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A  
D E F E N C E  
OF  
ITINERANT AND FIELD PREACHING.

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A

D E F E N C E

OF

*ITINERANT AND FIELD PREACHING:*

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY FOR GRATIS SABBATH SCHOOLS,

*On the 24th of December 1797,*

IN LADY GLENORCHY'S CHAPEL, EDINBURGH.

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BY GREVILLE EWING,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL. *K*

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EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY J. RITCHIE.

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LEITH; M. OGLE, GLASGOW; AND R. OGLE, GRAY'S  
INN LANE, HOLBORN, LONDON.

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1799.

*IF any Profit shall arise from the Sale of this Sermon,  
it will be given to the Society for gratis Sabbath  
Schools.*



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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WHEN this Sermon was delivered, it excited a pretty strong and general sensation. Some were pleased to approve: others seemed to think it their duty to condemn. Unfavourable opinions were formed, even by many who were not present in the congregation. Offended or alarmed at the reports which were carried to them, they zealously reprobated the whole discourse. The matter was indeed so very seriously taken, that several solemn consultations were held, with a view either to reprimand the Preacher for his transgression, or at least to deter him from ever committing it again.

Amidst

Amidst all this bustle, he was never directly spoken with on the subject, excepting for a few minutes, in a single instance, and that after the person in question had signified his displeasure elsewhere without reserve. The expostulation, however, which then took place, was received by the Author in a friendly manner; and he doubts not that many who blame him, have been actuated by the best motives. The respect which he owed to his friends, as well as the regard due to truth, inclined him carefully to review sentiments which had caused such a ferment. This he has endeavoured to do, and he has done it coolly, and at leisure. The result is, that he not only retains his sentiments, but, feeling more than ever their importance, thinks it his duty to lay them before the Public. He hopes that those who took offence upon hearsay, will now condescend to read that which they have so strenuously condemned. If, in any degree, he has been misrepresented or misunderstood, publication may perhaps do away the unfavourable

favourable impression. In cases of this kind, however, it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment. It is not the Author, it is the subject, which demands attention. Truth always rewards investigation, and it will prevail and operate, when the little differences of individuals shall have vanished away.

Among the objections made against this Sermon, the Author was much struck to find, that none of those which were stated to him, were either levelled against the truth of his doctrines, or directly drawn from the holy scriptures; and that no argument from scripture which he could use, in support of those doctrines, was sustained as a vindication for his having preached them. The leading consideration urged upon him was, that it was imprudent for any man in his situation, to preach such a sermon at all, however true the doctrines might be. It is fair to confess, that he decidedly rejects the principle of this reasoning. In all questions of Christianity, he deems it the first object to ascertain the  
 doctrine

doctrine of scripture, and the second, to declare that doctrine. In every situation, he is willing to be chargeable with wanting the prudence, which would lead him to “shun to declare the whole counsel of “God.”

EDINBURGH,  
*Feb. 20. 1799.*



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A  
D E F E N C E  
OF  
ITINERANCIES AND FIELD-PREACHING.

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PROV. i. 20, 21.

*Wisdom crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets :  
she crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of  
the gates : in the city she uttereth her words.*

**S**OLOMON, in all his glory, did not disdain to attend to the religious instruction of his people. Not satisfied with employing others, he personally engaged in the work himself; and seems, in the choice of a name, to have preferred "the Preacher," to all the magnificent titles of royalty.

His humility was equalled by his diligence. "Because the Preacher was wise, we are told,

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“ he still taught the people knowledge ; yea,  
 “ he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in  
 “ order many proverbs. The Preacher sought  
 “ to find out acceptable words, and that which  
 “ was written was upright, even words of truth.”  
 Eccl. xii. 9, 10.

Having not only preached with assiduity, but committed many of his sermons to writing, and published them to the world, they form part of the sacred record of revelation, and remain unto this day, by which means, “ he being dead yet speaketh.” Of these sermons the greater part is contained in the book from which we have taken our text. The object of this book is shortly stated in the beginning of the chapter. “ To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive “ the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, “ and equity ; to give subtilty to the simple, to “ the young man knowledge and discretion,” ver. 2, 3, 4. After observing that the importance of this object is felt by the wise, and despised only by fools, and that the wisdom of which he speaks has its beginning “ in the fear “ of the Lord ;” Solomon proceeds to address the young, whom, along with the simple, he had proposed

proposed to instruct, and who might be naturally supposed to be simple themselves. The first principles of religion will be carefully instilled into youth by godly parents. To their parents therefore the young are exhorted to give earnest heed. One of the greatest dangers to which youth are exposed, arises from bad example, and bad advice. To guard them against this, Solomon warns them that they are likely to be enticed by finners; he unveils the insinuating arts of seduction; and shews the mischief which seducers are sure to bring in the end upon themselves, and upon all who follow them.

Opposed to the ensnaring attempts of the wicked, are the means which godly men feel it their duty to use, for the advancement of true religion in the world. Under the personification of wisdom, is given a summary of the message of God to men; and a description of the manner in which it both had been proclaimed from the beginning by his servants the prophets, and was to be proclaimed afterwards by his own Son, (emphatically styled the Word and the Wisdom of God), as well as by the apostles and most eminent preachers of the gospel. The message of God, as it is described in this chapter,

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ter, would afford ample matter for many discourses. It is not so much, however, to the message itself, as to the manner in which that message is said to be delivered, that our attention is directed by the words of our text: In discoursing from them, we shall endeavour to shew,

I. That the description before us is justified by ancient and scriptural practice ; and,

II. That such practice is not only warranted by ancient example, but is in itself right and suitable, and ought still to be followed as highly expedient and necessary.

In the *First* place, The description of our text is justified by ancient and scriptural practice. A person who is accustomed to no other mode of public religious instruction, besides what is ordinarily carried on in those buildings called Churches, Chapels, or Meeting-houses, can hardly understand the words of our text. They expressly assert, that wisdom condescends to be a field-preacher; “ she crieth without.” Nay, she is a street-preacher; “ she uttereth her voice in the streets.” What seems still more degrad-

ing,

ing, she courts popularity ; “ she crieth in the “ chief place of concourse.” She is even what men will call unseasonable and intrusive with her lessons ; “ she crieth in the openings of the “ gates ;” that is, in places where magistrates sit in judgment, where the people come to seek justice, where the most solemn earthly affairs are transacted, where men have the best excuse, which worldly importance can afford, for declining to listen to her call. Nor will she be silenced by the bustle of ordinary social life. Without regarding din, or hurry, or opulence, or show, “ in the city she uttereth her words.”

Now, extraordinary as all this may seem, it was even so from the beginning. When Enoch, the seventh from Adam, preached that alarming sermon which is spoken of by Jude, it is not likely that he stood any where else than on the bare earth, or under any other covering than the vault of heaven. Noah, while he prepared an ark to the saving of his house, was a preacher of righteousness to the world around him ; and, like his blessed Master afterwards, appeared in the humble garb of a despised carpenter, and amidst the rude implements of his laborious occupation. Just Lot preached a farewell sermon

mon in the streets of Sodom to a most turbulent congregation of devoted reprobates. Moses was sent to preach, both to his brethren the children of Israel, and to his cruel enemy the hardened Pharaoh. Upon protesting his unfitness he received an assistant, but had no building granted him to preach in as his church. When he and Aaron first preached to the Israelites, they were obliged to go about, and intimate their own sermon. When they preached to Pharaoh, they sometimes went to him boldly into his palace, and sometimes stopped him at the river's side, as he was going out unto the water. Without invitation, they repeated their unwelcome visits till they were driven from his presence, and at last threatened with death if they saw his face any more. Time would fail, to mention the itinerant labours of Moses in the wilderness, while he rehearsed the law at Mount Sinai in the ears of the people, and, with Aaron, attended the construction, the service, and the many removals of the tabernacle. The last days of that venerable leader were spent in the solemn employment of field-preaching; and in the book of Deuteronomy we have a whole volume of  
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the impressive sermons which were then delivered.

After the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan, the manner of preaching appears not to have been altered. The prophets seem all to have been itinerant, and field, or street preachers. Even those of them who kept what we would call Divinity Colleges, who were attended by young men, whom they instructed, and who were thence called "the sons of the prophets," still travelled from place to place, and their schools, like themselves, were ambulatory. It is remarkable, that the words of our text were written by the great king Solomon; that they refer to the practice of the times of his splendid reign; and perhaps to the very mode of his personal exertions. He, who had been honoured to build the temple at Jerusalem, and who at its dedication, had kneeled before the altar of the Lord, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, while he spread forth his hands to heaven in prayer; this illustrious and wise king thought it no disparagement to his character, to "cry without; to utter his voice in the streets: to cry in the

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“ chief place of concourse, in the openings of  
 “ the gates ; in the city to utter his words.”

In like manner, (2 Chron. xvii. 7, 8, 9.) we find Jehoshaphat sending a company of princes, and levites, and priests, or, as we would say in modern language, of clergymen and laymen, “ to  
 “ teach in Judah, to take the book of the law of  
 “ the Lord with them, and to go about through-  
 “ out all the cities of Judah, and teach the peo-  
 “ ple.” Thus also, we find Isaiah, who is thought to have been of the seed royal, prophesying at the conduit of the upper pool ; Jeremiah, of the priesthood, prophesying in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and at the gate, as well as in the court of the temple. Amos saw his vision, when he was among the herdsmen of Tekoah, and, although a layman and a peasant, received courage to publish it without fear at Bethel. Amaziah the priest, whose real cause of offence was the prophet’s faithfulness, opposed him under pretence that he was guilty of conspiracy. Although he could not prove the charge, he at all events insisted upon excluding him from the pulpits of the established church. “ O thou  
 “ feer, said he, go, flee thee away into the land  
 “ of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy  
 “ there,



“ there. But prophesy not again any more at  
 “ Bethel, for it is the king’s chapel, and it is the  
 “ king’s court.” Amos confessed without scruple his humble origin, but was not deterred by the sacerdotal mandate from asserting and fulfilling his divine commission. “ Then answered  
 “ Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet,  
 “ neither was I a prophet’s son ; but I was an  
 “ herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit.  
 “ And the Lord took me as I followed the flock,  
 “ and the Lord said unto me, Go prophesy un-  
 “ to my people Israel,” Amos vii. 12,---15.

After so many examples, under the kings of Israel and Judah, it will be less surprising to observe the same practice during the captivity, or immediately after the restoration. Thus Ezekiel prophesied among the captives by the river of Chebar. Ezra, the priest, preached to all the people as they sat in the street of the house of God, Ezra x. 9. Again, Neh. viii. 1. we find the people gathered to hear Ezra, in the street that was before the water-gate, and upon that occasion we are told that he stood upon a pulpit of wood, or what we would call a tent, which they had made for the purpose.

After the Babylonish captivity, it was justly considered as one of the best expedients for preventing the people from relapsing into idolatry, to promote amongst all ranks the knowledge of God, and of his law, and to excite all throughout the land to join regularly in the public worship of the only true God. For their accommodation, synagogues came, in process of time, to be erected. Every synagogue had its stated governors and president, that the public service might be decently conducted, and that the people might be instructed in the sacred writings.

Respecting these institutions, it may be observed, that they were the result, not of express divine institution, but of rational piety, and enlightened zeal. Like the Sunday schools of the present day, they had the function of general precepts to diffuse, and cherish knowledge, and were entirely congenial to the spirit of the law, though not prescribed by any of its statutes. Like the modern institution just referred to, they were also extremely useful, having, under the divine blessing, been very likely the principal means of preventing the revival of idolatry, which had brought such accumulated calamities

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on the country ; and accordingly, they afterwards received the countenance of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, who were all in the habit of attending the synagogues.

As they were built without express command from God, so they sometimes at least were built voluntarily and at the expence of private individuals. Thus we read of a Centurion who loved the Jewish nation, and had built them a synagogue. But perhaps this house, after it was built, needed to be recognized by ecclesiastical authority, and to be received (to use modern language) either as a new erection, or as a chapel of ease. If this was the case, and if synagogues were built all over the country in consequence of legal establishment ; it was quite consistent with the Jewish constitution, in which there was not what has been called an alliance between church and state, but where church and state were absolutely one and the same.

Synagogues have been considered as answering among the Jews, the like purposes with parish churches among us Christians. They certainly had a resemblance so far, that both were destined for public worship, and both had a ruler to conduct it. But the ruler of the  
synagogue

synagogue does not appear to have had jurisdiction through a certain district, like a parish minister; neither was he understood to have the sole right of officiating in the synagogue. Synagogues were certainly much more numerous than our parish churches, for they were appointed to be built wherever there were ten persons of full age, and free condition; and instead of being shut, as parish churches sometimes are, against itinerant preachers, they seem to have been universally at their service, and to have always afforded them in every place an opportunity of meeting with a congregation. The rulers of the synagogues soon began indeed to oppose our Saviour, and often afterwards their congregations joined with them in casting his Apostles out of the synagogue. But that persecution arose from the corrupt state of the institution, and betokened its approaching fall.

As synagogues were built for the instruction of the people, so public seminaries or schools were formed, wherein those who were destined to teach others, were to be taught themselves. These schools were properly what we should  
call

call divinity colleges; another human institution, but certainly of great utility, and naturally arising from the former. Like our modern seminaries, while properly conducted, they were no doubt favoured with the divine countenance; but when they came to be held in higher veneration than the synagogues which they were intended to serve; when the doctors of the law affected to multiply the high sounding titles of Rabbi, Rabbi; when the very disciples prided themselves in the sect to which they belonged, and all in one way or other taught for doctrines the commandments of men; they then ceased to answer the end of their institution; they became the greatest obstacles possible to the progress of truth; and our Saviour's heaviest woes were denounced against them. From their degeneracy and ruin, Christians may learn what to think of academic bigotry and pride; of saleable literary degrees; and of exclusive privileges which foster the indolence of the chartered student, and obtrude him upon the church, without asking her consent.

But we have mentioned these institutions, not merely for the purpose of shewing that they  
were

were liable to corruption and abuse ; our most important remark concerning them, at present, is, that whatever might be the degree of their utility, they were not sustained by God, as a sufficient provision for the religious instruction of the people. The well attended colleges did not prevent the mission of John the Baptist, nor that of the apostles ; neither did the synagogues supersede their itinerancies. Although all the synagogues in the country were open to our Saviour, he yet added to his labours in them, the more enlarged exertions of “ crying without.” The wilderness, the river’s side, the sea shore, the mountain, the corn fields, the high way, the villages of Galilee, the streets of Jerusalem, and the porch of the temple, were all honoured as places where Jesus condescended to preach the kingdom of heaven.

The disciple was not greater than his Lord. In a country not so extensive as Scotland, no less than seventy itinerants were sent forth by our Saviour, to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The very first consequence of the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, was street-preaching. It would be endless to speak of Peter, and Paul, and Barnabas, and the rest of  
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the great company of those that published the word of God. It may be in general asserted, that in the primitive propagation of Christianity, especially as to the labours among the Gentiles, though the churches were commonly edified within doors, they were chiefly gathered by preaching without.

Thus have we shown, that the description of our text is justified by ancient and scriptural practice. It might perhaps be equally easy to descend through the successive ages of the church, even to the present day, and to shew, that the gospel has, at no period, and in no country, made any considerable progress, or experienced any remarkable revival, without the aid of itinerancies and of field preaching.

The *Second* thing proposed in this discourse, was an endeavour to shew, that the practice, with regard to preaching, as described in our text, is not only warranted by ancient example, but is in itself right, and suitable, and ought still to be followed as highly expedient and necessary.

To some, this part of our plan may seem superfluous, from the opinion, that whatever ap-  
 pears

pears from scripture to have been primitive practice, both may and ought to be observed in all ages of the church. This opinion, however, is not universally admitted, at least not without very great limitations. Besides, the manner of preaching described in our text has, in modern times, fallen into general neglect among all the churches; it is regarded by many as extremely contemptible; and endeavours to revive it have often excited suspicion. It seems proper, therefore, that the subject should be viewed on all sides, and that we should be willing to discuss its intrinsic merits, as well as to plead the authority of precedent in its favour.

That the gospel, then, should be preached in the streets, and fields, and wherever an opportunity can be obtained among the haunts of men, seems equally evident from the nature of the gospel, and from the state of the world. "The whole world lieth in wickedness." The gospel is the glad tidings of salvation to sinners through Jesus Christ. We are commanded to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. And without the gospel, no flesh can be saved. But men are blind to their danger. From the first they are indifferent  
about



about the gospel, and as soon as they begin to be acquainted with its doctrines, unless they also feel its saving power, they proceed from indifference, positively to hate it. Suppose, then, as many religious houses built as you please. These will accommodate men who are Christians already. They will be nurseries for the church, where the children and servants of Christians may be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by the divine blessing become spiritually alive to God through Jesus Christ. They will even be the occasional resort of strangers, and men who are prompted to attend by curiosity, by the desire of finding fault, or by base hypocrisy, may be made the monuments of divine grace. “ If all prophesy, says the apostle, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.”

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. Let none therefore suppose that any thing we now say is either intended, or has itself a tendency to take from the importance of stated places of worship. We trust, it

may be said of many, as to such places, that they were born there, and that there they are edified. Wherever a church exists, that church will be in the habit of meeting together in one place. We do not therefore set aside, or undervalue buildings for worship; we only deny their all-sufficiency. Their utility we have fairly stated; but after all we ask, do they provide for the preaching of the gospel to every creature? Besides, men soon transfer their hatred to the gospel, from the thing itself, to the stated places for preaching it. What some of them do from perverseness, their children do from education, their servants, dependents, and many of their neighbours do from example, interest, and mere ignorance, and this progress goes on, till there is every where, even in the most enlightened countries, such as this, a vast body of people from their very infancy, utter strangers to the house of God\*. Shall these men be left to perish in their sins, while God is still pleased to spare them

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\* This argument proceeds on the supposition, that all our buildings for worship may be called "houses of God;" and even in that case it would be of force. But is it not notorious,

as prisoners of hope? Who knows, whether the most obstinate may not yet be saved? If the mighty works of Christ had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have repented long ago in dust and ashes. How then shall we abandon the uninstructed thousands, who, like the little ones of Nineveh, cannot discern between their right hand and their left, as to the way of salvation? They will probably never enter a church, because they never were told that they have any thing to do there. But if we would cast ourselves in their way; if we would carry the gospel to them, where we know we shall find them, though, no doubt, busied in other pursuits; the prophecy would again be fulfilled, "The people which sat in darkness saw  
 " great light: and to them which sat in the re-  
 " gion and shadow of death, light is sprung up."

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torious, that of the number who attend meetings for worship, hundreds never hear the gospel of Christ at all? Many hear reasonings and declamations in direct opposition to it. Subscription to articles that are not believed has procured to false teachers the means of disseminating their poison; and in churches of which the avowed standards are, upon the whole, scriptural, the doctrines actually preached are various, inconsistent, contradictory.

Mat. iv. 16. "The people of Christ would be  
 "willing in the day of his power." The des-  
 pisers might wonder and perish, but we should  
 be clear of their blood. Whatever may be the  
 prevailing negligence of churches as to this point,  
 the will of Christ respecting it, is indisputable,  
 "A certain man, said he, made a great supper,  
 "and bade many, and sent his servant at sup-  
 "per time, to say to them that were bidden,  
 "Come, for all things are now ready. And  
 "they all with one consent began to make ex-  
 "cuse. The first said unto him, I have bought  
 "a piece of ground, and I must needs go and  
 "see it: I pray thee have me excused. And  
 "another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen,  
 "and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me  
 "excused. And another said, I have married  
 "a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that  
 "servant came, and shewed his lord these things.  
 "Then the master of the house being angry,  
 "said to his servant, Go out quickly into the  
 "streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hi-  
 "ther the poor, and the maimed, and the halt,  
 "and the blind. And the servant said, Lord,  
 "it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet  
 "there is room. And the lord said unto the  
 "servant,

“ servant, Go out into the high-ways and hedg-  
 “ es, and compel them to come in, that my  
 “ house may be filled. For I say unto you,  
 “ that none of those men which were bidden shall  
 “ taste of my supper.” Luke xiv. 16---24. \*

Another argument in favour of field-preach-  
 ing may be taken from its influence on the  
 Preacher. A little reflection will convince us,  
 that no other kind of preaching has so imme-  
 diate a tendency to enlarge the mind, to excite  
 compassion, and zeal, and genius, and to fit the  
 speaker for bringing home his words to mens bu-  
 sines

\* Some have said, that the subject of this sermon was cer-  
 tainly of very little importance in Scotland, where it is so  
 common to have sermons out of doors at dispensing the Lord’s  
 supper. But, not to mention the many abuses that belong to  
 this custom, and that after all it but partially obtains, and is  
 going into desuetude, it is obviously quite different from the  
 ancient and scriptural practice for which we contend. Tent-  
 sermons at dispensing the Lord’s supper are for the accommo-  
 dation of those who would go to church, but cannot get in:  
 whereas preaching without, as here pled for, is to call those  
 who are going about their business and amusements, those who  
 are far from stated ordinances, those who might never think  
 of their souls at all, but for this mode of catching their atten-  
 tion.

finess and bosoms. As the world is wider than temples made with hands, so is the sphere of the field-preaching evangelist, wider than that of the mere chaplain in ordinary. As the evangelist advances his ideas expand. As he preaches, his mind is elevated by the varied expression of the mixed congregation, by all the peculiarities of the surrounding scene, by both the heavens and the earth which are in waiting to assist him. His interviews with men of different places and of all descriptions, increase his knowledge of human nature. He gets acquainted with the habits of thinking and practice peculiar to every class. He learns to speak to every man in his own way. His private conversation, therefore, and his public discourses, instead of stiff uninteresting common-place remark, borrowed from books, or excogitated in the cloister, come directly to the wants, the convictions, the desires, and the prospects of those to whom they are addressed. The advantages of such a situation were apparent in the ministry even of our blessed Lord. As he went about all the cities and villages, he was moved with compassion, when he *saw* the multitudes. His sermons were

occasioned

occasioned by the immediate and real occurrences of his own life, or by actual observation of the conduct of others. His beautiful illustrations are evidently drawn from the most striking objects at the time in view. Thus, in his sermon on the mount, pointing to the city over against him, "A city that is set on a hill, said he, cannot be hid;" looking up towards heaven, "Behold the fowls of the air;" and then turning to the flowery herbage below, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

Nor should we forget to mention, under this head, the impression likely to be made by field-preaching upon the mind of the hearer. Here it may be thought, that the argument is wholly against us. The ordinary objection indeed is the supposed indecency of the practice, and the danger of exposing sacred things to contempt, by forcing them on the attention of the profligate and the rude. But is it not right to disregard mere external appearances, and worldly notions of decorum, in cases of urgency and high importance? If the profligate and the rude are not excluded from divine grace; if their souls are precious,

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cious, and yet no means can be tried for their benefit, since they will not meet with us, unless we watch our opportunity to meet with them; what is to be done? Shall we let them perish, because it is awkward to be seen "crying with-  
 " out?" because some may wonder, and others may be angry, or uncivil? It is certainly unpleasant to see sacred things treated with contempt, or indignation. But this must be submitted to, if we preach the gospel at all. Some will mock, in every case. Others, however, will believe to the saving of their souls. Let us beware lest our fears about the indecency of the practice do not arise from tendernefs of ourselves rather than concern for the honour of the truth. The honour of the truth will be best secured by its general diffusion. The power of the gospel is not unequal to the conversion even of the profligate and the rude. Nay, the grossly ignorant, the openly wicked, the profane scoffers themselves, the refuse of our streets and our highways, are, humanly speaking, more likely to receive conviction, and to be awakened to serious concern about the state of their souls, than the men of literature and refinement, of decent manners, of respected character, of satisfied conscience,



science, and of self-approbation. To such, Jesus scrupled not to make the offensive yet faithful declaration, “ Verily I say unto you, that the  
 “ publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom  
 “ of God before you. For John came unto you  
 “ in the way of righteousness, and ye believed  
 “ him not: but the publicans and the harlots  
 “ believed him. And ye, when ye had seen it,  
 “ repented not afterward, that ye might believe  
 “ him.” Mat. xxi. 31, 32.

Field-preaching is not so ill calculated to command both attention and respect, as some of its opponents may be apt to believe. I allude not here to its novelty, for that I trust will every day be diminished. It is attended with circumstances of a more permanent and valuable nature. When the inhabitants of a place are seriously addressed by a stranger in their fields or their streets, upon the great things which belong to their peace; if prejudice have not been excited in their minds, they will naturally be impressed with the appearance of fortitude, activity, self-denial, and disinterested zeal\*. In stated  
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\* In no case should preachers of the gospel receive money from strangers, as wages for their preaching. The labourer is indeed worthy of his hire. Where a church is formed, they  
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and local establishments for religious instruction, the preacher is protected by express laws, and by all the powerful ties of acquaintance and good neighbourhood. His situation is generally made comfortable as to temporal things. His rank in society is considered as respectable. And his emoluments may sometimes be such as to offer a temptation to the mercenary. These advantages are often supposed by the irreligious to be his real incentives in the discharge of his duty. He preaches, say they, because he is paid for it. Whatever be his creed, no doubt his business is a very good one. Inquiring no farther,

except

that partake of the pastor's spiritual things, will feel it their duty, where he needs it, to make him partaker of their temporal things. The itinerant also may inquire, who, in any place, is worthy, and when received into a house, he may there abide, eating and drinking such things as are set before him, and accept of what assistance may be offered to bring him forward on his journey. But to make any demand, to ask pecuniary compensation, even to receive any thing beyond the supply of immediate wants, would only be to bring reproach on the gospel, to disgrace the truly zealous, to open a door for imposture, and to secure to the deceiver his reward. "For Christ's name sake, let the itinerant go forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles." 3 John, 7. If he need supply, let that be afforded by his brethren at home, to whom his character is known, and by whom his work is approved.

except perhaps to grumble at their share of ecclesiastical assessments, they leave the parson to follow his trade, while they follow their own, as if their respective occupations were quite upon a level. But when a man, to whom they give nothing, calls upon them to consider their ways, this is something different from the ordinary course of human affairs. When they see a stranger exposing himself to the fatigues of travelling, to the various manners of all classes, and evidently seeking not theirs, but them; they cannot but allow that he seems at least to be convinced of the truth and importance of his doctrines himself. From observing the conscientious principles of others, the transition is natural, to serious inquiry respecting their own. When the mind is thus far interested, the issue is hopeful. Great as is the ignorance and prejudice of human nature against the gospel of the grace of God, if the attention can only be fixed, if levity and a worldly spirit can be repressed but for a time; a breach is made in the walls of the fortress; the preacher, seizing the critical moment, presses on to the assault; and where the Lord has a work to perform, the sinner cannot hold out; he may dispute every inch of  
ground,

ground, but his strength is broken, and, in the end, surrender he must. How numerous are the instances of such victories as these, in the humble history of itinerant preaching! “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”  
2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

What has been said might perhaps be sufficient to recommend the practice of field-preaching, were it not that many plausible objections have, with great warmth, been urged against it.

The first of these, of which we shall take notice, is drawn from the supposed refinement of modern times. In a period of high antiquity, in a simple and rude state of society, field-preaching, it will be allowed, was neither uncommon, nor improper. But such a mode of instruction, is considered by many, as altogether unsuitable now, when men are accustomed to luxurious accommodations, and seem too fastidious to respect even the most sacred things,  
unless

unless they come recommended by external decoration. In reply to this objection, it may be justly contended, that field-preaching has all the elegant simplicity, without any of the forbidding rudeness of ancient times. To associate it in the mind, with circumstances of meanness, is to cherish false taste, and to form our habits of thinking, upon partial views, and vulgar prejudices. The character of the money-gathering itinerant impostor, is indeed highly contemptible, whether he professes to vend drugs for the body or the soul. The situation of even the faithful preacher, if he be poor, and occasionally treated with insult, may seem to a transient observer absurd and ridiculous, as well as distressing. But in these cases, the thing is confounded with adventitious circumstances. Whatever it may be made by concomitant disadvantages, field-preaching is itself a mode of instructing mankind, at all times, and in every state of society, respectable at once for its extensive practicableness and commanding power. Who does not know, that classical oratory has ever been the oratory of the open air? Is that practice contemptible, which gave to both the philosophers and the statesmen of Greece and Rome  
their

their lasting celebrity? Shall we say, that “crying without,” is only then to be despised, when the subject is of infinite importance and universal concern? Inimical to the gospel as men are, it might perhaps be proved, that field-preaching, so far from having any thing in itself despicable, has the very reverse, and in fact, has never failed of securing respect, when practised with any tolerable degree of ability, except where persons interested in opposing it, have set themselves by tumult, to obstruct its operation, or by calumnies, to bring it into artificial disrepute. And after all the exertions of its opponents, its native excellence still appears by its astonishing effects. To say that men must be won by external accommodations and decoration, is not to say that they are refined; it is to charge them with the imbecillity, and the undistinguishing prejudices of a state of barbarism. Were such arts ever so efficacious, they would be totally inconsistent with the simplicity and godly sincerity of the gospel. Never surely can the faithful preacher rise so high in expectation, as when he feels himself divested of every thing extraneous; when he has no authority, but the word of God, and no dependence,

dence, but the promised blessing. Suppose however for a moment, that field-preaching were calculated chiefly for the simple and rude, are not such numerous now, as well as in ancient times? A progress has indeed been made in civilization, but surely it is not yet complete. If then the refinement of some, point out the propriety of building elegant houses for their accommodation, when we would preach to them; does not the simplicity and the rudeness of others, by parity of reason, require, that we meet them on their own ground, that we enter their humble walks of life, and in some measure adopt their homely manners, that we may obtain an opportunity of bespeaking their attention. Condescensions of this kind will be despised only by those, who despise the cultivation of the mind of man.

Another objection has been stated to field-preaching, that it is hostile to the order and safety of the church. The short answer to this is, that if the practice be according to scripture, the order of every church either does or should, make provision for its continuance; nor can that which ought to be recognized in the constitution, ever endanger the safety of a church.

church. But taking churches as they are, how can that affect the order of the church, which is exercised, not in the church, but amongst the men of the world. Field-preaching does not interfere with the church, either in her worship or her discipline. In as far as she is a church of Christ, it tends to increase her numbers, and to promote her prosperity. There is no faithful pastor of any denomination, whose hands will not be strengthened in the work of the Lord, by the preaching of the gospel in the streets and in the fields. It is not therefore the church that is in danger from this practice; it is the corruption of the church, the error of her tenets, the evils of her administration, the pride, the laziness, the profligacy of her clergy, the dead profession of her other members. These are the things, wherever they exist, that are likely to be injured by that for which we contend; and what Christian will bewail their destruction?

But how, it may be asked, shall we guard against the itinerant and field-preaching of error? Against the preaching of error, in any way, there is no absolute security, except in so far as it is curbed by the Head of the church. But were the discipline of the church in a proper state



state of vigour, every Christian man, endowed with gifts, would be encouraged to go forth and preach, whenever he could get opportunity. No person would be allowed to remain in her communion, who was so ignorant, or so wicked, as to preach what was bad. As to persons who have no Christian communion, the church of Christ has as little concern with them, as with mountebanks or strolling players. To refuse her sanction to itinerancies would not lessen, but rather increase the number of such persons; whereas to countenance and promote those undertakings, would have the most immediate tendency to extirpate imposture. Things here, as in every other case, would soon find their own level. People who had heard the upright, would learn to detect the deceiver; and his trade being spoiled, he would be glad to change it. Even as things are, which presents the greatest temptation to the carnal mind, the situation of the staid, respected, beneficed pastor? or that of the ever-moving, despised, and hardly-bested itinerant? The latter may not be without its attractions to the changeable, the vain, or the indigent; but surely the former is the higher prize. Let those, therefore, who are so much

E afraid

afraid of bad itinerants, be still more afraid of bad ministers; and while they feel all their care insufficient to preserve the one order pure, let them confess, that the possibility of its being abused, is no argument against either.

Another objection against field-preaching is, that it is dangerous to the state. This would be a formidable objection at any time: it is peculiarly so at present; which is perhaps one great reason why it is at present so loudly brought forward. But surely it will not be said, that the gospel is dangerous to the state; how then can the preaching of it be dangerous? Does not Christianity enjoin conscientious subjection to the powers that be\*? Is not the spirit of Christianity, a meek and quiet spirit? Does not Jesus call the attention of his followers to heaven, and teach them self-denial respecting all things here below? Many an uproar has been raised against the gospel, but it is notwithstanding, still the gospel of peace. The scriptural means of propagating it have no tendency, more than itself, to disturb

\* See this subject treated, in a Sermon which was preached by the Author on the last general thanksgiving day, and lately published, under the title of "The Duty of Christians to Civil Government."

disturb society. The charge attaches rather to the conduct of those, by whom those means are misrepresented, and their operation violently opposed. What is the fact, with regard to this matter? Will any man say, that the late dangers of the state, were caused by itinerancies, by Sunday-schools, or by any of the exertions that are now making to promote the cause of Christ? Have not these things only begun to flourish since the ferment subsided? Have not their acknowledged effects been entirely of a pacific and salutary nature? But if it be dangerous to preach the gospel in the streets and in the fields, it cannot be very safe to preach it any where. If to confine it within doors be a measure of safety, to extinguish it at once will make the safety complete. Let the objectors speak out; let them own that they hate the gospel itself; that having long laboured to imprison it, by human restrictions, it grieves them to behold it still walking at large.

But what if a pretended itinerant preacher of the gospel, be in fact a preacher of sedition? And what if an established clergyman be a preacher of sedition? Such a thing has been, perhaps, in both cases: and in both cases, the  
remedy

remedy, we presume, is the same; the laws of the land. This remedy may be applied to the crime of the itinerant with as much ease and safety, as to that of the clergyman. The itinerant's labours are equally public, and more narrowly watched by the eye of suspicion, than those of his legally privileged companion. When guilty, therefore, detection could not fail to be speedy, nor would justice be prevented from taking its course. If the laws of the land are not to be trusted, what other remedy shall we find? Shall itinerants be utterly prohibited, and the gospel arrested in its progress, until the world can be persuaded every where to establish national churches, for the salutary purpose of keeping it in order? Or shall an office be opened for the licensing of itinerants; and this office put under the direction of those to whom itinerancies are an object of contempt or of jealousy? What would this be, but the power of the beast, "who hath two horns like a lamb, but speaketh like a dragon, and causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man may buy or

“ or sell, save he that hath the mark, or the  
 “ name of the beast, or the number of his name?”  
 Rev. xiii. 16, 17.

Instead of the honest traveller, we may sometimes meet with the murderous highwayman. This is a great evil. But shall we therefore prohibit travelling? Or shall we propose, that none be permitted to travel, without a license? Who does not see, that highwaymen would be the first to apply for this sanction to their marauding expeditions? In some instances, at least, they would succeed in obtaining it; and then their trade would be much more successful, as well as much more secure. Until the inefficacy of the expedient was notorious, people, trusting to its operation, would travel without precaution, and become an easy prey to the first who should attack them; and then the criminal, having a certificate to produce as his warrant for being upon the road, would be less liable to suspicion, and hardly ever within the reach of the law. The thing is better as it is. Every man is on his guard. Every man has an interest in discovering the guilty. The crime can seldom be committed, for the criminal knows  
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that he cannot escape. — These obvious reflections will easily apply to the subject before us. If itinerancies should be fettered by exclusive privileges, the licentiate, if a deceiver, would derive from his license a dangerous influence. Soon would he venture to relax in his exertions, or give them a pernicious direction. Meanwhile the people would be hushed into a state of fatal security, and many of those who might be disposed to undeceive them, would be prevented from their work of faithfulness and love, by the want of those qualifications which were devised by a short-sighted policy, and engrossed by men who had crept in unawares. Do not evils, somewhat like these, actually prevail in many existing ecclesiastical institutions? On the other hand, as matters stand at present, with regard to itinerancies, every man is known by his fruits. The attention of the people is awakened. They are taught not to respect the persons of men, nor to receive any doctrine because it is preached; but to search the scriptures, and compare what they hear with the word of God. There is therefore a check upon imposture in the nature of things; and unless the Bible itself be dangerous,

gerous, the unfettered preaching of its doctrines must be a blessing to the state \*.

There

\* Some object to every exertion that is made beyond the pale of the established church, without entering upon any particular consideration of the merits of the measure. They say, that all such things tend to unsettle the minds of the people, and to withdraw them from the ministers set over them by law. If the established church must be viewed merely as a political engine, the exertions that are made independently of it, together with their importance and success, will no doubt shew its deficiency. But the friends of Christianity should be cautious how they rest the cause of their Saviour, or the discussion of any question belonging to it, on the exclusive claims of a civil establishment. If Christianity were to be tried merely by its fitness for becoming a national religion, it would certainly appear to be far inferior to the Jewish dispensation. If the ministers set over the people by law were an adequate provision for the success of the gospel, it would indeed be wrong to unsettle the minds of the people. But if what has been said in this discourse be true, the ordinary labours of no national body of clergy are sufficient for the purpose. The question is, Shall the people be instructed, or shall they in any proportion be wilfully left to perish for lack of knowledge? Besides, it is notorious, that in our established church the minds of the people are already unsettled, by unnatural divisions within herself. There is a far greater difference between the preaching and conduct of certain classes of her ministers, than there is between  
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There is yet another objection made against field-preaching and itinerancies, of which we should

the preaching and conduct of the present itinerants, and one of those classes. The distinction between what are called the *wild* and *moderate* parties of the church of Scotland, arises not from occasional and trivial differences of opinion. There exists between them a permanent and radical contrariety of principle, which appears very clearly, not only in their ecclesiastical measures, but also in their preaching, their parochial, and even their personal conduct.

Some are so amazingly bigotted as to plead for the divine and exclusive right of our established church, with all her imperfections and corruptions about her. I can assure the reader, that I am not amusing him with a fancy of my own, but that I have actually heard an argument gravely urged, of the following import: All events are permitted of God. Establishments have been permitted by him to take place. Our establishment is scriptural in its standards. Many of the ministers in it may be bad men; but if God has any work to do in any part of the country, he can either convert those bad men, or take them away, and supply the vacancies with pastors according to his own heart. We ought not, therefore, on any pretence of urgency, to interfere with the claims of our establishment.—I am really not conscious of misrepresenting this reasoning, and yet it is so excessively lame, that perhaps few would stop to read an answer to it. Is it then so, that every effort by dissenters has been unwarrantable? Must the Holy One of Israel be limited forever



should take notice. Some excuse themselves from giving countenance to this mode of instructing mankind, upon the plea that it cannot be rendered general or permanent. The primitive practice as to this matter, they class among the singularities of the age of miracles. Similar attempts, they will allow, may be made still, on extraordinary occasions, and by extraordinary or eccentric men, and these attempts may perhaps be followed with partial and temporary success; but it is not to be expected, that they can ever be carried to the perfection, extent, and stability of systematic exertion, and therefore little is now to be hoped from their influence. Supposing all this were true, it would by no means warrant us in discouraging these

F attempts.

forever to human institutions which he has once permitted to take place? If such reasoning however, were to be sustained, the establishment has surely no right to monopolize it. Others may have scriptural principles as well as the members of the established church. Might we not argue, Itinerancies have been permitted to take place. They are scriptural. Itinerants may sometimes be bad men, but where God has any work to do in any part of the country, he can send good men." It would be absurd to turn this argument against an establishment; and this shews the absurdity of turning it, when used the other way, against itinerancies,

attempts. In preaching the gospel, even partial and temporary success is not to be despised. Souls may thus be saved, Christians may be quickened, ordinances may be observed for years to come, with greater diligence, solemnity, and profit. But for such revivals, partial and temporary as they are, whither would our cold formality carry us? These means are of a limited nature, only when compared with the extent of the church universal, and with the successive ages for bringing in her members: when considered as the means of converting or edifying individual souls, their importance is incalculable and eternal. Nor is their partial influence, when discouraged so much as at present, a criterion for judging what it might be, were Christians to unite in promoting their operation. It would be more seemly in Christians, to seize every hopeful opportunity, and to use every promising mean of usefulness, although the prospect were not unbounded, than to act as if they thought it always desirable to do as little as possible, and perfectly lawful to do nothing, if they had not the certainty of doing all.

But where is the impracticability of maintaining a permanent system of itinerancy now, more than

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than in primitive times? The gift of miracles was not bestowed to support the zeal of the first preachers, nor yet to protect them from personal insult and danger. They were as liable to weariness, to grief, to hunger and thirst, to imprisonment, to stripes, and to death, as other men. By miracles God bore witness to their testimony, while as yet the canon of scripture was incomplete; but they themselves lived, and ran the race set before them, by the very same faith in Jesus Christ, which has animated the just in every age. If they had some advantages, so have we. The facility and the accommodations of travelling are greatly increased. Expences now may be more easily defrayed by numerous and opulent churches. Religious persecution is considerably restrained; and communication is open through all the world.

There is nothing supernatural in the labours of itinerancy. We have many permanent systems of this kind for worldly purposes, why not for purposes that are heavenly? Shall the army and navy be always in readiness for the most distant and arduous expeditions? Shall the merchant voluntarily compass sea and land in the pursuits of commerce? Shall literary zeal carry  
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the botanist in search of plants, and seeds, and flowers, over the rugged face of the whole earth? Shall our venerable and aged judges regularly go through the fatiguing duty of extensive circuits? Shall all men be moveable but preachers of the gospel? Impossible! There have been, and there shall not cease to be, men raised up of God who will obey the command which saith, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Yes verily, their sound shall go into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. The sluggish and the mercenary may make many apologies, and be ready to murmur at the work of the Lord. But that work shall not wait for their approbation, or their reluctant concurrence. On the contrary, its very prosperity seems to be connected with their disgrace and rejection. So speak the words of inspiration, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. "Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altars for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept

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“ an offering at your hand. For, from the ris-  
 “ ing of the sun even unto the going down of  
 “ the same, my name shall be great among the  
 “ gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be  
 “ offered unto my name, and a pure offering:  
 “ for my name shall be great among the hea-  
 “ then, saith the Lord of hosts.” Mal. i. 10, 11.

Thus have we endeavoured to shew, that the practice of field-preaching and itinerancy is justified by ancient and scriptural practice ; that it is in itself right, and suitable, and ought still to be followed as highly expedient and necessary ; and that some of the objections which are urged against it, originate in error or misrepresentation.

The discussion of this subject seemed peculiarly suitable in the present times, in which some of the measures adopted for promoting the cause of Christ are uncommon, and might therefore seem new and unwarrantable.

From what has been said, we may learn, The great kindness and condescension of God, who hath afforded such abundant means of spiritual instruction, and provided, in such a variety of  
 ways,

ways, for the diffusion of the gospel among all ranks and conditions of men. In the days of old, he sent unto his people all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; and, having at sundry times, and in divers manners, spoken in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, he hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. The great salvation at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and it was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. When he ascended up on high, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors, and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. These gifts include the occasional labours of the evangelist, as well as the stated labours of the pastor. Both are therefore to be thankfully received. One glorious prospect of the latter day is, that then "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased," Dan. xii. 4. Nay, the time is coming, when "they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know him from the least to the greatest," Heb. viii. 11. Do not these words imply,

imply, that previously to the period predicted, they shall teach every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; and that this general teaching shall be so successful, as at last to be unnecessary. What shall we say to these things? Shall our eye be evil, because God is good? When we hear that persons are raised up of God to preach Jesus Christ with fidelity and zeal; shall we be filled with envy for the sake of men, however eminent, who already discharge, but can never monopolize that office? When we see men casting out devils in the name of Jesus, shall we forbid them because they follow not with us? Rather let us say with Moses, "O that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would pour out his Spirit upon them."

We are not, indeed, to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. But how is this trial of the prophets to be made? Not by examining their licenses, their literary degrees, or their epistles of human commendation. These things may be all very good in their own place, but they form neither the indispensable, nor the decisive criterion in  
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the question before us. Whatsoever those are, who seem to be somewhat, it maketh no matter to us : God accepteth no man's person. By their doctrine and their fruits ye shall know them. " Hereby, beloved, know ye the spirit  
 " of God : Every spirit that confesseth that Je-  
 " sus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God ; and  
 " every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus  
 " Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God : and  
 " this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof you  
 " have heard that it should come, and even now  
 " already is in the world," 1 John iv. 2, 3.

The faithful preaching of the pure gospel will ever be its own certificate ; while all other credentials without it must go for nothing. " To  
 " the law and to the testimony ; if they speak  
 " not according to this word, it is because there  
 " is no light in them," Isa. viii. 20. Let a man be loaded with all the honours of all the universities that ever existed ; let him come forth with the highest possible recommendations of his church ; give him all the advantages and ornaments that can be supposed to belong to the mere privilege of ordination, whether Congregational, Presbyterian, Episcopal, or Papal ; if after all, he shall preach another gospel, which  
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is not another; the sheep may be so far deceived by his "rough garment," as to give him a hearing, but "the stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers." On the other hand, let the unaccredited itinerant, let even the infamous persecutor, without conferring with flesh and blood, now preach the faith which he once destroyed; the church will glorify God in him, and they who seem to be pillars, perceiving the grace that is given to him, will be constrained at last to give him the right hand of fellowship.

The unfettered preaching of the gospel is one of those characters of universality which distinguish the Christian from the Jewish dispensation, and mark the contrast between that wisdom and prudence in which God hath abounded towards us, in the divine scheme of redemption, and the contracted policy, which every where appears in all that is human of religious institutions. Whatsoever in any degree hinders the proclamation of the glad tidings of salvation, among men of all descriptions, and all nations; whatsoever, in sacred things, does not positively encourage that proclamation, is wrong. How

remarkable are those words in the end of our Bibles ! “ The Spirit and the Bride say, come : “ and let him that heareth say, come. And let “ him that is athirst, come ; and whosoever will “ let him take the water of life freely.” Rev. xxii. 17. The whole system of Revelation, and the whole mystery of God, in his adorable providence, seem here to be resolved into the provision that is made for the universal propagation of the gospel. The Holy Spirit, and the Church unite their voice, and continually cry to sinners, come. This precious invitation is so necessary to be known, and known without a moment’s delay, that every one that heareth, is, in the very first instance, commanded to repeat it. Like a multiplying, and never ending echo, “ the joyful sound” must be on all sides transmitted from one to another, that in this accepted time, in this day of salvation, “ he that is a- “ thirst may come, and whosoever will may take “ the water of life freely.”

O ye sons of men, who love vanity, and seek after lies, is it for nothing that God thus careth for the preaching of the word ? How inconceivably important must that message be, which Jesus himself came from heaven to deliver, which  
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all who hear it, are commanded to repeat, and to be instant in repeating it, in season, out of season ! When “ wisdom crieth without,” she may seem intrusive, but is there not a cause ? Are not you living far from God, and far from righteousness ? eager to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind ? walking according to this world ? What is this but following the multitude to do evil, and going on in the broad road that leadeth to destruction ? You hate the voice of natural conscience ; still more do you hate the voice of God’s law : how then will you bear the voice of his righteous judgment ? Conscience you may sometimes contrive to stifle ; you may flee from preaching, or you may despise it : but when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, you shall hear him from the very grave. If there were no hope, to speak of these things would be only to torment you before the time. But, through the tender mercy of our God, the Day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. “ God so loved the world, that

“ that he gave his only begotten Son, that who-  
 “ soever believeth in him, should not perish, but  
 “ have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son  
 “ into the world to condemn the world, but  
 “ that the world through him might be saved.”

Here the love of God is manifested to sinners, such as you are. It is manifested in not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for all those that believe. And whatever guilt men may contract by rejecting the gospel, God sent his Son, not to condemn, but to save the world. Behold, now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Yet a little while, and your state will be unchangeable. Nay, it is at this moment dreadful in the extreme. “ He that believeth on Christ is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” To disregard the testimony of an honourable character, is a most heinous offence in every case, how much more when it is the testimony of the Son of God! Whatever you may pretend, your unbelief arises not from want of evidence, but from

from hatred of that evidence. “ This is the  
 “ condemnation, that light is come into the  
 “ world, and men loved darkness rather than  
 “ light, because their deeds were evil.” If the  
 alarm were false, we might justly be charged with  
 endeavouring to obtain an undue influence over  
 your reason by working on your passions. But if  
 the word of God, and the concurring illustra-  
 tions of his providence, are to be trusted, the  
 danger is real. Of this reality our minds are  
 convinced. “ Knowing, therefore, the terrors  
 “ of the Lord, we persuade men.” The subject  
 of our addresses, however alarming, recom-  
 mends itself to your reason and conscience, and  
 it surely must be the highest reason for them to  
 be seriously concerned about things undeniably  
 of unspeakable moment. What answer then  
 shall we carry to him that sent us? Shall we  
 return rejoicing that the very spirits are subject  
 unto us through his name? or shall we cry,  
 “ Who hath believed our report, and to whom  
 “ is the arm of the Lord revealed?” If you will  
 obstinately reject the messengers of peace; whe-  
 ther they be itinerants, or stated pastors, even  
 the very dust of your city which cleaveth on  
 them, they are commanded to wipe off against  
 you;

you; “ notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that  
 “ the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you,”  
 Luke x. 11.

Whatever be the case with many, the gospel hath certainly come to some, not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. To such we would say, Be very thankful that ever you enjoyed these means of grace yourselves, and be very earnest to afford them to others. Your faith came by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Rejoice then in the universal proclamation of that blessed word. Give your countenance and your aid to all that preach it with fidelity and zeal. “ He that abideth in the  
 “ doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father  
 “ and the Son. If there come any unto you,  
 “ and bring not this doctrine, receive him not  
 “ into your house, neither bid him God speed.  
 “ For he that biddeth him God speed, is parta-  
 “ ker of his evil deeds,” 2 John 9, 10. But as to the brethren who are strangers, “ if you  
 “ bring them forward on their journey after a  
 “ godly sort, you shall do well. Because that  
 “ for his name’s sake they go forth, taking no-  
 “ thing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought  
 “ to

“to receive such, that we might be fellow-  
 “helpers to the truth,” 3 John 6, 7. That  
 men who know not the importance of the gos-  
 pel should take offence at the labours of itine-  
 rants, is little to be wondered at ; but they who  
 know and believe it, should act in a nobler  
 manner. They should shew that they can dis-  
 tinguish between the reality and the appear-  
 ance, between the word spoken and the cir-  
 cumstances of the speaker. Nay, they should  
 be more zealous to shew their respect for  
 the truth of God, when it is preached in a way  
 which is useful and necessary, and yet likely to  
 be despised. Many, even among worldly men,  
 may take their opinion upon this subject of iti-  
 nerancy from some of you. If a difference of  
 opinion respecting it should appear in the church  
 of Christ, if some even of the Lord’s people,  
 should be disposed to cavil; the men of the  
 world will think themselves justified in treating  
 every attempt of the kind, with the most un-  
 qualified, and unbounded contempt. Whereas  
 if those, who ought to know how to discern the  
 spirits, would simply follow the rule of God’s  
 word, without hypocrisy, and without partiali-  
 ty, they would unite in rejoicing that Christ was  
 preached,

preached, and the world would get no countenance for their enmity from any of them.

We rejoice that there are not wanting some, who, amidst all the difficulties which surround them, are enabled to go every where preaching the word. Brethren, we respect your fortitude. We feel the liveliest interest in your labours. In all your trials, we would sincerely sympathize with you. We would heartily triumph in your success. We would glorify God in you, and learn, on our own part, a lesson of humility. Dearly beloved brethren, go on and prosper. Continue diligent and faithful in the work which you have so hopefully begun. Be not irritated or discouraged by opposition: be not elated by acceptance and favour. Be clothed with humility; with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price. Take heed to yourselves as well, as to your doctrine. Keep under your body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when you have preached to others, you yourselves should be cast away. Many eyes are upon you. Many pray for your prosperity. Many watch for your halting. Cut off occasion from them which desire occasion. Endure hardness as good soldiers



diers of Jesus Christ. Your labours are accompanied with peculiar dangers. “ In journey-  
 “ ing often, in perils of waters, in perils of rob-  
 “ bers, in perils by your own countrymen, in  
 “ perils by the heathen, in perils among false  
 “ brethren, in weariness and painfulness, in  
 “ watchings often, in hunger, and thirst, in fast-  
 “ ings often, in cold and nakedness,” 2 Cor. xi.  
 26, 27. “ But none of these things, we trust,  
 “ move you; neither count you your lives dear  
 “ unto yourselves, so that you might finish your  
 “ course with joy, and the ministry which you  
 “ have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the  
 “ gospel of the grace of God,” Acts xx. 24. “ En-  
 “ dure all things for the elects sakes, that they  
 “ may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ  
 “ Jesus, with eternal glory. It is a faithful say-  
 “ ing; for if we be dead with him, we shall also  
 “ live with him. If we suffer, we shall also reign  
 “ with him: if we deny him, he also will deny  
 “ us: if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful,  
 “ he cannot deny himself,” 2 Tim. ii, 10---13.  
 “ Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and  
 “ persecute you, and shall say all manner of e-  
 “ vil against you falsely for Christ’s sake. Re-  
 “ joice and be exceeding glad; for great is your

“ reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the  
 “ prophets which were before you,” Mat. v. 12.  
 “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because  
 “ he laid down his life for us ; and we ought to  
 “ lay down our lives for the brethren,” 1 John  
 iii. 16. “ Be faithful unto death, and Christ will  
 “ give you a crown of life,” Rev. ii. 20. “ They  
 “ that be wise shall shine as the brightness of  
 “ the firmament, and they that turn many to  
 “ righteousnes, as the stars for ever and ever,”  
 Dan. xii. 3.

**12 MR 58**

*THE END*

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A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN

LADY GLENORCHY'S CHAPEL, EDINBURGH,

*On the 29th November, 1798,*

BEING THE DAY APPOINTED BY HIS MAJESTY FOR  
A GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

12 MR 58