No. 147.

Social duty, religious duty.
Acts v. 4. - "Then shalt not bid unto men, but unto God."

The narrative from which this declaration is selected, is one of a most interesting kind. It presents a view of the condition and mode of living of the first tumult, as remarkable as well for its singularity, as for its simplicity and appropriateness. It is extremely difficult for us to go back to that time, and realize the circumstances among which these early disciples were thrown... At the present day, when ity has incorporated itself with the institutions and customs of so large a part of the civilized world, when millions of the most powerful and enlightened nations in the globe are ranked under its banners, the governments of lands are penetrated by its influence; when great, learned, good men have for ages been bringing to its defense and illustration all that talents of piety, of instruction could supply, when we are society,
informed into its truths, that all its grand and solemn doctrines, its high hopes, solemn motives have become as it were every day considerations with us. At this day, when our minds are made to hear only subject to us, we can hardly form a conception of the state of things at the origin of our religion, when its followers were few, without law, without name, without human support; when magistrates, rulers, priests were act in array against them; when their Master had just gone from earth, and was left to all that bigotry and contempt, which in every state of things, a sense of common suffering, of common merits, would bind them together; the individual would naturally lose every private feeling, every personal consideration, in his attachment to the cause, with which he was connected, and himself into it, into the common stock. One striking effect of this was the community of property indicated by the event in the shape of a text. No one said that what of the things of the possessed were their own, but they had all things common. They told their possessions, brought the price of their own to the apostles' feet, shared in a worldly substance, as they shared in danger. This was not that such a mode of living must have had its origin in a very uncommon generality of circumstances, y could not be expected, or desired, but where similar circumstances exist. A community of property at the present day, if practiced to any considerable extent, would destroy industry, enterprise. The few would labor if they could not share the command of the fruits of their labor. Such a policy if the seed of society would not survive or admit such a measure over. But at that time it was the necessary result of circumstances, was doubtless with the best degree beneficial to the interests of the infallible. Yet such a condition of things would naturally give occasion to fraud or deception in some cases; if this we have a reason why instance in the passage from which our text is taken. In times of sapphire, when whatever motives had conspired to destroy the infallible, pretending to have rendered into the common stock the value of their possessions, had in fact kept back a part of the price. They were willing to be bought to have made a generous sacrifice of their property, but from the
rice is from some more consideration, they professed their private interests to the interests of the whole community to which they belonged. The sudden and dreadful punishment of their fraud was a signal instance of the interposition of providence, must have been a solemn warning to the members of the same community. Wherever there was a disposition to practice deception, there the history of Amasis's sad fate must have occurred to the mind. I have held it back from the attempt to impress on the inquirer. A fictitious character.

But leaving the general illustration of inferences of this notion of sacred history, let us confine our attention to the principle stated in the text. You shall find it to be one of great importance. After clearly demonstrating what the law, for his base ignoble deception, his subduing falsehood, St. Peter proceeds, to assure him, that his crime was not one by a violation of the laws of social morality, but an offence to God. Then must not he unto men, but unto God? By violating the obligation to sincerity, you have not only infringed upon the security of your peace, but you have committed a sin against God himself. There is sin in it, as well as in morality in your conduct. Now it is this principle, that I wish to deduce from the text. St. Paul had now called upon us to turn the principle I mean; that our social duties are religious duties; that violations of religious duties are violations of religion. And this principle is one, as we seldom realize, at least, in its full extent, and importance. We are too much disposed to point out religion from the morality of life, to imagine that the promises may be disregarded without injuring the frame. As a man on the high conscience with the pardon, that commencing against his neighbor is a very trivial thing compared with turning against God. But forgetting that they are interwoven.

though they are allowed to be of themselves wrong, you have care of the rights and happiness of man; yet they are those who take a part of every day vices, who are commit and that for any one claim to considered religious. He who from one instance of carelessness is the love of accumulations, puts in operation all the acts of overreaching and practices as much dishonesty, assumes gross neglect. Legal punishment, never imagines that it is doing more than injuring his fellow-men, that he is com
mitting on against the All: the cause whose bias conduct is in a light of, which would exhibit it as so important, be seen as a moment to occur in a religious light. The man, she loves herself, her heart against the cause of humanity, who can look on suffering so great, without having the thought enter his mind, that it is a part of his duty to strive to see it could not easily be brought to believe, that his own kindness, though he should acknowledge it to be such, ought to be deemed an offence to God. at the most, he thinks it is merely a violation of a social duty, nothing to do with religion. Ambition urges on her headlong career, though she crosses the path of others, turns their interests, proceeds their happiness: the cause whatever as to be most against her, comes very lardy as very long, very sublimating, it would seem, as may best suit the occasion: yet the ambition must take it into its account, that the cause of God, God's self, involves any cause of a higher nature, God's own, the society; to regard it as dishonoring to God would be giving it a false, a solemn importance, not that necessary against it to possess. But it would be in vain to attempt to advert to all the instances, in our religion, which are thus served, nor are boundless to stand. And yet from each other, if to see his infinitely different judgments, God his joined together, men have, the great utility of both, no longer to consider. We act as if we knew the relation to that, for the benefit of all the duties, of the relation to God were entirely out of the question. The duties of social life, of the duties of religion are con sidered to have none of it, all are even deemed inconvenient. Religion age imagine, human interest, always suitable. Religion are imaginary, human interest, always suitable. Religion are imaginary, human interest, always suitable. Religion are imaginary, human interest, always suitable. Religion are imaginary, human interest, always suitable.
And it cannot but be apparent, that every violation of social morality is equally a violation of religion. We often reflect, that the duties of both are established by the same admiring announcement of God. He has placed us in a high station relative to himself; and it is no less true, that he has placed us in a most important relation to each other. The obligations resulting from the one of those relations are as strong as, and binding as, those resulting from the other. The same authority has commanded that we should give ourselves up to useless meditations idle and vain. Thus they thought no religion, forgetting that if it was not morality, it could not be religion. In short, this habit of regard the duties which are due to God as those which are due to man, as bearing no concern with each other, has been the fruitful source of errors. We are driven, if we would see reason, must look upon our obligations to men to God clearly in turn, and involves each other, before we can place morality on that elevated ground on which it designed for us, or give to religion that native and efficacious spirit, which Leisure and unexampled exertion of ability.
because he performs all the duties towards the state as rules prescribed by law, should think himself only at liberty to neglect or evasively his duties to his fellow citizens or subjectors, should put forth to invade the rights of men, the happiness of others. He certainly should think he is either rendered very bad, or has a very bad heart. And yet this is precisely the conduct of those, who suppose that religion, meaning by that term, the duties which relate to God, are to be derived from morality, i.e. from the duties which relate to man. And the higher and mighty purposes of the government would not regard whatever to the welfare of the race of man. The more clearly does this happen, the more perfectly must we be led to conceive of it as the unalienable idea of a divine law, as integral by God into the very frame of constitutions of things. If we mean to be the true friends of a powerful and firm man, and be a subject under his government. The same conduct under human government would be deemed sufficiently absurd. What should we think of one, who...
for the happiness of the creatures, as much as we can. The laws of moral virtue, as sure as we can deny, are most effectually felt. To promote that happiness, this alone is sufficient demonstration, that the only law of that divine government, whatsoever religious objects are to the benefit of the beings over whom it is exercised. This it appears, that God has bound in the whole rational creation by the sublime laws of nature; so that they will do nothing that will mar the majesty of the language; this we shall see that the happiness of man, to make an estimate of this his portion of the universe, it remains that rebellion against the purposes of the Most High! Let not the more attempt to sour religion from the active duty, the more is in fact an expression of the other: God has bound them together, as with chains of steel, if ever attempt to separate them, we do it at the peril of being found fighting against.

God. The language of our text may be applied to every violation of social duty; every such violation is an offence not against man only, but against God.

It follows, as a direct consequence from the doctrine I have now stated, that the whole of men, the looseness of virtue are almost infinitely increased. If the transgression of our social obligations is infinite in each separate instance, an act of vanity and pride, that can be furnished by any other view of the subject. Explanation of social, becomes thus not only an injury to man, but it is drawn to wage war against the throne of God. For not only breaks up the foundation of social order, carried in it the seed of ruin in the moral interests of the world, but it makes it to threaten to oppose the designs of the great Ruler of the Universe in the government of his rational offspring. Let him, then, who despises at the obligations of social duty, remember that he is doing more than spreading ruin and misery among his innumerable that his crime is not confined to
fountain of our consolation. And this must surely be a consolation, in which, if we are restrained in our approach, it could not otherwise attain. It is thus carried from earth to heaven, from its limited sphere of operation here below, to a wider and more glorious sphere. It is connected with God’s eternal Retro, all that is high, and hence the only. The virtue must not merely be good enough around them, but be happy and influences, but the constant harmony with the great plan of God for the universe, an actor in accomplishing these effects, as God designs to produce by all the spiritual and moral means of the earth scattered in confusion around us. It is by these circumstances, that virtue is sure to be free to us in our lights, as no other consideration can give them, so that it appears that the true enlightened is to each, the tie of the chain reaches to the throne of God.

And we should never forget, that if religion were
out misery be hollow & hypocritical & barren, on the other hand, morality without religion is precarious & fleeting, standing on a very weak foundation & supported by trembling props. The man who thinks that superficial, social morality, without reference to the duties of religion, will answer the demands of God's law, has made a very hasty partial estimate of his obligations. If the purpose for existence was bestroked & enabled by all the means of grace. It was not for the man by that God sent his Son an expiation of love & restored our awful race; it was not for this merely that the glorious discoveries of revelation were promulgated & confirmed by the sufferings of that Merciful & truth. No, it was to supply a class of motives, that would make true morality different from every other morality; it was to stamp a peculiar & action on the whole of our conduct & make it distinct from other actions; it was to connect time with eternity, man with God. This though a doctrine will triumph in the abuse of them glorious truths: this is not the fault of religion, but of indifference to it; religion is so deep more intimate, the framed constitution of man, that he will ever have his thoughts & affections employed about something, that he calls by that name. But the most effective mode of bearing our testimony against superstition is not by discarding religion altogether, but by contending earnestly for its simplicity & native beauty, protecting him in the front of the God. I remember that we can increase so effectually serve our neighbour, or our friend, or country so manfully, as by serving with purity of humble desire, the living true God. May 1822.
At home, May 19th, 1822, forenoon.
At home, May 18th, 1828, afternoon. regaining.