

This prediction was certainly fulfilled when Christianity became the professed religion of the Roman empire, when persons of all descriptions assumed the profession of the christian faith. It is obvious that there must always be many of the same character wherever christianity is a national religion,—but let no one suppose that such characters are only to be found in those churches which are avowedly in connexion with the State.—Many of them it is to be feared may be met with in societies which have professed on christian principles to separate from these.

It is often used as an apology for the neglect of this part of christian discipline, that it is extremely difficult to draw the line, that though you see deficiencies in many characters it would be hard, it would be uncharitable to say that they have a mere “form of godliness, but deny the power” of it, although in some cases this difficulty may exist, it will be admitted that there are many in which it does not, in which, if we apply the plain rule of Scripture, that of judging of men's characters by their works, it will be found that such persons practically deny the power of godliness though they assume its form. Let the disciples of Christ then obey this command, “From such turn away,” where the case is clear; and we have no doubt that the supposed cases of difficulty will be found to be greatly diminished if not entirely to disappear. The single question here is, Was this precept given to be obeyed? If so, all the reasoning from the supposed difficulty of obeying it, and which is often used as an apology for neglecting it altogether, can be considered in no other light than as involving a reflection on the wisdom of the Lawgiver.

With regard to the charge which is often brought forward here, of judging *uncharitably*, we cannot but notice how grossly, in this case, this term is perverted. If charity means love (which is plainly the scriptural import of the expression) we discover the most genuine exercise of this christian principle, when by our conduct towards others we guard them, as far as