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The Excellency of the Spirit of Christianity :

A  
S E R M O N,

Preached before

The SOCIETY in SCOTLAND for propa-  
gating Christian Knowledge,

At their Anniversary Meeting,

In the HIGH CHURCH of EDINBURGH,

On Friday, June 5. 1767.

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Principal of the College of GLASGOW.

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To the RIGHT HONOURABLE

THOMAS Earl of KINNOUL,

The following SERMON,

In Testimony

Of that Esteem

Which is due to distinguished Worth,

Is most respectfully dedicated

by his LORDSHIP'S

most humble

and most obedient Servant,

WILL. LEECHMAN.

# The Excellency of the Spirit of Christianity.

A

## S E R M O N.

II. T I M O T H Y, i. 7.

*For GOD hath not given us the spirit of fear ;  
but of power, and of love, and of a sound  
mind.*

**I**T is very probable, that the apostle wrote this second epistle to Timothy in the time of the persecution of the Christians in the reign of the Roman Emperor Nero, and when he was himself a prisoner at Rome, and had a near prospect of suffering as a martyr for his religion\*. In this mournful and distressing situation, he addresses this epistle to Timothy. He had converted Timothy to the Christian  
A faith ;

\* See Dr Beason's history of the state of things when this epistle was written, prefixed to his paraphrase and notes on the epistle.

faith; he had appointed him to the sacred office of an Evangelist, and had imparted to him the gifts of the Holy Ghost. The apostle, therefore, may be considered in this epistle as giving his dying charge to his favourite disciple, and devolving upon him the work of the gospel before he left the world.

IN the verse before the text, he exhorts him to stir up the gift of God that is in him. The word, in the original, which is translated *stir up*, signifies, properly, To blow up a fire to a more intense degree of heat: So that the meaning and import of the exhortation is, Cultivate and improve, to the best advantage, the spiritual gifts with which you are endowed; and exert all your faculties and talents to the utmost, in the faithful discharge of the duties of that great office in which you are engaged. And, in the words of the text, he enforces the exhortation from a consideration taken from the nature and genius of Christianity itself: verse 7.

“ For God hath not given us the spirit of  
“ fear;

“fear; but of power, and of love, and of  
 “a sound mind.” That is, God hath  
 not given us Christians the spirit of timi-  
 dity and cowardice, of selfishness and  
 malignity, of levity and folly; but he hath  
 given us the spirit of firmness and cou-  
 rage, of benignity and love, of wisdom  
 and sobriety of mind.

It appears from the verse after the text,  
 and from many other passages in this e-  
 pistle, that the apostle had full in his eye,  
 those labours, hardships, and sufferings,  
 which he foresaw Timothy would be  
 called to endure in the course of his mi-  
 nistry. And, in this view, he exhorts  
 him to prepare and fortify himself for  
 those exertions of courage and zeal, and  
 for the exercise of that prudence and dis-  
 cretion, for which he would have frequent  
 occasion in those circumstances of per-  
 plexity, danger, and distress, in which he  
 would find himself involved: And, at the  
 same time, he assures him that the spirit  
 of the gospel would enable him to suffer  
 afflictions, and behave under them with  
 that

that patience, modesty, and meekness of wisdom, which becomes one who is persecuted for righteousness sake.

IT is hoped, it will not be unfuitable to the design of this assembly, to offer some observations tending to illustrate and confirm the assertions in the text, with a view to display the excellency of the gospel as the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. We shall consider each of these in their order.

FIRST, Christianity is the spirit of power, or of courage and firmness, in opposition to timidity and irresolution of mind.

AMONG the many other groundless charges which have been brought against Christianity, it has been accused of inculcating servitude and dependence. A very celebrated author, who, in other parts of his works, appears to be a lover of the morality of the gospel, and an admirer of the character of its great founder, has expressly asserted, *That the spirit of the gospel is favourable to tyrants;*

rants ; and that true Christians are formed for slaves.\* And several other writers, though they admit that the Christian religion softens and sweetens the temper and manners of mankind ; yet alledge, that, at the same time, it enervates their courage, and disposes them for mean and slavish obedience.

IN answer to these, and other accusations of the like nature, let it be observed, in the *first* place, That, if we may form a judgment of the spirit of Christianity from the spirit of its author, we must acknowledge it to be a spirit of courage and boldness, and not of fearfulness and timidity. For it appears, in the most incontestible manner, from the whole history of our Saviour's life, that, while he supported the best of all causes, he set himself, though single, in a most intrepid manner, in opposition to a whole nation: And he persevered in doing this, though he had a clear foresight, that his doing so

would

\* Rousseau, Social contract, Book 4. chap. 8.

would bring him to certain death, and to a death too of the most formidable kind. It is hard to say, what compleat heroism is, if this is not an instance of it.

His first disciples, in like manner, discovered a spirit of the most active and determined courage. We read, in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that when the Jewish Sanhedrim, the supreme council of the nation, called the Apostles Peter and John. before them, and commanded them, verse 18. "Not to  
 " teach in the name of Jesus;" v. 19. "they  
 " answered, and said unto them, Whe-  
 " ther is it right in the sight of God, to  
 " hearken unto you more than unto God,  
 " judge ye; for we cannot but speak the  
 " things we have seen and heard:" And they accordingly went out from the council, and preached the gospel with all boldness. And we read in the same chapter, that even their enemies were struck with admiration when they beheld the firmness of their resolution: verse 13. "When  
 " the members of the council saw the  
 " boldness



“ boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled ; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus ;” that is, they perceived they had learned boldness and intrepidity in his school.

If your time would allow us to trace the spirit of Christianity as it appeared in the primitive Christians, we should find that persons of all ranks, sexes, and ages, shewed such an unshaken firmness and fortitude, under the severest trials, even death itself, as filled their very enemies and persecutors with astonishment.

It is worthy of observation, in the *second* place, That, if we may judge of the spirit of the gospel from the strain of its precepts, we must also conclude it to be a spirit of resolution and fortitude. The New Testament abounds with the warmest exhortations to Christians to exert the utmost firmness in withstanding the temptations and encountering the dangers to which they may be exposed.

Thus,

Thus, 1. Corinth. xvi. 13. "Stand fast," says the apostle, "quit ye like men, and be strong." And in the epistle to the Eph. chap. vi. from the 10th to the 19th verse, "Be strong in the Lord, and the power of his might; put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And further, it deserves our particular attention, that these exhortations are often enforced with motives taken from the peculiar doctrines of the gospel: As for instance, in the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle, after a most sublime and animating description of the glory of the resurrection-state, concludes with a pathetic exhortation to immoveable firmness in every good work: Therefore, says he, "Be steadfast and immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

BUT, not to rest the vindication of our holy religion from the imputation of a mean

mean and slavish spirit, merely on the precepts of it, or on the example of its great Author and his first followers, let it be observed, in the *third* place, That the unfeigned belief and sincere practice of the Christian religion has an obvious and manifest tendency to inspire such zeal and courage as will dispose men to act with resolution and firmness in every worthy cause. This will appear very evidently, if we attend to the two following particulars: 1<sup>st</sup>, That Christianity is the best preservative from all those things which damp the vigour of the mind, and enervate its active powers; and, 2<sup>dly</sup>; That it supplies the most powerful incitements to act every worthy part in life, in the firmest and most vigorous manner. Now, there are three things which chiefly check the vigour of the mind, and render it timid and irresolute; and these are, consciousness of mean and guilty conduct, unmanly habits of indulgence in effeminate pleasures, and a prevailing melancholy of temper.

It is not surely necessary to spend time in showing, that the first of these, consciousness of base and unworthy behaviour, is an intimidating and dispiriting thing: Every one knows, that guilt is in its own nature the source of self-condemnation, and of dread of deserved punishment; that it naturally fills the countenance with shame, and the heart with terror; and that, when the mind is under the influence of these enfeebling passions, it must be timid and dejected, and incapable either of forming, or of executing any manly and worthy design. It is likewise obvious to every one, that those who have imbibed the spirit of Christianity, will be preserved from those presumptuous sins which strike terror into the conscience; and that they will have such trust in the promises of the gospel for the pardon of their involuntary failings, as will establish them in peace of mind, and in the humble hope of the favour and acceptance of God. In this peaceful state of mind, they will be in  
full

full possession of their active powers, and ready to exert them, whenever and wherever duty calls. The experience of all ages verifies the observation of Solomon, "That the wicked fly when no man pursueth ; but the righteous are bold as a lyon ;" Prov. xxviii. 1.

AGAIN, That unmanly habits of indulgence in pleasure soften and enervate men's minds, and make them fly from every scene where labour and fatigue, where activity or boldness are required, has ever been admitted as a certain truth, to which daily experience, and the history of all ages, bear testimony. But that all irregular indulgence in pleasure is utterly inconsistent with the spirit of Christianity, is abundantly evident from the whole tenor of the New Testament. It commands us to be lovers of God more than lovers of pleasure, and to set our affections on the things above, and not on the things on the earth. It everywhere enjoins moderation and temperance, and forbids, in the most particular and in the most awful manner, all excesses

excesses in worldly pleasures of every kind. The Apostle, towards the beginning of the second chapter of this epistle, exhorts Timothy in the most earnest manner, "to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, and to endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." The examples too which our holy religion sets before us, are further proofs of the standing opposition betwixt the spirit of Christianity and every kind of mean and unmanly indulgence: "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection," says the Apostle, "lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away;" 1 Cor. ix. 27.

AND, *lastly*, Every one's own experience assures him, that nothing deadens the active powers of the mind more effectually, than a melancholy cast of temper: For, when this disposition becomes prevalent, it renders men timid and apprehensive to such a degree as unfits them for the ordinary affairs of life, and much more for encountering the difficulties  
and

and dangers of any great or hazardous undertaking. It must be owned, that when this gloomy disposition becomes a disease settled in the constitution, it is perhaps altogether incurable. But, so far as principles of reason, just sentiments, and comfortable views can have any power to give relief, the religion of Jesus is the most effectual remedy. The doctrines of the gospel are admirably adapted to establish the heart in peace and joy. The views which it gives us of the perfections and government of God in general, of the scheme of redemption in particular, of this state as introductory to a better one, and of the distresses of life, “as bringing forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,” are like rays of light breaking thro’ a thick gloom to cheer and gladden the disconsolate soul. When the real Christian contemplates the honourable relations in which he stands to his God and his Saviour; and when, with a mixture of  
faith

faith and humility, he looks forward to his eternal honours in the kingdom of heaven, he is inspired with an elevation and gladness of heart, which dissipates gloomy thoughts, and fits him for the worthiest and most vigorous exercise of his active powers. This joyous temper was very prevalent among the first Christians, "believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory;" 1 Pet. xviii. "Being justified by faith, they had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God; and not only so, but they gloried in tribulation;" Rom. v. 1. 2. 3. Thus it appears, that the spirit of Christianity is the best security against those things which are the chief obstructions to the exertion of our powers with cheerfulness and vigour to the best purposes of life and society.

BUT the spirit of Christianity not only delivers the human mind from those things which benumb its active powers, and bereave it of its resolution  
and



and fortitude; but, (as was proposed to be shown in the *second* place), it also supplies the most powerful incitements that can be conceived to act every worthy and honourable part in life, however difficult or dangerous, in the most vigorous and undaunted manner.

IN order to illustrate and confirm this point, let us attend to the principles and motives by which Christians ought to be animated in the course of their lives and actions.

HERE it is manifest, that whoever has imbibed the spirit of Christianity, will have the warmest and strongest sense of the excellence of all the virtues of the Christian life, and the best affections to God and man. It will surely be admitted, that all the virtues comprehended in the apostolical summary of Christian morality, “Whatsoever things are true,  
 “ whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely,  
 “ whatsoever things are of good report,” are the objects of supreme affection, and  
 habitual

habitual and delightful meditation, to every true Christian. All who are justly intitled to this character, contemplate these Christian virtues in a variety of lights; which cannot fail to animate, to elevate, and fortify their minds in a very remarkable manner. They always conceive of them as supremely excellent in their own nature, as agreeable to the all-perfect will of God, and as of indispensable and eternal obligation. They always live and act under the fullest and most delightful persuasion, that the exercise of these heavenly virtues not only constitutes the chief perfection, happiness, and glory of human nature, but also forms it into a resemblance of the divine nature itself; and from this persuasion of the supreme dignity and excellence of these virtues, ardent desires immediately spring up, to be possessed of them to the highest degree that the nature and situation of mankind in this world are capable of: And these desires again immediately excite resolutions of practising them with unvariable constancy,

stancy, and of cultivating them with the utmost ardor and assiduity.

Now, every one who has attended to the finer and nobler workings of the human heart, when purified by the grace of God, must be convinced that a warm love of that moral excellence, which is the chief glory of the divine nature itself, earnest breathings after nearer approaches to the perfection of it, a lively sense of duty, a full conviction, that the doing that duty is the will of God, and strong impulses of the friendly and public affections, are, without all doubt, the most powerful and commanding principles in the human breast; and when they unite their force, and operate with all their strength, nothing can withstand them. When we attend to what passes in life, we see the most convincing proofs of this: For whenever a mind, under the influence of these great principles, has its views fixed upon some great or good end, in the prosecution of which opposition, difficulty, or danger is foreseen,

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holy Christian resolution exerts itself with its whole strength; and indeed, it becomes in a manner invincible, so that hardly any difficulty or danger can stand before it. And we may easily conceive how it should be so, when we reflect upon the illustrious and mighty supports which it receives from the exercises of Christian faith and piety. The full assurance of divine approbation and aid, must ever<sup>ly</sup> inspire the soul with confidence and alacrity, in acting that part which truth and integrity require. It is impossible, even in imagination, to conceive any thing better calculated for emboldening the human mind, and supporting its most determined resolutions, than the firm persuasion that the divine administration is ever on the side of righteousness, and that the righteous man shall be most amply and gloriously rewarded for whatever he may have suffered for his adherence to it. “When he looks forward, “and reflects upon his dignity as one of “the sons of God; and that it doth not  
“yet

“ yet appear what he shall be, and that  
 “ when his Saviour appears, he shall ap-  
 “ pear with him in glory,” he is not  
 only encouraged to persevere in his virtu-  
 ous course, but he feels himself inspired  
 with a noble ambition to maintain a cha-  
 racter suitable to such an exalted relation,  
 and such glorious hopes. Under the full  
 influence of these animating views, all  
 the clamour and evil speaking, all the  
 reproaches and unjust censures of the  
 world, and even all the dangers that  
 may threaten, will not discourage him,  
 or make him desist and give way. “ He  
 “ will wait patiently upon God, will com-  
 “ mit his way to him,” and triumph in  
 the certain prospect, “ that God will bring  
 “ forth his righteousness as the light,  
 “ and his judgement as the noon day;”  
 Ps. xxxvii. 5. 6. Being conscious of his  
 honest endeavours to do his duty, thro’  
 amidst many weaknesses and infirmities,  
 he solaces himself with the modest, but  
 triumphant hope, thro’ the mercy of God  
 in Jesus Christ, that all his good inten-  
 tions, all his secret acts of goodness, all  
 his

his silent sufferings and struggles, and all his services, are recorded, and shall be one day published, honoured, and rewarded, on the grandest of all theatres, before an assembled world. These hopes cheer and gladden, and at the same time strengthen his heart, in the hour of danger, in the day of distress, and in the prosecution of every virtuous design. He has a firm reliance on the promises of the gospel, that he shall be enabled to do all things through Christ strengthening him; Phil. iv. 8. “And that at last he shall be a conqueror, and more than a conqueror, and invited to sit down with Jesus on his throne, even as he also overcame; and is set down with the Father on his throne.”

Now, it will certainly be acknowledged, that “those noble principles of action,” supported with “those glorious motives,” (which have both just now been described), are the fittest that can be conceived to inspire such a serene and steady fortitude, as will encounter every difficulty

ficulty and danger, and even death itself, in the most undaunted manner. It is extremely obvious, that when the minds of Christians are under the real dominion of these great principles of their religion, they are prepared to put in practice that magnanimous lesson of their Great Master, "not to fear them that can kill the body, and after that have no more they can do; but to fear him, who after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast both body and soul into hell-fire." And wherever this superiority to the fear of man and the fear of temporal evils and dangers flows from the principles of the gospel, it will be accompanied with a noble freedom and independence of soul, that can never dwell with mean and slavish principles. Men, though in the lowest station of life, who have a just sense of the dignity of human nature, and of those Christian virtues which dignify it, will discover, on proper occasions, a strength and greatness of mind, which will make them disdain

dain every thing that approaches in any degree to meanness, cowardice, or slavish fear. To all which we may add as sufficiently clear, without a particular illustration, that a courage derived from these principles and motives which have been described, will be more rational and vigorous, more firm and permanent, than that which flows merely from animal spirits, from external accidents, from the love of glory, or from what the world calls a sense of honour.

SOME perhaps will object to all that has been said, That superstitious notions of religion, and a fancied approbation of the Deity will excite some men to perpetrate the very worst and vilest actions, in as firm and undaunted a manner as the best Christians can perform the worthiest and noblest. To this it may be answered, That it must be owned, that when the minds of men are under the influence of false opinions, which they conceive to be countenanced by heaven, they will be daring and intrepid to an amazing degree. But surely false persuasions some-  
times



times producing very great effects, is no proof that just principles will not produce equal or superior ones, more certainly and more uniformly. Besides, to a discerning eye, there are marks which distinguish those acts of magnanimity and courage which are inspired by the principles of true religion, from those which proceed from the delusions of superstition. The former are calm and serene: The latter are fierce and turbulent. The first kind are modest and unaffected: The second are vain and ostentatious. The one sort, springing from an enlightened understanding and a pure heart, leave behind them a true peace of mind, which can never be extinguished or diminished; but the other sort, proceeding from an understanding darkened by superstition or corrupt passions, leave behind them only an ill grounded and delusive satisfaction, which the first glimpse of truth must dissipate and destroy.

OTHERS, perhaps, will object to what has been said, That the tendency of Christianity

stianity is only to form men to a kind of passive courage or patience under sufferings; but that it has no tendency to form them to that active courage which distinguishes the hero from the confessor. Let it suffice to answer to this objection, That that unremitting zeal and activity which prompted the Apostle Paul, for instance, to spend thirty years in journeys by land, voyages by sea, amidst numberless difficulties, dangers, and sufferings, to propagate Christianity, would have operated in the same manner, and excited to like indefatigable labours and efforts, if Providence had called him to defend his country, to support the rights and privileges of mankind, or to prosecute any other worthy undertaking. It seems natural to conceive, that a magnanimity and activity of mind, which were manifested in such an uniform and conspicuous manner through the whole of the Apostle's life, in promoting one great cause, would have displayed themselves in a similar way, if he had been engaged in any o-  
ther

other important cause, which reason, religion, and the good of mankind would justify and recommend.

YOUR time will not permit me to shew, as a further answer to the objection, That all the finer principles and affections of the human mind impell to action in the most spontaneous manner, and even in face of opposition and danger of the most formidable kind: That the gospel strengthens these natural principles, and encourages the most active efforts in every worthy cause; and that it is only when sufferings for a good cause cannot be avoided by righteous means, that the spirit of the gospel manifests itself in "perfect works of patience."

UPON the whole, from the view which hath been given of the principles and precepts of Christianity, and of the spirit of its great founder, we may conclude, that it is a *spirit of power, and not of fear*. And, indeed, we may safely challenge the brightest genius, in antient or

D modern

modern times, to invent a system of principles which shall be more adapted to inspire magnanimity and courage of the most exalted kind. And, if it is impossible to devise any scheme which shall excel Christianity in this respect, all the accusations of it, as encouraging a mean and dastardly spirit, as promoting slavish principles of any kind, should be contemned as altogether false and groundless.

THE power of prejudice, in giving the most unnatural turn to the plainest things, is very surprising. The author quoted in the beginning of this discourse, in the same chapter which is there referred to, alleges, that the true Christian's faith of another world, and a better life, extinguishes all concern in him for this present world, and this present life; or at least, that it renders him incapable of any brave and courageous efforts to preserve or promote any advantages that relate only to such a transitory state. But he has given no reason, that can convince  
any

any unprejudiced person, that a Christian, though of the most elevated and heavenly turn of mind, must have a less warm and delicate sense of the liberties or of any of the just privileges of mankind, or must have less zeal for the interests of his country, his family, or friends, merely on the account of his lively hopes of another and better life beyond the grave. Besides, when we reflect that a main part of the duty of a Christian, according to the principles of his religion, lies in doing good, in promoting the happiness of others to the utmost of his power, it is not easy to conceive how his firm hopes of immortality should render him indifferent to his duty, and incapable of all vigorous and manly efforts to discharge it. It seems to be a more natural conclusion, that the firm hopes of a future glorious life would animate the real Christian to discharge his duty with the utmost faithfulness, and particularly, would dispose him to labour with the utmost vigour to do good to his brethren  
of

of mankind, though it should be at the expence of a transient and uncertain life, that is soon to be succeeded by a permanent and eternal one. That is certainly the doctrine of the gospel, which declares, in the most express manner, "That Christians ought to lay down their lives for the brethren;" 1. John iii. 16. Such authors as throw out these and the like unjust reflections upon the Christian religion, are either totally unacquainted with its native purity and excellence, as it lies in the New Testament, or they are greatly deficient in that fairness and candour of mind which ought to be a primary qualification in those who assume to themselves the office of instructors of the world at large.

AGAIN, we may further infer, from the view which has been given of the principles of action recommended by the gospel, that those who profess themselves admirers of magnanimity, bravery, and that high order of virtues, ought to be consistent with themselves, and admire  
Christianity,

Christianity, which affords the best supports and the finest examples of them. And, if they would wish not merely to admire these shining virtues in speculation, but to practice them in real life, let them lay open their minds to the full influence of the spirit of the gospel. Those clear views of duty, and those striking and glorious motives to the practice of it, which the gospel sets before them, are the most effectual means of forming their minds to a firmness and fortitude of the most excellent kind.

To conclude, let all of us be careful to nourish our souls with the spirit of the gospel; so that, deriving strength and vigour from it, we may, on all occasions, exert true fortitude in resisting every thing that is evil, and cleaving to every thing that is good. Let us be ever on our guard to withstand, in the most determined manner, every impulse of ungoverned passion, every temptation to a departure from that equity of disposition, that benignity of temper, that purity of  
heart,

heart, and that integrity of life, which becomes the disciples of the Holy Jesus: And, particularly, let us arm ourselves with manly resolution, to despise that scorn and ridicule which the vicious and unprincipled take a pleasure in employing to seduce the unguarded and unexperienced into the snares of vice, or into a neglect and contempt of all religion.

We ought always to remember, that though we are not called to the national senate to shew our resolution and firmness, in opposing public measures which we conceive hurtful to the state, nor into the field of battle to signalize our bravery, nor to the scaffold of martyrdom to prove our constancy and fortitude; there are abundance of other opportunities in the daily intercourses of society, and ordinary train of life, for the most important exertions of courage and manhood. Private and ordinary life is the field of battle, where every Christian is called to exercise his courage "in fighting the good fight of faith." It is here we  
must



must learn to conquer ourselves, and to establish an empire in our own bosoms, over every mean, every sensual, every selfish, and every worldly passion. The victories gained here, though concealed from the eyes of men, may be more signal and glorious in the sight of God, than those that are gained in the most conspicuous and most admired scenes of public life. The maxim of Solomon, "That he that ruleth his own spirit, is mightier than he that taketh a city," is a fundamental maxim of all sound philosophy, as well as of Christian morality. The conquest over bad propensities, inclinations, and habits, is the first step of the Christian life. And, when this is obtained, the nobler principles of the heart will operate with ease and freedom, and display their power through the various scenes of life, in the steadfast prosecution of every thing virtuous and praise-worthy.

BEFORE I proceed to the *second* assertion in the text, permit me to suggest, that it particularly becomes those who

are

are associated for the noble purpose of propagating Christian knowledge, to exert themselves with vigour in that honourable and important work. They ought to suffer nothing to disconcert or discourage them, but to animate one another from the encouraging consideration in the text, That God hath not given Christians the spirit of fear, but of power, and suffer nothing to disconcert or discourage them : They may rest fully assured, that the spirit of that religion, which it is the end of their association to promote, is the power of " God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

OUR Saviour himself has plainly intimated, that the gospel is the great mean which the wisdom of Providence has chosen to enlighten, to sanctify, to bless, and to save mankind. " No man," says he, " knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." At another time, he declares, in like manner, " That no man cometh to the Father, but by him." And, on other occasions, he assumes to himself the glorious character

character and office of being “the light of the world.” The history of the world for near eighteen hundred years, confirms the truth of these declarations. For, in so far as any just and worthy ideas of God, of Providence, of a future state, and of pure morality, are yet to be found among the nations of the world, they are derived from the gospel of the Son of God. Even Mahometan countries are no exception to this; for whatever is good and pure in that religion, is manifestly borrowed from the sacred writings of the Jews and Christians. Now, from what is past, and from the predictions of scripture about what is to come, we have reason to think, that the same divine religion shall be the chief mean henceforward of spreading these blessed doctrines, till the knowledge of God, and of Jesus Christ his Son, cover the face of the whole earth. Government and laws, philosophy and arts, may give their aid; but the spirit of Christianity must be the inspirer and conductor of all other means

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of

of civilization and improvement. No stronger incitement surely can be given to a society, which have chosen for the object of their association the propagation of the religion of Jesus, than this, That they are co-operating with the grand scheme of Providence laid before the foundation of the world, “to turn  
 “men from darkness unto light, and from  
 “the service of sin and Satan, to the service of the living God.”

THE success which this noble undertaking hath already had, and which appears to the conviction of every one, from the number of schools, no less than 172, which are supported by it, and in which 7270 scholars are instructed in reading, writing, and arithmetic, must prove a new and powerful excitement to the Society itself to persevere with zeal and alacrity in their *labours of love*.

BESIDES these schools for acquiring necessary knowledge, there are twelve schools on a second patent, in which girls are taught and trained up to industry in  
 such

such kinds of work as are suited to their sex, and the condition of life for which they are designed. It may surely be expected, that the view of these blessed effects which this worthy institution has already produced, and is daily producing, will excite and encourage all the true friends of religion and humanity, to contribute, every way in their power, to the support and advancement of a design so manifestly calculated to promote both the temporal good of society, and the eternal interests of immortal souls.

I beg the indulgence of the audience, while I proceed to consider the *second* ingredient of the Christian spirit, mentioned in the text, *viz.* the spirit of love.

As love, in the New Testament, when spoken of in general, usually signifies the love of our brethren, we shall, in what follows, principally treat of it in this sense; *first*, By shewing that love, tenderness, and humanity, is most certainly the genius of Christianity; and, *second*, By endeavouring to point out the excellency of  
this .

this spirit, in the degree and to the extent in which the gospel describes and enjoins it.

Now, the *first* of these, That the genius of Christianity is love, surely needs no long or laboured proof to a Christian audience. The primary doctrines of this religion are: That God is love, and dwells in love:—That the whole system of his government is kind and benign:—That the scheme of redemption took its rise from the original benignity and mercy of the Great Father of all:—That the Great Redeemer was animated with the same spirit of benignity and compassion in undertaking, and in executing every step of it:—And that the consummation of this glorious plan will be the total deliverance of many myriads of the human race from sin and death, and their final establishment in a state of perfect virtue and of immortal felicity and glory. It cannot be contested, that these doctrines favour and encourage the spirit of kindness and beneficence.

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AND, when we attend to the preceptive and sentimental parts of the gospel, we find, that the spirit of love breathes in all of them: That the precepts of Christianity tend to restrain and suppress all the malevolent passions, and to promote the culture and improvement of the kind and friendly ones, can admit of no doubt: That Christian morality strikes at the root of that selfish and worldly temper which stands in direct opposition to the spirit of love, is evident from the whole strain of the doctrine of its great Author and his apostles, as well as from the shining examples they have given of generosity and disinterestedness in their own lives.

FURTHER, That the religion of Jesus not only aims at suppressing and extinguishing the selfish and worldly spirit, and the whole malignant tribe of passions which spring from it, but tends to cherish and invigorate all the benign and friendly dispositions, is evident beyond all doubt from the most cursory view of the New  
 • Testament.

Testament. To mention all the particulars on this subject, would be to transcribe a great part of the morality of the gospel. Let it suffice to select a few passages. "By this," says our Saviour, "all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." And, in another passage, he insists upon a forgiving temper as indispensably necessary in order to our acceptance with God; Matth. vi. 14. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." How perfectly he exemplified this sublime precept in the course of his own life, and at the conclusion of it, is well known to every one who has read the gospel-history. The apostles of our Lord inculcate the same kind of precepts with the greatest warmth and earnestness: Eph. iv. 31. 32. "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from among you, with all malice; and be ye kind



“kind one to another, even as God for  
 “Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

FURTHER, The points of light in which Christianity places our fellow-men, are such as are suited to affect us in the most powerful and tender manner.—We are all, whether high or low, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, equally the children of the same great family, and equally under the protection, and at the disposal of the Almighty and All-wise Providence of the same great Parent of all. We are all fellow-travellers through this state of pilgrimage, in which we are all exposed to the like wants, dangers, and distresses. We have all the like imperfections and infirmities, equally liable to fail in our duty to one another, and therefore equally standing in need of forgiveness at one another’s hands.—We are all equally labouring in the same state of darkness and corruption, of guilt and mortality. And we are all equally dependent for our hopes of deliverance from these great evils, on the  
 same

same great friend and Saviour of the human race, Jesus the Son of God.

THESE views of our brethren of mankind are certainly fitted to bring down the most lofty looks, and to convince the proudest of the sons of men, that, notwithstanding all the distinctions and pre-eminences on which they value themselves, they are, in reality, on a level in the most important respects with the poorest and lowest of the human race.—And all those who lay open their hearts to the full influence of such views, will feel such humane and tender sentiments arise within them as the antient eastern author expresses in the following pathetic words: “If  
 “ I did despise the cause of my man-ser-  
 “ vant, or maid-servant, when they con-  
 “ tended with me, What then shall I do  
 “ when God riseth up? And when he vi-  
 “ siteth, what shall I answer? Did not he  
 “ that made me in the womb make him?  
 “ And did not one fashion us in the  
 “ womb?” Job xxxi. 13. 14. 15.

IT is our great happiness in the Chri-  
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lian world, that the sacred writings abound with such sublime precepts, and such tender sentiments as have been mentioned. But let us take care, lest, through our familiarity with them, we lose the just sense of their excellence and importance. Let us always remember, that, whatever our notions about these precepts and sentiments of the gospel may be, they are surely divine instructions, and worthy to serve for lessons to the whole race of mankind. They are lessons that bear the most striking characters of that tenderness of heart, that elevation of mind, that total superiority to all selfish and worldly passions, which distinguished the divine Author of our religion; and they are the most convincing proofs, that humanity and love, in the highest perfection, is the genius of Christianity.

As was proposed, in the *second* place, let us allow our thoughts to dwell a little on the excellencies of the spirit of love.

1. Then, love is the most amiable and the most beautiful of all objects of con-  
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templation.

templation. Goodness, genuine goodness, where-ever it appears, charms the heart of man. The native indications of it in the features, the looks, the tone of the voice, or gestures of the body, strike every beholder with pleasure. The beauty, especially of kind and humane, of charitable and generous deeds, has ever been felt and acknowledged by all mankind. In a word, all the various emanations of a kind and benign heart, in looks, in voice, in words, in attitudes, or actions, are pleasing to the view of every observer. And hence it is, that the spirit of love, operating and displaying itself in the characters and manners of mankind, gives them their chief beauty and excellence. Where this is wanting, that artificial politeness, which is in so high estimation among the higher ranks of mankind, gives an apparent rather than a real grace and amiableness to their manners. That politeness which flows from real affection and humility will ever be found to be the most genuine. It may, indeed,

deed, want some of the exterior graces which arise from elegant attitudes and motions of the body, or from certain proprieties of voice and language. But as the essential part of politeness consists in attending to these things which may please or be agreeable, as far as is consistent with truth and integrity, in avoiding, either in words or in actions, what may hurt or offend, and in laying aside frivolous officiousness and studied formality, unfeigned goodwill and affection will engage to a more uniform and effectual practice of these things than any artificial rules and habits can possibly do.

It must indeed be owned, that considering how ill affected men are frequently to one another, they would be insupportable to each other without a portion of that dissimulation, which is a considerable ingredient in the fashionable politeness of the world. If men were to shew, without disguise, that envy or contempt, that aversion or malice, which, alas! they too frequently have in their hearts, they

they could not possibly bear with one another. It serves indeed, to maintain the peace and decency of society, that they mutually act a part, though far from the most sincere one. But, surely, if men would, in good earnest, apply themselves to the exercise of that mutual love which Christianity enjoins, there would be little occasion for that habitual insincerity in artificial professions of goodwill and humility, which make up so great a part of what is called good manners or good breeding. If love, without dissimulation, really warmed our hearts, it would beautify our manners more effectually than all artificial rules without it can possibly do.

FURTHER, in the *second* place, the excellency of the principle of love will appear, if we consider that it is not only a most amiable, but also a most powerful one. And, indeed, its power is so great that it is difficult to enumerate or describe all its mighty effects. It is an established maxim; That love begets love; and

and the truth of this maxim is verified by universal experience. If we show hearty good-will and affection to those with whom we converse, or with whom we have any intercourse, we can scarce fail to receive the proper returns of good-will and kind dispositions on their part. Love without dissimulation conquers every heart. Its empire is in a manner universal. Where it is known to be the ruling principle of any character, it will gain the hearts and applauses of thousands, nay of millions of mankind, who never saw the person, nor were ever within the reach of his beneficence. But the mighty power of love appears, not only in winning the hearts of all men, when there is no resistance to be overcome arising from envy, resentment, or any of the malevolent passions, but it appears more conspicuously in triumphing over ill-will, resentment, and malice of the most confirmed and inveterate kind: "For, if we really, and from the bottom  
 " of our hearts, love our enemies," (as our  
 Saviour

Saviour directs); “ if we bless them that  
 “ curse us; if we do good to them that  
 “ hate us; and if we pray for them that  
 “ despitefully use us and persecute us, we  
 “ will gradually soften and melt their  
 “ hearts.” If we uniformly persevere in  
 returning good for evil, the best offices  
 for the worst, there is scarce any human  
 creature so hardened and obstinate as not  
 to be mollified and even reconciled at last.  
 There is only one exception to this:  
 When the good man’s measures of con-  
 duct and course of action continue to op-  
 pose and thwart the worldly interests and  
 ambitious views of his adversaries; in  
 that case, the most steady exercise of the  
 purest and most perfect goodness will have  
 no effect. This was the state of things  
 betwixt our blessed Saviour and the rulers  
 of the Jewish nation, and was the cause  
 that his inimitable and unconquerable  
 goodness had no influence upon them.  
 But when this is not the case, an uniform  
 course of kindness and good offices, which  
 carry demonstration along with them,  
 that



that there are no remains of resentment at bottom, or no other wrong principle operating within, will sooner or later produce their effect, and beget love and esteem.

WE may further add, as another proof of the mighty power of love, that when any one is called to the delicate and difficult office of admonishing and reproving others for their follies and vices, nothing but the workings of real affection appearing to the full conviction of the guilty person himself, that can reconcile his mind to the reprover, and give real energy and efficacy to what he says. The power of love, in such cases, far surpasses the power of the finest eloquence. When love manifestly dictates the reproof, it will draw tears from the eyes of the profligate and abandoned, and even of the hardened in vice and profligacy, and make him conceive a higher degree of affection and esteem for the friendly adviser than ever he had before: And sometimes the successful

cessful execution of an office of this kind proves the commencement of a friendship that lasts through life.

WE may still add upon this head, that it is love which inspires the soul with generous and noble designs, and with that resolution and fortitude which is necessary to execute them. These heroic actions which are recorded in history, and which we read with admiration, have, for the most part, been the effects of the love of one's country, of particular friendship, or of an ardent zeal for some important interests of mankind. Thus heroism, the truest heroism, derives its chief excellence and strength from the spirit of love.

*Lastly,* THE mighty power of love displays itself in uniting and binding mankind together. A renowned leader in science or in arts, a superior of distinguished virtues and talents in any important department in society, produces a wonderful union and harmony among

mong his admirers and adherents. The warm attachment, for instance, of all soldiers to a favourite general, or of all the subjects to a beloved prince, what goodwill, what unanimity of views does it produce among the soldiers or subjects? How does it make them forget their little animosities, and interfering interests, and join heart and hand in the service of him who is the common object of their affection? In a word, love is that invisible, but mighty chain, which links mankind together in a thousand ways. And it is by these associations, that their personal interests, and the interest of the public are frequently promoted in the most effectual way.

To all which we may add, that this principle of love shall at last demonstrate the whole extent of its power, by uniting the whole virtuous and holy part of mankind into one happy and glorious society, under the one great Mediator and head Jesus Christ the righteous. And as he is the perfect image of the invisible God, it

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shall through him unite them all to the great Parent of the universe. And thus love shall be the eternal and indissoluble bond of union to the whole immortal empire of Jehovah.

THE *third* and *last* proof of the excellency of the spirit of love is, its being the source of joy and happiness. This is a point that needs no laboured illustration or proof. We need only appeal to every one's feeling, that love is the temper, nay the very essence of happiness. Every sentiment of the human breast, in so far as it partakes of benignity, it is happiness; and, in so far as it partakes of malignity, it is misery. If we had our choice in the manner of making ourselves happy, we could not fix upon any thing more effectual, than to have our hearts overflowing with the warmest affection to every human creature, without the least tincture of any malevolent or disquieting passions. The only thing further wanting to complete our happiness, would be the assurance

furance of the favour of God to secure and perpetuate it. Let us suppose this attained, and then try, if we can even imagine a more happy state than that of a man "who dwells in love," who is satisfied with his lot in life, and who rejoices in the divine administration. In such a state, surely, the mind must be open to relish, with the fullest pleasure, all the enjoyments of life. And it must also be in the best disposition to do good, and to relieve the necessities, to sympathize with the sorrows, and to share in the joys of all mankind.

THESE are the natural and noble effects of the spirit of love: Wherever it prevails, it renders the possessors amiable, powerful, and happy.

To conclude, let us not satisfy ourselves with admiring and praising the excellency of this spirit; but let us be solicitous to transplant it into our hearts, and to exhibit the blessed effects of it in our lives. Let it ever be our assiduous care  
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to check the first risings of all the malevolent passions, and to cherish the first motions of the benign affections. Let us habitually lift up our souls in earnest prayers to Almighty God, that he may kindle in our hearts the sacred flame of love to himself and to mankind, and that he may heighten and increase it by the continual influences of his Holy Spirit. In all the intercourses of society, let us embrace every opportunity that offers, and even seek opportunities of exercising our own friendly affections: And let us be equally careful to extinguish the beginnings of animosity and hatred, and to spread love and friendship among all those to whom our influence can any how reach. For, if we set ourselves in earnest to do so, we may be assured the kind dispositions will gather strength, and will grow up till they gain the ascendancy in our souls. And under the dominion of those gentle masters, we shall be amiable in the eyes of men, we shall be acceptable in the sight of God,  
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we shall be happy in ourselves; we shall be useful in the world; and at our departure hence, we shall be fit to be translated into those blissful regions of the new heaven, and of the new earth, where peace and harmony, love and friendship, shall have their everlasting abode.

WE now proceed to offer a few observations on the *third* assertion in the text, *viz.* That Christianity is the spirit of a sound mind \*.

IN entering upon this part of the subject, let it be observed, in order to prevent mistakes, that two things seem principally to be comprehended under the notion of soundness of mind; *1st*, That the mind is settled in such a state of freedom from the perturbation and darkening influence of all irregular passions, that it is in a capacity to judge fairly and justly of things according to truth and nature; and, *2dly*, That it can adhere with steadfastness

\* What follows was not delivered for want of time, but is now added, that the subject might not be left quite unfinished.

fastness to these right judgments, even in the most trying scenes of life. It will surely be admitted, that it is not the meaning of the assertion in the text, that Christianity gives us better natural powers than we would have had without it; but only that it assists us in the free and genuine use of those powers, in whatever degree we are possessed of them.

Now, that the spirit of Christianity has a natural tendency to preserve soundness of mind, and to lead to wisdom in the conduct of life, will appear from the following observations.

*First*, That it is one principal end and intention of Christianity to establish such rational and solid principles of religion, as if followed out, would prevent or correct all such superstitious and enthusiastic notions as tend to relax the obligations of morality, and to substitute something else in their stead. The conceptions which the religion of Jesus gives us of the nature and perfections of God, as a Spirit possessed of all moral excellencies, lead us to conceive, that the practice of these moral

virtues



virtues which makes us resemble him, is absolutely indispensable. Our holy religion not only enjoins us, in general terms, “to be followers of God as dear children;” “to be holy, as God is holy; perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect:” But it assures us in the most express and solemn terms, that the acceptance and favour of God cannot be obtained by rites and ceremonies, or any thing whatsoever, without holiness of heart and life: That “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” is one of its fundamental principles; and it is solemnly declared to be the grand and ultimate end of the whole dispensation of the gospel, “to purify mens hearts, and make them zealous for good works.” Our blessed Saviour stood forth, through his whole life, an undaunted champion for pure and undefiled religion, for the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith, in direct opposition to the superstitious, enthusiastic, and corrupt opinions of his bigotted countrymen; and it was in support

port of this glorious cause that he suffered even to the death. . Whoever reads the gospels with any degree of attention, must be convinced that he laboured, through his whole life, with the warmest and most indefatigable zeal to root out all superstitious opinions of every kind, and to plant in their stead the grand principle of true religion, That there can be no acceptance with God, no evidence of a title to future felicity, without a life of good works proceeding from a good heart: Whoever therefore imagines that Christianity encourages or promotes superstition, or substitutes any thing whatsoever instead of real holiness, must either be grossly ignorant of what it is, or must be prejudiced against it to an astonishing degree. :

Now, it is extremely obvious, that if this one momentous and capital principle of our religion, "That, without holiness, "no man shall see the Lord," were firmly established in the minds of men, it would have a mighty influence on the  
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whole system of their opinions, and on the whole conduct of their lives. This single principle operating with its full power, and to its whole extent, would root out multitudes of foolish, trifling, and pernicious opinions; it would correct innumerable weaknesses and follies, and would be a chief mean of strengthening and perfecting human reason itself. The effects of it on life would be no less signal; it would fix men at once in a right choice as to the great ends of life, and as to the means of accomplishing them: No ends could be proposed, or means employed, but such as the strictest virtue and purest religion would approve and recommend. The spirit of the gospel is therefore favourable in a very remarkable manner to soundness of mind and wisdom of conduct.

AGAIN, Let it be observed, in the *second* place, that the spirit of Christianity has a powerful tendency to mortify and subdue all those irregular passions, which

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prove the chief hindrances to the best exercise of our rational powers.

EVERY one who has given the least attention to human life, must have observed, that the taste for the affluence and riches, for the power and dignity, and for the splendid accommodations and elegancies of life, rises frequently to such an immoderate height, that it makes men lose sight of the true dignity of human nature, and engages them in the pursuit of these perishing objects, with as great ardor as if the possession and enjoyment of them constituted their chief happiness and glory: That vehement passions of this kind darken mens understandings, enfeeble their moral sentiments, and lead them to form a thousand false judgments and wrong estimates concerning the real worth of things, is abundantly evident from daily experience and observation. And when these worldly passions gain an ascendancy in the minds of such men as are at the same time under the full dominion of self-love, of pride and ambition, they not only

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ly disturb and blind their understandings, but, if they happen to meet with unexpected and severe disappointments and mortifications, they sometimes rise to such a height of violence as terminates in total distraction and madness in all its most frightful forms.

THE spirit of Christianity is the most natural and effectual remedy against the excesses of all such passions. For it is manifestly the design of this divine institution, to raise the minds of men to a strong and commanding sense of the excellence of virtue in itself, and to a lively faith of the glorious rewards awaiting it in a future state. It is a fundamental maxim of the morality of the gospel, That the chief happiness and chief glory of human nature lies in the virtuous endowments and dispositions of the heart, and not in worldly possessions or enjoyments of any kind. Whoever therefore has imbibed the spirit of this religion, will have his supreme affections set on the things which are above, on spiritual and eternal objects:

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The effect of which must necessarily be, that the love of inferior and earthly objects will abate and cease to maintain the empire in his soul: "We cannot serve two masters: We cannot serve God and Mammon." In so far, therefore, as men are really under the influence of Christian principles, those irregular passions which darken their understandings, which weaken their moral powers, and incapacitate them for forming right judgments with regard to the true ends and true happiness of life, will be subdued and mortified. And when the obstructions from these passions are removed, the nobler faculties of the mind will exert themselves with vigour, and govern the life according to the dictates of truth and wisdom.

THESE happy effects of the spirit of the gospel, in keeping all the passions within such bounds as not to stop or disturb the proper exercise of the finer powers, may have been of unspeakable benefit to the human race in former ages, and may continue

tinue to be so, till the consummation of all things. The minds of thousands may have been established in such a state of moderation and self-government, as has prevented their passions from rising to such hurtful or such fatal excesses, as their natural degree of strength might have occasioned, if they had not been mellowed and subdued, by the sacred and powerful influence of the gospel: And if the spirit of Christianity should more and more prevail, as there is good ground to hope, these blessed effects will also more and more increase. At the same time it is to be feared, that many persons in Christian countries make so little improvement of their spiritual advantages, that they suffer their pride, their ambition, their revenge and worldly lusts to hurry them on to the same heights of madness, as if they had never heard of the Christian religion. When, indeed, that most deplorable state of human nature, total phrensy, takes its rise from some strange disorders in the animal frame, without any aid

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from ungovernable passions, Christianity can have no influence to prevent or cure it, at least, in any other way than as it enjoins us “to mortify the flesh, to bring the body under, and keep it in subjection.”

It was observed above, that strong self-love and pride have a great influence in raising the worldly passions to an immoderate height. It is worthy of particular attention, that the spirit of Christianity interposes its friendly aid here also, by forming men to sober and lowly thoughts of themselves. The maxims and precepts of the gospel show sufficiently, that humility is an important and essential part of the Christian disposition. Thus the apostle exhorts, Rom. xii. 13. “I say unto every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly.” This sobriety of mind, though perhaps it cannot be reckoned a distinct virtue from all others, yet it is a distinguishing part of a right state of mind,  
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and is the best ground-work on which the superstructure of a virtuous character can be raised. Mark the person that is void of this sober sense of himself, and you must be very undiscerning in characters, if you do not perceive in him many foibles at least, if not many vices. The chief ingredients of this sobriety of mind are these two, humility and equity of disposition.

THOSE who retain an habitual sense of their constant dependence on divine providence; of their utter insufficiency for their own happiness; of their manifold imperfections, and of their accountability to God for their whole behaviour, cannot be high minded. Such persons will not discover a propensity to compare themselves only with those who are their inferiors in natural powers, acquired accomplishments, and moral attainments, that they may feed their vanity with their own real or fancied superiority. They will rather be disposed to compare themselves with those who are their superiors

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in all these respects ; and, not even satisfied with this, they will chuse to measure their attainments by that standard of moral perfection which is planted in their own bosoms, and which is clearly displayed in the purity and perfection of the divine law. These comparative views will soon make them sensible how little cause they have for indulging themselves in vain, self-complacent, and self-important imaginations. On the contrary, these sober views of things will inspire them with sentiments of genuine humility ; instead of entertaining self-magnifying thoughts, they will feel pious regret upon the account of their being still so far short of the standard of moral excellence, and they will feel the deepest sorrow when they reflect on those manifold failings and infirmities of which they are still conscious ; and, under these humbling views, they will earnestly implore the mercy and forgiveness of God in Jesus Christ, through whom they hope to receive the atonement.

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It must be obvious to every one, on the least reflection, that the humble state of mind just now described will be a perpetual restraint on these boilings of resentment, these pangs of pride and ambition, and these florid imaginations about worldly happiness, which strangely blind the understanding, and occasion the grossest departures from rational judgments and wise conduct. Again, equity and fairness of mind is also a great security against wrong judgments and wrong conduct in the affairs of life. Observe a man under the dominion of self-love, self-will, and self-interest, and you will see him form judgments so manifestly and reproachfully partial as must astonish every impartial spectator. On the other hand, observe a man of a fair and equitable disposition, and you shall see him give judgment with readiness and alacrity against his own interest, when justice or equity requires it. In the language of sacred writ, "He sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not." That hu-

mility and equity are fundamental virtues in the Christian scheme of morality, will not be called in question. The spirit of Christianity, therefore, must be acknowledged to be conducive, in a remarkable manner, to soundness of mind and to improvement in real wisdom.

WE shall only add, in the *third* place, that the spirit of Christianity produces a pleasing composure and serenity of soul, which has the most friendly influence on the best exercise of our rational faculties.

THE real Christian is not only delivered from the tumult of impetuous passions, but he is solaced with prospects and hopes of the most comfortable and peaceful kind. In this state of tranquillity and peace, he has the full command of all his faculties, and can exercise them to the best purposes and in the best manner. Every one's own experience assures him, that whatever disturbs his mind darkens and enfeebles it; and, on the contrary, whatever composes his mind, brightens  
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and invigorates it. Every one's observation either on himself or others, also informs him, that deliberate forethought, sound judgments, and wise purposes cannot dwell amidst hurry and confusion; and that they are only to be found in the habitations of order, quietness, and peace. As the eye, in a serene and unclouded sky, sees every object within its reach in the most distinct manner; so the mind sees every thing clearly when it is free from the perturbations of passion, and the inquietudes of care and anxiety. Thus it appears, that the spirit of Christianity is conducive, in a variety of ways, to soundness of mind and wisdom of conduct.

WHAT an admirable thing then is the religion of Jesus, which, while it "makes us wise unto salvation," makes us also wise as to this world, so far as our natural faculties are capable?

ALL that has been said of the excellency of the spirit of the gospel has been confined to the three ingredients of it mentioned in the text. But if we were  
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to display the gospel-morality in its full extent, as comprehending piety, purity, equity, humility, and the whole train of Christian virtues, many new and striking excellencies would rise up to our view. And if we were to add to the divine morality of the gospel a delineation of its peculiar doctrines, and of their excellence and suitability to the wants and exigencies of mankind in their present state, we would clearly discern that it was justly proclaimed by the angel at our Saviour's birth, to be "glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."

If we were, for instance, to shew that the gospel is light to those who were sitting in darkness; that it is pardon to the guilty; that it is the power of the Spirit of God to purify and sanctify those who groan under corruption and a body of sin; and that it gives the assured prospect of an immortal life in a glorious resurrection-state to those who, through fear of death, would be all their life subject to bondage:

I say, if we were to paint Christianity in these interesting lights, we would clearly see that it is, in all respects, “worthy of all acceptation;” and that it is the only source of consolation to the heart of man, that can never fail him in any circumstances or situation of life, or at the approaches of death and dissolution itself.

To which we may still add, that if we were to compare the gospel, both as to its doctrines and as to its morals, with the most admired schemes of antient Hea-then moralists, its superior excellence, in both respects, would appear in the most convincing light. But as there is not room for treating these important topics in one discourse, we shall conclude with a few brief reflections on what hath been said.

I. THEN, if the gospel has a manifest tendency to form men to the most amiable, the most excellent, and most useful dispositions, it must be total inatten-  
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tion, want of discernment, or want of taste for excellence even of the highest order, that can make any one insensible of its worth and excellence. To which we may add, that those who employ their time and talents to deprectate this excellent and useful institution, and to bring it into contempt, cannot be deemed true friends to mankind and to the most important interests of human society.

2. If the gospel is really so excellent, and so useful, as has been said, let us beware of entertaining prejudices against it. Let none deceive themselves with an opinion, that prejudices are harmless and innocent, or at least, that they cannot be criminal in any considerable degree. Let none imagine, that that liberty of thinking, which is the unalienable right of mankind, intitles them to think and to believe as they please, and whatever they please. On the contrary, every one of us ought to reflect with the utmost seriousness on the sacred obligations we are under to exercise our understandings impartially

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ly in the search of truth, and to judge according to the evidence which God hath laid before us. It is true, that we are not accountable to any human jurisdiction for our thoughts, and the use and improvement we make of our understandings. But, at the same time, it is equally true, that we are as really accountable to God for our ways of thinking, as for our ways of acting. There will be a mighty difference found at the divine tribunal, betwixt liberty of thinking and licentiousness of thinking, betwixt judgments formed from the just exercise of our rational powers, and those which have been formed under the influence of worldly and selfish passions. Nothing can be more equitable, than that those who through corrupt passions have shut their eyes against the light which would have directed their steps, comforted their hearts, and led them in the path of life, should suffer all the consequences of their own wilful conduct. He who is the truth hath assured us, that it shall be the ground and cause of the condemnation

demnation of many, “ that they have  
 “ loved darkness rather than light, be-  
 “ cause their deeds have been evil.”

To conclude, let us make the various excellencies of the spirit of the gospel the frequent and favourite subject of our most retired and serious meditation : And in these hours of retirement, let us lay our hearts fully open to these impressions which the contemplation of its excellence will naturally make upon us. The minds of most men are susceptible of impressions from moral excellence. And when we perceive, that a very high degree of it, shines through the whole gospel, we will be disposed to hearken with fairness and impartiality to the many other striking proofs of its truth and divinity. And as our hearts are more and more smitten with the love of truth and virtue, prejudices will vanish, and our faith in the divine mission of Jesus will be gradually confirmed, “ till we are filled with  
 “ peace and joy in believing.”

Names

Names of the persons appointed to receive  
 BENEFACTIONS in *London* and *Edin-*  
*burgh*, for the use of this SOCIETY.

In *London*, *John M'Intosh*, junior, Esq;  
 Merchant.

In *Edinburgh*, Mr *John Davidson* Writer  
 to the Signet.

FORM of a BEQUEST or LEGACY.

*Item*, I give and bequeathe the sum of  
 to the Society in Scotland for pro-  
 pagating Christian Knowledge, to be ap-  
 plied [*either to the purposes of the first or*  
*second charters, as the donor pleases.*]

Committee of DIRECTORS for  
 the year 1768.

*James Smollet* of *Bonhill*, Esq; his Ma-  
 jesty's Sheriff-depute for the shire of

*Dunbarton*, and one of the Commissaries of *Edinburgh*, Preses.

Dr *Patrick Cuming*, one of the Ministers of *Edinburgh*.

Mr *William Wilson* of *Soonhope*, Writer in *Edinburgh*.

Mr *William Dickson Dyer* in *Edinburgh*.

Dr *Alexander Webster*, one of the Ministers of *Edinburgh*.

Mr *William Tod* junior, Merchant there.

Mr *Robert Scot-Moncrieff* Merchant there.

*Joseph Williamson*, Esq; Advocate.

Mr *John Caw* Depute-secretary to the Board of Excise.

Dr *John Erskine*, one of the Ministers of *Edinburgh*.

Mr *James Robertson*, Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of *Edinburgh*.

Mr *Archibald Wallace*, Merchant in *Edinburgh*.

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Mr *John Walker*, Merchant there.

Mr *William Galloway*, Merchant there.

Mr

Mr *John Forrest* junior, Merchant in *Edinburgh*.

The Right Honourable the Earl of *Kinnoul* is President of the General Court.

*Alexander Tait*, Esq; one of the Principal Clerks of Session, Secretary.

*John Forrest*, Esq; Merchant in *Edinburgh*, and Deputy-governor of the Bank of *Scotland*, Comptroller.

*Robert Chalmers*, Accomptant.

*John Davidson*, Writer to the Signet, Treasurer.

*Alexander Stevenson*, Writer in *Edinburgh*, Clerk.

*David Russell*, Accomptant in *Edinburgh*, Bookholder.

*James Brown*, Bookseller.

*Alexander Coutts*, Officer.

F I N I S.