

In the *first* place, Let us consider our nature as men.

It is a study full of instruction to the curious or the pious mind, to contemplate the appearances in the universe, and trace the laws by which it is governed. All nature is busy and active. Something is ever coming forward in the creation; in the moral world, as well as in the natural, there is a design going on. The great purpose of nature in our system is to diffuse existence; to multiply all the forms of matter and classes of being. Every element is stored with inhabitants. Even the loneliest desert is populous, and putrefaction is pregnant with life. Worlds are enclosed in worlds, and systems of beings going on, that escape the eye of sense.

Such is the plan of Providence in this inferior world. The order established at the first of time is still advancing. The Divine Spirit, who at the beginning moved upon the face of the deep, and turned a chaos into a beautiful world, still continues to move, inform, and actuate the great machine. Nothing in nature is at rest; all is alive, all is in motion in the great system of God. Thou too, O man! art appointed to action. The love of occupation is strongly implanted in thy nature. One way or another, thou must be always employed. Woe to the man who by his own folly is doomed to bear the pains and penalties of idleness; Rest is the void which mind abhors. An idle man is the most miserable of all the creatures of God. He falls upon a thousand schemes to fill up his hours, and rather than want employment, is contented to lie upon the torture of the mind, while the cards are shuffling, or the die is depending. The glory of our nature is founded upon exertions of activity. From the want of them, those in the more affluent stations of life, whose fortune is made at their birth, so often fail in attaining to the higher improvements and honours of their nature. Have you not, on the other hand, seen men, when business roused them from their usual indolence, when great occasion called them forth, discover a spirit to which they were strangers before, and display to the world abilities and virtues which seemed to be bought for the occasion? While there are so many splendid objects to allure the mind, why trust your character to be evolved by accident? why leave your glory in the power of fortune?

This activity is not only the source of our excellence, but also gives rise to our greatest enjoyments. Even the lower class of enjoyments, animal pleasures, are not only consistent with a life of activity, but also derive from it additional sweets. Hours of leisure, suppose hours of employment; they alone will relish the feast, who have felt the fatigues of the chase. But mere animal pleasures are not of themselves objects of a wise or a good man. Unless they are under the direction of taste; unless they have the accompaniments of ele-

gance and grace; unless they promote friendship and social joy; unless they come at proper intervals, and have the additional heightening of being a relief from business, they soon pall upon the appetite, and disgust by repetition. Has sensuality a charm when thy friend is in danger, or thy country calls to arms? Who listens to the voice of the viol, when the trumpet sounds the alarm of battle? When the mind is struck with the grand and sublime of human life, it disdains inferior things, and, kindling with the occasion, rejoices to put forth all its strength. Obstacles in the way only give additional ardour to the pursuit; and the prize appears then the most tempting to the view, when the ascent is arduous, and when the path is marked with blood. Hence that life is chosen where incentives to action abound; hence serious engagements are the preferable objects of pursuit; hence the most animating occasions of life are calls to danger and hardship, not invitations to safety and ease; and hence man himself, in his highest excellence, is found to pine in the lap of repose, and to exult in the midst of alarms that seem to threaten his being. All the faculties of his frame engage him to action: the higher powers of the soul, as well as the softer feelings of the heart, wisdom and magnanimity, as well as pity and tenderness, carry a manifest reference to the arduous career which he has to run, the difficulties with which he is destined to struggle, and the sorrows he is appointed to bear. Happiness to him is an exertion of soul. They know not what they say who cry out, "Let us build tabernacles of rest." They mistake very much the nature of man, and go in quest of felicity to no purpose, who seek for it in what are called the enjoyments of life; who seek for it in a termination of labour, and a period of repose. It is not in the calm scene; it is in the tempest, it is in the whirlwind, it is in the thunder that this Genius resides. When once you have discovered the bias of the mind; when once you have recognised your path in life; when once you have found out the object of the soul, you will bend to it alone; like an eagle when he tasted the blood of his prey, who disdains the objects of his former pursuit, and follows on in his path through the heavens,

Thus have I set before you your obligations as men to make a right use of life, and have shewed you, from the principles of nature alone without having recourse to Christianity, that the excellence and the happiness of man consists in a virtuous course of action, and in making an improvement of time. Let us now, in the *second* place, take in the considerations suggested by the Christian religion, and see what new obligations arise from it to urge us to redeem the time.

It is the doctrine of revelation, then, that the present life is a state of probation for life to come; that we are now training up for an everlasting existence; and that, according to