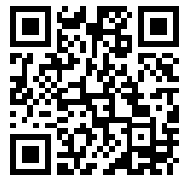

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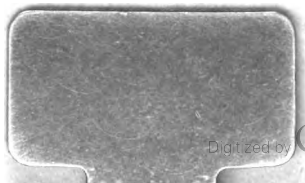
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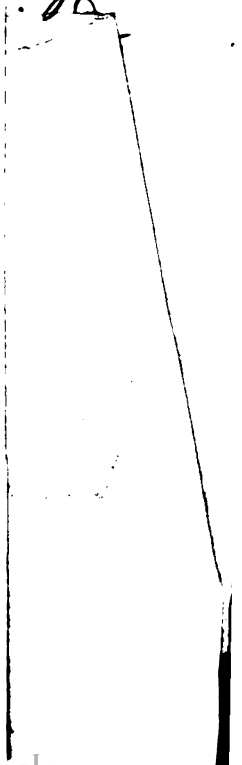
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POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF

ROBERT ROBINSON,

LATE PASTOR OF THE

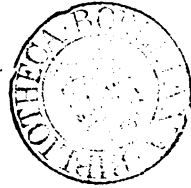
BAPTIST CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS,

AT

CAMBRIDGE.



By these, he being dead, yet speaketh.

HEBREWS.

HARLOW :

PRINTED BY B. FLOWER :

FOR M. JONES, NEWGATE STREET ; D. EATON, HOLBORN ; JOSIAH
CONDER, BUCKLERSBURY ; AND J. DRIGTON, CAMBRIDGE.

1812.

141. 2. 407.

P R E F A C E .

SINCE the publication of the late Mr. ROBINSON'S MISCELLANEOUS WORKS, several other pieces of the same writer have been put into my hands; and I doubt not but those which I have selected for the present volume, will prove acceptable to all those who know the value of the author's writings in general.

Five of the DISCOURSES out of the seven now first published, appear to have been preached at different places; three of them I had the pleasure of hearing in London. They were all preached during the years 1779, 80, and 81, and were taken down in short hand, and transcribed by the different writers.

The DISSERTATIONS appear to have been the first part only of a work projected by the author: the original title of the manuscript is—AN ESSAY ON MODERATE CALVINISM CONSIDERED AS A NARROW PATH BETWEEN TWO EXTREMES. Two of the chapters were introductory, and the author's plan comprised the discussion of certain doctrines which have occasioned much controversy in the church, commonly called—THE FIVE POINTS, viz. *Predestination, Original Sin, Particular Redemption, Irresistible Grace,* and the *Final Perseverance of the Saints*: but he proceeded no farther than the first POINT; a circumstance

which will be regretted by all those who, like the editor, are of opinion that he has treated this important point, *rationaly, scripturally*, and what controvertists on this and on other theological subjects have too little considered—*practically*. The mere philosophical inquirer will probably be disappointed, because our author did not go out of his depth, by attempting to comprehend all the *circumstances* respecting an important, instructive and consolatory scripture doctrine, revealed, not for the purpose of speculation, but of practice.

The Manuscript from which the DISSERTATIONS is printed, was fairly written from the author's copy, and has for many years been in the possession of my respected friend Mr. Coxe Feary, pastor of the Baptist church and congregation at Bluntisham, Huntingdonshire; who, to use his own language in a letter to the editor, "always esteemed the friendship of Mr. Robinson a favour, and at all times ranked amongst his warmest admirers." Mr. Feary is of opinion, that this piece was written by Mr. Robinson in the early part of his ministry; which opinion is confirmed by internal evidence. In the various quotations from the Sermons of Saurin, the reader is uniformly referred to the original in twelve volumes, which certainly would not have been the case, had the author published his translation, and which I have followed as superior to that in the manuscript alluded to. The first volume of the translation of Saurin was published in 1775.

The task of preparing these manuscripts for the press has not been without its difficulties; but notwithstanding the attention I have bestowed, the reader will evidently perceive the disadvantage of their not receiving the corrections of the author. All the **SERMONS** were preached extempore; and the best short hand writers are, I presume, liable to inaccuracies. The **DISSERTATIONS** it is evident were never corrected for the press: I have therefore endeavoured to discharge a debt of justice due to the memory of the author; and whatever deficiencies have attended my part, I can assure the reader, integrity has been my constant guide. I have not presumed to abridge, correct, or illustrate a single paragraph, which judging to the best of my abilities, would not have so far received the approbation of the author, had he been living, although his suggestions would doubtless have been considerable improvements: but whatever imperfections may be attributed to the editor, the volume now presented to the public contains treasures, which it would have been injustice to the memory of the author, and to the cause of truth, and virtue, to have suffered to remain hidden.

The **HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE PROTESTANT DISSENTING CHURCHES IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**, the latter part of which was written by the late Rev. Josiah Thompson, was sent by Mr. Robinson's venerable friend, the Rev. Dr. Toulmin of Birmingham, to the *Monthly Repository*, and inserted in the Supplementary number of the fifth volume of that respectable, and (alas! that so

very few theological publications should deserve the epithet) *impartial* publication. The letters to the doctor were inserted in the fourth volume of the same work. The letters to the Rev. Dan Taylor were first inserted in the numbers of the *General Baptist Repository* for March and April 1808, and afterwards in the *Monthly Repository*. Under this article I am confident every reader will join with me in exceedingly regretting that a large collection of Mr. Robinson's letters, written to one of his most intimate friends, many of which, a competent judge assured me, were written on experimental and practical subjects of divinity, in the writer's best style, and which I was promised the perusal and the selection of, should have been mislaid, or lent to some one who has been so careless, or rather so unjust as not to return them. Every search and inquiry after them has hitherto proved fruitless.

I have to request the reader, whilst attending to the contents of this volume, to bear in mind the dates I have mentioned, as he may be the better enabled to judge of the unjust, and unchristian efforts of those persons who during the life time of the author slandered his character, and who since his death have insulted his memory. From a perusal of the following pages, and comparing them with his later writings, it is evident;—That the alteration of his opinions on certain human explanations of scripture doctrines were, comparatively speaking, trivial;—that in the zenith of his popularity even with those who arrogate to themselves

the appellation of *orthodox*, he preached and inculcated those supposed heresies for which he was so plentifully reviled, by the ministers of his own denomination more particularly ;—that during the period alluded to, he publicly declared his disbelief of the commonly received doctrine of the *Trinity* ;—that he thought with the reformers LUTHER and CALVIN, that “ the word *Trinity* was “ a barbarous, popish word,” which had produced much evil in the christian church; and—that he “ ever held,” as he expresses himself in a letter to Mr. Dan Taylor,* the opinion of the *innocency of involuntary mental error* ; a truth, I will venture to affirm, which marks the distinguishing characteristic of the *righteous judge of all the earth*, from the weak, arbitrary, merciless despot. On the unworthy treatment our author met with in his life time, I have enlarged in the *Memoirs* prefixed to his *Miscellaneous Works* : of the slander cast on his writings since his death, I think it right to mention one instance, as it was vented in the most public manner before a numerous congregation at the Baptist association in the county of Essex. The preacher after warning his audience against heresy, which he informed them was widely spreading amongst the Baptists, not only in that but other districts ;—after misrepresenting and insulting the minister and congregation in whose pulpit he was unworthily officiating,—so unworthily as to compel the former, immediately on the conclusion of the discourse, to animadvert, al-

* See page 301.

though in the most candid manner on the unfounded charges;—the preacher had the effrontery to add, that this spread of heresy was to be attributed at least in part, “to the industry with which the *poison* of the late Mr. Robinson’s writings had been circulated!” As this calumniator is well known to be as miserably deficient in abilities both natural and acquired, as he is ignorant of the nature and spirit of genuine christianity, the exposure of his name would be making him of too much consequence. It is hoped, however, that the occurrence related will operate as a warning to our dissenting associations, how they appoint preachers on public occasions, who are so little calculated to do honour to their respective denominations, or to the christian ministry.*

* About the same time, the preacher above mentioned made a most indecent attack on the character of a neighbouring minister, with whom he had been in the habits of friendship, in whose pulpit he was engaged in carrying on a lecture with him, and also in a neighbouring village. With all the arrogance of a petty dissenting *pope*, he sent his friend word, that on account of “his awful departure from the truth,” he renounced all connection with him, and would no longer preach in his pulpit; nor in the other pulpit so long as he (his associate hitherto) was engaged. The consequence was, that the persons who had the property of the place of worship, in which the neighbouring lecture was carried on, were weak enough to resign their own liberty, to exclude the minister who had endured much persecution from a high church party, and who was the principal instrument in raising the congregation, and to make his *brother* hitherto, *lord bishop* of the barn and the pulpit! Should it be inquired—What were the dreadful *heresies* which excited this furious zeal? They were, rea-

Were I inclined to inflict on the revilers of Mr. Robinson's writings the chastisement they so justly merit, the apologies so charitably suggested

der, simply as follow ;—the opinions, expressed in a friendly conversation in a parlour, that the “ eternal generation of the Son,” had no foundation in scripture ; and that the phrase “ Son of God,” was applied to him only in his character as the Messiah ; points concerning which I need not inform any reader at all acquainted with the controversies on these subjects, that divines of equally established reputation for what is called orthodoxy, have differed without suffering their christian friendship for each other to be diminished : the late Mr. Romaine whose orthodoxy I suppose no one will dispute, thought the opinion of the “ eternal generation of the Son,” struck at the doctrine of his divinity ; and indeed the phrase *eternal generation*, (if it be in itself intelligible) must imply *eternal inferiority*. Such was the “ awful departure from the “ truth” which raised such a terrible outcry ! This same person I have heard in a sermon revile a whole sect of christians, amongst whom have shone so many great and good men, under the phrase—“ The *abominable Arminians !*”—I have likewise so far attracted his notice as to be posted for a *Socinian !* His only possible excuse for such misrepresentation and reviling, must be his total ignorance of the peculiar tenets of each of the sects alluded to. I sincerely wish this plea of ignorance may serve for others ; but it certainly requires the utmost stretch of christian charity to suppose that the cry of heresy, and in particular that of “ Socinianism” is not at times excited, for the dishonest and wicked purpose of injuring the character and hindering the usefulness of men, with whom it is hoped, the excitors have the modesty to shrink from a comparison for talents and virtues. Those whose observation and experience have made them acquainted with the mischievous effects of the wretched arts I have thus noticed will not think this note too long ; but will readily join me in lamenting, that instead of leading people out of their prejudices and enforcing on them the importance of thinking for themselves, and

by our author for persons of a certain description in his day, would tend in great measure, if not wholly to subdue such inclination. "If a man," he observes, "has no natural talents; if he be no thing but a bundle of sheer boobyism;—blubber for orthodoxy he may, but criticise a sentence he cannot; and if his temper were as soft as his brains I should hold him innocent The idiotism of some men is, in my eye, the seal of their salvation."*—There are however, I should hope, no persons so ignorant of the very first principles of reason and religion, as not to deem it their duty to acquire minds open to conviction, and to

drawing their sentiments from the pure word of God *only*, it seems to be the labour of some teachers to confirm those prejudices, and to rivet those chains which a confined mode of education, and an attachment to human creeds have forged for them. The consequence of this sad conduct is—That whilst the utmost jealousy is excited respecting speculative opinions, too little regard is paid to christian morality. It is notorious, that some of our most famous orthodox ministers, have rendered themselves equally *famous* for the vices of *slander* and *falsehood*; and although they may have been even convicted in a court of justice of these vices, which the gospel pronounces an equal disqualification for entering the kingdom of heaven, with those of any other description, and no signs of repentance have been manifested, are almost equally followed by the laity, and associated with, encouraged, and flattered by the most *orthodox* of the *sacred order*!—Would to God that the christian world would attend to the hint of that great divine, and excellent christian, SAURIN, who in one of his sermons expresses his wish, that instead of the usual anathemas against heresies in *doctrine*, might be hurled, anathemas against heresies in *practice*!

* See page 802. Also Miscel. Works, Vol. IV. p. 105.

endeavour to grow wiser.—It is my sincere prayer, that God would in his mercy grant to all who have unwittingly converted *manna* into *poison*, repentance and forgiveness, lead them to the *knowledge of the truth*, and give them *the spirit of wisdom and of a sound mind*.—*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.**

* I hope it will not give any great offence even to the reviewers of Mr. Robinson's writings, when I inform them of one *dose* of his "poison" which I begun the year with administering to myself and family, and of my intention to continue the practice to the last day of my life. In plainer language, I have pursued the following plan recommended in his inestimable and inimitable *Village Sermons*. (P. 407.)

"We suppose a good man's memory to be well furnished with scripture, and for this purpose we have often advised young people to get by heart every night, the last thing they do before they go to rest, one verse, to think of it till they drop asleep, and in the morning when they wake, that verse will probably be the first thought. This will always afford a subject for a morning meditation, and the practice continued for seven years will fill and enrich the mind with the word of God. A great advantage through life, and doubled when along with old age, dimness of sight, or blindness comes, so that however desirous we cannot then read the holy book."

I have already experienced the happy effects of this plan, *first*, on my two daughters, the one seven, the other nine years old, who after following the practice, a few weeks, naturally ask me for a text every evening on retiring to rest, and as naturally repeat it to me on their first salutation every morning: and *secondly*, on myself, who find this method an additional support in what I have felt to be, in the most forcible sense, since the loss of the ornament of her sex, the most amiable, excellent, and best of wives,—*The house of my pilgrimage*.

To those who are acquainted, and have entered into the spirit of our author's writings, little need be said in commendation of the contents of the present volume. The same beauty and simplicity of style ; the same ingenious, yet plain and forcible mode of reasoning ; the same ardour in the cause of liberty civil and religious, and of uncorrupted christianity ; the same impartiality and sincerity in the pursuit of truth, and the same devotional spirit which are the characteristics of his former writings, will be found to characterize this volume. Very few authors have so blended instruction with entertainment, more especially on controversial subjects. The encomium passed on the writings of Dr. Jortin by the late Archdeacon Blackburne, may with equal justice be adopted in the present instance.—“ Let the historian praise his candour in expressing his diffidence in a manner which shews, that he did not desire his interpretations of the texts he builds upon should pass for infallibilities. Would to God I had the talents to perpetuate the rest of his excellencies to the latest posterity. But he rests from his labours, and heareth not the voice of the oppressor nor the petulant scorner. His works will sufficiently speak for him, while there any remains of piety, learning and good sense among the sons of Britain, and will follow him to those mansions, where neither envy, malevolence, nor the dogmatical arrogance of ignorant, supercilious criticism, will deprive him of his reward.” In short, the same learned writer formed a just

opinion of our author, when recommending some of his "excellent" tracts, he styles him, "one of the ablest and honestest writers in the kingdom."*

It is my sincere wish that every reader may experience similar pleasure and profit to what I have experienced in the frequent perusal of Mr. Robinson's works. That I so often conversed with him in the parlour, heard him in the pulpit, and that since his death I have so familiarised myself with his writings, I reckon amongst the peculiar advantages and felicities of my life; and it will I am persuaded, for the remainder of my days and on my dying pillow, be a source of satisfaction to reflect, that I have in some degree been instrumental in preserving, and extending the circulation of his writings, and in perpetuating his memory. The task ought to have been performed by some one more competent; but I trust these *labours of love*, for the welfare of my fellow creatures, and fellow christians will meet with the candour, and approbation of good men of all descriptions; and above all, that they will be accepted by the great head of the church, who has declared his approbation of the humble offering of one who *did what she could*, and graciously promised that even the *cup of cold water* shall in no wise lose its reward.

Harlow, March 30, 1812.

B. F.

* Works Theological and Miscellaneous, by Francis Blackburne, L.L.B. Vol. I. Memoirs, p. cxxxvi. and Vol. III. p. 532.

Lately published.

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SERMONS

ON

VARIOUS OCCASIONS.

SERMON I.

THE PROMISE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.



ISAIAH xliv. 3. (Middle clause.)

I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.

ONE of the finest notions, Christians, you can form, and at the same time one of the most just concerning religion, is that of an intercourse or communion between God and man. Vast as is the distance between heaven, the habitation of God, (if it be proper to speak of God as having a habitation peculiar to himself,) and earth, the dwelling place of man; wonderful as is the difference between the highest and the lowest nature; and amazing as is that contrast which sin has made between God and us; yet it is a certain fact, that God speaks in Scripture to us, and allows us the honour and the pleasure of addressing him again. God so speaks in scripture to us as to convince us that he does speak as our Saviour. Christ said, *My sheep know my voice.* It has certain characters that distinguish it from all other speeches in the world. Now one of these characters is this:—God speaks of things to come; it is peculiar to him to do so. The prudence of man may

indeed go a little way into futurity and conjecture; but where is the man in this world that can stand up and conjecture, and upon that principle describe the condition of this country a thousand years hence? Yet this is what God by his prophet has done, and we have instances of prophecies given out four thousand years ago, which are now fulfilling in the world. Now this is a character of the voice of God;—he *speaks of things to come.*

It is not to be supposed that I should enter largely into this subject; our time will not admit of it. I have chosen one simple clause, or, if you will allow the metaphor, one star out of a large constellation, a great cluster; for you see by reading the chapter, that this is only one clause in the midst of several, all which form a brightness and beauty worthy the attention of an angel.

What is it this God says? Does he say he will give the Jews successors? He says more. Does he say their children shall have sense, reason? He says more: *I will pour my Spirit upon them.* But have we any share in this promise, is the important question? This question is expressly answered in the New Testament. We are told, *The blessing of Abraham is come upon the gentiles; that God is the God of the gentiles as well as the Jews;* and that at the fall of the Jewish church, the treasures of that church were transferred to the gentiles, and their fall is the riches of the world. Entered then upon all the *exceeding great and precious promises* of God, and unable to range

through them all, let us this evening look at this one: We will endeavour to think of it in three different lights. We will—

First. Consider our text as a PROPHECY; *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed*; that is, upon the church, for that is the plain meaning.

Secondly. As a CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE; and we will enquire what the promise contains,—*I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.* And

Thirdly. As a MORAL SENTENCE, and enquire what obligations go with the promise?

First. Let us remember, christians, the text is a PROPHECY. It is a sentence foreshewing things to come; and consequently if we compare history with prophecy, and find the event to answer what was foretold, we carry with us a grand light, or to speak more plainly, we obtain one clear, full proof that our religion is divine, that we have it from above, from the *father of lights*. I do not know how it may be with you, brethren, but in my opinion, the christian ought to have full, clear, sufficient proof;—proof sufficient to satisfy himself in his coolest moments of the divinity of his religion. The religion of the Bible calls us to embrace such hopes, calls us to such objects of hope, calls us to give up objects so dear to us in this life, to part with so much, and to expect so much more, that we ought to have good evidence that the call comes from above. Now we obtain this by observing that *prophecy* is one of the pillars on which christianity rests, and will stand for ever. Let us examine the subject.

Is it not matter of fact, that at a certain period of time there rises up in Judea that extraordinary person, Jesus; and that Jesus was a person inspired with a spirit of wisdom, justice and goodness more than human? Is not there a certain extension of thought, majesty of expression; in a word, a certain divinity in all he said and did, that every where proved that he came from God? After Jesus Christ's ascension to heaven, is it not matter of fact that, according to his promise, at a certain time, there came a visible sign, and with it an amazing degree, more than human, of wisdom, goodness, benevolence, disinterestedness, which we should never have looked for amongst the Jews? They were the last of all people in whom we should have expected this disposition. Was it not remarkable that, in a very extraordinary manner, the apostles of Christ were inspired with this spirit, and diffused it through all the world? If they were confined in prison, they wrote, and their word came down with a certain clearness, force and excellency into the hands and hearts of thousands to this day; which makes out what my text speaks, *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.* *Prophecy*, or the foretelling of future events, I repeat, is one mark of God's speaking; and *history*, or the accomplishing of these events, is one way of obtaining clear evidence that it is God who speaks. So if I can find out that what the Bible foretold long before I was born, is actually now taking place, in vain the tempter, the

world, ten thousand worlds can attempt to cheat me of my Bible : I am sure it is divine.

In a number of other instances we might exemplify this head; but there is one that seems particularly to proclaim its divinity, and I select it because it belongs to every christian. The work of religion upon every christian we say carries with it a mark of its divinity; for the meaning of this prophetic language is—I will maintain true religion in the disciples of Christ to the end of time. Now the first part of religion with which a sinful man becomes acquainted is, *Reproof*.—*Reproof!*—What does that produce? Pain; conviction of guilt, and consequently pain. And is it natural for a man to follow pain, or avoid it? Who does not know that to avoid it is the natural way; and that we no sooner discover any thing in every other case that gives us pain, than we draw back from it, and will not come near it again. But here is a case, when the *sword* of the divine Spirit, the word of God, touches the sinner, the sinner is found not to draw back, but to come towards it. For do not we know the desire of every upright man is that his soul may be searched? His desire when he hears the word of God is, *Search me O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Every man is endeared to him as he enters into his sad case, the real state of his soul. I call this an internal but clear evidence of the divinity of our holy religion. There is a certain

content, satisfaction, yea pleasure accompanying the pain; a certain conviction that it ought to be what it is, which may be justly termed a demonstration of its divinity. O, blessed prophecy! Although I see enough to strike me with awe, I see enough to raise in me the most lively hope.

But I must necessarily abridge this part of my subject. Every attentive mind may readily enlarge it.—Look into the sacred history of the Jews, and you cannot see a travelling Jew about the country, whose condition was not foretold four thousand years ago, and thence you will conclude that *prophecy* came from God. If you are a man of reading, and look into the state of other nations, you will find that their present condition agrees with what was prophesied concerning them many ages since. You may go further, you may look into the christian church, and you will find that its history answers to what God foretold it should be. You will find it prophesied in the book of the Revelations, that the bulk of christians should fall into vice, and that a few should maintain their profession; that those few supported by the goodness and truth of the cause, the rectitude of their hearts, and the power of the Almighty, should be able to hold out to the end. But what is of still more importance to us is our next article.

Secondly. We propose to consider this prophecy in the light of a CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE. *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed.* There is nothing perhaps upon which we want more instruction than this; for it is a very convenient and

tempting method to put to the account of God, (though it is a wicked and blasphemous one) all our follies and even vices in religion. Do men kill others for religion? *They think* (said our Saviour) *they do God service.* Do men run wild with their own fancies? It is they think the holy Spirit that inspires them. Do men go to dreams and visions? And do we wonder they stand fast in error, against all opposition? They are animated by the blessed Spirit of God! So that we hear all sorts of things put to the account of God himself. What shall we do in this case? Shall we take the method some do, deny the influence of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of those who abuse it? That would be running into an extreme.—Shall we believe all that others attribute to the Holy Spirit? That would be an extreme on the other side. We will do neither. We will endeavour to represent the operation of the Spirit in its true light; and I think three remarks will be sufficient for the purpose.

1, The work of the Holy Spirit *must be consistent with the nature of that Spirit.* Consequently it must be a wise, just, powerful, good and righteous work. If the Holy Spirit is just, his work must be just; consequently I have a right to look for conviction, pain and remorse in sinful man. It is just and right he should be sorry, for he has done great injury to himself, hurt to others, and offered great affront to God. I look upon the work of the Spirit to be genuine virtue, because the Spirit who works in the heart of a christian,

is a holy being; and I have a right to expect if a man professes to have the Spirit of God, that he be a genuine lover of holiness; that without any collusion sin is a burthen to him; that he does not only hate it, when the world hates him for it, when it is contrary to his interest in any shape, but that he hates it as sin. He loves holiness; it becomes in this case natural to him. I expect also to see a certain power accompanying the work, because the Spirit of God is Almighty. I do not expect to see religion hang lightly and loosely upon the surface of such a man's mind; I expect to see it go into the very soul of him. The Spirit is omnipotent, his work must be like himself, and as he, the God of nature *spoke, and it was done; commanded and it stood fast*; so it is in the conversion of a sinner; for he is still the same being. If he speaks trouble, it will not be in the power of any thing to give peace. If he speaks peace, it will not be in the power of any thing to give trouble.—We expect that this work should be a wise work. Not that it should have dreams, visions, fancies and flights; they are fit only for children; but that it should carry along with it all those marks of grave, judicious knowledge, all those marks of skill and insight into the nature of things that we have a right to expect from such a being. It is a wise, good, just work. And the same may be said of all the other attributes of God.

2. Again:—The work of the Spirit upon the heart, *must be fitted to the persons wrought upon; that is, to men.* I do not know what ideas we

form of the work of the Spirit ; but if the Spirit means to work upon man, the work must certainly be fitted to his nature, or it would defeat itself. We do not expect conviction can be a work of mechanism, and that men should be driven into it as sheep into their pastures ; we expect it should be a reasonable work, convincing the understanding ; a work that offers no force, but yet carries away the will ; that does not extinguish the passions, but governs them all. A work that affects the conscience ; not too much, for that would kill ; not too little, for that would not benefit. When I look into the Scripture reproofs by which the Spirit speaks to man, I find he treats him frankly, (if you will allow me the expression) he does not make any circumlocutions, nor does he make any apologies ; but takes up a clear case, convicts the sinner of sin, and carries the word home to his heart with strong reproofs and remorse. Sometimes God touches the sinner by a sense of interest, and he reproaches himself for his folly. Sometimes by his affections : he is pierced to the heart with the reflection that he has neglected the best interests of his dear children. Sometimes a sense of obligation tells him what he owes to his great benefactor, and reproaches him with not paying him suitable returns of gratitude for his mercies ; consciousness of ingratitude humbles him to the dust. But in all cases the language of the Holy Spirit is not that weak, unprofitable way of conviction which is only fit for children ; but that which marks the wisdom of the speaker, because

it is fitted to the nature of man. And yet, O God, how dost thou guard us against despair! I hear enough to bring down the stoutest heart, and yet not enough to make the most timid creature despond. There is so much mercy and goodness that people are not afraid of falling into the hand of the reprover: the wise parent by every stroke brings the child nearer and nearer to himself, agreeably to the language of the prophet Jeremiah, *Is Ephraim my dear son; is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still.* What love him, and yet reproach him? Yes;—*My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him.* Now I call this treating us like men and not like babes; like men and not like devils. What is there, christians, in revealed religion, inconsistent with your nature as a man? Has God any where in Scripture required any thing that should sink or degrade your nature? Has he any where required any thing that implies natural ability more than human? In a word, does not christianity appear to be made on purpose for man; on purpose for a reasoning man; on purpose for a conscientious man; on purpose for a living man; on purpose for a fearful man; on purpose for a man that can hope; a man that can enjoy; a man that can mourn? Every where,—every where, I see it is a religion fitted to man.

3. Once more.—As the work of the Spirit is to be considered as consistent with the nature of man, so also it is exactly *conformable to the written*

word. When we talk of the Spirit, I am afraid we often misunderstand ourselves, and imagine the Spirit of God is to reveal or do something for us without the scripture, or more than scripture warrants. The great principle of protestantism is the sufficiency and perfection of scripture; and the work of the Spirit in conversion is not to reveal any new truths, but only to impress old truths and old motives upon the heart. What is it you are afraid of when you read the threatenings of your Bible? Of hell, say you. And why did not you fear it when you read them at school? Why not when you were twenty or thirty years old? You can give no reason for it but this:—The doctrine of future punishment lay in your bible, but you did not attend to it. Now the work of the Holy Spirit was to give that part of divine truth such a witness in your eye, and so fix your attention, that you should fear, and then the truth of the book entered into your mind. The same may be said of all the other doctrines of scripture; they are conformable to the Holy Spirit. Indeed we may say, the work of the Spirit is the scripture set home upon the heart.

We have thus briefly illustrated the *doctrine* contained in the text. We proceed to consider—

Thirdly. THE MORAL OBLIGATION therein implied.

Hear what God says concerning you, christians:—*I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed; and ask, what ought I in truth, in conscience, to reply to God, who speaks thus to me? Suppose*

yourself a christian minister : when you are studying in private what part of divine truth you shall speak of, and how you shall treat it, so as to produce the edification of your hearers, you think you hear God promising his Spirit shall be with his servants, *even to the end of the world*. Do you think it will be proper to say, you expect the fulfilment of this promise, without reading, without meditation, without prayer? You expect to be wise without studying the scriptures ! You expect to be warm and animated without maintaining communion with God in prayer ! No, my brethren, every man must perceive that this would be an insult upon him who spake these words ; for is it not the tendency of the promise to bring the man upon his knees, and say, Lord, fulfil these words to me ! Does it not excite the servant of God to take up the book and read, because there he sees his will clearly revealed ? And so likewise of every other christian. The promise requires us to use all the appointed means, and thus wait for the accomplishment of a blessing so desirable.

Let us improve the subject.

1. For the *confirmation of our faith*.—When we take a review of the state of religion in the world, and even in this nation of professing christians, we are apt to be discouraged ; and to complain of the very partial and limited influence of true christianity ; of abounding ignorance, error, and vice ; and that truth, righteousness, and virtue, are rarely to be found. This proves the

source of great grief, and well it may. *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes*, says the *Psalmist*, *because men keep not thy law*. Who could bear to go through a kingdom distinguished as this is by favours from heaven, and hear God and his gospel despised and blasphemed: sometimes his name, sometimes his Son, sometimes his ordinances, and more especially on his own day: his faithful servants despised, insulted, and ill treated. Who could bear to make an enumeration of the families who maintain the appearance of religion in family prayer, and compare the number with those who do not *call upon God's name*? Who could bear this view of things? Amongst the hundreds and thousands of the different ranks and classes of our countrymen throughout the kingdom, ask that mortifying question—What are the objects of their pursuit? And you will find this man eager in the pursuit of wealth, that of pleasure, another of the gratification of some guilty passion, lust, revenge, and so on. O! of how few can it be said—they are seeking after the knowledge of God and the practice of virtue! An impartial view of the state of religion amongst us is so discouraging, that were it not for the consolation of the scriptures, we should be apt to despair, and think that the spirit of piety, sunk to such a degree, would soon be gone. But, no, elevate your minds, christians, and lay hold on the consolation your religion affords you. The God who gave it you told you he would take care of its interests to the end of time, and that his Holy Spirit should be the

same to the christian system as the soul to the body. Upon this truth we live, upon this we labour, upon this we believe that christianity always must have disciples, and that the time will come when it will have more disciples than ever; that the gospel shall have *free course, run and be glorified*. It is not that we expect any thing effectual from learning; that may have a glory; nor even from universal benevolence; that must have a greater glory; but the glory of the extensive, the general diffusion of the gospel, is sacred to God. The grand promise is contained in the text.—*I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed*, that is, I will give the spirit of this book to christians, ministers, and people.

2. Let us examine—*What is the spirit of the gospel?*—A spirit of *truth*, and to men who live in sin, a cutting truth. Take,—take it if you love your own safety; take the spirit of the book, and although it speaks against every false way, and your false way amongst the rest, nevertheless admit it; though a painful it is a salutary visitor. It will bring you pain at the beginning, but pleasure in the end. It is a spirit of *truth*, a spirit of *piety*, a spirit of *benevolence*. O God! Give us to imbibe the spirit of this religion; we shall then believe the gospel, and imitate the example of *Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*: we shall enter into the spirit of what the prophet says in the words following our text:—*One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his*

hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel. We shall then heartily join the christian church; we shall pray with the people of God; converse with the people of God; read the scriptures with the people of God; worship with the people of God; live with, and be happy with that blessed people whose God is the Lord, for ever and ever; and all in virtue of this promise:—I will pour my spirit upon thy seed. Amen.

SERMON II.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE GOSPEL.

MALACHI iv. 2.

But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings, and ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall.

THIS Prophecy which it pleased God by the prophet Malachi to give the old Jewish church, exhibits to our view a variety of beauties, many of which, well worthy our accurate observation in our retired hours, I am this evening under the necessity of passing over.

Considered as a piece of writing this prophecy contains very fine and beautiful imagery. There is something very expressive in calling a man a *sun*; there is something more expressive in ascribing to this sun *wings*; and more still in causing *health* to be universally diffused by virtue of his influence.—Considered as the writing of a Jew, there is something very picturesque, historical and expressive of that peculiar country, in the figurative language of the last clause:—*Ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* This is not a British phrase, remember: every country has its

idiom, and the beauty of an idiom, is taken from its conformity to known facts: that was the case with this phrase,—*Ye shall go forth and grow up as calves of the stall*; the propriety, force, and beauty of which was well understood and felt by the Jewish church. Considered as a prophecy it is a very clear one of the rising of some eminent person of the nation to whom it was addressed; and I think if *righteousness*, a righteousness beneficial to all the world be the character of the man, there is no person in all the history of the Jews that could lay the least claim to it, except he whose claim is universally allowed, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But amidst a number of observations of this kind, which are all just and all useful, I confine myself to night to one,—the *principle* of the text; because that must be of most importance to this congregation which is most likely to make for all our edification. Now the subject to which we shall beg leave to call your attention is THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE GOSPEL.—*And unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of RIGHTEOUSNESS arise with healing in his wings.*

Methinks I hear the conscience of some one, muttering within the bosom, “A *righteous* gospel! and what have I to do with a *righteous* gospel? A *gracious* gospel I love.”—Do you mean, conscience, (speaking to your own master I mean,) do you mean a gospel kind and gentle, which will wink at your disobedience, and forgive.

your sins without repentance? Is that the sort of gospel? Ah! that is not the gospel of this book; that is a gospel of your own. The gospel of this book is kind, and much kinder than you can conceive; but then it is just; and could you love it if it were not so?—Come let us enter upon the matter. It was righteousness in God which determined him to make us a present of the gospel of his grace. I say it was a just and righteous action in God to bestow on us the gospel of grace.

Here, my brethren, I again feel what I said to you when I began: the subject is great, very great, so great that I am afraid of your patience should I only enter briefly on each part of it. I was going to say that it was a justice which the great God owed to his own glory, to give mankind a full display of that glory. You know, one of the prophets expresses himself when speaking of the works of nature thus: he says, there was in the works of nature a *hiding of his power*. And, strictly speaking, all the works of creation are but a concealment rather than a display of the infinite excellencies of God. It was necessary in order to give mankind a full idea of that great Spirit that governs the world, to do some work that should display more wisdom, more tenderness, more purity, more justice; that is to say, that should carry the same perfections that are seen in nature, further; and bring them more home to the bosoms and business of mankind, and that is what the gospel does. Righteousness therefore, justice therefore, is the great principle on

which God was pleased to bestow Christ and the gospel.

Again :—The great person, the subject of this prophecy displays, in his own person, the **RIGHT-
OUSNESS OF THE GOSPEL**. Of this we are to judge by his history, fairly written; without any sophistry or art, and on which the writers have not, lest you should suspect their fairness, impartiality or integrity, bestowed any colouring. The prophetic parts of scripture are coloured highly; they ought to be, in order to call men's attention. The poetical parts of scripture are coloured highly; they ought to be, they are intended to fire the soul with religious passions. The typical parts of scripture are coloured highly; they ought to be, it was a lesson for children, for the church in its minority, for as the Apostle Paul says, the Jewish church consisted of minors, persons under age. It was necessary they should have a *lesson*, (forgive my plainness) and a *picture* above it, that so both might carry instruction into their minds. But when the evangelists came to write of Jesus Christ there was nothing of all this; no colouring, but only a history in as few words and as plain as might be. It was enough for the evangelists that their words were true.—Thus they write their history. *In those days came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea; and saying, repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* Thus they write of the birth of Christ. *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise; when as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they*

came together, she was found with child by the Holy Ghost.—Thus they write of his death:—*And they crucified him there between two thieves, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, Were they indifferent and cold? No, but they were, as historians ought to be, deliberate. Fully persuaded of the truth of the facts, they were concerned about nothing but establishing that truth, They knew that if the fact entered into the judgment, and was believed as it ought to be, it would of itself fire the whole man, and carry out all the powers of his soul in holy devotion towards God.*

Now in this history, the most important in the world, you will perceive a line of rectitude run through the whole. Does Jesus Christ appear in the presence of his superiors? (I speak of magistrates, and men of rank and office;) We read of no invasion of their office, but a proper respect to their official capacities, and at the same time a just and manly declaration of his own rights. Does he appear among the ignorant? It was but right that being wise, he should instruct them; and he did so. Does he appear among the sick and wretched? It was just and right that he who could at so small an expence relieve them, should relieve them, and he did so. Observe, I do not say that there was no *mercy*, no more than I say that there was no *wisdom* in all this; I only say that the actions of our Saviour were as *just* as they were *good*; as *righteous* as they were *wise*;

and that is the point we are upon this evening. Consider—

Further. The **RIGHTEOUSNESS** of the gospel appears in the purity of the **DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.**

I have read some books, and seen some men, who have pretended to doubt the gospel; and when I come to sit down calmly and reflect,—“What is it to be doubted? You say the gospel. What do you mean? Do you doubt this,—*Whatever you would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them?* Why, there is nothing here to be doubted; you do not doubt whether Jesus Christ spoke it or no: you do not doubt whether it be a just sentiment; you do not doubt whether it be happy and pleasant for mankind to submit to this golden rule. At length I find that infidels and infidel writings have made a false statement. It is not the gospel, but it is some circumstances that accompany the gospel. For instance; I cannot make out, says one, how it comes to pass, that in the first chapter of Matthew, in the genealogy of Christ we are told that from such a one to such a one there are fourteen generations; and from such a one to such a one there are fourteen generations; and when I come to reckon up names, I can make but thirteen in one of the lists, and so on. Now, supposing that we could not supply that name; supposing that we could not answer that objection, on account of the loss of that one word, (the fault perhaps of a transcriber, perhaps no fault at all) you will say you doubt the gospel.—I defy you: you cannot

doubt the truth of the gospel, except you be a bad man or a weak man ; for by the gospel we mean *righteousness*, that righteousness that runs through the doctrine of Christ ; and of which allow me to give you an example.

Let us not start from the point. Is there, or is there not a GOD ? If there be, (and it is impossible to maintain your ground if you affirm there is not ; for then every thing about you would be a greater wonder than the nature of God himself,) if there be a God, such a worship as Jesus Christ proposed, was a just and righteous worship : for what was that worship ? It was this. Here is my soul ; Jesus Christ stands before me with all the authority of a legislator ; I listen with all the docility of a disciple, and he says to me, *Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself.* And this I call, on a subject of such importance, a little all ; a great all ; he could say no less, he need say no more ; and thus he secures my reverence and esteem for God.

Again : suppose man a social creature, naturally connected with other creatures ; we insist upon it there is a *righteousness*, a strict and perfect equity in all the religion of Jesus Christ, as it relates to that state. Would you have a *cup of cold water* that you could spare, and see a fellow creature who was in want of it, and not administer to his relief ? Would you subvert that law ? Surely no. Which of Christ's laws there-

fore, concerning your fellow creatures would you wish to erase out of the book? Those that respect the poor? Unhappy outcasts! They all look to you with tears in their eyes, and beseech you not to take away that, without which most of them must perish.—The laws that respect the ignorant and the wicked? Ah! do not take away compassion. If any men want pity, the wicked do. If any men want instruction, the ignorant do. I repeat it, there is not a word of Christ's doctrine concerning our neighbours, which can be spared.

Suppose, finally, we look into the doctrine of Christ, as it regards OURSELVES. It is but one word, and that is contained in the passage just quoted, *love your neighbour as yourself*. As you love *yourself*. And is that all? Yes, and rightly understood, it is the whole law of God concerning my own person. I ought to know the worth of my speech, and never debase it to the purposes of sin; I ought to know the worth of my reason, and never debase it to the purposes of vice; I ought to know the worth of my passions, and never to waste them on unworthy objects. I ought to know the worth of my time, of my body, and of my soul; I should weigh myself; weigh myself against a world, and accede to that doctrine of Christ, that it would *profit me nothing though I should gain the world and lose myself*; and then I should understand the doctrine of loving myself, and find that it was right and just that I should do so.

Well then, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ is seen in his gospel; and you will allow me to add one article more: the righteousness of the gospel is seen in the followers of Christ. Yes, I do not hesitate to affirm, that the righteousness of the gospel, the justice of Christ's religion, and of all the claims of the people of God is to be seen in all the gospel history, from the day that Christ went up into heaven, to this hour. Remember, when I speak of *righteousness* as it is in us, I do not mean the righteousness of angels, for that is perfect; but I mean habitual righteousness; righteousness on the whole. Will you allow of a term used in trade: I take a man on an average, and I say he has his faults, but on the whole he is a wise man; he has his weaknesses, but on the whole he is a virtuous man; he has his dark and solitary moments, and there are times when I should be unwilling to see my best friend; I should find it, perhaps, hard to maintain my love for him; but upon the whole he is a friend I would often see, and almost always see; because his general course of life, his habitual conduct is that of a wise and virtuous man.

Let us consider this righteousness as it subsists among the people of God, in a collective body; and I believe you will allow the truth of the doctrine contained in the text, and expressed in these words: *The sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings.*—For instance; the people of God, the disciples of Christ, true christians, have always claimed, what their master

taught them to claim, the liberty of reading his word, and of judging of its meaning for themselves. Brethren, is not that a righteous claim; pray would you pay a bill, without examining whether it be just? Would you subscribe your name to a petition without examining its contents? And why, since you exercise your faculties in every thing else, would you be blinded and imposed upon in your religion? I say, Christ taught his disciples to judge for themselves; he gave them the Scriptures, and said; *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life*; and remember, he did not confine his address to divines or to civil magistrates; but he spoke to the common people; *Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think—you, the common people think—ye have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me*; and therefore true christians have in all ages, from that day to this, claimed a right of judging for themselves. We call this a righteous claim. We trust we have no occasion to spend our time in proving to you that it is so.

Moreover, collective bodies of christians have claimed a right of assembling together publicly to worship, and adore God.—O! I love to read our divine master's account of his own religion, and the noble sentiments which he throws into the souls of his apostles. They were great men, but it was Christ that made them fit to be apostles. What fine sentiments!—*Ye are the salt of the earth; ye are the light of the world; ye are*

a city set on a hill ; what I have spoken to you in the ear, publish ye on the house-tops.—There was a teacher ! One who gave the people to understand that the religion he taught might be exposed to the examination of all mankind. As if he had said, lift it up ; let the schools see it, it will ere long catch their attention. Lift it up, and let civil governors examine it, and see whether they can find any thing in it prejudicial to civil society. Lift it up, and let men of commerce see it, and examine if they can discover in it any maxims of injustice. Lift it up, and let philosophers view it, and discover if they can, any false reasonings. Let the whole world try their skill upon it, their fancy and their hatred ; and you shall find it is that religion that will always maintain its own majesty, and its own authority.

Now, agreeable to this sentiment which Christ communicated to his apostles, wherever they went they assembled the people together for the purposes of social and public worship ; and from that day to this it is a claim which christians have made ; which (thanks be to God) christians in this country have found their civil governors willing to allow ; and which I trust for the glory of my country will be firmly held, and never be parted with : (supposing it were called to be parted with, of which far be the suspicion from me.) It ought to be held by us, and by our posterity to our last breath. Can any thing be more just and right than that they who partake of all the mercies of God should assemble together to bless

and praise him? Can any thing be more just and right than that people who are surrounded with wants should assemble and offer up mutual prayers to God? Can any thing be more just and right for us, than that we should instruct our children and servants publicly in the doctrines of our divine master?

I will conclude with two reflections concerning the *righteousness of the gospel*.—The one as it takes place in an individual, in a sound conversion: the other, as it tranquilizes a man, or rather as it goes with him in his last moments, and appears at the judgment seat of Christ.

Somehow or other we have a natural fondness for every thing that is our own. The question with us is not, is it just? Is it beautiful? Is it useful? But is it *mine*? For if it be mine, though it be a sinful prejudice, though it be a criminal error, though it be a sensual passion, I shall cherish it. I shall cherish it because it is mine. It has grown up with me; I loved it when I was young; I am reconciled to it; it is my meat and my drink.—When the religion that lies in this book enters into the understanding of a man, let him be as perverted and as brutal as he will, or on the contrary, let him be as sober and as decent a character as he will, I venture to affirm that the gospel will carry into his soul proofs of its own rectitude. Is he profligate and dissipated; it will reprove him till it makes his heart ache. The threatnings, the promises, the very love of the gospel will unite in producing this ef-

fect; for the substance of all the kindness of Jesus Christ will at last amount to this: it will say to the heart,—*Is this thy kindness to thy friend?*—Look at him, see what he suffered for you, and know what he invites you too; and then, ungenerous as you are, ungrateful as you are, offend him if thou canst. The righteousness of the gospel therefore always fills the man who has lived a wicked life with a just abhorrence of his own sin: he is no longer proud, lofty, presumptuous, but meek, diffident, and humble. It teaches him to repent; and though prudence may forbid his exposing his state to his dearest friend, yet nothing will stand in the way between him and his God. Sometimes when he reads in scripture the majesty and glory of God, a tear will steal down his cheek, merely from his recollecting, *this is the God that I have blasphemed!* When he hears God proclaiming his laws, and reads, *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath Day*, the tear will steal down his cheek from this thought,—the justice as well as the kindness of this law, should have wrought upon me, but I have been insensible to both.

Suppose on the other hand a man of the most decent character, and yet a stranger to the principles of christianity. There are such men; decent men without christianity! Now to such people when the gospel comes, it discovers the imperfection of all their decency, and as it were takes them aside, and says—Do not glory on account of your morality; you would have been the same if

Christ had never come into the world; you would have been the same if God had never commanded you to be moral; you are so from inclination, or education; you are not so from principles of obedience to God, or of love to Christ.

In a word, the *righteousness of the gospel* appears from that full conviction of imperfection which it carries into the bosom of every one of its disciples. My brethren, this is the reason that a good man is an amiable, humble man; a man not apt to be fierce, not given to controversy, not proud of his own dogmatical opinions. He is not one who thinks and speaks as if he were inspired, and who in all companies must be respected as if he were the oracles of God: who thinks that he has nothing to do but to consult his own judgment;—perhaps I wrong him, perhaps I should have said, his own foolish fancies and prejudices.—The good man is one who understands the gospel of Christ as a body of wisdom, in the presence of which his knowledge is all comparative folly; as a body of virtue, in the presence of which his virtue is all comparative weakness and vice; as a body of happiness, in the presence of which, his enjoyments, however just and lawful, are only the playthings of a child. I call this a well instructed christian.

Let us finish.—I said the *righteousness of the gospel* should be seen in the last moments of a christian.

We visit people sometimes in their dying moments; not that we can do any thing for them;

there is no magic in our visits; we have very little hope of people at that awful period who have lived without religion. For is *that* a time to make them reasonable christians? Is that a time to instruct men to form principles, to infer consequences, to act on well settled judgments of their own? Alas no! But my brethren, when we have visited the beds of dying persons, we have observed that the source of that exquisite misery they suffer, (and that is a time when the pains of nature should not be increased) is the recollection of past sin. O says one, my broken Sabbaths! O, says another my neglected bible! O, says another, my forgotten God! O, says another, how have I lived without the practice of religion!—What is all this? What voice is this I hear in these frightful moments? Why it is much repentance effected in a little time; which the mercy of God enables men to perform, and therefore it throws into the soul a great deal of quick recollection; a great many attentions to past follies. On the other hand, we have seen people in their dying moments, not placing their dependance for acceptance with God on what they were doing or had done, but taking pleasure in the review as proof that they were interested in Jesus Christ.—With what pleasure does a dying christian look back on a day well spent in pious, devout exercises! With what satisfaction does such an one look back on acts of kindness done to his fellow creatures! He recollects, perhaps, no new promise, but what satisfaction in the reflection—

am certain I shall find such mercy in my God, as I have shown to my fellow creatures. Was it not the voice of God that said,—*Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.*—My heart has been affected with benevolent dispositions to mankind, and I have been able to relieve many, and willing to relieve more; and now Lord I claim thy promise; now the *merciful* wants to find *mercy*.—What is this I say, but the *righteousness of the gospel*?

But the grand display of this *righteousness* will be at the last judgment. When Christ will make, not such a distinction as takes place in our world, between family and family, party and party, country and country, but the grand distinction between the *righteous and the wicked*. He shall set these on his *left hand*, and those on his *right*; and he shall say to the *righteous*, *come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*. And he shall say to the *wicked*, *depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared (not originally for you) but for the devil and his angels*.

My fellow christians, I sum up all with that fine expression in the text, and on which I wish to fasten your attention. The text has said much to us in telling us that *the sun of righteousness arises with healing in his wings*. Now remember that whenever vice tempts us, it can have no force over us, and the power of the temptation is lost if vice appear in its own colours: bad as we

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may be, we are forced to be seduced by appearances. It is not naked evil that is the object of men's pursuit, but evil under the appearance of good. Would to God that we could this evening learn this great truth, that there is nothing but **STERLING RIGHTEOUSNESS** good for us. Nothing is good for youth but rectitude; nothing is good for middle age but rectitude; nothing is good for old age but rectitude; *and as for those who turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity, but peace shall be upon Israel.*

May the blessing of God attend what has been said.

SERMON III.

THE DESTRUCTION OF ANTICHRIST.

Preached at an Association, at Tring, Herts,
June 6, 1781.

Mr. Robinson, after a short prayer, delivered the following INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE, *on the* NATURE OF DISSENTING ASSOCIATIONS.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

It is right my friends before we proceed, to give you some brief account of the meaning of associations, or why we thus meet together; and the simplest and easiest manner may be by affixing our attention to a passage of scripture. You will find the passage to which we shall at present attach our ideas, in—

2 COR. viii. 23.

Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellow helper concerning you, or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ.

The phrase, *the glory of Christ*, is equal to the glory of christianity, or the glory of Christ's religion. Now you will perceive if you look back into this chapter that this was a time of great

dearth or scarcity of provisions, and likewise of great trial and affliction. The church of Macedonia agreed to send money to the relief of the poor scattered all about in their grievous necessity. And in order to do that the church chose messengers to travel with this *grace*, that is with this gift. Now these messengers had two sorts of works: they were to go to a church and propose their case, and in all likelihood to use such arguments as were necessary to enforce their relief; and then having collected the money were to proceed on their journey and distribute it among the needy as their necessitous cases occurred. These men were called *Messengers*, and they are sometimes called *Apostles*; but are distinguished from the apostles of our Lord as the twelve are called which Christ chose. These are men that were chosen by the church to go upon any particular errand as their case required, and it is with great beauty the apostle calls them the *glory of Christ*, or the glory of christianity.— For let us suppose an assembly was convened of this sort of people, and there were there an hundred men sent from fifty churches, two from each. You would suppose these were wise and good men, and had entered with all their souls into the spirit of christianity and the work of Christ; that they made it the employment, the business of their life. Now you may further suppose a messenger from one of these churches would rise up and say, for instance, there had been one among them from some other church who had advised

them all to be circumcised, and told them it was necessary to their salvation. Well, he would represent that such church wished to take the sentiments of their brethren assembled on that doctrine, as they were of themselves undetermined how it would be right to treat this person establishing such a doctrine. Now I cannot but think that we may call this assembly the *glory* of christianity. I will suppose one among the assembly to be a man remarkable for a clear understanding; he states the case to the rest: another to be remarkable for just reasoning; that is, for perceiving the dependence of one thing on another; and so carrying on one fact to another, and reasoning from the cause to the effect, and from the effect to the cause. I take such a man to be another *glory* of christianity. Here is a third, remarkable for his courage; and he with a holy insensibility, feeling nothing at all at offending men, but fearing God only, he outs with some bold truth that ought to be known, but which others perhaps are afraid to make known: that is another *glory* of christianity. Another is remarkable for modesty, and he possesses a soft, soothing way of making the most uncomfortable truths set easy; and, have you, christians, never found some of us want this power, of making uncomfortable truths sit easy upon you? I call a man furnished with this ability the *glory* of christianity. Well, and perhaps you will see another active, lively man, that will go through as much religious work in an hour as another in a week;

such a man must have the performing of that part which the others with all their judgment, discernment, courage, or modesty cannot go through; they are a wise plodding sort of men, they are the understanding of the church; these the hands and the feet. There are other hardy men who fear neither wind nor weather; they are to travel, they are to come and report from their churches their different cases. Well, these men are a kind of constellation, a cluster of stars, they move on, some of the first, some of the second, some of the third magnitude in the sphere in which God has placed them. These men thus assembled are the glory of christianity. 1. Because they derive all their ability from Christ. 2. They derive all their authority also from the same divine leader of his people. No man shall ever persuade me but where a christian association is set up there is no dictating to conscience, no wronging of any man's property; their power is all derived from Christ; and no further than they apprehend he gives, do they pretend to assume. And then, 3. They give christianity what it ought to have, a fair trial; that is, their gifts are collected together into one body, and like rays of light collected into one point or focus, what one cannot do alone, they can do all together. Thus the apostle says if our brethren be inquired of they are the *messengers of the church*. Well,—have the churches done right? Yes, for says he, they are the *glory of christianity*. Now we apply this to the present case. Far be it from us to think we are primitive

christians; we are not fit to carry the shoes of the primitive christians : there is not a brother here that would think himself worthy to bear the name. But we have found by experience, that as we have in our own bosoms improper dispositions that often make the advice of a friend necessary; so in our churches there are disagreeable occurrences that arise, and which require the advice of other churches; we therefore agree to meet once a year, for this purpose, to hear the cases of those churches that are connected with us. If it happens to be poverty, we administer to their necessity : if it be a case of ignorance, we endeavour to assist them with our advice. Thus we call these meetings the *glory* of christianity ; and give me leave to say, we have seen, and each of us been thankful for the benefit of these associations: not only have we enjoyed the presence of God our father in them which is better than life; not only have we had the benefit of advice, but have seen real good done by them to others; and our children and our servants have gained real good to their souls from them.—Thus we have ourselves seen the *messengers of the church* to be the *glory of Christ's religion*.

[*Mr. Geard of Hitchin, in a Sermon from 1 JOHN, iv, 3. having exposed the nature and errors of Popery, Mr. Robinson delivered the following discourse.*]

We have my brethren read of a spirit in the primitive church, which wrought up at length

into what is now called popery ; and our brother has described in a just and excellent manner, the nature, the growth, and the danger of that detestable spirit.— I think, while I hear a servant of Christ introducing such a subject, I see him leading into an assembly a kind of *Nebuchadnezzar*, proclaiming, “ I am king of kings, and whosoever doth not fall down and worship the image that I shall set up shall be cast out into the fiery furnace ; for I have power to kill and power to save alive.” I cannot but think that every good christian must inquire,—Lord what is to be the end of all this ? On supposition that some of you make this inquiry, I am happy to open the oracles of God and tell you.

2 THESS. ii. 8.

Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

The Lord Jesus Christ's second coming was a favourite topic with the apostles ; but the primitive christians were at times like us ; their zeal outran their knowledge, and the good people at Thessalonica were of this sort. Fired with the doctrine of Christ's second coming, they thought it must be near, because they wished it to be so ; and it seems with this persuasion they grew cold to the common duties of life, and acted on supposition that the period of our Lord's appearance as Judge of the world was at hand. When Paul heard of this he writes to these people and says, —*We beseech you brethren, that ye be not soon*

shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. As if he had said, we so preached as to make you see it would be so, and we see him coming; but we do not mean any more than to impress the doctrine upon your mind; we do not mean that the day of the Lord is come, or will speedily arrive.—*Let no man deceive you, for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first; unless there be such a general growth of the antichristian religion, as to produce a falling away from the religion of Christ, and that man of sin be revealed; the son of perdition, who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.* You must remember that when I told you of these things I was yet with you; and now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time; for the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. This was the Roman emperor: the priest would have been prince, but the reigning prince would not let him. I told you that he who is now letting or hindering will let till he be taken away. Ah, what do you mean to kill the emperor? This was a prophecy that it was dangerous to reveal, therefore the great apostle speaks of it only in general terms. Had they revealed the whole truth on this subject, the apostles would have been cast into prison, tortured and burned. Blessed God, thy church of-

fers thee this day a tribute of praise: what a mercy that we little worms of the earth are permitted to stand as it were on an eminence, and behold distant periods, and console ourselves that though popery may reign to day, yet that the Lord shall destroy it in his own time and way! The plain meaning of my text is this:—THE DESTRUCTION OF POPERY WILL BE EFFECTED BY THE WORD AND SPIRIT OF GOD. That is the doctrine. To him therefore on that account the song will be raised, which is in the New Testament called the *Song of Moses and the Lamb*; for as the glory of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt was ascribed to *Moses*, so the deliverance out of spiritual Egypt, antichristianism shall be ascribed to the *Lamb*. Our design then is to shew, that the scriptures are, by the *word*, and *spirit*, calculated for the destruction of antichristianism. And further, to shew you what glorious weapons the great God has put into our hands. We request your attention to the holy scriptures. Where the light of revelation shines it is impossible popery can reign.

First. God appoints the *word* and *spirit* for the destruction of *antichrist* in PROPHECY. And here I will give you an instance or two.

1. In the old testament prophecy, you know when Moses came into the world and delivered a religion and finished it, and gave it to the Israelites in a book, he says,—*A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things, what-*

soever he shall say unto you : and it shall come to pass, that whosoever among you shall not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Do not imagine, he says, the religion I am going to establish is to continue for ever ; it is only for a time ; and whenever there comes a prophet from God, *like unto me*, who shall resemble me in the principal characters of my life and conduct, do not pretend any longer to perpetuate my religion, but give up to *him* ; and to the end of the world *his* commandments shall stand fast. After such a prophecy, when any one comes and says,—This religion that I am going to teach comes from a council, a succession of fathers, a succession of cardinals, a succession of popes ; we say what care we for all these ; for we have a promise from God that a *prophet should be raised up like unto Moses* : now that *prophet* is come, and there has been no succession to him commanded by God ; consequently all new laws, all new doctrines, all new penalties stand for nothing ; Christ has taken the throne, and he has left no successor ; therefore here is one *prophecy* out of many, that makes it impossible for antichrist to reign ; for it would be strange indeed if God should introduce popery into the world, such an important change, and not inform his people of it, by his prophets, as he had of other things.

That God who points out great events by his prophets, warns us of the enemies of Christ. It is remarkable that among the books that make up

the scriptures of the New Testament, there is one called the *Revelations*, a prophecy of the principal events which would take place in the world from Christ's ascension to his second coming. We are there told that the true church should be persecuted, and a false church should rise; and it is well said by a commentator on this book,—“Had the pope sat for his picture he could not have been drawn a more striking likeness.”

REV. xvii. describes this community which we call the catholic church, and which they call the *holy Roman catholic church*, under the similitude of a *woman*. You know that upon some of our coin we have upon one side of it a *woman*, *Britannia*, which used to describe the country it belonged to, *Britain*. Now in the prophecy of St. John, the Roman catholic church is represented as a *woman sitting upon seven hills*; and is further represented as an empress reigning over the kings of the earth. Observe verse 9. *The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth*. It is a city that is built on seven mountains: the city of Rome is exactly so. Further,—*The woman is that great city that reigneth over the kings of the earth*. Now where was a city that ever reigned over the earth except this?—Without making further quotations, we have here an exact picture of the church of Rome. I should blush to go through the chapter as she is there represented:—A prostitute *drunken with the wine of her fornications &c.* The apostle John stood in the primitive church as your ministers stand

amongst you; a plain man amongst a few plain people; and he knew that when he was dead a successor would arise who should be of an higher class; that he should aspire from one thing to another till he should be a prince, and the people instead of a plain, good people, should be a superstitious, wicked people; instead of worshipping in a plain house they should have a palace to worship in; instead of punctually observing the law of God they should observe a precision in the make of the priest's robe, and the cut of his sleeve. *While I beheld this*, the apostle adds, *I wondered*;—as if he had said,—Lord can any of these people become *kings* and *priests* unto thee; is it possible it can be so?—*Now the Lord shall consume him, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan*; he shall point him out so clearly, that the people shall point at him as he goes along, and say,—there he is; that is the bloody, the wicked spirit that the prophets and servants of Christ foretold, in order to guard us against his coming.

Secondly. The word of God considered as an HISTORY consumes popery, and equally cuts up the very roots of it.—My brethren if ever there were persons in the christian church that had a right to reign in it as the pope of Rome doth, assuredly Christ was the first, and inspired men the last: but did Christ ever appear in the pomp, the ceremonies and the practices of the pope? Did the apostles ever appear with the pomp and splendour of priests and cardinals? I know it is

said the apostles were all poor men and could not acquire this state; but it cannot be said so of Christ, for he could have made *stones* gold as well as *bread*: but he would not, he saw it was all folly: and I have no doubt but the apostles when they performed miracles in the world, if they had had a mind to make a gain of their power, could have made more than twice the money the church of Rome has. Were they not in one place thought *Gods*? In a word, take all the histories of religion that ever were in the world, and you will find, that from the time God gave a revelation to Adam, to the present time, we have no information of men's coming to instruct mankind in the manner the catholic church came: for how do they come? With the the mystery of iniquity, with *the working of satan, with the workings of his mouth*. What, by telling lies? Yes. And is that the way to instruct mankind? With the workings of his eyes sparkling with rage and ready to consume a whole country if they believe not in him!—Do they come with the workings of his hands? Yes, for give satan the hand and what does he do? He teaches it to rob, to steal, and to kill. So the apostle here considers satan as the soul of the man of sin, and looks upon him as a sort of machine that the devil works in words, in looks, in actions. Now there never was such a power revealed to instruct mankind. Christ's religion is plain, without mystery; soft and easy without anger and passion; all generous and free without persecuting, or cruel laws for

its support. If you turn over the history of scripture and consider the character of these false prophets, you will find it exactly answering to this description of antichrist. Who prevailed at the court of Pharaoh? Magicians, long headed, cunning, subtle men, that waited about the throne, that would run the risk of being damned for his service. You will find them in the false prophets of Jezebel, four hundred prophets: (a glorious number!) it is not said that they instructed, they prayed, but that they eat at her table; they were gluttons: the same may be said of false prophets now; they are dead to the wants of all mankind; dead to every just action, and lovers only of themselves. Let us go on to the time of Christ, and look at the makers of *long prayers*, the *tithers of mint and cummin*; look at those who delighted to be *seen of men* in all their religious services, *standing in the market places, and being called rabbi, rabbi.*—*History* may be justly considered as a standing protest against popery; and *scripture history* in particular, is one edge of that sword by which God will destroy the man of sin, one branch of that fire by which God will destroy the spirit and power of it.

Thirdly. The DOCTRINES of scripture *consume* popery. The shortness of my time obliges me to abridge many things of importance under this head; but I recollect a few remarks of Dr. Grosvenor's on a passage in the Revelations too suitable for our purpose to be omitted. *I saw* says the inspired prophet, *the woman drunken with*

the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus!—"Drunken! Yes; and she "gives this proof of her being intoxicated; she "talks nonsense. There is the nonsense of transubstantiation; it is bread, and yet it is actually "flesh; it is wine, and yet it is actually blood: "there is the nonsense of purgatory; the soul is "in hell, and yet it is not in hell; it is in heaven, and yet next door to hell." There is a great deal of truth in these observations; and they may be still more extensively applied. Who but a person intoxicated with pride would assume the character of a lord priest, and say priestcraft is a doctrine of scripture? What but a mind intoxicated with revenge would come to put a sword in the hand of every priest to destroy the flock; a flock for whom Christ shed his precious blood? What but a mind intoxicated with vice could imagine that Jesus Christ's doctrines encouraged sin, and allowed of absolution from sin by giving a little money?

But how do the doctrines of scripture destroy the popish religion? They are all plain, and we glory in being able to say it to you, there is not one of the doctrines of scripture that *we* can understand by study, and *you* cannot understand. We acknowledge that learning makes some difference. One learned man can tell you what a *shekel* was; another can tell you how far it was from *Jerusalem* to *Jericho*; another can tell you the properties of the *cedar* tree, what wood it is. And what of all this?—This is no more than natural knowledge, but as

to the essential truths of religion we know no more than you do. For instance; does not the scripture declare there is but *one God*. *Though there are lords many, and gods many*, there is but *one living and true God*? We never heard of any more in the bible. Do not you know that there is *between God and man one mediator*? We know of no more. Do not you know that sin in man unrepented of is a damning thing? And do not we all know that sin without repentance is a mighty torrent that rolls the man under its power to eternal destruction? Do not you all know that when any man has a disposition to return to God, God is disposed to receive him? You know and can understand these important truths; but when you go into the papal church, and inquire about her doctrines, you will find them all hard, and not to be understood. There is indeed a great deal of this papal blindness among protestants, but it is our own faults. Do but step out of the road as you are riding or walking, and ask a poor shepherd a question about Jesus Christ; who, and what he is, and for what he came: he will tell you, perhaps, it is a hard question, he knows nothing about it; but he dares to say the parish priest can tell him, he does not doubt but he can! But the doctrines of scripture are all plain if we attend to them. Cast your eye upon another poor shepherd, who has seriously thought upon the subject, under a tree, or a hedge, with a few friends of his own class in society: he reads to

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them this passage :—*If I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me ?* I have been thinking, he says to his neighbours, what that sorrow was, and I believe it to be a godly sorrow for sin, which would make glad the apostle's heart, as it would lead the man who feels it to repentance. Well, you return and say, I have been bearing a shepherd expound scripture ! My brethren we glory in this ; that in our churches there are doctrines which any one may understand ; and we bless the Lord when an unlearned man has taken a passage that he can explain. The scriptures are indeed so plain, that *he that runs may read*. But as the DOCTRINES, so

Fourthly, The DUTIES of scripture consume popery.

God requires three sorts of duties of all mankind : the first are duties to himself, acts of piety, and devotion : the second are duties to one another, acts of justice and benevolence ; and there are duties likewise that we owe to ourselves. Whenever Jesus Christ in the execution of his offices in the church says,—*Search the scriptures :—Call no man master on earth :—*when Jesus Christ animates a man to this duty, what does he but fulfil the prophecy of my text ? He gives popery the death wound in the breast of that man : he says to him, here is the book, the bible : take the book, not the canons and the articles drawn up by men ; make use of the judgment I have given you, and do not ask what says the priest.

the bishop, the pope; for *one is your master* in religion. Now the moment any one is enabled thus to exercise his reason, down goes the pope, and all that belongs to him. Yes, you get a habit of searching the scriptures, and of judging of their meaning, and thus you stand as it were on ground of your own.

I have only time to remark on this head:—This is a duty you owe to yourselves; and this duty properly performed, destroys the life and soul of popery in every one that makes the scriptures his guide.

Lastly, The SPIRIT and TEMPER of the scriptures *destroy* popery. You know there is in every book a sort of *spirit* or *temper*. When you take up some books you shake your heads, and say,—this is wrote in an ill temper, and so it is; and you touch this sentence, and the other, and say, there is the poison, there is the slander, the lie, the deep design to hurt, to wound the reputation. Again, in another book you perceive a good spirit; and you say I see as clear as the day, it was written in a christian frame. Now what is the temper, the spirit of christianity? One of our historians says of queen Mary, who is known by the name of *bloody Mary*, “that she
“was a good tempered lady of an ill tempered
“religion: for in her private life, in her house-
“hold, who so good tempered, so amiable as
“queen Mary? But in the market place there
“was nothing but blood and cruelty; and in

“her prisons good men starving and rotting.” There are some ill tempered christians, but who ate of a good tempered religion, which proclaims—*Blessed are the poor in spirit for their’s is the kingdom of heaven : blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted : blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth : blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled : blessed are the merciful, who cannot see woe without feeling it ; who cannot feel misery without relieving it, for they shall obtain mercy : blessed is the man that can say, has any woman lost a husband, any family, a father ? I will become a husband to that woman, a father to that family. Are any under doubts and fears of the mercy of God ? I wish I was able to comfort them ; I can scarcely sleep for longing that I had ability to direct them to the promises made to such. This is the temper of Christ’s religion. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God : blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called the children of God.*—Now, take these tempers of christianity, and go and carry them to the holy catholic church, and say,—You glorious pope with three crowns, set upon a throne,—are you *poor in spirit ? Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness ? Are you making peace ? Are you pure in heart ? Merciful ?* And you will find the wretched pontiff of a far different spirit. Go to a priest, a sordid wretch, that will sell body and soul for a little worldly gain ; ask the poor creature if he is

poor in spirit ? No, he will reply, if he has any honesty remaining in him, I domineer over men's consciences. Are you *meek* ? No: though I may be meek by nature, I am of an ill tempered religion, and I must thunder out persecutions and threatenings to those who do not adhere to it. Do you *hunger and thirst after righteousness* ? No: I *hunger and thirst* after rich meats, and drinks, and luxuries. Why my brethren, I have a right to affirm that my text includes the spirit of christianity, and that men who are of the spirit of the gospel, cannot be of an antichristian spirit. O! that we may be dismissed from this assembly laying these truths home to our hearts.

To conclude. I shall not presume to advise my fathers and brethren in Christ; nor would I presume to dictate to your consciences; but if the destruction of popery is to be effected by the *word and spirit of God*, let us study well the scriptures, and make the proper use of them. Do I feel pride or any evil passion working within me? I will go by the grace of God, to our Saviour on the *mount*, and say, blessed be the name of the Lord; his frown can destroy pride; I will pray that he will cure me of its malignant poison; and so of every evil disposition. Let us my brethren read the scriptures to our children; if they cannot relish the other parts, let us read the *history* to them, and set popery in all its horrid, bideous light. Let us not only read but pray over the scriptures with this view: let us

pray that God would so bless his word, that it may cut up popery, root and branch: he is able to do it; and Oh! what a pleasure to you christian, when you in any measure feel within yourself the spirit of antichrist, nobly to resolve—I will still struggle with thee; the Lord shall *destroy with the spirit of his mouth* my evil dispositions, which would make another pope, which would even make another fall in heaven: you I will struggle against, because the Lord has promised his spirit and grace. What a happy will that be when the church is gone up *through the sea*, to the other side, and shall *sing the song of Moses and the Lamb*: as the children of Israel rejoiced in the fall of Pharaoh and his hosts, so shall the children of God rejoice in the destruction of antichristianism; for antichrist shall *fall through the spirit of God's mouth, and be destroyed with the brightness of his coming.*—*Amen.*

SERMON IV.

THE CORRUPTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY EXPOSED.

MICAH i. 5.

What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?

In order that we may enter into the design of the prophet, let us attend to the context. In the second verse, he thus solemnly introduces the subject.—

Hear all ye people, hearken O earth and all that therein is, and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple: for behold the Lord cometh forth out of his place and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth and the mountains shall be molten under him, and the vallies shall be cleft as wax before the fire, and as waters that are poured down a steep place; for the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? And what are the high places of Judah? Are they not Jerusalem?—Now lay your books by and hear us for a few moments, and then we will return to the prophet.

55 *The Corruptions of Christianity exposed.*

We were speaking to you last Lord's day concerning *popery*, and while we expressed our abhorrence, a *just* abhorrence at rioting and violence,* we acknowledged, and it is but *right* to acknowledge, that there is that in *popery* which is enough to provoke the most patient of mankind. We aimed therefore to make a distinction, and to convince you, my brethren, that though a good man can do nothing wrong to suppress popery, yet he cannot be a good protestant unless he cordially hate it; I say, though a good man can do nothing contrary to reason and religion to suppress popery, yet there is no good protestant but must hold popery in constant abhorrence.—Now I am going this afternoon, to pursue this subject a little farther. I have chosen the text, which contains a general principle; and I am about to apply it to this particular case, the case of the protestant world in regard to the church of Rome.

The prophet, describes in the context, the 2d, 3d, and 4th, verses, some grievous judgments that God was about to execute upon the Jews: he says, *The mountains shall be molten and the vallies cleft*; perhaps *literally* by earthquakes and by drought, by lightning and thunder: and *they shall be as waters that are poured down a steep place*; that is to say, the descent of God's judgments should be so rapid, so strong, that it should be impossible to stop them.—The

* This discourse was preached shortly after the disgraceful riots which had taken place in London, and different parts of the kingdom. (June 1780.)

beginning of the verse out of which we have taken the text, is the declaration made by the prophet of *the cause* of all this; for you know, no farmer takes and tears up all his growing crops without occasion; no gardener takes and roots up all his own well planted plots without a reason; no architect, who has built a house, pulls it all to pieces again without a cause. The prophet knew there was a righteous *cause* for judgments, and, when he saw desolation pouring out over all his country, he was compelled to declare;—*For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel.* But if any body should say, this is general, this is at large,—for *what* sins, for *whose* sins in Israel? for yours Micah, or ours who hear you, or the sins of us both? Why his answer is contained in the words of the text—*What is the transgression of Jacob, is it not Samaria?* The meaning is this:—What is the great crime that is punished in the country? (for that he means by *Jacob*;) Is it not the great sin that is practised in *Samaria*, the capital, and which you have learned of the mother city?—*What*, says he again, *what are the high places of Judah*;—where did you in your little country villages, learn those vices, those idolatrous practices of which you all partake? Why, adds he again,—*Are they not Jerusalem?* Are they not little images of that great wickedness that is set up in the metropolis?

It is a very just, true and general remark, that when you have sin in the metropolis, that is, the

chief city, the residence of the king and court, and the greatest of the nation, you have sin for the character of the nation; for all the rest of the country learn of the mother city. If you look into the history of the Jews, you will find, if you examine the reigns mentioned by the prophet in the first verse, of *Jotham*, *Ahaz* and *Hexekiah*, you will find the case to be thus.—Those kings, the two first particularly, had made alliance with the heathen, neighbouring kingdoms, and they had carried their complaisance so far, as to bring in the religion of those kingdoms into their cities, although God himself had appointed the religion of the Jews, and had expressly prohibited any alteration therein until Christ came, and had said, when *a prophet like unto Moses* rises up, then do you *hear him*; then there is an end of your economy, but, till then, hold sacred this law. This is the substance of the Old Testament declarations.—Now these kings set up the neighbouring idolatries in *Samaria* and *Jerusalem*, the two capital cities of their respective kingdoms:—the country people coming up and finding what was the fashion, their vices put them upon trying to be in the fashion too, and down into the country they carried patterns of those Gods, their temples, and their priests, that they had seen in the capital cities; that this is the meaning of the prophet, as compared with the history is evident.—What was the sin of the country? *Idolatry*. And what led the country into idolatry? The *mother city*.—This is the plain English of our text.—Now this I said was a ge-

neral principle, I should apply to a particular case; and I dare say I need not tell any person here that there is a community called in scripture, *the mother of harlots*; that the community in question is the church of *Rome*, and that the church of *Rome*, which has been the metropolis of the christian world, has communicated to all churches, to protestant churches, a great deal of that corruption of christianity which she herself introduced.—My brethren, do I speak plainly? Let us not mistake this important subject.—I say the church of *Rome* has been the metropolis of the christian world, and that church has corrupted the whole; that the present protestant churches, however reformed, yet retain a great deal of the original corruption, and it is one reason among others, why wise and good protestants, as it is expressed in scripture, *hate the whore and burn her flesh with fire*. The meaning is, they abhor popery, body and soul, the spirit and the substance, because of the damage done to the christian world by it.—Come, let us enter upon the matter.

In the *first* place: (but let me premise, that I shall try to pay all my attention to making the matter plain and clear, and I flatter myself, if you will pay that attention that is in your power, we shall not be misunderstood:)—I say, in the first place, the church of *Rome* introduced into christianity the idea of *plurality*, and joined it to the idea of *Deity*.—What I mean is this.—Christ taught the apostles that there was *ONE GOD*, and but *ONE, and one mediator between God and men, the*

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man Christ Jesus : the apostles kept on teaching till they died, what Christ taught them, and they preserved with all imaginable care the unity of God;—and with a great deal of reason.—One God was enough for any worshipper, and to add ten thousand would be nothing but idolatry.—But what did the church of Rome do? It threw into the idea of *Deity*, (*Deity* signifies *Godhead*) *plurality*, which is more than one; and it is a very sensible and just observation of a late protestant writer, “ If the reformation had not been brought about by the providence of God when it was, we should have had Gods upon Gods, Gods upon Gods, till we had entirely lost the true God in the multitude of other Gods.”—It was a saying my brethren, of the apostle Paul, and it was the faith of the primitive christian church, to *others*, to the gentiles, *there are Gods many and Lords many, but to us, that is, to us christians, there is but one God the father, and one Lord Jesus Christ.* But now it may be said, to *papists* there are Gods many and Lords many, just as there is in the pagan world, but to *us* protestants there is—Ah! have not I said too much—There ought to be, but *one God and one mediator and Lord, Christ Jesus.* And you will ask me, perhaps, how protestants came by this? I will tell you what I think, my brethren. The common, popular notion about a *Trinity*, is a relic of the old popish idolatry, and the too prevailing gross ideas about the Father, Son, and Spirit, the dividing the Deity into *persons*, the naming of buildings,

and churches, in consequence of such notions, are a species of the same defilement.* *What is the transgression of Jacob, is it not Samaria; and what are the high places of Judah, are they not Jerusalem?*

Secondly. It was popery that introduced obscurity into revelation.—Obscurity is darkness, difficulty, perplexity; a thing is obscure when it is hard to be understood. Do not you think, christians, when Jesus Christ came into the world, that he was a plain man? I say, do you think when Jesus Christ walked up and down the streets of Jerusalem that he looked like a modern academic, wrapped up in all the ensigns of wisdom and science, and looking down with contempt upon all who were not in his habit, as being destitute of knowledge, of which his habit was the badge? No such thing.—Jesus Christ was the plainest man in the world. He would talk to a beggar, and he was too much the man, I say nothing now of his glorious mission, he was too much the man to speak to a beggar about what a beggar could not understand.—He was as plain in his public ministry as he was in his private conversation; he gloried when he stood upon his trial before his iniquitous judges that he had spoke nothing in secret,

* Respecting the time when the words *Trinity* and *Persons*, were introduced into the christian church, see *Robinson's Ecclesiastical Researches*, p. 52. And for the opinions of *Luther* and *Calvin* respecting the word *Trinity*, similar to those expressed by our author, see *Memoirs of the Life of Robinson* prefixed to his *Miscellaneous Works*. Vol. I. p. cli. (Note.)

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and he charges his apostles thus,—“ When I am gone, go ye into all the world, and teach all things whatsoever I have commanded you:—all things:— I do not commit any secrets to you;—the private conversation we have had at times under a tree, when eating by ourselves, or in our retirements— Do not hide it; do not conceal it; no:—*Publish it upon the house tops*: but that would have been an affront to the common people if it had not been level to their capacities. When the apostle Paul in this spirit wrote to the Corinthians declaring his master’s doctrine, he spake thus (and yet perhaps they were not so respectable a congregation as you are, for he represents them to be those that had no birth, no learning,—that is the meaning of part of the first chapter of his epistle to that church, *God hath chosen the foolish, the weak, and the base things of the world*; people of the lowest rank in life; yet he says to that people,) *I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say*. He could not mean such wisdom as consists in the knowledge of hard words; but he must mean, what is true wisdom; good, sterling *common sense*: now he would not have bid this people *judge* what he said, unless they had powers equal to the subject: and thus the christian world had no notion that they must take and carry the book and pull out their purses and pay a learned man to give them them the *sense* of it: they had no notion of such a thing: Paul had told them at Corinth, *you may all prophecy*, by which he meant that *any* good brother might speak to the rest in their christian

assemblies, the sense of the book, for though there is nothing in it *obscure*, yet there may be one part of it that might strike me, another part might strike you, a third might affect another christian brother, and that brother might be able to speak upon it at that time, better than you or I could, because he is just then feeling the sense of it. But by and by, my brethren, the bishop of Rome, (from that church we had it,) gave out that the bible was a very obscure, dark, hard book; and what do you think was his pretence? I do not ask that question as if I supposed you did not know how to answer it, but that you may perceive if you once lay that down as a principle, what follows?—Why then you must keep the priesthood to explain the book to you, and must not think for yourselves concerning the meaning; and the priest himself must not think, until he has gone through a prescribed course of learning, which all leads up to the grand point, that *he* understands it, and *you* do not; and thus protestants have received this strange notion of the New Testament, and groan under the yoke to this day. If you go into some of our villages and ask the shepherd, or the good man at the farm—Do you understand the doctrine of Jesus Christ? Why you will find that he not only *does not* understand it, but he has never taken it into his head that he *ought*; and he will point you to the house where the priest lives, and tell you, *he* understands it.—Forgive the plainness of my speech, and do not let it offend you. Brethren, the truth is, Christ taught a

plain doctrine and you are all of you as good judges of it, without learning, as with learning. Latin, Greek and all the rest of the hard things that cost so many hundred pounds to learn, they are not worth twopence with respect to the *essentials* of religion; for they that are acquainted with them, know no more of these than the man that understands his mother tongue.—Let me make one distinction.—When I speak of the bible being easy to be understood, and that learning can do nothing to render it more intelligible, I do not mean that a learned man cannot make out better by a long train of study and expence, what the Old Testament shekel was worth, whether it was worth half a crown, or thirteen pence. I do not say that a learned man may not be able to make out where Jacob's well was better than you or I. I do not say that he cannot tell the reason why the sea that washed the coast of Idumea was called the *red sea*, better than we can:—but I say—All these things are not what we mean by *the gospel, the doctrine of Jesus Christ*; for what signifies the worth of the Jewish shekel, to the pardon of my sins?—What signifies the place where Jacob's well was to sound sentiments about God?—What signifies it why the sea was called the *red sea*, rather than the *black sea*, or the *dead sea*; what has all this to do with my eternal happiness? But I beg leave to assert that all the truths, that are necessary to salvation, are as plain to the unlearned, as to the wisest scholar; and that the reason why they are not considered so is because

the *transgression of Samaria* has got down to *Jacob*.—Is it not wonderful that in christianity, there is nothing to be done without a minister?—Is any body sick?—Away they go for the minister;—he is fetched, just as the attorney is, as if matters were *all to settle*.—I ask, (one cannot refuse going you know) what does this good man want? I have said all in public I have to say; he has got the bible, he can search the scriptures, what would he have? I recollect our text—*What is the transgression*; and then I *pity* the person more than I *blame* him.—I say *what is the transgression of Jacob, is it not Samaria?*—Whence came this, but from the custom of administering what they call the “extreme unction” to dying men?—Go, read the New Testament, my brethren, take the meaning just as it rises, love the gospel, lay it to your hearts while living for that only can comfort you in the departing hour.

Thirdly. The church of Rome not only brought PLURALITY *into* DEITY, and OBSCURITY *into* SCRIPTURE, but it also brought MYSTERY *into* PIETY.—People who can read foreign writers know that there is nothing more common than this kind of language.—Do they write about the *cross of Christ*—Why they call it “the *mystery* of the cross.”—Do they treat of the Lord’s supper,—it is “the *mystery* of the holy sacrament.”—Do they mention baptism—it is “that sacred institution that has such a *mysterious* meaning.” And some how or other we imbibe these notions.—When we

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go into established places of worship we find a part railed off from the common people, and something there not to be seen; and in certain dissenting places of worship, when the people assemble to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of their Lord, (some of our churches indeed have left off the practice, happy if they had cast off every other likeness of popery) a napkin is thrown over the bread and the wine. In short, the idea of a *mystery* is carried all through our religion. I will give you two examples of what I call a monstrous imposition upon the doctrine of Jesus Christ.—A person comes and says—Friends, I have sat under the word of God twenty years:—I have always had a horror at the thought of being eternally lost, and an eager desire to be saved; but for my part, I cannot make out what my state is: sometimes I think I am a christian, and then again I am not: and we say to this person under these complaints, well, wait upon the Lord and in his due time he will reveal it to you.—Is not this the sort of language you would use, brethren, would not you give some such advice? Pardon my freedom—I think you should not.—Wait upon the Lord, and he will *reveal* it to you,—Why, I ask when I come soberly to read the New Testament, *what* is this person bid to *wait* for? A new messenger from heaven? But Christ is come.—A new doctrine to be added to those that are given? But Christ is the *finisher* of our faith as well as the *author* of it. There is nothing more necessary until he comes to judg-

ment.—What then is this person to wait for?—I find in short, he has got an idea that he is to have some new, imaginary *discovery* made to him: for if you should say—Go to the Lord's supper,—O, he replies, my father goes, for he has felt the power of the word.—I never have, and fear I never shall.—And thus the poor creature is harrassed all his days, and goes down to the grave without attaining that, which he is feeling after, like a blind man, if haply he may find it: whereas the truth of the matter is this, and this is the whole:—Man acquires early habits of sin, grows up in it, and if he dies in it will be lost.—When he comes to perceive his condition he is afraid, and with great reason, for God is a just God and hates rebellion against his law:—the minister of Jesus Christ declares in the congregation that *God so loved the world*, sunk into this state, that he sent his son to execute the office of a *prophet*, by preaching the doctrine and instructing men in the way of salvation:—That he gave his son power, through the once offering up himself *a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour*, power to expiate the guilt of sin: that he constituted him *king* to reign by his commandments over his followers to the end of the world.—And now we ask this man, this complaining man, do you believe this?—He *hopes* he does.—*Hope what?* You do believe or you do not; there is no medium.—Faith indeed like animal life, is in a thousand different degrees; it is sometimes vigorous and strong, and sometimes faint

and weak; but *life* is never confounded with *death*, nor is *faith* with *unbelief*.—And thus it is in believing on Jesus Christ; a man either believes, or disbelieves: and in short when we come to close the matter we find it to be—God hath given in his word, his testimony concerning his son; the belief of that with the heart, has eternal life annexed to it; the man who has this belief finds it growing in him, into godliness, and he that has it not may pore about all his days for an unknown something to be wrought and felt in him, but he will never find it, and will at the last go down to the grave in distress.—We have this also from the apostate church of Rome.

Another instance we take from our *ordinances*.—We have seen people clearly convinced by reading the scriptures of the duty of being baptised by immersion:—we have heard these people make their confession of faith, and we have seen them plunged into the water *in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*.—We had reason to believe that these people would *go on their way rejoicing*, but we have sometimes seen, (no new thing), we have sometimes seen these people have been very unhappy, whereas surely they ought to have been happy after they had thus done their duty.—And I ask, what is the matter? Is it the ridicule cast upon the ordinance? No: that would argue a little soul indeed; what troubles me is this, I did not *feel* that comfort and joy in passing through the ordinance that I expected.—And thus it is at the Lord's supper: we have seen

people come to the table of the Lord, and they have done their duty in coming; and yet have been very unhappy, because they have not met with the frames and feelings of others.—We have set down this or that good man's experience for the salvation that lies in Christ, in the bible, and another man's feeling's under the ordinance, for the testimony of God's approbation, which testimony lies in the word, whether we feel comfort or not in our attendance.—It would keep you too long to enlarge, but you will find, if you seriously think on the subject, that this notion of *mystery* in religion is of dangerous consequence, and that it constitutes a part of the great body and soul of popery.

Fourthly. Popery introduced POMP into the christian religion, which pomp the *protestant* churches have not yet quite cast away, but which it would be to the interest of all good men to *get above*, in point of *judgment, immediately*, and in point of *practice, when they can*.—What shall I say? Shall I indulge a freedom upon this point? That might offend some of my hearers whom I wish to edify, or else what might we not say upon this article, so obvious to every beholder! Shall we say that the performance of public worship in many of our churches appears to carry an air of a theatrical performance, and has that in it which you expect to find at a comedy; or, to speak more gravely, at a tragedy? The whole put together seems to be a tragi-comedy in which each has his part to act. Brethren, pomp in religious

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worship' is imposition; it tends to blind all those who perform, and who are present. I will give you one or two among numberless arguments, which might be stated on this subject. I take the first reason against a pompous, ceremonial worship from the souls of the worshippers.—Now tell me honestly, do not you find that if you were in a place of worship, and to pay attention to what the worshipper of God is to do,—do not you find it would occupy all your soul? Would it not be all employed if you were desirous of worshipping in *spirit and in truth*? I say, would not your soul with all its faculties be fully stretched? Now if this is the case with the wisest and best of you, what can be said for stuffing and cramming the souls of the people, the weakest of us all, with ceremonies and pomp? The mind of man has no room for them; and as it has not room in worship for both, certainly what should be banished to make room for the other is, the flummery and pomp of worship, for genuine, soul worship, which is conformity to the will of God.—God knows, the man is greatly to be pitied who has got not only to take care in divine worship of the temper of his heart, the strength of his faith, the depth of his humility, repentance for his sins, the exercise of hope and so on, but has got other matters to perplex himself about: the change or colour of garments; keeping time to instruments of music; paying respect at the same time to God in heaven and a picture against the wall; turning first on this side and then on that side; bowing now; kneeling

then; standing at this time; sitting at another:—Here is a vast deal too much for a fallen creature to do.—From the souls of our worshippers we argue the wisdom of Christ in appointing a religion that left forms and ceremonies just as circumstances suited; the essential respect it had was to the spirit of the worshippers, and the exercise of their faith, hope and joy in God, through Jesus Christ their Lord.

To mention but one thing more:—A grand argument for pomp and ceremonies in religious worship which is a fatal one.—You know for what reason some have pleaded for them; they tell us, that they are necessary—to what? we ask.—To piety. Our people say they, or the bulk of mankind would have no religion without them; they are struck by their solemnity; they are like children, they must be directed in their worship, and therefore assisted by such outward ceremonies.—To which we reply by an appeal to facts too notorious to be controverted; we appeal to those very people for whose sake these ceremonies have been used; and we ask—Have they produced piety in them? Have ceremonies answered the end upon the people for whose sake they were invented? We are forced to answer—No! On the contrary, we fear they have encouraged hypocrisy, and led them to place the observation of pompous rites in the stead of the love and the fear of God.

It would have been a great misfortune, my brethren, I will venture to say, it would have been a great misfortune to the world, if Jesus Christ had

by his power and wisdom established such a religious worship as that of the church of Rome, for though there might have been a shew of wisdom therein in one place, in another it would have appeared the most egregious folly.—It might have seemed wise, to take the tenth of the rich man's property and apply it to the purposes of pomp and ceremony, in order to set the people a gazing and keep them in a little awe; but what would it have been had he taken the tenth of the poor man's pittance for this purpose?—Pomp cannot be maintained but at a vast expence. Brethren, when I ask—Whence came pomp and ceremony into the christian church? will not the answer be—Came they not hence—even from the church of Rome.

Fifthly. I will mention but one reflection more.—**TYRANNY OF TEMPER.**—Tyranny of temper came into the christian church from this mother of the christian world, *Rome*; and from thence it has run all through Christendom; in some places rapidly and in large streams, and in others in gentle rills. When the Lord Jesus Christ delivered his doctrine, he left it to make its way in the world; and there is no instance in all his ministry, though he had thunders and lightnings, and the whole universe at his command,—there is no instance of of his ever injuring a hair of any man's head, for disregarding and not embracing his doctrine.—No; when he went up out of the world he could say those great words, and if there were no others they would argue him to have been the greatest of

men;—*Peace I leave with you.* And this legacy which Christ left was maintained in the christian world, in the primitive churches long after his ascension to heaven. All that the apostles of Jesus did, and the rule which was followed by the primitive christians was, to tell the tale, and they had done; for their law was, *do injury to no man*—the utmost that ever they did, was to keep men from injuring them, and that is both reason and religion: to avoid being injured by other people is prudence, but to injure another in order to secure ourselves is wickedness, and is what Christ carefully avoided: in him therefore we have no example of violence, tyranny, despotism and cruelty in order to propagate his doctrine.—He did not say when he went from his apostles, *fire I leave with you*, burn them that will not submit to my doctrine.—He did not say, *finis I leave with you*, lay heavy fines upon them, impoverish them if they will not receive my gospel. He did not say, *the keys of the gaols I leave with you*, take and lock up the persons who will not regard your teaching.—No: nor did he say, *evil language I leave with you*; *sour tempers I leave with you*; *frowning looks I leave with you*; but he says, *PEACE I leave with you*, his benignant aspect enforcing what he said. Is it not then a sad thing that any should rise up in the christian church, and affect to propagate truth as it is in Jesus, and to spread his gospel by the savage, cruel means of persecution?

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To sum up the matter, christians : I have given you my opinion freely and plainly, that the popish church from which we are all reformed, but not sufficiently, has hurt christianity particularly, by introducing the idea of *Plurality into Deity* :—*Obscurity into scripture* :—*Pomp and ceremonies into divine worship* :—*Tyranny into the temper* ; —And, what I would wish you to pay a particular regard to is, *mystery into piety*, for that respects your own experience and mine.

We have two reflections to make at the close of this subject.—And *first* we could wish this evening, to withdraw your attention from the world and the present scene, and lead you back into the soul of the mediator when he first in this world declared the gospel to his disciples, particularly on that day when he went up into a mountain, called to him the *twelve*, and ordered them to spread it through the world.—Then my brethren, enter if you can into the soul of the son of God. See with what reason he was called by the prophet,—*A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. You recollect Moses, who wrote the history of the creation of the world and the entrance of sin which spoiled the work which God had made ;—you recollect he introduces the great creator as looking at the world about the time of the flood, and saying that it *grieved him at his heart that he had made man upon earth*. Now it is impossible we should enter into the perceptions of the divine mind, for they are above our grasp, but it is very easy to conceive what Moses meant,

as far as finite creatures can conceive what an inspired prophet who spake of the Deity meant at that moment.—I ask when a man like Jacob lies upon his death bed and calls his family about him, the sons he has educated and brought up, and who were dear to him as his own soul, to tell them what should befall them in the last days:—When such a good man is forced to say of one of them, you will *ravin as a wolf*, to another, you will be *a serpent in the path*, a subtle, wicked man; when he is forced to say to another, you will be *a hind let loose*, a light, dissipated man, and your family with you; to another, you will *lie down like a strong ass*; an ass for stupidity, and the more hateful because you have strength to cast off your burthen:—I say when a parent thus looks upon his sons and sees nine out of ten, stubborn, deceitful, and cruel!—Cannot you conceive what it must be to see such a world as this come out of the hands of God, earth, air, water, all furnished, richly furnished, the wisdom of God flowing round the creation in every thing, and then to see the finishing piece, man, come up and turn it all into confusion; to see him in a word, cover the earth with violence and blood; do not you think it enough to make even a Moses grieve? Well now, enter if you can, by this track into the soul of your divine master, when he bid his apostles *go and preach the gospel*, but told them they would be persecuted and imprisoned; that they would be *as sheep in the midst of wolves*. Did he not, think you, carry his eye forward and

see the papal corruption rise up in the world: did he not, think you, contrast in his eye, the plain picture that stood before him, with the pomp and finery of the church of Rome?—I am sure one of his apostles did so; when he foresaw the perils consequences that would be brought into the church of Christ; when he saw, *A woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, riding upon a scarlet coloured beast, (or rather upon the back of a monster) drunken with the blood of saints:* he says, *when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration:* I said, Lord is this the christian church?—Is this thy doctrine that is thus perplexed, and confounded, and wrapped up in obscurity, so that the souls of the people to whom it is preached, cannot understand it? Lord is this thy spirit? Are the emblems of thy broken body held up by a blasphemous priest to be worshipped in what is called the mass? Lord, what killing, and slaying, and burning is here! Does the gospel that we preach bring men to all this?—*I wondered,* says the apostle, *with great admiration;* and well you might! How true therefore was the prophet's saying, that Christ was *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief!*—It was his great wisdom that affected his temper. He knew enough to make any one grieved and sad: he knew too much for his own pleasure, speaking of pleasure as we understand it; for he looked forward, and in the prospect of the future saw all the corruption and apostacy that have since appeared

in the christian world. And, brethren, let me ask, how did he look at you? Did he at that time see, if he did, doubtless it gave him a moment's pleasure, did he see you among the number of those who would steadily adhere to his gospel?—Doubtless he then said, *blessed be ye of the Lord—Ye are like the field that the Lord has blessed.* Continue faithful to your Lord.—*Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the world.* My brethren, this is the first reflection we make, that the prospect of the corruptions of the christian church, in a great degree illustrates the character of Christ *as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*

To finish.—Permit me to ask you, with all seriousness, to take this subject home to your own houses, and to examine,—let each of us examine, how much we have yet remaining of this old, popish leaven, this execration of God and man. Have we any persecuting principles towards those who differ from us in matters of religion?—Lord tear them from our hearts.—What right have we to punish those who reject the truth; that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom *all judgment is committed.* Do we entertain a greater regard for pomp, for shew, for the outside of religion, than for its spirit and temper?—Lord tear this also from our hearts.—What have we to do with these?—Christ never made a shew of himself, nor recommended his gospel by pomp; and shall not we follow his example? Have we, my brethren, yet remaining in our heads, dark notions of a

*plurality in the godhead, of obscurity in scripture, of mystery in piety, and so on, and are we like blind men, feeling about, if haply we may find the way? O let us pray God to open our eyes that we may see that Christ is the way, and the truth, and the life. All that you will ever know to your abiding comfort, you are taught in the scripture; if the spirit that speaketh in you, speaketh not according to that, it is because there is no light in you. Would to God then we may take the bible only for our directory, and let us abhor all that is called popery; it is a composition of all sorts of vice; and let us at the same time take care that we maintain the spirit and the temper of christians and protestants, copying as near as we can the lovely example of our Lord and Saviour. And let us attend to the prophet, who having in the text declared the cause of the troubles of the nation, and so performed his duty as a good man, yet when he saw the distress that was coming upon his countrymen, was so affected at his heart, as to exclaim, *I will wail and howl, I will go stript and naked.* He means by *naked* not dressed in his best, not adorned, not ornamented; he would put on his old garments. *I will make a wailing,* he adds, *like the dragons and mourning like the owls.*—What about Micah? For this,—*her wound is incurable, for it is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.*—May God avert that omen from us, and grant that *we* may never have occasion to make that reflection!—It is the only thing we have hope in, and it is the chief thing*

therefore that we should now attend to, that our wound is *curable*.—*Incurable* ignorance! *Incurable* wickedness! If so there is an end.—Enough praying, enough preaching!—Lord what are we better than our fathers! but O let us not see the destruction of our country, for then must we be compelled to acknowledge our wound is incurable!

But should you reply, what is it you mean by the observation with respect to *us*?—I will tell you what I mean. I have seen in the course of my ministry many things amiable and praise-worthy, but have also seen many deserving of blame, and I have wished that if the public ministry of the word did not produce reformation, the calamities that have come upon our country might at least affect you. I have prayed for this to my God and Father, that the sleeper might awake and the careless be more earnest in the affairs of religion, and the *things that accompany salvation*. We have every thing but *felt* the judgments of God; yet we are not awake: we are just were we were, before troubles came, before war came, before all the evils which have taken place came.—But I would hope—O let me hope, and feed my hope, that the wound of *my* people is not *incurable*; that they will be restored; and with their whole heart will resolve to keep *pure and undefiled the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ*.—Would to God you might do so, and then you would abominate the corruptions of the church of Rome, and of every corruption which defiles the church of Christ.—May God write these truths upon your hearts!

SERMON V.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD, AND ITS EFFECTS.

HOSEA iii. 5. (Part of the verse.)

The children of Israel shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.

The doctrine of *fear*, christians, is of so much importance that it can never be too fully discussed by us, nor too well understood by you. And we are going this afternoon (if it please God to bless our attempts) we are going to shew you that as the greatness of God produces fear, a fear productive of all christian obedience, so the goodness of God in the highest display of it produces the same emotion, the same obedience; and for this purpose we have chosen the words, *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*

Perhaps it may be necessary before we enter upon the subject, to give you a general account of the context; for the literal interpretation of scripture is a foundation which should not be destroyed: without it *what can the righteous do?* The general design of the prophet, adapting himself to the condition of his countrymen, was to call their attention principally to two things; first, to their miserable condition, made up on their

part of *sin*, on God's part of *judgments*, which fell upon them in consequence of their transgressions; and who thus chastised them as a nation. That was one great object: it is presented all through the prophecy. The other was their deliverance from this calamitous state by the promised Messiah. And this part also divides into two particulars. The one is the character of the person called Messiah. And the other, the rich and noble effects that this dispensation should have upon them as a nation at the time of his appearance, and on all succeeding ages; that it should produce the noblest acts that the human soul could perform; and should continue to do so to the end of time. This is a general view of the prophecy. But in order to strike these truths the deeper upon the hearts of those that heard them, (for without it to what purpose do men waste their time and strength upon these subjects) the prophets were engaged, according to the custom of their country, to express them by certain visible signs; and that I suppose is a key to the character which belongs to this prophet, Hosea; and particularly to this chapter. For mark the 2d verse of the first chapter: *The Lord said to Hosea, go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms; for the land hath committed great whoredoms, departing from the Lord.* And Chap. iii, 1. *Then said the Lord unto me, go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of*

the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. Now a plausible objection here arises against the character of the prophet; and above all against his pretence to inspiration, that he should receive such a direction from God. But our answer is—That the prophet, agreeable to the custom of his country, chose to preach by visible signs. Sometimes the prophets preached by inanimate signs. *I took (says one) a girdle, and I girded about me, and said, thus shalt thou be girded by the Lord.*—*I took (says another) a yoke and put upon my neck, and said, God will bring you into slavery.* Now, here Hosea is said to take persons, not like Isaiah, who took his own child and said,—*by this child I can say so and so, such and such calamities shall befall you; but he goes and hires a prostitute to accompany him to the house of speaking; and as it is said,—I bought her to me; I gave her so much for her attendance on me, and she was not to play the harlot; she was already a wicked person, but she served to answer this purpose.* Now when it is said that the prostitute taken by the prophet for this purpose, *bare a son; that his name was called Jezreel,* the meaning is only—That the woman was directed to take his child and say his name is so and so. Now I call this child *Lo-ruhamah.* (*Ye shall not obtain mercy.*) This being the truth, and this the manner of impressing it, we come to the text, which was a part of the prophet's address to his countrymen; and it sums up thus: the children

of Israel looked to other gods as this prostitute to other women: the children of Israel, like this bad woman, shall be turned out and suffer the true desert of their deeds, and they shall find it as hard to believe that God would come to them, as this woman that a prophet should take her up and bring her to the temple; but nevertheless this is not (says the prophet) improper for God to do. *They shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without Teraphim. And afterwards the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.*

Now, here are two things that I wish to turn your attention to. The *first* is that the accomplishment of this promise, that is, the exhibition of Christ to the world in the latter days of the Jewish state, is meant by the *goodness* of God. And *Secondly*: That this was so sudden as to excite just and well grounded fears.

First, The accomplishment of this promise; that is, the exhibition of Christ to the world in the *latter days* of the Jewish state is meant by the *goodness* of God.

You often meet in the prophecies with the expression, *latter days*. Now I presume we have reason to think, if we examine the places, that the expression in general stands for the last years.

of the Jews continuing to subsist as a kingdom, from about the time that Herod the Great reigned, to the destruction of Jerusalem. They were truly and properly the *last days* of that people; they have never figured as a nation since. Now these *latter days* are marked in the prophecies by certain events that should distinguish them. ISAIAH. ii. 2. *It shall come to pass in the last days, (just when your kingdom is coming to an end) that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.* As if the prophet had said; then you will know when your state is coming to an end, when God shall so order your religion that it shall spread itself amongst your neighbouring nations; it shall glide away from you as water from off a mountain. MICAH IV. 1. *In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it.* The same prophecy you see is repeated by two prophets. In process of time Christ came, called in the verses of which the text is a part, *David their king.* He was a descendant of David, and the principal person of that family. When he came, what did he?—Fulfil this prophecy; accomplish this

event. At his birth a star invited wise heathens, that is, pagan philosophers in search of truth, to the place where our Lord lay: and after his ascension into heaven, he poured out the gift of tongues, and his servants went about preaching the word; not making formal distinctions between *Barbarian, Scythian, or Jew*; but abolished all distinctions of that kind, to shew that Christ's kingdom was made a universal kingdom.

And now, fellow christians, carry your recollection back to the day when the apostle Paul travelled into a gentile town, where the name, much less the nature of God was not known; where the idols were all the deities, and vices all the virtues; where they groaned under the miseries of this life, and trembled under the approaching miseries of another, and knew no way of escape; think you, what a mercy in God to send a man full of knowledge, with unsearchable riches to make them know the love of God in Christ, that exceeded all dimensions and conceptions. It was *goodness* of the most heavenly kind. But the gospel was *goodness* particularly to the heathens, because it taught them—

1st. Their own dignity. Pagan philosophers had been *feeling after God*; they were feeling amongst the works of nature without any light from above, and made nothing out. They were not sure even of their own immortality; but when the apostles went with their gospel, they roused man into the knowledge of his own dignity, and shewed him that he was an immortal creature. When

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man views his immortality, he seems to outgrow vice, and to be elevated above the whole world. It was goodness to mankind after having shewn them their own dignity, to rend the vail, and—

2. Shew them GOD. When we see a man without hearing, we pity him as losing a most delightful sense. When we see a man without sight, we pity him also; and say, how many thousand pleasures would light give that man, had he but one eye: but what shall we say when we see a man ignorant of his God? In God are the sublimest pleasures; but a man ignorant of God is dead to all these pleasures. How kind then to shew God to the world in the glory of his character, as a merciful God.—But the gospel was good because it exhibited—

3. Benevolent principles and social excellencies. What is an unfeeling animal good for in society, that can see mankind distorted with all kinds of misery, and feel nothing at all for them! The gospel recommends benevolence. Paganism could do this but feebly: but christianity was *goodness itself*; because it went about exciting good dispositions; united the weak with the strong, the bold with the timid, and so on. Imagine to yourselves a poor fellow creature in the agonies of death; conceive the body all agonising with pain, and the soul all excruciating with fear: conceive that poor creature lying in a pagan country, where not a soul about him could inform him of one word of comfort. Suppose it were possible to bring a philosopher to him: all he would be able

to tell that person would be his own conjecture, that there was a state of happiness, but he could not speak with certainty. It would be out of his power to do the poor creature any good by conjectures; unless the mind were capable of receiving consolation from a little cool, uncertain reasoning. But imagine a poor wretch in a country visited by the apostle, or in our own country. When any of your poor fellow creatures fall sick and begin to tremble at the opening grave, what a mercy is it that a neighbour can go in, and point out *the way, the truth, and the life* to him, and so pour the strongest consolation into his distressed soul. This gospel thus associates a wise man with an ignorant man; one that knows God, with one that is a stranger to him. Now how did God give this *goodness* to the world? The apostle of the Gentiles describes it thus: thus he speaks to the gentiles when he declared to them the scripture. Methinks I see the great apostle giving them these oracles as a present from God the Creator of their law: methinks I hear him say thus,—*The branches were broken off that thou mayest be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity; but toward thee, goodness: otherwise, thou also shalt be cut off.* Thus came the gospel to the heathen world. And it is as much

as if the apostle had said,—Take the doctrine of eternal life, but beware of using it as the Jews, or you will be punished as the Jews: here we offer you a Saviour, but mind you sincerely receive him. For if you say,—*Come, let us cast him out of the vineyard, this is the heir, come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours; he will come and burn you up.* So that when the text says—*They shall fear the goodness of the Lord,* methinks I see them taking the dispensation, but with trembling; taking the gospel, but with fear; taking the gospel so as to *stand in awe and not sin.* Yes; our ancestors when they received the gospel, received it with mingled pleasure and pain for themselves, and for us their successors.

4. We have also in these words a display of Christ to individuals. When your ministers speak of the exhibition of Christ to a sinner; the discovery of Christ to a sinner's mind; always understand us in this manner, whether we have time to explain or not. We do not mean that Jesus Christ descends from heaven; that God the blessed Spirit reveals to the mind of any man any new truth not already revealed in scripture. On the contrary, we think that the day the canon of scripture was closed, all the grand ideas were completed that ever will be given concerning Christ and his gospel in this world; and that there has not been, accurately speaking, a new thought on the subject, from that day to this. The old ideas of the gospel have been variegated,

in a thousand forms, but not one new idea has arisen in the human mind. The ideas of scripture, like colours, may be varied many ways, but are all reducible to their original principles. The effects produced by the gospel are the same now, as on its first publication. We have numbers of people walking amongst us ignorant of Christ, though he is preached to their ears every day. I do not say ignorant of his name, but ignorant of his character, offices, and grace. Now, the gospel is formed to unite itself to the soul of the sinner at his conversion. It enters into his heart, and transforms the man; just as a passionate wretch, who by communion with a person of a placid temper, becomes cool and calm; and has insensibly caught the temper of his friend. O my God, what *goodness* is this! Shouldest thou give me days like Methuselah, wisdom and riches like Solomon, yet what would these avail me: if I could not enjoy the blessings of thy gospel, I should be a miserable man. I might indeed for a while dance, and sing, and visit, and seem to enjoy myself, and put far away the evil day; but there would come a period when God would say unto me, here shall thy proud course be stayed.

If there be any thing that deserves the name of *goodness*, it is this gospel dispensation. It is good in youth, good in old age, good in health, good in sickness, good while we live, and good when we die; it is good for ever.

Secondly. We have to shew you that this *goodness* is so exhibited as to excite *fear*; given so

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as to make the mind quiver whilst it takes the gift, lest it should offend God.

1. Let us attend to that part of experimental religion, which we call *conviction*. Now this conviction is a knowledge of oneself, and that includes a knowledge of the body, a knowledge of a frail set of organs, which the want of a little breath of air will bring to putrefaction; and that is a very mortifying knowledge: but it includes also a knowledge of the soul; a disordered spirit, that loves where it should hate; that hopes where it should fear; that "rushes where angels fear to tread." Now is it possible to know my body, know my soul, know that my reason is where my passions should be; and that my passions are got above my reason; and that what I know to be right, I have not a heart to do; and what I know offends my God, that I do:—but is not this sad and melancholy knowledge? And yet this I call evidence of the *goodness* of God. It is like informing a man who is going a journey, that there are thieves in the road that will take his property; assassins there who will aim at his life; so that there is great need of his calling in help. Yes, *conviction* is indeed expressive of the *goodness* of God, though it includes just grounds of fear. And to this—

2. We may add *conversion*. This literally means a *turning about*; and in its theological sense it means, the return of a sinner through Christ to his God. Oh! could the hearts of converted people speak, what would they tell us

on this subject? I (says one) was lost in ignorance and misery, and I thought my heart leaped for joy, when I heard there was a possibility of recovery. I (says another) I thought it next to impossible I could be saved; and when I found this promise, though it only assured me it was possible, though but a *may-be*, it was what I hovered over and laid to my heart, and lived upon. I said, O my God, this is better to my heart than *thousands of gold and silver*; and when I approached a little nearer to Christ in his gospel, methought my soul was all bedewed with a sense of his love; it was a kind shepherd; a good father running out to meet his prodigal son; it was a benevolent person looking into my poor cottage, and saying, child, have you any bread, have you any support; here it is for you, here in the cross of Christ, here in the grace of God; here set your foot, and you are safe for ever. And thus you were converted. Under an apprehension of the goodness of God in Christ you ventured to approach the Deity, and to say with an humble and broken heart, Lord, I beseech thee, let me live. But I ask, was all this so done as to leave out every ground of *fear*? No, say you, I was obliged to take the mercy where my God gave it, and though the most awful object in the world, was displayed before me, the *cross of Christ*, there I followed him. I have the hope of heaven, blessed be the name of the Lord, but I have it only through the *blood of Christ*. I have the blessing, but, O my soul, at what an expence!

I was almost afraid to take it, lest I should abuse it. Just as an artist, sensible of the worth of an excellent painting, would be afraid to touch it lest he should tarnish it: or as a careful person would be afraid to possess a jewel of great price, lest he should lose it.—Need I take you beyond *conversion*, and lead you—

3. To *sanctification*. And why need I remind you of those afflictions with which God has visited you to sanctify and make you holy. But it was *goodness* that made you feel. Perhaps you were lifted up too much on account of your health. Your health, says God, shall suffer for many years. Perhaps your affections ran loose after a beloved wife, or child, to the neglect of your God. The *desire of your eyes*, the darling of your heart is taken from you. But still there is *goodness* in the stroke; the design is to mend the heart, to make you better. Then—

4. There is the hour when the soul departs out of the body to God. Imagine yourselves come to that hour: and O what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of death! How mortifying to find our senses go off one after another, and bid us an eternal adieu. We lose the pleasure of seeing and hearing, of tasting and smelling, and we become dull old people. Our faculties fail, and we go about a truth, but are incapable of comprehending it. The memory fails, and we cannot recollect the things we most wish to remember: yet in this very state God is about to conduct us to *heaven*; *there* we are to have an eternal health

of soul ; there we are to have the use of all our faculties, and those faculties infinitely improved. This is *goodness*, although the circumstances of it may be attended with *fear*.

But, to conclude, remember, God is not to be trifled with. We have said this whole dispensation puts the soul into a proper state between the two extremes of *presumption* and *despair*. There is an odious disposition in the heart of man to extremes ; to presumption on the one hand, to trifle with divine things ; and to despair on the other, to look upon God as a tyrant. We want to be kept from both ; and it is this dispensation well wrought into the soul that keeps it between both. A good christian dare not trifle with God, or set light by his gospel ; but at the same time God has laid such grounds of hope in his *goodness*, that he is bound over by the gospel and his own feelings to avoid bold presumption, and miserable despair. May God give to each of you, and may you live long to enjoy this promise literally : may you *fear the goodness of the Lord in the latter days.*—*Amen.*

SERMON VI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL.

[Preached at *Hempstead, Herts*, after an Ordination Service.]

2 COR. vi. 1.

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

WHAT a melancholy truth, christians, does my text imply ! That men may receive the *grace of God* to no purpose ! A truth nevertheless, that it may not be improper or unseasonable to urge upon you this evening, who have this day openly and in the face of so many of your brethren, appeared to rejoice in receiving *the grace of God*. Sad would it be, if when the last account is made up, it should be found this was but *the crackling of thorns under a pot*, (to use a scripture expression,) and that after all you had received no saving benefit from the gospel. I persuade myself to night, to this congregation such a thought is shocking, and I think I hear every one saying *God forbid !—Amen !* I reply with all my heart : but the way to be saved from this, is well to understand in what it consists, and to walk with

caution the rest of our life; for where there is danger there should be a strict guard. Let us then attend to the subject in dependence upon the Spirit of God.

You know my brethren, the writer of this epistle was Saint Paul. He had been informing the Corinthians that one of the best general notions they could entertain of the gospel is, that it is a *ministry of reconciliation*, as it was intended to lead man who had fallen from the state in which he was created back to God; he tells them what God had done to bring about this great event: I believe that is his meaning when he says, *we then*, I Paul, Apollos, Peter and others, who labour among you, consider ourselves as entering into right views of Jehovah, and endeavour to *work together with him* to bring about this great end. Whether this be the meaning of the text or not, it is a certain fact, that your ministers endeavour to represent to you the goodness of God in giving the gospel, and they catch, from the contemplation of his love the holy fire, and say to the Almighty—Send me with all the powers I have to bring back wandering souls to thee.—I enter on the subject with this view: would to God I could effect it. This is what a faithful minister attempts in his studies; and all his labours, his conversation, his example, tend to this purpose: detesting worldly projects and motives, his great aim is, to bring the people back to God. Now, says Saint Paul, *We beseech you* Corinthians also; for with all your great gifts, it is possible you may have

no saving grace, and may even perish; we beseech you that you would not be dazzled by your gifts, but attend to this great point; enter into the views of your ministers, as they do into the design of God, and see that you *receive not the grace of God*, by them published to you, *in vain*.

The important question then is—When a man or a people, may be said to *receive the grace of God in vain*?

Some of you perhaps may inquire—What are we to understand by the *grace of God*? Is it the doctrine of the gospel as it lies in the book of God? For so it may be called *the grace of God*. The gospel is a plan of redemption that arose in the favour, and was revealed by the mercy of a wise and good God, and whatever becomes of it in the world, his grace will everlastingly be displayed in the plan, which is, as we have termed it, a system of goodness. Others perhaps may ask—Does it mean the *principle of grace*, ingrafted in man? You know the doctrine of our churches is, that it is the former: it cannot indeed be the latter, for when this principle is implanted, it is impossible it should be received *in vain*. It must then be the first of these senses,—the gospel of Christ. And may not the gospel be called fairly by this term—*The grace of God*? What possible right could we have to *grace* or favour who have made so little use of what we naturally have—*Reason*? I ask, is it fair of you to expect a second gift before you have made a right use of the first? Now the first is *sense* or *reason*. We have not made a right

use of this gift ; we have made an insufficient, or a wrong use of it ; and can we then have a fair claim to expect a future blessing ? No, my brethren we have not made a right use of this blessing bestowed upon us by nature ; I do not presume to say how far it would have gone if we had : but when God saw the world in this condition, and he knew it had no right from him to expect a revealed religion, it was an act of grace to give us this revelation.

We proceed to inquire—When does a man receive this *grace of God*, the gospel of Christ *in vain* ?

Here we observe—

First. The gospel of Christ is a body of *truth*, it is a regular system a connected chain of truths. There is a God, is one.—This God is to be worshipped is another, and so on to the doctrine of the final judgment, heaven and hell. The doctrines of Christ's gospel are a compact body of religious knowledge ; and whatever curious minds, depraved by vice may say against it, certain it is, that a sober mind inquiring after knowledge can ask no question in religion, which this book does not fairly and fully answer. I say a sober mind disposed to know in order to do every thing necessary to faith and holiness can ask no question which this book does not fully answer : indeed we may ask a thousand quaint questions even in religion, answers to which would do us no good, of which we should have no mind to judge

did we find them in the word of God, and if we could judge concerning them, should have no power to execute them. A person may be said then to receive this *grace of God in vain*, when he is not instructed by it! Is it possible for a man to receive *the grace of God in vain* in this sense? Can he be insensible that there is a God, that he himself is a sinner; that Christ came to save him; can he be blind to the doctrines of heaven or hell? My answer is, there are two kinds of science; one that lies only in the head, and does not affect the heart and the life; and there is another that we call practical knowledge, such as sways the soul into obedience. And I believe every truth of religion carries with it its own force and power when rightly understood: for instance, do I attain the knowledge that there is a God, instantly I feel a constraint to worship him. I cannot entertain just sentiments of God, without feeling admiration of such a being, an approbation of him, a veneration for him, and respect for him; and this will bring with it a desire to imitate him. Do I believe the doctrine of the depraved state of man, how can I avoid feeling sentiments of pain, anguish, grief? What, shall a man lose an only son, and not rise up and search after him with anxious carefulness? And shall a man be persuaded he has lost his innocence, lost his hopes of happiness, and not be affected with the sad truth? No: I repeat it, you have received the doctrines of this pulpit and of all others *in vain*.

if you have not received them with such knowledge as bows the soul into obedience.

It may be necessary here to observe, that there are two sorts of truths taught in the gospel; the first we call *essential*, without the practical knowledge of which it is impossible a man can be saved; the other kind is *circumstantial*, which though we should never hold lightly, yet we may be saved without them. Do not wonder we say some truths are essential to salvation. Repentance is necessary: now I cannot be sorry without knowing why; I must know my state and behold the danger of that state; and it is the discovery of this which produces grief and pain.—I must know the character of that God whom I have offended; I must be acquainted with the mission of his Son, and from this knowledge springs that innate shudder of the soul which a christian feels when alone in his closet at the tribunal of God; first beholding God at Sinai; then the Saviour at Calvary; here to attend to the voice of God in thunder, and see him in his judgments and power; there to behold Jesus dying for me, and receive that gentle touch that breaks the heart for sin. Now how can this doctrine for one instant be received aright without knowledge?

The gospel is received *in vain* when it is not practically understood by those who hear it. You are a happy congregation if you have no instance among you of people who have sat a long time under the gospel, and have not understood it: but

examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith: and O! that you may be able to say, and say it with truth, I know in whom, and in what I have believed.

2. The gospel of Christ is an ocean of *comfort*. Now it is received *in vain*, unless it administer comfort to the person that sits under it. The thoughtless and the trifling may laugh when we talk of experimental religion; but the day will come when they will have their experience and their feelings too, but O God! what feelings will they be? I will tell you what some feel; they are sensible that they have lost their original rectitude, and of their aversion to good and inclination to evil; and that they are under the censure of God for being so; that they perceive they have been travelling every day further and further from him: finding this to be true they suffer the most pungent grief, whether abroad, at home, by day and by night, in a place of devotion, or a place of diversion: the cutting thought goes about with them every where. Wretched man art thou, which way wilt thou look? About thee, all enemies; above thee a heaven which thou hast forfeited; beneath thee hell gaping to receive thee; within thee many fears and distressing doubts: which way wilt thou turn? and in this condition the soul appears cut off entirely from God and from hope! O my soul, thou art overwhelmed with guilt, and misery on this account. Now the question arises from hence, what can give such a one solid relief? —Return to duty? Ah, that is done, in some

measure, at least; but he is not yet fit to appear before the King of kings. What is to be done? Why the minister comes with the gospel of Christ, and brings you a ground of comfort; from that he tells you, notwithstanding all this wretchedness and misery, God sets forth his son, his death is an atonement for your sins, through him he opens the way to eternal life, and invites you to come and walk in it: now if people come and hear this doctrine, and after all say, it is very well, but I have more comfort in getting a little money, or experiencing a little pleasure; all my delight springs from other sources, than the death of Christ; I am more concerned for my reputation, my honour, my prosperity, there is more comfort to be derived from these, than from the death of Christ; why then, undoubtedly, you receive *the grace of God in vain*. We ask, what is there no comfort in Christ? no pleasure to be found in the history of Christ's dying for the salvation of miserable souls? Wretched creature, to have sat under this gospel and received no comfort from it! In truth christians, the weakest among you though he complains of himself continually, though his faith is never so weak, yet this weakest christian actually derives comfort in hoping to be saved by Jesus Christ, that he would not exchange for all the sensual honours and pleasures in the world.

3. The gospel is a *rule of conduct*.—Indeed strictly speaking the gospel itself is a declaration of mercy distinguishable from a rule of conduct; but since our *Immanuel* lived all the while he was

in the world, a holy, pious, benevolent life, the history of this mercy includes a rule of action, for it includes a world of godly example. Well then, that man receives the gospel *in vain*, who has not from it derived any such motives of action as Christ the giver of it possessed : and here will you give me leave to remind you of two things in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The course of his outward actions.—Certainly every good man imitates these actions. Christ prayed to God ; and every good man though his prayers are not of the length and fervency of the Lord Jesus Christ's, yet he is a praying man. Christ attended public worship conscientiously, seriously and constantly. Every good man is, when nothing extraordinary prevents, (and this should not be a little matter) a constant, public worshipper of God. Jesus Christ was a man who was just in every station ; a good subject, a good son, a good character in all his actions, and so every good man receives the gospel of Christ with this intent, to make him perform the same sort of actions as Christ did, though not in the same perfect manner. He prays to God though not with the same length and fervency ; he worships God, though in a less perfect way, and fulfils all the offices of duty to God, and benevolence to man as far as he is able, though not with the same degree of piety and uniformity. Then there is in Christ a second sort of excellency which we as ministers are too apt to overlook in our people ; that is the temper of Christ, the holy inward dispositions of

Christ. Now it is not enough that a man follows Christ in the course of his actions, but if he be a true disciple of Christ, he performs them in the temper of Christ; he prays fervently, he worships God with his whole heart; he does not only bear with man, but he does it with all that pity, gentleness and constancy, and in a word endeavours to do every thing with that sort of excellency, though not that degree of it, that went through the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, add this head to the former, and believe me when I tell you, you have received *the grace of God in vain*, if you have not in some sense entered into his spirit and temper.—I should suppose to night some among you may say, O how happy should I be were I a possessor of these graces: but I fear some of you may say, God knows were I this instant called to the bar of my judge, where matters would appear as they really are, and not what mistaken man takes them for, thou knowest O my God, I have *received the grace of God in vain*. What shall I say to such? Why if I could I would say a few of the plainest things in the world, and cover thee with shame, because thou knewest these things and didst not practise them; I would say thy breath is in thy nostrils, thou art every moment hanging over the gulph of eternal perdition, and where is thy prudence, that knowing this thou shouldest dare to trifle thus? I would say a sinner dying under the sound of the gospel goes down to the pit with aggravated condemnation. Dost thou want to know this? and if thou hast known

it, how is it that thou hast not acted accordingly? O go to God, and beg of him to give thee this only true, valuable knowledge: say what will it avail me if I know a thousand things, and know not God, O my soul, thou wilt, in a moment's time, thou wilt feel enough in one moment's pain to dispossess thee of all thy knowledge. Would to God that fears, well grounded fears, though they are not faith, might begin to operate, and that they might influence thee to cast thyself upon the mercy of God. There may perhaps some happy minister, some good book, inform you of the way to eternal life; some happy moment may arrive, in which when thou art wrestling with God, he may manifest his grace to thy soul, and give thee to say, now O God, I know that thou lovest me. There is no other way but this; for what can a sinner do? He tries to forget his state; he endeavours to persuade himself that his case is not so bad as the gospel represents it; but why not go into the matter thoroughly? Is not thy conscience like a bankrupt's books, and art thou not in like manner afraid to look into it? But since it must be known, look into it now, and may God impress thy soul. O, that it might be this moment! God forbid that you should receive his *grace* again *in vain*. I will suppose every one of us, has great reason to be humbled in the dust before God. O what a number of good sermons have been thrown away upon me; how many good books have I read to no purpose; how many Lord's days have I murdered, got rid of the time, at length come to the end

of it, and know nothing nor have done any thing! My brethren, these thoughts would arise if we looked only at the means; but we lay means aside, and say, no, my beloved Saviour! it is not the loss of a Sabbath only, it is not the loss of a sermon or a good book that I lament. When I behold such a Saviour as thou art, I should stretch my wings like an eagle and say, is he to be known? I will know him. Does a drop of this knowledge console my mind? O God what would I give to feel more of this consolation!—When a man places himself before God and thinks he has received so many blessings *in vain*, it is enough to pluck up pride by the roots, and make the best man hide himself in the dust, and say, what might I be if I did but improve my privileges!

When I see a sleepy, sluggish soul, neglectful of prayer, methinks I see, first,—Moses come and warn him; after him another, after him another, and so all the prophets call him up to God; Joshua comes and Jonas with all the rest, and try to rouse the sleeper to prayer: *arise O sleeper, and call upon thy God.* The prophets come forward; and methinks I see the apostles and ministers of the gospel come upon the same errand, but *in vain*. I see also the Son of God quit his Father's throne, and I hear Jehovah say, I will send my son; surely *they will reverence my Son.* The Son comes and with him *grace and truth.* By *grace* some understand gracefulness, that is that Christ preached the truth in a graceful way, in a kind and gentle manner: he that could smite the sleepy, indolent

christian down, and would not smite him twice; he that could put every part of his body to pain, and turn every nerve and sinew within him into a hell, he comes and says,—*I beseech you by the mercies of God, by the shedding of my blood, by the honour of my Father, I even command you by the allegiance you owe me, that you do not receive this grace in vain.* Here—take the blessed gift, the gospel, the *grace of God*; but I charge you do not receive it *in vain*.

What, is it possible, that all this should be not fancy but fact, and yet be held out to you to no purpose? O, my God, help us all to night to shake off this sluggishness, to go directly to thy throne, and say, O my God I am determined in dependence upon thy strength, not to receive any longer as I have done, *the grace of God in vain*; no, I will receive it to the best of purposes; to excite to the constant universal conformity of my conduct to thy will, and to pray that I may live a life of holiness here, and happiness hereafter.—
May God to this purpose bless these hints.

SERMON VII.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF REVELATION.

JOHN XI. 9, 10.

Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world; but if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth because there is no light in him.

MY brethren, how happy would it be for us, if in the course of our christian conversation, we were content with what God has been pleased to reveal. The religion we profess is *christianity*, and about christianity we profess to know no more than God has been pleased to tell us; consequently when we require men to walk by that revelation we mean that they should conform exactly to it; that is, that they should believe all that God has revealed and nothing more. I suppose it was with a view to this that the wise man said, *be not over wise, why shouldest thou destroy thyself?*

In order to direct us in this course, if it may please the Holy Spirit, whose assistance we implore to bless the word, we have chosen these words for our present meditation: and it is necessary we should mention their connection with the

rest of the history, and give you the literal sense of them, because all our doctrine will be a moral use drawn from that literal sense.—You know the chapter out of which I have read the text begins with an account of Lazurus: he was the brother of two sisters who lived a little way from Jerusalem, at whose house our Lord seems frequently to have been. This man it seems fell sick when Christ the friend of the family was at a distance. Now what appeared very strange to the disciples of Christ was, that when a messenger came to inform him of the sickness of Lazarus, and the sorrow of his sisters on that account, *he*, it is said, *abode two days still in the same place where he was*; yet it is said immediately before, *Jesus loved Lazarus and his sister and Martha*. The disciples could not comprehend how the conduct of Christ was consistent with his professions. Seeing he had so great a regard to that family, and had it in his power to gratify their warm wishes, they wondered he did not immediately proceed to do so: but he said to his disciples, *let us go to Jerusalem, and abide there two days*. It seemed as if Christ had thought about the matter *two days*; not that he wanted a second thought; but he lived not for his own sake but his disciples, and his conduct was often regulated by a concern for their advantage. Not aware that his saying—*let us go up to Jerusalem* was a conclusion drawn from sober premises, they said to him, *Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee and goest thou thither again?* My text is an answer to this question, and at the same time

an explanation of Christ's conduct; and if I were to divide the two verses, I should say they contain an apology for the disciples, and a justification of Christ himself. The apology is this:— There is no foreknowledge in you; you have not a spirit of prophecy to foretel what will befall me; you do not know that the Jews will kill me, though they once attempted it. Since then you have not a knowledge of the thing itself you cannot deduce the principle: since this is the case you act like a man that walketh in the dark, and you stumble; now, for my part, I do not blame you while you are thus incapable of judging, but I justify myself, for I have the spirit of prophecy; I am like a man that walketh in broad day. *Are there not twelve hours in the day; if a man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light.* I am in that case a perfect judge, well instructed in regard to the step I am going to take; *I stumble not; but if a man walk in the night he stumbleth because there is no light in him:* that is, if you act upon a principle, upon which you have no ability to judge, *there is no light in you; you stumble.*

Now the moral use of these words is, that true religion consists not in the speculations of our minds, but in a conformity, exact and accurate, to what God has been pleased to reveal, which is, in my opinion, the height of the life of a christian in this world.

I will endeavour to investigate this subject in four different points of light.

First. I shall endeavour to shew you that we have EXISTENCES declared in the scripture, with the nature of which the scripture has not acquainted us; and that in that case it is equally our wisdom and our duty to believe the truth, namely, that there are such existences, and not be shocked if their nature is not explained.—Let me mention a few instances.

The scripture tells us that there is a GOD, the first cause, the maker of all things. It assures us that this God possesses perfections infinite in their nature, and eternal in their duration, it tells us that he *is a Spirit*, and a Spirit who *knows all things*: it tells us that he is a Spirit who can *do all things*; that he is a Spirit perfectly kind and just. Now if any one say, but this does not tell me how this supreme Spirit, subsists, or the mode of his subsistence, I should answer, here is the case we mentioned to you; a nature declared to be, but the mode of its being not explained; and I can conceive a great many reasons why God does not afford us this explanation.—Because the knowledge of it does not contribute to my holiness, or because it cannot be comprehended by my capacity. So then, a christian if he reads in the scripture, that Jesus Christ is God, that the Holy Spirit is God, he is bound to believe that upon testimony: he never found it out by his own investigation, but he is told so, and the teller of it is a credible witness; upon his testimony he believes it, and he is not shocked because he is not told the manner in which these three are one.

Again, we are told that the human spirit, the soul of man is immortal; but we are not told whether this be what philosophers call matter or spirit; but that this spirit this soul of man shall exist for ever; that at death it shall *return to God who gave it*. We are told that this spirit exists in a separate state after laying down the body. The thief was to be the *same day* in *paradise* with our Lord. The Apostle Paul when *absent from the body* was to be *present with the Lord*, and the same of all true believers. Now what is a plain christian to do? To give credit to this testimony; and it is not in the power of all the philosophers in the world to shake his confidence; for he does not rest upon his own investigation; he has not found out that the soul is immortal by the force of his own reasoning, but God has assured him it shall be so.

The same we say of man, we may say of *angels*: there never was a man who could conceive what sort of a being an angel is; we have no word to describe their form, their shape and powers: if they are called *angels*, the word only signifies *messengers*, and intimates their employments, rather than their natures. The same may be said of *devils*; never any body formed a clear notion of Satan; considered as a being we all know he is a malicious, wicked, envious spirit: but we have no notion of the form, the colour of this spirit; we therefore know that those who ascribe colour or shape, or certain extraordinary powers to this being, act wrong; there are no such colours or shapes, or

powers described in scripture. If a christian allows that these spirits may exercise some degree of influence upon our souls, to tempt us to sin, so far he *walks in the light*, because the testimony of God declares it, but if he goes any further, he walks in the *dark*, he *stumbleth*.

If the first principle we have laid down be a just one, if it be true that scripture informs us of an order of beings, without informing us the manner of their existence; if the christian world had kept true to the principle, what multitudes of disputes would have been avoided, what numbers of books would not have been written that are written, and which serve but to oppress and encumber the earth: for what after all, are most of the controversies that have been written about the *Trinity*; or *angels*; or *devils*; or the *immortality of the soul*? Why I will venture to say that after all the learning that has been spent upon them, and the many books that have been written, we are just as wise as the christian world were before, because they have informed us of nothing more than we find in the scriptures, and the subjects were far beyond the investigation of the writers.

SECONDLY. There are EVENTS, and the reasons of these events not always assigned: but for as much as these events are recorded in scripture we are called upon a principle of sound christianity to believe them. You know what they call in the schools "Original Sin" has made a deal of disturbance in the world; as will be the case of all such

subjects.* The only proper, and the only safe way of determining the matter, is to take it up as the Holy Spirit has given it us. A serious, thoughtful man asks himself, without touching any book in the world, am I disposed to sin? He examines his heart upon this matter, and he finds he is so; that he is when trouble comes disposed to murmur, and discontent; that he is when prosperity comes disposed to be proud and vain: when mercies are given him, he is disposed to be insensible of them, or not thankful to God for all the benefits shewn him, and therefore is chargeable with that black sin of ingratitude. Let him ask further, how long have I been so disposed to sin? Was I disposed to sin at forty, at thirty, or twenty years of age? He may carry back his thoughts as far as he can, and he will find he acquired a disposition to sin from his early years: he can go no further; there is an end of his knowledge. Well—what is this man to do?—The holy scrip-

* Our author appears in several parts of this discourse to have entertained the opinion of that great and good prelate, Bishop Taylor, who remarks as follows:—How many volumes “ have been writ about *Angels*, about immaculate conception, “ about *Original sin*, when all that is solid reason, or clear “ revelation, in all these three articles, may be reasonably “ enough comprised in forty lines! And in these trifles and “ impertinencies men are curiously busy, while they neglect “ those glorious precepts of christianity and holy life, which “ are the glories of our religion, and would conduct us to a “ happy eternity.”

Liberty of Prophesying. Preface.

I

ture comes and finds him putting this question; our Lord put it in a parable, *The servants said to their master—Didst thou not sow good seed in thy field! From whence then hath it tares?—* Am I not a creature of God, and is not God a wise and good being? How came I by an ignorant and wicked disposition? In answer to this Christ says—*An enemy hath done this*; in which he acquits God the creator of every man, narrates the fact, but does not account for it. The Apostle Paul says, *they die who have sinned*; well, and what then? How came they to die? Death implies they have sinned, if they suffer the penalty; why says he, *by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men for that all have sinned*. Here is the event clearly related, that sin came in by one man, and so overflowed all his posterity, but this is not accounted for. What does a man in this case who walks without light? He goes directly to impeaching the wisdom and goodness of God. How is it, says he, consistent with a good and righteous God to permit sin, the source of all evils? This is strange! Well, my brethren, I say so too; it appears to us to be strange; but on the one hand, we read that God is a wise and good being; *that* I cannot dispute; on the other, that man is a sinner; *that* I cannot dispute; that an *enemy* has sown these evil dispositions in man, I know not how to dispute; and there I stop; there is all the light God has been pleased to give us upon this point, and as long as we walk by these attested

truths we are safe, but when we go further, we are in the dark, we have no revelation about it, and we *stumble*.

There are two sorts of events recorded in scripture; the one is past; the fall of man is one of this kind; the second sort are events yet to come, and the resurrection of the dead is one of that kind. Now I read in the holy scripture this event, and I reason concerning it just as I do about the entrance of sin: for instance, I take and convey the body of my dearest, deceased relative to the grave, and easily perceive that there it is lost, and gone out of my sight: after a few days and years it is decayed, putrified, mixed, with the common earth, and if a man were to say, go find your relative, his eye, his ear, his hand, I should say he is gone out of my sight, and I know not where he is: I have no possible knowledge of futurity without revelation; but here comes in revelation; Jesus Christ comes from heaven and tells me, *I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me though he were dead, yet shall he live; and I say as the sisters of Lazarus did, he shall rise again.* I know by thy doctrine, that at the last day a pious parent, wife, child, or friend shall rise to the *resurrection of the just*, but the wicked to the *resurrection of damnation*. And now what would our fond wisdom do? It would go to enquiring how is it possible for God to effect this? How is it possible if you bury a dead body in the sea, if that body is eaten by a fish, and is incorpo-

rated with the body of the fish, if that fish is taken up by a fisherman and eaten by him, it becomes a part of his body,—how is it possible for God to distinguish these different particles at the last day? What therefore is the essential, indestructible part? *How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?* Why I answer, if I am true to the principles of revelation, I am in *the day, the twelve hours* of which our Lord here speaks; I know there is a period hastening, when *Christ will come again in the clouds with ten thousands of his saints*; but how this event is to take place, and by what means I cannot tell; whether God will raise the dead by an immediate effect of his power, or whether he will make use of earth, fire, water,—I know nothing of the matter: if I attempt to find it out, I *walk in darkness, and stumble.*

THIRDLY. God has been pleased in scripture to reveal to us CAUSES, but not to tell us all their *effects*. For example.—God has been pleased to tell us, that redemption by Christ is an *effect* of a *cause*, which *cause* is the *love of God to man*. Now he has not told us how far this cause shall produce effects, and therefore some people not content to stop where revelation stops, go into endless disquisitions upon this point. One says, what is the condition of the heathens, will they partake of eternal life? Yes, says one; no says another; they will all be saved says one; no says another, they will be all damned, they have no faith in Christ. My brethren, a good christian,

true to his principles says nothing. God's love is the cause, redemption is the effect of his love, but God has not told me how far this cause is to go, and it would be prophane in me to determine any thing about the matter. Again. Some take up the destruction of infants, and are perhaps inclined to think, for I hardly suppose any body can well and firmly believe it,—they will be annihilated says one, punished says another ; but a christian true to the principles laid down in my text, says nothing, but he supposes, and he has a right to suppose, that the love of God has great effects, and thinks the love of God may go so far as to include all christian children, and many heathens, but this should not be matter of faith.

And you christian!—Christian, say you? You miscall me, I am examining about my case. Well, I speak to you : what is your condition? I have looked say you into my heart, and I find it to be sinful, and deceitful; I am subject to evil passions; and when I look into the gospel I tremble for my fate, for I think, that whatever may be the extent of redeeming love, it can never go so far as to involve my case. I feel I have no effectual power over my evil dispositions, I cannot help crying out with the Apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* And say you, I am not a young person, whose habits are not formed, but I am an old man, and they have been formed a long time, and though they create constant grief and give me constant pain, though I have no hope but in the

gospel; yet I can scarcely believe the gospel extends to me. Now I say such a person sins against the gospel revelation, for God has no where limited his mercy: he says by his prophet, *Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.* Did you ever my brethren, perceive the spirit of these words as they are expressed not merely in our language, but in the original? *He will pardon infinitely, he will multiply to pardon.*—Who then are you that you should draw consequences against yourself, which it is not in your power to support, nor your interest to believe! Ah, better take the declaration of mercy at a word, and believe that the goodness of God can extend his grace to a man as unworthy as you are:— Pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit to enable you to subdue your sins, and improve your graces, and rest assured if you add watchfulness to prayer, and make use of the appointed means, that assistance will be granted you.

FOURTHLY. God has been pleased in this life to deal with his people, with respect to temporal and spiritual blessings very differently. I see for instance, two young men set out alike in the christian church; I see one of them go through life with the full use of his senses, his reason, his friends, his limbs, see him prosperous in the world, get rich, be esteemed by all about him, and at length *die in his nest.* I look for his companion,

I find him just as good a man as the other, but he has not the right use of his reason, nor of his limbs; instead of being healthy he is of a sickly constitution; instead of having a cheerful flow of spirits, he is a man of a disconsolate spirit; he is not prosperous in his business. Instead of being esteemed by all in his old age, he is a neglected decayed old man, and goes down to the grave unregarded.—I ask the cause of this difference; if I were to say as the Jews concerning the souls of those on whom the tower of Siloam fell, that man was a greater sinner than the other, I should say what I could not prove true. But if I say, true to the principle of the text, that God has been pleased to give his people adversity or prosperity according to his wise and good designs, I believe verily I should *walk in the day*, and should have no fear about *stumbling*, because this is a clear revealed christian truth; but if I go further, and expect to find in the afflicted, the cause of his distress, and in the prosperous the cause of his prosperity, perhaps I should err. And so likewise of two departing souls; I see one of the best christians on the earth, undergo a sort of discipline to the grave that makes a stranger shudder; I see him lose first one sense then the other, and so he dies as it were piece-meal, and when he comes to die he dies with a cloud over his soul, and does little honour to christianity! I look to the other, a man that one might expect would tremble till the bed shook under him, and he professes to feel consolations in a dying hour that our souls would above

all things desire : what shall we say christians? Shall we say God in one case acts with indifference, and in the other with unkindness? Let us believe that God has wise reasons for all this, and if we persevering in holiness, get safe to heaven at last, it is well ; leave all the rest to him.

When I think of hell torments, the misery of the damned ; when I think of the eternity of the blessed I am lost. I know no more than this ;—That one is appointed for the righteous, the other for the wicked ; but what *the worm that never dies, the fire that can never be quenched* is ; or what the river is, *the streams whereof make glad the city of God ; what the inheritance uncorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away* is, I cannot tell, *we know but in part*, and that but a small part. Oh, happy the man who imitates the *father of the faithful*, and having a call to come out from bad principles and bad practices to good ones,—happy he that can go as Abraham to the world unknown! Happy the man that can give up all to the will of God, and not withhold even a beloved son *Isaac*!

Let us briefly sum up this doctrine. We are come by the providence of God to the end of this day, this fifth of September ; what now is our duty? What is our mercy? Why we may look back, exercise our memories, and I am persuaded if we do, we shall kneel down in prayer to-night, with hearts full of veneration for God, praise for his providence, and thanks for his grace.—But what say you about the sixth of September, and the seventh, the next week, the next month, the next

year? Does not the Lord of assemblies stand forth and say, *take no anxious thought for the morrow, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof? Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart?* The doctrine of my text reduced to common use is this. I am to enjoy what I clearly know; to be easy about what I know nothing. Why should I make myself uneasy about to-morrow, a day that may never come? Why should I afflict myself about my own death? Perhaps the sting may be gone before I feel it. Why afflict myself about the death of my dearest relatives or friends? Perhaps I may never have them taken away from me, or if they are with tokens of love.

And why should we, brethren, fear the future state of the christian church? What though the majority go out after vice; what though the faith and love of many *wax cold*; what though the supporters of truth and virtue are but few! Yet, am I sure the church of Christ is always to go on dwindling, decaying, and dying? Have I never heard the voice of Christ saying, *look unto me and be ye saved all ye ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else?* Have I never heard him asserting, *the residue of the Spirit is with me? I have other sheep that are not of this fold, them also will I bring with me? I am the good shepherd, that layeth down my life for the sheep?*—Have I lost sight of the glorious prediction—*The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea!*—I,ord of all! This

people we hope with one heart and soul commit all their affairs to thee; their bodies to live or die, be sick or well as thou seest fit, their spirits to be lively or depressed, their properties to be disposed of at thy pleasure; their children, their friends, the church, the whole world they leave to thy wise and good government in future times, rejoicing that thou art a good God *to day!*

END OF THE SERMONS.

T H R E E
D I S S E R T A T I O N S :

I. ON THE NATURE AND OPERATIONS OF THE
HUMAN MIND AS RELATING MORE PARTICULARLY
TO THEOLOGICAL ENQUIRIES.

II. ON THE LITERARY PRECAUTIONS NECESSARY
IN THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY.

III. ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION;
OR, MODERATE CALVINISM CONSIDERED AS THE
SAFE PATH BETWEEN TWO EXTREMES.

*Ego multos studiosos quotidie video, paucos doctos; in doctis
paucos ingeniosos; in sententia nullos bonos. Atque adeo
literæ, generis humani unicum solamen jam pestis et pernicii
maximæ loco sunt. Itaque hodie ad lectionem eorum quæ pro-
deunt quotidie accedendum est πιστευτικῶν aut αλεξίφρακτων*

Jos. Scallig, Epis. Casauban. Ep. xiest.

*Sophistarum et aretalogorum hic est mos, ut in veteribus scriptis
hariolentur ea quæ ipsis scriptoribus nunquam in mentem
venerunt, et inscitia suæ velum sese putant obtendere cum
doctos grammatacos vocant, sese autem solos mirantur, se
solos sapientes prædicant. Idem. ad Gill. Seg. Ep. xv.*

DISSERTATION I.

ON THE NATURE OF THE HUMAN MIND &c.

THE celebrated Mr. Locke, conversing with five or six friends on a subject which perplexed and confounded them all, bethought himself that they were taking a wrong course, and that before they set themselves about such enquiries, it was necessary to examine their own abilities, and see what objects their understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with.* This wise reflection which produced his admirable *ESSAY ON THE UNDERSTANDING*, is worthy of imitation by every enquirer after science; and above all, deserves the most serious regard by every student in *Divinity*, the profoundest of all sciences, which has for its object not the works of God only, but the infinite mind of the adorable workman, whose intelligence, even an archangel need not blush to say, is as *high as heaven, what can he do; deeper than hell, what can he know?* (JOB xi. 8.)

The mind of man *physically* considered, as well as his body, however expansive, has yet its dimensions: and as the body has a certain degree of strength, capable of moving exactly such a weight, and the feeblest effort beyond it is absolutely impossible, so it is with his mind; there is a certain stretch of thought to which it can extend, but be-

* Preface to his *Essay*, Vol. I.

yond which, no effort, no art, can dilate it. This natural capability differs in different men; perhaps no two are exactly alike; but as in our bodies there is a universal sameness of parts, forming a resemblance between the blanched European and the sun-burnt African, and yet an endless variety of features, sufficiently distinguishing a twin from his brother; so probably it is with the soul; there is a substratum constituting humanity alike in all, and yet an infinite variegation distinguishing one from another, through the countless multitudes that exist. Men by not exercising their own mental powers may be insensible of their extent, and perhaps by a long habit of negligence, incapacitate themselves, as the strength of the body may be lost by indolence. Men who have never tried, may imagine themselves capable of many more animal and rational acts too, than they are. Men's minds will shrivel and contract for want of culture; and literature, by exercising will expand and strengthen them; but after all, used or disused, there is a native size beyond which no human art can carry them. Now if the *Father of Spirits* has formed some men's minds prodigiously capacious, and others extremely contracted, depend upon it, *religion*, that religion which has God for its author, is both simple and sublime: what is essential to salvation must be within the compass of the feeblest soul, and religion must have wherewith to fill and gratify the grandest mind. What an absurdity then is it, to make a man's happiness in either world depend on his receiving

just so many ideas as you please to put in a creed, and no more; seeing there will be more than some minds can grasp, and not enough to fill the capacity of others!

If we consider the human soul *morally*, its perfections will appear to consist in a certain harmony of concord, to disconcert which, a small defect or a small excess is all that is required; for as the health of the body depends on a certain tone of the solids, and an exact motion of the fluids, a small abatement on the one hand, or a small excess on the other, destroying the equilibrium, injuring the health, and endangering the life of the man, so it is with the soul; its *health*, (or to speak without a figure) its *holiness* and *happiness* entirely depending on certain agreements, determinable only by the nature of things. My soul is capable of a certain emotion styled *love*. The idea of a benevolent man, by whose benevolence I am no ways benefited, never fails to excite this emotion in the first degree: a second whose benevolence benefits me, excites a stronger degree of the same emotion: and a third, whose benevolence is twice as beneficial to me as the second, excites a stronger emotion of love still. Now, it is evident, that if I am obliged to love the first of these benevolent men as *five*, I am bound to love the second as *ten*, and the third as *twenty*: moreover, my love to the two last takes the name of *gratitude*, requiring such a return as is in my power: twenty degrees of love then is due to the last, as five is the proportion of the

first. I follow this reasoning and soon perceive not only that the supreme Being is infinitely amiable in himself, and therefore worthy of the highest love of all his creatures, but also, that the relations he bears to us all, and the benefits he bestows agreeable to those relations, requires all our most exalted services, and after all, are a poor present for the God we adore.—Now this equanimity, this state of the mind with regard to every object about which the mind is conversant, determining its operations by the nature of the thing, seems to me to constitute the moral perfection of a rational soul; and every deviation from this proportion, whether by failure or excess, is injustice, *sin*, the disorder and imperfection of a rational mind, more or less depraved, as it more or less departs from this right rule. Now, is there a man upon the face of the whole earth, whose happy soul has rendered again *to the Lord, according to the benefits done to him*; (2 CHRON. xxxii. 25.) or is there one, who has not under-loved the Creator, and over-loved the creature: have we not all cause to say, *If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse.* (JOB ix. 20.) The natural reflection of the human mind then, consists in a just extent of thought: a narrow mind, physically considered, contemplating a simple idea, is as perfect as the widely dilated soul of an apostle, penetrating the whole of a complex scheme; and the moral perfection of the human mind, consists in maintaining that order

which its relation to God and all subordinate beings requires; or if you please, it is that nice disposition of the heart, which refers all the ideas of the mind to their natural and lawful ends. He who is supremely good, will not, he who is supremely just, cannot require of these different creatures equal rights, nor indeed any thing which they have not received, or which they might not have received if it had not been their own fault. When, therefore, we consign the whole heathen world over to punishment for not being converted to a religion of which they never heard; when we deliver infants up to Satan for a crime which they never committed, and of which they know no more than the inhabitants of the moon; when we say that many in Christendom are damned for want of what God never bestowed, and even prohibited his ministers to offer; when we assert these and many more things of a like kind, we may indeed establish scholastic theses, but we do it at the expense of the perfections of God: and when ministers deliver to all their auditors such doctrines to believe under pain of damnation, their terms have a vague and indeterminate meaning, or to speak more properly, have no meaning at all. How desirable would it be to hear JEHOVAH claim his own rights, and publish his own gifts! Methinks like *Alcibiades*, when *Socrates* encouraged him to expect a teacher who should inform him of his duty to God and man, one would cry "most gladly would we know and submit to him who-

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“ever he be:” yet perhaps a wise man in the midst of his transports would add as *Socrates* did to him,—“That the same must be done for me “which *Homer* says *Minerva* did for *Diomedes*;^{*} a cloud must be removed from my eyes that I may discern God from man: for when God condescends to speak, it becomes me to be all attention, and by no means to appeal from his perfect decisions, supposing I am convinced that it is God who addresses me. Let sophistry say what it will to darken the evidences of Revelation; let her alternately as she pleases assume the preacher, fidler, statesman, or buffoon, she shall never prevail with me to deny miracles well attested, history well accredited, prophecies daily fulfilled. Every jew is a bible guarantee, and if there be any event in the world to be believed which I did not see with my eyes, that event is the *resurrection of Jesus Christ*; an event on which hang all the law and the prophets; an event, which if it is not true, not only supposes friends and enemies, Paul and Porphyry, jews and gentiles, the whole world in league to deceive me, but supposes God himself allowed falsehood all the evidences of truth. But should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk or with speeches wherewith he can do no good? Should he cast off fear, and chuse the tongue of the crafty? (JOB xv. 2, 3, 5.) Besides the language of the writers agreeing with the country and the age they pretended to have

* In Platonis Alcibiades secundo xl.

lived in, besides the purity of the morality taught in our scriptures, two things conspire to exalt my ideas of revelation. The perspicuity of its leading and essential doctrines, so plain that he may *run that readeth them*; and the mysteries of others, so deep that an order of intelligences superior to human *desire to look into them*: and should we be puerile enough to flatter, and forsake scripture every time people cry *mystery, mystery*, since God has stiled his gospel the *wisdom of God in a mystery*, and since we have demonstration that it is God himself who speaks to us by his prophets and apostles. And after all, who are these that would deliver us from *mystery*? Can they promise us that we shall find no mysteries in scepticism? Every daisy and cowslip is a greater mystery without a Deity, than *God in Christ reconciling the world to himself* is with one. Deny a self-existent Being, and all is mystery, more than mystery, impossibility. Acknowledge a Deity and the incarnation remains indeed a mystery, but ceases to be an impossibility, for God is able to do, not only more than we can explain, not only beyond all what we can think, but he is *able to do abundantly above all that we ask or think*, yea, he is *able to do EXCEEDING abundantly above all that we ask or think*. Sound reason allows this. Hence Longinus blames Homer for not representing God as he truly is, grand, glorious, and absolutely perfect, and commends Moses for doing it. Revelation every where represents the Deity

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as he is, exalted above all blessing and praise; and after this, shall little haughty ignorance pronounce his word unwise?

“ As if upon a full proportion'd dome,
On swelling columns heav'd the pride of art!
A critic fly, whose feeble ray scarce spreads
An inch around, with blind presumption bold,
Should dare to tax the structure of the whole.”*

Far be it from us to think that a doctrine is therefore credible because inconceivable; for thus we might sell our faith to fancy, to stuff as she pleased, and so instead of an uniform agreeable christian virtue, as a bible faith is, we should have only a frightful scare-crow.—On the contrary, we believe the mysteries of religion are comparatively few, that some parts of the true religion have been called mysteries which are not so, as Baptism and the Lord's Supper; which Le Clerk ascribes to the pompous rhetorical language in which these institutions were not unfrequently spoken of by the preachers of those days, and to the same cause does Vossius attribute the origin of praying to saints. He says—“That the orators of those days at their funeral orations for their brethren, followed the false swelling bombast of the times, very often used enormous hyperboles about the deceased, some times apostrophes, and prosopœias to the departed saints, and the common people, not understanding rules of rhetoric, took these addresses for prayers.” This is very likely, and we all know if great swelling words of

* Thomson's Seasons. - Summer.

vanity, convey no new ideas of plain doctrine or duty, they will at least dissipate the old ones, and thus the simplest thing in the world will in time become a mystery, which a whole conclave of Jesuits will never be able to explain. If some real parts of religion have been made mysterious when in themselves they were plain and easy, other mysteries have been invented which in truth *were* mysteries, but not mysteries of the gospel, nor indeed any parts of the gospel at all.—A fondness of allegorising has produced many such mysteries in the christian church; and whether the disposition came from Plato or Philo, it was early at work with the holy scriptures, until at length centering in Origen, whose genius was fruitful and fancy fine, he manufactured enough for the whole christian world: successive writers did but copy him. But why blame Origen? Such is man's love of the marvellous, so great his pride of discovering, so eager a candidate is each for originality, that if the whole christian church was restored to its primitive purity to day, its false marvels all swept away and forgotten, we should litter the house to morrow under pretence of making it fine, and in a very little time make it as bad as ever. Let God give us a rational, scriptural, heavenly mystery, and on his word for its truth require us to believe it, for perverseness sake we effect to believe no mysteries, nay not to be obliged to believe any; but let God leave us to ourselves, and rather than not have a mystery we will make one, and not only believe it ourselves, but assume a

divine authority, and require all our dependents to believe it on pain of our supreme dictatorial displeasure. Indeed there is very little reason to establish this kind of errors, for we may say of these what Quintillian somewhere says of an oration:—"A monstrous composition, like a monstrous production in nature, will always attract the admiration of the populace, while plain, but perfect nature, will slip by unnoticed." A religious mystery is a proposition which without revelation reason could never have discovered, and which, since its revelation, reason cannot fully comprehend; I say fully comprehend; for reason has something to do with a mystery; reason must examine its evidences of credibility, and reason may reject it if it be an impossibility; reason may renounce it if it be evidently irreconcilable with other certain known demonstrations; but nothing like this is the case with the gospel of truth: on the contrary, every doctrine is founded on evidences which right reason cannot fairly reject; there is nothing irreconcilable with any received demonstrations, nor is there any one which supposes an impossibility or even an absurdity. If two geniuses of equal capacity be concerned in commerce of thought; if one of these proposes a scheme however complex which the other cannot comprehend, there would be no absurdity in the latter objecting, at least pausing before he received it, for this plain reason; a mind no more extensive than my own cannot invent more than I can comprehend: but when he whose understand-

ing is infinite; when he who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; when he who doeth great things and unsearchable, yea and wonders without number; when he who stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing; who bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under him; when he whose power divided the sea, whose spirit garnished the heavens, whose hands formed the crooked serpent; when he who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand; meted out heaven with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance; when he whose glory covereth the heavens and who fills the earth with his praise; when he condescends to speak of the glory of his kingdom and talk of his power, when he makes known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glory and majesty of his dominion, ought right reason to wonder if he bringeth the princes to nothing, and maketh the judges of the earth as vanity?

Revelation therefore requires *faith*; and does not philosophy require it too? The divine and philosopher agree in requiring faith of their disciples; both require me to believe incomprehensible facts, though neither of them ask for faith without demonstrating the truth of those facts: one gives me ocular demonstration for he speaks of earthly things: the other gives me intellectual demonstration for he speaks of heavenly things: both have their inconceivables and both their demonstrations.

What must a man do? Glory in ignorance as that porter did, who seeing an office-clerk hanged for forgery, blessed himself, reproached the malefactor, and cried,—“ Ay! this comes of your reading and writing!”—I should conceive in all pursuits a certain point of approach to the object in view, a certain focus (may I call it,) in which with my present organs, with my present intellects, the object appears in its most perfect splendor for the contemplation of a sized mind as mine. A man who knows no difference between daubing and painting, or as Shaftsbury says, “ between a painter and a layer on of colours,” such a man will examine a picture best when his nose touches the canvas; but a connoisseur will halt, approach, retreat, until having well performed the optician, he may begin to judge. Methinks there must be a certain philosophic and evangelic justness of thought, short of which, if we pause, we err on the one hand, beyond which, if we rush, we err on the other: the truth lies betwixt both; and if we err, it matters little whether we err through defect or excess. Some indeed tell us that if we err sublimely we err nobly. But (begging their pardon who say so) error and sublimity are two extremes which no artist can associate, patronize him who will. On this sound maxim proceeds scripture when it exhorts us, *be not righteous over much neither be thou over-wise*. To be *over-righteous* is to do what God has not commanded, to be *over-wise* is to believe what he has not revealed. St. Paul says, *Be not wise in your own conceits*, and

advises us, *not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.*—We ought therefore to consider what is the rule of thought?—The holy scriptures no doubt: which rule is to be used according to the measure of faith; a plain doctrine for a little faith, and a more comprehensive one for a greater faith.—But what is faith? Faith is the submission of our intelligence to the decisions of an infallible being; of our passions, to such objects as revelation proposes, and of our conduct to the rules of action prescribed in the bible. We are obliged to include these three ideas in a saving faith; they are essential to its nature, and constitute its very being; take away of the three whichsoever you will, and you disfigure and destroy christianity: leave out the first, and you confound christianity with deism; omit the second, and you disgrace it with enthusiasm; take away the third, and Jesus, the just and holy Jesus, will become the lord of libertines, the patron and protector of practical antinomianism: retain the whole, and you have a religion admirably adapted to the attributes of God, the nature of man, and the good of society.—My own existence necessarily conducts me to the existence of the supreme, self-existent God, nor can I reflect on myself, or cast my eyes on any other creature, but I perceive the wisdom, goodness, and power of the great creator.—Now in seeking a religion, I must embrace that only which exhibits God as a wise, good, and powerful being, for I

know most certainly by the light of nature, that he is such a being, nor need I hesitate a moment in rejecting that revelation, which tarnishes the attributes of God, which far from augmenting diminishes the light of nature, and leaves me less acquainted with the Deity after I have received it than before. Many people are alarmed when we talk of the value of natural religion, but the apostle calls it the *truth of God*, and says that *his invisible Godhead was clearly seen, by the things that were made*.—What if the heathens when they knew God, glorified him not as God, and changed the truth of God into a lie? What then? It is the truth of God still, and natural religion as far as it goes, will teach me some clear truths about God, which I expect revelation should not cloud, but fill with splendor till they dazzle the eye with their lustre. On this principle we renounce the cruel worship of Tyre, the silly superstitions of Rome, with many modern fancies equally inferior to the dictates of nature on the attributes of God. Whatever we may think of the light of nature, the primitive christians, who lived in the midst of its abuses, and had therefore greater reasons for disgust with it, so far from condemning were even lavish in commending it. Hence Clement of Alexandria says—“What is Plato but Moses speaking ‘greek?’” Plato said so many good things that that father thought he had been dealing with scripture. Lactantius says more still of Tully; for having transcribed a most beautiful passage of his, descriptive of the moral law written on all men’s

hearts, he asks,—“ What christian now can more
“ fully describe the law of God than this heathen
“ has done;” for my part, adds he, “ when I hear
“ such men proclaim such truths, I am ready to
“ think that they are instructed by some divine
“ spirit; and had Cicero, when he perceived the
“ reasonableness of that law, explained wherein
“ obedience to it consisted, he would have per-
“ formed the office not of a philosopher but of a
“ prophet.” Cicero speaks almost Saint Paul’s
language, and when that apostle wrote to the Ro-
mans, he acknowledged they with other gentiles
did by nature the things contained in the law ;
he did not therefore propose to set aside natural
religion, but to distinguish and explain it, by de-
claring to them as he did to the Athenians that
same God whom they *ignorantly worshipped*.—
The gentiles not having the law, says Saint Paul,
are a law unto themselves, and do by nature the
things contained in the law,—which shew the work
of the law written in their hearts. Cicero re-
marks—“ That there must needs be Gods because
“ we have ideas of them implanted, or rather in-
“ nate, which nature has impressed on every mind.”
Must a man now after embracing the nervous
reasonings of Socrates, Cicero, and Plato ;—after
receiving the unity, eternity, and supremacy of
God ;—after acknowledging the immortality of
the soul, and the eternal union of holiness and
happiness :—must a man after believing all these
with the philosophers, renounce all these when he
becomes a christian ; or by becoming a christian

is he not rather infinitely more established in all these? Nay more, are not these truths laid as the basis of the whole superstructure of christianity? And when we submit our reason to faith, as we carry light coin to the mint, do we not receive rational truths back again, stamped with a new impress, shining with a new lustre? In good truth, if revelation called me to renounce the unity, eternity, and immensity of God, to resign the immortality of my soul, and the necessary dependance of happiness on holiness, I should know what to think of such a revelation; without hesitation I would reject it with both my hands.—We usually consider the light of nature in the lives of the philosophers, but that is not fair: what shall we think of christianity, if we judge of it by the lives of some of her advocates? Let us then abstract natural religion from the conduct of the pagan philosopher, and let us own that it is to revealed religion, not as total darkness is to day, but as some distant star is to the meridian sun: in the absence of the sun we are glad of the star, and though the presence of the sun absorbs, yet it by no means annihilates the star. We are equally irrational in denying the existence of the star, when it is no longer needful, and in reasoning against the existence of the sun, because it more than illuminates, and darkens the eyes that approach.—If from the attributes of God we pass to his brightest resemblance in this lower world, man; if we attentively consider his nature, all disordered and defiled as it is, we shall soon perceive that the revelation

which comes from God, must needs be intended not to destroy but to perpetuate and ennoble it; for that each body lodges a spirit, and that a spirit is indestructible who can doubt?

- “ Are there on earth (let me not call them men)
- “ Who lodge a soul immortal in their breasts ;
- “ Unconscious as the mountain of it's ore ;
- “ Or rock, of it's inestimable gem ?
- “ Are there (still more amazing !) who resist
- “ The rising thought? who struggle to be brutes?
- “ And with reverst ambition strive to sink ?”*

Every thing proclaims man immortal,—his genius, his reason, his passions, his virtues, his very vices not excepted;—even the latter, detestable as they are, publish his dignity, as the devils published the mission of Christ.

- “ His grief is but his grandeur in disguise :
- “ And discontent is immortality.”†

In vain our inventive genius devises works of grandeur; now collecting materials to form a palace, then combining sounds to fill with melody; in vain she expands in a science, and dilates in an art; in vain she produces them all; all are inferior, far inferior to ideas of grandeur yet unborn. Reason cannot help thinking it rational that she should be indulged farther than at present she is; she says God can lengthen this point into a line; I wish to have it done; far from injuring it will exalt his glory; I conclude therefore he will do it. She shudders at the sound of death when annihilation

* Night Thoughts. † Ibid.

is supposed to follow, and rejoices, while yet untutored by revelation, at the hopes of future happiness: future happiness is so rational that ignorant of heaven, she will create Elysium felicity, and future punishments so reasonable, that she will talk of Tartarus ere she knows any thing of hell: at all events she will be immortal. Man richly full of immortality, has perfumed with its delicious fragrance every thing about him; every thing proclaims that *he loveth life*, and would *fain see good days*: O! was he but as ready to *eschew evil, and do good, to seek peace and pursue it*, how soon would his heart and the gospel unite? How soon would he adopt that exulting language—*My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips*: for God would *open his hands and satisfy the desire of this living thing; he would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer him to see corruption. He would shew him the path of life, that presence where is fulness of joy, that right hand, where are pleasures for ever-more.*

If it be objected—*Animals think, are animals therefore immortal? All animals are loth to die, are all animals therefore perpetuated?—We could answer, that all are happy in this world but the lord of the creation. No sparrow sighs for a palace, or is his mind too big for his nest. Dost the wild ass bray when he hath grass, or loveth the ox over his fodder? God openeth his hand, they are filled with good, he taketh away their breath, they die and return to their dust.* But whatever

objections you may raise, instead of giving way to them, and thereby destroying our noblest wishes, we will turn to a revelation which answering every reasonable objection, regulates our speculations, and captivates our thoughts to the obedience of Christ.—We are reasoners. Well, what says the *teacher come from God?* Does he propose to extinguish reason, himself the finest reasoner in the world! *Your father in heaven is perfect; be ye therefore perfect. Ye know not what hour your lord will come; therefore watch. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without your father; ye are of more value than many sparrows; therefore fear ye not. I am the Son of God; if I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe me not, believe the works.*—Are these the words of a man who disdains to reason? What are all his sermons, all his miracles, all his word, (but as some have said) an appeal to the reason of mankind? Does one venerable prophet assemble all Israel? It is to *reason with them before the Lord.* Does another charge them with the most aggravated crimes, and yet publish an act of oblivion? He offers to *reason* together in the name of the Lord. Does an inspired apostle persuade the Jews and Greeks? It is because he *reasoned in the synagogues every Sabbath-day:* and this at Corinth too, where he went not with *excellency of speech or of worldly wisdom;* where he declared the *testimony of God in demonstration of the spirit and of power;* where he spoke the *wisdom of God in a mystery, not in the words*

which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. He reasoned Felix into horror, the Ephesians into peace, the magnificence of Diana into contempt, whole libraries into the fire; the devil himself turned evidence: *so mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*

But Jesus Christ sometimes blames his disciples for *reasoning*. He does so, and sometimes blames people for *praying*; for hypocrisy and sophistry are alike offensive to him.—No, if God gave us eyes he intended we should see with them; if he gave us reason, he intended we should use it; he that warned us not to believe *fair* words, would have us yield to *right* words: and after all that people say against reasoning, some how or other, men will reason in spite of themselves; those that most oppose it are glad to use it as far as they can, and that sect is yet to rise which does not propose to establish itself by reason. Reason is immortal, live she must, live she will, she has outlived paganism, shook off popery, survived a thousand oppressors; been often imprisoned, never long confined, often ingulphed, never drowned; she has been in *perils by false brethren*, in perils by the heathen, and in every city bonds and imprisonments and afflictions await her still: yet here and there a voice joins her panegyrist.

“ All sacred reason !

“ My heart is thine ! deep in its inmost folds

“ Live thou with life ; live dearer of the two.

“ On argument alone my faith is built ;

“ Reason pursued is faith, and unpursued
“ Where proof invites; is reason then, no more;
“ And such our proof.”*

But what is genius? And does the gospel annihilate it? No, it conducts it to objects where it is sublimely gratified, and magnificently lost.— Genius is said to consist of imagination, judgment, and taste. Imagination is sportive and unconfined, collects, invents, associates, separates, wanders uncontrouled through unknown regions, and gives “ to airy nothings a local habitation and a name.”† Judgment is a sobriety of thought, correcting fancy, as sorting ideas, lopping off luxuriances, and reducing the whole to an ideal standard of truth. Taste is better conceived than expressed; she makes as free with the gravity of judgment, as judgment did with the gaiety of fancy, fixes the quantity of each, and adjusts the whole. Was my will effectual, could I make a thing really exist as easily as fancy it, and set about creating it, I should suppose something like this in the process. I can fancy a flower, a tulip (suppose) as tall as a cedar, as high as the atmosphere; or as low as the lowest flower in nature; I can fancy one whose cup shall be big enough to hold a pint, a puncheon, an ocean, the planet Jupiter with all his satellites; or so small as to be filled with the most attenuated drop: I can fancy its leaves round, square, oblong, indented, even,

* Night Thoughts. † Shakespear.

prickly, knotty, downy, in all manner of forms, and with all sorts of appendages: I can fancy it green, yellow, purple, scarlet, violet, white, orange, black; or can assemble them all: I can conceive all this instantaneously produced; or growing by imperceptible degrees: I can imagine it instantly dying away, or preserving its beauty all the year round, or blooming unsullied through a thousand generations.—Judgment examines all these qualities, knowing that they cannot all be assembled in one flower; if its cup be of this size it cannot be of that, it assorta therefore and digests the whole. Taste considers it with relation to me, and by a comparison of my mediums determines the size, such a colour, such a shape, as is capable of producing the best effects on an eye, organized like mine. Every one has a degree of this genius; it is the soul of a thousand arts; it is the bread of some, the delight of others, the (often unsuspected) joy of all. But genius with all her boldness is confined. All prolific as she is, can she conceive a *sixth* sense, or an *eighth* original colour; or is she capable of one single abstract idea?—How! is genius herself a captive? Yes: she has her limits as the moon has her orbit; yet she is a royal prisoner, august even in her chains; even there she is a pattern of an original somewhere; that original is God. The God of genius must not be a deity *whose eyes see not, who has ears and hears not*, whose heart cannot conceive; she would refuse any ideas of a God beneath herself; it must be a God *wonderful in council and*

excellent in working; and then should the conceptions of God exceed all comprehension, genius could no more object to their reality, than the capacity of an infant would be a reason for renouncing Sir Isaac Newton's philosophy. What if he does not understand it now; let him grow, give him education; while a child he is not obliged to understand the whole system, but let him learn some easy first principles now, they will bring him gradually to the whole by and by.—She should say, God must be as far and infinitely farther above me, than Sir Isaac could be above the weakest mind: there the comparison is between creature and creature, here all comparison is lost. Shall I disannul his judgment? Shall I condemn him that I may be righteous? Have I a mind like God, or can I invent with an intelligence like him? I am then obliged to believe that the infinite mind of God conceives all possible worlds; I cannot doubt but he could have made this bigger or less than it is. I must conclude that of these possible plans he has chosen the best, otherwise God would be less perfect than his creatures. But yet . . . what yet? Speak out genius!—Here are some things you cannot conceive; —and some are absent you can conceive. Nay but is this fair? Do not you sometimes in oratorical and poetical efforts refuse to be tried by a dull grammarian, who chastises your freedom with mood and tense, who makes a rumbling with rules of syntax? You object, why? because say you, he can plod on in

rules made for him, but he never had an effort of poetic genius in his life: can he judge me? Very well, we allow your reasoning, we will allow your apologist who said that literature was content with the judgment of the few; but we insist on your equity; if he never composed a poem, you never made a world; acknowledge superiority of genius, set your dogmatical critic an example, yield to Almighty wisdom, and adore your God! Oh! how gratifying to exalted genius is our holy religion. What are the pranks of pagan theology collected by Cicero, in his book "Of the Nature of the Gods," when compared with the *mighty acts of the Lord!* How contemptible the legendary lies of the papist, compared with any one miracle of Jesus Christ! How barren the schemes of modern sceptics! They provoke people to say as the Castilian king of the received astronomy of his day—"Had God, when he made the world, called me into his council, I could have devised a better way." That saying was then blasphemy, but later astronomers have voted it orthodoxy.—But when we approach the holy doctrine stiled by excellency itself the *wisdom of God*; when we hear that—*To us a child is born, unto us a son is given, that the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace*: when we are told that, *all we like sheep have gone astray, the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*:—That none of the princes of this world knew him, and

therefore crucified the Lord of glory. That because he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath also highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. That being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation to all those that obey him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. That he shall so come, in like manner as he was seen to go into heaven. That he shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him: then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: and then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.—That these shall go into everlasting punishment, and the smoke of their torments ascend up for ever and ever. That the righteous shall go into life eternal; that they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more: the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their

eyes: that they shall be before his throne, and serve him day and night in his temple, be like God and see him as he is: that not the redeemed from earth only, but thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, thousand thousands, shall minister to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands stand before him; that they shall say with a loud voice, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, and praise.—Blessing, and honour, and glory, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.—

“——My God, what things are these!

“Eternity’s too short to speak thy praise!

“Or fathom thy profound of love to man!”*

Henceforth then let me confess that the greatest geniuses, unacquainted with this, *walk in a vain show*, for nothing can satisfy the soul but what astonishes, yea almost confounds. Henceforth let me exult, *great is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite! Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable!*—*It was he who made the earth by his power, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion.*—*It is his wisdom that dwells with prudence, and finds out the knowledge of witty inventions; by him princes, and all profound politicians rule. It is he who fills with understanding in all manner of workmanship, in devising curious*

* Night Thoughts.

works in gold, and silver, and brass, in cutting of stones to set, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. It is he who makes women wisehearted, to spin with their hands blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen; and goats hair. By his wisdom the hawk stretcheth her wings towards the south; the eagle mounts up and maketh her nest on high; the ostrich scorneth the horse and his rider; the horse smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting, paweth in the valley, becomes terrible with his nostrils, swalloweth up the ground with his fierceness, meeteth the armed men, mocketh at fear, neither turneth back from the sword. He taught behemoth to drink up a river, and leviathan to laugh at the shaking of a spear! We receive these declarations with all thankfulness, most gracious God!—But far be from us the impiety of calling these the sum total of thy wisdom, perfection, and beauty! Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! A gift proposed to our faith as an exceeding great effort of the wisdom of God! And when riches, and merchandize, and mariners, pilots, and caulkers, all the men of war, and all their company, shall fall into the midst of the sea;—when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth, and all her works be consumed; far from crying alas! alas! in one hour so great riches are come to nought, we expect thou wilt discover deep things out of darkness; and bring out to light the shadow of death,

filling us with joy unspeakable and full of glory ; with things prepared for them who love thee, which eye hath not seen, ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man ! Let him therefore who is deceived, trust in vanity ; for vanity shall be his recompence.

The stoics have ever been considered by thoughtful men as a superficial race, nor can they be acquitted from such a charge, if they meant to extinguish the passions.—But perhaps it may be questioned whether their opinions are not misunderstood, as those of the Epicureans usually are. Cicero says, “ That their disputes with the Peripatetics, were more about words than things :” and indeed who can dispute against what we all feel and desire to feel? What a world would this be were the affections banished? Subtract from a man all the fine feelings of the passions, and there remains but just enough to make a formal reasoning machine ; love is essential to all the relations of life, and the child of speculation has nothing but frigid disquisitions for them ; every body condemns such a creature to moulder away in a college apartment, uninteresting and uninterested.

A passion of the mind is a mode of thinking attended with pleasure or pain, and had we words as plentiful as ideas, we should call every degree of pleasure and pain by a distinct name ; but we are ever at a loss for words to express the sensations of the body ; light in a certain degree is very pleasant, in a greater painful, and in a greater still, exquisitely painful to the eye ; yet by what names

to call all these degrees of pleasure and pain we know not. It is the same with the mind; a fortune expected some years hence produced some degree of pleasure, more still as the period of possession approaches, and most of all (if we have not over-valued it) when we actually possess it. Our passions like the colours of the rainbow seem as if they were to run one into another, and it is a question whether the most speculative mind upon earth can distinguish their bounds; we have therefore names for some of the strongest degrees of pleasure and pain, as love, hatred, hope, fear, joy, as we have for simple colours; and for some few mixed passions, as for some mixed colours: compassion is of this kind; but for some we have no names, as indeed they are scarcely distinguishable. The passions seem to have a natural relation to objects, and to be no more in our power than the sensations of our bodies; I have no power to be burnt at a certain distance from the fire, nor to be only warmed if I thrust my hand into it; these effects are independent on me: there is also a connection between ingratitude and indignation, cruelty and horror, misery and compassion, virtue and love. "To eradicate the passions" (says a sensible writer) "is the attempt of fools; but to bring them under proper regulation, is the triumph of wisdom, and wisdom of the truest sort; which inclines us to the paths of duty, in order to put us in possession of happiness."—Wherein this regulation consists let us briefly consider.

There are matters of enquiry which have no relation at all to my happiness or misery; these, if I were a perfect creature I should examine without interest. For example, Herodotus and Xenophon both wrote the history of Cyrus, and differ very much in their accounts of his birth and death. The question is, whose history is the true one? An answer to this, no way relates to my happiness or misery; the examination therefore ought to be dispassionate, nor should a fondness for the stile of one of these historians, gain a verdict in his favour, to the prejudice of the other. There are subjects which have a very distant relation to my happiness or misery: for example, it was a very ancient opinion of the church, that after the resurrection of the dead, Jerusalem should be rebuilt, enlarged, embellished, and inhabited by good men a thousand years, and that Jesus Christ should personally descend from heaven and dwell with them: this seems to have but a very distant relation to my happiness or misery, for if I am in a place of torment, what is it to me where Jesus Christ is?—And if I am in happiness it is the same to me whether I am in heaven with Christ or Christ on earth with me; perfect happiness is not local. On subjects therefore which have no relation, or only a very distant one to my happiness or misery, I ought to be chiefly speculative, or very little moved.—On these we would approve of the maxims of Socrates, prevail with ourselves to withdraw from the judgments of the eyes and ears, and all the senses; to collect the soul if possible

into itself; to force the soul as it were from her own emotions. from joy, and fear, and hope; for whatever pleases us, we are apt to be biassed by that very pleasure to admit as true, and so *vice versa*. On these articles we admit with Cicero, "That all emotions of mind are diseases, that the health of the soul consists in a certain tranquillity and steadiness, that a mind void of these is insane, and that strong affection destitute of understanding, is not improperly called folly and madness."

But ought we to view things relative to our own happiness or misery, without emotions of pleasure or pain? This appears to me just as rational as asking—ought a man to take fire in his bosom and not be burnt? The question is not whether he *ought* but whether he *can* do this; and there seems to be, as much reason to suppose that God has fixed the emotions to be excited in our minds by certain objects of of thought, as there is to admit that he has determined the effects which shall be produced in the body by objects of sense: our heavenly father has not been less benevolent to the soul than to the body. The senses are evidently prepared to guard the body, the emotions to answer the same end to the mind. But since it is undeniable that the passions influence the choice of the mind very much, if I am to banish them in judging of things which have relation to my happiness and misery, and to admit their influence in things that have, shall I not by this rule generally judge amiss? For example; two critics equally

capable, sit down to examine the apostolical canons, the one in the protestant, the other in the Romish community.—Is it not almost certain, that he in the Romish church would expose himself to danger by determining their spuriousness? And would not the fear of this bias his understanding, and make him take up with a superficial examination? would not the hopes of a plaudit, a diploma, a mitre, or a hat in the sacred college, tempt him? I answer, if any of these advantages do indeed relate to his happiness or misery; if the perfection of his faculties, and immortality of his soul, do at all depend on any of these, then indeed, he would do right; first to blindfold himself, and then to leap into felicity. But on the contrary, we insist that he ought to consider himself as an immortal shortly to account for his conduct to God at the tremendous bar, that on that awful trial, depends an eternity of bliss or woe! That he ought to view hell with horror, heaven with desire, and the favour of God with the utmost ardour. Instead of biassing him the wrong, would not this influence him the right way? Such a man would see no comparison between time and eternity, God and man, he would not fear the wrath of a king, but *endure as seeing him who is invisible*. The happiness or misery of this man does not depend on the orthodoxy of this or that communion; truth is his interest, his only interest, and simplicity and godly sincerity his only duty; what if the investigation of truth should make him change his community, and even expose him to martyr-

dom, cannot the God of truth indemnify him? He calls him a friend, and says *fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* He easily discerns on the one hand, the power of God, the immortality of the soul, the certain connection of disobedience and punishment; and on the other, the weakness of man, however cruel: he ought then to feel very faint emotions about the latter, because they have only a very distant relation to happiness, and very strong ones to the former, because his infinite and eternal all depends upon them.

The man who governs his passions, does not seem to me to be one who divests himself of feelings, but who relates them to their natural objects: it is rather brutality than humanity, to view with the same indifference a lawless murder, and a lawful execution; the obedience of an angel, and the malice of a devil; high treason against God, and a profound veneration for him.—For as Lactantius justly argues, “ a vehement affection to a lawful object, is no sin, as a small regard for an unlawful one, is no virtue: such an attempt therefore, under a pretence of rendering the mind quiet and tranquil, is an attempt to change a running stream into a stagnant lake, rendering that which was profitable, useless and dangerous.” The master of his passions speculates only as to what can neither do him good nor evil, nor is he afraid of that; he does not fear the world’s fear, but *the Lord of Hosts himself is his*

fear, and he is his dread. Forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. But they are altogether brutish and foolish, the stock is a doctrine of vanities.

Perhaps it will be asked, since invisible objects excite emotions in the mind, as sensible ones do sensations in the body; since the creator seems to have placed both with the same design, to admonish of danger, and quicken us to means of security and safety;—how have we lost the government of our passions; and how may we recover this inestimable privilege?—If it be true that in a certain view we have no power to love vice, nor to hate virtue; how have we been driven from the post of observation, and how may we regain it?—An answer to these questions is so closely connected with what the schools call *Original Sin*, that it would divert us too far from our present design: (which is not so much to prove a doctrine as to state a fact,) we will therefore beg leave to wave this point, and taking for granted what no one will deny, that we have all diverted our passions from their proper objects, we will just observe, that the present state of our passions leads us directly to revelation, and that revelation undertakes to sublimate, and perfect them.—Children have senses and passions, yet far from determining with the Berkleians that there are no primary qualities, they think all the secondary qualities really inherent in external bodies; far from taking fire from an idea existing in their

minds, if they go too nigh the little infidels, say what you will, obstinately believe that there is heat in it. They are astonished when you tell them that the sun is equal in magnitude to a million of our earths; indeed they take him to be a little corpulent when he rises and sets, but at noon a perfect pigmy. In short every thing appears to them in disguise, and they will be familiar with nettles, and transported with trifles, until they discover the deception.—This they will often do; and the sinking and misgiving they feel on such an occasion, is as fair a warning from an emotion of pain to take care of deception, as burning or stinging is to avoid a fire or a nettle: they therefore ere long perceive that their senses which conduct them safe to a certain point, desert or betray them if they trust them a step farther: and they would just as soon perceive the same of their passions, did we apply their little curious enquiries to *search and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.* The Earl of Shaftsbury, to be even with those who stiled his lordship a *free-thinker*, called his opponents *no-thinkers*; and it is to be lamented, that so many deserve the title; for one should think it almost impossible that so many should live with so little reflection as they manifestly do. The luxuriance of the vine, and the industry and health of man are so connected that they are easily perceived; how is it that excess of passion and cautious education, so seldom meet? How is it that some of us treat our chil-

dren as domestic animals, others as beasts of burden, and others try to transform them into little devils? Do not we know that the passions as well as senses, are avenues of pain as well as pleasure? Do we not too well deserve the sarcastic appellation of *no-thinkers*? Why do we not follow the loud dictates of nature? Sense and passion would soon call for the help of reason, reason for revelation, and revelation would direct us to God, as the only object fit for the exercise of all-pervading passion.—Who ever glories in a freedom from the passions? The *second man, the Lord from heaven*, was far from such a freedom. Jesus Christ loved and feared, rejoiced and mourned, *offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, and was heard in that he feared*, and it seems he has *left us an example that we should follow his steps*. His followers were far from being dispassionate towards him. They were *filled with comfort, and were exceeding joyful in all their tribulations; when they had fightings without, and fears within, God that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted them*.—Nor were they indifferent to one another. Titus told the Apostle Paul of the Corinthians *earnest desire, mourning, and fervent mind towards him, so that he rejoiced the more*.—Nor were they without feelings for themselves; not those emotions of the world against each other which work death, but that self-resentment against sin: that *godly sorrow*, that tremulous contrition of a broken heart, that wounded spirit, *that worketh repentance not*

to be repented of. These heavenly men, wise as serpents, harmless as doves, without emotion almost for worldly objects, in this respect how impassioned! *What indignation! yea what fear! yea what vehement desire! yea what zeal! yea what revenge! in all things they approved themselves clear in this matter.* In this respect they agreed with the old Testament church. The meekest of men said, when he received the glorious ministration of death, *I exceedingly fear and quake. Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, was moved with fear and prepared an ark to the saving of his house.—They all saw the promises, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, were unmindful of the country from whence they came out, desired a better country, that is an heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.* Thus the church before our Saviour's advent, and the church since, like the two cherubims of old, look one to another, and the faces of both are towards the mercy seat. What meant all the fiery retinue of the law, *blackness, and darkness, and tempest!* What all the excelling glory of the gospel? *Pompous eloquence of agony, and earnestness, prayer, and sweat, and blood!* What means the history of the greatness of thine excellency, O God! *glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!* *What aileth thee O thou sea, that thou fleddest!* *Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back; ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams;*

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and ye little hills like young sheep! Why all this published by the voice of the Lord powerful! the voice of the Lord full of majesty! Is all this only that we might know the certainty of the things? Rather, were not holy men moved by the Holy Ghost, that we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to the hope set before us? Is it not that we might fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God? Is it not that we might know that the Lord our God is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations?—After the noblest objects in the world to touch the passions, are described in the noblest sublimity of stile, will any man say that it was only to inform the understanding, demonstrate the truth, and obtain the assent? Unjust, ungenerous prophets and apostles, why did not ye speak like metaphysicians? Is this the godly sincerity you boast of? Is this renouncing the hidden things of dishonesty, and commending yourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God? If I chuse a religion it is to make me happy; not to make a mere reasoner happy, but to make a creature happy who consists of both reason and passions; whose soul must be felicitated not by cutting it asunder, and destroying one half to gratify the other, but by preserving, governing, and impregnating the whole.

“Ye gentle theologues of calmer kind!

“Whose constitution dictates to your pen,

“Who, cold yourselves, think ardour comes from hell!

“ Think not our passions from corruption sprung,
“ Though to corruption now they lend their wings !
“ *That* is their mistress, not their mother.—All
“ (And justly) reason deem divine: I see,
“ I feel a grandeur in the passions too,
“ Which speaks their high descent and glorious end ;
“ Which speaks them rays of an eternal fire.”*

Every body seems to know the value of the passions, but some modern refiners of christianity. Aristotle thinks it not enough to demonstrate the truth in an oration; the passions must be engaged, for this he gives solid reasons, and a variety of rules to direct in the application of them. Longinus is for a perfect enthusiasm in his sublime, and gives various instances from Euripides, Eschylus, Sophocles, and others. In what degree soever a man possesses this art, in that degree he will please; and when mankind are all divested of passion, enquire with a philosophical nicety for truth, and are moved by such speculations, then, and not till then, will a scheme of religion cold and clear, be a useful one. But as long as that principle abides true, on which the great masters of antiquity proceeded, that is, that the passions are the springs of human conduct, so long will it be of the last importance to apply to them. Well might Clement of Alexandria, after having observed, that Plato and Democritus both “ ascribed “ a good poem to GOD, and supposed the poet to “ excel in virtue of divine enthusiasm,”—well might

* Night Thoughts.

he cry—"How astonishing are the prophets these "organs of the Almighty God; Does no one admire them?" Truly they are astonishing! full of what Fenelon calls sublimity, enthusiasm, and vehemence. Divide scripture into two parts, place on one side, the simple plain doctrines of the Bible, such as this—*God is a spirit*; or this—*Without holiness no man shall see the Lord*: place on the other, the dress and ornaments of these doctrines set before our eyes in various degrees of light and shade, in order to affect us; and say whether any thing can be more rational, or more sublime? Take for instance, the last mentioned, simple principle of the bible, and you will find a variety of habits in which scripture clothes it, directed now to this emotion, then to that. Sometimes supremely amiable to fire with love, sometimes magnificently terrible to alarm with fear; now fanning gently in soft narration; then irresistibly rushing with all the rapidity and sublimity of song: here in a parable, there in a type; yonder in a prophecy; now gilding the face of a bright archangel, then drawing the horrid features of the devil. Why all these representations? Scripture was made for man, and not man for scripture. Its ornaments and principles are fitted to his nature: *what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*. Virtue and vice are such important matters to man, that it is impossible for him to be indifferent about them, in the choice of a religion, if he chuses a religion at all.

Consider him as an organized being, who must be employed some way or other, and the regularity or irregularity of his motions must be of consequence. Consider him as subject to irregularity, and he wants the most powerful munitions against a fatal bias. View him as capable of regularity, and he wants grand examples, and perfect patterns. View him as capable of both vice and virtue, and he wants a religion so blended as to maintain his abhorrence of vice, and yet keep him from despair under weakness of virtue.—Consider him as existing only in this world, and he wants a religion to indemnify him for all he risks in embracing it. Consider him for eternity, and he wants grand and glorious rewards and punishments to animate and to warn him. Regard him as a dependant creature, he wants a religion to open and urge his dependance on virtuous purposes. View him as independent, and accountable to none of his fellow creatures for his conduct, even then a scheme of religion must be able to prove that such a being cannot be happy in a disconcerted or vicious state. Regard him in what light soever you will, and a virtuous religion must be his choice. Let us also remember that there is in every religion a certain *spirit* or *genius*, to which all its exteriors are appendages, and that the genius of religion whether placid or morose, ought carefully to be considered; as the devotee after a little familiarity with the surface, will certainly plunge into the soul and and spirit of the scheme proposed.—It would be easy to trace these, as the former articles to the

bible. They would undoubtedly perform the office of the *star*, at the birth of our Saviour, and stand over *where the young child was*.—But as we have been unawares somewhat prolix in the other parts of our subject, we will wave these points, taking it for granted that what in any religion would make me vicious, I ought to reject, and what virtuous, embrace. Let us briefly consider what must be calculated for social purposes, and let us enquire whether the religion of Jesus is so.

Man is evidently formed for social purposes, his necessities and inclinations impel him to seek society. His associations are natural, civil, sensitive, scientific, or religious. By natural, and in some sense necessary, associations, we mean, those of husband and wife, parents and children, brethren and sisters. Civil associations are for purposes of government. By industry man acquires property; by property right; right must be secured; right in one thing will not supply the wants of all, hence traffic, exchange, commerce, all which render laws and governors necessary.—To answer these and such like purposes, civil associations must be entered into; the foundation of these societies is self-interest, the happiness depends on self-denial, and their grand objects are mutual protection, convenience, and comfort. By sensitive associations, I mean such as men form in order to gratify the innocent pleasures of the senses:—A society of florists delighting each others eyes with the colours and smells, with the scents of flowers:—A society of musicians, ravishing the ear with the melodious

modulations of sound ; and so on.—Scientific associations are for intellectual pursuits, for philosophical enquiries and mental investigations. Religious societies, for the worship of God, include all, parents and children, masters and servants, kings and subjects, the politest and the most homely of mankind, for religion is the duty and glory of all. All these associations involve a variety of obligations, on the regular discharge of which depends the very being of society. Every religion therefore that does not allow, confirm, explain, and enforce social obligations, ought to be rejected ; for the God of religion is the God of nature also, and if religion destroys what society requires, it is easy to see whence it comes.

It is clear by accurate observations, that there are more males born than females, that the overplus of the males is about a 13th part, a provision seemingly made for violent deaths, to which navigation, and other hazardous enterprises expose men more than women ; it is therefore certain that polygamy, or allowing many wives to one man, contradicts the design of the God of nature. On this principle we reject the religion of Mahomet, which allows polygamy, and embrace that which says *let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband* : the latter is agreeable to social rights, the former destructive of them. Promiscuous intercourse produces little or no conception ; the increase of foxes therefore is nothing like the increase of sheep, where this liberty is restrained, notwithstanding such great numbers of

the latter are daily butchered : hence the wisdom of that government, which punishes vices plainly destructive of society, such as adultery and fornication, and restrains divorces for trifling matters. To provide against and remedy those evils, to which solitude would expose us, and to obtain those advantages which are unattainable alone, we enter into society : and since the obligations to which these various relations subject us, can by no means be dispensed with, that religion must be most eligible which fits individuals for, and obliges them to the observance of the social duties.— Without religion what society can subsist as it ought! Without hopes of immortality, social virtues are infamous crimes.

“ Die for thy country ! . . . thou romantic fool !

“ Thy country ! . . . What to thee ?—

“ If with thy blood thy final hope is spilt :

“ If virtue costs existence 'tis a crime !”*

Does the good of society require us to consider all its members naturally on a level? Revelation tells us that we have all one God, one father who created us.—It teaches us to consider every one as an *image of God, and to hold his life sacred, because God will require it at the hand of every beast, at the hand of every man, and at the hand of every man's brother.*—It directs to the same dust for our origin, the same evils for our portion, the same rewards and punishments for our last end. —Does the good of society require truth and sin-

* Night Thoughts.

erity? Revelation bids us *put away lying, and speak every man truth with his neighbour, because we are members one of another.*—To enforce this it tells us that *all liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*—Does the good of society require the utmost fidelity in contracts? Religion requires us *to render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour.*—Saint Chrysostom well observes on this command, “That we are not only “required to discharge our obligations to our superiors, but to render fear and honour to them: “nor” (adds he) “does the apostle say give, but “render, for the discharge of all social obligations “is equity, not favour.” So sublime are the precepts of our adorable legislator, extending even to the thoughts and intents of the heart! Does the good of society require mutual love? Revelation tells us that *love is the fulfilling of the law.* That all the commandments of the second table, are briefly comprehended in this saying, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Love is so essential to christianity, that though we have the eloquence of angels, the miraculous powers of apostles, the flaming zeal of martyrs, yet if we have not *love, we are nothing.* Love is so greatly important in the sight of God, that when all christianity is reduced to three graces, *faith, hope, and love,* the greatest of these is pronounced to be *love.* Christians are commanded to love their enemies, and engaged to do it in imitation of their *father in*

heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.—They are commanded to love because love is of God, and because he that so loved us, obliged us to love one another.—Does the good of society require me to sacrifice my private interest to the public good? So does the christian legislator. *Let no man seek his own but every man another's wealth.* He tells us that he laid down his life for us, and that we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—In short should this excellency of christianity be disputed;—to all the philosophic parade of paganism, and all the enervating notions of modern infidelity, I would oppose this inimitable code of morality:—*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise think on these things.*

The religion of Jesus Christ seems to me so wonderfully calculated to display the glorious perfections of God, so wisely adapted to all the wants of men, so directly aiming at the good of society, that it must be every man's duty and interest to receive it: yet alas! men act as if they thought submission to christianity the greatest of all misfortunes! Some have effrontery enough to deny the whole, others take a little part, and very rarely do we meet with one who embraces all.—I am loth to believe this partial conduct owing to malice, and inclined to hope it proceeds from inattention. Whether it

comes from education prejudices, an incautious attachment to traditions, and complaisant resignation of our reason to custom, a propensity to run from one extreme to another, or from what cause soever it proceeds, few people seem to understand their own religion; they spend therefore all their zeal about words to no profit, but to the subversion of the hearers. Here we see church discipline canvassed, until the very end of that discipline is destroyed^d; there we have a violent dispute about some peculiar doctrines, until peace, the essence of all doctrine, is done away; every where almost we find that which is *lame turned out of the way*, and that grand command explained away, or buried under piles of trifles,—*Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*—The Apostle John, who had seen with his natural eyes the primæval simplicity of his master's doctrine reigning in the primitive church, and having afterwards with eyes of prophecy seen the corruption of that doctrine, with all its dreadful consequences; having seen those churches which were presented as *chaste virgins to Christ*, ravished of their innocence, reconciled to their betrayers, abandoned to the vilest prostitutions, and at length publicly avouching their fornications, supported by human authority, and drunk with christian blood!—*When I saw this* (says the apostle) *I wondered with great admiration!* Truly the corruption of christianity is astonishing! Who but God could foresee the horrors of popery, the quarrels of protestants,

divisions perpetuated from generations to generations, by men professing that religion which is receivable only by its fitness to glorify God, and give peace among men:—Who would have imagined that *five speculative points* should divide the dearest friends, the violence of their contentions leaving hardly a wreck of love behind? *How are the mighty fallen! O tell it not in Gath!*—The *five points* I mean, are *predestination, redemption, grace, free-will, perseverance*:—I take the liberty of calling them *speculative points*, for such in my opinion they are; as such, what we can discover of them by the light of revelation we may, but that no consequences can be drawn from them injurious to the attributes of God, the nature of man, and the good of society is (I think) abundantly clear.—The very same principles which oblige me to receive christianity, oblige me to renounce some explications of it; it is highly reasonable that I should embrace an institution which displays the attributes of God, and should any explication of that institution tarnish them, it is highly reasonable I should renounce such explications. Let us enter on this enquiry with fear and trembling, for, merciful God! what evils have not disputes about these articles produced. Let us enter on it with an humble reliance on God, who says, *when his law is in our hearts, none of our steps shall slide*.—Let us consign over the ridiculous notion of *uniformity* to deists and bigots. The deist objects to christianity because of its multiplicity of sects; the bigot disgraces chris-

tianity by anathematizing all who do not think with himself; both err from the same principle; both cry up uniformity.* Let us leave these quixotic gentry to go on with their saint-errantry, until history, philosophy, scripture, and good sense, reclaim their understandings, and enable them to extol and honour the king of heaven, *all whose works are truth, and his ways are judgment.* Happy for us if we can quit the world with the protestation which Calvin inserted in his will.—“ I “ protest that in all my contentions and disputes “ with the enemies of the gospel, I have made use “ of none of the sinful tricks of sophistry, but have “ endeavoured to maintain the truth with integrity “ and candour.”

* Enough of this may be seen in the history of our own country. See *Neal's History of the Puritans*, Vol. I. Dr. Law's *Considerations, et etiam Clerici Prolegomena*. Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*. Sect. II, Chap. 3—11.

DISSERTATION II.

CONTAINING SOME BRIEF LITERARY PRECAUTIONS NECESSARY IN THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY.

A critical accuracy in the sacred writings is by no means necessary to the man who contents himself with simple, genuine christianity; but if he stirs a step beyond the most plain and obvious truths, if he pretends to determine the most abstruse mysteries of religion, which are determinable only by the voice of scripture, all the world expects that he should free himself from those mistakes which render that voice unintelligible.—Now there are several vulgar errors, which if they attend us in our examination of the sacred writers, will tend to obscure the clearest truths. It is therefore absolutely necessary to deposit these as *unclean things without the camp*, before we approach that God; who with the *froward shews himself froward, with the pure shews himself pure, whose words do good to him only who walketh uprightly*.—Dionysius of Alexandria, who flourished about 250 years after Christ, pretended to find barbarisms and solecisms in the revelation of St. John, yet he received that book as canonical. And herein he acted wisely, for deviations from the rules of grammar would no more affect the authenticity of the sacred writings, than such improprieties affect the established reputation of the

most polite English writer : Dr. Lowth has shewn us a number of such solecisms in our best models of eloquence.—Nor does it injure the inspiration of the sacred writers, for they did not profess oratory but divinity.—How wise in God, who to secure the glory of the promulgation of divine truth to himself, left marks of weakness on the first heralds of revelation ! Whether there be solecisms in scripture or not, is a question that has nothing to do with our present enquiry.—Be it also allowed that there are some interpolations.—Nobody pretends that the *doctrines* are interpolations, or any passages relative to them.—All own the originality of the passages we shall mention ; the meaning of them only is questioned.—Every body knows that each language has some modes of expression peculiar to itself ; these are called its *idioms*. Such as are peculiar to the Hebrew tongue, are called *Hebraisms* ; to the Greek, *Grecisms*, and so on. The Hebrew tongue is remarkable for bold, pompous, figurative, expressions. Cedars are called *trees of Jehovah*. The warm advocates for ceremonies are said to have a *zeal for God*. Adam is told that *in the day he eat, dying he should die*.—Christ is said to *sit at God's right hand*.—All these and many more of the same kind, ought not, cannot fairly be literally pressed into controversy. The apostles were Jews, from their infancy used to their own idioms, and when they wrote in Greek, they frequently expressed these hebraisms in Greek. “ In the Greek tongue,” (says Le Clerc) “ particularly in the polite attic dialect, there are

innumerable particles which grammarians call expletives, added not for the sake of any ideas which they convey, but only to put a gracefulness into the oration, which it would be destitute of without." Such are the particles *alla, gar, dec, oun, an, men, de,* &c. which are always cut off in latin versions of Greek writers. As in this instance, from the defence of Socrates written by Plato, ε (uso) υμεις [ω] ανδεις Αθηναιοι. In translating these into latin μ^o and α must be left out, *quid vos, viri Atheniensis.*—These idioms ought to be carefully attended to, otherwise we shall often be wise above what is written. Tertullian never would have made out so many strange notions about the corporeal nature of souls, their generation from Adam, their colour, with more absurdities of the same kind, unless he had entirely neglected all idioms of speech, as well as all other rules of judging.—The rich man *in hell lifted up his eyes.* *Lazarus was in Abraham's bosom.* One had a *thirsty tongue,* the other a *spare finger,* and thence that father gathered many things never intended by the speaker.—He is not the only one who has raised lofty doctrines on the sandy foundation of a mistaken idiom.—If a bare idiom be dangerous when mistaken, how much more so are the bold, figurative allegories of the easterns? The prophet Joel says—*A great people and strong are spread like the morning clouds on the mountains; their appearance is like the appearance of horses, and as horsemen so shall they run; they shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like*

men of war, they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks; they shall walk every one in his path, and when they fall upon the sword they shall not be wounded; they shall run to and fro in the city, they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb upon the houses, they shall enter in at the windows like a thief, the earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; and Jehovah shall utter his voice before his army, for his camp is very great. And what is this great army of Jehovah described with so much pomp?

A swarm of locusts.—Le Clerc observes from Eusebius, “That Porphyry complained of interpreters,” (Eusebius says of Origen) “for finding so many hidden mysteries, and boasting of their expositions of them, and for applying the allegoric allusions of the Greeks to the writings of the Jews.” In good truth, Porphyry had reason to complain, when Origen said, “Eden was in heaven, Adam and Eve before the fall unembodied spirits, and the fig-leaves which they put on after the fall, their mortal bodies.”—Long since that time, a successor of Porphyry’s complains of some of his cotemporaries, (and for the same allegoric art I suppose) says they are,

- “ For mystic learning wond’rous able,
- “ In magic talisman and cabal,
- “ Whose primitive tradition reaches
- “ As far as Adam’s first green breeches :

L

“ Who Anthroposophus and Floud,
 “ And Jacob Behmen understood.”*

Who is most to blame now? Divines or buffoons? *Woe be to him by whom the offence cometh!*—*This is my body*, is figurative, but make it literal, and out comes transubstantiation to be dipt and dyed in christian blood. *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, is figurative; but make it literal, and every one dying without baptism is damned! Of so great importance is caution on this article!

On the other hand, let literal language be taken figuratively, and what strange absurdities may not follow. Thus a certain writer of more fancy than judgment, instead of improving the lives of the patriarchs to moral purposes, tells us, “ That Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, signified the Trinity: the first for offering his Son, the second for suffering, and the third for prevailing in prayer, were fit representatives of Father, Son, and Spirit.”—The writer calls this “ a weak and dark shadow of a very great mystery;” perhaps some of his readers may rather think it a weak and dark abuse of a very plain history.—This last is called a type, and under the notion of the Jewish economy being typical, every thing almost has been violently tortured, and the true glory of that economy shamefully obscured.—Theophilus who was ordained a bishop of the church at Antioch in the year 170,

* Butler's Hudibras.

and is the first writer who uses the word Trinity about the divine nature, gives us a type of this mystery, and says that "the three days which preceded the creation of the two great lights were types of the Trinity;—of God, of his word, and of his Wisdom." In some of the stars he finds the prophets, in others good men, the planets being types for the wicked. We commend the piety of this father in endeavouring to reclaim his friend Autolytus from paganism, but how much more conclusive would such a type have been as St. Paul recommended at Crete!—*In all things shewing thyself a type of good works, in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.*—"Every type" (says an able writer) "ought to have such a relation to its antitype, as that, when the type is spoken of and considered, the antitype may also appear to be spoken of and intended. And thus in narrations of this kind there will necessarily be two proper and natural senses, the one agreeing with the type, and the other with the antitype.—Sometimes indeed the type is so expressed, as that the antitype does not easily appear; but then on the contrary, such terms are sometimes made use of, as better agree with the antitype, than with the type, and that consequently the sense does not terminate there: the mind in such a case is naturally and necessarily carried by the narration to something more sublime."

Another source of mistakes, is the dangerous custom of treating the whole bible as the book of Proverbs should be treated, as if every single text had a meaning independent on the preceding and following verses. The English translation of the bible, and its division and verses is so useful and convenient, that the translators deserve great commendation; yet a great critic says, "that as to the verses there is not one chapter in the New Testament but is faultily divided, that is, we have that portion of sacred writ figured, and marked out for a complete sense, which does not furnish a complete sense." He adds, "There are no conveniences in the division of the sacred books into chapters and verses, that can balance the inconveniences and prejudice they bring.—Stops are made, chapters and verses ended, where the sense narration, and argument, is mangled and broke off. Generally when the chapter and verse end, so does the reader's attention: he makes an unreasonable pause, and often loses not only the beauty and sense of the period, but the conclusiveness of the reasoning, and the connexion and dependence of the context."* The scope and design of a writer is doubtless of the last importance, and

* Blackwall's Sacred Classics, Vol. II. page 2. Acts **xxi.** **xxii.** should not have been divided, the 16 first verses of Matth. **xx.** belong to the last verse of chap. **xi.** and explain and illustrate it. The last verse of John **vii.** should not be divided from the first of the **viii.** nor should the 1st verse of the **viii.** of the 2nd of Corinthians be separated from the last of the 6th.

broken fragments of his writings, if allowed in proof, are dangerous beyond expression.—What a proposition is that of the apostle to the Jewish magistrates, *we ought to obey God rather than men!* Very true, but the question is, whether you would disobey God in obeying the magistrates? When? Where? How? In what cases were you released from our jurisdiction? What proofs of your freedom from our authority? What security for a behaviour not injurious to society? How needful the whole story to determine all these points for the credit of the apostles, and for a precedent for their successors to the end of conscience-tyranny! In order to understand the scope and design of the inspired writers; (to use the words of a sensible author) “A man should accurately distinguish between particular and universal propositions: what was spoken of collective bodies of men, from what was spoken of individuals: and what was designed to be understood relatively of the first christian converts to christianity only, or some other particular person or persons; from what was intended to be taken absolutely, or as applicable to christians in general, of all ages. Scripture should be explained by scripture, parallel places should be compared, and as much as possible the writers should be made their own interpreters. A man should be duly acquainted with the customs and opinions which prevailed in the time of the sacred penmen, and to which they allude; whether belonging to the Jews, Grecians or Romans. Without these requisites the sacred

oracles will become sources of the most enthuſiaſtical, extravagant doctrines, doctrines injurious to the attributes of the Deity, ſubverſive of the human frame and conſtitution, and in their natural tendency, destructive of an aſſiduous and conſtant cultivation of moral virtue, the great genuine eſſence of pure and undefiled religion, the confeſſed end and ſcope of all the diſpenſations of heaven."

As we ought to conſider the deſign of each writer in particular, ſo of the whole revelation of the ſacred canon in general.—A due attention to this would always iſſue in two things. Firſt, we ſhould guard againſt a vain curioſity, which it is certain the ſcriptures were never deſigned to gratify.—If the divine power gave us *all things that pertain to life and godlineſs*; if he gave us *exceeding great and precious promiſes*, it was that by theſe we might be partakers of the divine nature, *eſcape the corruption that is in the world through luſt*; and that beſides theſe we might give *all diligence ſo make our calling and election ſure, and to add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge, temperance*, and ſo on. How comes it to paſs that Origen, that fruitful genius, who wrote ſix thouſand volumes, who ſo frequently undertook to explain the doctrine of the Trinity,—how is it that he is underſtood by nobody? St. Jerom, St. Auſtin, with many more on one ſide, take him for an Arian, Chryſoſtom, Baſil, Gregory of Nazienzum, with others, take him for an Anti-trinitarian: both ſides claim Origen, both ſides fall out with poor Ruffin for his latin verſions of the

father.—Is there not a third way? May we not suppose of Origen what we see with our eyes in others at this day, that he put scripture upon the rack, to make it explain what it never proposed to explain, and so confounded himself and every body else?—What multitudes of volumes has this turn of mind produced! The scripture does not propose to teach natural philosophy, yet how many questions of that kind have the fathers handled, pretending to decide them by scripture, when indeed scripture has nothing to do with them. And the same may be said of every other science. Very early did superstition, ignorance, indolence, or something of the same kind, commit all to the apostles; and very wisely did the twelve answer, *it is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables, look out among yourselves men of honest report, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.* Some topics therefore scripture does not meddle with, and others it asserts but does not explain: for *these things are written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing we might have life through his name.*

A constant regard to God's design in revealing his unsearchable will, must needs produce a second advantage; it will keep us from that ridiculous custom of giving strained and far-fetched senses to scripture. One grand proof of its divinity is its running parallel with the capacity of the poor; and if any man, under pretence of sublime discoveries

robs the sacred code of this glory, by that very attempt he disproves its divinity.—*Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*—said John's disciples to Jesus. *Go and shew John* (replied our Saviour) *again those things which ye do hear and see: the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.*—Grand peculiarity of the gospel! Glorious superiority of revelation! It were better for thee to become extinct, than that any man should make thy glorying void! A gospel without charge, that costs nothing to learn. Lactantius makes a noble use of this against all the heathens called philosophy, and with great reason. Who ever saw the poor philosophized? But *go tell John* the poor are evangelized! And should we divest the gospel of this argument? God forbid! Some attempt this under a notion that the scripture is the wisdom of God, and therefore must be unintelligible. What an absurdity! Is there not infinitely more wisdom in the plain rising of the sun, than in the exhibition of fantastic fireworks? Yet the latter are the admiration of hundreds who never look at the former, or which is much the same, who never looked enough to discern the glory of God. The wisdom of revelation, like the wisdom of nature, is plain but august, rejected now as formerly for its simplicity.—*The Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Greeks foolishness.*

There are some people who under the notion of finding Jesus Christ in every text, give scripture far-fetched meanings. I wish we could condescend to learn of an ancient Egyptian monk. "We should be content," (says he,) "to apply to Jesus Christ what is plainly spoken of him, but we should not strain that which has no relation to him; for those that find Jesus Christ in places where he is not spoken of, tempt infidels to deny him in places where he is."—Let men's pretences be what they will for this abuse of scripture, nothing can justify it, nor do I believe there is a better canon of interpretation than that of the present Bishop of Carlisle, (Dr. Law,) "The books of the New Testament, and indeed the scriptures in general, were written and adapted to the people, and therefore the plain popular sense of words and phrases ought to be constantly attended to, and followed in the interpretation of them." This made Archbishop Leighton encourage the undergraduates of his university to study divine revelation. "In this study," (he observes) "a weak understanding will be no disadvantage, if you have but *a willing mind* and ardent desires. This heavenly doctrine, though it be the most exalted in its own nature, is not only accessible to those of the lowest and meanest parts, but they are cheerfully admitted to it, graciously received, preferred to those that are proud of their learning, and very often advanced to higher degrees of knowledge therein, according to the words of the Psalmist:—*The law of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes, the entrance of his*

word giveth light, it giveth also understanding to the simple.

Besides these general precautions, there seem to be some particular ones, applicable to certain books.—The idea of interlocutors is perhaps one of the best keys to Ecclesiastes, as a perfect knowledge of the eastern allegory is of the Canticles. An attention to the nature of the two economies, Jewish and Christian, would much facilitate St. Paul's epistles, as the best ideas of them are taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews. St. Jude in his Epistle talks like a judge, and awfully, but equitably, sentences angels and men, the former for *not keeping their first estate*, the latter for *turning the grace of God into lasciviousness*. St. Paul in his Epistle to Philemon, and in his last chapter to the Romans, unites the tongue of the courtier with the heart of the christian: he practised his own rule, *whatsoever things were lovely*, as well as *whatsoever things were just*. In short, there is a certain closeness of thought, an exact severity in controversy, as there is a gravity in morality, and a gaiety in poetry; and say what we will about *orthodoxy*, expositors of the sacred writings will fail in some books as they will excel in others; the reason is, their geniuses are naturally suited to some books in scripture, and not to others.—Do we really think that such a genius (suppose) as Dean *Prideaux*, would succeed as well in expounding *Lamentations*, as *Kings*, or *Chronicles*? A man, who, by a long habit of coolness and equanimity, had accustomed his mind to strip facts of figures,

and for the sake of penetrating real facts, had as it were, deafened himself to the voice of plaintive and persuasive eloquence! Would such a man relish the complainant's pathos? or could he well explain a book he did not feel? On the contrary, do we think that a *Bosuet* would succeed as well in *Nehemiah*, as in *Solomon's Song*? Grant each an equal degree of piety, yet genius will have a share. Perhaps therefore had we charity enough, instead of attaching ourselves to the infallibility of any one commentator, [we should chuse this expositor on this book, that on that, a third on another, and so on.—We have just cursorily run over a few precautions, omitting many more: but after all, we ought always to remember that it is God who speaks in his word, and should he dazzle and confound us with his brightness we ought not to dispute.

I beg leave to conclude this chapter in the language of one of the greatest of the moderns, in illustration of our subject.

“ A maxim from which a divine ought never to depart, and which we wish particularly to inculcate on those who extend the operations of reason too far in matters of religion is the following:— We know indeed in general what are the attributes of God, but we are extremely ignorant in their sphere; we cannot tell how far they extend; we know in general that God is free, he is just, he is merciful; but we are too ignorant to determine how far these perfections must go, because their

infinity absorbs the whole capacity of our minds. An example will explain our meaning.—Suppose two philosophers subsisting before the creation of this world, and conversing together on the plan of the world which God was about to create; suppose the first of these philosophers affirming—God is about to create intelligent creatures; he could, communicate such a degree of knowledge to them as would necessarily conduct them to supreme happiness, but he intends to give them reason, which may be abused, and may conduct them from ignorance to vice, and from vice to misery. Moreover God is about to create a world in which virtue will almost always be found in irons, and vice on a throne, tyrants will be crowned, and pious people confounded. Suppose the first of our philosophers to maintain these theses, would not the second have reasoned against this plan, would he not in all appearance have had a right to affirm—It is impossible, God being full of goodness, should create men whose existence would be fatal to their happiness: it is impossible a being supremely holy, should permit sin to enter into the world? Yet how plausible soever the reasons of this philosopher might have then appeared, the event has since justified the truth of the first plan.—It is certain God hath created the world on the plan of the first, and it is also as certain that the world hath nothing incompatible with the perfections of God, how difficult soever we may find it to answer objections. It is our diminutiveness, the narrow limits of our

minds, and the immensity of the Deity, which prevent our knowing how far his attributes can go.*

“Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed of everlasting life, which though hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.”†

* Sermons de Saurin, Vol. II. *Sur les Tourmens de L' Enfer*. Robinson's Translation, Vol. III. Sermon XIII.

† Collect for second Sunday in Advent.

DISSERTATION III.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION;
OR MODERATE CALVINISM CONSIDERED AS THE
SAFE PATH BETWEEN TWO EXTREMES.

OF all the writings of the amiable and excellent Dr. Watts, I have sometimes been most delighted with the following passage. "After all my studious enquiries into the noble subject of spirits, I am far from being arrived at an assurance of the truth of my opinions. The speediest way to full assurance in any point is to read only one side of a controversy! They are generally the confident and infallible dictators to mankind, who see no difficulty, and admit no doubt. I must confess I have followed a different method of study, and therefore have so few *indubitables* among my philosophical acquirements. But though I cannot pronounce certainty on my sentiments on this argument, yet I have been loth to renounce and obliterate them all at once, and to leave so vast a vacancy among my intellectual ideas, unless I could have found some tolerable system of the nature and operations of our souls, to put in the room of it, which was attended with less or fewer difficulties: but this I have sought in vain, both in my own meditations, and among the works of the learned."

As far as christian modesty is superior to sour dogmatical sophistry, so far does this chaste and

humble language excel the bold assertions of some rash intruders *into things not seen as yet*. If human science blushes before one single finite human spirit,—Almighty Father! All created intelligence must prostrate before thee! Who dare sail on the immense ocean of thy perfections? Who can speculate the heights, fathom the depths, compass the lengths and breadths of this vast profound! *Where, O God, shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof: neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith it is not in me: and the sea saith it is not with me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof: no mention shall be made of jewels, for the price of wisdom is above rubies. Whence then cometh wisdom? God understandeth the way thereof: unto man he said, behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* To what then are all our best speculations reducible? To practice. Yes, after all our voluminous disputes, after all our theological wars, after all our fine spun theories, *the fear of the Lord THAT is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding?* We are to examine the “five points” with this view, wholly to reject them if they do not answer this end, heartily to receive that explanation of them which does. We will endeavour briefly to explain our meaning, offer our proofs, and point out the use and abuse of each.

PREDESTINATION is the determined plan of all God's works, considered as in his eternal mind. This plan producing certain real positive existences, is called creation; as it regards the government of all these creatures, it is called providence; as it determines the salvation of some, it is called election: and as it implies the damnation of others, it is called reprobation.—To understand these we ought to examine with the foregoing maxims in our eyes, to maintain a certain scriptural justness of thought, a certain point, which, if we pass, we err through excess, and if we drop short of, we err through defect. That the great Supreme, when he created the world, produced nothing but what he had a pattern of before in his own mind, is beyond contradiction.—That in his arranging and modifying all his creatures, he governed by a plan, fixing and determining laws of causes and effects, determining one thing to produce another, relating several events to one fixed end,—all these who can doubt? Who help admiring? Should christianity be silent on these articles, even paganism herself would cry out.—That the salvation of one man, and destruction of another could never have been effected without their existence, without the concurrence of many providential events, in short, without the prescience and agency of God, is plain to every thinking man.—Accordingly scripture ascribes creation to his wisdom, providence to his power, election to his love, and reprobation to his justice:—or to speak more pro-

perly, all his attributes are in perfect harmony with each other; each of his works harmonizes with all his attributes, *his works are perfect; all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.* He is God the creator, God the governor, God the rewarder, God the avenger. *Of him, and through him, and to him are all things. Of him;* for creation with all her rich varieties, providence with all its regular labyrinths, heaven with all its ineffable delights, and hell with all its awful horrors; all these, to us delightful or formidable realities, were ideas from all eternity in Jehovah's mind. *Through him;* for let God suspend the act of creation, and no creature exists; let him perform one single act of annihilation, and all ceases; one word of his stabs the universe to the heart; it expires without a groan, and vanishes like a dream. If all things continue to exist, they exist *to him, to whom they will be a glory for ever. Amen!*—Whether we embrace predestination in one, two, three, or in all its branches, or whether we deny it wholly, we all profess to aim at the *glory of God*: I cannot however but think, that such as deny prescience in order to destroy predestination in any of its branches, are unfortunate in their ideas of God's glory. What sort of a deity is he who makes a world with less foresight than an artificer makes a watch? Who, when he created matter and spirit, when he arranged, modified, and combined all, did not foresee what would result from all? What

a God is this, who, instead of communicating intelligence to all, receives light from his creatures, and is wiser to day than yesterday, yesterday than than the day before : go back to his first creating moment, and he knew almost nothing at all. Indeed no scheme of predestination can be more replete with absurdity than this. *Known unto God, are all his works from the beginning of the world,* is one of the clearest and most indubitable truths, and that in this case, foreknowledge and fore-appointment are the same, methinks is as certain. In us prescience and influence differ, for we may know an event without its depending at all on us to be, or not to be. But it is not so with God ; God has innumerable plans of possible beings in his infinite mind, but none of these have a real existence, without an act of his will, an exertion of his power. God had the idea of light in his mind from all eternity, yet never had a particle of light a real existence until that instant in which he said—*Let there be light, and there was light.* I am therefore obliged either to deny his foreknowledge, or to acknowledge his decrees.

Let us be cautious as we proceed on this subject, not to establish one attribute on the destruction of another ; but let us beg of God to give us that justness of thought, that we may consider it to the glory of all. *As the man is so is his strength,* is a proverb as true as it is ancient ; for the productions of power are always as the natural and moral perfections of the agent in question. Does a feeble genius erect a building ? That building

pre-exists in his mind in idea : the idea is invisible, but the building will exactly answer the exemplar in his mind, and the production be a cottage. Does a great genius invent and execute a building? As is the genius so is the building; his production will be a palace. A grave genius will build on the gothic model; regular and lasting, gloomy, strong and safe. Does a fruitful invention devise in architecture? The basis of all the columns, shafts, and capitals, will variegate in endless delicacies; the marble will seem to aspire at life, circumvolving in a thousand forms. Do all building perfections unite in the genius of the architect? The structure will have solidity, convenience, beauty, order, disposition, and proportion. In every case the productions of power are exactly as the extent of intelligence. As in a natural so in a moral view, a great genius governed by avarice, may build nobly, but he will devote his architecture to sordid interest; a disinterested patriot will devote the productions of his genius to his country's good. Thus the same building passing through various hands will assume different forms; in a regal hand it is a palace; with the literati a college; with the commercial a manufactory; with the indigent an hospital. Thus as the prophet expresses it,—*The vile person will speak villany, for his heart will work iniquity : the instruments of the churl are evil, for he deviseth wicked devices : the liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things will he stand.* In all doubtful cases,

could we know the agent we should distinguish his acts. A defective scheme can never proceed from a perfect mind; an irregular and disorderly action can never proceed from a being of perfect order and regularity.

Let us pause; and let us ask consistently with these certain maxims,—What we are to believe of God's decrees? Christian divines give us four systems. One class deny the prescience of God, and so get clear of the decrees, and in fact of their author; for a perfect being without foresight, is of all paradoxes surely the very greatest. A second class hold prescience, but deny predestination; but we have observed that in God, prescience and predestination are the same. A third sort acknowledge predestination in all its parts, in the most rigid sense. They say, that God's design in all his works was to manifest his glory, particularly his justice and goodness; that he ordained sin, in order to appear infinitely good in pardoning some, and infinitely just in condemning others; that he did not condemn these because he foresaw they would sin, but resolved that they should sin in order to have a fair plea for condemning them. This scheme is incumbered with insuperable difficulties; it disagrees with the perfections of that God, to whom it is ascribed. The supreme God is perfectly happy; who can believe that he would create millions of creatures on purpose for misery? The supreme God is perfectly holy; who can conceive him the author of sin? Even the permission of sin, (a fact we are all forced to at-

low) even that has difficulties; but this scheme increases those difficulties, and if words have any meaning, to purpose sin in order to punishment, is to be the author of sin. The less we charge God with this the better; and if we cannot fully comprehend his purity, let us not however tarnish it. *God cannot lie*: in his word of revelation he professes *not to desire the death of a sinner*; he condescends to *reason*, plead, expostulate with sinners; he declares that their *destruction is of themselves*. If after all these declarations, he never gave them an opportunity of being saved, who hereafter is to believe his word? God is good: but in this system it would have been better for many of his rational creatures *never to have been born*: his patience and long-suffering are no favours to them, nor can it be henceforth said—*the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: the Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy*.—The Lord is just: and though he is supremely so in punishing such as sin wilfully, yet the case of that man who is driven away necessarily to sin in order to punishment, is rather pitiable than equitable. Which of the divine attributes ~~then~~ is glorified in this system; rather which of them is not dishonoured? It does not agree with itself, nor answer its proposed end of glorifying God.

It is not a fair answer to these objections to affirm, "God is a Sovereign." Does this mean that God is an independent being, above hope, above fear, above controul? All this we grant; but is

God also above *holiness, justice, goodness, truth?* Great Supreme! Thou not only possessest absolute power, but thou exercisest that authority just as pure and holy spirits desire thou shouldst exercise it! Thou art *glorious in holiness, even when thou art fearful in praises, doing wonders!* —When *clouds and darkness are round about thee: righteousness and judgment are the basis of thy throne.* When thou *Lord thunderest in the heavens, and givest thy voice, hailstones and coals of fire:—When fire devours before thee, and it is very tempestuous round about thee, when thou callest to the heavens from above, and to the earth that thou mayest judge the people, then shall the heavens declare thy righteousness.*

The various mistakes which are made on this important subject, appear to me to proceed from the same source,—inattention to the limits of the human mind; for he who denies a truth because it is incomprehensible, and he who under pretence of explaining deduces from it absurd consequences,—both err from the same principle; both seem to forget that the mind like the eye sees at a certain distance clearly, a little beyond confusedly, and a very distant object not at all. How wise, how kind was he who established the laws of vision? Who taught rays of light to diverge; he meant to shorten my speculations lest they should divert me from practice: a little speculation I wanted for practical purposes, but much would have destroyed the very end it was meant to answer. Blessed be God, who although he could have made

his decrees somewhat plainer, or my capacity somewhat wider, has yet kindly fixed the size of the one and the distance of the other: we discern his meaning; he would have us to know that this life is for action, the future for speculation.

But what are we to believe about the decrees of God? Adorable Father! keep us from darkening thy *counsel by words without knowledge!* We are to believe that God of his infinite goodness created man free, with power to continue so. That Adam abused his liberty; that all his descendants, beside the frailty of their nature, have acquired habits offensive to God, injurious to themselves, rendering them justly obnoxious to future punishment. That God from all eternity foreseeing this, resolved to express his infinite love to his creatures, by saving a great but a certain number, and his justice by punishing others. That in all this display no violence is offered to the will; one believes freely, the other hardens himself freely: that at the last day it will fully appear that the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; and the destruction of the wicked is of themselves.—If it be asked how can these things be?—Decrees fixed, certain, and eternal, offering no violence to the will? I answer, that the fact reason and revelation both agree in proclaiming.—*Horace* says that Homer's poems contain more beautiful instructions than all the writings of the most able philosophers. And what says Homer that oracle of paganism? One who perfectly understood him said—"Fate according to Homer is the decree of Jupiter; the

inviolable law, by which Jupiter himself is bound." And as a proof that this is Homer's doctrine, we may remark, that he has never once mentioned *fortune*; that blind divinity adored in after ages was not known in his time. The poet shews that the dispensation of good and evil is carried on with the utmost equity, by placing golden scales in the hands of Jupiter, in which he weighs the fate of mortals, denoting that it is providence which presides over all events, distributes corrections and rewards, and that its decrees are founded upon justice. This is rational; reason alike recoils at a denial of the decrees, and at an unamiable explication of them.

Let us attend to the inspired writers on this subject. The name of God is I AM; he is *the Father of Spirits*, communicating to all, and receiving from none: *without variableness or shadow of turning, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever: a God filling heaven and earth: whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain: from everlasting to everlasting he is God: the fountain of life, he only having immortality: to him belongeth power, and with him nothing is impossible: a God of knowledge by whom actions are weighed, whose understanding is infinite: not a word in our tongue but he knoweth it altogether; he understandeth our thoughts afar off; he is naked before him, and destruction without a covering; how much more then the hearts of the children of men?* His wisdom is manifold, for he is *the only wise God, to him belongeth power, with him is*

strength and wisdom, the deceived and the deceiver are his : he worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will. He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what dost thou ? God is love, good to all, rich in mercy, gracious to whom he will be gracious, shewing mercy to thousands, abundant in goodness and truth, patient towards all men, ready to pardon, slow to anger, of great kindness, waiting to be gracious. His name is holy, his nature happy, his works are truth, his ways judgment, without iniquity, just and right is he.—He cannot deceive, he cannot be deceived; the perfection of beauty, the first, the last, the King of Kings, higher than the highest, before all, above all, beyond all, pervading all, upholding all ; in the most sublime of all senses, all in all.

Dispute we the prescience, resist we the will, doubt we the goodness, suspect we the equity of our God? Contemptible atom, speaking great words against the most high ! *Get thee into the clefts of the rocks, into the tops of the ragged rocks, hide thee in the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty ; or rather stand up and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever, who is exalted above all blessing and praise : thine O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty : for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine ; thine is the kingdom O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all ; both riches*

and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all; now therefore O our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name.

“What shall I say of the prescience of God;” (says Tertullian) “it has as many proofs as there are prophets.” Do the prophets pretend to deny the prescience of God? What is all the Old Testament almost but a comment on this subject? Did the apostles deny prescience? Without it all their doctrines fall to the ground; for they declared *none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come.* Was prescience with them, naked prescience, a bare influential inspection? They ascribe to his council a hand *determining before whatsoever should be done.* Did they hold this influence injurious to the freedom of the will?—Did they extend it to a length destructive of the nature of virtue and vice? They said that God had *foreknown* and his *counsel determined* the crucifixion of Christ; yet that he was *by wicked hands crucified and slain*: that the promise was to as many as God should call; yet with many other words testified and exhorted the people, saying *save yourselves from this untoward generation.* And here we halt, as arrived at that point of thinking beyond which it is folly and profanity to proceed; to stop short of this is to rest beneath what reason can attain, and to proceed is to insult reason by forcing her to dictate like a Delphic prophetess, distorted,

disbevelled, and raving wild on a subject beyond her comprehension. The prescience, the love, the universal equity of God, and the freedom of man, are alike clearly revealed in the scripture; to deny either is to stop short of revealed truths by unbelief; to force scripture:—to explain one, to the injury of another, is to affront revelation by an enthusiasm bordering on blasphemy. “Two truths” (says a modern writer) “may be certain, and worthy of all acceptation, though we can neither see their connection, nor discover any way how to make them agree?”—Thus scripture remarked *Christ is David's son, how is he then his Lord?* The Messiah was prophesied of as the most mean, the most august, grand enough to be called *the everlasting Father*; mean enough to be called a *worm and no man*. Abraham was obliged to submit to the sacrifice of Isaac, and yet was persuaded he should be *the father of many nations*; and he accounted for the harmony of both by the power of God operating a resurrection, of which he had never seen an instance nor heard an account.—The prophet Jeremiah told Zedekiah King of Judah, that he should be taken by Nebuchadnezzar, and, he adds, *thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the King of Babylon, yet thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace, and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings, which were before thee, so that they burn odours for thee, and they will lament thee, saying ah Lord! for I have pronounced the word saith the Lord.*—What says Ezekiel? *I will bring Zedekiah to Babylon, yet shall he not see it, though*

he shall die there.—What but the events could explain predictions seemingly so contradictory? Who can conciliate the supreme, ineffable goodness of God, with the permission of sin; or comprehend how Providence influences evil, without producing or approving it? Thus stands the counsel of God and the liberty of man; God from eternity determining all, yet man never losing that power over his actions which is absolutely necessary to his being an accountable creature, the subject of praise or blame, reward or punishment.—In such cases we are first to examine whether the two propositions in question are both clearly revealed. Secondly, we should give all diligence to make them agree. If both are true, and yet we cannot harmonize them, what must we do? Must we be stupid, and shut our eyes, or lax, and abandon our principles? God forbid we should ever recommend a blind faith on the one hand, or the renunciation of a well attested religion on the other.—Rather let me say, I am convinced by many examples, that two truths may be certain though they may seem opposite: of this kind doubtless are the truths in question. My duty is not in all respects to comprehend and conciliate revealed truths, but to believe them and regulate my conduct thereby.*

* Si je n'en vois pas l'accord, Dieu le voit. Il me les a révélés; cela me suffit: mon devoir est, non de les comprendre a tous égards, ou de les concilier, mais de la croire et d'y conformer ma conduite. *Sermons de Superville, Tom. 1.—Sur les obscurités de la Revelation.* See also *Sermons par Monsieur Dumont.—Sur l'imperfection de nos Connoissances.*

There are but two possible ways of being satisfied on this article. One is to comprehend fully and perfectly the combinations and arrangements of God's decrees, and by comparing them with the powers of the human mind to perceive they do not clash: this way is inaccessible to us in this state. The other is, to examine the oracles of God, and sit down by their decisions.* This we have done, and have remarked the necessity of submitting our intelligence to the decision of an infallible being. Let us pause for the present; let us give God his glory, man his liberty, scripture its dignity, and let us look around and see whether we are in the inextricable wilds of mystic theology, or in the realms of common sense? The more I try to penetrate this profound mystery, the more I am bewildered; the reason is plain; I infer consequences from a subject unknown; and here my feeble reason is lost.—I will not then puzzle myself about *explaining* the decrees; I believe they surpass my conception in my present confined state, and the more I consult my nature, the plainer do I perceive the propriety of such a pause, and the absolute necessity of quitting speculation and applying to practice. If I examine my body, I perceive other bodies around exciting such and such sensations, some pleasant, some painful. Some one has fixed unalterable laws of nature, all which are as independent on me as the motion of the planets. It is not in my power to determine the sensations which

* *Sermons de Saurin*, Vol. IX. Sur la cause de la Perte des Pecheurs. Translation, Vol. V.

fire shall produce on my body ; nor have I any authority over the croaking of the toad, or the melody of the nightingale : the fragrant honey-suckle, the strong-scented tansey, the bitter wormwood, the delicious peach, the blushing rose, the glaring sun-flower, all these defy my power ; all reign in absolute monarchy, independent on every creature ; in vain I pretend to produce their effects on me. — But all confined and imprisoned as I am by surrounding Deity, is my liberty gone ? No surely ; this is in my power ; I consider my own experience, I avail myself of other peoples, and I soon learn that fire at such a distance excites a pleasant, and at a nearer approach a painful sensation ; my place I perceive is to pause at a right station. It is true when I look at a meadow in spring, I cannot chuse whether I will see it green or blue, or yellow : every spire of the herbage is ready painted ; an unalterable law determines the effects which shall be produced on me ; but all environed with nature's laws as I am, I can tell which colours, which forms, which scents, will always produce pleasant, and which painful sensations in me, and I stock my garden accordingly. This creative predestination is no way inconsistent with God's glory or my happiness ; he has determined, and I am pleased. Thus every object of thought, every creature, every event, every circumstance, the songs of the aspiring lark, the moans of an expiring toad, the hymns of an archangel, and the blasphemies of evil spirits, the love of a benefactor, the treachery of a betrayer, the sympathy of a protector, and the cru-

elty of a murderer, alike conduct my intelligence to the great Supreme, in whose inexpressible glories I am sublimely lost. Soothed and shocked, stilled and startled, elated and ingulphed, the certain effects of objects in view, effects that open and none can shut, shut and none can open, calmly direct the mind to the great first cause. His acts of benevolence excite my love, his inflexible justice alarms my fear; I revere his grandeur, dread his anger, melt under his compassion, inflame at his love; and by a happy experience find every operation of my mind capable of full play on the inexhaustible glories of my God. The laws of Providence, like the laws of nature, are fixed, determined, certain. Mighty is the union of temperance and health, industry and plenty, intemperance and diseases, indolence and scarcity; and though sometimes in these as in all things else, God counteracts and shews his power, yet not the extraordinary appearances, but the fixed, known, ordinary laws of Providence are our rules. If we well cultivate our lands we have no power to make them barren; cultivation and fruitfulness go together, we open the mouth of the earth, and she drinketh water of the rain from heaven. If we do but half cultivate we shall have but half the quantity of fruits; and if we abandon them to nature, their productions will be comparatively useless, if not hurtful; yet the law of Providence abounds with goodness; some slow growths shall spring up, God himself will be the husbandman, providing for another generation: he will rain upon

the wilderness wherein is no man, and will plant in the *desert*, the *cedar*, the *myrtle*, the *fir tree*, the *pine*, and the *box* together. By temperance, industry, chastity, prudence, equity, fortitude, we find little states have become mighty empires; but who ever saw a people rise to empire by luxury or indolence, effeminacy or barbarity? On the contrary, all the advantages gained by the former virtues, when abused to vicious purposes, dissolve the community they once united, and invigorated, and, as if every thing was impregnated with a moral sense, every thing undertakes the tuition of mankind. From the simple hoeing round a cabbage, to the solemn faith of treaties, effects flow from causes, causes from laws, or what is the same, from the nature of things. O glorious and inviolable decree, watching and warning thy sons! Thou hast *not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth*; thou hast *not said to the seed of Jacob seek ye me in vain!* Dost thou destroy our liberty? The Lord *hears the heavens, and they hear the earth, and the earth hears the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they hear the lispings of the child Jezreel.* Perhaps I may have harboured the wish that I had been born a prince, and have reigned a king. But why should I have preferred this to another station? Because through inattention and prejudice I have associated ideas which indeed have no relation at all. I have imagined greatness and happiness in union; whereas God *who seeth not as man seeth*, who knows that—not greatness and happiness, but goodness and happi-

ness are associates, has providentially cast me in a retired station. My dominion extends over three acres, and I am happier than a prince; no neighbouring monarch disputes my title, nor harasses my frontiers. My frugal and industrious subjects form regular communities, swell into colonies, are quietly governed by their own laws, yet neither rebel against God's nor mine; they, happy in superior protection, the crown rich with their productions

“ ————— Undreaming ill,

“ The happy people in their waken cells,

“ Sit tending public cares.* —————

Do princes taste what I taste when seated on an elm stump, my domestics bask in my presence? When my gentle cow, my willing horse, my faithful dog, my fluttering, prating poultry surround my throne, watch my motions, and by a thousand acts of unsuspected loyalty, tell me that I am *in league with the stones of the field, and the beasts of the field are at peace with me.* Without Raphael's or Angelo's imitation, supremely delighted with grand originals of a great master—

“ Infinite numbers, delicacies, smells,

“ With hues on hues, expression cannot paint,

“ The breath of nature and her endless bloom.†

Not Handel, with all his concords, can furnish such a symphony as mine! My musicians, heaven's pensioners, twitter in the thatch, thrill in the

* Thomson's Autumn. † Thomson's Spring.

bushes, echo in the grove:—melody, harmony all the day long: We go out with joy, we are led forth with peace; the mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands. O! how infinitely preferable to the world, its pomp, its pleasure, is the unpol- luted joy of that still, small voice, that walketh in the garden in the cool of the day; that wraps the face in a mantle, expands the soul in attention, and whispers *there is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are everlasting arms. Israel shall dwell in safety alone, the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou O Israel, who is like unto thee, O people saved of the Lord!*

PROVIDENTIAL PREDESTINATION, unalterable as the fixed stars, displays the Almighty God, de- prives me of no real good, but fills my heart with food and gladness; nor do we scruple to affirm, that Providence distributes happiness much more equally than many people, intombed in prejudices, imagine. So wisely did the Stoics judge, that they have left this remarkable character of their *Summé sapiens*: “that he can never be disappointed, be- cause whatever he sees necessary for him, he makes it his choice.”—Religion like creation and Providence has unalterable laws, and though these laws as well as the laws of Creation and Provi- dence, may be obscured by our prejudices, or

may be in many cases, beyond our capacities, yet they never can be inconsistent with the glorious perfections of Deity.

Let us proceed to consider the third branch of Predestination; ELECTION, or the choice of men to eternal happiness.

Whether God by an eternal appointment, has ordained some men to be holy here, and happy hereafter, is the proper question? We not only ask, whether he *foresaw* it would come to pass, but also whether he *predetermined* it should come to pass? Scripture answers in the affirmative:— It speaks of an order of beings superior to men, stiles them (not on account of their nature but of-
fice) *angels*; and calls some of these *elect angels*.—The scripture speaks of that extraordinary person the Lord Jesus Christ, and calls him also *God's elect*: and the nature of the thing requires us to believe he was chosen to his work, to the utter impossibility of its frustration. The same scripture tells us that twelve were *chosen to the apostleship*; and some, but not all, (for Judas was excluded) to obtain eternal life. The converts among the Jews, are said to be *elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. The gentiles are said to be *predestinated unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ; and to be chosen in him before the foundation of the world*. The Apostle Paul says, that *the names of his fellow-labourers, with Clement, and the names of some women who laboured in the gospel, were in*

the book of life : from all which we conclude, that the doctrine of personal, eternal election, determining the holiness and happiness of a *great multitude which no man can number*, is a sound, safe, scriptural doctrine. If it be asked, whether this election of persons be conditional;—that is, whether they are elected for the sake of their foreseen faith and obedience? The scripture answers, *that God hath saved them and called them with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace given them in Christ Jesus before the world began. That the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which they had done, but by saving them in a way of mercy, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Therefore St. Paul calls it *election of grace*, and argues, *if by grace then it is no more of works : otherwise grace is no more grace.*—If it be asked, whether this decree does not weaken the interests of morality? The scripture answers by assuring us, that God, who from the beginning chose his people to salvation, chose them *through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he calls them by the gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.* The holiness of the gospel is therefore a part of the decree; it is naturally and necessarily placed between eternal election, and eternal salvation; and of so great consequence are *faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance,*

patience, brotherly kindness and charity, that these only make our calling and election sure.

The last article in Predestination is, the consigning some to future punishment: we are to learn this also from scripture. Let it here be observed in the first place, that scripture assures us of a distribution of punishments as well as rewards, at the last day. *Some shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. They that have done evil shall come forth to the resurrection of damnation.* No one will pretend to say that God did not foresee this event; his foretelling it precludes such an extravagant objection. Nor will any one say that God could not have prevented it; yet he determined not to prevent, that is to permit it. Reprobation is to be considered either as an absolute or judicial act. To consider it as a judicial sentence, seems most consonant to scripture and reason. It is then the righteous determination of God to punish such as wilfully live and die in sin: we say *wilfully*, because we deny that God's decree to punish, forces any man to be punished. God is represented in scripture as a just and holy being; a being, who out of love to his creatures requires their obedience, but such an obedience as is proportional to the talents they receive. *Those that have sinned without law, shall perish without law. Those that have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law!*—Those who have been favoured with the gospel as having *no cloke for their sin*, for whom, if they perish, it shall be less *tolerable than for Sodom and Gomorrah.*—One of the most

odious ideas that we can form of God is to consider him as *reaping where he has not sown, and gathering where he has not strewed*; conduct which scripture every where disclaims on the part of the righteous God; positively affirming *that a man is accepted according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not*. God declares that *he desireth not the death of a sinner; that he hath no pleasure in the death of him who dieth: that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*. He has commanded the gospel to be preached to every creature; he exercises riches of goodness, forbearance, and long suffering, to lead those to repentance, who treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. He condescends to plead, and expostulate with sinners; to tell the wicked *that he will abundantly pardon such as return to him; to ask them why will you die?* To say in the tenderest language, *O that you had had known in this your day, the things that belong to your peace! O that you had hearkened unto me! O that there were in them such a heart! O that they would remember their latter end!* He tells them that in such a case *their peace should have been as a river, and their righteousness as the waves of the sea*. In a word, he sets before them life and death, alarms by the horrors of one, and invites by the delights of the other, and expressly declares after all, that if sinners perish, *their destruction is of themselves*. He says that *more could not have*

*been done for his vineyard than he has done : that when he judges the people, the heavens shall declare his righteousness : that heaven with all his holy prophets and apostles, shall rejoice in his vengeance, for God will be justified when he speaketh, and clear when he judges. The scriptures further assign this wilful disobedience as the cause of destruction.—If some angels are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day, it is because they kept not their first estate.—If Sodom and Gomorrah suffer the vengeance of eternal fire, it is because they gave themselves over to fornication, &c. If blackness of darkness be reserved for any, it is for such as turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, commit ungodly deeds, separate themselves from the saints, among whom they once hypocritically crept unawares, and with whom, like the people saved out of Egypt, they once pretended to be travelling toward the land of promise : of such men the annals of the church give us the history, and such all the prophecies tell us we are to expect. Yet after all, the apostle would have us to compassionate such people, save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire.—When St. Paul had been professedly treating this subject in the 9th of Romans, and asks—*What shall we say then ?—The gentiles have attained, but Israel hath not attained.—Wherefore ? because they sought it not by faith. If it be said faith cometh by hearing,— what!—says**

the apostle, *have they not heard?* Yes, verily, *did not Israel know?*—Yes, to Israel he saith *all day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.* The apostle nowhere assigns God's decree as the cause of reprobation, but declares they *attained not because they sought not.* On this subject he quotes a passage respecting judicial blindness, often applied to the Jews in the New Testament, but never to the gentiles, taken from Isaiah's prophecy; but it ought to be observed, that this prophet appears to have had a commission of mercy, first proposing to make their *scarlet sins white as snow*; and having been treated as the former-prophets were, he received *in the year that King Uzziah died,* a commission of vengeance, recorded in the sixth chapter of his prophecy. The case of our Saviour and his apostles being exactly similar, their reasoning, persuading, all their doctrines, and all their proofs being rejected, they apply Isaiah's second mission also to that obstinate people, and tell them that God in a judicial way, for their wilful obstinacy, would give them *the spirit of slumber,* and prevent their believing in future. St. Paul's sermon at Antioch, exemplifies our subject: he relates the expectations of their ancestors, the fulfilment of prophecies in Jesus Christ, the rejection of him at Jerusalem, and tells them that through *that man was preached the forgiveness of sins.*—He entreats them to beware lest that come upon them which was spoken of in the prophets,—*behold ye despi-*

sers, and wonder, and perish.—He presses these matters home in private, and when they contradicted and blasphemed what he said, he and Barnabas boldly and awfully said, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn unto the gentiles.—Thus he did also at Rome, and in so doing he had the sanction of his master's example; who when his disciples asked, why speakest thou unto them in parables? Was*

* The Epistle of St. Jude which treats of *reprobation*, is a kind of epitome of the 2nd. Epistle of Peter, as a comparison will make very plain. To this St. Jude seems to refer when he says, that these men were προγεγραμμενοι before described in writing; that is by the Apostle Paul and others. See 17th and 18th verses of his epistle. How that word came to be rendered *before ordained*, (verse 4.) I know not, but sure I am it would read strangely so rendered in GAL. III. 1. ROM. XV. 4. EPH. III. and 3d. yet it is the same word in all these places. The people then did not sin because the decree forced them to sin, but returning to sin *after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*, they were righteously punished for so doing. See 2 of Peter II. 20. St. Paul indeed says, that *Esau was hated before he had done evil*; that *Pharoah was raised up to shew God's power*; that *God hardeneth whom he will*, and so on. To all this we answer with the same St. Paul—*Who art thou that repliest against God?* Do not you know that God's will, God's love, God's hatred, (whatever be meant by these) are in perfect harmony with all his other attributes, with his wisdom, holiness, goodness, justice, truth. In short an answer to two simple questions decides the whole. Is punishment ever inflicted without sin? Who is chargeable with sin—God or man? The innocent are never punished, nor does God make any man sin.

pleas'd thus to account for his conduct ; *because they seeing see not ; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand : therefore by hearing, they shall hear and not understand, by seeing they shall see and shall not perceive.* The scripture further tells us that God will deal with the gentiles as he did with the Jews ; *that they were broken off for unbelief, and that we stand by faith.* That they shall be grafted in again if they abide not still in unbelief, and that we shall be cut off if we continue not in his goodness. The sum of the whole matter seems to be—That God from all eternity foreseeing that all left to themselves, would wilfully and obstinately continue in sin ; from all eternity determined to punish some with *everlasting destruction from his presence ;* thereby righteously expressing his utter abhorrence of sin. That to express his infinite love, he determined to pardon and save others : that in the one case he affords the supernatural aid of his spirit, and in the other does not deny it, because it is not asked ; and that in both cases men act freely, and without violence.

There seems to me but the shadow of a difficulty remaining.—How can God invite, expostulate, plead with sinners, when he foresees that they will not, and even fore-determines that they shall not repent, and be saved ? On this difficult question what must we answer ? Must we say that God could not foresee the event ? This cannot be admitted without shocking injury to his perfections, as well as to scripture, which foresaw and foretold

the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, and the rejection of the Jews for murdering the Messiah. Must we say then that God expostulates with none but the elect? But this is rather cutting the knot than untying it. The reasons and explications of learned men in defence of this position, are far from satisfactory; and it seems very clear that God has commanded his ministers to address invitations to all, in the most extensive sense of the word. Must we then say that God is insincere in addressing them? This is dreadful: for if God can speak falsely, dangerous is the state of those who trust him. Neither of these inferences can be admitted: indeed it would answer no end; for to admit either of these, is to plunge ourselves into a thousand difficulties, for the sake of removing one. Let us then rest where we ought to rest. Let us believe the following scriptural propositions to be true, and let us leave the manner of reconciling them to God, and apply ourselves to practice. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning. Whom he predestinated, them he also called; the Lord hath made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil. The Lord is patient towards all men, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. The gospel is to be preached to all nations, and to every creature, for the obedience of faith. God giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not. Every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Whosoever shall call on the*

name of the Lord shall be saved. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. Let us believe that without holiness no man shall see the Lord ; and that this is the Father's will—Every one that seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life : that though it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely. I call this a shadow of a difficulty ; for indeed a man must know very little of God, very little of himself, and very little of scripture, not to know that two truths may be both certain, and yet the harmony of them beyond his comprehension. It is proper for scripture as the voice of Jehovah powerful and full of majesty, to reveal such truths ; and it belongs to faith to receive them, fully persuaded that things impossible with men are possible with God.

There are two sorts of persons who object to this mode of reasoning ; the one pretend that it is irrational ; the other that it is unscriptural. I wish to know of the first, whether in many cases thousands in the world are not obliged to receive two truths which they cannot conciliate ? For instance, who does not know that every day the sea running six hours together from south to north, makes a flood on the coasts : and after a quarter of an hour's pause, returns back again from north to south, leaving the coast at an ebb ? Who does not know that these are regulated by the course of the moon ? That the spring-tides or highest

tides are about the new and full of the moon, and that the highest happen at the equinoxes? The moon regulates the tides, the tides are regulated by the moon.—Are these the less true because thousands cannot account for them. Is this phenomenon the less true because some philosophers ascribe it to the compression of the atmosphere, some to the power of gravitation, and others more timorous, are afraid to pronounce the cause at all.—The monsoons or trade-winds in the East Indies, blow constantly six months one way, and the contrary way the other six. A constant east wind blows under the equator. Is it not certain that these are altogether unaccountable to thousands, who yet have the fullest evidence of the facts; and would it at all affect the facts, if no one in this world could account for them? These with an endless number of earthly things are analogous to heavenly ones, and we insist on the reasonableness of faith in both. Those that urge scripture against us, either deny the truths advanced because they imagine they are not bible truths, or else because they cannot comprehend them. If any deny such plain truths as these, I have no desire to converse with such; for it is plain they are not fairly attentive to the language of scripture and reason; if scripture does not assert God's decrees, and man's self-destruction, I know not any truths it does assert. If any believer of scripture denies, because he cannot comprehend the harmony of of these, he ought by the same rule to deny the two natures of Jesus Christ; the union of soul

and body in man; the resurrection of the dead; and every other mystery of Revelation and reason.—In a word, God has made holiness every man's duty, the nature of things annexes to it present peace and future reward; let us therefore be fully persuaded, that the *judge of the whole earth will do right*: that they that *wait on him shall never be confounded*. Let us believe that inviolable and eternal rules of right and wrong will *reward every man according to his works*; and that *the wicked only shall be turned into hell*.

How long shall divinity which ought to lead the way to other sciences, loiter behind them all? How long shall she resign her precedence rather than own the wholesome though humbling truth,—that the human mind has its bounds? How long shall the *children of this world be wiser than the children of light*: pause at their limits of speculation, and apply to practice? Hear the language of one in the communion of the church of Rome, enough to make a protestant blush. “One half of the philosophers being surprised at their meeting with nothing but profound darkness, whenever they attempt to penetrate further than the testimony of their senses, indecently revile the condition of man, and condemn him to an universal ignorance. But scripture and experience on the contrary encourage us to make researches, by informing us, that God has subjected to us whatever is upon the earth, and that he crowns the operations of our hands with never failing rewards. The other half of the philosophers taking too great

a complacency in the powers and faculties granted to us, give man to understand, that his capacity extends to every thing. But scripture and experience inform them, that men are placed upon earth, not indeed to know the ground of God's works, but to improve them by their skill and industry; that man is not born a philosopher but an husbandman; and that his wisdom consists in making virtue and labour go hand in hand. The best we can do is to regulate our studies according to our destination. Now, it is demonstrably true that God who has given man a measure of understanding proportioned to his wants and his end, has purposed to make him not a creator but an husbandman. Such is our condition; in this we may make ourselves eminent, but ought never to go out of it. The title it is true, suits neither the metaphysician who is generally travelling in his possible worlds, nor the systematic philosopher whose mind is for ever taken up with some imaginary edifice. These men are no husbandmen, as they are not of this world.—But our truly learned, and all those solid geniuses, whose labour produces some good upon earth, properly speaking are so many husbandmen. This is a title equally suitable to the industrious trader, the intendant of the navy, the overseer of commerce, and the learned academic. The geometrician it is true never ploughs a field, but he fixes the limits of it. The botanist never handles a spade, but he enriches the garden. The geographer transports neither leather nor corn; but he facilitates navigation and trade.

Let us reduce all arts and sciences to the same point. The thing is easy to be done. To this point it is that experience, common sense, conscience, and the holy scriptures refer us: and from this point all our systems of physics seem to have laboured to swerve, by raising us so high as to put us out of our sphere, and by busying us about what we can neither understand, nor make any use of. Philosophy will then become amiable, accessible to every one, satisfactory and profitable in proportion as philosophers, taking the extent of the human understanding for their rule, will renounce all learned pageantry, empty speculations, pretended profundities, and above all the illusory maxim of never admitting any thing but what we evidently conceive; invariably to stick to facts, or the knowledge of them; the evidence of outward objects; of usages and relations: for not only in religion, but also in natural philosophy, we ought to be contented with the certainty of experience, and the simplicity of revelation.*

Scripture-predestination professedly leads to practice: it teaches me to believe that my days are numbered and determined: the number of my months is with God, who hath appointed man's *bounds that he cannot pass*: it teaches me also that *bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but that their breath shall go away before their time*. Does scripture require me to harmonize these? Rather let me listen to

* Abbé Pluche's *History of the Heavens*, Vol. II. book 4.

him who said, *what man is he who desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Depart from evil and do good: seek peace and pursue it.*—This use also it makes of those branches of Predestination which concern the next world. *To whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? Let us therefore labour to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. A promise being left us of entering into his rest, let us therefore fear lest any of us come short of it.*—Thus when St. Paul had been through half of his subject; when he had brought it to this conclusion—*Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:* he adds; *I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service; and be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

The uses of this view of Predestination are obvious. It magnifies God, and does not build a system of divinity on the denial of his natural perfections, under pretence of glorifying his moral ones: nor does it on the other hand, destroy his moral to exalt his natural perfections: it acknowledges his mind replete with science, his heart with love. If any of his attributes seem to jar, we believe still that they are in perfect harmony, and

ascribe the apparent discord to our defect.—As to man, we follow the same method, abasing but not annihilating those mental powers, which God has *fearfully and wonderfully made*. We release him from gazing and set him to work. We say to him—*Seeing therefore some must enter into rest, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: again he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, to day after so long a time; as it is said, to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.*—Were we in the midst of a primitive christian church, we should say—*How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?* We would stir up all, without exception, *to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure*: with St. Paul would say—*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

We shall more fully explain the *Uses* of Predestination, by observing some of its *Abuses*; for that it is abused I think no one can doubt. Alas! What conscientious minister of Jesus Christ looking round the church can question this! *For these things I weep, mine eye runneth down!*

Predestination is inexplicable, because it is inconceivable. It is a mystery of faith, confirmed by right reason, but incomprehensible to both; and though we are not able to explain it, it is pretty evident, that many explications do actually confound it. So a child incapable of holding a bow, may be very sure that many expert archers miss the mark. The first article of religion, na-

tural and revealed, is—*The being of a God.* How mortifying the reflection, that of this first article we know almost nothing! Yet from this, as from the fountain head, flow all our after thoughts in religion; and it appears to me a very sound maxim, —That our ideas of the God we adore, will give the tint to all our religion; they will chrystalize if clear, and discolour if defiled all our whole religious system, which will be more or less polluted, more or less gross, as our ideas of God are more or less pure. It is therefore of the last importance, that if we cannot swell our little rill of divine knowledge into a river, we should at least use all possible precautions against polluting that little which our frugal benefactor allows for present use. O God of love! Shew us the *pure river of water of life clear as chrystal, proceeding from the throne of God and the Lamb.* Lead us beside these *still waters*, and give us to drink of them.—The decrees are often so explained as to injure the perfections of God. Hence one class of abusers.—We have the fullest proof of the being and harmony of the divine perfections, and we may and ought to reject that explication which disagrees therewith. We are sometimes amused with a curious account of the covenant of grace in favour of the elect; and God the Father is represented as enquiring of the Son and Spirit what must be done? A consultation is holden about harmonizing the divine attributes; the issue is, the Father proposes, the Son accepts, and the Holy Spirit accedes to a

treaty of peace. Whether all this agrees with the unity of the divine essence, or the perfections of the supreme wisdom:—whether on the contrary, it does not becloud rather than display the divine glories, let any one judge. If all this be collected from the word *counsel*, it is certainly mistaking the meaning of the word.* If it be founded on such a passage as that in Genesis—*Let us make man in our own image*, it is a mistake of the idiom. If commentators say they speak figuratively, we reply, that such figures of speech should be introduced, with good, plain, sterling, literal language, lest the unthinking people should take fiction for truth. Be it remembered, we are not objecting to the *thing*, but to the way of accounting for it. Calvin and Beza who both believed the decrees, yet differed in their opinions about the arrangement of them. Beza was for the *Supralapsarian*

* The *secret* or *counsel* of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant, *Psal. xxv. 14*. *Secret* and *covenant* are synonymous in meaning. *Neque enim aliud est fœdus Dei quam secretum vel consilium*; says Calvin upon the place: and adds—*Hic locus nos modestiam et humilitatem invitât, ne perrumpese tentemus ad mysteria quorum notitiam singulare esse Dei donum pronunciat David*.—This word is used for a company of invisible angels, *1 Kings xxii. 19*. For a private meeting of good men, *Psalm cxl. 1*. For a conspiracy of the wicked, *Gen. xlix. 6*. For the impenetrable secrecies of the human heart, *Psalm lxiv. 2—6*. The seventy render the word by Homer's term for Jove's decree. On the whole, it seems to mean the secret purposes of God; impenetrable to us but as revealed in his word, *1 Cor. ii. 10, 11, 13*.—See *Gen. xi. 7, 18, 21, et passim*.

scheme; that is, that God elected some to happiness, and ordained others to misery, considered "in the pure mass of creatureship." Calvin took the *Sublapsarian* way, that is, that the decrees of God passed in the divine mind under the consideration of men "as sinners." If by God's considering men in "the pure mass," he meant his viewing human spirits abstractedly, to the utter exclusion of vice and virtue, if in this abstract view he determined the covenant of grace, behold, the covenant of grace is a system of Ontology! And if human spirits considered abstractedly, were reprobated, then God is the author of vice and misery! Such an abstract view of the decrees, is attempted to be accounted for by the sovereignty of God; but we deny that a wise and holy God exercises any such sovereignty, and we are confident that he can no more do an unjust or partial action, than meet with any controul: as just as independent, he does not punish without a cause. God it seems is determined on the extreme punishment of so many millions of human spirits: it is true as a sovereign he could punish them without their deserving it; but to make that just which before was uncontrollable, these spirits shall be forced to sin, and then forced to suffer! O inexorable hardness of fate! No pleas, no cries, no prayers, no tears, no regrets, can move the inflexible judge's heart: merciful God what an idea of thy dominion!—Our mistakes on this subject, arise from a supposition of our capability of comprehending the operations of the infinite mind,

and we make no scruple,—we, who cannot arrange our own operations, we make no scruple of arraigning the thoughts of God : but we receive no sanction from St. Paul's reasoning concerning *Esau* and *Jacob*, for whoever attends to the Apostle, will easily perceive that he does not so much intend to *explain*, as to *assert* the decrees. His reflection on the whole is—*O the abyss ! How unsearchable his judgments ! his ways past finding out !*

Sometimes the “ will of God ” is assigned as a ground of the decrees. A very sound way of speaking if rightly understood : but alas how seldom taken in its scripture-sense ! The will of God ought never to be considered abstractedly, but always in connection with the eminence of his other perfections. God does not determine any events, merely because he will determine them ; but he determines such a thing to come to pass, because it is the wisest, the best, the most conformable to all his other glorious perfections. *If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land : but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword.* Whatever therefore cometh from the *Lord of Hosts, is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working !*—Sometimes God is said to have a “ secret will,” not only distinguishable from, but actually opposite to his “ revealed will : ” and we are told that he requires that of his creatures in his revealed will, which his secret will renders impossible to these very persons of whom the service is required ! A God requiring

impossibilities of his creatures! A God forming a man, and then punishing him for not being an angel! A God saying one thing and meaning another! What profound divinity is this? Equally incompatible with the purity of God's nature, the equity of his law, and the veracity of his promises, the fears of the wicked, and hopes of the just! Faith in such a God, would rather work by abhorrence than by love. Of all the methods hit upon for the explication of the decrees, this is surely one of the most absurd. The will of God must of necessity, be invariably, eternally, unchangeably the same; *he is of one mind, and none can change him? What his soul desireth, even that he doth. His counsel standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.* His law is the transcript of his own holy mind; and we ought to esteem *all his precepts concerning all things to be right*, believing that all his judgments from eternity to eternity, are strictly just. His promises are no longer proper grounds of confidence, than while they indicate without equivocation the love of his heart. His veracity makes his threatenings formidable; and if it could be admitted that his secret will was contrary to his revealed will, his word would not be a safe guide; apostles might be lost, and assassins saved; luxury might be a virtue, and temperance a crime. No, no, *we have a word of prophecy more sure than the voice that was heard in the holy mount. The word which by the gospel is preached to us, is the word of the Lord that endureth for ever.*

Some explanations of the decrees, give us the idea of an ignorant, some of a cruel, some of an unjust, and some of an unfaithful Deity; but without enlarging on this part of the subject, we may be assured, that every system of Predestination establishing itself on the ruins of the essence or harmony of the divine perfections, is false, and ought to be avoided.

Let us just glance at a second class of abuses relative to scripture.—“God’s revealed will requires what his secret will renders impossible:”—A position which I think would never have been advanced, but for the sake of supporting a certain system. Be that as it will, the position is false, and groundless; not only injurious to the divine attributes, but destructive of divine revelation. It is therefore immaterial whether we consider this under the notion of an abuse of scripture, or an abuse of the perfections of God; in effect it strikes at both. The “will of God” is a phrase which admits of various senses. Sometimes it means the determinate plan of all God’s works as in his own secret mind. Thus he *worketh all things after the counsel of his own will*. Sometimes it means the direction of affairs in Providence. Thus St. James says—*Ye say to day or to morrow we will go into such a city, whereas ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that*. Sometimes it signifies the will of God in general. Thus what two evangelists call doing the *will of God*, a third calls *hearing the word of God, and doing it*. Sometimes it is put for a particular branch of

God's word. *This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.* The *secret will* of God properly speaking, are those determinations in the divine mind, yet unrevealed, such as the day and hour of judgment; but can we speak too modestly of what neither man nor angel knows? Have we not the clearest evidence imaginable, of the equity and immutability of that secret will? And can it be right to pronounce that secret purposes contradict his open professions? *God forbid! Yea let God be true, and every man a liar.* But it seems God commands some things to be done, which he foresees will not be done. But we deny that God's secret foreknowledge renders the required obedience impossible, and we abide by our principle, that man's freedom and God's fore-appointment do not clash, however difficult it may be to reconcile them. We hold fast the hidden will of God, and the free operations of the human mind, and on this difficulty take the apostle's advice; *judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart.* Several instances in sacred history are brought by some, to support the opinion, that God commands one thing and wills another. Thus Eli is punished for not reproofing his sons, yet when he did reprove them, *they would not hearken because the Lord would slay them.* But why would he slay them? Did God *absolutely* or *judicially* determine their destruction, together with their father's

violent death? *I will judge the house* said the Lord, *for wilful sin, for iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not, and therefore I have sworn that the iniquity shall not be purged for ever.* Can any thing be plainer? We are further told, that it was God's revealed will that Pharoah should let Israel go, but his secret will that he should not; where the relation is as follows.—*Go unto the King of Egypt and say, let us go we beseech thee, and I am sure that he will not let you go, but I will smite Egypt, and after that he will let you go.* It was God's revealed will that Pharoah should let them go, and that whatever means he used to prevent it, should be ineffectual; accordingly we find they did go, and Pharoah himself sent them away. But the Lord is said to *harden his heart?* And is not Pharoah said to *harden his own heart?* Did not Moses say, *how long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before the Lord?* Did not Pharoah say, *I have sinned, the Lord is righteous, and my people are wicked.* And can any man doubt but the sense of the whole is this:—God determined to bring his people out of Egypt, in order to which he commanded Pharoah to let them go: Pharoah was not obliged to believe that so extraordinary a message came from God without proof; Moses was directed to give proof by miracle, not by a plague, (for where there is no sin there is no punishment) but by changing his rod into a serpent. Pharoah, as God foresaw, endeavoured to obscure and evade the

force of this miracle. God judicially hardens his heart against greater miracles still, by leaving him to follow his obstinate prejudices and head strong passions. What contradiction is there in all this, between the secret and revealed will of God? But still *the Lord* is said to *harden his heart*. To which we reply, that the holy language usually ascribes extraordinary things to God. The *cedars of Lebanon* are *Jehovah's trees*: an high hill is the *hill of God*. Nimrod was a mighty hunter *before the Lord*. The first born of Adam was a *man from the Lord*. And thus *the Lord rained upon Sodom fire from the Lord*. In like manner we read of a *plague from the Lord*, an *evil spirit from the Lord*. Nor is it at all unlikely that according to the genius of the inspired language, Pharaoh's hardness may be ascribed to the Lord in the same manner. It seems to me an hebraism, for an extraordinary degree of stupidity and sin. But be it granted that God suspended his operations of restraining grace from Pharaoh, and so left him to the vitiosity of his nature. Will it follow that this was a positive act? Who that knows the man can question but that it was judicially done? Sesostris seems to have been the cruel tyrant to the Israelites mentioned in the first chapters of Exodus; and Pheron his son, the Pharaoh now in question; and if historians sacred and profane may be believed, he was a very stupid, and a very wicked man. Who but a madman would pretend to chastise a river with a javelin? I call him mad, who intoxicated with grandeur, supports

his monarchy with cruelty, defying alike both God and man. Such from his actions Sesostris king of Egypt seems to have been; therefore the prophet calls Apries (or *Pharoah Hophra* as the scripture stiles him,) *the great dragon that lies in the midst of the rivers, saying my river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.* And therefore Pheron is called *leviathan*, and his great men *dragons.* And this is that King Pharoah so often called in as an evidence against the Lord of Hosts! So again in Abraham's case; we are told that he would have committed sin had he refused to sacrifice Isaac, and in looking to God's secret will, would have acted counter to his revealed will. How could Abraham look at God's secret will? If God's designs about Isaac were *revealed*, they were no longer *secret*, and if unrevealed how could they be looked at? The truth is, God had revealed to Abraham that Isaac should be a father. In trying whether he would sacrifice him while a youth, God proved whether his servant would submit his intelligence to faith: Abraham believing that God understood the law of nature better than he, offered to sacrifice his son; and so far was it called looking at God secret will, from making him liable to sin, that it was his faith in that very secret will that supported him. For he accounted that God, who had said *in Isaac shall thy seed be called, was able to raise him up even from the dead.* And this is the point we plead for; that however the declarations of God's revealed word may seem to clash, such is the eminence of his perfec-

tions, and the holy immutability of his perfect will, that he may safely be depended on to harmonize all.

The *will of God* sometimes signifies his *law*, wherein he explains, and enforces universal obedience; and such an obedience as is called his will, because it is what God himself practises, and prefers in others. Sometimes it is put for the *gospel*, wherein God farther manifests his eternal moral rectitude, together with the great sacrifice he has made of his son, to express his inviolable justice and eternal love; and this is called his *will*, because he has graciously determined in this honourable way to save the guilty. But neither in these nor in any other sense, ought we to separate the will from the wisdom, truth, and goodness of God. God is wise, and true, and good, independently on his willing or determining to be so: nor is it possible he should will any thing contrary to those attributes. Suppose in an absolute monarchy, where the prince's will is law, a sinless, perfect man was to govern: would not his subjects be perfectly happy under his government, if equity could make them happy? For such a sovereign having no contract with his people, would do by nature the things contained in contracts; having no law he would be a law unto himself. His will is the law it is true, but his will is governed by equity, gentleness, goodness, truth. Why do not we reason thus of God? The reasoning is just, however plain.

Another abuse of scripture is the denial of some of the most obvious truths therein recorded. We

are told by some that general invitations can never accord with a particular decree. Pains must therefore be taken to prove that there are no exhortations nor invitations addressed to unbelievers, in all the whole word of God. In vain we reply, that the prophets and apostles delivered themselves in general terms to general assemblies; in vain we prove that they cry to heaven and earth, high and low, rich and poor, all the inhabitants of the world together. In vain we say, that the commission is, *go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* In vain we prove that God called to those that refused, that Jesus invited those that would not come, that the apostles preached peace, *peace to those that were afar off, as well as to those that were nigh.* In vain all these, and a thousand arguments more: men will prefer speculation to believing, and rather than submit their intelligence to that God whose decrees and invitations are cemented together, will blot out three parts of his written word.—In our Saviour's time, *many were called but few chosen*; but now *few are chosen* and none called! Does he that sitteth in heaven see this? He does, and says by his prophet, *Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay; for shall the work say of him that made it, he made me not? Or shall the thing say of him that framed it, he had no understanding? The deaf shall hear the words of the book; they that erred in spirit, shall come to understanding, and they that murmured, shall learn doctrine. Who then*

shall make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. Is it not a sad abuse of holy writ, to find predestination in a thousand places where it is not spoken of at all? To confound absolute and judicial purposes together; to connect predestination with every subject, historical, moral, or theological; so that the duty of servants to masters cannot be preached without it! Are not these with many similar abuses notorious; and do not such expositions make easy things hard, and straight things crooked? The word of God, like the works of nature, has its simplicity and sublimity, exercising both reason and faith: the wisdom of man is to distinguish each its proper object, and to reduce all to practice.

A third class of abuses relate to the *capacities of men*. The apostle distinguishes christian truths into two classes, and calls the plainer truths *milk*, and the more profound *meat*. In which class must we place Predestination? Without doubt it belongeth to them, *who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil*. St. Paul says that when he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians, that church was *not able to bear meat*; and that until then *he had fed them with milk*; and indeed, he adds, *ye are not now able to bear it*. And yet he had preached at Corinth a year and six months; and had been at Ephesus almost two years when he wrote this epistle: accordingly it consists of the plainest

truths, the deep things of God being omitted or but lightly touched on. The resurrection of Jesus Christ indeed being the basis of his whole preaching, must needs be dwelt on, and the resurrection of believers was so naturally connected with it, that it could not be omitted; but this sublime doctrine is handled modestly and practically, and the conclusion is,—*Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

There are other abuses of this kind, in which it is plain no regard is paid to the capacities of the person in question. Taking it for granted, that as he who formed different men of different capacities, will judge them according to their use or abuse of those very capacities, it must needs be the duty of every tutor to proportion his instructions to those different sizes of the human mind: not requiring a child to believe as much as a man, nor an idiot to reason like a philosopher. To put the article of predestination into our catechisms for children, is feeding babes with *meat*, not with *milk*: and this perhaps is the reason why many that receive this doctrine in childhood, so few, so very few ever digest it. The little tender minds of children hovering as yet in their senses, can they stretch the wing and soar into the abstract speculations concerning the decrees? They may learn the words, but that will be very far from understanding the thing. And even grant that they understood the meaning of the terms, their faith in

an article which requires reasoning and thinking beyond their years, will be a mere prejudice. Plain simple truths ought to be taught in their early years, and deeper things reserved for greater maturity. Even an inspired apostle was not ashamed to say, *when I was a child I thought as a child : I spake as a child, I understood as a child ; it was when I became a man, that I put away childish things.*—Nor do I think it much wiser to press this article on young converts ; their minds are apt to create difficulties where there are none, how much more to stumble at them when placed in their way. We see by the passage just cited, that the Corinthian converts had been fed by an apostle almost four years with *milk* ; and we are sure our Saviour who had many things to say to his disciples, deferred saying them, not because he could not explain them, but because *they could not bear them*. Let us respect these examples, and do not let the *child behave himself proudly against the ancient, nor the base against the honourable, lest our tongue and our doings against the Lord should provoke the eyes of his glory.*—Young converts are born into the spiritual world, as young children are born into the natural world, perfectly formed, but altogether incapable of certain applications, until their *senses* have been *exercised*, as the apostle terms it, and they are arrived at full age.

A third abuse is—preaching the doctrine constantly to illiterate people. Gentlemen immured in colleges, or diverted with the politer part of mankind,

little think how grossly ignorant are the lower class of people: to these who all their days have "trudged along unknowing what they sought;" to these would a wise man be always preaching a theme fit to exercise the abilities of an archangel? Let us not pretend that these want understanding, but they want cultivation.

In the same class on this article, we arrange the busy mechanic, and the careful merchant. Can men, whose heads are filled with the commerce of the world all the week, be very capable of close meditation on such a sublime doctrine on the Lord's day? Without disparaging the abilities of any description of men, we all know that habits of mind, like habits of body, imperceptibly mould the man into the form of the occupation pursued. The great majority enter too eagerly into worldly pursuits to retain the government of their thoughts. Should it be said, we are to suppose our religious assemblies are composed of not merely *natural* but *spiritual* men, and they are capable of *judging all things*. But let it be observed, that the apostle who said so, adds, *And I brethren, I could not speak to you as unto spirituul, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*. The *spiritual man* therefore distinguished from a *babe* in Christ, is a grown christian, and stands opposed to a natural man, or a man of mere intellectual powers. A man may certainly be *born of the Spirit*, and yet not know whence his spiritual birth came, nor whither it tendeth. Do we really think that people whose intellects are naturally feeble,

or that those whose minds are not naturally but habitually enfeebled,—do we really think that these people when regenerated are capable of comprehending all doctrines? God hath set in the church—first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly, teachers,—miracles, gifts of healings, diversities of tongues. *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.*

What shall we say of those who make the belief of this doctrine essential to salvation; people who judge of your birth and growth by the same rules; and who, because you are not arrived at the strength of a *Samson*, positively declare that you are in christianity a non-entity; who make no allowance for capacities, prejudices, or virtues; who have no sympathy for the weakest, no veneration for the strongest; but who deem Predestination the *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *first* and the *last* of all doctrines! I confess I cannot help saying of such,—*Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations: O my soul come not thou into their secret: into their assembly mine honour be not thou united.* If men intend to destroy some of the best evidences of christianity; if they mean to return to the blind faith and implicit obedience of Rome; if they intend to crumble the christian church into parties, and by dividing, to dissolve

religion until it is confounded with the world; then one would advise every party to magnify all their circumstantials into essentials, all their essentials into infallibilities, and to prescribe every article to us under pain of damnation! Then *the light of Israel would be for a fire, and his holy one for a flame.* It would burn and devour not only thorns and briars, but it would consume the glory of the forest, and of the fruitful field, both soul and body, and they would be as when a standard-bearer fainteth: and the rest of the trees of the forest, would be so few that a child might write them. But if, on the contrary, we wish to have the root of Jesse stand for an ensign of the people, for Assyria, for Egypt, for Pathros, for Cush, for Elam, for Shinar, for Hamath, for the islands of the sea, for the outcasts of Israel, and the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth; then let the envy of Ephraim depart, and the adversaries of Judah be cut off. Let not Ephraim envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. Let us not abuse our power in the gospel; let us to the weak become as weak, that we may gain the weak, all things to all men, that we may by all means save some.

There are other abuses of the doctrine of Predestination which affect *morals*.—The rights of morality are most sacred and inviolable; nor is it possible to violate them, without the most daring infringements on all religion, both natural and revealed. The scripture proposes Predestination as a powerful *motive* to obedience, but never pro-

poses it as a *rule* of obedience ; for how should an unknown decree be a rule of duty ? The light of nature teaches parents to inform their children of the right knowledge of God, and to urge the necessity of spiritually worshipping him. Can it be thought, that any doctrine of christianity releases parents from this duty ? What shall we say to those who neglect teaching their children to pray, or refuse to instruct them under a vain pretence of not knowing whether they are elected or not ?—I shudder at the impiety ; and the apostle says—*If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* The light of nature teaches a heathen philosopher whose researches have enriched his own mind, to impart the happy science to others : the obligation is the greater as the science is the more important. “ This, therefore,” says an excellent moral philosopher, “ is the sum of all social virtues : that with an extensive affection towards all, we exert our powers vigorously for the common interest, and at the same time cherish all the tender affections in the several narrower relations which contribute toward the prosperity of individuals, as far as the common interest will allow it.”* Is it therefore credible, that any doctrines of christianity should weaken these social virtues ? And yet they are much weakened when christian ministers tell us, “ they are to preach to none but the elect :” and

* Hutcheson’s Moral Philosophy, Vol. I. B. I. Chap. 5. See also B. II. Chap. 10. On our obligations in speech.

to complete the matter acknowledge, "that they are not sure who the elect are."—A certain writer undertakes to prove, that "Arminianism is the breach of all the ten commandments: Arminianism itself" (observe, not Arminians; but the bare belief of the Arminian *five points*) "is a breach of the ten commandments: they break the first by deifying man's power; they break the second by bowing down to the idol creature-power, carved and adorned with reason, reading, disputes, &c. —They break the third by speaking so much of *grace, grace*, and denying the infallible appointments of God to give grace: they take the Lord's name in vain: they break the fourth by denying perseverance, which is a *sacred rest*.—They break the tenth by coveting their neighbour's interest in God and Christ, when they come to die by coveting their neighbour's serenity and assurance, in the high road of nature." Wretched sophistry! Is it a crime involving a curse, to desire to go to heaven? "But," (adds this writer) "you will say that reprobation, denying eternal life to mankind in general is a breach of the sixth command, a soul-murdering doctrine! That is a mistake," he replies; "for as men may kill beasts without murder, so the reprobate or such as God proposes to leave under their free will, are not to be considered in the sense of the holy scriptures as men, but as beasts, serpents, dogs, swine, &c.*—

† Hussey's *Glory of Christianity unveiled*, &c. chapter 26.

Such nonsense as is above quoted, may seem too contemptible to be noticed, more especially by such a man as Robert

Arminianism is surely innocence itself, compared with the crime of hating a brother. Yea, infidelity talks more soberly on the subject. "Is not hating a neighbour for his opinions," says Voltaire, "the most dangerous of all superstitions? Is it not evidently far more reasonable to worship the milk and smock of the virgin Mary, than to detest and persecute a brother?"*

The decrees have been made not only rules of conduct to our fellow-creatures, but they have also been made the rules of duty to God and ourselves. Hence we are told,—“That as some men have no saving faith, no evangelic love, so it is not their duty to have any. Indeed it is the duty of all to believe the truth of the history of redeeming love, but not to trust in it to the saving of their souls: no, that is the duty of none but the elect.” We ask these men, how we are to know the elect? They answer—“The elect are known only by their faith and obedience.” We ask what is the faith of God’s elect? They reply,—“A reliance on the

Robinson. By way of apology for him, it may be observed, that Mr. Hussey, notwithstanding his deplorable, high supralapsarian opinions, was a minister of considerable popularity at Cambridge, and not destitute of talents, or christian virtues: that the *leaven* noticed in this and several following pages, was not yet purged from the congregation of which Mr. Robinson was pastor. It may be added, that since his time, similar opinions have been held by a few weak men, ministers and people in certain villages in Cambridgeshire, and that they have been made the test of *sound doctrine!!!*

* *Traité sur la Tolérance, Ch. 20. Velly's Hist. de France, Tom. 12.*

rich promises of grace made in the gospel to sensible sinners." We thank them for such answers, the rather because they spare us the pain of a confutation. Without going on to enumerate abuses of this kind, which are endless, we will conclude them with the following most beautiful words of an amiable author, just mentioned.—“ With what other view than that of pursuing virtue, has God given us souls so well fitted for the knowledge and practice of so many virtues? To what purpose so many noble powers, such furniture of soul for most excellent arts and offices; the powers of reason and speech, the powers of invention, the desires of knowledge, an almost boundless retention and memory of things past, a provident sagacity about futurity, a sense of what is honourable and shameful as the controller of our lower appetites; so many kind affections consulting the good of others; a conscience or sense distinguishing the right from the wrong, the honourable part from the vicious and base, along with a strength and grandeur of mind for enduring dangerous toils? To what purpose that penetration into nature which reaches even unto the heavens, discovers the Deity presiding in the universe, discerns his infinite perfections, and raises us to the hopes of immortality after the dissolution of the body? Do we speak only about philosophers? What nation or clan is there, where there has not always prevailed an universal and firm persuasion, that there is a Deity, that he enjoins certain duties on mankind, appoints them a certain moral character they must

maintain; and that their future state after death shall be happy or miserable, according to their conduct in this world? These therefore are the dictates of nature, sentiments adapted to our frame, and supported by obvious reasons, which continue coeval with mankind; whereas the credit of all grounded fictions by length of time has always decayed, and at length vanished away.*

A fifth class of abuses relate to the *distresses of mankind*. When David had dishonoured Bathsheba, murdered Uriah, sacrificed the lives of many of his subjects, he coolly sends a message to Joab. *Let not this thing be evil in thine eyes, let not this afflict thee; for the sword devoureth one as well as another. Overthrow the city, he says to the messenger, and encourage Joab.* This was a sin in David of which he afterward repented: he justified God, and acknowledged himself to be wholly in fault. Nothing is more common than for people to sin themselves into sickness, poverty, and a thousand other penal evils; and instead of saying as they ought, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him,* they are not ashamed to throw the whole weight of their affliction into the scale of God's decrees. *They eat and wipe their mouth, and say I have done no wickedness.* Nay to such excess has this been carried, as to extinguish the sympathies of humanity, in full view of what is most of all distressing, the damnation of numbers; children, ser-

* Hutcheson's Moral Philosophy, Vol. I. B. I. Ch. 7.

vants, and neighbours left to perish in ignorance through our neglect! People not only pray by the rule of an unknown decree, preach by the rule of an unknown decree, but endeavour to stifle repentance in embryo in the same way; and a conduct which ought to confound and abase us before the Lord, is a praise-worthy conduct, attended with no regrets! Little do such people resemble Jeremiah, who wished *his eyes were a fountain of tears, that he might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of the people of Jerusalem.* How little like Moses, who prayed *that his name might be blotted out of the book of life for his people;* or like Paul who wished himself *accursed from Christ for his kinsmen.* How opposite to Jesus who wept over Jerusalem, saying, *if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes!*

Finally. The last class of abuses relate to *consolations.* We are told—"That the value of a privilege is enhanced by its sacredness; that as a virtuoso sets but little esteem on a medal, or a vase, so common that every one who pleases may have one of the same kind, so it is with persons elected to holiness and heaven." According to this way of reasoning, the comfort of an *elect vessel* must rise in proportion to the number of the reprobate; and instead of being comforted in seeing multitudes obedient to the faith, every one added to the church, must make our comfort the less. What, in the name of common sense, do

these divines mean? When Elijah distressed himself because he was *left alone*, the answer of God to comfort him was—*I have reserved to myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal.* And hence St. Paul argues—*If the casting away of the Jews be the reconciling of the gentiles, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead.* For this reason, the *call of the gentiles* is spoken of by the prophets as a *comfort* to the godly Jews, and the event proved it was a trouble to none but the wicked. On this account chiefly, the Holy Ghost conferring the gift of tongues, is stiled by way of eminence, the *comforter*. How does this agree with “enhancing a privilege by scarcity?” How with the apostles crying *now we live if ye stand fast in the Lord?* But why farther reason on the subject? I appeal to you christian people:—Is your comfort increased by a scarcity of church members? I appeal to you christian ministers:—Do your comforts increase by a scarcity of labourers in the Lord’s vineyards? I appeal to you christian parents and masters: are ye happiest when you have fewest of your children and servants elected to holiness? Holy apostles and prophets what say ye? For the apostles, hear St. Paul in his address to Agrippa.—*I would to God that not only thou, but all who hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.* For the prophets, hear Moses.—*Would to God that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them.* People say,

preach Predestination to us, it is a comfortable doctrine. If it be so, (and every one knows best what comforts him,) if it be comfortable, I presume it must be so to such as know their own election to eternal life. Among a thousand of you how many are there assured of this? What comfort those that for any thing they know may be reprobates—what comfort such may find in it, is a mystery to me, except it be the comfort of hearing their own opinions defended; and yet it seems they are most comforted when their doctrines are least believed! Glaring contradictions! Granting that I know my own interest in the decree, have I not abundant proof that many dear to me have no apparent interest therein? What comfort it may be to me in another life, when all the bonds of nature are dissolved, I know not; but here the fewness of the elect, far from comforting, distresses me.—What says the apostle Paul, after his triumphant exclamation—*I am persuaded that neither death nor life, &c. shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*; he adds—*I say the truth in Christ I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren my kinsmen according to the flesh.*

A disposition to repine at the happiness of others is unnatural. So far from being happier in the enjoyment of the sun if all our neighbours were blind, we are so much the happier for the common

blessings of its beams. Sad diminution of comfort truly, if *all the ends of the earth see the salvation of our God; and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ!*

We are told that the decrees of God, "should be publicly taught from the pulpit and the press; that even the meanest of the people may not be ignorant of a truth, which reflects such glory on God, and is the very foundation of happiness to man."—Well, let the doctrine be publicly taught as scripture teaches it, as a way of God *past finding out*. Let it be guarded against the various abuses to which men of corrupt minds frequently warp it. Let it be taught with all its benign consequences. Discharge the decree from conspiring the destruction of a sinner, and lay on him his own guilt. Console the faithful soul by assuring him, that *fury is not in God*. Do not so teach the doctrine as to fortify the wicked, alarm the weak, or encourage the indolent. Preach it as a mystery calling for modesty, diligence, faith, gratitude, and every grace.—Leave to God the arranging and executing his own decrees.

I have passed over numerous abuses of this doctrine, mentioning only a few of the principal: I have omitted for the sake of conciseness, numerous arguments in favour of what has been advanced. I beg leave to conclude the whole with the words of the excellent Bishop Berkeley, applicable enough to the present case. "If the principles which we have endeavoured to propagate be true, the consequences which will flow from thence will

be the destruction of atheism, and scepticism ; many intricate points will be made plain, great difficulties solved, several useless parts of science retrenched, speculations referred to practice, and men reduced from paradoxes to common sense ; and although it may, perhaps, seem an uneasy reflection to some, that when they have taken a great circuit though so many refined and unvulgar notions they should at last come to think like other men ; yet, methinks this return to the simple dictates of nature, after having wandered through the wild mazes of divinity, is not unpleasant ; it is like coming home from a long voyage. A man reflects with pleasure on the many difficulties and perplexities he has passed through, sets his heart at ease, and enjoys himself with more satisfaction for the future. The shewing that such parts of revelation, as lie within the reach of human enquiry, are most agreeable to right reason, best disposes all prudent, unprejudiced persons, to a modest and wary treatment of those sacred mysteries which are above the comprehension of our faculties."*

* Berkeley's Preface to his three Dialogues.

END OF THE DISSERTATIONS.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

OF

PROTESTANT DISSENTING CHURCHES

IN

CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

HISTORICAL ACCOUNT, &c.



CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

The first Protestant Dissenting Churches in this county, were formed by the Rev. Francis Holcroft, M. A. fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge. This gentleman was son of Sir — Holcroft, of West-ham, near London. He was educated at Clare Hall; Mr. David Clarkson was his tutor, and (the afterwards famous Archbishop) Tillotson was his chamber and bed fellow. During his residence at college, he embraced the Calvinistic doctrines, and approving of the non-conformist discipline, was a communicant with the Rev. Mr. Jephcot, of Swaffham Prior, eleven miles from Cambridge. Mr. Jephcot died 1673, aged 96. While he was prosecuting his studies at college, his chamber being over the college gate, he often observed a horse waiting a long time on a Lord's day morning, for one of the fellows to go to preach at Littlington, thirteen miles from Cambridge, and often returning without the preacher, who perhaps was drunk at the time, or not recovered from the last night's debauch. Touched with compassion for the souls of the neglected country people, and ashamed of continuing idle in college when preaching was so much wanted, he offered to supply that parish. The offer was accepted, and his ministry

was very much succeeded there to the conversion and edification of many souls.

Some time about the year 1655, Mr. Holcroft accepted of the living of Bassingbourn, eighteen miles from Cambridge, where he laboured in season and out of season, not only preaching on Lord's days, but on holydays also, great multitudes following him.

While Mr. Holcroft was minister of Bassingbourn he formed a congregational church, consisting of a great many people of other parishes, as well as of his own, besides several of both gown and town from Cambridge. The first members of this church were embodied, and all others afterwards admitted, on a profession of repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the following covenant was read and subscribed by all the members, standing;

"We do in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the awful crowned King of Sion, and in the presence of his holy angels and people, and all beside here present, solemnly give up ourselves to the Lord, and to one another, by the will of God; solemnly promising and engaging in the aforesaid presence, to walk with the Lord and with one another in the observation of all gospel ordinances, and the discharge of all relative duties in this church of God, and elsewhere, as the Lord shall enlighten and enable us." Subscribed by A. B.

C. D. &c.

Thus the church was first embodied. When a member was afterwards received, the pastor used

to say:—" Brother; (or sister) if you now in the presence of the Lord Jesus, the awful crowned King of Sion, &c. do now solemnly give up yourself, &c. (*mutatis mutandis*) signify it by lifting up your right hand to the Lord;" and then on the part of the church, the person admitting lifting up his right hand, said, " we likewise in the aforesaid awful presence, do receive you into our communion, solemnly promising and engaging to carry it towards you as becomes a church of Christ, watching over you in the Lord as he shall enable us, and in testimony thereof do give you the right hand of fellowship." Over these people, Mr. Holcroft was settled pastor by the Rev. Mr. Staloms and others.

The cruel act of uniformity, which ejected six masters of colleges,* forty fellows and students from the university,† and twenty incumbents from their livings in the county,‡ expelled Mr. Holcroft also from Bassingbourn. However, as he considered himself the lawful pastor of his people, he was determined to execute his office as long and as well as he could; and as his people could not all assemble now at one place as they had done before, he resolved on preaching, praying, administering

* Dr. Tuckney, of St. John's. Moses, of Pembroke. Dell, of Caius. Sadler, of Magdalen. Bond, of Trinity. † Hill, Fellow of Magdalen, &c. ‡ Jephcot, of Shaffham; Bradshaw, of Willingham; Hunt, of Sutton; Wilson, of Over; King, of Foulmire; Townly, of Littlington; Ponder, of Whadon; Sheldreck, of Wisbech, &c.

the Lord's Supper to them in separate societies. One of these met at one Thurlow's house, (Scanderet was fined 10*l.* by the mayor for preaching there,) at Cambridge; another at Barrington, another at Clopton, one at Eversden, one at Guyhorn, one at Waterbeach,* &c. &c. but as this was too much for one man to go through, immediately after his ejection in 1662, he called as general a meeting as the times would permit, at Eversden, and informed the church of his design, desiring them to chuse four of their number, elders to assist him. Accordingly they chose the Rev. Jos. Oddy, M. A. lately ejected from his fellowship of Trinity college and from his vicarage of Meldrith; the Rev. Messrs. Corbin, Waite, and Bard, for elders of their church.

The pastor and elders divided their circuit and laboured among their people till the next year, 1663, when Mr. Holcroft was imprisoned in Cambridge castle, by Sir Thomas Chichely, for preaching at Great Eversden; Oddy, for preaching at Meldrith; Corbin and Waite shared the same fate, and Bard escaped it only by flight. While their pastors and elders were thus separated from their flocks, the people continued to meet for religious worship in their several separate societies: some-

* A respectable interest has within these few years been established at Waterbeach, and a new place built in 1802, which was opened by the Rev. Hugh Worthington of London. The Editor of this volume reflects with peculiar pleasure on his having been made instrumental during his residence in Cambridgeshire, in increasing and settling this interest.

times they spent their time in fasting, reading the holy scriptures, and social prayer. At other times, some ejected minister preached privately to them, and now and then the jailer allowed Mr. Holcroft to go out in the night to preach and administer the Lord's Supper to them: besides all this, the people had frequent letters from their pastors in prison, one of which entitled "*A word to the saints from the Watch Tower,*" was published by Mr. Holcroft in 1688.

Persecution operated now as at all other times; it multiplied the people. They had regular meetings, many additions, and their pastor being absent, they exercised discipline themselves, and cut off two or three elders, Waite and Bard: the first was soon after admitted a member at Bedford, and the last was received into the church at Olney, Bucks. They were charged with forsaking the congregation after their release. After five years imprisonment, Mr. Oddy was set at liberty, as after nine years Mr. Holcroft was; but both were soon imprisoned again for preaching as before. Mr. Holcroft's last imprisonment was for three years.

After their enlargement, which was first in 1672 and last in 1675, they prosecuted their plan with greater vigour than ever, preaching at Cambridge in spite of a drum, which the gowmsmen beat in the meeting to interrupt their worship, and all over the county, travelling quite through the fen towns, and being followed by such multitudes, that they were often forced to preach abroad.

Mr. Oddy continued an itinerant in this county till his death, which happened May 3, 1687. He was buried at Oakington,* near Cambridge, in a small burying-ground adjoining the church-yard, and given by Mr. Holcroft for that purpose to his church in the hands of trustees.

Hitherto Mr. Holcroft had been considered as pastor of all the congregations in the county; but about two years after Mr. Oddy's decease, that is in 1689, two events fell out which produced the establishment of these congregations into separate churches. One was Mr. Holcroft's illness; for while he was in prison great numbers of people visited him, to whom he frequently preached, and as the excessive heat of the place was too much for him, he often preached in his waistcoat, and thereby caught such colds as destroyed his health. After his release, his prodigious zeal for the salvation of souls struggled with and surmounted his illness for some years; but at length a weakness of nerves enfeebled his whole frame, and he fell into a melancholy which rendered him useless to his people as a preacher. At the same time, the act of toleration gave the Nonconformists their liberty, and these two events contributed to settle the churches of this county.

* Oakington is a village four miles north-west of Cambridge. The piece of ground is very small. The tombs were covered with nettles, elder bushes, &c. and the inscriptions illegible till they were cleared away and the tombs cleaned the beginning of 1774. The fences are gone and a neighbouring cottager has taken it into his garden. Dr. Conder it is said is the trustee.

Mr. Holcroft continued to decline till 1692, when on Jan. 6th, he died, his tomb-stone says in his 59th year, his funeral sermon says in his 63d. His courage and spirits returned before his death, and he departed with great joy, uttering these words, "For I know that if my earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved, I have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 COR. v. 1.

Mr. Holcroft seems to have been one of those uncommon men in whom the excellencies of several men centered: His learning was enough to have gained him an ample reputation; but his comprehensive knowledge of the gospel of Christ was his greatest glory. His preaching was less methodical than that of his cotemporaries; but then it was more useful. "It appeared to me," (says Mr. Milway in his funeral sermon) "truly apostolical, primitive, and divine." His words were sharp arrows in the people's hearts; they had a quick penetrating power and efficacy, so that his converts were very numerous. He was so indefatigable in his labours that he preached perpetually: there is scarcely a village about Cambridge, but some old person can shew you the barn where Holcroft preached. He had a lion-like courage, tempered with the most winning affability in his whole deportment. His doctrines were moderate Calvinism, and he had a great zeal for nonconformity, though a greater still for true piety, which he revered even in his enemies; if indeed any such could be enemies to so good a man. During the twelve

years of his imprisonment in Cambridge castle, he was of the most cheerful disposition; and though in the latter part of his life his spirits failed, yet all his conversation was heavenly and useful. He died at Triplow, eight miles from Cambridge; his funeral sermon was preached at Cambridge, by Mr. Milway of Bury, from ZECH. i. 5, 6, and was afterwards printed with a preface, by Messrs. Taylor and Hussey, and with two copies of verses on his death, and also an epitaph, by Mr. Haworth. Mr. Holcroft left an estate in the Isle of Ely (at Sutton) to the poor of his church, which estate is enjoyed by the two congregations of Eversden and Gransden; it produces 5 or 6l. per ann. and also a piece of ground at Oakington to bury in, and there himself was buried, and a tomb erected to his memory.

Several of Mr. Holcroft's congregations, who did not chuse to embody separately during his life, thought themselves now called in providence to imitate their brethren; and to form themselves also into churches; especially as several ejected ministers had lately died, and others were too far advanced in years to supply them much longer. Bradshaw, (who had been ejected from Willingham, and from his senior fellowship in Trinity college, and who had since preached at Childerly, Willingham, Cottingham, &c.) died at St. Ives, 1690, aged 71. Scanderet was advancing towards 70; and others were hastening home. Accordingly in the year 1692, the Baptist congregation at Wisbech built a meeting and settled a minister.

In 1694, the Independants at Cottenham and Willingham embodied themselves and settled young Mr. Osland; and in the same year the congregation at Croyden, since at Gransden, settled; as did also Chishill and Melbourn, Needingworth, Guyhorn, &c. Several of these churches subsist still, and some of them are dissolved or united to other churches; but almost all contend for the honour of having Holcrott for their first pastor. In fact he was pastor of all, and exercised that office over all till the toleration act took place, and over many till his death.

CAMBRIDGE TOWN.

Puritanism, which from its first rise abounded in the university, was plentifully communicated to the *town* by the members of that learned body. Three things contributed chiefly to do this; first, *the part that the university took in puritanism*; for they petitioned Queen Elizabeth 1565, against the surplice and other habits, and they retained the privilege of licensing twelve preachers, and indulged the Puritans with those licences against all the power and influence of Archbishop Parker, who endeavoured to deprive them of their right; and these contentions between the court and university occasioned much talk and some inquiry in the town's folks. Secondly, *the preaching* of the Puritans in the parish churches; in earlier days, [1570] Cartwright of Trinity, Chadderton of Queen's, and Preston and Clark of King's: and in later times, [1630] Dr. Goodwin and Dr.

Sibbs, who preached at Trinity church, Shelly of Jesus, (great grandfather of Mr. Robinson, the present Baptist minister at Cambridge,) who was vicar of All Saints, and many more of note in those days, diffused the principles of the Puritans through the town. Thirdly, *the private visits*, fasting, praying, and expounding exercises of many university men in the houses of the inhabitants of the town. These were the means, in the hand of God, of disseminating the principles of nonconformity, and of preparing multitudes of people for the open profession of it in the time of the civil war.

The Cambridge Nonconformists were a mixture of four sorts. The largest part were for *independent* church government; of which sort there were many at Cambridge. A *second* sort were for a Presbyterian government; these were not numerous, but they were rich. In 1689 they licensed two meeting-houses for divine service; and six private houses in Cambridge for the purpose of private meeting, of prayer, &c. They were in one certificate, which is dated August 3d, 1689, signed William Baron, town clerk. A *third* sort were Baptists; these at Cambridge were mixed with the Independants till 1726, when they also formed a separate church. There was a *fourth* sort under the direction of a Mr. Davis,* a Welchman, who met separately at Cambridge, but where

* He was afterwards pastor of Rothwell or Rowell, Northamptonshire, and published Hymns, which were republished with a preface by the late Dr. Gill.

I cannot learn, nor what became of them, though it is probable they afterwards joined with Mr. Hussey's people.* I have seen a letter of Mr. Waite's to Mr. Hussey's church, dated 1692, in which he endeavours to guard them against Mr. Davis's Antinomianism, as he calls his doctrine, and calls his meeting pest-house. The three first differed from each other only in *discipline*; but the last differed from all the rest in *doctrine*. In discipline they were Independants.

The Independants met in Green-street, and the Presbyterians on Hog-Hill. The first settled Mr. Taylor, who had been ejected from St. Edmond's Bury for their pastor; and the last were supplied by neighbouring ministers, particularly Mr. Billio of St. Ives, and others, till Thursday November 19th, 1691, when they settled for their pastor the Rev. Joseph Hussey.

The church then consisted of seventy-six members; twenty-four men, and the rest women; and on occasion of Mr. Hussey's settlement, the Rev. Mr. Scanderet of Haverhill preached, and Mr. Billio of St. Ives, and Mr. King of Wellingborough prayed.

Mr. Hussey, as appears from his own manuscripts, was born March 31st, 1660, at Fording-bridge, in Hampshire, and received his first tuition under the Rev. Robert Whitaker, who had been ejected from his fellowship in Magdalen Col-

* Hussey and Taylor protested first against Davis, but some years after Hussey went into Davis's opinions. See Hussey's *Glory of Christ*. p. 313.

lege, Cambridge, in 1662, and at that time lived at Fordingbridge. When he was of proper age, he was sent to the academy at Newington Green, which was then under the direction of the famous Mr. Charles Moreton; and when he had finished his studies, he preached his first sermon in Mr. Jenkin's meeting-house in Jewin-street, London, August 14th, 1681, and became domestic chaplain to Mrs. Powell, afterwards Lady Thompson, at Clapham. Here he continued preaching occasionally till 1683, when he became chaplain to Sir Jonathan Keate, at the Hoo, Hertfordshire, where he continued preaching constantly till May 20th, 1688. In the summer of 1688, Mr. Hussey removed to Sissufernes, in Coddicote parish, Herts, at which place, and at Maiden Croft, near Hitchin, he preached till his removal to Cambridge, that is till 1691.

Mr. Hussey was ordained by the presbytery at Dr. Annesley's meeting-house in Spital Fields, London, Oct. 26th 1688, in the presence of six Presbyterian ministers. He defended this thesis *papam esse illum antichristum*. His testimonial was signed by Dr. Annesley, Samuel Slater, John Quick, John Turner, Robert Franklin.

Mr. Hussey exercised his ministry at Cambridge with great success till October 1696, at which time his church had increased to 122 communicants. Several indeed had died, so that at that time there remained only ninety or thereabouts. October, 1696, sixty-six members of the church with the pastor, voted for a congregational disci-

pline, and twenty-four were against it; the former signed a rigid covenant, drawn up by Mr. Hussey; the latter left the church and went to Green-street, which church became Presbyterian.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH MEETING ON
HOG-HILL, CAMBRIDGE.

Mr. Hussey continued pastor of this new-modelled church; and the senior deacon was the Rev. Robert Wilson, who had been ejected from the curacy of Over, in 1662, and afterwards taught music in Cambridge till 1710, when he died full of days and of the fruits of righteousness.

Great success attended Mr. Hussey's ministry till 1718, when some disputes about church discipline chiefly, and partly about his doctrine, rendered him very uneasy, and at the close of the year 1719, he accepted an invitation from the late Mr. Humphrey's church in Petticoat-lane, London, and removed from Cambridge, January, 1720, N. S. leaving a congregation of 1100, and a church of more than 150 members.

Mr. Hussey, while at Cambridge, published—
—1. *The Gospel Feast*, thirty sermons on Luke xiv. 17; preached at Cambridge in 1691, and printed 1692. 8vo. 2. *A Warning from the Winds*, a sermon on John iii. 8. preached at Cambridge January 19th, 1703—4, quarto. 3. *A Funeral Sermon for his late Wife*, preached February 3d, 1703—4, quarto. 4. *The Glory of Christ unveiled against the Rev. J. Hunt of Northampton*, 1706, thick quarto. 5. *God's Opera-*

tions of Grace, 1707, 8vo. After his decease, Mr. Peacock of Dedham, in Essex, published two of his sermons on Matt. xi. 28, quarto; and there are now three quarto vols. of his sermons in MS. containing ninety-three sermons.

After Mr. Hussey's departure, the church invited several ministers on trial, but could not agree in their choice of a successor. The two most likely candidates were the Rev. Messrs. Throgmorton and Davis; but as they could not agree to settle either or to part with either, about 100 members withdrew with Mr. Davis, 1720, and opened another meeting: and the remaining fifty settled for their pastor April 11th, 1722, the Rev. James Throgmorton, whose ordination sermons were preached by Messrs. Bradbury and Sladen. Mr. Throgmorton continued his ministry till September 29th, 1728, when he removed to Aylesbury.

The church procured supplies, but could not agree on a pastor till 1734, when they chose to that office the Rev. Joseph Dadly. Him they excluded the next year (June 24th, 1735) at which several being dissatisfied, Mr. Dadly opened a meeting in Sparrow's lane, and after a while removed to Gamlingay. He published a Funeral Sermon, 8vo.

On July 29th, 1736, the church chose for their pastor Mr. Samuel Shene; but as he proved an immoral man, they availed themselves again of that noble privilege of protestant dissenters, and on November 2d, 1738, cut him off, and dismissed him. On Nov. 23d, the same year, they invited

to the pastoral office the Rev. Mr. (afterwards Dr.) Conder, who was ordained September 27th, 1739. The church had enjoyed almost no peace since Mr. Hussey's departure; partly owing to the disputes among the people, which had originated before Mr. Hussey left them, and had continued till now, and partly to the violent tempers of their pastors. But their present pastor was happily instrumental in restoring them to some degree of harmony and good order. Mr. Conder exercised his ministry here till October 13th, 1754, when he removed to London.

June 5th, 1755, the Rev. Caleb Sibly came in consequence of an invitation sent him, and was ordained pastor, August 5th, 1757. Mr. Sibly continued his ministry till September 29th, 1759, when he removed and was succeeded by the Rev. Abraham Darby, who was ordained July 14th, 1763, and removed September 29th, 1766. In the following year the church invited, and on Oct. 13th, 1768, the Rev. Jos. Saunders was ordained, who is their present pastor (1774.)

THE BAPTIST CONGREGATION AT STONE YARD
CAMBRIDGE.

After Mr. Hussey's departure, Mr Throgmorton and Mr. Davis were candidates for the pastoral office, as before related. The greater but poorer part were for chusing Mr. Davis. The fewer and richer were for Mr. Throgmorton. The matter for a while was compromised by an agreement, that one should preach in the morning, the

other in the afternoon. But on March 26th, 1721, Mr. Throgmorton's adherents forgetting for a moment the principles of their dissent, by a constable refused the pulpit to Mr. Davis, who therefore with 100 members separated from them, and on Monday, March 27th, 1721, hired a stable and granary in St. Andrew's parish,* called *Stone Yard*, of Mr. Halstead for twelve years, fitted it up and on April 16th, 1721, Mr. Davis first preached there. One hundred members of the late Mr. Hussey's church being thus separated from their brethren, formed themselves into a congregational church, renewed covenant, received Mr. Davis into their fellowship by a letter of dismission from the church at Higham Ferrers, and in July, 1721, Mr. Davis was settled in the pastoral office among them. Mr. Davis's ministry was acceptable and useful, the church increasing to 132 members, and every thing appeared well till July, 1723, when an unhappy affair broke this new church into two parts. Several steps were taken to prevent this but all ineffectual; the major part voted him out of his office, and denied him access to the Lord's Supper with them; but at the same time agreed to allow him 20l. on condition

* St. Andrew's-street takes its name from the church at the upper end, near which church stood one of the town gates, called Barnwell Gate, the whole street from that gate towards the country was in the suburbs. It was formerly called *Preachers'-street*, from a convent of black preaching friars, situated where Christ's college now stands. The old convent held the honourable name of *Domus Dei*, God's house.

of his removing before Christmas. Eighty-eight members (forty men and forty-eight women were for Mr. Davis's exclusion. Forty-four others, (thirteen men and thirty-one women) were for restoring and continuing him. The forty-four members that were for Mr. Davis separated from the church, fitted up a place of worship at *Barnwell*, and December 1st, Mr. Davis preached there for the first time.

The church at *Stone Yard*, consisting of eighty-eight members, proceeded to chuse a minister, and the Baptists, who were upwards of fifty, proposed a Baptist minister, and for the future a strict communion. This as may well be imagined, was disputed with great warmth. The Baptists had the majority, and so their vote was respectable. But not content with a moderate use of their power, by chusing a Baptist minister, they certainly carried their authority too far, by voting a strict communion for the future, and thereby obliging their Pædobaptist members to refuse people hereafter of their own sentiments. While these disputes were agitating, the church was supplied by neighbouring ministers: at length the Baptists, unwilling to separate and thereby risk the ruin of both, or perhaps seeing the unreasonableness of imposing a minister and form of discipline on their brethren, took the resolution of not acting at all, and left the government of the church to the Pædobaptists, the minor part, that is, to thirty-three members; (sixteen men and

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seventeen women.) These on July 15, 1725, settled for their pastor, Mr. Sewell, who was an old man, and had his ministry been acceptable, the Baptists would have contentedly sat under it; but they disliked his preaching, and having never chosen him, they withdrew the year after his ordination, hired a building, called Millar's barn, in St. Andrews, fitted it up in the spring of the year 1726, licensed it* April 8th, and on April 16th, Mr. John Ruethorn, of Wisbech, preached in it for the first time. Thus Mr. Hussey's church was in six years divided into four parts.

The Baptist church appointed many meetings of prayer, and invited several ministers to preach

* The Act of Toleration allows the nonconformists to perform public divine worship in any place, provided they certify such a place to the bishop of the diocese, or to the archdeacon of that archdeaconry, or to the justices of the peace at the general or quarter sessions. All the certificates of the Protestant Dissenters, in Cambridgeshire, were carried to the bishop's office till the year, 1764, when Dr. Mawson, the then Bishop of Ely, refused to receive any more. The reason he assigned was, that the Methodists had procured at his office several licences, (as his lordship called them) and as they did not profess themselves Dissenters, their certificates were illegal and he could not protect them; to prevent any mistakes for the future he determined to grant none: since that time they have applied to the sessions, and have always obtained them with ease. Of late the views and dispositions of the bishops have been much changed in this respect: apprehending the increase of Methodism must eventually prove a considerable accession of strength to the dissenting interest from the establishment, they encourage all the Methodist preachers to receive episcopal ordination, the present Bishop of London refusing none that come.

occasionally to them, and hearing of Mr. Andrew Harper, called him to minister among them. Mr. Harper came on trial and preached his first sermon in Cambridge, July 24, 1726. He continued preaching to this society from July 1726 to May 1727, at which time old Mr. Sewell being a man of fortune and perceiving the people diminish, quitted his office and left Cambridge. After his departure, the people offered to chuse Mr. Harper for their pastor, and to unite his congregation with themselves, at *Stone Yard* meeting, on condition of their granting a mixed communion. To this, after warm debates, the majority agreed, and removed to Stone Yard, Nov. 1727.

The Baptists now in possession of Stone Yard meeting-house, with a minister of their own denomination, could not withstand the temptation of once more trying to introduce their favourite plan of strict communion. They had two great obstacles: Mr. Harper was rather unsettled in his opinion on this article, and the Pædobaptists had their previous agreement from which they were determined never to recede: various views gave birth to various contests, some of them not to the praise of religion, and altogether contributed to delay their settlement. Disputes ran so high that Mr. Harper could not obtain leave to preach on adult baptism, or to administer it in public till August 16, 1730, when a vote passed that he might do both as occasion offered, and for the first time, Aug. 26, Mr. Harper preached on be-

lievers' baptism, at Fulbourne,* and publicly baptized three by immersion.

Mr. Harper's church consisted at first of only twenty-one members, (thirteen men and eight women) but it considerably increased every year, under his ministry, which he continued till 1741, when he deceased on the 16th of March, and was buried at Fulbourne, in Mr. *Rutt's*, since *Scott's*, and now (1774) *Green's* burying ground, Mr. Royston, of Burwell, preaching his funeral sermon. Mr. Harper was a man of no learning, nor

* Fulbourne is a large village five miles east of Cambridge. Baptism was usually administered there till November, 1764. Since that time the river at Whittlesford has been the usual place. There have always been many Protestant Dissenters at Fulbourne, and they have been accustomed to occasional meetings, during the times of Messrs. Simson, Harper, Hussey, &c. At present (1774) they have a monthly week-day meeting, where, excepting in harvest time, about four hundred generally attend. Mr. Harper and Mr. Simson baptized sometimes in the rivulet by the mill, and at other times in Scott's orchard, in a spring head there. Besides these people, there is also a very small congregation of General Baptists, who meet at Wilbraham one Lord's day and at Fulbourne another. They are very few.

N.B. Since this account was written, the numbers have increased at Fulbourne, and they have been for some time settled as a church under the pastoral care of Mr. Baron of Melbourne, who preaches once a fortnight. They have supplies on the other sabbaths. A new place of worship was lately built at the sole expence of one of the congregation, the late Mr. Thomas Hancock. It was opened Nov. 1, 1810: on which day discourses were preached by Messrs. Ingle of Ramsey, Tall of Swavesey, and the Editor. The latter supplied the congregation every other sabbath, from Nov. 1800, to July 1804.

were his natural abilities remarkably bright, but his ministry was rendered exceedingly useful to many. It was neither a dry morality nor a scholastic subtlety, but a scriptural appeal to the reason and sense of mankind. His people loved him while he lived, remember him with gratitude since his death, and retain a savour of his services to this day.

After Mr. Harper's decease the church was supplied by neighbouring ministers till Nov. 13. 1743, when Mr. G. Simson, A. M. the pastor of the church at Floor, in Northamptonshire, preached to them by their desire, and was called to the pastoral office, July 14, 1745. The Baptists having a majority, and a minister for strict communion also, they again proposed their darling theme, strict fellowship, and passed a decree not to displace the Pædobaptist members, but to admit for the future none but such as were baptized by immersion.

In Mr. Simson's time the church greatly declined both in numbers and practical religion. Some were cut off for their immoralities, some returned back again to the world, on which their hearts were chiefly placed, and the few pious souls that remained were covered with confusion at seeing some of their best people withdraw to other churches. In the midst of this distress, Mr. Simson accepted an invitation from the Baptist church at Norwich, who had lately buried their pastor the Rev. Mr. Sterne, and quitted his charge at Cambridge. Mr. Simson was a North Briton,

educated at Aberdeen, at which university he took his degree of master of arts. He was a complete scholar, reckoned by some a good preacher, but of a most violent temper. A lord in his church, a tyrant in his family, and a libertine in his life. He was pastor at Norwich two or three years; thence he removed to Warwick, where he had been formerly pastor, and where, weighed down with age and infirmities, he died suddenly, 1763.

Mr. Simson being gone, the little people, soured and disunited in their tempers, dispirited with their prospects and extremely low in their circumstances, jangled awhile and then broke up, the doors were shut and the people scattered. After some time it being recommended to them by some neighbouring ministers to try again, they had many meetings of fasting and prayer, and now and then procured a supply, and thus went on till July, 1759. In the spring of 1759, Mrs. Dutton, of Great Gransden,* informed one of the old dea-

* Great Gransden is in Huntingdonshire, on the edge of Cambridgeshire. Mr. Holcroft was pastor of that church at the time of his decease, and left lands towards its support. Mrs. Dutton (well known by her writings) was the widow of Mr. Dutton, formerly pastor of the church. She died some time ago, and left estates towards the support of a minister that produce 24*l.* or 25*l.* a year. Mr. Robinson, the pastor of the Baptist church at Cambridge, was chosen Oct. 1773, by contending parties at Gransden, to adjust a difference between the Rev. Mr. Blacket, one trustee, Mr. S. Fisher and some members, on the one part, and the rest of the members and trustees on the other, and happily succeeded to the prevention of a breach in that society. He examined all their deeds, and found that their property consisted of

cons that there was a youth at Norwich, about twenty-three years of age, who had preached three years among the methodists, and now was inclined to settle with a protestant dissenting congregation, particularly among the baptists, having lately been baptised at Ellingham, in Norfolk, by Mr. Dunkhorn, pastor of that church. The deacon called a meeting, consulted his brethren and invited Mr. Robinson to supply them two Lord's days. Accordingly, July 8th, 1759, he preached at Stone Yard for the first time. The church at this time consisted of thirty-four members, but so poor that all they could possibly propose to raise for his support was 3l. 6s. per quarter.

Mr. Robinson preached on trial almost two years, during which time the church frequently solicited his acceptance of the pastoral office, which he refused, partly on account of his youth and inexperience, and partly from some scruples of conscience about the rigidity of their discipline: at length these matters were adjusted to

a meeting-house and yard; a minister's house and garden; a tenement inhabited by the widow of the last minister; a house called the school-house, tenanted by one Crane, at 19s.; an estate at Bourne at 3l. 10s.; an estate at Ellingham at 4l. 16s.; an estate called Bryars at 10l.; an estate at Over at 6l.; annual rent, taxes and repairs deducted, there remained 12l. 12s. 9d. for the last half year. These estates were in the hands of six trustees, chosen by Mrs. Dutton herself, (a 7th was dead) whose names are James Wood, Nedingworth; Robert Gray, Great Gransden; John Ladson, ditto; William Peel, Little Gransden; William Wagstaff, Great Gransden; Samuel Fisher, Eversden.

his satisfaction, and upon the church's declaring for open communion and protesting, several of them, that they would never agree to strict communion any more, June 11, 1761, he accepted the church's call, and was ordained pastor over them, and from that time the church has amazingly increased. The number of hearers at first was very small, at present (1774) they are from five to seven hundred.*

The Stone Yard meeting had been hired in the year 1721, and, except for two short intervals, had been used for divine worship ever since. It was at first a barn, afterwards a stable and granary, then a meeting-house, and notwithstanding its pews and galleries concealed its meanness within side a little, it was still a damp, dark and ruinous place, and the Cambridge baptists had met in it, not because they were insensible of the prejudices which such wretched appearances make in the world, but because like many of their brethren, in other places they had never been able to do better. For the liberty of this place, they paid

* In the church book I find the following note in Mr. Robinson's hand writing, viz, "by the nearest calculation I can make, there are 200 families that attend, and allowing 5 to each family, there must be about 1000 souls (including children and servants) belonging to this congregation. Merciful God what a charge! Who is sufficient for these things! If to these be added, the families that attend the country lectures, who never get to Cambridge, though they never go to church, they are as many more." Mr. R's whole congregation lies in about 50 parishes; 14 in Cambridge, and the rest in the neighbouring towns and villages,

4l. 10s. annual rent, besides keeping it in repair. It was now become too small for the audience, and several of the new auditors being men of fortune, in 1764 they purchased the place of Mr. Alderman Alstead for 70l. rebuilt the house at their own expence, which amounted to five hundred guineas, and on Lord's day, August 12, 1764, they met for the first time for public worship in their new meeting-house.

* Mr. Robinson had not been long settled at Cambridge before his singular talents and excellent qualifications as a preacher, began to be taken notice of; and at the desire of the gown and town, he set up a Lord's day evening lecture, which is crowded, and it is supposed that not less than 150 or 200 gownsmen, from different motives, generally attend. His preaching is altogether without notes; a method in which he is peculiarly happy, not by trusting to his memory entirely, nor by working himself up to a degree of warmth and passion, to which the preachers, among whom he first appeared, in general owe their ready utterance; but by thoroughly studying and making himself perfectly master of his subject, and a certain faculty of expression which is never at a loss for suitable and proper words: in short, his manner is admirably adapted to enlighten the understanding, and to affect and reform the heart. Such a plainness of speech, such

* The subsequent part of this account was written by the late Rev. Josiah Thompson, of Clapham.

an easy and apparent method in dividing a discourse, and such a familiar way of reasoning as discovers a heart filled with the tenderest concern for the meanest of his hearers; and yet such a decency, propriety, and justness, that must be approved by the most judicious.*

Unhappily for the dissenting interest in this county, for almost a century the congregations have been supplied by ignorant laymen, whose want of knowledge has been more observed and rendered more galling by being under the immediate notice of a celebrated university, by which means the knowledge of their weakness has been more diffused, and the mischief they have occasioned to the character of dissenting ministers in general more painfully felt. To be diverted with the peculiar oddities of these preachers has, time immemorial, drawn numbers of the gownsmen to the dissenting places of worship in Cambridge. Mr. Robinson's lectures had been frequently disturbed by them. After complaining to no purpose to the vice chancellor, he at length determined to try another method, and addressed a discourse to these sons of Belial, upon a *becoming*

* Dr. Randal, the present professor of music (1774) in this university, who worships with this people constantly, (except when his office in the university obliges him to be absent) hath examined, altered and even composed music for this assembly. The pious professor hath beautified this ordinance and sown the seeds of knowledge in the minds of many of the children, servants and gentlemen of the university, who have at first learnt the hymn only for the sake of the tune.

behaviour in religious assemblies, which is allowed by the best judges of composition, who have seen it, to be the most complete piece of argument, genteel satire, and christian oratory that ever was read.

Upon his coming to Cambridge, his first employment was to *reconnoitre* the religious state of the town and county, in order the more properly to adapt his ministry to all. He found the generality of the people grossly ignorant of religion, and very immoral; and the dissenters themselves with an orthodoxy *outrè* to have a very faint and languid morality, and to be greatly negligent of those essential duties, and of cultivating that christian temper which forms and constitutes the truly religious character, honourable in the eyes of the world, and in the sight of God of great price. Deeply affected with this state of things, and touched with a compassionate concern for such numbers of immortal souls that were perishing for lack of knowledge, with a zeal proportioned to the importance of the occasion, Mr. R. set up several lectures in the adjacent villages; the good effects of which multitudes can happily testify.

These village lectures in private houses or in country barns have proved the nurseries of his church; and indeed no where are they more needed than round Cambridge: for whether it be owing to the non-residence of the clergy or to any other cause, it has been often remarked, and the present bishop of Ely, Dr. Keen remarked

it, in a printed charge to his clergy at his first visitation at Cambridge, that the people round Cambridge have less knowledge of religion than is to be found in any other parts of the kingdom, the other university adjacencies excepted!

The lectures attended by Mr. R. are either *annual* or *occasional*, which he appoints as it suits the people or himself, never going on a week day in hay-time, harvest, saffron time, &c. or *stated* on fixed days. The usual time is half an hour past six in the evening, when the poor can best spare the time; and sometimes at five in the morning for one hour before they go to work, and now and then in the summer at two in the afternoon, for the sake of far comers. These meetings generally consist of scores, often of hundreds of people. A list of them follows.

Villages.	Distance from Cambridge.	Number of Hearers.
Dry Drayton	- - - 5 miles,	occasional - - - - 100
Duxford	- - - - 8 m.	occasional - - - - 200
Foulmire	- - - - 9 m.	occasional - - - - 150
Foxon	- - - - 8 m.	annual - - - - 500
Fulbourne	- - - - 5 m.	stated monthly - - - 400
Granchester	- - - 2 m.	occasional - - - - 100
Harston	- - - - 5 m.	occasional - - - - 200
Haslingfield	- - - - 5 m.	occasional - - - - 100
Hauxton	- - - - 4 m.	occasional - - - - 100
Ickleton	- - - - 9 m.	monthly - - - - 300
Saxton	- - - - 7 m.	monthly - - - - 50
Stapleford	- - - - 4 m.	occasional - - - - 200
Fen Stanton	- - - 10 m.	monthly till lately, now embodied and settled } 200
Swavesey	- - - - 10 m.	occasional - - - - 100
Whittlesford	- - - 7 m.	occasional - - - - 200

8,900

Fen Stanton is the only one of the above places where there is a dissenting congregation statedly supplied every Lord's day. They embodied themselves into a regular church state, 1774. The whole country round about is an encouraging field to cultivate; for in all the villages almost, as well as in the town, there are great numbers of serious attentive hearers, and many excellent christians, who, till lately, were wholly unacquainted with the principles of non-conformity: and could there be even a very moderate provision made for the support of a serious evangelical ministry, there is the highest reason to believe in a few years several numerous congregations of protestant dissenters might be formed in these parts, where till within these fifteen years a dissenter was not known.

I shall conclude this article with the following extract from Mr. R's. church book at Cambridge.

"In the year 1765, William Howell Ewen, Esq. LL. D. one of his majesty's justices of the peace, in Cambridge, advised the dissenting ministers in town, to qualify as the act of toleration required. Dr. Ewen's advice which was quite friendly, was sent by Mr. Ivatt to me, and was meant to preserve us from trouble on account of the omission; accordingly Mr. Darby, the then independent minister, and I went to the Shire Hall at the sessions, on Friday, October 11, 1765, and in the presence of the right honourable the earl of Hardwicke, chairman, and several other of his Majesty's justices of the peace, took the oaths

of allegiance and supremacy, and also the oaths of abjuration, subscribing our names as the act directs : of all this we received certificates from J. Day, the clerk of the peace : but," adds Mr. Robinson, "*had I seen things in the light I now do, (1774) I might have thanked Dr. Ewen for his advice, but would have run all hazards rather than have qualified thus. Blessed be God for an high priest who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way.*"*

* The above subscription expressed a belief of the doctrinal articles of the established church. By a subsequent act of parliament this imposition, so far as it respects dissenters, is abolished.

LETTERS.

LETTERS.



To the Rev. Mr. Toulmin.

Chesterton, Dec. 20, 1783.

REV. SIR,

A few days ago I received a copy of a letter of yours to Mr. Lepard from him, by which I find, and am extremely sorry to find, that you have not had the 4th volume, which has been published this year and a half. I supposed you had been supplied from Bristol, otherwise they would have been sent. I have no connections with Lepard now, and I shall send you ten volumes, either by a neighbour, who will be at Taunton in a few days in a single horse chaise, or by the Taunton waggon. Whenever you receive the money for them, I should wish it to be paid to Mr. Staley, at Mr. Keene's, St. Mary Overs stairs, Southwark. I am busy in translating a fifth volume of Saurin, which is sold to Lepard, and which he will print with a second edition of the four, the copy-right of which is also sold him, only I am to take 100 sets of this new edition, which I hope to dispose of among my friends. I have had all but a law suit with Lepard. The matter was referred to arbitration, and I was obliged to attend in London almost a fortnight about it; but the arbitrators have awarded me all my money, which was

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a hundred pounds, an opportunity of getting 25l. more by the sale of a hundred sets, and what was better than all, they acquitted me of all blame, and approved my integrity in the whole dispute. It is not worth troubling you about.

I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Job David in London, and by him that of hearing of you. May God shower every blessing on you.

I have lately lost a most intimate and worthy friend of your religious sentiments, a clergyman, and a fellow of Queen's college, who with a virtue that does honour to humanity has left all, and is retired for conscience sake to a Unitarian society at Montrose. Another fellow of the same college, an intimate friend too of us both, brought me a sweet letter from him two days ago. I do not know whether Mr. Hammond, that is the name of the last-mentioned gentleman, will not be obliged to follow his colleague Palmer. For my part, I go for a heretic because such as these do me the honour of an intimacy, and attend at our place of worship. May my church, like heaven, hold all nations, tongues, and kindred! Do you think, my dear Mr. Toulmin, that we shall do much good to truth and virtue, while we preach *inscrutabilia*? Says a grave brother, friend, I never heard you preach on the Trinity. I replied, O, I intend to do so as soon as ever I understand it!

My wife sits by and will have her compliments put in. Be it so.

I am, dear Sir, your obliged

R. ROBINSON.

*To the same.**Chesterton, May 29, 1787.*

REV. SIR,

A long while ago, you may recollect, we have had thoughts about a history of the Baptists, and nothing would give me greater pleasure, were it possible to obtain it, than to converse with you one day on the subject, because I know you have turned your attention very much that way, and because your mind is free from systematical shackles, which cripple and disable so many for writing a general history on liberal principles. I think it my duty, however, to lay before you what little I have been doing in that way.

The Calvinist Baptists in London appointed a committee, and intreated me to go to town in order to acquire materials for an History of the Baptists. I complied, and spent above a year in this chace, and the further I went, the more fully I perceived they had no materials, and nothing to say on the great foundation principles of all ecclesiastical rites.

Convinced, however, that what are called Anabaptistical errors, such as the right of states to equal and universal civil and religious liberty; the sufficiency of scripture; the competency of every individual to judge of its meaning; the right of all to associate for religious worship as they themselves think proper, and so on, ran through all ages and all countries among people who practised

baptism as we do, I determined to pursue this subject independently of all our church records. The Calvinist Baptists are the youngest children of our family, and nothing shocks me so much as to see them sing psalms round the tomb of that bloody Calvin, who burnt Servetus, the learned, the benevolent, the pious, the generous Servetus. I cannot forgive the rascal for this barbarous deed. Forgive my warmth. I have made an excursion, and I return to my tale.

Through favour, I have had free access to the noble library of this university, furnished with whatever the most luxurious heart can wish on all branches of literature. I have been often asked by gentlemen of this university,—Who are you Baptists? Where is your history?—You may guess how I looked and felt, when I was forced softly to mutter, it is contained in Crosby. I see we want a standard library book, which might contain, if not a deposit of our history, yet an index to point out where it may be studied. I thought, no man of our denomination except myself could come at a public library of authentic books, ancient and modern, in the best editions. I resolved to try whether I could not extract some materials that might hereafter in the hands of more capable judges be arranged, and serve the common cause. I say the *common* cause, for the primitive gospel was nothing but the doctrine and precepts of Jesus, the bond of union was virtue and not faith; piety and virtue were essential, the understanding was left open and unawed by any human standards.

and improvement went on at a great rate ; every thing was tried in the fire of criticism ; the Manichean gospel was reasoned against the Greek gospel ; the nature of Jesus was investigated, and no harm was done till the Alexandrian school personified the Logos, and dreamt John the fisherman used the word in their sense, which sense they set up as a standard, and sent it rolling down to posterity in the tears and the blood of pious and virtuous believers in Christ. Church history seems to me one long lie, and no branch of history needs so much a reform. I was not aware that baptism connected itself with all church history ; but I find it does by connecting itself with baptismal creeds, and of course with all the concomitants of these instruments of mental oppression. Having buried myself alive two years in this pursuit, for I have done nothing else, except the services of our own church, I have at length digested my materials into a sort of form. This then is what I have done.

My plan comprises about four thin quarto volumes, of which I have written about three. The first is an history of *baptism*, divided into essays, and these again into sections. The whole is intended to exonerate the other volumes of *Baptism*, which otherwise would often perplex the history of the people, for the other three volumes contain an history of *Baptists*, beginning with the apostolical churches, proceeding through the four eastern Patriarchates, then going on to Greece, Africa,

Rome, and the Gothic kingdoms of Spain, Italy, and so on, and ending with America.

Abington, Bristol, and some of the General Baptists have offered me more money than is necessary to print the first volume, for on the one hand, I neither can nor will do any thing more than compile the work, which in my conscience I think enough for one man. Nor will I, on the other, print on tobacco paper, nor lead the friends of the work into any secrets blindfold. I want nothing from it, except to do good. At the same time I ought not to torment myself with subscriptions, and I never will. In brief, it remains only for me to resolve to print, and for them to hit on a mode, which I presume they have done. In order to make up my own answer concerning printing or not printing, I have dipped my hand promiscuously into the middle of the copy of the first volume, and struck off twenty or thirty copies to send to a few wise and good men, by whose advice I shall regulate my determination. One of these I presume to lay at your feet, humbly hoping you will tell me whether such a kind of work, as far as can be judged by this specimen, be likely to serve the cause of freedom, truth, and virtue.

According to my notions the various parties of Baptists are capable of being placed in various lights of general utility. For example: Ronem-berg the druggist once went along with a small company from Cracow to Moravia, when the Poles were at the lowest ebb, in order to form a union

with the Moravian Baptists. They were mutually delighted with each other, till the Moravians found that the Poles did not believe the Trinity. Then one party was shocked at the other for doubting it, and the other again at them for believing it. So they parted. It is, however, certain, that each party had many excellencies, and both held some general principles, which might have formed an ecclesiastical union; but neither of them then understood what Philipowski afterward taught the Poles, that virtue and not faith was the bond of union, which, by the way, they seem to have soon forgotten. There was, at the same time, another party of Baptists in Moravia, who lived on the lands of Lichtenstein, formerly of the Boscowickz family, the heiress of which married a German prince Lichtenstein. Among these people there were no regularly ordained ministers, and women taught. The first Lady Boscowickz herself did so, and the jesuit, who reports this, assigns that as one reason why these Anabaptists did not believe the Trinity. These therefore were not the Baptists to whom the Poles addressed themselves. But these were an honour to religion. They were about as many as the inhabitants of Manchester may be—industrious, frugal, modest, and much resembling the modern Quakers in their public worship. Such as these have been lost, because they were never inspired with a passion for making proselytes, nor ever took part in the disputes of ecclesiasticks. They were banished by the Emperor, and the contrivance of the Jesuit Caraffa, whose

letters, while they breathe nothing but blood and slaughter, speak in high terms of the people, to whom, he says, the lay gentry were very much attached, because the dirty rascals were profitable to the state. What signifies profiting the state, if you do not believe as the church believes? And what signifies the favour of the nobility, when the nobility are slaves to an Emperor, and when the Emperor himself consults a beggarly priest, his confessor, as an oracle of Almighty God? For my part, I consider nothing when I meet with such people, except that they are men who do honour to their species by resisting tyranny, and prove their profound respect for the Deity by fearing him more than what all the empire fears, the frown of a prince, and the fury of a priest. Strictly speaking, these latter Baptists were Bohemians, but on the borders of Moravia. So I learn from Bohuslai Balbini Hist. Regn. Bohemiæ. Pragæ. 1679. & an. seqq. I believe these people went into Moldavia, Wallachia, and the territories of the Turks, where they found a toleration which the bloody catholics denied. Now, may not, in a History of Baptists, each of these parties be placed at proper stations to speak with the enemy in the gate? Cannot the Poles speak on learning and criticism? May not the Bohemians speak on the subject of trade and manufactures? Cannot the Moravians afford also a lesson? And may not all plead the common cause of liberty, the necessity of personal conviction in religion, and the safety and advantage of following its dictates? May not

all these be contrasted with states depopulated by penal sanctions, and churches converted into slaughter houses by human creeds, and by the everlasting trammels of priests and enthusiasts? I think they may.

Perhaps you will be so good as consider the above tale of my burrowing under ground as a reason for suspending a correspondence with my friends till I came up again. However that may be, I am sure you will consider the few leaves I have sent as a MS. not published, and treat them accordingly.

I am, dear Sir, your's ever,

ROBERT ROBINSON.

Rev'd. Mr. Toulmin.

To the Rev. Dan Taylor, London.

Chesterton, Dec. 24, 1787.

REV. SIR,

I am to thank you, or Mr. Birley, or both, for your "Observations on Mr. Fuller's reply to Philanthropos." I admire the *temper* in which you conduct the controversy, and I do now most sincerely thank you for an example so edifying. It does me more good than all the arguments however just and conclusive they may be.

This, however, is not the immediate business of this letter. The bearer, Mr. M'Intosh, is a printer of good character, who is obliged to quit

the university press, where he hath hitherto wrought, because the warehouse is overstocked with goods. He comes to town in search of work. Do you know friend Brown? Or is the printer of the St. Ives Ordination Sermon a man who can help him? I only wish if you have any interest you would be so good as to assist the worthy man.

Where I shall print I am not able yet to determine. Here I perceive I cannot. In town how is it possible without my personal attendance, and that cannot be. My labours have been suspended by a domestic loss, but I have resumed them, and I keep amending, transposing, adding, curtailings, and so on. I wish, if wishing be lawful, you were near; I should certainly consult you on the structure of some parts of the work, advantageously to myself, and perchance not disagreeably to you. Is there any history of the *English General Baptists*? Are the modern generals descended from those at the reformation, whom the pretended orthodox persecuted under the nickname of *free-willers*? I never will call a *persecutor* orthodox: he is heterodox in his morals, and I regard him as a heretic of the most pernicious kind.

Do you ever visit old book stalls? If you do, condescend to run your eye down the catalogue, and if you alight on the following books seize them for me.

Schyn. Herman. Plenior deductio hist. Menoniter. Amstel. 1729.

Müntzers Thom. Protestation odder empietung seine lere betreffende, unnd tzum anfang von dem rechten christen glauben unnd der tawffe, quarto, 1524. No place.

Müntzers Thom. Behenthiis &c. quarto, 1525, without the place of printing.

I have Schyns Hist. Mennonitar. but his *Ple-nior Deductio*, I cannot get, and it is a different work. The two others I fear I shall not find. They are not in the library. Some time ago, I recollect, you asked me something about my notion of the Innocence of Error. I ever held what I now hold on that article, and I ever professed to hold it: but not as some divines in London are pleased to explain it for me. I met with a new book the other day, (by the way I seldom leave off reading old writers now to look at any new books,) in which the author says, page 47; "My hypothesis here is, that no man is to blame for what he could never *possibly* avoid." Lo! the whole secret of innocent error! The difference between me and my objectors is,—they determine this possibility for every individual, judge for each, and hold all guilty who are not believers of what *they* pronounce to be true. I leave this judgment to the Lord, and hold men guilty in regard to *me* only for actions overt and accountable to me. Trace you their axiom, and you will find it scents of human blood: and follow the history of it, and you will find the standard of the true is the opinion of the majority; and of course the poor anabaptists, always in a

minority, are in some of the rooms of inquisition, preparing for the fire, to which they are condemned, not for immorality, but for holding error. Do not, my dear Mr. T. imagine I am courting a dispute. Pray don't answer me, think what you will ; for my respect for you will force me to write, and my sense of duty to my history will forbid it : and so between both I shall be in an uneasy case. Have you seen a little piece of Dr. Arthur Ashley Sykes, that finest of all fine reasoners, on the Innocence of Error? I am told it is sold at Johnson's in St. Paul's Church Yard. I have never seen it, but I so esteem the author!

Dec. 25.

I was interrupted here yesterday, first by company, and then by embracing the moment before the library was shut for the holidays, of an opportunity of looking out a lot of books for my amusement during the time. I could not resist the temptation, and a fine parcel of scarce and invaluable old pieces I have got. Among others here is "The Obedyence of a Chrysten Man, by W. Tyndale.—Prynted at Malborowe, in the lande of Hesse, by Hans Luft. The viii. day of Maye. Anno MDVIII." Remark this one sentence, folio lxxvi. Baptym. The *plungynge into* the water sygnifieth that we die, and are buryed with Chryst as concernynge the olde lyfe of synne which is Adam. And the *pullynge out agayn* sygnyfyeth that we ryse agayne with Chryste in a newe lyfe." This is one of the many proofs

beyond all contradiction which I have of the fact, that immersion in ordinary baptism was the invariable practice of the English till the reformation. This is dated 1528, and by the man who translated the bible. I have now received thirty-four volumes. Several are old farthing tracts, and one hath forty-seven of these jewels in it.—I was speaking of Sykes. I think him an incomparable writer, and therefore I *suppose* his piece on the Innocence of error is excellent, but I do not affirm that it is, for I never saw it.* This writer, and numbers more, the first in learning, piety and critical taste, lie wholly unknown to most of our ministers. Why? They have mistaken their true and real characters, and instead of considering themselves disciples of truth set up for defenders of faith. Hence it is, you may ride a black horse white among that class of men, and not find a single *critic*. I do not call a snarling pickthank a critic. I call him so who hath the talents and the temper which constitute critical abilities. One is not a critic; he hath no brains. Another is not; he is too idle, he will not labour. A third is not; he is too poor, he cannot procure books and tutors. Another durst not be one; he is so afraid of his reputation. A very

* Mr. Robinson's *supposition* of the great merit of Dr. Sykes's tract appears to have been well founded. In a letter written shortly afterwards, he mentions his having read the piece, and the satisfaction it afforded him. See his *Miscellaneous Works*, Vol. IV. p. 253.—The *sixth* edition of Dr. Sykes's admirable tract was lately published, price 1s.

great fund of both folly and vice is at the bottom of all such cases, except the first; for if a man have no natural talent, if he be nothing but a bundle of sheer boobyism, blubber for orthodoxy he may, but criticise a sentence he cannot; and if his temper were as soft as his brain, I should hold him innocent.

It is the critical study of the New Testament, not of single words and phrases, but of the *whole* in connection with geography, chronology, eastern customs, languages, &c. that I think is the peculiar business of a disciple of *truth*. It is easy to make of boys defenders of faith. It is not easy to make even men sound critics. A man who affixes guilt to any mode of thinking must not so much as suspect some popular notions which are called fundamental to be false, or only true in part. He must not even be known to buy or read heretical books. He must never examine more than one side; that is to say, he must renounce all pretensions to that *perfect* liberty in which his Lord placed him by his gospel, and he must declare for some species of tyranny. You hold *general* redemption; another *particular*: you hold one another guilty; so you begin in coolness and end in enmity. I hold you both innocent in regard to me as long as you differ only in thinking of this subject; and whether either of you be guilty, or which of the two, or in what degree, I leave to the great Judge to determine. Both innocent in my eye, I admit you to all christian privileges, baptism, the Lord's supper, the alms,

and the offices of the church. The moment you break the king's peace by any unjust action one to the other on account of your different sentiments, I hold you both guilty, not of believing error but of overt acts which disturb society. A man the other day, a man of God too, and, more than either, a *Londoner*, wrote us word he was not sure he understood Robinson's notion of the Innocence of Error, but he and his brethren condemned it. Now is not this abominable, friend T.? This genius doubted whether he understood what he had heard of, but he did not hesitate to censure it!

I beg your pardon for scribbling on at this rate. It snows very fast. I query whether I have any company to day. It is a popish festival, but I being a protestant leave the pope to countenance his own frenzies. I will not disgrace myself by stooping to preach to those who would not hear if they had any thing else to do. However, I do not mean to persecute you all day by writing. As to what I have written, pray do not answer till you do so in this room, and then I should think a week well spent in proving that where a man doth not affix immoral consequences to his modes of thinking, he ought by us to be held innocent think what he will.

Last week I had the happiness of seeing six of my children received on their own profession of faith into this church. I baptised them not in the church baptistery, but in my family bath at the bottom of my garden; for I had a mind to

try the primitive eastern mode of immersing. I led one down the steps, turned her about and set her face toward the steps, placed myself on her left side transversely, and putting my right hand on the back of her head, bowed her forward into the water, and effected a perfect immersion, while I pronounced the baptismal words. We are all so satisfied with this mode, (for the rest followed the first, one ascending, another descending) that I think I shall never use any other in future.

I will trouble you no longer. Every benediction be with you.

Your's ever,

R. ROBINSON.

To the same.

Chesterton, March 23, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

I received your favour of the packet last Friday evening, and now address myself to answer your queries; very briefly, because I hope shortly to have the pleasure of seeing you, and thanking you face to face.

I beg my duty to father Britain, but I do not intend to preach any where in town. I shall visit London as I would Paris. Preaching exposes one to so much company, so many solicitations, so many refusals, or weak compliances, to so

many silly censures, and in brief to so much trouble and fatigue, that I choose to rid my hands of it.

My profound respects to good Mr. Lowdell, to whom I answer three things. First, I thank him for his civility respecting the committee. Mr. Jeffries sends me all the papers, and my opinion of the test is published in a sermon not long since preached to all the deputies of the churches in this county. I am not sure whether I sent you one, and I doubt now whether Dilly has one. Secondly, I keep poring over my manuscripts, and do not regret delay, for baptism is an amazing subject, and occupies a large part of ecclesiastical history. My first volume is of *baptism*, not *baptists*. I never knew, till lately, that any had been baptized in milk; but this, and a thousand other curious facts, go to prove that when men depart from pure scripture, no bounds are to be set to their extravagancies. Thirdly, I am ready to begin to print, whenever I can find a bookseller to take the hazard and trouble off my hands.

My humble thanks are due to you for your sermon on the eternity of future punishment. You know I always admire your integrity and your christian spirit; but I think, when you survey your argument pages 10. 11. from the *multitude*, you will see reason, as a baptist; to retract it. It is a great misfortune to be governed by authorities. Lexicographers are no authority in a case of criticism: but we have no critical learning among us. I wish our young folks would study canons of cri-

x

ticism; but human creeds blast this, and tell young men, that there is turpitude in mental error, and with this silly stuff poison free enquiry at the source.

I am greatly obliged to you for the minutes, &c. especially for the paper concerning the foundation of your fund. It a sensible, well-written piece; and it contains the sum of all I say to the particular fundees. I am no friend to endowments of any kind; and I would have nothing to do with any, except in hope of correcting the viciousity of them. I understand the creed of the particular baptist fund, used as a *test* to their poor brethren hath fallen under the censure of a learned gentleman in this university, in a new publication. I have not yet seen the book. You doubt whether this be tyranny. I am so fully convinced of it, that I shall never retract my opinion, and never call it by a softer name. I shall amend by adding the *most foolish* tyranny that ever was exercised. In the pope, in the first city in the world, inhabiting the most splendid palace, surrounded by all that nature and art call great, with a prescriptive title acknowledged by prelates and princes, the government of conscience is a specious tyranny. In the reformers it was a low life and barbarous tyranny, for which the pretence of orthodoxy was a beggarly apology. In us poor anabaptists, whose only merit is, not literature and superior devotion, for in these the very monks excel us; but a love of liberty, in us what is the government of conscience, the consciences too of upright though poor men, struggling against hunger, nakedness,

cold, contempt, and penury, but a silly tyranny! Can five pounds a year bribe these poor things into an acknowledgement of human authority over conscience, and a tacit denial of the sufficiency and perfection of scripture? O poor hearts! As wise and competent as their lords in London, they ought not to be insulted with a scrap of scholastical divinity. Pray, good Sir, with what face can such inconsistent men ask for the repeal of the test act? What do they mean to subvert prelates and civil magistrates, not out of love to mankind, but that they may have an opportunity of playing Jupiter themselves! Yes, yes, I have given their imposition a right name, and instead of altering it, I will think of something more harsh, and more fully expressive of the injustice and cruelty of all such demagogues, as publish their silly oracles in the name of Almighty God, and under pain of damnation, not merely to him that denies, but even to him that doubts the truth of what they please to whistle! Are they christians in town? so are we in the country. Have they the scriptures? So have we. Have they understandings and consciences? so have we. Are they then to *add* to the scriptures, and tell us what we are to believe on every idle question which they please to start? Pray God forgive them, and enlighten their dark minds into the dignity of man, the nature of civil government, the perfections of God, the sufficiency of scripture, the kingly office of Jesus Christ, the bond of union among christians,

and other subjects of the same kind, of which one would suppose they had never heard.

I perceive by the proceedings of the general assembly of 1788. p. 4. that we may expect some account of your denomination from yourself and Mr. Kingsford. It is questionable whether I ever write the history of *modern* English baptists; and if I do I shall not come at them these three or four years. My notion of the dignity of history forbids me to publish any thing little and unimportant, and therefore I see very little to publish of the modern baptists in London. The glory, the love of liberty universal, is departed from Israel, at least from that part of it, which presumes to strut forward, and give itself out for *the cause*. The particulars are intoxicated with a false system of disjointed metaphysics, which they call the *gospel*. The generals, if one may judge by their books, which they publish as a body, are less tenacious of a system of *faith*, but equally zealous for an impracticable *discipline*. What else can be understood by the Leicester case, where they tax some of their members with *faction*? Or by the case of Leak where they busy themselves about *suits*, I suppose they mean *courtship*! What does Halifax mean by speaking of expences *necessary* to maintain the cause of *Christ*? Is there not reason to fear that Nottingham hath been too busy in excommunicating? Is Burnley wise to lay out 300l. when they can raise only 50l.? And what do they mean at Nottingham by, zeal in the cause of the Lord Jesus?

Does the association take cognizance of property, deeds, titles, &c. ? And do the churches pretend to give advice more full to the purpose, than sensible and respectable attornies ? (See Wadsworth.) Does not the case at Longford imply the power of the association to judge and choose a pastor, for a people who pretend to independency ? And are you aware, that your books are bought, bound up, preserved in libraries, and intended to be used as arguments against you and your successors, in proof of your exercising dominion, and in apology for the exercise of that dominion which the friends of an established hierarchy intend to perpetuate ? See, say they, "How futile all the objections urged by these people against us are, when they are obliged to exercise the same dominion to uphold their congregations." "Behold," say they, "Their faith and discipline are weak and unproductive ; by their own confession neither their families nor their churches are in a state of superior knowledge, or refined morality."

Believe me, my friend, you are off the bottom of the old Baptists, whose history is edifying, because it exhibits genuine freedom and sublime virtue. The present plan of all parties in England is obscured by priesthood, and the poison of that pervades every part of the body, and in proportion as any body grows important to the church, "the king of kings, and lord of lords, the express image of the Father, the brightness of his glory" diminishes in splendour, and goes into an eclipse ; in our churches partial, in the

climes of popery total. Degrees of more and less are the only distinctions between us and established corporations, calling themselves churches. Should I proceed I might write a folio. Hoping shortly to see you, and wishing you every benediction that can make a man great, good and happy,

I remain, dear Sir, yours ever,

ROBERT ROBINSON.

FINIS.

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