could but put them on a level in this point with those, that make no conscience of keeping the sabbath.

Go on likewise, and the Lord be with you, to exert yourselves every day against gaming-houses, and all the scandalous numbers and irregularities of cellars, and of publick and private gin-shops; against night-walkers and sturdy beggars; against all profane cursing and swearing, drunkenness and debaucheries; and in a particular manner against the monstrous unnatural sin, and all the filthy practices that tend towards it, which was one of the blackest brands of infamy on the worst of heathens, and brought the heaviest vengeance on *Sodom*, and which is shocking to common modesty to think or speak of; but which nevertheless (if general rumour may be credited) is a growing abomination amongst us. And let me intreat you, gentlemen, to keep a watchful eye upon *Popish emissaries*, priests and Jesuits, that they may not break our laws, by propagating their antichristian, treasonable, cruel, and immoral schemes, and by making their  
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profelytes rebels to Christ, and to our gracious and only rightful fovereign King *George*.

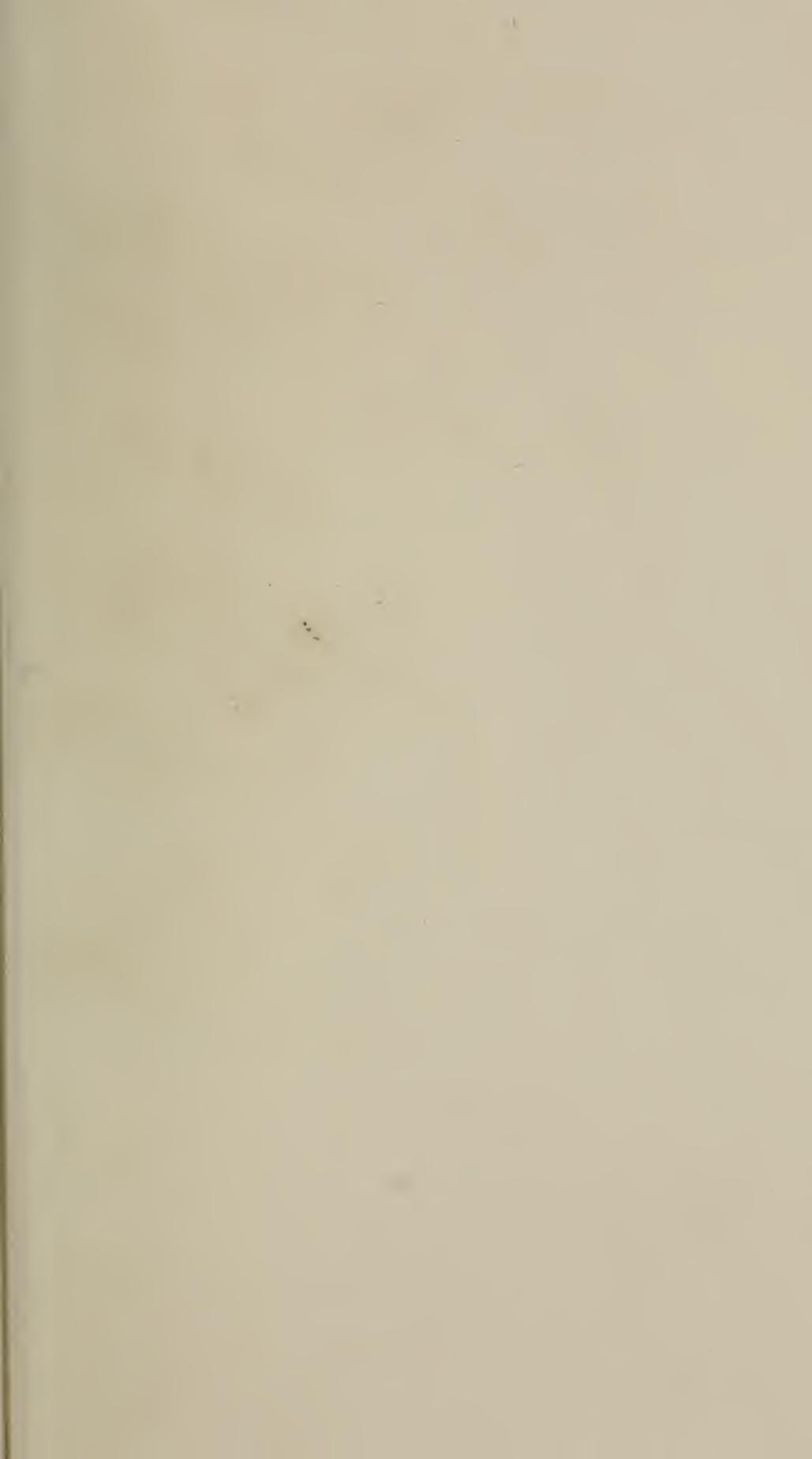
To conclude, let me earnestly beseech you, Sirs, in the name of the Lord, to look carefully to your own hearts and ways in this, and all your other management; and to take to yourselves what has been said about *personal* reformation. See that you yourselves be Christians indeed, that you are in a state of favour with God thro' faith in his beloved Son, and that your principles, motives and views are set right by regenerating grace; that whilst you attempt the reformation of others, none of you yourselves may be found cast-aways at last. Don't go forth in your own spirit, but look upwards for help from heaven; don't think to make a merit with God by the utmost that you can do in reforming-work; but count yourselves after all *unprofitable servants*; and place your trust in Christ and his righteousness alone, for the acceptance of your persons and of all your labours of love for his name's sake: You can lose nothing by this; for I am very sure, that such an humble self-disclaiming temper of mind can be no bargain against the acceptableness of the best of your works, in the final judgment; but I think no person can be sure, that they will not be very unacceptable without it; and I would fain have none of you, gentlemen, disappointed then. But if, in the manner which has been recommended, you vigorously apply yourselves to your duty; remember for your encouragement,

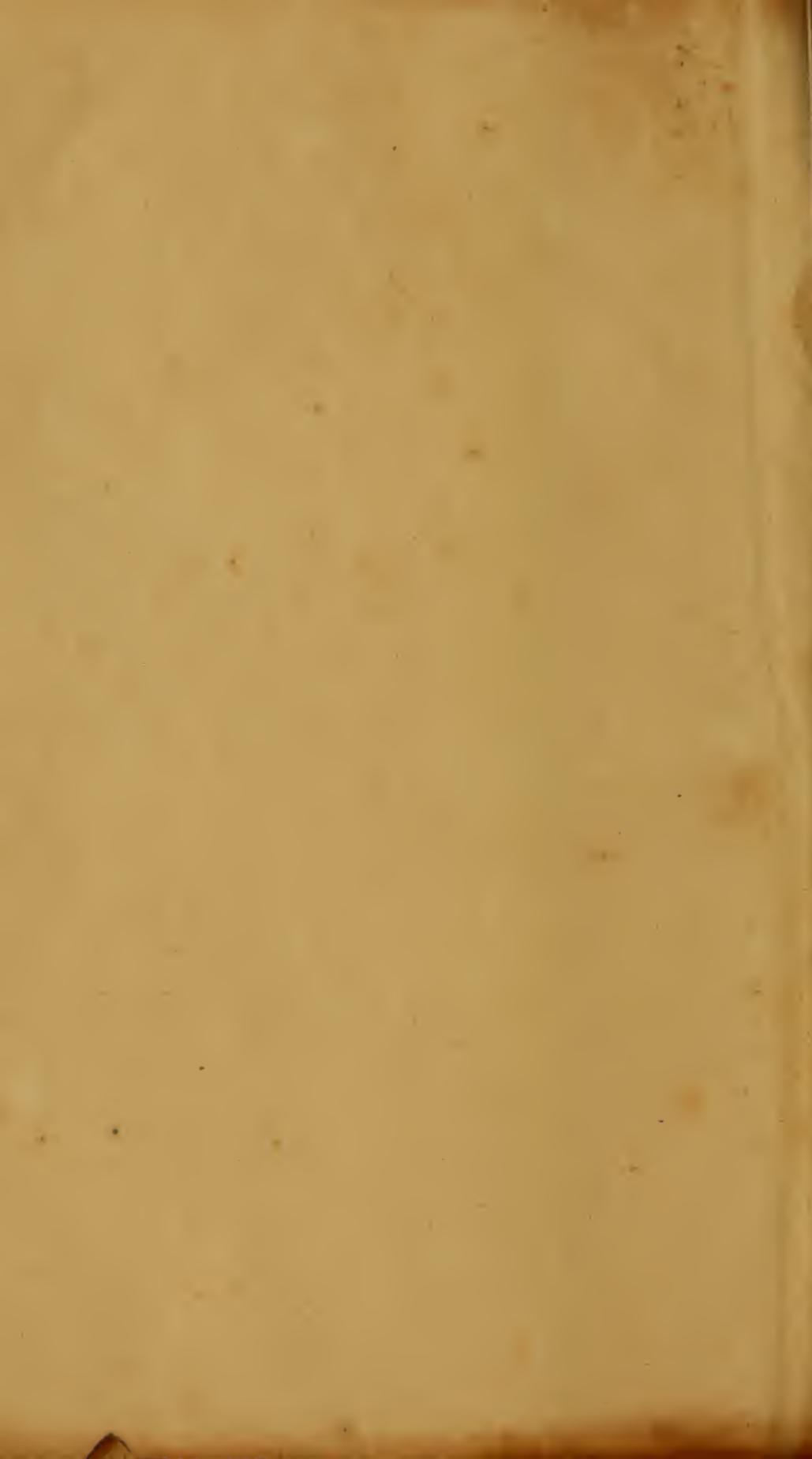
ment, that whatsoever may be the event to others, *great is your reward in heaven*; even that reward of grace, which God has promis'd in his sure and everlasting covenant, and which Christ will adjudge you to at the last day, when he shall say, *Well done thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord\**.

\* Matt. xxv. 21.

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