

CHAPTER III.

ALLEGED INCONSISTENCIES.

THE laws of the material universe are consistent with themselves ; the laws of religion are the same ; and the pretensions and conduct of men are expected to be so too. *Nature* is in congruity with itself, *religion* with itself, the *animal economy* with itself, and *all* the works of God, wherever presented, and however related, exhibit a principle of congruity.

Consistency is thus a law of *nature*, interwoven with the economy of man, dictated by reason and justice, and consequently an universal rule of human conduct. Voluntary actions are viewed in the light of media to voluntary pretensions—the criteria of inward sentiments. Hence every man is bound to be consistent with himself, and his conduct is clearly referable to those laws under which he professes to act. If a politician, he is expected to act in accordance with his political principles ; if a moralist, with the principles of morality ; and if a christian, with the principles of christianity.

A man, however, may act consistently and yet be a hypocrite ; he may act inconsistently, and still be an honest man ; for as one link makes not a chain, one step a journey, nor one word a discourse, so neither does one action constitute a character. Incidental actions resemble the counter-currents of a stream ; they are not the main body itself, but they serve to show the direction

in which it is advancing, and with which they are speedily united.

To the *ends* and *aims* of life, which form the main channels of human actions, we ought to look for the developement of principles. The termination of a stream is inferred not from the dreamings of a somnambulist, or the ravings of a madman, but from a knowledge of geography, and of the course the stream is taking. Religious principles are supposed to govern moral conduct,—where they do *not* govern they are supposed not to *exist*.

By this law of congruity we must allow the pretensions of professed christians to be tried. If in their principles, dispositions, habits, and general course of conduct, they agree with the spirit, maxims, rules, and general character of christianity, they proclaim at once the sincerity of their hearts, and the efficacy of their religion; but if the reverse of this is the case, they are fairly chargeable with delusion or hypocrisy; nor can all the special pleading in the world set aside a verdict, pronounced in the court of consistency and ratified by the common sense of mankind.

The inconsistencies preferred against professors of religion exist in so many forms, have been debated in so many places, applied in so vague a manner, and are altogether of so miscellaneous a character, that to collect the precise language, and give correct references to the authors, would be no easy task, were it even possible. The reader, however, may be assured that if incorrect representations present themselves, they are referable to the complexity of the subject. Could the writer have done better, his better doing would have given him great satisfaction.

Observe then the general charges: “you *pretend* to be not of the world—to have no fellowship with its pleasures, no sympathy with its aims or its ends—you profess to be crucified to the world, and the world to you—you have been translated into the kingdom, and transformed into the image of Christ—you have certain standards of

religious admeasurement, and certain concentrated forms of expression called maxims, to which you make frequent reference, and to which you attach great importance—you condemn us to endless punishment for our inconsistencies and wickedness, as if, when tried by our own laws, we were more inconsistent or more wicked than you. Were your inconsistencies but few, or your wickedness not infinite, we might excuse you where we ought not to commend you, and where, if truly virtuous, you certainly would not commend yourselves. But the truth is, you are habitually and universally inconsistent, and wicked—some of you at least—to a degree perfectly incredible, of which we, reckless as we are, should feel dishonoured and ashamed. In fact, such is the ungraceful contrariety between your profession and your practice, and such the general tenor of your lives and conversation, that we are coerced into the belief of one of two things, viz. either you are without religion, or religion is without efficacy.

“For example: *wealth*, you say, is a delicious poison; and yet you put the poisoned chalice to your lips, and drink, feverishly enough, the luscious draught! Worldlings, you remark, *may* get money, and love, and hoard, and worship it; we lay up treasure in heaven, and are rich towards God. But do not *you* amass money when you *can*, and love, and worship it, as well as we? You lay up treasure in heaven, you affirm; and we inquire *where* your heaven is? Whether you *have* any other heaven, or *can* have any other heaven, than your estates or your money-bags? You lay up treasure in *heaven*, meaning the invisible world of bliss; but what do you mean by laying it up? and when do you effect those transactions? You are rich towards *God*! How? By what means?—Making him your *Banker*?—Trusting him with your property? Nothing of the sort. Whoever is your banker, *He* is not. You dare not *trust* your property in *his* hands, lest you should never get it again. Not only dare you not trust him with the principal, you murmur much when some voluntary contribution claims a mere fraction of your per centage. Rich towards

God ! Some of you may ; but we have not the pleasure of knowing who, except they are men without money.

“ The love of money, you frequently remark, is the root of all evil ; and we as frequently wonder how, with the maxim in your mouths, or the language on your lips, you should love it as you do ! Is it not proverbial, that men, whose minds are in their money-pots, and whose souls are in their sovereigns, are men professing religion ? Far from us be the thought that religion *makes* men avaricious ; but the evil is seldom chidden from the pulpit, is frequently lacquered over, and sometimes made to pass for a christian virtue.

“ According to your notions, riches are snares set to catch souls ; and are not a whit less fatal, because made of twisted gold instead of twisted wire. But if so, why do you compass sea and land to procure them ? Why do you set snares for your own souls, and then pray to be delivered from them ? Is this consistent ? Is it wise ? Is it rational ?

“ Money, you tell us, drowns men’s souls in perdition ; and yet you are resolved not to swim without it, however perilous the connexion ! Wealth, you cry, is a thin narrow plank, thrown over the mouth of hell, which ought never to be trusted, and upon which it is madness to adventure even a single step ; but madness as it is, many of *you* venture upon it, and some of you would do so were it thrown over *edgewise*.

“ But riches are especially dangerous to *young* people, you sometimes remark ; we dare say they are so ; but do you, who are *fathers*, and stewards under God, guard effectually against this evil ? Far from it. Instead of doing this, we see you striving to raise your children above industry, and to place them in situations of worldly splendour. You breed in their minds expectations of earthly grandeur, and train them to habits of luxury and indolence, which too often terminate in criminal indulgences, or baneful dissipations. To use your own phraseology, you want to ‘ make men of the world ’ of your sons, and worldly ladies of your daughters ; to accomplish which, your paths are full of curves, and

religious admeasurement, and certain concentrated forms of expression called maxims, to which you make frequent reference, and to which you attach great importance—you condemn us to endless punishment for our inconsistencies and wickedness, as if, when tried by our own laws, we were more inconsistent or more wicked than you. Were your inconsistencies but few, or your wickedness not infinite, we might excuse you where we ought not to commend you, and where, if truly virtuous, you certainly would not commend yourselves. But the truth is, you are habitually and universally inconsistent, and wicked—some of you at least—to a degree perfectly incredible, of which we, reckless as we are, should feel dishonoured and ashamed. In fact, such is the ungraceful contrariety between your profession and your practice, and such the general tenor of your lives and conversation, that we are coerced into the belief of one of two things, viz. either you are without religion, or religion is without efficacy.

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your lives fraught with dishonour. You pray, it is true, some of you, that your children may fear the Lord; but it is equally true that you move heaven and earth to place them in situations where the fear of the Lord is but rarely seen. You talk much about the importance of a *religious* education, while, at the same time, you incorporate with it visions of sensual glory and the gratification of inordinate desires. You scatter upon the fruitful soil of a corrupt nature the seeds of wantonness and irreligion. You pray for an object, and at the same time do every thing you can to prevent it!

“Such, too, is your selfishness and self-importance, that you speak of *your* families as if they were the only families in the world; as if the world was made for them, and for them only. ‘The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold,’ are nothing in comparison with *yours*; and you cannot even relieve the former, because you have made up your mind to glorify the latter. You can do nothing, in comparison, for God,—not because you have not the means, but because you have not the heart—not because you have no money, but because you have no mind—you cannot, because you will not. You can do nothing for God, because you have determined upon doing so much for yourselves. ‘Your *children* want all you get;’ as if you lived *only* for your children; as if your children’s *wants* were a safe rule of conduct; as if their desires were of more importance than the voice of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, or the interest of immortal souls through time and eternity! Your families may be dear to you, and they ought to be; but ought they to be dearer to you than the religion you profess? Dearer than Jesus Christ—than the church—or than your own souls? You ought to *care* for your children, but then, you ought not to care for them *exclusively*. You are under the bonds of *religion*, and you ought to care for them according to the *scriptures*.

“Riches, you affirm to be useful as a *means*, but dreadful as an *end*. As a medium, they are valuable; as a terminus, they are execrable. Worldlings, who have only the world, you significantly hint, may make wealth

an *end*, for it is their all; but with *christians*, it is far otherwise. *They* seek wealth honestly, temperately, in the fear of God, and for the sake of doing good. Now were this doctrine true, there would be something honourable in the motive, and we could rejoice in your success. But *is* it true? Is it any thing like the truth? If so, how is it your chapels are in debt, your ministers, many of them, distressingly embarrassed—your principles unknown—your best institutions declining—the heathen uninstructed, unprayed for, and unpitied—and even your own country but half reclaimed from paganism and infidelity? Explain these facts.

“The Lord loveth a cheerful giver; and because, it may be presumed, a cheerful giver is an image of himself. You also say that he loves *you*; and we ask, on what account? Not, surely, because you resemble him, either in the *extent* or in the *manner* of your giving; for what likeness is there between *your* benefactions and *his*? How seldom and how stingy, how churlish and how frost-bitten, are your bestowments! *How* to give good gifts unto men, you know not. The liberal man *deviseth* liberal things; but what liberal things do *you* devise—what liberal things do you *support*? What suspicions you breathe upon every benevolent prospectus! How many generous measures you crush in the bud! With what jealous anxiety you watch the workings of public institutions, and with what joy you seize upon a failure or a deformity, in order that you may practise the pleasant virtue of withdrawing your assistance? How many warm currents you freeze in their very springs; how many hearts you penetrate with anguish! And when, through the force of circumstances, you perceive it no longer decent to withhold, how coarsely and how grudgingly you give! How many questions you ask! How fast your doubts multiply! And with what marvellous simplicity you talk about the ‘widow’s mite!’ As if *you* were widows, and with a widow’s heart were giving all you had! What shameful dissimulation!

“So vast is your inheritance, and so well are you satisfied with it, that earthly treasures you reckon as ‘garbage

and offal.' And yet with what marvellous tenacity you cling to this offensive matter! How devoutly you love it! How assiduously you pile it up! How admirably it suits your *nature*! How richly you *enjoy* the garbage! what sweet morsels the *refuse* affords! How carefully you 'gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost!' Even the shakings of the cloth are too precious to be foregone. You love the world in heart, and in heart and soul you pursue it, grasp it, cling to it, and delight in it. One would think, that, having so much *spiritual* wealth, you would be liberal with the *parings* of your property; if you kept the bulk, you might, cheerfully enough, give away the *rhind*, especially to the Lord's saints, and to the Lord's cause, which you profess to love next to Jesus Christ. Instead of which, we find you shutting up your bowels of compassion—those of you who have bowels of that description—and making yourselves the centres and ends of your possessions!

"When, for instance, you give for the furtherance of religion, do you ever give like *christians*? or like persons whose hearts have been penetrated by the power of religion? Instead of studying how each can do *more* than another in proportion to his means; you employ every artifice, and descend to every subterfuge, in order that you may do *less*. The only plain, simple rule, designed to regulate this matter, you discard as apocryphal, although obviously founded on reason and scripture. Not how much of the burden you *can* carry, but how little of it you *mean* to bear; not how *much* you can afford to give, but how *little* you intend to part with, are the principal objects of your inquiry. Are you ever alarmed lest persons belonging to the congregation, and to whom you would refuse admission into your churches on the ground of their not being christians—are you ever alarmed lest persons of this class should have more right-mindedness, or more real benevolence towards spiritual objects, than yourselves? Not in the least. To save a shilling where you ought to give a sovereign, and a sovereign where you ought to give fifty, are gratifying proofs of good *generalship*, and constitute the essence of

your financial and ethical theories. Religion may be a good thing, and your spiritual inheritance may be a good thing; but there are many other good things in the world, all of which you seem to relish a great deal better, after which you labour more devoutly, and in the attainments of which you have a plenary satisfaction.

“Covetousness, according to your theology, is *idolatry*. Now, if this doctrine is true, what moral obesity, what criminal hardihood, and what wicked assurances must some of you be possessed of, who, with the brand of idolatry upon your foreheads, have nevertheless the unblushing impudence to call yourselves *christians*! For, that many of you—not excepting some of your voluntary teachers—are fortune-hunters, speculators, misers and money-grubs, are truths as notorious as the sun; and that many professors of religion, are more avaricious and selfish, more grasping and grinding, than are many of the people you call “worldlings,” is beyond all dispute a true fact. We are called covetous because we love wealth; but then, we have nothing else to love. The world is our only portion, and we should be fools not to make the most of it. With you, however, it is quite otherwise. Yours is the kingdom of heaven; and what with us is all in all, is with you nothing at all. The world is your passage, but not your portion; and having food and raiment you profess to be content. Such are the doctrines you teach—such the pretensions you make; while at the same time, and in forms the most glaring, we observe you loving the world, instead of God, with all the heart and all the mind,—we see you pursuing objects of worldly gain, by the most crooked policy, in the most reckless manner, with a prostrate greediness, as well as an insensate madness, which disgust and confound us. We will not say that you make gain godliness—though some of you do this—but are you ever more pleased with godliness, than when gain is in its service? We do not blame you for economizing, for economy is a law of nature. But then, nature economizes that it may be productive in beneficence; and did you economize with the same view there would

be something dignified in your principle—something praiseworthy in your savings. If, like the clouds and the rivers, you collected in order that you might give, and gave in order that you might bless,—if you were collectors, for the sake of being distributors,—receivers, for the sake of being diffusers,—we should admire your conduct and reverence your religion. But when we compare your principles with your practice, your pretensions with your dispositions, or your doctrines with your desires,—when we find you resembling reservoirs and not rivers, cisterns and not clouds,—when we see you spouting your houses, and catching your neighbour's soft water besides—drawing from your neighbour's well, and locking up your own—turning all the little stray streams, and all the streams which are not stray ones, into the places prepared for them;—when we see all these things—all these tricks, and many more,—when we see you acting from a principle of selfishness—the sheer love of acquisition—the lust of money, or the power it confers,—when we see all this—and who can help seeing it?—we revolt at your profession and hold your religion in contempt.

“Religion, you say, takes away the stony heart, melts the flinty feelings of human nature, and renders its subjects sympathetic and liberal. But would it not be an abuse of language, as well as a sin against God, to affirm that the agency of religion has produced these results in you? Is it not frequently remarked, that *some* of you make the worst *masters*, the worst *guardians*, the worst *overseers*; and that you have less sympathy with the poor, and care less about them than persons professing no religion at all? To say that *some* of you have the hearts of *men*, much less of christians, is to blaspheme religion, and to defame the common sense of mankind. *Hearts* you have none. The things you call hearts are only cherry-stones, dropped there by mistake, and retained there by design. You are not infidels; but then, you have no souls; you know nothing of what a soul is. How should you? Covetous people have no *souls*—they have only *holes to hide money in*.

“The scriptures, you inform us, will decide our characters and our destinies ; and we inquire whether they will not decide yours also? Now the scriptures call covetousness *idolatry*, and class it with adultery, fornication, lasciviousness, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and *such like*.¹ This is the connexion and the catalogue, the latter finishing with an *et cætera*. We produce them, as evidence taken from the standards of your religion, the truthfulness of which you cannot deny, and the presence of which ensures your conviction, and shows you to be as bad as we are! The wicked, we know, are to be turned into hell ; but then, if no *idolater* is to enter the kingdom of God what will become of you? You say, you do not think you are covetous to an *excess*. But your scriptures say nothing about *excess*. They describe the sin as destructive, without saying a word about *excess*. They make it damning in its *nature*, without uttering a syllable about *degree*.

“But if you are *not* covetous, why do you call covetousness by a prudent name? Why do you not condemn it, discard it, abjure it, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness? Were you not covetous, would you associate with covetous persons, any more than with drunkards, liars, thieves, murderers, &c.? Above all, would you choose them for your companions, think favorably of their religion, drag them into your churches, and thrust them into the office of deaconship—for the sake of oppressing the poor in the church, just as you make poor law guardians of them for the sake of oppressing the poor in the parish? We know your flesh and blood would be scandalized by contact with an infidel ; as if infidels were worse than idolaters! Or as if the man who worships no God, is a worse character than the man who holds the bible in one hand and a lie in the other! The man who defames my character, does me more dishonour than the man who says he has no evidence of my existence ; yet, you consign infidels to perdition,

¹ Gal v. 6, 7, 8.

and place *christian* idolaters in Abraham's bosom. Is this as it should be?

"The charge of covetousness you declare to be ungracious and untrue. Yet how long is it since the evil became so monstrous, the vice so rampant, as to require the most gifted pens in the kingdom to write it down? For a short time the demon was laid prostrate, and a few of the less hardened of its votaries, frightened out of the 'iniquity of their covetousness,' made restitution. But the luxury of hoarding was too intoxicating, the evil deplored too deeply seated, to be taken away by a stroke. 'Mammon' was bought—not always for the sake of being read—less still of being practised—but for the sake of standing conspicuously in an open library, like the long-robed hypocrites of Palestine—at the *corners* of the streets; by which ingenious device the 'mammon of unrighteousness' retained its throne in the temple of the heart, while these christian worshippers procured at a small expense a warranty and a licence—one vouching for the genuineness of their religion, the other protecting them from the penalties and suspicions of a contraband trade. Not covetous! Why, covetousness has always been the reigning sin of persons professing religion. But for this species of demonolatry there would not have been a land without bibles, or a country without temples.

"To the charge of covetousness, you plead not guilty. But let a person steal a stake from your hedge, deprive you of a bargain, or hinder you of a shilling; let him cross your path in the pursuit of wealth, grasp the object after which you are following, or stand in anywise between you and the love of acquisition, and what dissatisfaction! what jealousies! what resentments! what mortal antipathies spring up in your bosoms! What cavillings! what quarrelings! what revengeful deeds ensue! The man whom you never forgive, and towards whom you entertain an unmitigable enmity, is the man who has had the dishonesty to rob you, the incapacity to pay you, or the temerity to oppose you in some worldly project.

“Or, let the miserable and destitute of *God's* family, whom you recognize as *brothers and sisters*, solicit your alms,—let the cause of Christ be pleaded, the poverty of your ministers exhibited, the claims of the heathen presented, or the necessity of home missionaries argued,—let the debts upon your chapels be talked over with a view to their removal—repairs, enlargements, sabbath-schools, or collections for even local purposes; and what a scene of prevarication follows! What looks, and what allusions! What complaints, and what losses! What times you live in! What excuses! What shufflings and doublings! What implicit fraud and lying!

“You, however, ‘do as much as you can for religion, but some people are never satisfied,’ you say. Perhaps not. But do you *hoard* for religion, *live* for religion, *squander* for religion—*indulge* in luxuries, breed disorders, disqualify yourselves for active services, promote competitions, figure expensively in the world, with a thousand other unchristian things, for the sake of *religion*? Are your regrets at pecuniary losses, *religious* regrets? Do you then grieve because *religion* will suffer? because you will be less able to support and extend its ministrations? or because you will have fewer benefactions to confer upon the poor and needy? We trow not.

“The tendencies and virtues of the gospel, are said to aim at nothing short of the destruction of human selfishness. It therefore proscribes covetousness as a primary sin, denounces it as an idolatrous affection, places it in a category of the blackest vices, and bars the gates of glory as surely against the covetous as against the most filthy and profligate beings upon God's earth. And yet this is the vice *you* think nothing of! If a sin at all, it is a little one, a mere peccadillo, a venial infirmity, which christians may well excuse, and which the Father of mercies may be well content to pity and forgive!

“A worldly spirit is not the *symptom* of your disease, but the disease *itself*. It is not a noxious quality in the atmosphere, but the atmosphere in which you live, move, and have your being. It is the ‘thin air’ which circulates through the whole economy of mind, which per-

vades every faculty, fills every crevice, and encompasses every step of your lives. It is that which pollutes all the fountains of the soul, blasts the first faint sproutings of inward life, and renders you incapable of producing the fruits of righteousness. It is not the out, but the inside of the evil that is to be most deplored—the corrupt core, which corrupts all around it, and which you have not the moral courage to squeeze out, nor even to *probe*.

“*Aristocratic honours* you profess to despise ; and rank, you tell us, is the hallucination of an artificial mode of existence ; yet you constantly aspire after worldly distinctions, eat dirt by handfuls to obtain the friendship of affluent individuals—whom you make the breath of your nostrils—and into whose fellowship you fawningly seek admission. Matrimonial alliances with the world, or with state religionists, you who are Dissenters, pronounce to be unscriptural, unphilosophic, and impolitic ; yet how few of you refuse these alliances when offered ! By some of you they are solicited far more anxiously than the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; while not a few of you would sell your consistency, and your principles into the bargain for the sake of that very status you pronounce to be unreal ! How many of you are daily bartering your spiritual privileges for a mess of pottage, like that ‘profane person’ who for one morsel of meat sold his birth-right ! How many of you are hourly forsaking religion, as Demas forsook the apostles, having loved this present evil world ! You break through all the restraints of religion, from no other motive than worldly distinctions ; while all of you, with wicked willingness, give your sons and your daughters to the world, and for the sake too, of those very honours you profess to disregard ! Not content with the honour which cometh from God, you seek searchingly enough for the honour which cometh from the world also, and seek it at the expense of both your principles and your piety.

“With you, *titles* are gaudy feathers, inconsistent with the simplicity of religion, offensive to the spirit of inward truth, and serving no other purpose than to amuse the curiosity of spectators, or to feed the vanity of the

wearers ; yet, gaudy as they are, and modest as you pretend to be, you nevertheless seem quite delighted to parade them ! You choose the chief places in your synagogues, and covet greetings in the market-places. Have you ‘ the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of life and glory, without respect of persons ? ’ Make you no distinction between a nobleman with a ‘ gold ring in goodly apparel,’ and a ‘ poor man in vile raiment ? ’ Have you not an aristocracy of your own ? and is not your humble aristocracy more aristocratic than the aristocracy you affect to despise ? If you are not titled lords, you are would-be squires ; and with your small squireship you can out-squire the squirarchy itself. As far as you *can* go, you *do* go ; and by as many empty names as people are pleased to call you, by so many empty names are you well content to be flattered. When you cannot be great squires, you struggle hard to be little ones ; judging, apparently, little squires to be better than no squires at all. *Gaudy* as these feathers are you love to wear them, for they tickle *your* vanity as well as *ours*. They supply grateful aliment to you as well as to us, for you love to be called of men, *Rabbi*. So fond are you of titular honors, that we seldom hear of persons laying them aside for the sake of doing homage to religion ; while *clergymen* have created for themselves titles remarkable for ‘ spiritual wickedness,’ and even your *dissenting teachers* sport their academic laurels, and scruple not to assume a title ascribed nowhere in the scriptures but to the Divine Being himself !

“ With the *fashions* of the world you pretend to be very angry ; while at the same time you have every thing assimilated to them ! Here you not only *copy*, but *study*,—not only *adopt*, but *invent*. From the highest to the lowest—from the youngest to the oldest—of both sexes—at all times—in every locality—and with but few exceptions—the fictitious claims of fashion are held of paramount importance. You *must* be fashionable, if you are *nothing else* ! The law of fashion *must* be obeyed, though the laws of religion should be *abrogated* ! Not how *religious* you ought to be, but how fashionable you

can appear,—not in what inward tempers and dispositions you should present yourselves before God and before the world, but in what outward habiliments,—not in what spiritual graces, but in what outward costume you can surpass one another—and surpass us too—seem to be prime considerations with you! Did you imbibe the spirit of religion, and practise its duties, half so much as you imbibe the spirit of the world, and follow its lusts and fashions, you would be as eminent for holiness as you are now remarkable for the want of it. But not content with following the fashions, as you are well content to follow religion—afar off—you vie with us to see who shall lead the fairy dance, expensive and fantastic as it is. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, reigns the transforming life of fashion. Fashion—not religion—is visibly predominant throughout the whole of your establishments. Are your appearances less gay—your garments less expensive—your houses less attractive—your furniture less modern—your entertainments less sumptuous—or your sons and daughters less gorgeously attired, than ours? According to your means, and frequently *beyond* them, you are studiously fashionable. So fashionable, indeed, that when called upon to exercise benevolent affections you have no affections to exercise, nor any means at your command. ‘You have many ways for your money,’ you say; and who can doubt it? Fashion opens a large drain; for which reason fashionable people are mostly poor, and not very unfrequently in debt. But as *christians*, what have you to do with the fashions of a world you have renounced, with which you are at variance, and against which you have turned your arms? Your business is to be *religious*, not *fashionable*. Conformity to Christ, not to the world, is the grand business of your lives; and did you attend to this business as you ought, you would have neither time to follow nor taste to relish, the wicked fashions of a wicked world, lying in the arms of the ‘wicked one.’

“*Worldly amusements* you profess to discard, as contravening the spirit, precepts, exhortations, and spiritual

tendencies of true religion. But have you not your card-parties, balls, soirées, oratorios, &c. &c. 'Of rational recreations we say nothing—feel nothing; but *you* blend diversion with devotion—religion with recreation—depravity with piety. You can leave the chapel or the church for the theatre; and when you cannot attend both, you can give a preference to the *latter*! At a dance or a party you can spend a whole night—be the last to leave a ball and the first to open a prayer-meeting, read the hymns, or 'raise the tunes at chapel!' Equally adapted to both hemispheres—suited to both elements—you can open a ball or open a prayer-meeting—lead a dance or 'read the lines'—be the steward of a ball or the clerk of a congregation! You say we are ill-natured, and always ready to defame you. But are not these charges true? Are they not notorious? Here is *part of one of your* 'bills of fare:'

SOIREE—REV. W. A. in the Chair.

PROGRAMME.

Praise - - - - Psalm c.

Blessing.

(Service of Coffee.)

Praise—*Second Paraphrase* - Eastgate.

Address—Chairman.

Fantasia	—Pianoforte - - - -	Mr. F. S.
Duet	—"I love thee." Miss B. and Mr. W. L.	
Song	—"Logie o' Buchan." - - -	Mr. M.

Address—REV. DR. —.

Overture	—Pianoforte - - - -	Mr. F. S.
<i>Sacred Song</i>	—"Nothing true but heaven." Miss B.	
Song	—"They're a' teasing me." -	Miss B.

Address—REV. T. F.

Air with Variations	—Violincello - - -	Mr. F. S.
Song	—"The Macgregor's gathering." Mr. L.	

(Service of Fruit.)

Address—REV. S. S.

Irish Melody	—"Widow Machree." - -	Mr. L.
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Address—REV. W. A.

Irish Song —“Widow Malone.” - - - Mr. L.
 Song —“There’s nae luck about the house.” Mr. G.
 Song —“We’re a Noddin.” - - - Mr. M.
 Song —“Tell me, Mary, how to woo thee Mr. M.

Address—REV. ROBERT W.

&c. &c. &c.

“This is only *part* of the bill, and in pure pity the name of the party, the name of the edifice, and the name of the periodical which published the intelligence, is suppressed. We give it you without comment, without reflection, and without envy.

“Luxury, avarice and ambition, are the three great elements of the world, to which your religion stands opposed, and against which you have proclaimed interminable warfare. Now it is in relation to these very particulars that your failures are the most conspicuous, and the most deplorable. The friendship of the world is said to be enmity with God; whoever, therefore, is the friend of the world is the enemy of God. Consequently, if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ‘For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.’ Now by the lust of the flesh, we presume is meant all sensual indulgencies—unnecessary food, wines, sleep, &c. &c. : *vices* to which some of you are verily and grossly addicted. We do not say that your religion is the creed of intemperance; but we do say that many of you *are* intemperate, and that of *christian* abstinence you know absolutely nothing. By the ‘lust of the eye,’ your best commentators understand gold, or wealth, which avaricious people fervently covet, anxiously hoard, look complacently upon, and to which they implicitly, as well as fatally say, ‘Thou art our God!’ By ‘the pride of life,’ is designed an ambitious turn of mind, which influences persons to enter eagerly upon hazardous speculations, promote worldly competitions, and engage in such pursuits as are likely to add to their pretensions or their

appearances, thus enabling them to figure upwards in the world. This is manifest in dress, furniture, houses, servants, alliances, friendships, &c.; to all of which you are as strongly addicted as any class of people we know. We do not say that you are *all* covetous, or *all* luxurious, or *all* ambitious,—we do not say that you are all misers,—or that you are all given to pleasurable indulgencies,—or that you are all hungering and thirsting after the pomps and vanities of this wicked world; but we do say that most of you may be put into one or other of the aforesaid categories; and that when each class shall have claimed its own, the remnant will be small indeed.

“What renders your conduct more surprising is, you tell us *self-denial is christian virtue*—the essence of practical religion, and the first lesson inculcated by the gospel! But *what* do you deny yourselves in, or *what* do you restrain yourselves from? Is it worldly association?—Dress?—Equipage?—Residence?—Ease?—Acquisition?—or worldly conformity? Do you bridle your tongues, restrain your cupidity, or hold in check the disorderly passions of human nature? We know the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, is said to teach the doctrine of self-denial; but how few of you can be said to have felt its restraining influence! How few of you do we find acting upon its instructions, obeying its injunctions, or heeding its examples! Your conduct is formed upon the principle of indulgence, not abstinence—gratification, not restriction.

“Christians, you tell us, reckon themselves ‘dead indeed unto the world, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ.’ This may be true, but then it is a truth which receives neither proof nor illustration from *you*. Where, for instance, is your *death*—where is even your *indifference*, to the world! Are you indifferent to its wealth, its opinions, its honours, its gratifications, or its fellowship? Far from it. So ardent is the thirst of most of you for ‘the world and the things of the world,’ that you break through all the restraints of reason and truth, violate the sanctities of your religion, trample under foot divine authority,

close your eyes against examples the most terrible, and your ears against threatenings the most appalling. So unconquerable are your lustings after 'things pertaining to the flesh,' as presumptuously to fancy, that where others have failed, you can succeed; where they have fallen, you can stand; and where they have been wrecked, you can sail. But what vanity! What self-conceit! What sheer infatuation! *Who* are you, that you should triumph where *others* have been vanquished? that where thousands have been destroyed, *you* should be delivered? that from the exact place where others have been thrust down into hell, from that very spot *you* should be lifted up for ever? *Who* are you, that *you* should be thus exempted, that *you* should be thus privileged? *Dead to the world!* why are you ever more alive than when pursuing worldly schemes, or clutching worldly gains? Are you ever better pleased than when 'sucking the breasts of worldly consolation,' and delighting in the 'abundance of its milk?' or ever more mopish and melancholy, ill-tempered and waspish, than when the world offers you nothing but 'dry breasts and a mis-carrying womb?' *Dead to the world!* what, when like the horse-leech, you are always crying, Give, give; and when enough is always a little, or rather not a little, more than you possess? Muckworms with muckrakes, epicures and dandies, dead to the world! How monstrous! How sarcastic! Men clinging with epileptic grasp, and fastening the last rag of existence to the world, *dead* to it! Men minding the world, loving the world, hoarding, courting, and even worshipping the world, *dead* to it? *Dead to the world!* why you live in the world, marry in the world, trade in the world, and bury in the world. Not only do you live in the world, but the world lives in you,—not only do you marry in the world, but the world is married unto you,—not only do you trade in the world, but the world trades in you,—not only do you bury in the world, but you bury yourselves in it; and—as if to complete the climax—you even bury yourselves *alive!* *Dead!* why you have not *began to die yet!*

“But are you ‘alive unto God?’ Is your fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ? Are you walking with God, or thirsting for the living God? Is it true that you are crucified with Christ, that Christ liveth in you, and that you live in him? Are you panting for conformity to his image, interest in his death, and redemption through his blood? He laid his life down for you, what have you laid down for him? He has done every thing for you, what have you done for him? He parted with every thing to glorify you, what have you parted with to glorify him? Ease? Luxuries? Connexions? Worldly honours? Property? or what? Tell us the particular thing. We should be glad to know that you *were* alive unto God, because then we should have security for your rectitude, truthfulness, and general excellencies. When you enter upon the engagements of the world, you do service with all the heart and all the soul. You have the world in your thoughts, in your desires, and at the bottom of your hearts; but is it so with religion when you enter upon the services of God? Is there the same life, the same glee, the same purpose, the same fervour, or the same expectancy? For worldly engagements you can plan, contrive, arrange, and find by one method or other, the ways and means; but can you do so in relation to *religion*? You are *alive* unto God, you pretend; but are you jealous for a jealous God? Has the zeal of his house eaten you up? Do you plead his righteous cause, maintain his holy truth, and stand up for him against the evil doers? Are you counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus—that you may know *him*, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death; if that by *any means* you may attain to the resurrection of the dead? Are your affections set upon heavenly things, and not upon things below? Are you honouring your Saviour in his poor members, whom he has entrusted to your care, and to whom you are bound to show acts of especial kindness? Are you praying, planning, and labouring for the further-

ance of your Lord's kingdom? Are your hearts set upon its extension? Are you recognized as men devoted to your profession, or as men devoted to something else? Alive unto *God*! Alas! how many of you are not yet *quickened*?

“The prime end of your religion you affirm to be the *glory of God*. In this centre all the lines of life are to meet; to this end all the paths of religion are to incline. Here all the dispositions of the heart must converge—all the energies of mind and soul concentrate. The stream of life must flow in this direction, and in no other; and even common actions, and common things, must be sanctified to this exalted object. This, we must acknowledge, is magnificent in theory; and did you realize the end of your religion you would be the finest characters in the world. There would be a dignity in your lives, and a majesty in your religion, to which we should be compelled to do homage. But when you talk about doing every thing for the glory of God, we immediately fall to asking ourselves, *whether you work for his glory, wait for his glory, or watch for his glory? Whether the splendour of your garments, houses, furniture, retinue, and general appearance, is for the glory of God?—Whether God's glory requires you to be close-fisted, stingy, and selfish beyond all endurance?—Whether it is for God's glory that you eat the bread of the hungry, and drink the wine of the condemned?—Whether his glory renders it necessary for you to cheat and defraud—to lie one to another, and to ‘do not the truth?’—Whether it is for his praise that you buy, and sell, and get gain? Is it, we inquire, for his honour that you will be rich? Do you hoard, or indulge, or squander, or figure in the world, that the ‘Lord may be glorified?’ In what way does your avarice, your luxury, or your ambition promote the glory of God? Are your schemes of worldly grandeur, of acquisition, or of sensual gratification, referable to the glory of God? or are they referable to your own? Is it for the glory of God that you do so *little* for religion, and so *much* for yourselves? For what end is it that*

you so often oppress the poor and needy,—that you make the shekel light, the ephah small, and sell the refuse of the wheat? Is the end of all this the *glory of God*? Is it for the glory of God that many of you drive the swinish multitude from your doors, and thrust rudely and unfeelingly from your presence the squalid forms of sickly souls, reckoned by you in the genealogy of a *spiritual descent*? Or can it be for the glory of God that you visit the theatre, dress for the ball, sport at the tavern, or gossip at the card table? Is it for the glory of God that you fiddle, dance, and shoot? or that you pursue various objects of viscious recreations? Are your bickerings and strifes, your reflections and slanders, your animosities and retaliations—are they, with a multitude of other criminal passions and loathsome vices, for the glory of God? Do you *think* they are? Can *we*, who are of the *world*, think they are? And is it *true* that you seek the glory of *God* in preference to your *own*?—That you seek not your *own* but *his*?—That it is the glory of *his* name—of *his* house, and of *his* interests, and not your *own*, which you are seeking?—That in truth, you seek his glory at the expense of your *own*, and not your *own* at the expense of his?—Or that you forget yourselves and your temporal advantages in the pursuit of his honours; while you remember him in all your ways, setting the Lord always before you? Is it a fact that you seek the glorification of God more, or the glorification of yourselves less, than do your neighbours? Would it not be better for you to leave off talking about the *glory of God*, till your hearts are sufficiently evangelized to seek and promote it? Why should you expose yourselves to unnecessary ridicule and contempt, by talking about the *prime* end of your religion? Your *own* glory, not the glory of God, is the prime end of your *lives*—the prime end of religion is another thing?

“What makes your avarice, luxury, and ambition the more astonishing is, you tell us you are ‘*stewards*,’—not proprietors, but *stewards—only* stewards—*nothing* but stewards! But is not your stewardship a sort of

saintly parent, for getting all you can and keeping all you get? If you are only *stewards*, what becomes of the *proceeds*? Who takes the rents? and who keeps the *books*? A nobleman founds an establishment through which he confers abundant blessings upon its members. He frames certain regulations respecting their social meetings, dress, demeanour, habits of life, domestic duties, and general conduct. The terms of admission are, an entire surrender of themselves to him; so that all they have and are belong to him, and are to be devoted to his will and pleasure. Now it is his will and pleasure that a certain public ministration should be upheld and extended,—that the members should all love one another, and all jointly concur in carrying out the intentions of the founder. Economy is prescribed to the rich, exertion to the poor, indulgence to the afflicted and decrepit, and all who, by reason of sickness, infirmity, or old age cannot support themselves, are to be supported, in brotherly kindness, by a fund kept for that purpose. The nobleman founds his establishment, commits its interests to the members thereof, and after giving them needful instructions takes his journey into a far country, saying, ‘occupy till I come.’

“Now, if instead of conforming to the spirit and rules of the establishment, they conform to the spirit and rules of an hostile establishment; if instead of seeking the interests of the establishment they seek their own, and their own only; if instead of upholding and extending the ministration prescribed, and relieving the necessities of the poor, the infirm, and the sick; if instead of devoting their property to these uses, to which by the terms of their admission they stand pledged; if instead of thus applying their resources they hoard for themselves or their families, or consume it upon their lusts, or squander it upon objects alien to the establishment; if *such* was to be their conduct, would not every body who knew of their misdeeds, and who knew the claims of the establishment to which they belonged, pronounce them at once, and with but small mental reservation, a set of unprincipled swindlers—unworthy of the

establishment to which they belonged, undeserving the esteem and confidence of the public, and justly meriting the reprobation of God and man?

“Your only reply to this case is, ‘undoubtedly.’ Yet *this* case is a very exact type of *yours*. At least, it corresponds to yours. You profess to surrender yourselves, and all you have, to the Lord. Now, it is the revealed will of your Lord, that you should *christianize* your establishments by bringing them under the laws of the institution to which you belong. The interests of religion are committed to your trust, and the poor of the flock to your sympathies and support. You are bound to uphold and extend the gospel; but do you fulfil your obligations? For eighteen hundred years you have had the gospel, but what have you done with it? How *far* have you diffused it? How many *nations* have you blessed with it? What have you been doing with it all this time? What have you been doing with *yourselves*? Have you been living for God, or living for *yourselves*? Have you been minding *his* interests, or minding your *own*? Whose are you minding *now*? And have you christianized your domestic establishments at *last*. Are you regulated in heart and life by the policy of religion, at the present time? Or rather, are you not still carnalized and sensualized—a gang of freebooters committing hourly depredations upon the estates of your Lord, and either hiding or rioting upon the plunder? Answer us these questions.

“Suppose, for one moment, you could be induced to regulate your labour and expenditure, according to the principles and precepts of the New Testament; what an astonishing change would come over the face of religion, aye, and over the face of the earth too! The exchequer of your Sovereign’s kingdom would overflow, and you would be seen flying, like the apocalyptic angel, in the midst of heaven, ‘having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth.’ You might turn the world upside down, as the first christians are reported to have done. What should render you less efficient than they were?

“That you have not *diffused* the gospel to the extent you *ought*, and according to your *means*, is too clear a fact to be controverted. Let us see how you *uphold* it in your respective localities. Is it creditable to your religion, for you who are *stewards*, and who are entrusted with the interest and honour of your Sovereign, to permit your ‘holy places’ to be in *debt*? Yet how many of them are so? And how slight your feeling of remorse on that account! Then look again at many of your *ministers*, whom you designate your ‘*dear pastors*,’ and the ‘sent servants’ of your Lord. How do you treat *them*? How are *they* supported? While you are accumulating, or indulging, or lavishing your money on worthless objects, they are pinched, and poorly clad, and have daily conflicts with the temptations and privations of a helpless state. How many of their lives do you embitter—how rank the wormwood and the gall which you so frequently place in their cups, and which, in brutal exultation, you sometimes *compel* them to drink! Which of the prophets have you not persecuted or slain? And which of them is it, that will not rise up in judgment against you, at the last day?

“Take lastly the *poor*—the *Lord’s* poor, who are left in *charge with you*. How is it that so many of them are miserably destitute? How is it many of them receive parochial aid, and many of them, for want of a better home, seek refuge in union workhouses? If you are *faithful* stewards, how is it, that after having been for years in your master’s family, when their limbs fail, and when they can no longer furnish strength to subdue the glebe or feed the machine, with palsied hands and broken hearts they then enter the ‘house of the condemned,’ receive the badge of public degradation, are cut off from religious ordinances, denied the intercourse which has been the habit of a life, become vexed by the ‘filthy conversation of the wicked,’ and compelled to bemoan a location where the refreshing dews of gospel doctrine fall not upon their spirits, and where the ‘voice of sweet accord’ resuscitates not the dormant energies within? Now, these are *members* with you, of the same