

**SELECT CHRISTIAN AUTHORS,
WITH INTRODUCTORY
ESSAYS. NO. 8. THE LIFE OF
BERNARD GILPIN**

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Select Christian Authors, with Introductory Essays. No. 8. The Life of Bernard Gilpin by
William Gilpin & Edward Irving

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WILLIAM GILPIN & EDWARD IRVING

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THE
LIFE
OF
BERNARD GILPIN.

BY
WILLIAM GILPIN, A. M.
PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY.

WITH
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BY THE
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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

THE most acceptable offering which we can present unto God, the author and preserver of our being, and the most grateful return which we can make to the world in which we have passed our days, is to live a life directed according to our best perceptions of truth, and devoted to the ends of everlasting goodness. And when any frail and erring mortal has been enabled, by the light of God's word, and the ministry of his Spirit, or, in the absence of these, by the light of nature, and their strength of natural virtue, to witness a good confession for truth, and maintain his integrity to the end, he hath done a work of which the world should take knowledge, and carefully treasure up the memorials; for she hath nothing more estimable of which to make her boast, nor more profitable for accomplishing the spirit of her children, and upholding those high and holy interests, in which stand the grace of her honour, and the security of her well-being. If such a life hath been wrought out in hard and perilous times, against the stream of custom, and in the face of earthly disadvantage and loss, and be interspersed with calm and

deliberate protestations against error, and justified by free-will offerings of worldly interest for the sake of truth, and the ready encounter of every risk and hazard in the service of God and righteousness,—then is it to be treasured up as the most precious jewel of the past, and the most valuable endowment of future generations. It is a victory gained over the powers of evil—a trophy reared in the land of the enemy; whose heroic purpose and adventure beyond the popular and approved undertakings of the times, will continue to awaken, in the breast of future ages, aims and ambitions beyond the limitations of every-day prudence. Its sure faith in an overruling providence, and cheerful confidence in the steadfastness of truth, will breathe courage over those who have arisen to contend with prejudices, and are struggling in the perilous contest with wickedness. The sight and knowledge of it will prove like life from the dead, to the kindred spirits fainting in the wilderness, who will again bestir themselves in their lonely way, as when one lost in the desert discerneth the track of footsteps, or findeth a guide to conduct him on his path. If, moreover, after many trials of his faithfulness, and overshadowings of his hope, it hath pleased the Lord at length to bring forth the judgment of his servant like the light, and his righteousness like the noonday—to redeem his life from the bondage of the enemy, and permit it to enlarge itself to the full measure of its good desires, and calmly to decline in honour and peace,—it then becomes, to every advocate of noble and magnanimous deeds, the best argument against the prudential and expedient doctrines whereby undertakings for the good of mankind are ob-

structed. To every worldling, content with visible and temporal things, it is for a stain and a reproach, a rock of stumbling, and an occasion of silence; while to every noble spirit, whose labour has been crowned with success, it answers for an example in the days of his prosperity, as it was a light in the day of his adversity—a guide how to perform and accomplish, as well as a summons to rise and undertake, those high purposes for which his Creator endowed his soul, and which the world, in ministering to his wants, expects him to fulfil.

A sentiment is but the idea of what may be, an action is the reality of what hath been; the former liable to every contingency of things unforeseen, and assailable by disputation and doubt—the latter, beyond all controversy, a thing which human nature hath performed, and which human nature may perform again. A book of noble sentiments is, as it were, the seed of noble actions, which have yet to stand the proof of the world's ungenial climate and ungenerous soil; but a life of noble actions is the harvest which hath stood through all weathers, proved the capacities of the soil, and is ready to shake the plentiful produce abroad, and flourish like the strong cedars upon the top of Lebanon. And yet, though a book of excellent sentiments be but as the embryo-seed of excellent things, men are so persuaded of the worth of books, that they come down, preserved by careful hands, from the stream of time, which hath been allowed to carry away all contemporaneous things; they are multiplied innumeraibly, and strewed like autumn leaves over the face of every land; and we of this land are so jealous over the integrity of these caskets of

precious thoughts, that we will permit no will nor authority to molest their native forms, no royal license, nor priestly expurgation, nor censorship of any kind, such as in other countries lord it over truth and knowledge, to intermeddle with their sacred contents. Of what estimation, then, is a noble life, which has been not imagined, but wrought amongst us!—not worded, but acted, or, if it be written, written with imperishable deeds—not a superficial painting, but a solid statue—not a cold statue, but a living and a moving emblem, and, as it were, an incarnation of truth. How jealous should we be of such evil censorship, and of the sacrilegious and despoiling hand of evil time—seeing such men are as the seed of life, such spirits are the fathers of spirits, and their memory as the star of the morning, in the dark benightings of the light of heaven!

Therefore, it hath ever been the aim of wise and good men to testify truth by example, and commend what they nobly thought by noble actions. In ancient times, the sages, and legislators, and judges, whose names were enrolled next to the gods, were what they taught others to become; while the sophists, who are now despised, went about filling themselves with vanity, and the public ear with declamations and arguments concerning virtue. But the sages held wisdom too dear to peace and happiness to be so dismissed. They brought her home, and made her their spouse; they lived with her, they breathed of her, and in her they sought to have their being. And so much do men prize living evidence above all verbal demonstrations of truth, that they would, I believe, be more content to lose all which Aristotle or Plato have