

**DISCOURSES ON  
PRACTICAL AND  
EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS**

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Discourses on Practical and Experimental Subjects by Jonathan Cogswell

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**JONATHAN COGSWELL**

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# DISCOURSES

ON

PRACTICAL AND EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECTS:

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## P R E F A C E .



THE following discourses, when originally delivered, the author has reason to believe, were the means of the conversion of a number, who were then the people of his charge. They have been printed, and are now presented as a donation to the Presbyterian Board of Domestic Missions, with the hope and prayer that they may be useful to those, whom he has not seen and cannot expect to see in the present world.

*New Brunswick, N. J. May 15, 1845.*

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## DISCOURSE I.



### THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

“For what is a man profited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”  
MATH. 16, 26.

The subject contained in the text is, I know, familiar to every one accustomed to listen to the sound of the gospel. It is not, however, on this account the less interesting. Indeed those subjects, I am persuaded, which are calculated to operate most powerfully on the human mind are too seldom considered in all their important bearings, because they are thought to be understood by every one. This may account for the cold insensibility which prevails in Christian congregations among those who are living without any good hope of salvation. Such persons do not dwell with intense thought and for any considerable time on those truths, which are best suited to alarm them or to rouse them from the slumbers of stupidity. How many may be found, who acknowledge the scriptures to be the word of God, but whose views of the sublime doctrines of revelation are too superficial to affect them! Some cannot be entertained except by perpetual novelty. They are like travelers, who pass too ra-



pidly over a country to examine satisfactorily any object. Others prefer such discourses, as are above the comprehension of the illiterate. While they are gratified, many are not profited.

Christianity places all men on the same level—proposes to them the same conditions of reconciliation, offers them the same rewards, and requires them to become fools that they may be wise. The object of the faithful preacher is not to be admired for the splendor of his genius and his extensive erudition, but to be approved of God.

In this Christian land, where the gospel shines with unclouded brightness, and where we may almost everywhere behold the wonderful works of the wonder-working Jesus; how many pass through life, as if ignorant of a future state, or, as if they thought it a matter of indifference, whether they are saved or lost! Their views of spiritual things are very obscure and circumscribed, and their affections are fastened to the perishable objects of this world. They willingly endure the greatest hardships and expose themselves to the most frightful dangers to obtain temporal riches and honors, while they neglect to secure an incorruptible inheritance and unfading glory. How many crowd places of amusement and live without any regard to the consequences of their conduct! The great mass of mankind must be awakened by the clearest exhibitions of such truths, as most deeply concern them. Can it be that those, who appear so cheerful and gay, and who are wholly engaged in worldly pursuits are destined to exist forever, and to be forever happy or miserable according to their conduct in the present state? How few have commenced that great work,

without the accomplishment of which they must be miserable forever ! Many seem never seriously to have considered what may be obtained or lost during their short life.

When Christ, who spake as never man spake, was upon earth, one argument he used to persuade men to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, was derived from his knowledge of the worth of the soul. Though it is beyond the power of any finite being fully to estimate the value of the soul ; yet some just views of its worth may be obtained from a consideration of its *capacities*, its *immortality*, and the *price of its redemption*.

I. The *capacities* of the soul will first be considered.

The soul of man is intelligent. It is this which renders him capable of making vast attainments in knowledge. The body, which is the habitation of the soul, is of the earth and differs only in form from the dust on which we tread. It is the soul, which gives lustre to the eye, expression to the countenance, and activity and vigor to the body. The body, as soon as the soul leaves it, loses all its beauty—becomes a mass of corruption, fit only to be the food of worms.

What vast treasures of knowledge a single individual may acquire during his short life ! How many volumes he may read, and how many subjects he may investigate ! He may understand the laws of nature—the structure of the earth we inhabit—the motions of the planets—and may, by just calculations, determine the times, when those phenomena will be witnessed, which so greatly alarm the illiterate. Assisted by the light of revelation he that is in pursuit of knowledge may raise the curtain that hides from our

view the scenes of the invisible world. He may obtain a correct knowledge of heaven—even a more correct knowledge from the writings of the inspired penmen, than he can obtain from fallible historians of countries he never visited. With the volume of revelation for his guide, he may enter the New Jerusalem—survey its walls—walk through its streets—behold its magnificent temple—drink its pure water of life—and partake of the fruits which abound in the city. With the same guide he may go down to the prison, where the wicked are confined—listen to their heart-rending cries—and see many daily dropping into the abyss of woe. How vast and boundless the field of contemplation, presented to the view of those, who diligently study the scriptures! How sublime and glorious the objects, constantly before them! In 50 or 100 years after the soul is separated from the body it may acquire more knowledge than is now contained in the largest collections of books in the world. Those, who are illiterate when they die, will be far more learned than those, most distinguished for their knowledge, who after the lapse of a few years follow them.

2. It is the soul, which enables man to rise to a high degree of dignity.

Man was originally made but little lower than the angels and was crowned with glory and honor. God gave him dominion over the works of his hands, and put all things under his feet—all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field—the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. Though by his apostacy rendered baser than the beasts that perish; yet by sincere