

A TESTIMONY AGAINST DUELLING:

A

S E R M O N ,

PREACHED IN THE

UNITED SECESSION CHURCH,

MONTREAL, AUGUST 12, 1838.

BY THE REV. W. TAYLOR, PASTOR OF THAT CHURCH.

"Thou shalt not kill."—Exod. xx. 13.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It is unnecessary to state here the considerations by which the Author was induced to preach the following Sermon; they are alluded to in the Introduction to the Discourse, to which, therefore, the reader is referred. Since it was preached, many of those who heard it have expressed a desire for its publication; from a hope that it may be the means of checking, in some measure, the sin against which it is directed. The Author, therefore, submits it to the public, in compliance with this wish; and is desirous only that the hope accompanying it may not be altogether lost.

Montreal, August 20, 1838.

A TESTIMONY AGAINST DUELLING.

“*Thou shalt not kill.*”—Exodus xx. 13.

IT is one of the great duties of the Church to testify, in the name, and on the behalf of God, against sin. And the faithful performance of this duty is a necessary means of vindicating the honour of the Divine Government, and preserving and promoting the moral interests of mankind; yet it seldom fails to bring upon the Church the resentment of those whose conduct she arraigns. But this ought not to deter her from the duty. For, if she fails, either through fear, or any other cause, to lift up her voice, and testify against prevailing wickedness; or if she utters only *an uncertain sound*, which those who practise that wickedness may neutralise by an interpretation of their own, she involves herself in the consequences of those sins which she has been too timid to rebuke. Christ said to his disciples, “The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, *because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil;*” and the Church which he hath purchased ought to follow in the same path, though it should lead to the same consequences.

When any particular sin becomes prevalent, this duty appears to me to be more imperative than in ordinary cases; more especially if the sin escapes general censure; and the punishment which it may deserve, from those who possess competent authority to inflict it. In such a case, it receives a negative encouragement; and the Church is therefore more loudly called upon to protest that it is contrary to the will of God, and excludes from his salvation. I apprehend this is true of the sin of duelling, as regards the population of this city, at this time. A very aggravated instance of this sin occurred amongst us a few weeks ago; and yet nothing has been done from which it might be inferred by a stranger, that, in the judgment of the Church and population of this city, it deserves condemnation. The public press seems to have maintained a studied silence on the subject; perhaps I ought to say, that the notice which has been taken of it by the press, has been complimentary rather than otherwise; Christian societies have said nothing, at least publicly; and the Civil Magistrate has borne the sword, in this case, in such a manner as to be a *praise*, rather than a *terror*, to this species of evil doing. In these circumstances I maintain it to be our duty, as a part of the Church of Christ, to put forth our testimony on the subject; and faithfully and fearlessly give this deed the character which it deserves; by ranking it with those “things, for whose sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.”

It is with this view that I now address you on this

subject ; and I am desirous that my motive should not be misunderstood. I am not desirous of acting the part of a public censor. I cannot be accused of meddling with a matter which does not belong to me, for it does belong to me, and to the whole Church in this city. I disclaim any unfriendly feeling towards any of the individuals implicated in the outrage to which allusion has been made. And I take this opportunity of stating that though a particular instance of duelling is the *occasion* of this Discourse, it is not the *subject* of it ; it is directed against duelling *as a system*, and duellists *as a class*. My desire is to discharge my duty as a Minister of the Gospel, and furnish you with an opportunity of discharging your duty, as professed believers of the gospel, by lifting up our voices against this sin. I could have wished that this had been done by some whose voices would have been better heard ; in that case I would not have come before you at this time on such a subject ; but since it has not been done, I consider it our indispensable duty, if *in weakness*, yet in sincerity, to enter our public and solemn protest, on behalf of God, and his word, against the sin of duelling.

“ The custom of duelling took its rise in times of profound ignorance and superstition. It was prevalent among the ancient Gauls and Germans, and became universal in Europe after the irruption of the barbarians had destroyed the Roman Empire.”* From this remote antiquity, it has remained to this day, among

* Chambers' Edinburgh Journal.

Europeans and their descendants, for we are not aware that it has been adopted by any other race ; and it is, therefore, worthy of being remembered, that though it has undergone various changes, corresponding with the changes which the growth of civilisation has superinduced on society and its institutions, it is, nevertheless, *a relic of barbarism*. Though it is now regarded as an accomplishment, by a certain class of society ; and even held to be a necessary attribute of a *gentleman*, yet in truth it is a savage remnant of the times of ignorance and feudal barbarity ; and we would hope therefore, that, like every other thing of the same nature, it is doomed to be driven back, by the progress of society, to the place whence it came.

Let us briefly consider this custom, with the view of ascertaining its merits or demerits, morally considered. And, for this purpose, the only standard to which we can appeal is the word of God. The law which it contains is paramount. It points out the boundary between right and wrong, and from its decision there lies no appeal. Upon the authority of this law, I maintain that duelling involves the guilt of murder ; and not only so, but that there are many circumstances attending it, which prove it to be murder of the most aggravated kind.

I. It is maintained that duelling involves the guilt of *murder* ; and though, in any given case, neither of the parties engaged in a duel should lose his life, yet both are chargeable with the *murderous design* of compassing one another's death.

I do not take it upon me to say, in what light duelling, and duellists, are regarded by the law of the land. It is not my office to explain the law of the land; nor do I consider myself competent to do so. But we have before us, in this Book, a code which is infinitely superior in respect of its perfection, and authority; and, what is of no little importance, its perspicuity also. The law of God takes precedence of all other laws, and every statute, by whomsoever enacted, which is contrary to it, is, for that very reason, null. So far as the object of our present inquiry is concerned, therefore, it matters little what estimate may be formed of duelling by the laws of the land; for as the law of God is the foundation of all morality, it is only by an appeal to it that the *moral nature* of this, or of any other custom, or act whatever, can be truly ascertained. Now the divine law on this point is contained in the text, *Thou shalt not kill*; and, upon the authority of this precept, we maintain that duelling is murder.

You will observe that the precept, as expressed in the text, is *absolute*. It draws a line of protection around human life, which no person may violate with impunity, upon any plea or pretence whatsoever. From other parts of Scripture, however, we learn that there are three exceptions, and only three, to this statute. The *first* is, when the life of a criminal is taken away. The *second*, when the life of another is taken away in self-defence, or, as the *only* means of preserving our own. And the third is, when the life of another is taken away unwittingly. Every instance

of the taking away of life which does not fall under one or another of these exceptions is murder, aggravated more or less, it may be, by the circumstances attending it. But can any of these exceptions be pleaded in defence of duelling? Not the first; for the life of a criminal is always taken away in obedience to the sentence of *the judge*. Nor the second; for the duellist does not fight to preserve or defend his own life, but with the design of *taking away* the life of his opponent, placing his own, at the same time, in jeopardy. Nor the third; for the duellist does not act *unwittingly*. On the contrary, he discovers throughout the whole transaction a design to take away life; and not only so, but *design of the most deliberate character*. This, as we shall afterwards see, is one of the most revolting features of his conduct. Duelling has been reduced to *system*. The person who practises it acts according to prescribed rules, for the attainment of *a certain prescribed end*; and that end is, in the cant language of the duellist himself, “to wash away an insult with the *blood* of the offender.”

But, if duelling does not fall under any of the above exceptions to this precept, we are forced to conclude that it is *murder*. There is no other alternative, either to reject or adopt. It is true that attempts have been made to create another alternative, by making a difference between *culpable homicide* and murder; but this is a distinction which neither reason nor Scripture will sustain. For what is murder, but the culpable taking away of human life? It may sometimes be accompanied with slight aggravations; and at other

times with the most weighty, as in the case under consideration ; but this difference is only circumstantial. I am unwilling, however, to argue this point as if it really required much argument to support it ; for nothing can be plainer than that the wilful taking away of life, with which every duellist is chargeable, is a direct breach of this commandment. To enter into a lengthened and careful refutation of the various quibbles by which he may attempt to defend himself, is to acknowledge that they possess some weight. Instead of doing so, let me quote the following passage of Scripture, in which an inspired writer draws the line of distinction between those cases in which human life is taken away without guilt, and those in which it involves the guilt of murder. “ If a man smite any person with an instrument of iron so that he die, he is a murderer : the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer : the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand-weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer : the murderer shall surely be put to death. If he thrust him of hatred, or hurl at him by lying of wait that he die ; or in enmity smite him with his hand that he die, he that smote him shall surely be put to death, for he is a murderer ; the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer when he meeteth him. But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, or with any stone wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm ;

then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments; and the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hands of the revenger of blood."

This quotation first mentions some cases in which life might be feloniously taken away; and in each case, you will observe, the slayer is held to be a *murderer*. It then mentions some cases in which life might be taken away without blame, on the part of the slayer; and in each case, it is provided that he be allowed to flee to the city of refuge. Now whether does duelling belong to the first, or to the second of those divisions? Can it be said that the duellist comes upon his enemy *suddenly*, without lying in wait, or without *enmity*? or can it be pretended that there is any comparison between his conduct, and that of a man who takes away the life of his neighbour, by unintentionally throwing a stone in the direction in which he is, "*seeing him not*," and consequently not knowing that he is there? These things will not, for a moment, be pretended; and it therefore follows, that, upon the principles of law contained in the word of God, he is a murderer, in the full sense of the term. In whatever light he may be regarded by the world,—though he should pass without condemnation at the tribunal of the Civil Magistrate, or the bar of public opinion; nay, though he should be received by his fellow-men with honour and applause; it is plain, that, in the judgment of that God to whom he must soon give account, according as his judgment is declared in his word, the duellist is a *criminal* of the *worst character*.

The world may attempt to throw over him the tinsel of a fashionable reputation, but all is insufficient to hide from view the *blood* with which his moral character is defiled.

If a duel should not result in the death of any of the parties, it may be inquired whether the above charge can justly be brought against them? To this question we would reply in the affirmative. It is true that God alone can determine how much the guilt of it is diminished in this case, by the absence of accompanying aggravations; but it is evident from the foregoing quotation, that the charge of murder is the *only substantive charge* which can be brought against the duellist. Besides, it does not come of the disputants themselves that blood is not shed; they *intend* to take away one another's life; and the law of God takes cognizance of "the thoughts and intents of the heart," and judges men accordingly. Their feelings are of the most vengeful kind, but they are prevented, by circumstances which they cannot controul, from gratifying them to the utmost; and is it to be supposed that this necessity, to which they submit with reluctance, may afterwards be pleaded by them as a virtue, of sufficient efficacy to extenuate their guilt?

II. But we proceed to a second position, namely, that duelling not only involves the guilt of murder, but there are many circumstances connected with it which prove it to be murder of the most aggravated and revolting character.

1. This appears from the *deliberation* with which it is done. A man may take away the life of another, under some strong excitement, and as soon as that excitement is over he may deeply regret the rash act. In such a case we feel pity for the murderer. Though the temporary excitement under which he laboured cannot exculpate him from the charge of blood guiltiness, yet it prepares us to feel pity for his condition, because we are conscious that we are liable to be acted upon by excitement in the same manner ; and because we feel convinced that the cool and sober judgment of the murderer never gave its consent to the bloody deed, which he was hurried on to commit. But if these considerations prepare us to feel pity for him, they completely prevent the exercise of such a feeling towards the duellist, and even lead us to look upon him with an aversion and horror which are felt towards no other criminal. For he proceeds with the utmost deliberation and forethought. He acts upon *system*. He maintains, that in certain circumstances a man may take away the life of his neighbour, nay *must* do so, in order to maintain the character of a man of honour ; and having been placed in these circumstances by receiving an affront, either real or imaginary, he begins immediately to act upon the system which he has embraced ; and that system, be it remembered, forbids precipitation. He goes home, brooding over the insult which he has received, and thereby causing his desire for revenge to burn with increasing vehemence. He sends for an acquaintance, and consults him ; and after much reasoning it is agreed that he ought to seek "satisfaction." He then arranges the prelimin-

aries—fixes the time and place of meeting—despatches whatever business may be most urgent, in view of the possible fatal result of the affray; he inspects his weapons to see that they are in proper order—proceeds to the place of horrid rendezvous—causes the distance to be properly measured between him and his opponent—takes the instrument of death in his hand, and *deliberately aims* at his opponent's heart; and is it possible that reason can be so perverted as to acquit such an individual from the charge of murder? But there is something more than simple murder here—there is a coolness and deliberateness of purpose to which the mind cannot advert without horror. The thing is not rashly done. On the contrary, the mind reviews it again and again, and contemplates it in all its aspects and results, religion apart. Now, to adopt a series of measures, after such a calm survey of consequences as this, for the avowed purpose of taking away the life of another; and to prosecute them with unrelenting determination till the awful crisis is reached, is to betray the disposition of a beast of prey, rather than that of a man;—least of all such a man as the duellist would fain persuade the world he is,—a man of noble sentiments, and of honour. In this respect the assassin is superior to the duellist; though his is a character which the world has ever held in detestation, and his crime has been generally punished with the severest penalties. He acts under the influence of uncontrolled passion, without having time to deliberate, but the duellist acts according to system, and carefully revolves every step. The latter, therefore, displays deeper depravity—a state of mind which can

look, without shrinking, upon crime of the most revolting kind.

2. That the murder, involved in duelling, is of more than common aggravation, will appear if we consider *the relation of the parties*. They are not enemies—they are not persons whose minds have been previously exasperated by a long series of mutual injuries or recriminations; they have not descended from families between which an hereditary feud has long existed; if such were the case, their quarrelling, even unto blood, would not inflict upon the public the horror of such a surprise. But they are, for the most part, acquaintances; who have received one another upon some footing of friendship, and between whom some degree of intimacy has already sprung up. Or they are, perhaps, neighbours, who have lived together in the habit of daily correspondence for years. They have always treated one another with respect, and even with kindness; they have, possibly, often performed the rites of hospitality to one another, and, in various ways, come under mutual obligations. Now, for a person, so situated, to attempt, out of set purpose, to compass the death of his friend, is a degree of savageness, to which even the savage himself is superior. For although the savage will sometimes treat his avowed *foe* with the greatest cruelty and vindictiveness, yet the person of him whom he has received into friendship is held sacred. But, your pretended man of honour can rise from the table at which he and his friend have been feasting, and perhaps mutually complimenting one another; and,

for some hasty expression, deliberately form the purpose to take away his life. Instigated by a spirit of fell revenge, he will pursue this purpose with inflexible resolution; drag his friend to the field of battle; determining either to take his life, or lose his own. And yet, the man who does so, is to be looked upon as *a man of honour*, and one who is possessed of all polite and gentlemanly accomplishments! The ancient Romans considered it highly honourable to take the life of an enemy, and nothing was more disgraceful, in their judgment, than to lift the hand against the life of a friend. But now these notions of honour have been completely reversed; it is honourable (as it ought to be) to treat an enemy with indulgence, and grant him all the advantage of the most charitable construction of words and actions; but to show an equal degree of indulgence and charity to a friend would be a symptom of cowardice! Oh, what perverted notions of propriety! That man is to be decked with the reputation of honour, whose friendship is a perpetual snare, and who maintains it to be sometimes necessary for his reputation to dip his hand in blood, the worst of human crimes—the blood, it may be of a friend, or intimate acquaintance. There is something in this inexpressibly revolting. Murder always gives a violent shock to the public mind, though the circumstances attending it should not be of an aggravated nature; but when one friend sheds the blood of another upon the ground, a thrill of horror passes throughout the community,—an expression of the public sense of the appalling enormity of the deed.

3. I must refer here also to *the trifling nature of the offence*. I do this the more readily, because some of you have perhaps felt the objection rising in your minds, as we proceeded with the discourse, that the injured person has received an affront, and has therefore a right to reparation ; and that this reparation is all that is sought, in the first place at least. Doubtless a person who is injured has a right to reparation ; and the person who has done the injury ought to give that reparation as soon as it is asked ;—these are positions which no person will call in question. The religion of Jesus Christ makes it our duty to love our neighbour, but it requires our neighbour to reciprocate the same affection to us ; and if, instead of doing so, he should offer any violence to our life, or our character ; or inflict even some wanton and unnecessary pain upon our feelings, it condemns him without qualification. His first duty in this case, is to seek forgiveness and reconciliation ; and, until this duty is performed, the gospel shuts him out from all access to *the altar* of divine grace. But though he should refuse to perform this just and reasonable duty, even when urged to do so ; though on the contrary he should rather persist in the offence, and even repeat it, with fresh provocations,—the gospel does not allow us to take vengeance into our own hands ; much less to pursue the offender even unto death, and refuse to accept of any less satisfaction. We wish to state this the more explicitly, lest any person should suppose that it is the object of this discourse to teach, that others have a right to insult us, and that we have no right to resent it, or take any notice of the injury. Instead of taking away

such a right, the gospel secures it to us ; but it, at the same time, prescribes rules for the prosecution of it, which must be faithfully observed.

When men quarrel with one another, we have a right to expect, that it shall be only some grave offence which is permitted to break up their harmony. This expectation is the stronger when the quarrel is pursued to such a fearful extremity as the mutual shedding of blood. But when one *friend* rises in furious resentment against another *friend*, with the horrid design to take away his life, or die in the attempt, the above expectation is so strong, that, when it is not realized, we feel that an unnatural outrage is committed upon the sympathies of our nature. But what is it that instigates the duellist to seek a hostile meeting with his friend, that he may inflict upon him the heaviest punishment which the hand of man can administer? Surely that friend must be guilty of some unparalleled atrocity. No, brethren ; the cause of the rupture is nothing but a hasty expression, or look, or action ; all of which are perhaps only of doubtful meaning, and might receive a more favourable construction, if pride and obstinacy would permit it to be given. I appeal to yourselves, if the cause of a duel, generally speaking, is not something so trifling, that every father now present would feel it to be his duty to punish his children, if they presumed to quarrel about such a matter.

But there are many who lay great stress on the provocation which the duellist has received, and seem

to imagine, that, if it does not completely justify his conduct, it is a powerful extenuation. In reply to this objection, we beg leave to offer the following remarks, and, for the sake of saving time, we shall present them in the form of distinct propositions.

First. That the injury, generally speaking, partakes largely of an imaginary character; by this I mean, that it is of such a nature as to hurt only his pride, neither his character, nor his honour.

Secondly. That, when the offence is real, it may be affirmed that it is never of so grave a nature, as to deserve to be put in the balance with the *life* of the opponent.

Thirdly. In all cases of real injury, the law of the land provides the means of redress, and the duellist ought to be satisfied with that redress as well as others. It is most unreasonable pride on his part, to insist that a more particular satisfaction shall be awarded to him, than is provided by law for his neighbour. The man who does so is neither a good subject, nor a good Christian.

Fourthly. As the causes out of which duels arise are generally of so trifling a nature that the law of the land has made no provision for redress; and as, at the same time, the law of the land provides redress *in every case in which it is really necessary to our happiness or our honour*, we may conclude, that the redress sought for by a duel may be neglected without

danger to either. We must either admit this, or hold, on the other hand, that our legislators are ignorant of what is due to men of honour, which is the same thing with affirming that they are not men of honour themselves.

Fifthly. Though the offence should be hard to be borne, and the offender should obstinately refuse to make any reparation, however reasonable, we have yet no right to put his life in peril by our own hand. We must exercise patience, and rest in the belief that Providence will vindicate our innocence, or make it the means of greater ultimate advantage. This is decided at once, by a reference to the example of Christ. Never, perhaps, was there a being on this earth more bitterly calumniated; never was one calumniated with greater injustice. While all tongues ought to have joined in expressing their gratitude unto him, almost all were joined in loading his character with the foulest imputations. And how did he act? “When he was reviled he reviled not again: when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself unto him that judgeth righteously.” “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.” “He was meek, and lowly in heart.” “He gave his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, he withheld not his face from shame and spitting.” And with this example of Christ before our eyes, shall we yet quarrel and avenge ourselves, to the endangering of our own life, and the life of others, on account of offences so trifling, that, were

it not for our immoderate pride, they would give us but little, if any uneasiness? Shall we show a studied proneness to resentment and revenge; and yet deceive ourselves, and insult the common sense of the world by pretending to be Christ's disciples?

When, therefore, it is considered that the provocation which the duellist has received is of so trivial a kind, what judgment are we to form of his character, when we find him exacting such a terrible revenge? For the neglect of some punctilio, or piece of fashionable etiquette; for the sake of something which has wounded his *feelings*, but which a person of better regulated feelings would have regarded with indifference or contempt, he imbrues his hands in the blood of the man, towards whom he is bound by the laws of friendship and honour to exercise kindness and forbearance. And after having done a deed so atrocious, that even "the dark places of the earth, which are full of the habitations of cruelty," would blush to acknowledge it; he has the effrontery to turn round upon us, and require us to regard him as a gentleman, entitled to especial respect!

4. But we hasten to observe, in the last place, that *the immediate consequences* of duelling present us with a farther proof of the peculiar enormity of this sin. Let us mention a few of these.

We have already said that the duellist designs to take away the life of his opponent; let us suppose then that he succeeds in this design; as, indeed, it must be

granted that he uses every precaution necessary to insure success. In what distress does he then involve the family of the man who has fallen by his hand? He rends the hearts of his *parents* with the bitterest anguish. They nursed him, and educated him, and watched his progress to maturity, with intense interest; and as his mind began to expand, and displayed one after another the powers which it possessed, they indulged expectations such as parents alone can form, and cherished them with a fondness, such as parents alone can feel. But in one moment their hopes have been cruelly scattered. Their son has been entangled, by the duellist, in some tavern or gaming-house brawl; and in the prosecution of this worthy cause, he has died in a ditch. His mangled corpse is carried home to his distracted parents; a more agonizing spectacle than the torn and bloody garment which was sent to the aged patriarch from the field. Who can describe the scene which that house of mourning presents! To parents, brothers, and sisters, it is a “day of grief and desperate sorrow”—their burden of woe is heavier than they can bear. And yet we are required to believe that the man who has smitten this family with such a deadly breach is *a gentleman, and a man of honour!*

Let us suppose that the deceased has also a *wife* and *children* to bear their share of the calamity, and we shall obtain a farther view of the “horrid cruelty” which is involved in the system of duelling. We cannot imagine the frantic grief of the widow, from whose arms her husband has been torn by his professed

friend ; nor can we have adequate conceptions of the evil which is brought upon her unoffending and helpless babes ; they are turned adrift, brokenhearted, and fatherless, to buffet the storms of life ; the arm which should have given them shelter and protection being powerless in the dust. We cannot enlarge upon these things ; but when we contemplate through them the character of the duellist, we find it assuming a shade of deeper and darker depravity ; instead of ascribing to him the character which he would so presumptuously arrogate, we feel ourselves compelled to ascribe to him another, as far removed from it as it possibly can be ; and we are persuaded that the feelings even of the duellist himself are not so completely dead, but that he will acknowledge, when he calmly and dispassionately meditates on these things, that we are perfectly right in doing so.

But we have another charge to prefer against him still ; he is the means of hurrying an individual unprepared, there is every reason to fear, into eternity. It is true, the state of the dead is to us unknown, but there is something fearful in the thought of passing into the dread presence of the Almighty, from the field of mortal combat, where the worst passions of the heart were likely to be excited. Such a scene must be a very unfit preparation for entering into eternity, and the man, who forces it upon his fellow-men, must be a criminal of no common order. Other murderers take only the life of the body, at least they cannot be directly charged with the consequences which follow

in another world, but the duellist raises his hand against soul and body at once.

To rush into a fixed, eternal state
 Out of the very flames of rage and hate ;
 Or send another shivering to the bar,
 With all the guilt of such unnatural war,
 Whatever use may urge, or honour plead,
 On reason's verdict, is a madman's deed.

COWPER.

Let us now briefly reverse the supposition : As the duellist not only puts his life in jeopardy, but has no reason to expect that he shall survive the combat, let us suppose that he falls. Then upon *his* parents, upon his brothers and sisters, or upon his wife and children, he brings all those consequences to which we have already referred. He brings the gray hairs of the first with sorrow to the grave ; he makes his wife a widow, and his children fatherless ; he fills a whole family with mourning and shame, and that, the very family of which he ought to have been the joy and support ; and all this is done to gratify stubborn pride, or an insatiable spirit of revenge.

But, brethren, the subject is revolting. It is full of passion and of blood. It places before us an instance of human wickedness so hideous that it is painful to contemplate it. "Simeon and Levi are brethren, instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret ; unto their assembly mine honour be not thou united : for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger for it was

fierce, and their wrath, for it was cruel ; I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.”

I shall not pursue the subject farther. I consider it unnecessary to do so. I trust you are already convinced that the duellist is a murderer ; and not only so, but when you think of the cool deliberation with which he acts, of the relation in which he stands to the man whose death he is compassing, of the trifling nature of the offence ; and of the terrible consequences, both as they respect his own family, and the family of his opponent, you will admit, that duelling includes murder of more than common aggravation.*

1. In drawing this Discourse to a conclusion, as we have hitherto spoken of the guilt of duelling, we may now, in the first place, take notice of the folly of it. It is altogether unnecessary and vain, as a means of accomplishing that for which it is professedly followed.

Let us suppose that an individual affronts us ; by impeaching our veracity, for example ; a cause which very frequently leads to a hostile meeting, that individual cannot persuade others to believe his assertion, if we have previously, by our good conduct, gained a character for truth. If we have done so, it is unnecessary for us to challenge the calumniator to fight a duel, in defence of our character ; for our actions will be believed far sooner than his unsupported

* I do not inquire whether the *challenger*, or the *challenged* ; the *principals*, or the *seconds*, are most guilty. All of them are answerable for the same sin ; but the degree in which each of them is answerable is known only to God.

assertions. To do so, moreover, would be extremely foolish, for instead of giving us satisfaction for the injury we have sustained, it puts it in the power of the calumniator to do us a greater injury still. Though our character, in the case supposed, be out of reach of the shafts of his calumny, yet, if we meet him on the field, we are not to suppose that our life is equally secure from his weapon.

Am I to set my life upon a throw,
 Because a bear is rude and surly? No—
 A moral, sensible, and well-bred man
 Will not affront me, and no other *can*.

COWPER.

The truth of this position might be corroborated by instancing a variety of facts, if it were necessary. You are doubtless aware that many of our greatest, and most eminent men, have refused to give or accept a challenge, yet their characters have suffered no injury by doing so. Colonel Gardiner refused a challenge, adding that he was *not afraid to fight, but afraid to sin*; yet no man sustained a higher reputation for bravery amongst his contemporaries, and the lapse of time has only added to its lustre.

But if we have not previously gained a character for veracity by our own conduct, it is madness to suppose that the proper way to refute an imputation upon our veracity, is to challenge the author of it; for, though you should put him to death, this would by no means prove the falsehood of what he has stated. There was a time, when the world believed that truth was

always on the side of the victor, in such combats, but these times of ignorance are happily gone ; and the world now insists, that the only way in which a man shall obtain possession of a good character, is to earn it by his own virtue. If what another says against us is false, his saying it will never make it true, and, on the contrary, our own good conduct will soon live it down ; but if it is true, his death will never make it false. If any evidence is needed to vindicate our honour, this is not the kind of evidence that can be received. How absurd to suppose that a person, destitute of veracity, may acquire a reputation for that, or any other virtue, by taking the life of the man who justly calls his want of it in question !

The best way to preserve honour and reputation is always to be deserving of them ; by cultivating habitually the virtues which adorn the Christian character. We shall thus render it impossible for any calumniator to rob us of our good name ; for the world will attach greater weight to the conduct of an *humble, consistent* Christian, than to the intemperate speeches of his accusers. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

2. We remark, that the sin of duelling ought to be punished by the Civil Magistrate. I am not one of those who maintain that the Magistrate ought to

punish sin, as such; and exercise his power for restraining it. I conceive this to be the duty of the Church, and I apprehend it is to be accomplished, not by the power of the sword which the Magistrate wields, but by the power of the truth of which the Church is put in possession. Yet, I doubt not, it will be admitted by all, that duelling is within his province. If it is the duty of the Magistrate to punish the murderer; and this, I apprehend, no person will deny; it will follow that the duellist is pre-eminently deserving of punishment, because he is chargeable with murder of the most aggravated kind, as appears from the reasoning employed in the preceding Discourse.

This remark appears to me sufficient to prove our point; yet there are other considerations which lead to the same conclusion with equal force. The practice of duelling is calculated to prove destructive to the community, because it puts the lives of multitudes in constant danger. And those persons who are endangered by it, are, generally speaking, of greater eminence than others; and possessed of talents which fit them to promote the public good. Those very things which render them valuable to the community, namely, their talents, or their station, or their influence, are also the very things which expose them to the designs of the duellist; and there are always men to be found, who, insignificant in themselves, imagine they will attain some consequence, if they can involve themselves in a quarrel with a great man. The interests of the public, therefore, require, that the lives of such eminent persons should be protected.

Duelling is likewise calculated to become destructive to the community, because, however sinful it may be, fashion has adopted it. We do not need to be warned against murder, in any of the other forms in which it is usually committed ; because it is so hideous in itself, that no person labours under any mistake respecting it ; it shocks our feelings, and this is the most effectual warning which we could receive. But duelling comes to us recommended by *fashion* ; it is practised by *gentlemen* : a veil is thus thrown over it which hides its true nature from public view ; so that, under the influence of mistaken opinions respecting it, the practice is calculated to spread throughout the community, till its victims are found on every hand. We conclude, therefore, that duelling ought to be punished, and that too, with the heaviest penalties, by the civil ruler ; and the Magistrate who winks at it, is evidently chargeable with a gross dereliction of duty.

But it is still more imperative upon the *Church* to set her face against the evil, and condemn it. Tremendous is her responsibility if she suffers the duellist to remain in her communion without censure. Is not this to justify his crime ? Is it not to add the solemn sanctions of our religion to the mistakes of the trifling, fashionable world, respecting this murderous custom ? It is generally in the church that evils of this kind arise ; at least, it is from her culpable negligence that they grow up, and increase, till they become so formidable as almost to set opposition at defiance ; and the only way to remedy such evils, is to begin the reformation where the first false step was taken. If

the church were to unite in denouncing the duellist ; if she were to stigmatise him as a murderer, and cast him forth, and exhibit him to the world in his true character ; I apprehend, we would soon find, that few were ambitious of the honour. But she must either do so, or become a partaker of other men's sins, and bring upon her "the blood" of those whom she deludes.

In fine, as I am now addressing private Christians, let me exhort you to condemn duelling by your *practice*. "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." The religion of Jesus Christ consists in an imitation of his example ; and no person requires to be told, that his example was one, from which rudeness, and a haughty disregard of the feelings of others, were utterly abhorrent. He was not only *holy*, he was also *harmless* ; he was meek, and gentle, and compassionate ; he healed the hearts of many, but he never once acted in such a manner as to give unnecessary pain. In this respect, we ought to copy his blessed example ; and if all those who profess his religion were habitually to do so, the provocations from which duels arise would but seldom be given. We are not to spare the sins of men from a regard to their feelings ; thus did not Christ, as his treatment of the Pharisees may testify ; but we have no right to abuse their goodness, or trample upon their patience, or in any way exasperate their feelings, by harsh, and unmannerly treatment. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets."

While you abstain from giving offence to others, let me exhort you to bear the offences which you receive from others with Christian patience. An opinion seems to prevail, in certain classes, that quickness in resenting an affront, and eagerness in pushing revenge, are necessary to constitute such a character as shall entitle its possessor to respect ; but I can conceive of nothing in more direct opposition to the character of Christ, to the character of Him who sent him, to the character of his Apostles, and the injunctions which they delivered, by divine authority, to others. Among the graces exemplified by those, who are held up, in the scriptures, for our imitation ; and the duties enforced by those holy men who wrote them, patience under injurious treatment holds a distinguished place. "Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you so also do ye."

Readiness to forgive an injury, is also a grace so essential to the Christian character, that its absence is a fatal deficiency. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

In one word, let me exhort you to set your face against the custom of duelling, and everything which leads to it. And to this end, it may be of importance, to give things their proper names. "An

affair of honour” is a phrase invented only to hide the deformity of sin from public view ; an affair of *blood* would be a juster description. In this, and in every other suitable way let us protest against the wicked system ; let us labour to disseminate just views of its nature, and the character of those who embrace it ; and to diffuse the influence of that holy religion, which teaches us to “ follow after those things that make for peace, and by which we may edify one another.”

FINIS.

The Judgment.