THE APPLICATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE COMMERICAL AND ORDINARY AFFAIRS OF LIFE, IN A SERIES OF DISCOURSES

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BY

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

MINISTER OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, GLASGOW.

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PREFACE.

This volume can be regarded in no other light, than as the fragment of a subject far too extensive to be overtaken within a compass so narrow. There has only a partial survey been taken of the morality of the actions that are current among people engaged in merchandise; and with regard to the morality of the affections which stir in their hearts, and give a feverish and diseased activity to the pursuits of worldly ambition, this has scarcely been touched upon, save in a very general way in the concluding Discourse.

And yet, in the estimation of every cultivated Christian, this second branch of the subject

should be by far the most interesting,—as it relates to that spiritual discipline by which the love of the world is overcome; and by which all that oppressive anxiety is kept in check, which the reverses and uncertainties of business are so apt to inject into the bosom; and by which the appetite that urges him who hasteth to be rich is effectually restrained—so as to make it possible for a man to give his hand to the duties of his secular occupation, and, at the same time, to maintain that sacredness of heart which becomes every fleeting traveller through a scene, all whose pleasures and whose prospects are so soon to pass away.

Should this part of the subject be resumed at some future opportunity, there are two questions of casuistry connected with it, which will demand no small degree of consideration. The first relates to the degree in which an affection for present things, and present interests ought to be indulged. And the second is, whether, on the supposition that a desire after the good things of the present life were reduced down to the standard of the gospel, there would remain

a sufficient impulse in the world for upholding its commerce, at the rate which would secure the greatest amount of comfort and subsistence to its families.

Without offering any demonstration, at present, upon this matter, we simply state it as our opinion, that, though the whole business of the world were in the hands of men thoroughly Christianised, and who, rating wealth according to its real dimensions on the high scale of eternity, were chastened out of all their idolatrous regards to it—yet would trade, in these circumstances, be carried to the extreme limit of its being really productive or desirable. An affection for riches, beyond what Christianity prescribes, is not essential to any extension of commerce that is at all valuable or legitimate; and, in opposition to the maxim, that the spirit of enterprise is the soul of commercial prosperity, do we hold, that it is the excess of this spirit beyond the moderation of the New Testament, which, pressing on the natural boundaries of trade, is sure, at length, to visit every country, where it operates with the recoil of all those calamities, which, in the

shape of beggared capitalists, and unemployed operatives, and dreary intervals of bankruptcy and alarm, are observed to follow a season of overdone speculation.

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