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VILLAGE SERMONS

ON

THE CHIEF ARTICLES OF FAITH, &c.

ON

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER,

AND ON SOME OF

THE RELATIVE DUTIES.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

PASTORAL ADVICE

TO

YOUNG MEN,

PARTICULARLY THOSE IN COUNTRY VILLAGES;

IN

SEVEN SERMONS.

BY THE

REV. EDWARD BERENS, M. A.



BY THE  
REV. EDWARD BERENS, M. A.  
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VILLAGE BRITONS  
THE GREAT BRITAIN OF FAITH  
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THE GREAT BRITAIN OF FAITH



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TO THE  
**INHABITANTS**  
OF THE

*Parishes of Shrivenham and Englefield,*  
IN THE COUNTY OF BERKS.



MY DEAR PARISHIONERS,

**T**HE volume which I now put into your hands has no pretensions to novelty of argument or of illustration. My object is, in a plain way, to call your attention to certain important doctrines, which, as members of the Church of England, you all acknowledge; and to point out the practical effects which real belief in these doctrines ought to produce upon your hearts and conduct.

You were long since taught, that the chief Articles of Faith are, belief in God the Father, who created; in God the Son, who redeemed; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth you. These are the doctrines which I here wish to impress upon your minds. And since we can neither believe nor do any thing well with-



out the grace of God, I have added five Sermons on some of the principal means of obtaining that grace, and of renewing and strengthening within you firm religious principles. Permit me to hope, that you will peruse this little volume with seriousness and attention, particularly at those seasons to which the discourses which it contains are particularly appropriate:—the Sermon on Redemption, on Good-Friday; that on the Holy Spirit, on Whit-Sunday; and that on Judgment, in the season of Advent. To the discourse on the Baptismal Vow, I humbly request the attention of all; but especially that of *parents*, when they bring a child to be baptized; and that of those, who, by sickness, or any other affliction, are solemnly admonished “to remember the profession which they made unto God in their Baptism.” The times in which we live, and my persuasion of the justness of the claims of the ministerial office to attention and respect, induced me to add the Sermon on the Christian Priesthood.

In the Sermons on the Christian Character, which stand next, I by no means pretend to give a complete body of Christian duty. I merely wish to enforce the cultivation of such virtues, as, from the observations which I have made, seemed most to require notice. As an introduction to what follows, I first endeavour to convince you, that real *practical holiness* is the great design of the Christian dispensation.<sup>a</sup> Then, as the *love*

<sup>a</sup> Serm. XII.

of God<sup>b</sup> is styled by our Lord the first and great commandment, I give to *that* the first place in my statement of particular duties. To the love of God, the love of the world is one of the chief obstacles; I therefore proceed to caution you against the spiritual dangers which are occasioned by *the things of the world*<sup>c</sup>—and the *men of the world*.<sup>d</sup> Afflictions<sup>e</sup> may, by unthinking persons, be looked upon as tokens of God's displeasure, and may consequently tend to lessen our love to him; I have added, therefore, a Sermon on the temper with which afflictions ought to be borne. Next follows *humility*,<sup>f</sup> a grace or virtue of the utmost importance with respect to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. The *love of man*<sup>g</sup> is the ground work of all the duties of the second table, and seemed to demand particular consideration. The subjects of most of the following Sermons<sup>h</sup> were suggested by the latter part of the fifth chapter to the Ephesians, in which St. Paul mentions the virtues which ought to characterize him who has “put on the new man.” *Rash judging*,<sup>i</sup> and *evil-speaking*,<sup>k</sup> are vices so prevalent, that I felt it right particularly to warn you against them. The Sermon on *charity*<sup>l</sup> is added as a sort of summary of the several discourses which precede it.

<sup>b</sup> Serm. XIII.

<sup>c</sup> Serm. XIV.

<sup>d</sup> Serm. XV.

<sup>e</sup> Serm. XVI.

<sup>f</sup> Serm. XVII.

<sup>g</sup> Serm. XVIII.

<sup>h</sup> Sermons XIX. XX. XXI. XXII. and XXIII.

<sup>i</sup> Serm. XXIV.

<sup>k</sup> Serm. XXV.

<sup>l</sup> Serm. XXVII.



In Sermons on subjects so nearly related to each other, you will probably find many instances of repetition. I did not take much pains to avoid, or to correct this, as the duties which I inculcate require to be enforced with "line upon line, and precept upon precept." The repetition of the quotations from Scripture cannot be otherwise than useful.

Possibly some persons may think, that I ought not to have omitted the too common vices of swearing, drunkenness, and unchastity. But I was unwilling to increase unnecessarily the size of the volume; and, against these vices, there are on the list of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, several excellent little Tracts ready at all times to be distributed among you, "as need shall require and occasion shall be given."

I have added six Sermons on some of the most important of the *Relative Duties*.

When St. Paul exhorts the Ephesians and the Colossians to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they were called,"—to live as becomes Christians;—and when he tells them, that the true Christian doctrine—"the truth as it is in Jesus,"—is that which teaches "to put off the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,"—"and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;"—he goes on to mention, particularly, several of those sins which

real Christians must avoid, and several of those moral graces, those virtues in heart and conduct, which Christians should endeavour to acquire. Among these virtues, a distinguished place is assigned, in both Epistles, to attention to the *relative duties*;—those duties which result from the several relations of husband and wife, of parent and child, of master and servant. The enforcement of these duties occupies a considerable part of the two concluding chapters of each of these Epistles; and it appeared to me to be a most fit subject for the pastoral addresses of a minister of the Gospel *now*.

In a similar manner, among the moral precepts towards the conclusion of the Epistle to the Romans, much stress is laid by St. Paul upon the observance of the duties of *subjects*; duties which are strongly enforced also by St. Peter in his first Epistle.

With respect to all the relative duties, I would make one observation; which is, that they are not in such a sense reciprocal, as that if one party should fail in the performance of those which peculiarly belong to him, the other is thereby justified in being guilty of a similar neglect. Upon this subject, however, I shall take the liberty to make use of the words of a living writer, who is equally distinguished for fairness and candour of mind, and for accuracy of reasoning. "The relations existing among mankind, in which there are duties required on both sides, may be divided into two classes;



" those in which the parties are mutually *respon-*  
 " *sible to each other*, and those in which they  
 " are *not*. To the former class belong all part-  
 " nerships, mercantile bargains, and, in short,  
 " the great mass of voluntary dealings between  
 " man and man. In all these cases, not only is  
 " each party bound in conscience to the fulfil-  
 " ment of his part of the agreement, but being  
 " responsible to each other for that fulfilment,  
 " if either party fail in performing his engage-  
 " ment, the other is at once released from his  
 " obligation, by the dissolution of this condi-  
 " tional compact.—The other class of relations  
 " is of a widely different nature. It compre-  
 " hends not only that between governor and  
 " subject, but between parent and child, be-  
 " tween kindred in general, between husband  
 " and wife, and between every man and his  
 " neighbours. In all these cases, there are in-  
 " deed obligations on both sides, but the parties  
 " are *not* mutually responsible to each other.  
 " Parents are no less bound in conscience to  
 " take care of their children, than children to  
 " honour their parents; and to God the parents  
 " are responsible for the performance of this  
 " duty; but let not children suppose that every  
 " neglect of duty on the part of the parent  
 " absolves them from theirs."<sup>m</sup> The case is  
 " similar with respect to the other relative du-  
 " ties.

<sup>m</sup> See Mr. Whately's excellent Sermon, " The Christian  
 " Duty of Obedience to Rulers," preached January 30,  
 1821.

That the Sermons now published may be  
 instrumental in promoting the glory of God and  
 the edification of those who read them, is the  
 sincere wish and prayer of

Your affectionate Pastor,

EDWARD BERENS.



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## SERMON 1.

### FAITH.

2 COR. xiii. 5.

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your  
 yourselves.

I KNOW not any admonition in the Scriptures which has a stronger claim to our attention, than that which calls upon us, to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith.

In discoursing on this subject, it is my intention, First, to speak of the necessity of Faith; Secondly, to point out certain marks or tokens, by which we may judge, whether we are in the Faith or not; and, Thirdly, to mention some of the means of increasing and strengthening Faith.

By Faith, I mean that strong belief of the truths revealed to us in the word of God, which disposes us to perform what is there commanded;—such belief, particularly, of those doctrines which are shortly brought together in the Apostles' Creed.

I. The necessity of faith is self-evident; for there can be no religion at all without faith. “He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”<sup>a</sup> The purpose of religion is, to teach us

<sup>a</sup> Heb. xi. 6.