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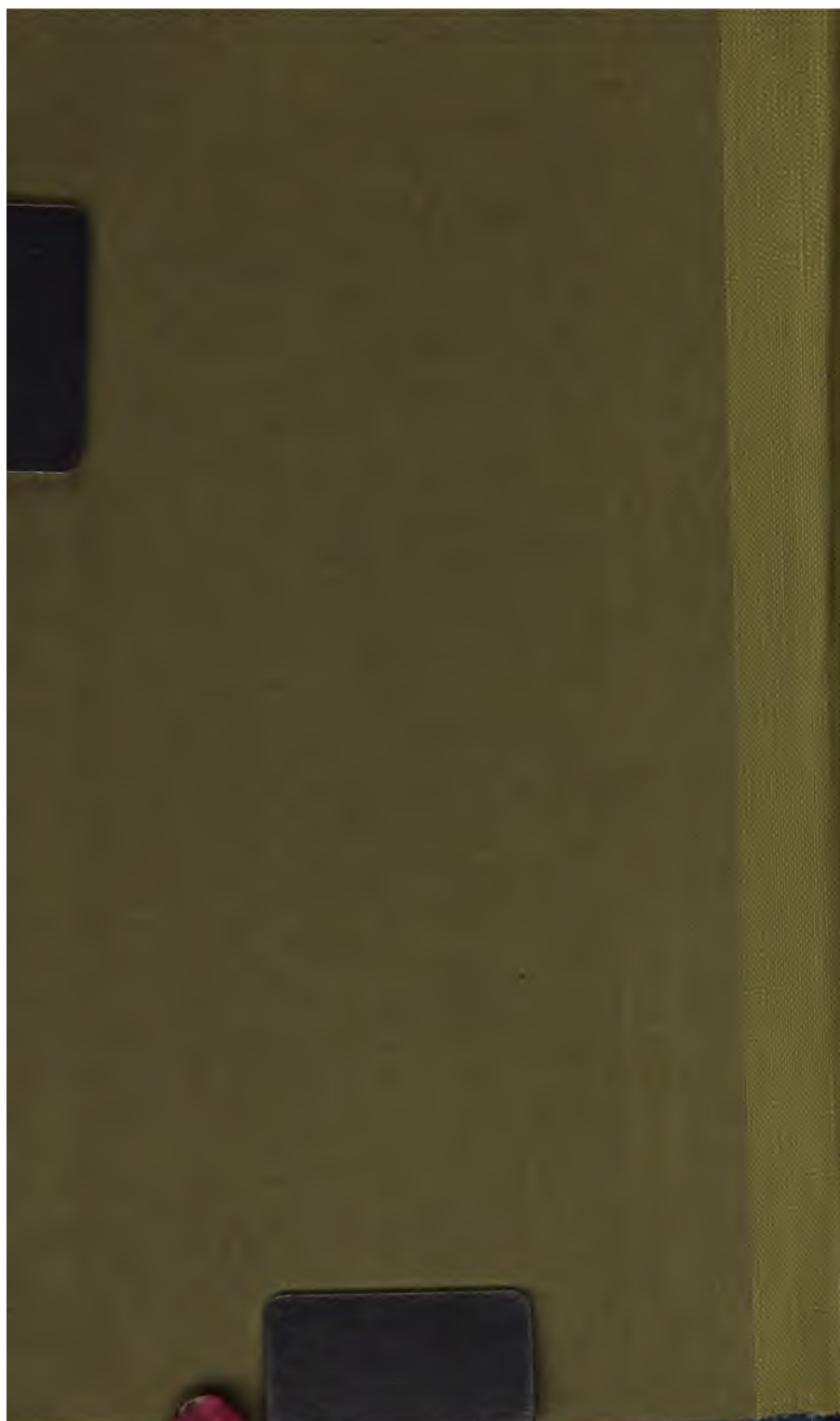
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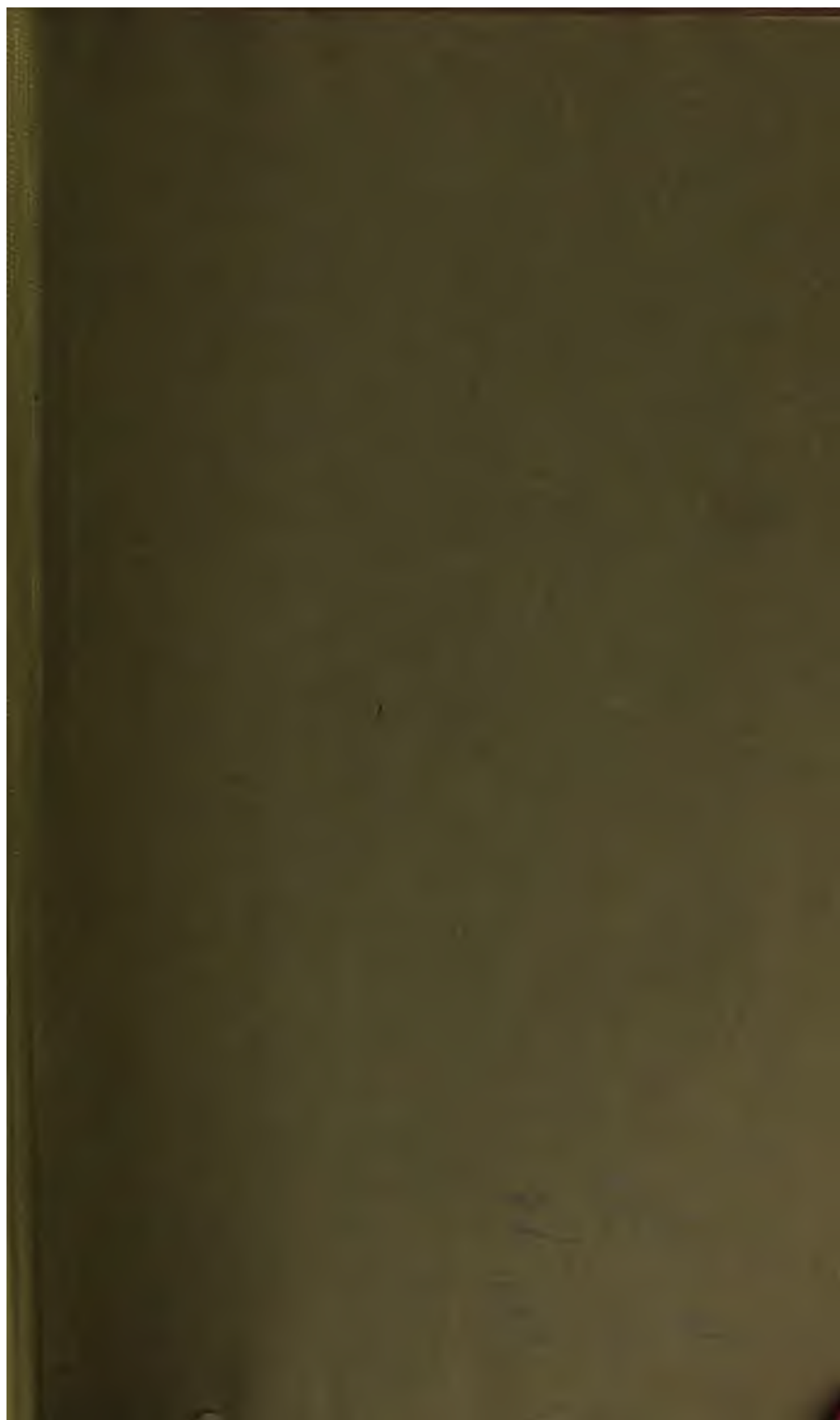
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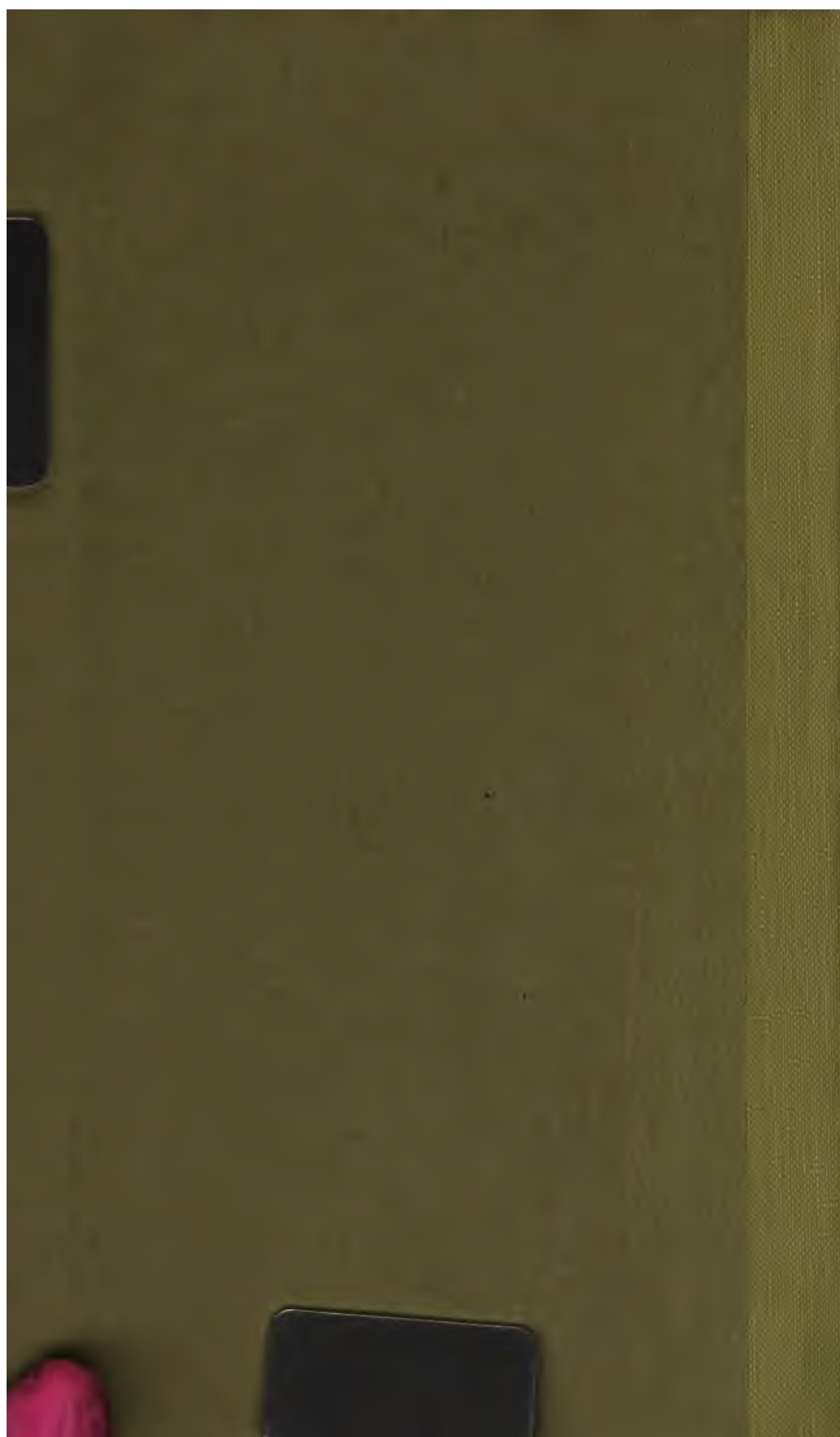
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HISTORY
OF
DISSENTERS,
FROM THE
REVOLUTION
IN 1688, TO THE YEAR 1808.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY
DAVID BOGUE ^{D.D.} & JAMES BENNETT. & Y

VOL. IV.

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1812.



CONTENTS

OF VOL. IV.

	PAGE
CHAP. VIII. SECT. II. <i>Lives of eminent Christians.</i>	
LIFE of sir John Hartopp, sir Thomas Abney	1, 3
Sir Richard Ellys, Thomas Hollis	6, 7
Thomas Hollis jun. Daniel Defoe,	9, 12
Joseph Williams, John Taylor	14, 21
Mrs. Bendish, Mrs. Rowe	21, 30
CHAP. IX. STATE OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD.	
SECT. I. <i>State of Religion in England.</i>	
Corruption of public morals, favourable occurrences	35, 41
Huchinsonianism, eminent men in the establishment	43, 45
SECT. II. <i>Eminent men in Scotland.</i>	
The marrow of divinity condemned	53
Prosecution of professor Simpson	55
Rise of the secession, rise of the glassites	57, 64
Presbytery of relief, revival at Camberlang	67, 69
SECT. III. <i>Religion in Ireland.</i>	
State of protestants and catholics	74
Presbyterians, rise of arianism	75, 79
SECT. IV. <i>Religion in America.</i>	
Revivals, eminent men, Jonathan Edwards	85, 97, 99
THIRD PERIOD.	
FROM THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE III. TO 1808.	
CHAP. I. NEW SECTS. SECT. I. <i>Sandemanians.</i>	
Their principles, history of this communion	107, 120
SECT. II. <i>Swedenborgians.</i>	120
CHAP. II. STATE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.	
Reconciliation of the clergy and the court	147
American revolution	148
Application of the clergy for relief from subscription	155
Dissenters apply for relief	160
Relief granted to Roman catholics	170
Application for repeal of the corporation and test acts	174
French revolution.	189
CHAP. III. CONTROVERSIES. SECT. I. <i>On Dissent.</i>	
Graham's attack on religious establishments	213
Controversy concerning village preaching	214
SECT. II. <i>Arminian Controversy.</i>	
Its commencement between Pelagius and Augustine	226
Arminius against Beza	227
Rise of arminianism in England	228
Revived by Mr. Wesley	229
Review of the controversy	236

SECT. II. *Socinian Controversy.*

Loëlius Socinus, Servetus	241, 243
Socinianism in England	245
Dr. Priestley becomes its champion	248
Publications of Mr. Lindsey, Gilbert Wakefield	251, 252
Dr. Belsham's attack on Mr. Wilberforce	253

CHAP. IV. SEMINARIES.

Academy at Homerton, Hoxton	258, 268
New college at Hackney, academy at Daventry	265, 268
Western seminary, Axminster academy	271, 273
Yorkshire seminary, seminary at Newport Pagnel	276, 279
At Gosport, Warrington academy	281, 282
Baptist academies, seminaries in Wales	287, 295

SECT. II. *Review of Seminaries.*

294

CHAP. VI. OUTWARD STATE OF DISSENTERS.

SECT. I. *Numbers and Rank.*

Causes of increase, causes of decrease	311, 318
List of dissenting churches	327
View of different communions	328

SECT. II. *Labours and Support of Ministers.*

Funds and benefactors	357
-----------------------	-----

SECT. II. *Public Services and Associations.*

Addresses to the king	365
-----------------------	-----

CHAP. VI. INWARD STATE OF RELIGION.

Effects of the arian controversy	370
Irreligion in the academies	372
Influence of the independents	373
Religion of the baptists, quakers, and methodists	376
Decision of character produced by Dr. Priestley	379
Establishment of the missionary society	383
Village preaching, religion of the independents	387, 389
Of the independents, of the methodists	390, 391
Antinomianism	392
Life of Dr. Benson, John Mason	397, 402
Dr. Chandler, Dr. Lardner, Dr. Langford	404, 409, 411
Dr. Furneaux, Job Orton, Dr. Price	414, 416, 421
Dr. Fordyce, Dr. Priestley, Dr. Guyse	425, 429, 438
Dr. Wilton, Thos. Strange, Samuel Brewer	444, 448, 455
Isaac Toms, Dr. Gill, Robert Robinson	459, 464, 468
John Ryland, Dr. Stennett, Samuel Pearce	475, 477, 480
State of religion in England, in Scotland	483, 487
In Ireland, in America	491, 493
Influence of Dissenters	496

INDEX.

	Vol.	Page.		Vol.	Page.
ABNEY, sir Thomas	IV.	3	England, state of reli-		
Address to king Wm.	II.	144	gion in	II.	308
— to queen Mary	II.	146		IV.	85
— to queen Anne	II.	150		IV.	483
— to George I.	III.	363	Evans, Dr,	III.	449
— to George II.	III.	371	Flavel	II.	199
America, state of reli-			Fordyce, Dr.	IV.	425
gion in	II.	42	Foster, Dr.	III.	486
	IV.	65			
	IV.	493	Gale, Dr. John	III.	421
Arminian controversy	IV.	225	Gaunt, Mrs.	II.	306
Arian controversy	III.	213	Gill, Dr.	IV.	464
Baptists	I.	141	Guise, Dr.	IV.	438
Baxter, Richard	II.	188			
Bates, Dr.	II.	204	Harris, Dr.	III.	459
Benson, Dr.	IV.	39	Hartopp, sir John	IV.	1
Bennet, Benjamin	III.	429	Henry, Philip	II.	209
Bendish, Mrs.	IV.	24	— Matthew	II.	289
Board, dissenters	II.	143	Hollis, Thomas	IV.	7
Bradbury, Thomas	III.	489	— jun.	IV.	9
Brown, Simon	II.	455	Howe, John	II.	214
Brewer, Samuel	IV.	455			
Bunyan, John	II.	248	Introduction	I.	1
Burgess, Daniel	II.	276	Independents	I.	123
			Influence of dissenters	IV.	496
Calamy, Dr. Edmund	III.	452	Ireland, state of religion	II.	404
Controversies	I.	388		IV.	73
Clarke, Matthew	III.	435		IV.	491
Crisp, Dr.	I.	399			
Cromwell, Richard	II.	298	Keach, Benjamin	II.	363
Cruso, Timothy	II.	254			
			Langford, Dr.	IV.	411
Davis, of Rothwell	I.	388	Lardner, Dr.	IV.	409
Defoe, Daniel	IV.	12	Liberty, religious	I.	178
Dissent, controversy on	III.	179		III.	115
	IV.	209		IV.	146
Deistical controversy	III.	250	Lisle, lady	II.	304
Doddridge, Dr.	III.	475	Lowman, Moses	III.	484
Ellys, sir Richard	IV.	6	Marshall, Walter	II.	238

INDEX.

	Vol.	Page.		Vol.	Page.
Methodists	III.	1	Sandemanians	IV.	107
Methodists, wesleyan	III.	33	Seminaries	II.	1
——— calvinistic	III.	75		III.	264
Moravian brethren	III.	101		IV.	258
Neal, Daniel	III.	460	Scotland, *state of reli-		
			gion in	II.	316
Orders, dissenting	I.	419		IV.	50
Orton, Job	IV.	416		IV.	487
Outward state of dis-			Shower, John	III.	412
ters	II.	92	Smith, Jeremiah	III.	433
	III.	314	Socinian controversy	IV.	241
	IV.	311	Stennett, Joseph	II.	285
Owen, Dr.	II.	235	——— Dr.	IV.	477
			Strange, Thomas	IV.	448
Pearce, Samuel	IV.	480	Swedenborgians	IV.	126
Pomfret, Samuel	III.	424	Taylor, Nathaniel	II.	257
Presbyterians	I.	110	——— John	IV.	21
Priestley, Dr.	IV.	429	Toms, Isaac	IV.	459
Price, Dr.	IV.	421	Tong, William	III.	441
			Trosse, George	II.	279
Quakers	I.	157	Veil, De	II.	267
Reasons of dissent	I.	286	Warren, Thomas	II.	243
Religion, state of among			Watts, Dr. Isaac	III.	467
dissenters	II.	155	Williams, Dr. Daniel	III.	417
	III.	76	——— Joseph	IV.	14
	IV.	369	Wilton, Dr.	IV.	444
Reynolds, Thomas	III.	445	World, state of reli-		
Robinson, Robert	IV.	468	gion in	II.	457
Rowe, Mrs.	IV.	31	Wright, Dr. Samuel	III.	464
Ryland, John	IV.	475			

* * * The authors regret that they have been prevented by the unexpected quantity to which the last volume has extended, from giving, as they designed, a list of the Subscribers' names.

TO THE BINDER.

The two first sheets of the third volume must be taken from the end of the second volume, within the boards of which they were originally published.

HISTORY OF DISSENTERS.

CHAP. VIII.

LIVES OF EMINENT PERSONS AMONG THE DISSENTERS.

SECTION II.

LIVES OF EMINENT CHRISTIANS WHO WERE NOT MINISTERS.

SIR JOHN HARTOPP.

THIS celebrated baronet was born about the year 1637. His father was one of the first English gentlemen honoured with the new title. He married the daughter of Charles Fleetwood, esq. but was, in 1711, deprived of this lady, whom Dr. Watts describes in her funeral sermon as a woman of eminent religion. From the same writer we learn, that sir John "joined the independent church over which Dr. Owen presided, and continued an honourable member, under successive pastors, to the day of his death." Boldly patronising the despised cause of the dissenters, amidst the fiercest persecutions, he was a devout and diligent attendant on their public worship, till the infirmities of years confined him to his private and domestic devotions. He frequently instructed his family by reading to them the discourses which he had written from the lips of the first preachers in his early days; and to him we owe many of those which are contained in the folio volume of sermons and tracts by Dr. Owen, with whom he maintained the most endeared friendship.

Elected by the freeholders of Leicestershire, as their representative in parliament, he displayed a most ardent zeal for the religious and civil liberties of his country, and became a strenuous advocate for the bill which was to have excluded James the second from the throne. For this reason the whole weight of the court was employed to prevent his reelection; but the Hartoppians, as they were called, prevailed, and he was thrice returned member for the county. This popular patriot and pillar of the dissent lived to the advanced age of eighty-five, and terminated his labours on the first of April, 1722.

Dr. Watts, who had entitled Lady Hartopp's funeral sermon "The last enemy conquered," published one for the baronet in the form of a treatise, on "The Happiness of separate Spirits." The character which the preacher gives his deceased friend, claims a place in this memoir. "When I name sir John Hartopp, all who knew him will agree that I name a gentleman, a scholar, and a Christian. He shone with eminence among persons of birth and title, while his obliging deportment rendered him easy of access to all his inferiors, and the delight of all his friends. He had a taste for universal learning; mathematics were a favourite study with him in his youth, and even in his old age he maintained his acquaintance with the heavenly bodies. But the Book of God was his chief study, his divinest delight. The Bible lay open before him day and night. Desirous of seeing what the Spirit of God said to men in the original languages, he commenced some acquaintance with the Hebrew, when he was more than fifty years old, and kept his youthful knowledge of the Greek. He took pleasure in the doc-

trines of grace, in the glories of the person of Christ, God in our nature, and the wondrous work of redemption by his cross: he adored him as his Lord and God, and was zealous to maintain the honour due to his divine nature. What he knew in the things of God, he resolved not to know only for himself, but for the benefit of all who had the honour of his acquaintance. Many join with me to confess how often we departed from his company refreshed and advanced in useful knowledge. I cannot but reckon it among the blessings of heaven, when I review the five years I spent in his family, in my younger part of life. I found much instruction to myself, where I was called to be an instructor. His zeal for the welfare of his country and of the church of Christ in it, carried him out to the most extensive, toilsome services in his younger and middle age. He applied his time, his spirits, his interest, and his riches for the defence of the nation, when, forty years ago, it was in the utmost danger of popery and ruin." How pleasant must have been the setting sun of this good old man, when he saw his country saved from tyranny, and the church from popish persecution, Britain under the liberal reign of George, and Zion blessed with such pastors as Watts and many of his cotemporaries. If there are now but few baronets among dissenters, it is equally true that there are few Hartopps among baronets.

SIR THOMAS ABNEY.

Sir Thomas Abney, a Christian patriot, was heir to higher honours than if the blood of all the Howards had flowed in his veins; but he was also descended

from one of those families which heralds pronounce ancient and honourable. Wilsley, in the county of Derby, the family seat for five hundred years, was the place of his birth, in January, 1639. Early deprived of his mother, he was committed by his father to the care of a pious aunt, lady Bromley, who was honoured to produce those religious impressions which rendered him afterwards a public blessing. In early life, he thought it his glory to be a puritan, and having adopted the sentiments of the independents, he joined the church in Silver-street, of which Dr. Jacomb, and after him Mr. Howe, was pastor. He first married the daughter of the celebrated Caryl, and on her death he became, in 1700, the son-in-law of Mr. John Gunston, of Newington-green, whose memory the muse of Watts has forbidden to die. The name of Abney, also, has been handed down to posterity by means of its connection with that of Watts, who found in the house of sir Thomas and his descendants an asylum for thirty-six years.

Though decidedly devoted to an unfashionable religion, he rose to the highest civic honours, for he was chosen, in 1693, sheriff of London and Middlesex, and, before the expiration of his year, alderman of Vintry Ward. He received from king William the honour of knighthood, and though it was some years before the usual term, he was, in 1710, elected lord mayor, when his conduct gave occasion to the assertion that "the house of Hanover owes the throne of Britain to a dissenter." For, in opposition to the majority of his brethren on the bench, he had the courage to propose an address from the common council to king William, assuring him of their determination to stand by him against the pretender, whom the

French king had lately proclaimed sovereign of Great Britain. His boldness and prudence having triumphed in the city, the address not only encouraged the king, to whom it was presented while he was with the army on the continent, but gave the tone of loyalty to the nation, which re-echoed the language of the metropolis from Caithness to the lands end. The king dissolved the parliament at this favourable moment, and sir Thomas Abney was chosen member for London, of that legislature which passed the act for the abjuration of the pretender, and the further establishment of the protestant succession. The bill received the royal assent, the day before king William died, and was the means of securing the throne to the house of Brunswick. A person of distinction, complimenting this dissenting lord mayor on his zeal and address in the critical affair, said, "you have done the king more service than if you had raised him a million of money."

That the dignities to which he was exalted, and the popularity he acquired, did not seduce his heart from a due regard to the honour which comes from above, is evident from an anecdote, which will have a very different effect on the Christian and the man of the world. The evening of the day on which he entered upon his mayoralty, he withdrew silently from the assembly, went to his own house, performed the usual family worship, and then returned to the company. He probably recalled an example which may already have occurred to the reader, that of David, who returned from a royal procession, on a national festival, "to bless his household." Sir Thomas Abney lived to be father of the city of London, which received at least as much

honour from the wisdom, patriotism, and piety of its father, as it conferred on him by its population, talents, wealth, or commerce. This distinguished ornament of the metropolis, the senate, and the church of God, lived to the good old age of eighty-three, and departed to higher honours February 6, 1722.

SIR RICHARD ELLYS.

In the number of men of rank among dissenters, none of the most respectable was this baronet, whose opulence and title were the least part of his honours.

During several parliaments he had a seat in the house of commons. Piety, when blended with bigotry, and debased with a relish for arbitrary power, makes a man a curse instead of a blessing: but when liberal sentiments of civil liberty are grafted on the stock of pure religion, they form the character which, it is devoutly to be wished, should distinguish all the representatives of the people of Great Britain.

As a man of learning, he made a respectable figure among the literati of his day. A specimen of his talents will be found in his "Fortuita Sacra;" which is highly creditable to his erudition and his critical powers.

But to be pre-eminent in goodness is infinitely superior to learning and honours: and this high distinction was the inheritance of sir Richard Ellys. The doctrines of the old puritans formed his creed, which sanctified his soul, and rendered him a devout, a humble, and a zealous disciple of Christ. He had once been under the influence of a different system, but he received the knowledge of the truth from one

inferior to himself in every thing, but an acquaintance with the gospel; and the bigotted arminian was constrained by the conversation of an aged Christian woman to throw away the high ideas of himself, and to lie prostrate at the foot of the cross, ascribing his salvation to the righteousness of the Redeemer and his free and sovereign grace. He was a great admirer of Boston's fourfold state^b.

Sir Richard appears to have been first a member of Dr. Calamy's congregation, but on Mr. Samuel Say's succeeding him in the pastoral office, he joined Mr. Bradbury's church, and continued in communion with that society till his death.

THOMAS HOLLIS.

Sheffield was his native place. The death of his mother, when he was only twelve years of age, deeply impressed his heart; and the counsels of his father on the mournful occasion, aided by the affecting discourses of Mr. Fisher, their minister, were the means of his conversion to God: thus at an early period a foundation was laid for that eminence of character to which he afterwards attained. From Sheffield he removed to London, and there spent the remainder of his life.

His temper was naturally warm and impetuous; but under the government of Christian principles, it produced only an energy of character which displayed itself in extraordinary zeal for the honour of God, and the happiness of man. Habitual sense of the evil of sin, was accompanied with deep humility;

^b See the account of this change more fully given by himself, in *Boston's Memoirs*, appendix, p. 22.

while, from a lively faith in the promises, flowed the animating hope of the friendship of Jehovah, and of eternal blessedness. This delightful anticipation of heaven he had the felicity for many years to enjoy.

The salvation of his children lay near his heart; and to train them up in the knowledge and practice of religion was his assiduous care, while his instructions received a tenfold force from a holy life, peculiarly exemplified in public, domestic, and secret devotion. To find his labours crowned with success was his enviable reward. In his latter years it pleased God to afflict him with blindness; and though to a man who, like him, wished to do good by personal exertions, its long continuance must have been peculiarly distressing, he was enabled to bear it with exemplary patience, and was never heard to complain or murmur. He died in the hope of heaven, at a very advanced age, in 1718. The text chosen for his funeral sermon, strikingly described his spirit and character, Phil. i. 21.

To do good was, early in life, a ruling principle in the heart of Thomas Hollis, and one of the grand ends for which he considered himself to be called into existence. While but a youth, he laid aside a part of his earnings for pious and benevolent purposes; and as his property increased, his charity increased still more. That he might be the more extensively useful, he lived in the most economical manner. How honourable is frugality, when the design is to feed the hungry, and to convey the knowledge of salvation to the perishing soul! There is a dignity in it beyond all the splendour of worldly greatness. An immense quantity of good books was distributed by his hands. A lover of the house of God, and feel-

ing the pleasure and benefit of public worship, besides contributing with an open hand in a multitude of instances to the building of meeting-houses, he erected two at his own expense, one at Doncaster and the other at Rotheram, with schools attached to them, and permanent benefactions for their support: Sheffield derived advantage from being the place of his birth; for, besides assisting his townsmen in the erecting of a place of worship, he founded almshouses for the residence of sixteen poor persons, with some additional support.

In sentiments, Mr. Hollis was a baptist; but he was for sixty years member of a pædobaptist church at Pinner's-hall, under the pastoral care of Anthony Palmer, Richard Wavell, and Dr. Jeremiah Hunt.

THOMAS HOLLIS JUNIOR.

He was the eldest son of the person just described, and inherited not only the piety but the public spirit of his father. He too, though a baptist, was a member of the same pædobaptist church. Early in life he made a profession of his faith in Christ; and from the benefit of it to his own mind, he used to recommend it earnestly to others. The advancement of the divine life in the soul, was the object of his peculiar solicitude; and diligent attention to every ordinance of religion was a distinguishing characteristic of the man.

When in business, he was so good a manager of his time, that a portion of it was daily redeemed for mental improvement. In the choice of books he was

See Dr. Hunt's funeral sermon for T. Hollis.

exceedingly careful, and would often say, that the little leisure he could command made this absolutely necessary for him. When he advanced in years, he laid aside those which were more difficult and abstruse, and selected such treatises as were plain and practical and of a devotional strain. His respect to ministers for their works sake was uncommonly great: and such was his moderation towards those whom he did not approve, that when the preacher did not please him, he never used words more severe than these, "I would not chuse to sit constantly under that minister."

The public spirit which he inherited from his father, shone forth in him with still superior lustre. To do good was his delight; and his benevolence was not confined within the limits of a sect. To the baptists he was a most generous friend. The society of independents with which he communicated, received distinguished tokens of his bounty. But still more substantial marks of his liberality were conferred on Harvard college, in the Massachusets. By his donations to this American institution, he displayed not only the benevolence of his heart, but the soundness of his judgment and the comprehensiveness of his views; for what can so extensively promote the happiness of mankind as piety and learning united in the breasts of public teachers^d? Still higher praise

^d Dr. Wadsworth, the president of Harvard college, thus describes their obligations to Mr. Hollis. "He founded two professorships in it, one for divinity, the other for mathematics and natural and experimental philosophy. Out of the income, or interest of his donations, he ordered fourscore pounds per annum in our money to each of his professors, and ten pounds a-piece per annum to poor scholars, of a laudable character; designed for the work of the gospel ministry, as an help to defray the charge of their

is due to Mr. Hollis for those noble principles which gave a preference to that school: it was because it did not, like many of the colleges and universities of Europe, confine its benefits to a privileged sect; but opened wide its doors to all, bade all welcome to its literary advantages, and placed all on a level as candidates for its honours and degrees.

After being half a century a member of the same church as his father, he died in 1731, in the seventy-second year of his age^c.

John Hollis, his brother, was from his youth equally eminent as a Christian for his devotional spirit, and his exemplary conduct in every relation. He possessed too the public spirit of the family. He died in 1736, and from his funeral sermon being preached by Dr. Hunt, it appears that he was a member of his church. Three such men confer a glory on a Christian society.

If any of the posterity of Thomas Hollis the elder still remain, under what obligations do they lye to be followers of their excellent progenitors!

education; and twenty pounds per annum to the treasurer of the college for the time being, to reward him for his care and trouble for managing the donations he has sent us. Besides these things, he has given us a curious apparatus for mathematical and philosophical experiments. By this means we have Hebrew and Greek types to be used in printing; and he has at sundry times augmented our college library, with very valuable books, partly of his own gift, and partly by procurement from friends. Indeed his heart was extensively engaged in doing good; in essays to promote God's glory and the welfare of mankind."

^c See his funeral sermon by Dr. Hunt, and Crosby's History of Baptists, vol. IV. p. 229.

DANIEL DEFOE.

This remarkable man, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, was born in London, in 1638. His father whose name was James Foe, being a dissenter, sent his son for education to Mr. Morton's academy at Newington-green, and he was no dishonour to his tutor. Daniel, not liking his paternal name (and certainly it has not a Christian sound) prefixed the syllable De, to give it greater dignity. He entered early into business as a hose factor, but was not successful: though unable, however, to satisfy the demands of his creditors, he was acknowledged to have acted in an honourable manner. From 1692, when this reverse in his circumstances took place, during the reign of William and the former part of that of queen Anne, he was in various employments under government. When the union between England and Scotland was in agitation, he was sent down to Edinburgh, where he rendered considerable service in forwarding the important measure. After the accession of the house of Hanover, he was not in any public situation, but subsisted by his pen as a man of letters, which has perhaps in fewer instances than any other employment, been the road to opulence. After seventeen years of literary labour for his support, he died in low circumstances, leaving a numerous family*. Mr. Defoe had a soul of peculiar ardour which was constantly engaged in some enterprize, and at times hurried him into excess; but he was a very able and good man, and

* He had attained such facility in composition, that he once wrote two shilling pamphlets in one day; and what was a shilling pamphlet in those days would now cost half-a-crown.

his writings have been beneficial to the world, for he always appeared the friend of piety and morals. His religious writings show him to have been well acquainted with the nature of the Christian life, and to have highly valued the practices and modes of piety and domestic government of the old dissenters.

He was, indeed, a steadfast dissenter, and wrote various pamphlets in defence of their principles. He entered the lists with Mr. Howe, on the subject of occasional conformity, and it was allowed that he maintained his ground.

Mr. Defoe wrote a multitude of political pamphlets, from 1683, till after the accession of George the first, in which he ever shewed himself the patron of the protestant religion and of civil and religious liberty. For two of them he was prosecuted: the reward of one was the pillory, and for the other he had a pardon from the queen; but in neither case was there any thing to his dishonour. Some of his satirical pamphlets were mistaken for serious compositions. On commercial subjects he wrote much and with singular ability^f. His *Robinson Crusoe* was first published in 1719. Attempts have been made by malice and envy to rob him of his character or his fame in this extraordinary performance, but without success. The "*Family Instructor*" in two volumes had gone through sixteen editions in 1787, and "*his Religious Courtship*" twenty one in 1789. There have been between twenty or thirty editions of his "*True-born Englishman*." By such unequivocal marks has the public testified its value for his works.

^f *Biographia Britannica*, art. Defoe.

JOSEPH WILLIAMS.

As the example of eminent ministers, which ecclesiastical history presents, is frequently rendered inefficient to private Christians by the notion that their superior religion was a professional excellence, which is not to be expected from those who are employed in secular affairs; the same propensity to excuse ourselves from resembling the eminent, may have induced some to remark, that the memoirs which we have given of persons not in the ministry, were taken from the higher ranks in life, where independent circumstances and freedom from the distractions of business, render devotedness to the service of God and his church comparatively easy. It is, therefore, with peculiar pleasure, that we now introduce to our readers a devout tradesman, whose religion, excellent for its own superiority to the ordinary standard, becomes still more valuable for the stimulus it furnishes to the great mass of mankind, who must ever, like him, be occupied with the labours of a secular calling.

Joseph Williams was born about the year 1691, and was the son of a pious clothier, at Kidderminster. His first serious impressions of religion were occasioned by the death of a boy in the neighbourhood, when he was but seven years old. These solitudes were increased, about six years after, by his father's remarks on the death of his sister. "I felt myself," he says "much inclined to get into some place of retirement, to meditate on death, and an interest in Christ appeared to me better than all the world." After this he bewails the pollution which his mind experienced by being put to work among the weavers in his father's shop. To a similar cause many a youth, once modest and

virtuous, may ascribe the debauchery of his life, and the perdition of his soul. Vexed with their filthy conversation, he at last prevailed on his father to allow him a separate room for work, where he kept a religious book close by him, and without any interruption to his duties, committed to memory the whole of Mason's hymns.

About this time, his father taking him out for a walk, to impress on his heart the importance of early religion, related to him the following anecdote. "I was coming home one evening with an elderly gentleman and his son. They had been spending some hours with persons who had thrown out severe reflections on dissenters, which the old gentleman, who never came to meeting, except when he was in London, had the courage to oppose. After relating to me what he had said to them, he turned to his son, and exclaimed, son, though I have not myself been so religious and careful of my soul as I should be, I cannot but have a tender concern for your everlasting happiness; and here, before Mr. Williams, I admonish you not to live after my example, but keep close to such persons as the dissenters. I have often advised you to make this man your associate, he will lead you in the way to heaven. You are got in with a knot of young fellows who will do you no good: but I will not stir from this place, till you have promised me to abandon that set, and make this man your daily associate. Mind religion in your youth, and do not do as I have done. I have slighted many convictions, and now my heart is hard and brawny." These last words struck young Mr. Williams as a clap of thunder, and the design of his father, in relating the anecdote, seemed happily accomplished.

A young companion with whom he afterwards associated, was exceedingly useful to him, though at length he exemplified the melancholy close of Mr. Baxter's lines, which they often read together.

He warmed me with his zeal, when I was cold,
And my remissness lovingly controul'd,
For such a friend I had. Though, after all,
Himself became my warning by his fall.

In the year 1719, he lost his father, of whom he says, "he was an excellent pattern of self-denial and diligence in his heavenly calling. He redeemed much time from his bed, rising commonly by four, and spending two or three hours in reading, meditation, and prayer, before the family were up. He was a man of a passionate temper, but through his great watchfulness and close walking with God, it seldom appeared. His death greatly impressed my mind; and roused me out of the spirit into which my intended marriage betrayed me."

After his marriage he went on very prosperously in business, for some time; but in the year 1725 he lost to the amount of almost the whole of his capital, which he says became the means of enriching him with a more spiritual state of mind and stronger assurance of his salvation than he had before enjoyed. When, shortly after, some aggravating additions were made to his temporal afflictions, he wrote thus to Mr. Pearswell, of Taunton. "I have not suffered loss, but reaped the greatest gain, the tidings were at first surprising, and the swelling billows began to toss my mind, and disturb my rest; but O what serene calm follows when God speaks peace! How sweetly did he assure my soul that by this cross providence he was

faithfully pursuing the great end of electing love to take away sin."

On the return of prosperity, he was agitated with solicitude lest he should be lifted up with the pride and self importance which wealth too frequently generates, and seek his happiness in the world rather than in God. But in his diary he writes, "I humbly hope, yea surely in this I may be confident, by the experience now of twenty-seven years, but more remarkably of the last twelve years, that the love and favour of God is what I prize above all things." The letters and the verses which he wrote on his journey at this time, display a heart amazingly detached from the world and ardently devoted to God. A copy of verses which were addressed to his wife, he sent to the Gentleman's Magazine, with the just and useful remark, that many fine things are published which were written to young ladies to win affection, but he deemed it worthy of the muse to address something to a wife, to cherish conjugal attachment. After having been married twenty years, he recorded the various favours of heaven, and recalled some of his severe afflictions, among which he observed that the loss of five children, all dear to him, but especially the two last, was the most severe. "The rending of such branches gave my heart sensations the most painful; but, blessed be God, who enabled me quickly, without a murmuring word, or repining thought, to submit, because it was his will."

As the church at Kidderminster, of which Mr. Williams was a member, had been deprived of a minister by the death of Mr. Bradshaw, in 1742, Mr. Williams united with several friends, twice a week, in

a private room to supplicate the Head of the church to grant them a pastor after his own heart. The delight which he expressed in these exercises, and the confidence of a favourable result which they inspired, abundantly recompensed the pious solicitude for the interests of the church which he and his friends evinced. "We trembled for the ark of God," he says, "and the zeal of his house hath eaten us up; but he granted us the desire of our souls, and the minister of our unanimous choice declared his cordial acceptance of our invitation." Were the same purity of motive cultivated by all who exercise the inestimable privilege of choosing him who is to watch for their souls, and the same methods adopted to secure the happy result, how many churches would be preserved from disgraceful dissensions and as ruinous elections!

On another occasion, which frequently puts the religion of a tradesman to a test more severe than it can endure, the success of a person who had lately become his rival in business; Mr. Williams displayed that true dignity of mind which religion inspires. He charged himself not to be dissatisfied that his rival had been in some instances beforehand with him; to remember that the divine householder cared for all the families of the earth, and saw that his neighbour had a family to provide for; to labour to love the man who seemed to be in opposition to him; to enjoy his prosperity, and not to suffer an envious thought to find a place in his own heart.

The solicitude which he manifested for the salvation of his children, by writing to them such letters as would do honour to any pen, was recompensed by the exquisite delight of seeing their early and decided

piety. Of the youngest, who was afterwards the wife of the Rev. Richard Winter, of London, he says; "she has not yet finished her fifteenth year, and has melted my very soul with her sense of gratitude and duty, and her ardent aspirations in favour of her parents." These are her expressions, "my gratitude to you, dear sir, should warble in the sweetest strains and sparkle with the most refined lustre. I am sure it warms my heart. God will reward you for all your tender care and diligent watchfulness over your children's souls." He declared that God had given him, not only to long for the conversion of his children; whom from his inmost soul he dedicated to God at their baptism, and devoted to him every day; but also for the salvation of others who came within his reach. "I have the joy of seeing all my children walking in the truth, and of hoping that no less than seven young persons have been born of God in my family, within these three or four years." This disposition so benevolent, and so truly Christian, induced him to address a young clergyman with whom he was once in company; and his serious remarks produced such an effect, that the young man in tears begged his prayers and the favour of his correspondence. The impression proved permanent and effectual, the minister became a faithful preacher of the gospel, and Mr. Williams, who lived but a few years after, maintained, from that time, an affectionate correspondence with him; delighted, as he said, with the honour of being a winner of such as are winners of souls.

In the year 1755, Mr. Williams was taken ill on a journey, and wrote to his wife the following sentences. "If it be the divine will, I would gladly

return to my native place; either to recover strength, or to die; but if it please him who said, 'Take Aaron up to mount Hor, and he shall be gathered to his people and die there,' to say, let Joseph Williams die on the road, or at Windsor, or Oxford, I desire to say in every case, Father, not my will, but thine be done." His wife received the letter, which breathed throughout the language of heaven, about an hour before the writer himself was brought home. His complaints terminated in a lethargy, in which, about ten days after, he died, on the twenty-first of December, 1755, in the sixty-third year of his age.

His memory has been cherished with pious affection, not only by his children and relatives, who felt it their honour and privilege to be allied to one so evidently born from above, and tending towards heaven; but by multitudes who knew him personally, or learned from his memoirs how eminently he walked with God." His talents were so considerable, that, had he received a superior education, and devoted his life to the pursuits of literature, he would have risen to distinction among divines or authors. Amidst the cares of an extensive business, he published, in 1740, a pamphlet, entitled, "The principal Causes of some late Divisions in Dissenting Churches, traced to their Origin, in a letter from a Dissenter in the Country," which was revised by Dr. Watts. In 1748, he gave to the public an Abridgment of David Brainerd's Journal among the Indians. His diary forms his highest eulogium, and may be pronounced one of the most useful books which a Christian tradesman can read^s.

^s Extracts from the Diary, Meditations, and Letters of Mr. Joseph Williams, of Kidderminster, which was edited by the Rev. Benjamin Fawcett, of Kidderminster.

JOHN TAYLER.

He was a member of the baptist church in Wild-street; exemplary in his deportment as a Christian; and eminent in zeal for the salvation of the souls of men, by expending a very large portion of an ample estate for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause. Large quantities of good books were distributed by him through the country for the benefit of poor ministers, and indigent families; and many were sent abroad with the same excellent design. It may be mentioned, to his praise, that his benevolence was not confined to a sect; it was enough for him to know that the person was indigent and would make a proper use of his bounty.

Having had a remarkable deliverance during the great storm in 1703, he commemorated it by annually consecrating the day to devotion: as long as he lived he employed a minister to preach a sermon suitable to the occasion; and by his will he made provision for the continuance to the present time^b.

Mrs. BENDISH,

If it could not be said of Oliver Cromwell's family, as Xerxes once affirmed of his army, that the men acted as women, it may be asserted that the women displayed the spirit of men. Few families have produced such a constellation of heroines. Among these Mrs. Bendish shines a star of the first magnitude, and furnishes an example of the female character so unique as to claim and reward the study of her species.

^b Crosby,

She descended from Oliver Cromwell by Bridget his eldest daughter, who was married in 1645 to Henry Ireton, of whom Burnet said, that "he had the principles and temper of a Cassius, stuck at nothing to turn England into a commonwealth, and was bent on the king's death, when Cromwell was in suspense." Mrs. Cleypole, Oliver's younger daughter, would have preferred the restoration of the Stuarts to the dangerous elevation of her own family; and the wife of Ireton disliked the power of her father for the opposite reason, because she had imbibed from her Cassius a republican antipathy to the government of a single person, which rendered odious the name of Protector even when borne by a father whom she revered and a brother whom she loved. She united strong sense with commanding deportment and that ardent devotion which could not fail to be branded with the name of enthusiasm. The death of Ireton, in 1651, which opened the way for her father's elevation to sovereign power, was followed, after some time, by her marriage to Fleetwood, whom she supplied with more political wisdom than he knew how to use; and when her counsels were not followed, her foresight anticipated the crisis, which her influence could not prevent. She died soon after the Restoration.

Mrs. Ireton bore to her husband one son and four daughters, of whom Bridget, the subject of the succeeding pages, was the third. She was born about the year 1649, and was educated under the eye of her grandfather, with whom she was a favourite. From him, she used to say, she so early learned the art of keeping a secret, that, when she was only six years old, she sat between his knees, at a cabinet council,

on the most important affairs, and on some of the counsellors objecting to her being present, the protector replied, "there is not a secret that I would trust to any of you, that I would not trust to this child." To prove his opinion well founded, he would tell her something with an air of confidence, and then bid her mother and grandmother get it from her by promises, caresses, bribes, threatenings, and punishments; against all these she held out with astonishing coolness and determination, acknowledging her duty to her mother but maintaining that she was bound to keep the secret entrusted to her by her grandfather. As she grew up, her character justified these early expectations, and her appearance, which was an exact feminine likeness of the protector, was a faithful index of her mind.

She married Thomas Bendish, esq. of an ancient and honourable family, whose father served both king Charles and Cromwell in the quality of ambassador. Her husband dying in 1707, she was left with three children, Ireton, Bridget, and Henry, and remained a widow during the rest of her life. Her residence was in Suffolk, at a place called South Town, near Yarmouth. Left with an income of two or three hundred a year, she laboured to increase it to the extent of her own liberal habits, and the expectations of her family, by embarking, without fear, in several hazardous schemes. In the salt works, carried on at South Town, she was employed with indefatigable industry among her labourers, stooping to the meanest drudgery, from the earliest dawn, till it was dark. Having undertaken the business of grazing cattle, she attended the neighbouring fairs, travelling in a single-horse chaise, by night or by day, whether she knew the

road or not. She has been heard to say, that, in the darkest night, on a wild open heath, with which she was totally unacquainted, while encountering the most dreadful thunder storm, she has yet been perfectly happy, singing a psalm, and not doubting but angels surrounded her chaise and formed her guard.

As she was not too delicate for the drudgery, she was not too proud for the appearance of labour; though she was formed to shine in a court or command upon a throne. The following description is given by an eye witness, and though evidently a caricature, it may enable a judicious reader to form for himself a picture. "At her residence, which was quite open to the road, I have very often seen her in the morning, stumping about with an old straw hat, her hair about her ears, without stays, and when it was cold an old blanket about her shoulders, and a staff in her hand, in a word exactly accoutred to mount the stage as a witch in Macbeth; yet, if at such a time, she was accosted by any person of rank or breeding, the dignity of her manner, and politeness of her stile, which nothing could efface, would instantly break through the veil of debasement which concealed her native grandeur, and a stranger to her customs might be astonished to find himself accosted by a princess, while he was looking at a mumper."

"After working all day, insensible to the calls of nature, she would eat and drink most plentifully of whatever happened to be before her, then throw herself down upon any couch, hard or soft, sleep profoundly for a short time, and rising with new life and vigour, dress herself in all the grandeur that her present circumstances or the remains of former greatness would allow, and ride in her chaise, or on her pad,

into Yarmouth, pay innumerable visits of business, ceremony, or charity, figure at the assembly, and receive the precedence in all company, as a lady who once expected to have been one of the first persons in Europe. Splendid she never was, her highest dress being a plain silk, but it was usually of the richest sort, though as far as I can remember, of what is called quaker's colour, and she wore besides a black silk hood, that was out of date, and though hoops were in fashion nothing could have induced her to wear one. Yet there was something in her which could not fail of attracting notice and respect, amidst the most numerous company, where many might out-shine her in splendour of appearance."

Her ardent benevolence rendered her the common friend of the poor, to whom she gave her money, while it lasted, with profusion rather than liberality; and when she had nothing else, she gave them the wisest advice in the kindest manner, and so powerfully pleaded their cause with the rich, that she seemed not so much to solicit, as to demand the relief which she judged it their duty to give. If she found a sick person destitute of proper attendance, she would perform the meanest offices for them herself, and passed much of her time in the most wretched apartments, administering to the temporal and spiritual relief of the afflicted. Amidst the sufferings of the nonconformists, she stood forth their fearless champion, and waged war with the hosts of spies and informers, to whom she was a constant terror. "Sometimes she circumvented and outwitted them, sometimes she bullied them, but in the end she generally got the poor parson out of their clutches. On these occasions, and all others which admitted of their interposition, she was sure of the common

people, who idolised their benefactor, while the higher classes of all parties valued her for her dignity of manner, superior sense, engaging elocution, and knowledge of the world."

As few men could rival this woman in courage, so it was sure to appear whenever man or woman attacked the reputation of her grandfather Oliver. Gratefully attached to him, to whom she ascribed the praise of every excellence which she possessed, when she was complimented on any attainment she would reply, "I learned this of my grandfather." She was such an enthusiast for his fame, that, not contented with pronouncing him the first of mankind, equally distinguished among saints, among statesmen or generals, she also expected that every one in her company should echo to his praises. Two stories are related of her offering to fight duels with gentlemen, who had, in a stage coach, disputed the propriety of canonising the protector; but as they betray marks of being both intended for the same event, though the circumstances are contradictory, and neither of them seem capable of confirmation, they are not worthy to be recorded. In a violent fever, when she was supposed to be deprived of sense, finding lady Fauconberg, her aunt, yield too much to what was spoken by some in the room to the dishonour of Oliver, she rose up, to the astonishment of all, and said, "if I did not believe my grandmother to have been one of the most virtuous women in the world, I should conclude your ladyship to be a bastard; for I am astonished that the daughter of the greatest and best man that ever lived, should be so degenerate as to hear with patience his memory so ill treated,

In religion, Dr. Owen was her favourite author, and she has been ridiculed for calvinistic enthusiasm and confidence in her election to the kingdom of heaven. That such religion should be viewed by many with an evil eye is not surprising; but when it is affirmed that, possessed of piety, sincerity, and magnanimity, in the highest degree, ardently desirous of serving God and promoting the truest interest of all mankind, even of her bitterest enemies; she yet was fawning, suspicious, and capable of any falsehood or cruelty, must not every judicious person perceive that the author of such a relation, in attempting an antithesis, has fallen upon a contradiction? As the best part of the description is supported by the evidence of facts, of which the worst is destitute, reason, as well as charity, requires that we should ascribe the former to the excellencies of Mrs. Bendish, and the latter to the prejudices of the reporter. Though she was charged with lavishing in charity, what was due to her creditors, she declared that she would die in no ones debt; and as the fact justified the assertion, should we not ascribe it to her attention to equity, rather than to accidental coincidence?

That her religious principles, engrafted on such an ardent temperament, produced fruits which cool prudence would never relish, we may readily conclude. If she questioned the lawfulness or expediency of any undertaking, she adopted the method, which she said her grandfather always employed with success, by shutting herself up in her closet for fasting and prayer, and searching the Scriptures, till she came to some determination, upon which she acted with the confidence of success that usually attained the object.

Thus she was induced to say in similar emergencies, she would trust a friend who never deceived her. After her days of labour, she would frequently pay visits, at ten or eleven at night, mounted on an old mare, never accompanied with a servant; for she said, God was her guard, and she would have no other. The unreasonableness of the hour even in those more sober days, never rendered her visits unwelcome, and in addition to the usual sprightliness of her conversation, if religion was the theme, she was generally so elevated as to insist upon singing a psalm before she would retire. She then mounted her mare, at one in the morning, singing a hymn, in notes rather boisterous than melodious, till she arrived at home.

As she had formerly hazarded her life by delivering a relation from imprisonment for the Rye-house plot, to which she was said to be privy; when the revolution was determined upon, she was entrusted with the secret, and went about to different shops in the town to look at silks, and other articles, and on going away would drop bundles of papers, to prepare the minds of the people for the great event. It was, perhaps, for this service that archbishop Tillotson introduced her to queen Mary, to obtain for her a pension suited to her former station; but the prelate and the queen soon after died, leaving the affair unaccomplished. Mrs. Bendish lived to the age of eighty, and died in the year 1729.

The best portraits of Oliver Cromwell are said to require only a little softening, to make them the most perfect resemblances of Mrs. Bendish. She was esteemed by the first persons of her days, and Dr. Watts addressed to her one of his lyric poems, which

closes with a dissuasive from tears, well suited to her masculine soul¹.

The original turn of this lady's mental physiognomy must always distinguish her from the crowd of biographic portraits, and he who has once attentively marked her features finds that he has for ever increased his acquaintance with human nature. The energy of her soul, communicating its impetus to ours, renders the fatigue of inaction intolerable; while her decision of sentiments and character, which compelled every thing to serve her purpose, raises a blush for the chameleon minds which can tamely take the colour of every surrounding object. Her religion has been charged with enthusiasm, but it was evidently the enthusiasm of benevolence and intellect, to which it was equally impossible to live for herself, and not to think for herself. From the splendid rank for which she was formed, she possessed the rare ability of descending, at the call of duty or charity, to the habiliments and fatigues of labour, still retaining the power to charm and enjoy the most polished society; and though she pursued the business of earth as if it were her heaven, she made religion her business, as if she had no other employment on earth. The courage of an Amazon, which could brave danger and look contempt out of countenance, was united in her breast with the tender charities which give the truest charm to the female

¹ Then let these useless streams be staid,
Wear native courage on your face,
These vulgar things were never made
For souls of a superior race.
If tis a rugged path you go,
And thousand foes your steps surround;
Tread the thorns down, charge through the foe,
The hardest fight is highest crown'd

form, when watching by the bed of sickness or of death. Though called to force her way through a world in arms against her dearest attachments to kindred, liberty and religion, her philanthropy ever blazed with unabated ardour, and amidst the numberless vexations which she endured, she maintained to old age the cheerfulness that could sing hymns to the silence of midnight or the thunders of a storm^{*}.

Mrs. ROWE.

Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe is one of the few women equally celebrated in the world for her talents, and in the church for her piety. She was the daughter of Walter Singer, a gentleman who knew the nature of religion too well to imagine that superior station exempted him from the obligation of confessing Christ under the meanest and most persecuted form. While he was imprisoned for nonconformity in Ilchester jail, he was assisted by Mrs. Elizabeth Portnell, which produced an attachment that ended in marriage. Mrs. Singer was removed early in life, but her husband survived many years, and was so much respected in the neighbourhood of Frome, to which he removed, that he was visited by persons of the highest rank, and by bishop Kenn once a week. His daughter used to relate that when he was near his end "he often felt his pulse, complained that it was still regular, but smiled at every symptom of approaching death. He would say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Come, ye holy angels, that rejoice at

^{*} Anecdotes of Mrs. Bendish by Rev. Samuel Say, Dr. Brookes, and Mr. Hewling Luson. See Noble's Memoirs of the protectorate house of Cromwell.

the conversion of a sinner, and conduct my soul to the skies. But thy time, Lord, not mine is best." One of those who called themselves free thinkers was so affected with the sight, as to be ready to exclaim, "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

The subject of this memoir, who was the eldest of three daughters, was born at Ilchester, the place of her father's imprisonment, Sept. 11, 1674. "When she received the first impressions of religion," says the Rev. Henry Grove, who commenced her memoirs, "does not appear; it is not unlikely that it was as soon as she was capable of it; at once perceiving her obligations to the author of her being, and in the same measure as her opening reason discovered them, feeling their force." In one of her devout exercises, she says, "my infant hands were early lifted up to thee, O God, and I soon learned to know and acknowledge the God of my fathers." Her taste for the fine arts appeared almost in infancy, for she loved the pencil, when her hands had scarcely strength to guide it, or to squeeze out the juices of the flowers with which she contrived to colour her drawings. Music assisted her in poetry, and gave a measured movement to her prose; for when quite young she scarcely ever wrote a familiar letter, which did not bear the marks of a poetic genius; and having begun to write verses at twelve years of age, she was announced to the world in 1696, when she was but twenty-two, by a volume of poems on various occasions. Her modesty forbidding her own name to appear, her friends gave her that of Philomela, the nightingale, in allusion, perhaps, to the name of Singer, as well as to the sweetness of her strains. In more advanced years, she deeply regretted some things in her early poems.

They introduced her to the family of lord Weymouth, whose son taught her French and Italian, and was surprised to find his fair scholar in a few months able to read Tasso's Jerusalem with ease. She wrote her paraphrase of the thirty-eighth chapter of Job, at the request of bishop Kenn, when she was not twenty.

Several men of genius, among whom are mentioned Prior and Watts, were ambitious of being united to the accomplished lady, who charmed every one she came near. But Mr. Thomas Rowe, son of the Rev. Benoni Rowe, a distinguished minister of the gospel, and himself a superior scholar, poet, and historian, was the happy man. This match of intellect is said to have been happy, beyond the common lot of human life; though some might have foreboded that two geniuses would be rendered irksome to each other by mutual claims of ascendancy, or reciprocal neglects of the inferior attentions which are so necessary to the happiness of domestic life. In some tender lines addressed to her, under the name of Delia, long after their marriage, Mr. Rowe says,

Short be my life's uncertain date,
And earlier far than thine, the destined hour of fate.
Whene'er it comes, mayst thou be by,
Support my sinking frame, and teach me how to die.

His wish was granted, for a feeble constitution, exhausted by excessive study, sunk under a consumption, May 13, 1715, when he was only twenty-eight years of age.

As it was only in compliance with her husband's inclination that she had resided near London, Mrs. Rowe soon retired to the neighbourhood of Frome, where she determined to spend the rest of her days in the solitude which was her delight. She now

wrote the works entitled "Friendship in Death," and "Letters moral and entertaining," to impress, as she said, the notion of the souls immortality, without which all virtue and religion must fall to the ground, and to make the mind contract an habitual persuasion of our future existence. In 1736, she published the history of Joseph, a poem, which she had written in her youth. She employed herself much in devout meditation and in contemplation on death, which she anticipated with delight; though, till about half a year previous to her decease, she scarcely ever knew what illness was. On the commencement of the attack which first threatened her life, she complained that she found her mind not quite so serene and prepared to meet death as usual, but "from the contemplation of the atonement, and mediation of Christ; she afterwards derived such confidence and satisfaction that she said, with tears of joy, "I know not that I ever felt the like in all my life." She had nearly recovered her usual health, and had been conversing with a friend, in high spirits, when she retired to her chamber for extraordinary devotion, as was her custom on Saturday evenings. The servant shortly after heard a noise, and going to her, found her fallen on the floor, in an apoplexy which terminated her life the next morning, February 23, 1737, in the sixty-third year of her age. A devotional book was lying open before her, and some loose papers, on which she had written the following lines.

O guide, and counsel, and protect my soul from sin!
O speak and let me know thy heavenly will!
And whisper heavenly comforts to my soul!

She was buried, according to her request, under the

same stone with her father, in the meeting-house at Frome. A funeral sermon was preached by Mr. Bowden to a crowded auditory ; for she was highly esteemed in the town, and the poor flocked to her grave with tears, telling of her unbounded kindness, and pouring blessings on her memory. For her generous heart spurned the love of money, which she thought so dishonourable to religion, that she used to say, it is fit sometimes to give for the credit of religion, when other reasons are wanting, that the enemies of religion should not say, " that Christians are covetous." In one of her private papers, is the following vow : " I consecrate half my yearly income to charitable uses ; and though by this I have reduced myself to some necessity, I cast my care on my gracious God, to whom I am devoted. I am, indeed, unworthy to wipe the feet of the least of the servants of my Lord ; but let me administer consolation to the afflicted members of my exalted and glorious Redeemer, and I give the glories of the world to the wind. By this generous sacrifice, she was enabled, besides her other charities, to place poor children at school, and give Bibles and instructive books to the ignorant. Her devotional papers were left to be published by Dr. Watts, under the title of the " Devout exercises of the Heart," which we had rather feel than criticise ; and in her desk were some letters to be sent to some persons to whom she was anxious to be a blessing after death.

CHAP. IX.

STATE OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD.

SECTION I.

STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND.

THE irreligion of our country, in the former part of this period, is attested by a public document of high authority; for his grace of Canterbury and thirteen bishops published, in the year after the accession of the house of Hanover, "a declaration," which loudly complained of the national sins. They affirm, that "the chief hopes of the enemy in the rebellion then excited, seemed to arise from discontents fomented by some, who, too much valued by themselves and others for their pretended zeal for the church, had joined with papists in their wicked attempts." Yet that members of the church of England, amidst high professions of zeal for her interests, should attempt to set up a popish pretender for her support, is pronounced by the prelates "such an absurdity, as nothing but an infatuation from God, inflicted for our sins, can suffer to pass upon the nation^k."

The charges which the bishops prefer against their cotemporaries for infidelity, hypocrisy, strife, and rancour, are substantiated by every publication which describes the moral character of the age. The gall of

^k Declaration of the archbishop of Canterbury, and the bishops in and near London, against the present rebellion. 1715.

bitterness with which the tories in the church laboured to poison the intercourse of society, and destroy liberty of religion, soon appeared to be spent, but the transition from bigotry to indifference and infidelity was as terrible as it was natural. The deistical writers were so numerous, bold, and active, and their attempts to proselyte the higher classes of society were so successful, that many well meaning Christians were depressed by the most gloomy forebodings, and seemed to admit that revealed religion was about to disappear. Bishop Butler, who, as the champion of revelation, had watched the progress of its enemies, felt so little assurance of success in his efforts, that he said to his clergy, "the influence of religion is more and more wearing out of the minds of men, the number of those who avow themselves unbelievers increase, and with their numbers their zeal. The deplorable distinction of our age is an avowed scorn of religion in some, and a growing disregard to it in the generality¹."

The notorious South Sea scheme, in 1720, contributed to the depravation of the public mind. The nation caught so greedily at the gilded bait, that even grave religious persons, who were afterwards ashamed to own their losses, were involved in the general ruin. Fed by prodigious profits, the mania of speculation raged to such a degree, that South Sea stock rose to one thousand per cent. and, for some days, every other business was neglected; for all ages and ranks, statesmen and clergymen, whigs and tories, physicians, lawyers, and tradesmen, with multitudes of females, crowded Exchange-alley, to procure a share in this golden mine. Forsaking the path of

¹ Charge at the end of his Analogy. 8vo. 1791.

sober industry and moderate gain, multitudes, especially in the capital, ran after the bubbles, as they were called, which started up every day, till a hundred new companies were formed, with the pretence of raising three hundred millions. If the love of money is the root of all evil, how much vile fruit must it have produced at this period. The natural consequences of insatiable cupidity soon appeared. Those who fancied themselves princes, intoxicated with their sudden elevation, launched into such excess of luxury, debauchery, and pride, as seemed to set heaven and earth at defiance. But as soon as the bubbles burst, they were plunged into despair, rancour, and deadly hatred. When the king hastened from Germany and assembled the parliament, to enquire into the public calamity, such scenes of fraud and extortion were detected, as destroyed the confidence of society, which seemed divided between those who had shewn no moderation in the public plunder, and those who now set no bounds to their thirst for revenge. The charitable corporation, a company formed in 1707, to lend money to the poor on small pledges, and to persons in higher life on good securities, was, in 1731, found to be robbed of capital to the amount of more than five hundred thousand pounds. The cashier, Mr. Robinson, member of parliament for Marlow, and John Thompson, a servant of the company, absconded in the same day, which induced the proprietors to present a petition to parliament, and produced the discovery that some of the first persons in the nation had joined with the two fugitives, and several of the directors, to embezzle the capital of the company. The petitioners complained that multitudes were plunged into the deepest distress.

A passion for gaming raged, also, among individuals of all ranks to such a degree, that the legislature interposed, and passed an act, in 1739, for the suppression of the growing evil. The journals of the times remarkably abound with instances of robbery and murder, aggravated by every cruelty; while the complaints of barbarity in the jails induced the house of commons to appoint a committee of examination, which disclosed many shocking scenes of tyranny insulting over wretchedness.

Another subject deeply affecting the public morals fixed the attention of the legislature. The cheapness of the lowest kinds of spirituous liquors, had induced the poorer classes to abandon themselves to the most loathsome excesses of drunkenness. Cellars^m covered with straw were provided by the venders of the fiery poison, that those who had dropped down from extreme intoxication, might, on their recovery, be at hand to pursue the same course again. Multitudes thus quenched their reason and their life, amidst the roar of profaneness and blasphemy truly infernal. To remedy the enormous evil, the legislature imposed a duty almost amounting to prohibition, but it seemed only to prove that drunkenness laughs at human laws; for, without paying the duty, the spirit was again swallowed at the corner of every street, amidst threats and insults, which intimidated informers, and set magistrates at defiance. Perceiving that the quantity consumed was greater than before, the ministry proposed to benefit at once the revenue and the morals of the country, by enacting a more moderate duty, and obliging the retailers to

^m Painted boards invited the poor to be drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence, promising them clean straw for nothing.

take out licenses. This measure was seriously opposed, as pernicious to morality, and the question agitated the nation and the legislature to a degree almost incredible. The whole bench of bishops voted against the ministry. The earl of Chesterfield, who had ridiculed the new bill, perceiving this, said, "I doubt whether I have not got on the wrong side of the question; for I have not had the honour to divide with so many lawn sleeves for several years." The bill, however, passed in spite of Chesterfield and the bishops, nor were the ministers disappointed in their expectations of benefit.

The preaching which prevailed at this time, must be reckoned, also, among the evils that afflicted our country. It was, indeed, less bigotted and papistical than that which was in vogue during the latter part of Anne's reign; for the public taste began to loathe the claims of uninterrupted succession from the apostles and the necessity of episcopal sacraments in order to salvation; but a cold ethical strain, excluding the doctrines of the Gospel, betrayed the preacher's ambition to become, what an able prelate has happily ridiculed by the appropriate name of the "ape of Epictetus." In this line bishop Butler's sermons at the Rolls are a finished model, which was but too generally followed, and helped to promote the infidelity which he so mournfully bewailed. Sherlock, master of the temple, and afterwards bishop of London, was more worthy of the popularity which he enjoyed as a preacher; for he paid more attention to Christian doctrine, and he not unfrequently surprises us with such strokes of sentiment and eloquence, as would have atoned for any defect but that of the Gospel of Christ. Yet he also, like the other divines

of this era, was affected with the epidemic of the times, dread of infidelity, which induced him to make deists of more importance than they could have made themselves. Warburton, who blazed the comet of George the second's reign, contended for the credibility, while he opposed the spirit of Christianity. With arrogance to assert whatever he chose, and powers to defend almost any thing he pleased to assert, if the end of controversy be the propagation of truth, by the conviction of opposers, he was most completely foiled; for, he rested the evidence of revelation on such grounds as, in spite of his mighty paradoxes, frequently exposed the cause he defended to the contempt of the infidels. To neglect the decencies of letters, as well as the meekness and benevolence of religion, in the treatment of infidels and all opposers, became the fashion of the Warburtonian school.

The worship of talent was the prevailing idolatry of this period, of which Shakspeare and Pope were *dii majorum gentium*. Literary clubs were formed; where nightly sacrifices of conviviality were offered to the vanity of prostituted intellect. When Johnson became the hierophant to these literary heathens, they may almost be said to have been evangelised; for though he spent his evenings among them, in such a way as made him blush, and would have made an enlightened Christian shudder, yet it may be reckoned a felicity that he became their saint; to supply the salt of grace to the wits, among whose productions his periodical papers are pre-eminent, as well for purity of morals as for dignity of thought and expression. In prose he has happily taken the precedence of Addison, whose Spectator has much to

pollute as well as to divert and instruct ; but in poetry he has not eclipsed the fatal glory of the Cato, where suicide becomes a splendid sin, and thus is likely to be preferred to a *sombre* virtue. The poetic fame of Pope, however, has been the bane of religion ; for independent of the seductive lustre which he has given to the dæmonology of Homer, and the unblushing deism of his *Essay on Man*, pure heathenism, in spite of a few solitary truths introduced for the sake of the rhyme, ever feeds his lamp and scents his works, which paganise the taste of thousands.

Garrick, the Roscius of this age, infected it with a dramatic mania, which, in proportion as it transported men into the visionary scenes of the theatre, rendered the sober realities of eternity gloomy or disgusting. While the play-house was crowded to the neglect of the church, and Shakspeare, edited by the first scholars, was studied more than the Bible, need it be asked what was the state of the public mind ? If, however, it is not yet sufficiently evident, let it only be remembered that Foote ventured to bring on the stage a farce composed of blasphemous puns on the doctrines of the Gospel, in the very words of inspiration, for the sake of holding up Whitefield to ridicule. That such a being as Aristophanes could succeed in rendering one like Socrates the laughing stock of Athens, has been considered a proof of a dissolute age ; nor is it enough to wipe away the odium from the period of which we write, to say, that the Minor was discountenanced ; for the very attempt was invited by the profaneness of the public manners.

There were, however, breaks in these clouds, through which heaven smiled on earth. The attention paid to the evidences of revelation, though

accompanied in many, perhaps in most instances with the neglect or misrepresentation of its essential truths, was yet favourable to religion. Unspeakably more edifying than the ancient prize essays in behalf of priestly claims, it furnished many valuable works calculated to instruct Christians as much as to confute unbelievers. The lecture founded by sir Robert Boyle, produced some admirable treatises, among which Derham's astro and physico-theology claim a high rank. But the analogy of natural and revealed religion, by bishop Butler, forms a treasure which will enrich every age and clime.

Our country was, at this time, not entirely inattentive to the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, though not so earnest in the cause as its importance demanded. One of the Danish missionaries, at Tranquebar, coming to England, gave a history of their labours and success, in a personal conference with George the first. They afterwards wrote a more full account of their mission, which was answered by a kind letter from the king, assuring them of his readiness to give every proof of affection for their laudable design. At the desire of the English in India, they erected schools for the children of the natives. They gratefully acknowledge the assistance given them by the society for promoting Christian knowledge, which was now furthering the same benevolent object, by providing for the east, an edition of the New Testament in the Arabic language. The details of these efforts with their success among the heathen, were eagerly read among many in the establishment, and served to fan the latent flame of religion.

Of all the events favourable to religion in this period, the new spirit excited among some of the

clergy is the most important. It could now no longer be said, that the history of dissenters was that of religion. Whitefield and Wesley, with the original band of church methodists, were followed by others, who adopted their principles, and imbibed their spirit, but adhered more firmly to the church of England, which, from this time, has presented, like the church described by Solomon, "the appearance of two armies." The evangelical clergy, as the new party was afterwards called, could but ill accord with those who placed the marks of a true churchman, not in a vital belief of the doctrines, but in conformity to the rites of the establishment; nor was it without colour of reason, that they were reproached as intruders, who came to disturb the peace (though it was the peace of the grave) which had now reigned for near a century in the church. But, entrenched deeply in articles and homilies, and inspired with the zeal of recent belief, they withstood all the attacks of their enemies, and gained constant accessions to their numbers. To thirty-four of these clergymen, Mr. Wesley addressed, about the end of George the second's reign, a proposal for union. Many who were hostile to establishments in general, as well as to the particular constitution and forms of the church of England, now rejoiced to find the Gospel faithfully preached in pulpits, from which it had been banished since the expulsion of the nonconformists.

Together with a new spirit among the clergy, a novel species of philosophy, intimately connected with theology, was introduced from a quarter whence it was least expected; and though contemptuously rejected by some, welcomed by others with enthusiastic ardour. The author of this theologico-philosophy

was John Hutchinson, who was born in 1670. After serving the duke of Somerset, as land steward and surveyor, he procured from him a sinecure place in the king's mews, which enabled him to devote his life to study. In his travels, he investigated the different strata of the earth, and formed that extensive and noble collection of fossils presented by Dr. Woodward to the university of Cambridge, and obtained, it is said, in a clandestine manner from its owner. He published his discoveries in such a style, as could not have failed to obstruct the reception and celebrity of more popular sentimentsⁿ.

ⁿ After conquering the resistance of repulsive tempers and fatiguing language, we find his system maintains, that the source of wisdom has given, in the Hebrew Scriptures, all true philosophy as well as theology; that it is, therefore, necessary to examine into the radical idea of the words he has employed; that, in order to this, we must discard the vowel points, which are a modern, if not a diabolical device, to conceal, rather than convey, the contents of the Bible; that when the Mosaic history is understood, it confutes all other systems of the universe, not excepting the Newtonian, with its doctrines of gravity, attraction, and repulsion; that the world is a machine of limited extent, of which the sun is the main-spring, at the centre, the most dense state of air forming a wall at the extremity, and all the planets revolving upon mechanical principles; that the deluge was an exhibition of the Creator's power to reduce the earth to its first principles, and form it again; that the visible creation was intended to be an image of the Creator, his attributes and relations towards his creatures; that the heavens, or celestial fluid, composed of fire, light, and air, are designed to teach the Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit; that the Deity imparted a knowledge of all these mysteries to the first parents of the human race, who were placed, not in the paradise of Epicurus, but in a kind of observatory, or school of philosophy; that, after the fall, visible representations of the Trinity in unity were given in the cherubim, on the east of Eden, placed in a tabernacle, similar to that of Moses, where our fallen parents worshipped, being taught the rite of sacrificing, circumcision, and other symbolic ceremonies; that, from thence, a revelation may be

The association of ideas would lead us to commence our account of eminent men, during this period, with the name of sir Isaac Newton, whose philosophy the system of Hutchinson was designed to oppose, and who, on many accounts, may claim precedence among "the men of name." Without stepping out of our department to characterise his philosophy, or attempt the hopeless task of adding to his praise; we shall only record his humble acknowledgments of the divine Author, whose works

said to have been given to the whole human race, without which, man could know nothing of God or religion; that the idolatry of the heathen was only an apostacy from the true philosophy, by worshipping the works, instead of learning from them the author of nature; that to recover the true philosophico-theology, the Mosaic economy was given, representing in its tabernacle and utensils, the structure of the universe, as well as pre-figuring a Saviour, who should be the Creator tabernacling among his own works, to make expiation for sin by a sacrifice of which all nations have retained the aboriginal tradition; that the temple of Solomon was a figure of Christ's humanity, as the Saviour himself declared, in which, as a temple, dwelt all the fulness of the godhead bodily, while it was also a grand monument to the creative honours of the Deity; and finally, that the figurative language of Scripture is not mere allusion or embellishment, but an application of the material world to its true design of teaching spiritual and divine doctrine. If this sketch of Hutchinsonianism, hasty and compendious as it is, be thought disproportionably protracted, let it be remembered that the system has founded a school in religion and philosophy, has been warmly espoused by bishops and their clergy, taught by the most distinguished scholars, and cherished by some of the most devout believers in Revelation, as an antidote to what they deem the atheistic tendency of the Newtonian philosophy. It has, indeed, been rendered ridiculous by some injudicious friends, among whom may be ranked Mr. Romaine; but the pious manner of bishop Horne will insinuate its principles into the breasts of the devout, the erudition of Parkhurst recommend it to the studious, and the cultivated taste of Mr. Jones may procure it admirers among the lovers of elegant learning.

he so successfully explored ; his diligence in studying and elucidating the volume of revelation, which, by his publications, he recommended to the world ; and the purity of his moral character, without which professions of faith are but hypocritical, and transcendent genius only rises to a level with fallen spirits. If, in other countries, infidels exult in the leaders of science as their own ; in ours, Christians may not only point to a Milton at the head of modern poets, and a Locke among metaphysicians, but may boast of a Newton, the first of mathematicians and philosophers, who acknowledged the existence of the Deity, and received the holy Scriptures as the revelation of his infinite mind.

Woolaston, the author of " the Religion of Nature delineated," should stand next in the list. His subject, it is true, is, of all others, most equivocal ; but his mind, of the first order, combining simplicity and original force, with profound knowledge of the learning of others, has reared a system of natural religion, not indeed without the aid of Revelation, which has now blended its beams with those of reason, but without any discoverable obligation to that paramount source of information. The delineation of the religion of nature was one of the most important publications of its day, in the department of moral and metaphysical discussion, and ranks among the few books which supply the elements, and excite the habit of thinking, while they inspire equal admiration of the author and esteem for the man. " The Religion of Jesus delineated," by Reynolds, with less mental vigour or learned lore, contains many valuable passages, and is an excellent companion to the former.

Lord chancellor King was another of the distin-

guished writers of this age, who, though not of the clerical profession, enriched the church with theological productions. When a very young man he published an "Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the primitive Church," valued equally for its frank simplicity and its copious learning, and which is said, with great probability, to contain the principles which prevented him from entering the church of England. It certainly has convinced many, that the essential principles of the independents prevailed in the Christian church during the three first centuries. His critical history of the apostles' creed is worthy to be studied as a supplement to bishop Pearson's admirable exposition of that ancient summary.

Among distinguished churchmen, archbishop Tension deserves a place, only on account of his mildness of character and elevation of rank. Burnet, bishop of Sarum, again occurs to our notice; because he died after the accession of George the first; but he has become already so familiar to our readers, that we have only now to give an estimate of his character as a divine. As far as zeal for pure morals, seriousness in the discharge of pastoral and episcopal duties, and catholic liberality towards dissenters, deserve praise, it is his due; but he who looks for an accurate perception of revealed truth, a precision in the mode of instruction which leaves no room for misapprehension, and a fidelity which spurns at accommodation to the times, as essential to constitute a faithful minister of Jesus Christ, will not concede that title to Dr. Burnet. His "Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England," which were designed to prevent "diversities of opinions," labours to prove that men

of diversified opinions may honestly sign them, though conscious of direct hostility between their sentiments and those which the compilers of the articles intended to express. By his explanation of "the literal and grammatical sense," he has earned the disgraceful glory of sanctioning in the establishment the prevalent practice of subscribing with the hand, a declaration of unfeigned assent and consent to words intended to convey sentiments which the mind rejects and the heart abhors.

Dr. Wake, who succeeded Tennison, as archbishop of Canterbury, in 1715, and held the see during seventeen years, was principally distinguished by a scheme which he formed to unite the churches of England and France. How far this proposal of alliance with a catholic communion, was honourable to the English establishment, or its primate, must be determined by the reader's opinion of the differences and resemblance of the two churches.

Hoadley was a happy *unique* amongst bishops ; for he defended the cause of religious liberty with so much vigour and ability, that he deserves the thanks of posterity as the founder of a liberal party within the bosom of the establishment. The undue praise which bishop Butler acquired as a preacher during life, found its counterpoise in the charge of popery brought against him after death ; but the true and only basis of his fame is the able reasoning contained in his *Analogy of natural and revealed Religion*. To Dr. Wilson, bishop of Sodor and Man, belongs the praise of devout superiority to the grandeur or emoluments of the world, faithful devotedness to the labours of his ministry, and unbounded charity to the needy, in which course he persevered to the age of ninety-

three, when he died the oldest and poorest bishop in Europe.

Dr. William Lowth, father of the celebrated bishop of that name, ranks among the first ornaments of the church of England in his time, for personal virtues and biblical learning. The distinction which Dr. Waterland acquired will not descend to posterity, with whom good intentions will not atone for the absence of superior talents. His book on the sacrament, conducts the mind not to the pure fountain of truth, but to the semi-popery of men who wrote what a confused imagination dictated, before controversy had given accuracy to truth. Dean Stanhope was a celebrated devotional writer, who, with the unction of the fathers has retained their mysticism. His translations of Austin and Thomas à Kempis, and his manual of devotions are likely to injure those who are not previously well informed. As a commentator on the sacred scriptures, Whitby is celebrated beyond his deserts, though he merits praise for attending to this important labour, at a time when it was much neglected. The name of Hervey, must not be omitted. His personal excellencies as a Christian, and his faithful labours as a minister of religion, are universally acknowledged, but his style as a writer is full of faults, though of such a kind as will continue to render him popular, in spite of the just censures of all who have formed their taste upon classical models. His Theron and Aspasio has been more useful than almost any other publication of modern theology; for though he was but an inaccurate divine, which appears in his account of the nature of faith, he has placed its object in such a light as tends to fix and charm the mind of every serious reader.

SECTION II.

STATE OF RELIGION IN SCOTLAND.

FROM the reformation to the commencement of this period, the church of Scotland had enjoyed but few intervals of real tranquillity. When not in a state of actual conflict with the civil rulers who wished to deprive her of her existence or her power, her situation was so precarious, as to produce a constant alarm. But the accession of George the first, by disappointing the hopes of the Stewarts who were the hereditary foes of presbytery, introduced a season of permanent peace, and left the ministers at full leisure to attend with composure of mind to all their spiritual functions.

The internal state of the Scottish church appears to have been exceedingly prosperous. It is asserted by some to have excelled every former period in the number of devoted, active, and zealous pastors, and in the superior measures of knowledge and piety among the people. Others who give the palm to the period which elapsed from 1638 to 1660, allow the second place for excellence to the time when George the first ascended the British throne.

While stormy seasons are the harvest of the historian, and the sufferings of mankind furnish events which deeply interest the feelings of the reader, the time of peace affords few materials for the historic page, and these too inferior in effect. The attempts in 1715, and 1745 by the exiled royal house to regain the throne of their ancestors, presented a faint image of the distresses of former days; but their short duration

and their feeble effects do not entitle them to particular notice in ecclesiastical history. It must be mentioned, however, that the presbyterians were to a man the zealous and stedfast friends of the House of Hanover ; and that the only adherents of the Stewarts were to be found among the episcopalians and Roman catholics.

If we form to ourselves the pleasing representation of the humble presbyters in the Scottish church, labouring with assiduity and perseverance among their flocks in preaching, catechising, and pastoral visits ; and multitudes under their care imbibing divine knowledge and the spirit of the Gospel, and adorning their Christian profession by a holy life, we shall have a full idea of what was taking place, during the early part of this period, in hundreds of parishes and among ten thousands of the people. But peace has its temptations which were powerfully felt, and proved greatly injurious to the purity and prosperity of this highly favoured church. Small as the emoluments of office might be, to some they would appear great, while the respectability, attached to the minister of an established church, with the rank he holds in society, will powerfully influence many in their choice of a profession. From these causes men of a different spirit entered on the clerical office ; and by the want of activity and zeal in the teachers, piety decayed among the people, so that the conclusion of this period presented an aspect far less pleasing than its commencement.

But however favourable the external state of a community may be, events will occur to imbitter the sweets of life, and to furnish trials to the wise and

good. Such was the effect of a measure needlessly adopted by the British government in the end of queen Anne's reign. The oath of abjuration which had at the union been required of Scotchmen in civil offices, was in 1712 imposed on the clergy, under a penalty which involved their utter ruin. Not one of the body was disaffected to the existing government ; but many of them were enemies to an oath except in cases of absolute necessity ; and some scrupled particular clauses as binding them to express their approbation and support of episcopacy, and preventing them from seeking the farther reformation of the land. So widely were these sentiments extended, that more than a third part of the ministers refused to comply with the requisition of government, and became liable to a penalty of five hundred pounds, a sum which perhaps not fifty of the whole body would have been able to pay. In this distressing situation, thrust out of the protection of the law, these nonjurors remained from year to year. In 1715, and again four years after in 1719, the subject was brought forward, and the oath with certain alterations commanded to be enforced. The stern principles of the old presbyterians, dictated by conscience, refused to comply ; and they continued to the day of their death, discharging the duties of their office with the naked sword of the law hanging over their heads.

Another evil effect of the oath was, that between the ministers who submitted to it, and those who refused it, not only coldness but an alienation of heart was produced ; and at one time but for the wisdom of principal Carstairs, a schism was likely to have taken place in the Scottish church. The people too entered into the subject with the ardour characteristic of

Scotchmen in disputes pertaining to religion. Being in general hostile to the oath and its adherents, they viewed with suspicion and dislike many excellent men because they were on the opposite side.

Before the abjuration oath had ceased to harrass the minds of the Scottish clergy, a circumstance of a different kind arose, which was for some years a source of disputation and strife. An anonymous book written in England during the time of the civil wars, entitled, "The Marrow of modern Divinity," which had floated silently down the stream of time with the mass of middling publications, fell into the hands of a minister in Scotland, who was greatly delighted with the manner in which the writer had stated the doctrines of the Gospel. From him it was handed to others, till at last Mr. Hog, of Carnock, one of the most eminent of the clergy for piety and zeal, in 1718, published a new edition with a commendatory preface.

An alarm of heresy was instantly raised; the book was brought before the general assembly, in 1719; and numerous errors extracted from it were condemned. The favourers of the Marrow Doctrine, as it was called, remonstrated against the measure and asserted the orthodoxy of the author, but in vain; for by an act of the assembly, in 1720, a sentence of condemnation passed upon the book itself. Its friends, among whom were Mr. Boston, Mr. Riccalton, the Erskines, and many of the best men of that communion, stood forth boldly in its defence, both in the ecclesiastical courts and from the press. The majority however was against it: and by the assembly, in 1722, the former decree was confirmed; and the

brethren who contended that the Marrow of modern Divinity was an orthodox book, were rebuked at their bar.

The condemnation of heretical books is a measure which has often been resorted to by established churches, but seldom, if ever, with success. Rome, relying on her infallibility, thundered out her anathemas against erroneous publications: but even infallibility could not insure efficacy to the measure. In the Jansenian controversy, where she strained every nerve to ruin the reputation of particular authors and their works, the effect was only to make the authors more popular, and to give their books a greater sale and wider circulation. The humour of condemning books seized the convocation of England in the reign of queen Anne, and with as little success and honour; for the writers of the erroneous volumes escaped unhurt: and all the learning and orthodoxy in the venerable body were trampled in the mire by the queen, who as head of the church, and consequently supreme judge of controversies in religion, did not think proper to confirm their decision.

With both these warnings before her eyes, the church of Scotland enters the field and exercises her inquisitorial power, but in circumstances more awkward than either of her sister establishments. The book which she condemned, was written by one who was neither of her own communion nor of her own country*. By the friends of evangelical doctrine it was conceived to have stated with singular perspicuity many important truths: but it contained expressions

* Principal Haddow, one of its greatest adversaries, in a pamphlet which he published in the controversy, asserted, that it was written by a London barber in the time of the commonwealth.

of a paradoxical kind, which though capable of being interpreted in an orthodox sense, might yet convey a very heterodox meaning. For the orthodox sense, as conveying the ideas of the author, the advocates for the *marrow* ardently contended, and its adversaries were as keen for the opposite side; and on account of this difference they entertained the most unfavourable ideas of each other, as hostile to the principles of holiness, or the doctrines of grace. The injury done to the Christian people by such disputes no tongue can express.

The peace of the church of Scotland was again disturbed by the opinions of a man who held one of the most important ecclesiastical stations. John Simpson, professor of divinity in the university of Glasgow, was accused of maintaining a variety of notions either contrary to scripture or beyond the line of divine revelation. Of these sentiments and his conduct, the general assembly, in 1717, expressed its disapprobation. Some years afterwards, a more serious accusation was brought against him; for he was charged with denying the divinity of Christ, and teaching the arian doctrine to the students. The alarm throughout the country was greater than we can now conceive: horror seized the zealous members of the church; and the cause was brought before the general assembly. The accusations of his opponents he endeavoured to confute by a confession of his faith in orthodox language; and for offensive expressions which he had used he expressed his sorrow. The assembly however, in 1728, conceived that heresy enough was proved to justify them in suspending him from the exercise of his functions; and in the

following year they declared him unfit to be entrusted with the education of youth for the ministry of the Gospel.

Professor Simpson is said to have been a man of talents, learning, and respectability. Some have asserted, that he was not an arian : and in this sentiment several of the students from England, who attended on his lectures, concur. On the contrary, those of his countrymen who examined the subject, confidently assert that he denied the divinity of Christ. Whatever he was found to be at that higher tribunal before which he has long since appeared, he seems evidently to have been destitute of some qualifications of great importance to a professor of divinity. The fancies, to call them by no harsher name, for which he was first brought before the ecclesiastical courts, discover a mind eager to pry into things not revealed, enamoured of novelties, and calculated to produce a race of conceited whimsical young men, who losing sight of the grand-principles of the Gospel, will employ their time and strength in the pursuit of trifles.

If he was an arian, it was necessary for him in order to be an honest man, not to continue a day longer as a professor of divinity in the Scottish church. Her creed is calvinism in every part, and for calvinists only her offices and her honours are designed. If an arian, he should have imitated the heroes of the reformation in their conduct towards Rome : he should have forsaken her altars, and bidden adieu to all her advantages, for what he deemed the cause of truth. But such was not the spirit of professor Simpson : he ate of her barley loaves and fishes to the day of his

• *Boston's Memoirs. Brown's History of the Secession.*

death; for the assembly had the humanity to allow him to retain his salary, while they stripped him of his office.

But by far the most important event relating to the church of Scotland during this period, was the secession which took place in 1732. Ebenezer Erskine, minister of Stirling, son of Henry Erskine a confessor whose name adorns the catalogue of the nonconformists, being appointed to preach a sermon before the synod of Perth, with great boldness enumerated what he conceived to be the sins and defections of the church: and among these, patronage, and the evils arising from its rigorous exercise, were not forgotten. Clerical men have never been famed for being humble and docile hearers; nor did the present instance furnish an exception. Instead of meekly receiving the word of exhortation, for three days the synod warmly disputed concerning the obnoxious preacher; and at last determined that he should be rebuked at their bar, both for the matter and the manner of his sermon. From this decision twelve ministers and two elders dissented, and Mr. Erskine appealed to the general assembly; but here too he found the same reception, for embracing the sentiments of the synod they ordered him to be rebuked at their dread bar. Conceiving that he pleaded for the cause of God and truth, Mr. Erskine protested, that without violating his conscience he could not submit to the rebuke, and insisted that he should be left at liberty to deliver the same testimony on every proper occasion. Three other ministers William Wilson, Alexander Moncrief, and James Fisher joined in his protest. The meekness and gentleness of

Christ do not appear to have been that day the reigning principles in the assembly; for they ordered their commission, at the next meeting to proceed against the four brethren, and if they did not retract their protest and express their sorrow for it, to suspend them from their office, or even inflict severer censure. Mr. Erskine and his adherents remaining steadfast in their sentiments, the sentence of suspension was pronounced against them; and some months afterwards at another meeting, the same ecclesiastical court finding them still, as they termed it, obstinate and impenitent, their relation to their congregations was dissolved: the moderator's casting vote determined a point so important in its consequences to the Scottish establishment. Against this sentence too the four brethren protested, insisting that the validity of their office as ministers, and their relation to their congregations should not be affected by it; and they declared a secession not from the constitution of the church of Scotland, to which they professed their ardent adherence, but from the prevailing party in her judicatories.

Such was the commencement of a separation from the established church, the most considerable that ever took place; a separation which has been increasing for fourscore years, and which is likely to be of equal duration with the church itself. Nor can it be denied, that for the first half century at least of its existence, in proportion to their numbers, few sects can boast of so many laborious, faithful, and orthodox ministers, and intelligent and exemplary private Christians within the pale of their communion.

The leaders in the secession were men of eminent piety, unshaken integrity, deeply concerned for the

prosperity of religion, and wholly devoted to the service of Christ. Their preaching was evangelical, and the manner of some of them exceedingly popular. But they had studied that part of the Gospel which enjoins crucifixion to the world, and keeping at the remotest distance from every vice, more than that which inculcates the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and the catholic philanthropy which sweetens as well as purifies the soul. Their principles of church government were injurious to their minds. While the independent derives all his religion both as to doctrine and discipline from the sacred Scripture, the Scotch presbyterian of those days derived a multitude of his ideas from the confession of faith, the books of discipline, the acts of the general assembly, and some in addition to these from the solemn league and covenant. These at once perverted and contracted his heart, and brought into his religious system a multitude of human ordinances which he regarded as essential parts of divine truth: hence flowed a spirit of intolerance, and sourness, and severity.

From the defectiveness of the system of which they were not aware, no small part of their dissatisfaction with the established church arose. While independency professes to govern believers in Christ by the rule of God's word, presbytery takes all the inhabitants of a parish under her care, and attempts to restrain them by the rod of her discipline. Her determination is to make wolves and bears act like lambs, and display the dispositions of lambs. In the mass of population in any country, how inadequate the effect of such a discipline must be, need not be proved. Calvin undertook the task at Geneva in

more favourable circumstances than England or Scotland did ever present ; but it was a source of perpetual torment and unceasing disappointment, and no minister of any established church has ever had better success. The failure of the Scotch clergy in this herculean labour was a source of bitter complaints to Mr. Erskine and many other pious ministers of that communion ; nor could they be persuaded that it was an impracticable attempt, and that the church and the world are two different things.

Another difficulty arising also from the system of established presbytery, Mr. Erskine and his brethren found in the character and conduct of many of the persons with whom they were associated in an ecclesiastical body. During the long period of the church's peace, some were, from year to year, entering on the performance of the sacred functions, who were not endued with the spirit of their office. But with these men they were obliged to associate in their church courts, to unite with them in various parts of ministerial duty, and to acknowledge them as brethren in the work of Christ. Scarcely can any thing be conceived more abhorrent to the sentiments and feelings of pious men. Presbytery, unless it be composed of good men, is the worst of all constitutions for a conscientious minister to be under ; and it lays the most numerous stumbling-blocks in his way. Independency warrants a pastor to unite himself, and hold communion with those only whom he believes to be faithful ministers of Christ. Episcopacy is a loose system which exercises but little controul over the parson of a parish, if he performs what the rubric enjoins. He is required to have scarcely more intercourse with the neighbouring priesthood than is agreeable to his

choice ; and in the meetings of the bishop with the clergy, there is no exercise of ecclesiastical authority in which he is required to take an active part in conjunction with his worldly brethren. But presbytery is a compact and active system, which obliges a Minister to sit and vote in ecclesiastical courts in conjunction with the rest of his body, and to unite with the worst of men in carrying into execution the decisions of their courts, however contrary they may be to his own judgment. This grievous inconvenience was deeply felt by Mr. Erskine and those who thought with him : it was their continual burden, and it was one of the things which led to a separation from the established church.

To prevent an entire separation was at last the anxious wish of those who had acted with so much severity ; and in 1734 the general assembly decreed that the seceding brethren should be restored to the execution of their office. To be wise at the moment when wisdom is required, is an invaluable blessing ; for if the mind be unhappily given up to folly then, wisdom may come too late, and have no other office left but to bewail her absence in the time of need. It was so here, for the seceders would not accept the boon. Still, however, the assembly waited five years more before it finally cast them out. But in 1739 they were commanded to appear before the court, and a willingness was expressed to receive them again into communion. This offer being rejected, the assembly of the following year deposed them from the ministerial office, as to the exercise of it in the church of Scotland.

The seceding brethren were not idle spectators of

these proceedings. Immediately after their suspension, they formed themselves into a distinct ecclesiastical body, to which they gave the name of the associated presbytery, and drew up what they called a testimony, containing a view of their principles, which they held to be those of the church of Scotland in her purity. Still however they did not lose sight of returning to their former stations; but when the favour was offered to them, in 1739, they were unable to accept it; for by keeping their eyes stedfastly fixed on every thing amiss in her, they perceived so many and so great corruptions, that they were afraid to go back into her communion. After a time, a second testimony appeared, comprising an immense mass of historical record, detailing the sins of the land, and the defections of the church; and this they made one of the standards of the body. Not satisfied with these displays of their principles and complaints, after they were entirely separated from the church, in 1743, they renewed with an oath the solemn league and covenant, to which was attached a long historical confession of national sins (some of which were at least of a very doubtful nature), and they went so far as to make it a term of ministerial and Christian communion.

In the course of these proceedings, the active and faithful discharge of their ministerial functions presents a more pleasing prospect. Mr. Erskine and his colleagues became itinerants and preached throughout the country. For this service they were well qualified by their eminent skill in theology, the superior purity of their doctrine, and the fervour and energy of their elocution. While the methodists in the south inveighed bitterly against the corruptions of

the English clergy; the seceders were not behind them in introducing into their discourses the defections of the church of Scotland. If both had been more sparing on the subject, and spent the time it occupied, in calling sinners to repentance, it would have accomplished a more valuable purpose. However the effect was powerful; multitudes joined them, the number of their congregations increased; continued yearly to increase, till a check was received by an unnatural division among themselves.

While in the excess of their zeal for little things, and the indulgence of scrupulosity of conscience, the seceders had proceeded to raise high walls of separation between themselves and all other Christians in the world, in 1745 the baneful effects of this contracted spirit were betrayed in rending to pieces their own body, and producing a separation which exposed them to the ridicule of their enemies, and covered them with dishonour even in the eyes of their friends. In the oath required of persons who become burgesses of corporations in Scotland, there is the following clause: "I profess and allow with my heart the true religion at present professed within the realm, and authorised by the laws thereof. I shall abide by and defend the same to my life's end, renouncing the Roman religion called papistry."

This declaration some of the seceders conceived to be perfectly consistent with their principles, because it was the pure religion of the church of Scotland which they professed they would maintain. To others of their body it appeared unlawful, because the oath was administered by the members of the established church, and must mean religion as it at present existed in the establishment. When the

subject was brought before the synod, those who thought the oath lawful were desirous that forbearance might be exercised, and no decision made upon it; and this was carried by a majority of votes. The other party would not acquiesce in this arrangement: but leaving the place, though confessedly the minority they claimed to themselves the name and powers of the synod, excommunicated their brethren, and renounced all fellowship with them. From that time, 1746, they became two separate bodies, and were known to the world by the undignified names of burghers and antiburghers, from their approbation or their condemnation of the burgh oath¹.

During the course of this period another separation from the church of Scotland took place, but on principles directly opposite to those of the seceders. The author of it was John Glas, minister of Tealing, a country parish in the neighbourhood of Dundee, who had imbibed the sentiments of the independents, but carried them to a degree of minuteness and rigour far beyond the advocates for the system, in England and America. Though an inveterate enemy to presbytery, he had not the manliness to quit his living; but after having for some years tormented and perplexed the ecclesiastical courts, by modes of reasoning to which they had been altogether unaccustomed, he was arraigned at the bar of the presbytery of Dundee, and as his answers tended rather to confirm than to remove the suspicions of his departure from presbyterian principles, he was cited, in April, 1728, before the synod of Angus and Mearns. He there openly avowed his sentiments concerning the

¹ Brown's historical Account of the Secession.

nature and discipline of a Christian church; and being asked whether he thought himself obliged to publish these opinions, he answered, "I think myself obliged in conscience to declare every truth of Christ, and keep nothing back, but to speak all the words of this life, and to teach his people to observe all things whatsoever he commands, so far as I can understand, though others may differ from me and I may be exposed to hazard for declaring them." The synod then pronounced him deposed from his office as minister of the parish of Tealing; and he published an exposition of the proposition "that a congregation or church of Jesus Christ, with its presbytery, is in its discipline subject to no jurisdiction under heaven." "Notwithstanding all means for reclaiming the Glassites," says Brown, "they obstinately went about preaching their principles in fields or streets, or printing pamphlets in favour of them, so that at length the synod deposed Mr. Glas from the office of the holy ministry."

That many ministers who approved of the church of Scotland, might disapprove of the sentence which completely drove an able man from the establishment, might naturally be expected; but that Mr. Glas himself should appeal to the general assembly against a sentence which only deprived him of what he could not conscientiously hold, seems strange and unreasonable. The assembly, however, on the twelfth of March, 1730, confirmed the sentence of deposition passed by the synod. As he had published in the preceding year his "testimony of the king of the martyrs," and had even acted upon the views which he there avowed by forming, in the parish of which he had been minister, a church upon his own principles,

why did he yet linger on the threshold of the establishment, clinging to its door-posts and compelling the rulers to drive him out by force, and then complain of his expulsion as an injury?

Mr. Glas was a man of very considerable talents, and illustrated some parts of the gospel with peculiar felicity, simplicity, and purity. He died in 1773. It was not till the end of this period and the beginning of the next that his opinion took root in England, under the name of Sandemanianism, and produced a new religious sect of which an account will be given in its proper place. Though differing so widely in his opinions from the seceders, he equalled, or perhaps exceeded them in a contracted spirit, in excluding all other Christians from his communion, and in short in confining Christianity to himself and to his sect.

This is a strange phenomenon in the religious world, but particular countries have their endemial diseases. The plague has from time immemorial ravaged Egypt; the yellow fever is the scourge of the West Indies; and goitres afflict and disfigure the inhabitants of the Alps. A malady of the soul similar to the last, seems to be the curse of Scotland. An excessive zeal for little things, like an enormous wen, has, with but perhaps one exception, disfigured every sect that has arisen in that country; and drawing away the vital energy which should have communicated strength, has weakened its spiritual powers. To ascertain the cause would be important, as it might operate as a preventative in future: but it is certainly a striking peculiarity in the Scotch character; and if it could be purged by hellebore, the whole

produce of Anticyra could not be purchased at a price too high.

Towards the latter part of this period another sect arose, which took to itself the name of the Presbytery of Relief. It derived its origin from the tyranny of the church of Scotland, and alone of all the divisions in that country can lay claim to the praise of liberality in principles. The person compelled to be its founder was Thomas Gillespie, minister of Carnock, a man of apostolical sanctity and zeal, as faithful to his charge, and as unblamable in his conduct, as any age can produce. One distinguished mark of a true Scotch presbyterian, till within the last fifty years, was that a congregation has a right to choose its minister. But a party in the church was now beginning to prevail, of men who carried the law of patronage to the utmost rigour, and treated the sentiments of the people with sovereign contempt.

In 1762, a candidate being presented by a patron to a parish within the bounds of the presbytery to which Mr. Gillespie belonged, the inhabitants were unwilling to receive him as their pastor. The business being finally brought before the general assembly, they enjoined the presbytery to proceed to his ordination. Mr. Gillespie, who was appointed to preside on the occasion, refused to take part in a service which he conceived to be contrary to the spirit of the Gospel; and several of his brethren concurred with him. Far from veneration the pious scruples of a tender conscience, the assembly, provoked at their refusal, inflicted ecclesiastical censures on all; but poured the full stream of its vengeance on Mr. Gillespie's head, by deposing him from the office of

the Christian ministry, and ejecting him from his parish. This sentence was pronounced, after solemn prayer to God and in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the blasphemies in the army and navy for twenty years past have not equalled the profaneness of that one act of the venerable assembly composed of the ministers and elders of the church of Scotland. The deposition of this good man was the commencement of a system of ecclesiastical polity, which with but little interruption has continued with increasing strength to the present time.

For Mr. Gillespie to have ceased from his evangelical labours, on account of so unrighteous a sentence, would, in his view have been disloyalty to his Lord, and cruelty to the souls of men. He therefore continued to preach to his congregation at their request, but not in the kirk, and it was hoped that the next general assembly would restore him to his charge. But the application then made on his behalf was without effect; nor were repeated applications afterwards more successful; the same baleful influence which deposed him still continued to bear sway.

All hopes of his restoration being blasted, his hearers procured for him a place of worship in a neighbouring town; and he continued near six years to minister to his congregation, unconnected and alone. But in 1758 he was joined by Thomas Boston (son of the great man of that name, whose praise is in all the churches of Christ) who resigned his charge in the church of Scotland; and they united as fathers of the new denomination, the Presbytery of Relief. They professed to maintain the principles of the church of Scotland in their purity; they were willing to hold communion with all the good minis-

ters and private Christians in the establishment ; and their avowed design was to afford relief to such parishes as had ministers imposed on them by law contrary to their will, and which did not wish to be fettered with the chains which the seceders had forged for their adherents. Boston was as popular as Gillespie was good ; and in consequence of their catholic principles and evangelical preaching, the number of their followers and congregations increased from year to year. This was the ground which had Mr. Erskine and his colleagues occupied in their secession, would have conciliated to them vast multitudes of the members of the establishment, and rendered their labours and influence more extensive and beneficial.

Nearly twenty years before the conclusion of the period, Scotland exhibited what may be called the marrow of ecclesiastical history—an extensive revival of religion, which took place within the bosom of the church. After a long season of comparative inefficacy, in which ministers complained that they had laboured in vain, a spirit of attention to divine truth was excited through different parts of the country in an extraordinary degree ; and multitudes, who had been walking according to the course of this world, were converted by the preaching of the Gospel.

This revival first appeared in 1742, at Camberslang, a village in the neighbourhood of Glasgow. During a course of sermons on the doctrine of regeneration by Mr. M'Culloch, the minister of the parish, the people began to be impressed in an unusual manner and degree ; religion occupied their whole attention ; they

* See a more full account of this body in the *Quarterly Magazine*, vol. I. p. 13—26.

were convinced that they had not been regenerated, and with the most painful anxiety of soul they inquired, "what must I do to be saved." Seasons of worship were immediately multiplied; and the minister's time was occupied from morning to night in giving spiritual counsel to his awakened flock. The consequences were infinitely delightful: in the space of a few months three hundred persons displayed unequivocal evidences of the Christian life; nor did future years give occasion to object that it was a transitory emotion of religious feeling; for the generality of them continued faithful unto death. The divine flame spread from place to place, and the most zealous ministers in different parts of the country had the joy of seeing in their own parishes the same spirit of revival, though scarcely any in an equal degree. Mr. Whitefield, who soon after visited Scotland, contributed by his powerful labours to promote the glorious cause.

While the friends of religion rejoiced in this remarkable display of divine grace, it was violently opposed and attacked by many of the clergy, as the quintessence of enthusiasm and folly. They spoke and wrote against it; they warned the people against its baleful influence, and displayed a zeal scarcely inferior to that of its friends who believed it to be the work of God. In every revival of religion a similar spirit has been exhibited; many men of note among the clergy have been the most violent opposers; and they have drawn after them a considerable body among the people, especially the learned, the fashionable, and the great. The cause of vital piety, however, was not left without defenders. Dr. Alexander Webster, then one of the most eminent ministers in Edinburgh,

appeared on its side ; and by reasoning from general principles and the examples of former times, vindicated the genuineness and excellence of the work as proceeding from a divine influence. The same testimony was borne by John Maclaurin, of Glasgow, a man second to no one of the age in which he lived for intellectual powers and Christian virtues ; by the venerable Dr. John Erskine, of Edinburgh, lately deceased, and by many others who were also eye-witnesses, and intimately acquainted with all the circumstances of the case.

Unhappily the seceders, from whom better things might have been expected, violently opposed the work, publicly testified against it as a delusion of the devil, and appointed a day of fasting and prayer that by the interposition of heaven it might cease. They conceived that if any great work of religion was to be accomplished in Scotland, it must be by them ; and because this revival had not taken place in their communion, it could not be from above. Their conduct on this occasion gave great offence to the pious and unprejudiced members of the established church, and contributed to degrade them exceedingly in the eyes of those who had formerly viewed them with high esteem. When the Gospel is preached in purity, the Spirit of God demonstrates by the influence with which it is accompanied, that he does not lay so much stress on the peculiarities of an external system as its votaries too often do.

Many eminent men flourished in Scotland at this time, but the space allotted to this part of the work forbids us to insert even the briefest sketch of their

* See Robe's Narrative. Divine Influences the Spring of the extraordinary Work at Camberslang, by Alexander Webster,

lives. It is impossible, however, to pass by two divines, who, in their different departments, have had few equals. Thomas Boston, of Ettrick, who may be called the apostle of humble life, and whose "Fourfold State of Man" has been, perhaps, the most useful book of any published during the eighteenth century, died in 1732. So highly have his numerous writings been esteemed, that it is but a few years since his friends ceased to copy his manuscripts for the press. The other may be justly denominated the instructor of the learned and the wise, and the defender of the doctrines of the Gospel against the cavils of human pride. Such was John Maclaurin, of Glasgow, who died in 1754, and to whose volume of sermons and essays there is nothing of superior excellence in the English language. They were two of the most holy, humble, and devoted men that the Christian church has ever produced.

SECTION III.

STATE OF RELIGION IN IRELAND.

TO this unhappy isle the accession of George the first introduced a state of lasting external tranquillity unknown in its ancient annals. The expulsion of the natives from their estates, confiscation of property, and the long train of former outrageous oppressions were now at an end: but of equal laws securing the rights, and having in view the welfare of the whole community it could not yet boast. The Roman catholic body was lying under the scourge of a multitude of unjust and cruel statutes; and in the course of this period too large an addition was made to the number. If ever a class of people was warranted to entertain prejudices against the protestant religion, the Irish catholics were the men, who, by the free government of Britain, that had the Hibernian parliament entirely at its command, were treated worse than slaves.

But, while crushed by the iron rod of power, the bitter hatred of their oppressions served to attach them more strongly to their religious opinions. Always superior in number to the protestants, during this period the superiority was greatly augmented; and a multitude of converts from the episcopal protestant church reconciled themselves to the see of Rome: protestant colonies planted in many parts of the south and west gradually disappeared, and nothing was to be seen but proselyted adherents to the Romish faith.

The episcopal protestant established church of Ire-

land was rich in tythes and estates, for she is supposed to possess a thirteenth part of the soil ; but poor in labours and in success'. The tythes her clergy exacted with sufficient strictness, and the estates were leased with abundant care ; but the people were shamefully neglected. In some parishes there was no building for the established worship, in others no parsonage-house; and the incumbents were all their life non-resident ; so that the only worship was that of the church of Rome : and in the greater part of those places where the service of the Irish church was performed, it was in so ineffectual a manner, that the people were gradually dropping off into the communion of Rome.

During the whole of this period, and indeed almost to the close of this century, Ireland presents a phenomenon which never did, and it is hoped, never will again appear in the Christian world. A poor, illiterate, persecuted priesthood with their whole flock groaning under oppression, is seen endeavouring amidst severe restrictions and under the frown of popular opinion, to propagate a system of gross error and degrading superstition. The opposite side presents a clergy not deficient in literature, abundant in wealth, cherished in the bosom of power, and supported by the strong arm of civil authority, headed by a considerable number of archbishops, bishops, and other dignified ecclesiastics, with pure doctrine in her articles and liturgy, and employed to diffuse divine truth among the Irish people, all of whom, as they tythed, they doubtless accounted themselves bound to teach. The result of the contest must astonish as well as shock every pious and candid mind : the erroneous-

* Dr. Campbell's Answer to the bishop of Cloyne.

and superstitious priests of Rome gained the victory: the protestant episcopal clergy were driven from the field, and had the mortification to see (if they were at the pains to look) the priests leading away their flocks in triumph to the Roman fold.

The conduct of the clergy of the protestant Irish church, from the revolution till near the end of the eighteenth century, was indeed such, as with few exceptions, to merit the severest reprobation. Among them might be found a considerable number of worthy men, highly respectable in their deportment and character, eminent for literary attainments, and presenting to the public numerous efforts of genius and displays of learning both sacred and profane. But during all this time, not one perhaps in a county was an active parish priest suited to the state of the country and the people, preached the pure doctrines of the Gospel, visited and catechised his flock, and entered into the cabins of the poor to instruct them, to fortify their minds against the attempts of the Romish emissaries, and to reclaim those who had been led astray. Such indeed was the criminal sloth of the clergy; that it merits to be held up to the execration of all succeeding ages, as the grand cause of the deplorable state of religion in that country, and of the political calamities which have sprung from it, and been so severely felt.

The presbyterians, for of that denomination were nearly all the protestants without the pale of the established church, present a more pleasing prospect. In the beginning of this period, both the great body in the north, and those in Dublin and the south maintained the pure principles of the Christian faith; and their ministers laboured among their flocks with an

the cause, but on narrower grounds; for at a meeting of the ministers and principal persons at Antrim, it was agreed to propose, as a condition of enjoying toleration, that they should subscribe the Westminster confession of faith. A general synod held soon after, 1716, at Belfast, unanimously approved the terms; and provided they could not be obtained, they consented to the acceptance of a strong formula expressing their belief of the great doctrines of Christianity. After a delay of more than two years, in 1719 they gained the wished-for toleration, on conditions more liberal than they had themselves proposed; and it is said to have been entirely owing to the gracious interposition of George the first.

The conditions were, that dissenting ministers should take the oaths of allegiance and abjuration, and renounce the belief of the pope's usurped power over temporal princes, transubstantiation, the invocation of the Virgin Mary and the saints, and the sacrifice of the mass. It was also required that the places of worship should be registered. To these was subjoined the following clause: "provided always, that this act shall not extend to give any ease to papists, or popish recusants, nor to any that in preaching or writing shall deny the doctrine of the Trinity, as expressed in the thirty-nine articles agreed upon in

places in the midst of worship, by two justices of the peace, Toplady and Archer, who sent him as a vagrant out of the country. He had been before disturbed in the services of his congregation and forced to appear at the assizes, and he had borne these injuries with patience; but he thought it was now time to claim the protection of the higher powers. A complaint, addressed to the duke of Grafton, and lord Galway, procured immediate redress; a severe reprimand sent to the meddling justices put a stop to their violence, and enabled him to continue his labours in peace. See too Boyse's Works, vol. II. p. 361, 370,

the convention held at London in the year 1562, and referred to in the seventeenth and eighteenth of Charles the second^a." Popery and arianism were very bad things, but this was not the legitimate method of prevention. To aim a thrust with a sword at the heart of a man in a raging fever, is but an awkward way of removing his disease.

Soon after this event, a root of bitterness sprang up, of the noxious fruits of which the Irish presbyterians are unhappily tasting to the present time. The arian heresy, soon found its way across the Channel, and infected some of the ministers of Ulster. Human depravity perverts every benefit from its proper use. External peace, while it gives leisure for theological disquisitions, too often makes men feel themselves not to be strangers and sojourners, but at home in their own country; and thus unfits the mind for investigating them with that spiritual disposition which is so necessary to the discovery and reception of truth. In this list it is painful to insert the name of Abernethy, whose example was followed by some of his brethren in the neighbourhood. Enthusiasm gaining a temporary victory over prudence, did not allow them to keep their sentiments secret; and the rumour of heresy quickly spread over the whole country. The fears of the orthodox were alarmed, and that union and peace which had formerly reigned, gave place to discord and strife. But though they conversed freely with their associates, and gave intimations of a change, like their English brethren, the Irish arians did not come forward boldly and declare with frankness, "we were in an error, but have now found out what we conceive to be the truth, which

^a See Biographia Britannica, vol. I. p. 30.

we will openly profess, at the risk of losing every temporal benefit." Such a spirit of integrity did not fall to their lot; and Emlyn's mantle does not appear to have been taken up by any of these Elishas. What they seem to have had much at heart, was a secure continuance in their present station. With this view they sought to shelter themselves under a general principle of acknowledged excellence, by declaring against the imposition of human forms as a test of orthodoxy. When this sentiment is professed to defend the rights of conscience, every genuine dissenter will hail it with applause; but when it is brought forward only to conceal from public view, the cloven foot of arianism which the person is ashamed to show, little praise is due either for liberality or uprightness.

This plausible pretext, however, did not lull the orthodox asleep; on the contrary, it excited the keenest fears that there was a design to change their present mode of ecclesiastical government, and to lay aside the Westminster confession of faith. In this temper they attended at the synod at Belfast, in 1720. The new party, finding itself not sufficiently strong, did not think proper to make a public appearance against the ancient system; but acquiesced in the decision of the majority, which resolved that subscription to the Westminster confession of faith should be required; and that those who scrupled any particular expression, should be allowed to propose their own explanation, which, if agreeable to the analogy of faith, should be received. This was called the pacific act; but instead of allaying, it is said to have increased the jealousies which previously subsisted.

The progress of the controversy bore a resemblance

to that in England. By the discontents of the people the majority of the ministers was influenced to subscribe the Westminster confession, as containing the articles of their faith. The new lights, which was the name given in Ireland to the Arians and Socinians, inveighed against all human impositions and the authority of men in matters of religion. Mr. Abernethy, trusting to the powers of his eloquence, published an able pamphlet in order to compose the storm by influencing the brethren to cease from their debates, and allow every minister to follow his own judgment^a. Some of the most eminent of the pastors in Dublin wrote a preface and a postscript to Mr. Abernethy's publication, strongly recommending the adoption of the principles which it contained; and they attended at the general synod, at Belfast, in 1721, in order to press the same measures^b. Mr. Masterloun, a zealous subscriber, suspecting or rather believing the heterodoxy of the nonsubscribers, of which the Dublin ministers, if we may judge from their strain of writing, do not appear to have been aware, wrote with great ardour against them, and excited still greater alarm in the minds of the people. A defence of the former pamphlet appeared from Abernethy's pen; and several others entered the field, but no effects in removing or even lessening the jealousies were produced by all their efforts. The controversy continued to rage till 1726, when, in the synod of Dungannon, the nonsubscribers were not allowed to continue in the communion of the presbyterian synod of Ulster. In consequence of this act

^a It is entitled "Seasonable Advice to the protestant Dissenters in the North of Ireland."

^b Nathaniel Wild, Joseph Boyse, and R. Choppin.

all the other ministers of the presbytery of Antrim, having joined with Mr. Abernethy in refusing to subscribe, were separated from the general body^c. From that time arianism, which had before lain concealed in the parlour and in the study, was seen publicly to ascend the pulpit, and cause its voice to be heard by the congregation.

Some years after this controversy had ceased, and the minds of the Irish presbyterians had returned to a more tranquil frame, they directed their attention to that degradation which they were suffering as a body by the operation of the test act. An application to parliament for relief was deemed expedient; and to prepare the public mind for a favourable reception, some of the ministers pleaded their cause from the press. A pamphlet by Mr. Abernethy, in 1731, "On the Unreasonableness, Injustice, and Impolicy of the Test Act," met with distinguished approbation, and perhaps heightened their hopes of success. The encouragement given by some persons of distinction, and by many members of parliament, had still greater influence on their minds; and in 1733, it was determined to bring the business before the House of Commons. In the department of argument, dean Swift entered the lists against them, and with all that acrimony of spirit in which he was pre-eminent above every other man, and which never overflowed more copiously than when he was contending with whigs and especially presbyterians, opposed their claims. The feelings of the dignitaries of the church were in unison with the wrath of their champion; and by their superior influence with the rulers of the land,

^c Narrative of the seven synods in the north of Ireland.

the application of the dissenters was rendered abortive ; so that they were constrained to sit down again in their chains rivetted on them anew by superior force.

The impolicy of the refusal might astonish those who consider that the presbyterians amounted to at least one half of the protestants of Ireland, and that the protestants were far inferior in numbers to the Roman catholics, whom it was the constant endeavour of each administration to discourage and depress. But such as are acquainted with the history of Ireland will be compelled to acknowledge with grief, that the measures of its government were in too many instances dictated by other principles than reason and justice, or even policy. Here, however, there was a peculiar obstacle in the way—a privilege which the established church conceived to belong to her favoured sons. When has an established church parted with one atom of power or privilege which it was able to retain ; or which the spirit of the times, or the irresistible authority of the civil rulers did not compel it to relinquish ?

Arianism, during this period, was advancing, but perhaps with slower steps than in England, to sow the seeds of error among the Irish dissenters, to banish the spirit of pure and undefiled religion, and to drag after it the torpedo of lukewarmness and indifference, which has never failed to accompany it in its progress through Great Britain. The fire of controversy has been seen in her hands, blazing abroad and giving heat enough : but in how few instances has she been found kindling in the breasts of her votaries, the flame of zeal for the salvation of mankind ! It has

frequently been observed, in surveying the annals of the church, that when any religious body has declined in purity of doctrine and fervour of zeal, it has pleased God to raise up others either to reclaim them, or to occupy their place. Such was the merciful dispensation of heaven in the present instance. About the year 1746, a minister of the seceding communion came over from Scotland, and planted the standard of the cross in Ulster; and he was afterwards followed by others of his brethren both burghers and anti-burghers. Wherever the new lights were introduced, the friends of the Gospel, justly disdaining to have their own and their children's ears polluted by the sound of heresy, forsook their old connections, and joined themselves to the congregations of the seceders. In consequence of this, there has been a continual increase of their numbers to the present day^d. Whatever may be thought of the peculiar sentiments of these men as to church government, they deserved to be highly esteemed for their faithful preaching of the glorious Gospel of Christ, and for the sanctity of their lives. Every Christian naturally prefers his own denomination to all others, because he believes it to be most consonant to the sacred Scriptures; but he has the spirit of Christianity yet to learn who does not wish prosperity and success to the denomination by which the Gospel is purely preached, and who does not give it the preference to his own when the pulpit is contaminated with dangerous errors.

Towards the close of this period, the methodists both calvinistic and arminian extended their labours to Ireland: and the latter formed societies in the principal cities.

^d Rogers's speech before the associated synod at Cookstown, 1809.

SECTION IV.

STATE OF RELIGION IN AMERICA.

THE religion as well as the soil of America, has frequently displayed an almost miraculous transition from the barrenness of a polar winter, to the delights of Paradise. One of these astonishing revivals in the church will form the principal subject of this section. It was preceded by the peculiar darkness and chill which are the harbingers of day-break*: but before the morning dawned, the day-star appeared. As early as the year 1718, the church at Northampton enjoyed a considerable revival, under the ministry of Mr. Stoddard, who, though the chief promoter of the pernicious scheme which tended to confound the church and the world, yet laboured in the Gospel

* Dr. Increase Mather, who prefaced his testimony by observing, "I am now in my eighty-third year, and have been sixty-five years a preacher of the Gospel, and had converse with the first planters of this country," says in the year 1721, "I cannot but be affected as the old men who saw the foundation of the second temple, and wept at the vast inferiority of it to the former. Too many are given to change, and leave the order of the Gospel, which was the very design of these colonies. The grand interest of New England is changed from a religious to a worldly object." That this was not the querulous moaning of an old man, who could see no glory but in the scenes of former days, is proved by the universal concurrence of writers in every period of life and denomination of Christians, who lamented, that, with many excellent ministers there was a very general suspension of those divine influences, which had formerly transformed the transatlantic wilderness into a fruitful field. Such facts also are adduced, as painfully manifest that truth drew the picture over which religion wept.

with such a spirit as the Redeemer loves to bless. Of the five harvests of souls, which he used to say he had seen, during his sixty years ministry, this was the last. In each of these seasons, the greater part of the young people in the town were awakened to solicitude for their salvation. Three years after, such effects attended the preaching of Mr. Whiting, at Windham, in Connecticut, that the church kept a day of thanksgiving, when a sermon was preached, from which it appears, that in six months upwards of eighty persons, who had been careless or profane, were joined to the church. "The neighbourhood rings of it," says the preacher, "while the contiguous churches exclaim, what hath God wrought? But why should this spot only be wet with the dew of heaven, and the surrounding country remain dry and barren?"

Freehold, in New Jersey, was the scene of another remarkable triumph of religion. The gospel had been introduced here by Walter Ker, who was driven from Scotland, under a sentence of perpetual banishment, by the iron sceptre of James the second. After a long life of more successful labours, than it is probable he would ever have enjoyed in his native country, he entered into his rest. His charge became in a few years unhappily notorious for an indecent contempt of religion and morals. Mr. John Tennant, a pious youth, having consented to preach to them for a season, was so shocked with their impiety, that he told his brother, he repented of having engaged to labour among a people whom heaven seemed to have abandoned. But the labours of a month, produced such a change, that he then said, "I would beg my bread to enable me to realise the

hopes I have formed." The place of worship, which had been deserted, except by those who afterwards confessed that they went there only for diversion, or to talk on business, was now crowded by persons of all ranks, penetrated with the importance of eternity, and overwhelmed with abhorrence of their sins against the majesty and holiness of God. Multitudes of both sexes, confessed with tears their former iniquities; and those who remained unchanged, were so ashamed of being thrown into a disgraceful minority, that they gladly retreated from notice. The race of the excellent youth, who was the instrument of this change, was as short as it was swift and glorious. After enjoying, in two years, more success than has frequently attended the labours of a long and diligent life, he was called up to his reward April 23, 1732.

Two years after his death, the town of Northampton was distinguished by a most remarkable blessing from heaven. Perhaps it was to anticipate and silence the objections, which the wisdom of this world raises against every display of divine influence on the human mind, that Providence selected as the instrument of this work, Jonathan Edwards, afterwards president of the college of New Jersey, one of the most clear discriminating minds, and one of the greatest masters of moral and metaphysical science the Christian church has ever known? He had succeeded his maternal grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, in the pastoral charge of the church at Northampton, where he says the young people had begun to betray alarming symptoms of apostacy from the spirit and principles of their fathers. The American custom of commencing the Sabbath on Saturday evening, and

ending it at six o'clock on the following day, was unhappily abused by devoting the remaining hours to parties of pleasure, which completely obliterated the good effects of the preceding solemnities. But towards the end of the year 1733, the profane, haughty, obstinate spirit of the young, began to be exchanged for a sober, humble mind, flexible to the voice of religious instruction and faithful admonition. They complied with the first recommendation of Mr. Edwards, to snatch their Sabbath evenings from worldly pleasures, and devote them to private or social religion.

A village, about three miles from Northampton, first displayed the symptoms of extraordinary solicitude for eternity. The death of a young man and woman, the latter of whom devoted her last moments to persuade others to seek the same felicity which she enjoyed, contributed, together with the funeral sermons preached on the occasion, to diffuse through the younger part of the town a predominant impression of religion. The peculiar and affecting circumstances which attended the death of an elderly person, produced similar effects on the aged. At this time, Mr. Edwards preached a course of sermons on justification by faith alone, a doctrine which had been controverted, ridiculed, and rejected, but was now believed with the fullest conviction of its truth, and welcomed as the only refuge from the wrath of a justly offended God. These sermons which produced the powerful and happy effects are in print, and so profoundly argumentative are they, that no one who reads them will say that the passions of the hearers were wrought upon by mere vociferation, or rhetorical displays of future torments; nor will any one

deny that those who could understand them must have possessed cultivated and vigorous minds, superior to the danger of being affected by sounds without sense.

Several remarkable instances of conversion now increased and diffused the general impression of religion on the inhabitants of the town. One young woman, who had been the principal leader in those practices which had before injured the youth and grieved the minister, came to Mr. Edwards to inform him of a change, which he was at first averse to believe, fearing lest it should serve to encourage others in her former sins. His incredulity was, however, vanquished by the happy evidences which she gave of a divine influence on her heart, and his fears were put to shame by the effects produced on the minds of others, who, convinced that it was of God, fled to seek from him the same mercy. From this time, religion, regarded as the one thing needful, became the only subject of conversation through the whole town; and business was pursued as a religious duty, though in neighbouring places it was reported the people of Northampton neglected every thing but their souls. Scarcely a person was to be found, old or young, rich or poor, who was not deeply concerned for his salvation, while the greatest opposers became as serious as those whom they had most derided. For several months, each day added to the number of the new converts, so that every house was filled with joy over a child or a parent, such as that which angels feel over a sinner that repenteth. The face of the whole town was changed; seriousness, or benevolent affection and sacred joy, sat on every countenance; places of public amusement were abandoned

for the minister's house, where eager inquiries were made concerning the true sources of consolation and the discriminating differences of genuine religion and false. The assemblies of the church were crowded with worshippers, whose praises are said to have been so much like those of heaven and their attention to the divine word so tremblingly alive, that the most stupid spectator would have been compelled to exclaim "how dreadful is this place, for God is here and I knew it not; surely this is no other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven."

The fame of this event was spread and received according to the different characters of men. While the sceptical and profane ridiculed it, under the name of the Northampton distemper; those who came from distant places to judge impartially for themselves, were made partakers of the same grace, and returned, calling it "a glorious work of God." Many neighbouring towns felt the same influence, and Windsor, in Connecticut, presented a similar scene, at the same time as Northampton, while neither of them knew of the other's circumstances. Seven years after, religion obtained a general prevalence, in many places round Northampton, which itself was not then particularly affected, as its harvest had been generally gathered in. But Mr. Edwards, who was invited to preach wherever a revival appeared, endeavoured to guide the public mind in novel and critical circumstances, by publishing "a Narrative of the Conversion of many hundred Souls in Northampton^f," "a Discourse on the distinguishing Marks of a real

^f Dr. Watts and Guyse, who had requested Dr. Coleman, of Boston, to procure the testimonials of respectable ministers to the veracity of the narrative, published it in England.

Work of the Spirit of God," "Thoughts on the present Revival of Religion in New England," and "a Treatise on the true Nature of religious Affections." No impartial person, after reading these works, will pronounce the event to which they refer, an enthusiastic mania; for they furnish the most powerful antidote to enthusiasm in religion.

By these events, the way was prepared for the reception of Whitefield in America. He had preached with his usual success in some of the more northern colonies, when Dr. Coleman and four other ministers invited him to Boston, without caring whether they should be eclipsed or not, and anxious only that his powerful ministry might awaken their congregations from the insensibility which they bewailed. He came to Boston in September, 1740, and preached his first sermon to two or three thousand persons. The attraction of his manner was such, that, though he preached the most unwelcome truths, and detected every artifice of the depraved heart, the number of his hearers obliged him to preach in the open air. The good ministers, who had invited him, saw their most sanguine hopes exceeded in the effects of his ministry on the hearts of thousands.

On his departure, an American Whitefield was raised up to succeed him. Gilbert Tennant came to Boston and produced similar effects by apparently opposite means. With no charms of oratory in language, or in action, but grave and serious as death, he thundered and lightened, surrounding the consciences of sinners with the terrors of the broken law. During the winter of 1740, which he spent in Boston, Mr. Cooper said upwards of six hundred persons came to him under concern for their salvation,

and Mr. Webb declared that more than a thousand came to him in the same space of time. William Tennant also, and other ministers itinerated through different parts of New England with great success.

The opposition of the lukewarm and the worldly was excited. Whitefield had thrown out some reflections, in his first journal, on Tillotson's writings, and on Harvard college, which enraged those who were warm admirers of the archbishop, or zealous sons of the American *alma mater*. The other occasion of prejudice was furnished by Mr. Davenport, minister of Long Island, whose devout zeal was dishonoured by a censorious spirit which assumed a right to pronounce those unconverted who opposed the new methods adopted for the diffusion of religion. Nothing was now wanted but a Whitefield for the opposition, of courage sufficient to lead the attack, and of talents to detect the vulnerable points. Such an one was found in Dr. Chauncey, of Boston. After travelling several hundred miles to collect facts, he published in 1743, "Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England." He retailed every story of disorder, enthusiasm, or uncharitableness, that he could learn, charged Whitefield with occasioning the mischief out of vanity and love of popular applause, not without allusions to his fellow feeling for the orphans in Georgia. A convention of ministers held in Connecticut, May, 1743, followed his counsels in a printed testimony against errors in doctrine and disorders in practice, earnestly advising ministers to preserve the churches pure by guarding against itinerants and exhorters. As large an assembly, however, soon after published an honourable testimony in favour of the late extraordinary revival of religion, while they protested

against the errors which sprang up as tares amidst the good seed.

That wild fire had mingled with the flame from heaven, was not denied by the most zealous friends ; nor could the bitterest enemies deny that very desirable effects were produced. If some betrayed more corporeal agitations than religious affections, if others yielded to visionary impressions, unsanctioned by reason or Scripture, and many fell back into indifference and sin ; what were these but deductions from the general sum of good ? By the same rules, where evangelical principles were imparted, rational impressions of eternal realities produced, the meek and benevolent temper of Christ inspired, and purity of conduct maintained to the end of life, what but inveterate prejudice could deny that these are the very effects which prove the divinity of the religion of Jesus and the heavenly mission of his apostles ?

On Whitefield's second visit to New England, he experienced much opposition. Harvard and Yale colleges denounced him. The press teemed with hostile pamphlets, and ministers formed associations against him. A cotemporary ecclesiastical historian of America says, however, " Whitefield came with an extraordinary spirit of meekness and benevolence, ingenuously acknowledging the impropriety of some of his expressions and censures, but defending his conduct by the highest authority and examples. As he was invited to preach a lecture at six o'clock in the morning, he was constantly attended at that early hour by upwards of two thousand hearers."

A law enacted in Connecticut to prohibit itinerant preachers, kindled the flames of persecution ; for several were imprisoned for this new crime, and Mr.

Samuel Finlay, a minister of the first respectability and afterwards president of New Jersey college, was, for preaching to a presbyterian congregation at New-haven, sent out of the colony as a vagrant. This infringement on the liberties increased their aversion to those ministers who sanctioned the law, and induced their hearers to form many separate congregations. The baptist congregations, which were before not numerous, being zealous friends to the doctrines and spirit now prevalent, received large accessions from those churches, of which the ministers were unfriendly to the revival. Mr. Davenport, whose conduct in pronouncing the ministers unregenerate, had fanned the flame of dissension, afterwards publicly recanted his rash judgments, and attributed to his own unmortified tempers, what he had before ascribed to his superior religious discernment.

In Virginia, the seat of episcopacy, a similar revival was afforded to the church. A principal instrument in the work was Davies, afterwards president of a college. Inferior to Whitefield in the elocution of the pulpit, he surpassed him in originality of thought as well as in clearness and force of reasoning. His sketch of the revival of religion informs us, that previously to that happy event, the form of godliness was despised, and vices of every kind were triumphant. Towards the end of the year 1740, a few persons became, by reading the divines of the preceding century, exceedingly solicitous for their eternal welfare. Mr. Samuel Morris, of Hanover county, laboured to excite the same solicitude in others, first, by private conversation, and afterwards by reading to the more seriously disposed, Luther on the Galatians, with some of the works of Bunyan. A young gentleman

of Scotland, having a volume of sermons taken from the lips of Whitefield, at Glasgow, read them at these meetings with such effect, that many perceived their guilt and danger, and wept aloud. They were now obliged to build a reading house to accommodate the crowds which attended, and were soon called upon by the government to declare to what denomination of dissenters they belonged. They knew not what answer to give, as they did not agree with quakers, almost the only sect they knew; till, recollecting that Luther's works had first impressed them, they called themselves Lutherans. As soon as their situation was known in the presbyterian states, William Robinson was sent to visit the southern colonies. The new societies were inexpressibly astonished to hear him pour forth from the fulness of his heart, the exact sentiments which they had derived from books, while they were delighted to find that he had in his own experience, a key to the most secret emotions of their souls. Mr. Robinson was equally surprized at the effects produced on the original societies, as well as on the increasing numbers whose curiosity was attracted by the general report; but, after correcting some things in their worship, and introducing prayer as well as singing, he left them to a succession of evangelical labourers.

Alarmed at the indications of a gathering storm, and apprehensive of being sent out of the colony, they applied, in 1745, to the synod of New York for advice and assistance. The assembly sent an address to the governor, by Mr. Tennant and Mr. Finlay, who were favourably received, and contributed not only to dispel the threatening cloud, but by preaching and administering the Lord's supper to increase the impressions of religion. Virginia was at last visited by

Whitefield, who, though accused of seeking popularity in large towns, was hunting for sinners, as he termed it, in the woods of the southern colonies. At length Mr. Davies, after preaching among them for some weeks, was, in 1748, ordained their pastor. He encountered much opposition and ridicule, as the leader of the new lights ; but saw many of the opposers first drawn by curiosity, then fixed by attachment, till fifty new families were added to their original number. In seven years after his ordination, he had three hundred communicants. He preached at seven different places, was successful in the conversion of many negroes, and saw with delight the same blessings diffused in other parts of Virginia, North Carolina, and Maryland.

So repeated and powerful were the displays of divine influence accompanying the Gospel in America, during this period of our history, that many believed they saw the dawn of the day of final glory to the church on earth. A treatise was written by president Edwards to show what effects the numerous indications of divine favour should produce ; and meetings for prayer were held in unison with Christian churches in Great Britain, to implore the continuance of such prosperity till the " earth should be filled with the divine glory." Upon the whole, the church of Christ has scarcely ever seen in any country a period of greater prosperity than America enjoyed at this time, whether for extraordinary triumphs of religion among thoughtless multitudes, for eminence of talents and graces in the hearts of Christians and divines, or for valuable publications in the first departments of sacred literature^s.

^s Edwards's Narrative. Manuscript Account of the State of Religion in America communicated by the Rev. Mr. Allen.

Of the eminent men who flourished in America at this period, Solomon Stoddard requires our first attention. Born at Boston, in 1643, he commenced his ministry in that city, but removed on account of his health to preach for two years in the island of Barbadoes. On his return to America, he was chosen pastor of the church at Northampton, over which he watched with distinguished zeal and success for fifty-six years, till he was removed by death in his eighty-sixth year. He had enjoyed (to use his own expression) five harvests, when such effects attended his ministry, that religion became the predominant concern of the whole town, and before he died he received as a colleague his grandson Jonathan Edwards, whose labours were attended with similar success.

Benjamin Coleman, D. D. was one of the most distinguished ornaments of the transatlantic church. He was educated at Harvard college, but came over to London in 1692, and having been ordained there, returned to take the charge of one of the churches in Boston. Having laboured with equal diligence and success to the advanced age of seventy-three, he died in 1747, leaving several publications which attest his excellence as a divine, and a reputation which will be dear to his country as long as zeal for the interests of sacred literature and the conversion of the Indian nations shall be held in due esteem^a.

William Cooper was, at the age of three and twenty, ordained co-pastor with Dr. Coleman, who preached his funeral sermon and bore this testimony to his worth. "He cultivated learning as a religious duty, and his talents, as well as his usefulness maintained a visible progress, till his graces were ripened in glory.

^a See his Life, written by Mr. Turell. 8vo. 1749.

I ought to thank God if I have contributed to form him for his eminent services: thus a torch may be lighted at a farthing candle." His reputation for talents and piety occasioned his election to the presidency of Harvard college, which his modesty declined. He died in 1743, in his fiftieth year.

Thomas Prince, after commencing his labours in America, preached several years in England, but returned to his native country in 1717. He was chosen colleague with Dr. Sewall as pastor of the Old South Church, in Boston. His native talents he improved by most laborious study, and consecrated the extensive literature which he acquired, to the service of the Redeemer, who honoured him with eminent success. He is most known as the author of "the Christian History," and of a Chronological History of New England. Death removed him from his labours in 1758, at the age of seventy-two.

The name of Mayhew shines with distinguished honour in the annals of the anglo-american church. Thomas Mayhew was the first minister of the Gospel in Martha's Vineyard: he began to preach to the Indians in his neighbourhood at the same time that Elliot commenced his missionary labours. When called away by death, he was succeeded by his father, Thomas Mayhew, esq. governor of the district, who laboured from the age of seventy to that of ninety-three, with more than the fire of youth for the conversion of the Indians. He was followed in the year 1689, by his grandson Experience Mayhew, who trode in the best steps of his ancestors. While he was preaching to the Indians he published a work, entitled, "Indian Converts," which furnishes an animating display of the effects of the Gospel on that benighted race of men.

David Brainerd, whose praise is in all the churches as a laborious and successful herald of mercy to the American Indians, might claim a place here, as he died in 1747, but his memoirs, published by president Edwards, are so generally known, that the slight notice we have taken of this excellent man will be deemed sufficient.

The person who must now close our list, is usually called president Edwards, to distinguish him from another, Jonathan Edwards, who was principal of Jesus college, Cambridge. America boasts in the president not only the first of moral philosophers among her sons, but also the first of metaphysicians among the whole host of Christian divines. He was descended from eminent ministers of the Gospel through many generations, for his great great grandfather, Richard Edwards, was a preacher in London during the reign of queen Elizabeth. His father, Timothy Edwards, laboured in the ministry at Windsor, in Connecticut, almost sixty years, and was residing there when his only son Jonathan was born, on the fifth of October, 1703.

At about twelve years of age, he entered Yale college, and took the degree of B. A. before he was seventeen. In his second year at college he read Locke on the human Understanding, "with more delight than the most greedy miser gathers up handfuls of gold and silver out of some newly-discovered treasure." From the mind which, at fourteen, found no difficulties in this treatise, but devoured it as an intellectual feast, what might not be expected when matured by twenty laborious years of kindred studies? With a respectable proficiency in most branches of liberal science, moral philosophy, as the handmaid of

theology, was his favourite subject, to the end of life. He declined, at the expiration of his collegiate studies, several invitations to the pastoral office, in order to remain as tutor at the place of his education, but he was induced, after two years, to become colleague with his grandfather at Northampton.

Serious impressions accompanied the first dawn of reason, and produced, when he was quite a boy, what may be called a childish religion, described by himself as consisting in a laborious course of prayer, five times a day, with great delight in his supposed goodness. It was not, however, till towards the close of his preparatory studies for the ministry, that he was formed for that work by a genuine experience of the grace which he was to preach to others. Of this essential change, which to readers in general forms but a dull history, he gives, though in his inelegant style, a vivid speaking picture, and clothes with substantial forms the most spiritual operations of the inmost soul, waking the heart of a Christian to the purest pleasures, and his conscience to the grand enquiry, am I a partaker of the same grace¹?

¹ About this time, he recorded in his diary seventy resolutions, many of which present the most perfect combination of the intellect of a philosopher with the devotion of a saint. The following specimen may incite, we hope, to the perusal of the whole.

Resolved *first*, that I will do *whatsoever I think to be most to God's glory* and my own good, profit, and pleasure, ON THE WHOLE, without any consideration of the time, whether now, or never so many myriads of ages hence. Secondly, resolved to be continually endeavouring to find some new contrivance to promote the fore-mentioned object. Resolved thirdly, never to do, be, or suffer any thing, in soul or body, less or more, but what tends to the glory of God. Resolved never to lose one moment of time, but to live with all my might while I do live. Resolved to endeavour to my utmost to deny whatsoever is not most agreeable to a good and universally

The spirit of his resolutions inspired his ministry. A religious abstinence in food, relaxation, and sleep enabled him to devote thirteen hours in each day to theological studies, which, with his depth of research, furnished such materials, as, when matured by his laborious care, produced sermons that attracted, almost from his first appearance as a preacher, the eager attention of the most profound divines. Though he read his sermons, which he modestly lamented as much inferior to preaching *memoriter*, and his feeble voice formed no counterpoise to this dead weight; yet his solemn manner of announcing the mighty emotions of his own soul, so completely fixed the minds of his hearers, that they forgot every thing but the important subject. The effect of his preaching soon appeared in the event that induced him to publish "a faithful Narrative of the surprising Work of God in the Conversion of many hundred Souls in Northampton." This relation not only attracted much notice in America, but was recommended by Dr. Watts and Guyse to the British public, and was widely circulated on the continent of Europe. The eagerness with which Mr. Edwards was consulted by multitudes during these extraordinary triumphs of the Gospel, added to his conscientious dread of confounding enthusiasm with religion, and his natural fondness for the philosophy of the human mind, induced him to study the various appearances of religious illumination, terror, and delight, with such anxious attention as

sweet and benevolent, quiet, peaceable, contented, easy, compassionate, generous, humble, meek, modest, submissive, obliging, diligent, and industrious, charitable, even, patient, moderate, forgiving, sincere temper, and to do at all times what such a temper would lead me to.

rendered him a profound master of this most delicate and momentous subject. Yet, after having been regarded by neighbouring churches as an oracle, and valued by his own flock as a man whom heaven delighted to honour, he was called to shew that the disciple is not above his persecuted Lord. To correct some immoralities among the younger persons of his congregation, he adopted a method which betrayed a deficiency in the prudence taught by intercourse with the world, and roused the ungovernable partiality of parents for the children whose characters were exposed to censure. In the midst of this ferment, he was led to renounce Mr. Stoddard's principle of the right of unbelievers to communion at the Lord's table, and thus let in a fresh blast upon the coals of strife; so that the passions of the people triumphed over the meekness and benevolence of the pastor, and produced a final separation.

After twenty-four years of useful labours at Northampton, he retired to preach to the Indians at Stockbridge. Here the adorable providence of God demonstrated that the man who most ably defended the truths against which the carnal mind rises with abhorrence, could not only cast himself, in the decline of life, with a large family, on the wide world without support, but could also devote his powerful intellect to teach these truths in the howling desert, where there were no applauding multitudes among whom he could shine, and no philosophising divines who could echo his praise. The six years which he spent among the Indians, were, however, not lost to the world, but may be valued as the most useful period of his life. In this retreat, besides his labours as a missionary, he devoted himself to such studies as his

former engagements had nearly precluded, and wrote his two treatises on the freedom of the will, and on original sin. His celebrity, advancing with his labours, soon called him from the exile which now seemed to have accomplished the intention of the mysterious arbiter of events in conducting him thither. Invited to succeed his son-in-law, Aaron Burr, as president of New Jersey college, before he was well seated on the chair, he was snatched from the sanguine hopes of the church by the small-pox. This ornament to the Christian name, whose intellectual grandeur was only equalled by his moral character, was removed to the element of unbounded knowledge and devotion, on the twenty-second of March, 1758, in the fifty-fifth year of his age.

If it be said, that, absorbed in thoughts (the sons of heaven), he too much despised words as the daughters of earth, to be allowed a place among elegant writers; he who removes his works from this class, must give them the precedence in the still higher departments of metaphysics and theology. A periodical critic, though decidedly hostile to the Edwardian system of divinity, pronounced his treatise on the freedom of the will, "the most stupendous monument of metaphysical reasoning which the human mind ever erected." But his "Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue or Holiness," displays in a still higher degree, such a combination of abstract thought and vast conceptions, with instructive elucidation and holy tendencies, that the reader feels himself extricated from the incumbrances of dull matter, to hearken to the discourses of ethereal spirits. The treatise "on God's last End in the Creation of the World," which forms its usual companion, has not, like the former the

rare praise of pouring full day upon a profound subject, which all other investigators had left in undiminished darkness; but it enables us to maintain as philosophers, what we already believed as Christians, or divines. His defence of the doctrine of original sin is, in the former part, conducted so as to compel the adversaries of the truth to contend against common sense and acknowledged fact; while the latter part sets at defiance the logical or metaphysical skill which would have ventured to contradict both our senses and our reason. One of the most useful of his treatises is that on religious affections, which at once enables the Christian to winnow his own soul, separating the precious from the worthless in religion, and preserves him at an equal distance from the mortal coldness of philosophic speculation, and the unhallowed fires of wild enthusiasm. The labours of Edwards have founded a theological school, which, in America, has verged to a metaphysical mania; but in England, has been a preservative from socinian and antinomian extremes, by presenting evangelical truth in that point of view, which at once satisfies the enlightened mind, and captivates the devotional heart.

* His works are—A sermon preached at Boston, on 1 Cor. i. 29, 30.—A sermon at Northampton, on Mat. xvi. 17.—A Narrative of the Work of God, &c.—Five discourses at Northampton.—A sermon preached at Enfield.—A sermon at New-Haven, on 1 John iv. 1.—Thoughts on the Revival.—Religious Affections.—On Prayer for a Revival. Life of the Rev. David Brainerd. On Qualifications for Communion.—A Reply to S. William's Answer.—A sermon preached at Newark, on James ii. 19.—On the Freedom of the Will.—On original Sin.—Eighteen sermons with his life prefixed.—The History of Redemption.—On the Nature of Virtue.—God's last End in the Creation.—Thirty-three sermons.—Twenty sermons.—Miscellaneous Observations.—Miscellaneous Remarks.

That part of the world which lies beyond the British empire furnishes too few materials for ecclesiastical history to deserve a distinct section. Among the protestants on the continent of Europe, scarcely any persons of extraordinary eminence arose in the church, which experienced little change and no improvement; and if the ancient fire of persecution sometimes burst forth from the church of Rome, spreading desolation wherever it could reach, the political powers refused that aid, without which religious bigotry can do little more than imitate Vesuvius, when, wanting force for a grand eruption, it emits only a faint rambling and transient flames, amidst clouds of smoke. Beyond the extent of Christendom, the missions of which the commencement has already been recorded, proceeded in their labours without any striking instances of success; while the Christian church was unhappily not yet awakened from its selfish slumbers, to form new stations for the labourers, who might cultivate the vast desert which still lay entirely neglected.

THIRD PERIOD.

*From the Accession of George the Third, to the Year
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Eight.*

CHAP. I.

AN ACCOUNT OF NEW SECTS WHICH AROSE DURING THIS PERIOD, THEIR DISTINGUISHING TENETS AND THE OUTLINES OF THEIR HISTORY.

IF it is painful to observe that the diversities of human opinion, perpetually increasing the number of sects, render it necessary to devote a chapter to their rise in every division of our history ; it affords some consolation to reflect that we have now to notice but two new denominations, a smaller number than have been recorded in either of the former periods. The division which took place among the Wesleyan methodists after the death of their founder, has indeed produced what is called the methodist new connexion ; but the formation of a separate body being attended with little or no change in doctrine, discipline, spirit, or practice demands no distinct section. This chapter, therefore, will only contain an account of the Sandemanians and Swedenborgians.

SECTION I.

SANDEMANIANS.

It has fallen to the lot of the loudest declaimer against popular ministers, to acquire so much popularity as to found a sect, which by wearing his name perpetuates his celebrity. But those congregations which in England are known by the denomination of Sandemanians, from Robert Sandeman, to whose labours they owe their existence, are in Scotland called independents, or Glasites, John Glas having several years before laid the foundation of the sect in the north. Accident, however, or the irresistible custom of society, rather than the vanity of the founders, gave these personal names to a communion, whose members prefer that of Christians or disciples to any other denomination.

The difficulty of exhibiting a correct, instructive statement of the peculiar sentiments of a religious sect, is felt with peculiar force, when the Sandemanians are to be held up to public view; for the differences which separate them from other Christians are in many instances so subtile as to be invisible to ordinary sight. In Scotland the Glasites were at first regarded, not without reason, as a species of independents, who differed from those in England, only in the date and country of their origin, and in the degree of importance which a new sect naturally attaches to its peculiarities. But when, instead of forming a federal union with the independents in England, they erected new churches among them, not only distinct, but alien from all others, it became

manifest that their separation from the Scotch establishment was produced by other causes than a disapprobation of presbyterian principles.

They are, however, as well as the baptists, strictly independents. The sentiments of Dr. Owen, the most celebrated defender of that denomination, were adopted by Glas, and given in a new form, without due acknowledgement, in his "Testimony of the King of the Martyrs." It is remarkable, too, that as the articles of the church of England are quoted by English independents, in defence of congregational churches, so Mr. Glas appeals to the Scotch confession of faith in support of his independent principles. "Our reformers taking their notions of the church only from the word of God, acknowledge no other church of Christ besides the universal, but congregations; as is to be seen in the Scotch confession of faith, article eighteenth, where we have these words: "Wheresoever then these former notes¹ are seen, and of any time continue (be the number never so few, about two or three), there, without all doubt, is the true church of Christ, who according to his promise, is in the midst of them; not that universal, of which we have before spoken, but particular, such as were in Corinthus, Galatia, Ephesus, and other places, where the ministry was planted by Paul, and were of himself named the churches of God; and such churches we, the inhabitants of the realm of Scotland, professors of Christ Jesus, have in our towns and places reformed."^m

¹ These notes are, 1. The true preaching of the word of God; 2. The right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus; 3. Ecclesiastical discipline, uprightly administered as God's Word prescribes.

^m Glas's Works, vol. I. p. 169.

Maintaining these sentiments of the first congregational churches with peculiar ardour; and condemning with equal severity all national establishments of religion; as essentially hostile to the kingdom of Christ, the Glasites were, from their origin, known by the appellation of Scotch independents^a.

Upon their system of discipline they engrafted some doctrinal peculiarities, which have rendered them like the Ishmaelites, men of war, every where dwelling in the presence of enemies, their hand against every man and every mans hand against them. It was not, indeed, by departing from the orthodox creed, on the subject of the Trinity, the person of Christ, the mode of acceptance with God, or the doctrine of salvation by grace, that they differed from the original independents; for on all these points they are zealously calvinistical. The abstract nature of faith, was the apple of discord, which separated them from those with whom they agreed in the grand outlines of doctrine and discipline. The wisdom which inspired the Scriptures had framed no technical definition of faith, contented with giving such devotional and practical statements of every doctrine and every grace, as should most effectually answer the purposes both of information and utility. But the founders of the Sandemanian system, conceiving that they had detected errors in the prevalent opinion, at once defined faith to be "a mere belief of the truth," and pronounced all who supposed it to include any approbation of heart, enemies to the grace of the Gospel. The sole requisite to justification, or acceptance with God, says Mr. Sandeman, is the work finished by Christ in

^a The Encyclopædia Britannica, in the article Independents, confounds them with the Sandemanians or Glasites.

his death, proved by his resurrection to be all sufficient to justify the guilty, that the whole benefit of this event is conveyed to men only by the apostolic report concerning it, that every one who understands this report to be true, or is persuaded that the event actually happened as testified by the apostles, is justified, and finds relief to his guilty conscience, not by finding any favourable symptom about his heart, but by finding their report to be true; that the event itself which is reported becomes his relief, so soon as it stands true in his mind, and accordingly becomes his faith."

While the Sandemanians refuse to hold communion with any who do not perfectly agree with them in maintaining the sovereign election of grace, and the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness to justify the most guilty who credit the testimony of the Gospel, they are far from approving of the antinomian tenet, that believers are under no obligations of duty or obedience. On the contrary, they are distinguished by the strenuousness with which they insist on the necessity of keeping the ordinances and commands of Jesus Christ, in order to entitle any one to the privileges and esteem of a Christian. Together with the propriety of practising the forbearance enjoined by the Redeemer in private offences among the members of a church, they maintain also the necessity of putting away at once those who fall into gross sin. An excommunicated member may be restored on profession of repentance; but should he again relapse into sin, so as to be a second time excommunicated, he would be restored no more; as they say that the Scriptures, the only guide in ecclesiastical affairs, give no sanction to any second restoration, nor could we have better evidence of repentance than that which we

had before, and which proved fallacious. In all acts of discipline, the whole church must be unanimous. To decide by a majority, say they, supposes in the minority a dissatisfaction with the determination of the church, contrary to charity or the law of the brethren. To the question which so naturally arises, how can absolute unanimity be always maintained among a number of reflecting persons? they answer, "diversity of opinion often happens, but when the discussion of the affair fails of bringing all to one mind, the minority is excommunicated." This, of course, leaves the majority with the name of an unanimous church. But it will probably occur to the perspicacity of many of our readers, that the noncontents can be excommunicated only by the vote of a majority, which must be admitted as valid in the very sentence that is passed in order to avoid it as unlawful. This ludicrous predicament in which they are placed by their own principles, would strike most minds as an unanswerable proof that those principles were not derived from the Author of our reason; but to the Sandemanians it seems to create no difficulty at all.

No person can be admitted into a Sandemanian church unless every one approves; and the kiss of charity is given as the seal of admission. With a member who has been excommunicated by any of their churches the Sandemanians hold it unlawful to eat, or drink, or maintain any such intercourse in civil life, as might be perfectly lawful with persons who never made a profession of religion. They believe a plurality of pastors, or elders, to be essential to the perfect order of a church; so that they will not celebrate the Lord's supper, or exercise any discipline, unless two or more elders are present. These officers

who are chosen from among themselves, and are usually engaged in trade, are set apart or ordained to their work by prayer, with fasting and imposition of the hands of the presbytery, or of those who were elders of the church before them. They have not only deacons, who provide for the temporal wants of the church, but also deaconesses, chosen from among the aged widows of the church. The direction given by the apostle that a bishop should be the husband of one wife is supposed, by the Sandemanians, to signify something more than that he should not have a plurality of wives, as was common in the days of the apostles; for they suffer no one to hold the pastoral office who is either a bachelor, or married a second time. Yet second marriages, which disqualify for office, are not only permitted, but enjoined on all those who possess not the continence spoken of in the seventh chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, which is regarded as the rule for all Christians of both sexes.

On the subject of baptism, they differ but little, if at all, from independents; as they approve of the baptism of the children of believers, whether members of their churches or not. While Sandeman has condemned those who oppose infant-baptism with his characteristic bitterness; Glass has, with his usual acuteness, pleaded the cause of children, maintaining that baptism is a token of admission into the catholic church, as the Lord's supper is a sign of communion with a particular congregation.

Their meetings on the Lord's-day are peculiarly designed to celebrate the Lord's supper, which they think the most essential part of the worship of the Sabbath. In the intervals between the morning and

afternoon services, they dine together, and this feast of love is concluded by the ceremony of kissing each other, as they believe "the holy kiss" to be a divine institution of perpetual obligation. Their public worship is not conducted exclusively by the elders of the church, but the brethren are called upon by those who preside to exhort and to pray in public. Believing the apostolic injunction to the Gentiles, to abstain from blood and from things strangled, to be still in force, they consider it unlawful to eat any thing that has been killed by wringing the neck. Indeed the distinguishing tenet of the Sandemanians is, the perpetual obligation of every precept of the Scriptures taken in the most literal sense. This induces them to maintain such a community of goods, that every member of the church must consider his property subject to the claims of the body; and no one is allowed to accumulate a fortune, which is termed laying up treasures on earth, in defiance of the Redeemer's prohibition. While they consider the distinctions of civil life annihilated in the church, they would reject from their communion all who should refuse submission to the civil government, or the conscientious payment of customs and taxes. Cards, dice, lotteries, and every game of chance they condemn; because the Scriptures have claimed the lot as sacred to God; but they are far from being rigid with regard to public and private diversions; for even the theatre itself, which most Christians abhor as a fatal snare to the soul, Sandemanians view with no unfavourable eye.

The characteristic distinctions of this society are rather in their spirit, than in any peculiarity either of doctrine or discipline. Many agree with them in

their views of faith, who are far enough from being disciples of Sandeman ; and others who adopt their discipline, abhor their spirit. Sandeman blew away with his northern blast, the impure mist which some had raised to obscure the glories of the Gospel, and had he spoken the truth in love, he might have been an extensive blessing. But if the law of kindness dwelt on the Redeemer's lips, and his words dropped as honey from the comb, the words of Sandeman were bitter as gall and sharper than swords ; so that he seemed to exercise his perspicacity in searching for the pearl of the Gospel only to dissolve it in rancour and spite. It must indeed be admitted, that he detects serious errors, and states, in the most luminous manner, important truths, which had been obscured by officious or incautious meddling, of which his remarks on the conversion of the thief on the cross are a proof ; but it is painful to see the enemy of God and man perverting these talents to render their possessor a firebrand, and to induce him to fling about unhallowed flames even at the foot of the cross. For when with the eye of a lynx, he detects faults, he tears them to pieces with the rage of a tyger. In his eagerness to hunt out errors, he attributes to men principles which they would abhor. Flavel, Doddridge, Boston, and Watts may have expressed themselves incautiously, and would, no doubt, have corrected some of their statements, had they encountered such a censor as Sandeman ; but to represent them as teaching men to derive their hopes from some change in themselves, is gross calumny, unworthy of one who professes to reverence the authority that said, " thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." Allowing indeed the accusation to be just, it is painful to see

one, who is himself affected by the fall, and liable to error, sneering at the fatal mistakes of his fellow-creatures, without any symptom of compassion for those whom he regards as deceived for eternity.

The accusations, which he brings so liberally against others, might be easily retorted. The conviction of sin, which he charges the popular preachers with attempting to produce, as a substitute for Christ, or at least a recommendation to an interest in his favour, he is compelled to acknowledge necessary, when he says, "no man will ever receive the divine righteousness till he is thoroughly pinched with a conviction that he has no other." Thus he abandons at once, all that for which he had been contending with so much asperity, and admits the very principle for which he had branded others with the mark of perdition; for, in spite of all his refinements and insinuations, those against whom he so loudly declaims, had no other design, in endeavouring to convince men of sin, than to lead to Christ, under a conviction that they had no other refuge from the wrath to come. But it has been the study of this communion to widen the differences between them and others. Maintaining that contention was the mark of the true church, they dreaded peace, and gloried in perpetual hostilities. Sandeman professes, indeed, to expect nothing but scorn and opposition, and to welcome the cross with all its opprobrium; yet the incessant mention of the subject betrays at once a soreness of mind, which does not appear in many persecuted men whom he condemns, and a lurking fondness for applause, or at least for notice, which would rather seek it in the pillory than not find it at all. While he sneers at the popular ministers

for assuming to themselves the rights of ambassadors of Christ, which he maintains to be the peculiar honour of the apostles, he arrogates to himself the deference due only to one who confirms his testimony by signs from heaven.

In his doctrinal discussions, he is usually open to censure, when he attempts to state what he would substitute for the popular errors, as he calls them. The architect only of ruin, skilful and mighty to destroy, he no sooner attempts to erect his own system, than he demonstrates the truth of the common observation, that it is much easier to find fault than to mend. His definition of faith seems to admit that it is an exercise of mind, which is no more passive when it gives credit to a truth, than when it approves that truth as lovely; but perceiving that it may be said a man may value himself for the righteous act of believing God's word, as well as for the virtue of loving his character, he abandons his own definition, and usually disputes as if the testimony itself was the faith by which we were justified, and the mind of man was not exercised about it in any way. He argues

° It has been observed, by a very superior divine, "that he who has a just conception of the character of God, and the relation he bears to mankind in general, or to saints in particular, as a God of grace and of justice, cannot embrace the Sandemanian principle, that saving faith consists exclusively in a simple assent to the divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ. The sovereign God, in the person of the surety, bestows the spirit of faith, without which there can be neither a simple assent, nor any thing else deserving of the honourable appellation of faith: and wherever that divine principle exists, there also will be found, as occasion offers, consent, affiance, reception, or approbation, no less than simple assent. This last, in its highest import, is only one fruit of the spirit of faith, which is not more of a saving nature than other exercises of the same divine principle. The dispute agitated by Sandemanians concerning

against assurance of salvation, and inculcates such an anxious state of mind, as would excite a suspicion that his principles afford him but little satisfaction or repose.

The spirit of Elijah, it was observed, rested on Elisha, and unhappily the spirit of Sandeman has infected his followers. Conceited of their knowledge in which they seem to place the whole of religion, they value themselves upon what they call their clear views, regardless of the warning "that knowledge puffeth up." The selfishness of a system, which made Sandeman avow, without a blush, that his religion consisted only in love to that which first relieved him, appears in their neglect of the poor, ignorant, perishing multitude; while they are occupied in cavilling at those who are more devoted to God than themselves.

That it is much easier to our depraved nature to faith is merely verbal. Granting that faith, in strictness, is nothing more than simple assent, it is not saving to the exclusion of hope and love, holy fear and penitential sorrow. For, though we are justified by faith, in the scripture sense exclusively, we are not therefore finally saved by it, irrespectively of other graces. If their views of faith be more valuable than any other, it must consist in the supposed ease with which a person may become a Christian. But is it a mighty acquisition to become better versed in the meaning of a word? In this representation of saving faith, there seems to be a strong, though subtle, spice of legality, under a pretence of ease and simplicity. While the formal pharisee requires much labour, in order to acceptance, the advocates of Glas and Sandeman require but very little, a little simple assent, and all the work is done. I fear the difference between these is not in kind but in degree; not as work differs from grace, but as much work differs from little work. For a simple assent is a work, an act, of the human mind, no less truly than trust, reliance, confidence, or any other branch of obedience." Dr. Williams's *Essay on Equity and Sovereignty*, p. 436.

make new discoveries in abstract truth than to reduce to holy practice the principles which have been long admitted, seems not to have occurred to the Sandemanians ; but it is an observation which demands the most solemn consideration of all who are beginning to drink into their spirit. When, indeed, the mind is intoxicated with this new wine, old, acknowledged principles have lost their power to please, and as no others have force to sway the heart and life, the pleasures of the world soon become necessary to occupy the vacant mind. Those who have seen them in their domestic walk say, that there is little or no appearance of family religion among them ; and those who can only judge by their public conduct, complain that nothing they ever do for mankind, would remind an observer of the description which God gives of his people, " the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."

This communion has frequently been accused of hostility to the influences of the Holy Spirit, and to the doctrine of sanctification ; a charge which it has never met with any adequate defence. The partiality to mere notions which Sandeman betrays, is unfavourable to the sanctifying influences of the Spirit upon the heart, and as holiness virtually consists in benevolence, it is natural that they should feel no attachment to it, who avow that all their religion consists in love to that which first relieved them. But where the doctrine of divine influence upon the mind is really rejected, warm professions of zeal for the work of Christ is merely a masked battery, from which the vital interests of the Gospel may be most

effectually attacked. It would then appear that the Sandemanian opinion of the faith of devils being the same as that of real Christians is accompanied with a persuasion that, provided we be placed in certain circumstances, faith will follow, without any divine influence. This may account for the propensity of a Sandemanian to value himself upon his clear views, and despise, rather than pity, those whom he supposes destitute of real faith; for where the influence of divine grace is denied, it is in vain to call to humility by the apostolic appeal, "who maketh thee to differ?" Here also we discover the cause of that chill which is said to seize the devotions of those who adopt this system. When we cannot sincerely ask that God would exert any real influence upon the mind, all other views of prayer will leave it to sink into a cold ceremony. Sandeman's contempt of those effusions of the Spirit and revivals of religion, in which other Christians exult, may be traced to the same cause; for a latent opposition to divine influence must be provoked to rage by such facts as give the lie to his theory. The manner in which he has expressed himself concerning Gillies' historical collections, can hardly be accounted for on any other hypothesis. They who do not believe the doctrine of the progressive sanctification of believers are sure to hate it. But what a deadly influence must that system have upon the soul which, instead of desires after the influence of the spirit of holiness upon the thoughts and affections, substitutes a contemptuous notion of our superiority to any such necessity, and the sufficiency of our clear views and ceremonial observances! Where this fatal error has seized the heart, who can wonder that it should be said, as it

has been of the Sandemanians, they often reproach others for being devout, but none ever reproach them for it.

The history of this communion is short, for it is but of recent date, its members have not been numerous, and it has never endured those persecutions which fill the annals of a church. John Glas, the first founder of this sect, who began, in 1727, to publish his opinions in Scotland, has been already noticed in the section appropriated to that country. The person who may be denominated its second founder, as he recommended its sentiments most effectually to the world, introduced them into England, and erected here the church now under consideration, was Robert Sandeman, a young man of fine talents, who had been educated for the ministry in the church of Scotland. From the mother church of the Glasites, at Dundee, of which he was an elder, he removed to Perth, and afterwards to Edinburgh. Here he published, in 1757, his Letters on the Theron and Aspasio of Mr. Hervey, a writer at that time exceedingly popular among the lovers of evangelical truth. The eulogiums which Sandeman pronounces on the grand design of Mr. Harvey, seem intended only to procure favour to his own sentiments and to the severe censures which he heaps on Aspasio's views of faith, which are pronounced hostile to the righteousness of Christ. But on Flavel, Boston, Erskine, and Marshall, whom Mr. Hervey had recommended as superior divines, Sandeman pours the full tide of his wrath, denouncing these popular writers as the vilest sinners before God, and the greatest enemies to the souls of men. These letters, either by means of

the popular work on which they fastened, or by the talents which they display, or their tendency to gratify the general taste for censure and irony, attracted more notice and acquired more celebrity than any previous production of this community.

Some persons in London, who read the strictures on Hervey, supposing that because he was sometimes wrong, Sandeman must be always right, formed in 1762, a church not only founded on his principles, but unhappily inspired with too much of his spirit. They met first at Glover's Hall, and afterwards, for several years, in the quaker's meeting-house in Bull and Mouth-street, from which they removed, 1778, to Paul's-alley, Barbican. Several independent ministers joined the new church; among whom were Mr. Chater, Mr. Prentice, and Mr. Boosey. But the proselyte who procured them most celebrity was Mr. Pike, a popular dissenting minister, who entered into a correspondence with Mr. Sandeman on the first appearance of his letters. The members of Mr. Pike's church eagerly watched the progress of the friendly controversy between their pastor and the writer whom they had just learned to admire. To Mr. Pike's expostulations concerning the bitter spirit of Mr. Sandeman, he received answers which appeared almost satisfactory to him and his friends, and encouraged him to introduce some of the Sandemanian practices into the public worship of the church.

While the shepherd and the flock seemed to be amicably departing together from their former sentiments, a rumour was raised, in 1758, that Mr. Pike had abandoned the faith of the Gospel, to which some reports were added, sufficient to excite odium against his character, though they

appear to have been destitute of truth. Two sermons which he preached in the same year, at Pinner's Hall lecture, and afterwards published, under the title of "free Grace, saving Grace," increased the aversion which many entertained for him and his sentiments, and occasioned his exclusion from the lecture. Some of the members of his church becoming dissatisfied, several meetings were called to consider the propriety of his continuance with them; but in the midst of these discussions appeared a pamphlet, entitled, "Reflections on an epistolary Correspondence, by W. F." who was William Fuller, Esq. a member of the church. To this pamphlet, which was designed to shew the dangerous tendency of Sandemanianism, and warn the church against following Mr. Pike, he wrote an answer, in the close of 1759, entitled "free Grace indeed," Shortly after was published, "the scripture Account of justifying Faith, interspersed with Reflections on some modern Sentiments in Religion, by T. U," Thomas Uffington, a deacon of the church, who strenuously opposed Mr. Pike's sentiments. An answer to it, entitled, "rational Religion distinguished from that which is enthusiastic," was written by John Dove, a member of the church (who had before defended Mr. Pike's "Form of sound Words" against Dr. Fleming) and who was called, from his trade and his learning, the Hebrew tailor.

These disputes were terminated by moving, at a church meeting, held in April, 1760, that those who have not revived their union under the pastoral care of Mr. Pike be excluded the membership of the church. There were seventeen voices on each side; but Mr. Pike, having the casting vote, his friends retained the

place of worship; in spite of the struggles of those who adhered to the original principles of the society. These they carried with them to a meeting-house in Little St. Helens, where they formed themselves into a distinct church, which chose Mr. Barber, of Basingstoke, to the pastoral office. Mr. Pike, however, becoming at length more than a doctrinal Sandemanian, resigned his connection with the society at the Three Cranes, Thames-street, and, in 1765, joined the Sandemanian church at Bull and Mouth-street, St. Martins le Grand. His talents soon called him to the office of an elder in this church, of which he published a particular account. After officiating here, with great acceptance for some time, he was sent to a society of the same sentiments at Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, where, after preaching two years, he died, in the spring of 1773, at the age of fifty-six.

When Mr. Sandeman had visited London, and founded a church there, he was invited to America by some persons who, having read his writings, wished to see his principles propagated in the western world. He complied, and undertook the voyage in 1764, accompanied by two of his brethren, one of whom was James Cargil, a glover, who had attracted much notice in Scotland, as the first unclerical, unlearned man, who dared to preach and exercise the office of an elder. They commenced their American mission by a visit to a society at Danbury, but after preaching there thirty days, and perceiving no satisfactory fruits of their ministry, they published a striking address and departed. Mr. Sandeman visited many other parts of America, but met with most success in New England, where he planted churches. When, however, the political disputes between Great

Britain and her colonies agitated the public mind, he found his situation extremely unpleasant; for, compelled by his principles to exhort to obedience, he so incensed the Americans, that when he died in 1771, they would scarcely suffer his body to be decently interred.

This denomination of dissenters has not become numerous in England. Besides the church in London, they have formed societies at Nottingham, Liverpool, Whitehaven, Newcastle, and other towns, which however are not large, and are tending to decay rather than to increase. Scotland and Ireland have, of late, proved most favourable to the sentiments of this communion. Many of their proselytes have since become baptists, in spite of the censures pronounced by Sandeman and Glas on those who deny the right of infants to the initiatory ordinance of the Christian religion. Controversy arose among the Sandemanians in 1798, in consequence of one of their leaders affirming, that by the work of faith and labour of love, they come to know they are of the truth, and obtain the assured hope of being accepted; that this is the highest possible enjoyment of Christ's people in this life, and to them the utmost evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. This doctrine was opposed by others as unscriptural, and contrary to the grand article of expecting salvation only in consequence of the work of Christ. The dispute was maintained for some time with great bitterness, and ended in the separation of a number of churches from the rest, in order to pursue this which Sandeman would have called "a devout path to hell."

In addition to this division, the Sandemanians are separated into several other classes. The followers of

Mr. M'Lean, of Edinburgh are baptists as well as disciples of Glas. The same may now be said of the societies in connection with Robert and James Haldane, of Edinburgh. Mr. Walker, of Dublin, is at the head of a society which differs both from baptists and pædobaptists; and Mr. Johnson, of Liverpool, has formed a division-denominated Johnsonians. Division, indeed, is the natural inevitable consequence of the bigotry which prevails in this communion, and its strong propensity to attach excessive importance to every thing in which they differ from others. Their late efforts for the diffusion of their sentiments will demand the notice of the future historian.

SECTION II.

THE SWEDENBORGIANS, OR THE CHURCH OF THE
NEW JERUSALEM.

THIS sect, like the preceding, derives its name from its founder, who was Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish baron. His followers, however, disclaim this personal appellation, preferring the name of Christian, and choosing to be distinguished from others by the title of "the New Jerusalem church".

Were we to commence with that which appears to the eye of a stranger the most important distinction of this communion, we should first describe its splendid temples, vestments, and modes of worship; but with the disciples of Swendenborg these are minor objects, which many of them sacrifice, continuing to join in the worship of other Christians, and satisfying themselves with their faith in the doctrines of the new church. The first and principal of these is, that baron Swedenborg was honoured with a divine mission to men; not, indeed, to make an entire new revelation, but to give, by means of visions and intercourse with the world of spirits, such an exposition of the sacred Scriptures as should lay the foundation of a new dispensation of religion. Those who maintain this first principle, firmly believe the Old and New Testament to be written under the highest

^p Swedenborg's "true Christian Religion, according to the doctrine of the New Jerusalem church, which was foretold by the Lord in Daniel vii. 13, 14. and in Rev. xxi. 12."

species of inspiration, which has so curiously indited these writings, that they contain three distinct senses, the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural. Four different kinds of style also are distinguished; the figurative, which was that of the most ancient church; the historical, suited to the next age; the prophetic, which belonged to the precursors of Christ; and the mixed style, adopted in the psalms of David. Each of the different senses of the Scriptures is accommodated to the angels of a distinct heaven, and to men on earth. The divine wisdom and will, which are repositied in the sacred volume, are not always discoverable from the letter, but lie concealed under it from those who are not furnished with the key to the internal sense. To speak, however, in the language of this sect, which is foreign from that of ordinary mortals, the sense of the letter is the continent, the basis, or firmament of its spiritual and celestial senses, being written according to the doctrine of correspondencies, which furnishes the key to the spiritual or internal sense; so that they equally err who, on the one hand, neglect the natural sense, or who, on the other, rest in the letter. But the baron must speak for himself.

“ I was once, raised up, as to my spirit, into the angelic heaven, and introduced to a particular society therein, and immediately some of the wise ones of the society came to me and said, what news from earth? I replied, this is new, that the Lord hath revealed arcana, which, in point of real excellence, exceed all the arcana heretofore revealed since the beginning of the church. They asked what arcana? I answered the following, 1. That in all and every part of the word there is a spiritual sense corresponding

with the natural sense, and that the word by that sense is the medium of conjunction between mankind and the Lord, and also of consociation with angels, and that the sanctity of the word resideth in that sense. 2. That the CORRESPONDENCIES, of which the spiritual sense of the word consisteth, are discovered. And the angels asked, had the inhabitants of the earth no knowledge heretofore concerning correspondencies? I replied, none at all, and that the doctrine of correspondencies had been hidden now for some thousands of years, *viz.* since the time of Job; that at that time, and in the ages before it, the science of correspondencies was esteemed the chief of sciences, being the fountain of wisdom to man, because it was the fountain of knowledge concerning spiritual things, relating to heaven and the church; but that this science, by reason of its being perverted to idolatrous purposes, was so obliterated and destroyed by the divine providence of the Lord, that no traces of it were left; that nevertheless at this time, it was again revealed by the Lord, in order to effect a conjunction of the members of the church with him, and their consociation with the angels, which purposes are effected by the word in which all and every thing are correspondencies¹.”

This doctrine of correspondence between every thing in the natural world, and its counterpart in the spiritual, as also between the parts of the human body and soul, is continually referred to in all the writings of this mystagogue, as essential to the right understanding both of the sacred Scriptures and of his inspired comments. Thus expounded the

¹ Swedenborg's true Christian Religion, translated from the Latin by the Rev. T. Hartley, Rector of Winwick, Northamptonshire, Sec. 846.

Jewish and Christian Scriptures are admitted to be the word of God, "the only medium of communication between God and man, the only source of genuine truth and knowledge concerning the divine nature, kingdom, and operations, and the only sure guide to men in their spiritual and eternal concerns." On this reverence for the Scriptures, the Swedenborgians found their claim to be distinguished from enthusiasts; in this they say consists the superiority of the baron to all fanatics and impostors; "since it is notorious that the latter are perpetually leading their deluded disciples to depend on the dictates of spirits in preference to the precepts of eternal truth; while Swedenborg is perpetually pointing out the great danger of such leading, and calling all his readers to be taught of God by and through the precepts of his holy word intellectually and rationally comprehended."

In the theology of this sect, the unity of God is inculcated, together with a divine Trinity; but essentially different from that taught in the Scriptures, which is branded by Swedenborg with the most odious epithets. He condemns the use of the expression three persons, as conveying to the minds of all who use it a tritheistic idea, which, he says, originated in the first council of Nice, and is the abomination which maketh desolate, spoken of in Daniel, and referred to by Christ. The divine Trinity which he teaches, is not supposed to have existed from eternity, but to have commenced, if we understand him, from the creation; and though he sometimes calls it by the scriptural expression, Father, Son, and Spirit, he more commonly speaks of the divine begetting, the Father; the divine human, the Son; and the divine proceeding, or Holy Spirit. As

body, soul, and operation are united in man, the Swendenborgian Trinity is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is therefore the God of heaven, and alone to be worshipped. Hence they say, that Jesus Christ is Jehovah manifested in the flesh; that he came into the world to glorify his humanity by making it one with the divine nature, so that the humanity is itself divine, and that there is no other way of access to God, but by this divine humanity, in which dwells the whole Trinity. For this again we have a visionary revelation. "As I listened to the angels, they perceived in my thoughts the common ideas concerning a Trinity in unity, and they said to me, what notions are these which thou entertainest? Are they not the offspring of natural light wherewith our spiritual light hath no agreement? Unless, therefore, thou removest these ideas from thy mind, we must shut heaven against thee, and take our leave. But I replied, enter, I beseech you, more thoroughly into my thoughts, and possibly ye will discover its agreement with your own. They did so, and perceived that by three persons I understood three proceeding divine attributes, which are creation, redemption, and regeneration; and that these attributes belong to one God, and that by the birth of the Son of God from eternity, I understood his birth foreseen from eternity. Then said the angels, it is well, and they desired me to declare upon their testimony, that whosoever doth not approach the true God cannot have entrance into heaven, and that God is Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah Lord, from eternity, Creator; in time, Redeemer; and to eternity, Regenerator."

To these notions of the Trinity and person of Christ, they add sentiments as peculiar concerning redemp-

tion, which they believe to consist, not in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer, as an atonement to satisfy the justice of the divine government ; but in bringing the hells into subjection, and the heavens into order and regulation, and thereby preparing the way for a new spiritual church ; checking the overgrown influence of wicked spirits over the minds of men, opening a nearer communication with the heavenly powers, and making salvation, which is regeneration, possible for all who believe in the incarnate God, and keep his commandments. " That redemption consisteth in these things " Swedenborg says, " I can declare with the utmost assurance ; inasmuch as the Lord is at this day accomplishing a redemption which was begun in the year 1757. And because it was permitted to me to see the whole process of this work, I could describe how the hells are subdued, and the new heavens were formed, but the description would itself take up an entire volume. "

The baron maintains, that this redemption could be effected only by an incarnate God, that without it no man could have been saved, nor could angels have remained in a state of integrity, that the passion of the cross was the final temptation which the Lord endured, as the grand prophet, and the means of the glorification of his humanity by union with his Father ; but that to believe redemption to have consisted in the passion of the cross is the fundamental error of the church, which, with the existence of the three Divine Persons from eternity, has perverted the whole church, so that nothing spiritual is remaining in it.

The doctrine of a divine influx holds a principal

² True Christian Religion, p. 140.

place in the Swedenborgian creed. Every man is supposed to receive this influx from God, but each one according to his state ; for by the evil nature of the wicked, good influxes are changed into their opposites. We are also subject to evil influences from the hells, or evil spirits, as well as good from the Lord and his angels ; and all angels, whether good or bad, were once men. By these opposite influences we are kept in equilibrio, at perfect liberty to turn which way we please. If we submit to God, we receive real life from him ; if not, we receive that life from hell, which is called spiritual death. Swedenborg assures us, there is not only a heaven and a hell, the natural consequence of the turn of our minds, but also an intermediate state, called the world of spirits. Few pass at once into heaven or hell, but the good are in the intermediate state purified from remaining evil, and the bad deprived of their extraneous goodness. About the third day after death, man rises again in a substantial body which was enclosed in his material body, and in this he lives as a man to eternity, whether in heaven or hell.

The last judgment is to be understood, according to the doctrine of correspondencies, to mean the consummation of the present Christian church, both among catholics and protestants of every denomination, and the new heavens are the new church in its internal, and the new earth, the Swedenborgian, or New Jerusalem church, in its external form. The essentials of the church and of salvation are an acknowledgment of the Lord's divinity, of the holiness of the word, and the life, which is charity. But to most readers enough has been said of these tenets.

The members of the new church are said to be numerous in England, Wales, Ireland, France, Holland, Sweden, Russia, Poland, Turkey, and even the East and West Indies and America. It is probable, however, that their numbers have been much exaggerated, and that they include many visionary sceptics, who have been amused rather than convinced by the revelation of the Swede. But as his avowed proselytes often remain in their former communion, the church of England, we are told, contains many of them among the laity; beside "a numerous body of clergy, who are disposed to think favourably of Swedenborg's testimony." Of these some affirm that it was never the baron's intention to form a new sect, while others suppose that he left it to each one to follow the course which his conscience might dictate, and a third class maintains the absolute necessity of establishing a church upon the principles revealed from heaven. If, however, Swedenborg left it to his disciples' discretion he must have contemplated the possible formation of a new sect, and if conscience should be called in to decide, would it not bid them flee from any communion which adopts the Athanasian or Nicene creeds, so severely reprobated by Swedenborg and the angels? As to the consistency of the baron himself, in thinking highly of the church of England, and in spending his days in the Lutheran communion, or of those clergymen who receive his revelations and yet continue to adopt the common prayer-book as the guide of faith and worship, we leave it to the judgment of those whom it concerns, for such Swedenborgians are not within our province.

Numerous members of the new church, convinced

that their peculiar doctrines demanded separate worship, published proposals for forming societies and contracting marriages upon their own principles. Dissenting chapels have been erected in London, Bristol, Birmingham, and other parts of the British empire*. They give the name of temple to their places of worship, which are very splendid, as are the vestments of the officiating ministers. A liturgy formed from that of the church of England, is used in their worship; but among the alterations made in order to render it perfectly Swedenborgian, the part, called the gloria patri, is exchanged for the following words: "To Jesus Christ be glory and dominion for ever and ever." To which the congregation answers, "He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last, who is, and was, and who is to come, the almighty Amen."

As this sect maintains no peculiar discipline, we pass to its characteristic features. Of these the first and chief is mysticism quite to the verge, if not to the very vortex of insanity. The material and the spiritual worlds, the internal and the external man, with their correspondencies, so possess their minds, that the objects of sense never produce the same ideas in Swedenborgians as in other men. Viewing every thing through the medium of their system, they speak accordingly, with great rationality, perhaps, in their own estimation, though with strange incoherence, according to the established language of man. The distinction which they make between themselves and other enthusiasts, appears extremely

* They have erected a magnificent church in Copenhagen, and at Baltimore, in North America,

futile; for what is the advantage of acknowledging the letter of the Scripture, instead of our own inspirations, if the Scripture is afterwards to be interpreted according to visions and angelic revelations?

The gnosticism which pestered the Christian church in its earliest ages is here revived. The æons of the ancient sect correspond to the hells of the modern; the gnostic doctrine of Jesus becoming Christ, at a certain time, resembles the Swedenborgian deification of the Saviour's humanity; and the *production* of the Holy Spirit is similar in both systems. The Swedish heresiarch adopted also the language which excites the ideas of the anthropomorphites. How could they have more effectually humanized the deity than Swedenborg has done, in the account of one of his visions, which informs us that through all the heavens they have no other idea of God, than as of a divine man, and that no other God could have created man in his image and likeness? Zealous socinians have claimed the members of the new church as unitarian brethren; but the unity which these maintain, socinians would abhor; as in the New Jerusalem "arianism, socinianism, and calvinism according to its original principles" are all held in devout abhorrence¹.

With regard to predestination, election, and free will, the disciples of Swedenborg are arminians; for they believe that their master saw Calvin in the other world, holding fast indeed his sentiments, but doomed for them to a sort of hell: it was, however, hard to expect that he should be convinced by a change of state of which Swedenborg says he was unconscious. Luther indeed was admitted into heaven, but only in

¹ True Christian Religion.

consequence of a posthumous conversion. Swedenborg was filled with the common enmity to calvinism, which he either did not understand, or wilfully misrepresented. But as there is more reason to think well of his honesty than of his intellects, it seems that he really thought the horrible caricature which he has sketched was a faithful pourtrait. How much then must we pity the man who, starting with horror at spectres of his own raising, frightened others by his vociferations against he knew not what? This, however, increases our regret, that so many should have yielded implicit credit to his visions; for who that truly understands the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, of election, or salvation by grace; can for a moment suppose that heaven favoured a man with revelations to overthrow a certain creed, without giving him light to understand it? While his ignorance is so palpable his illumination is incredible.

It is far easier to discover what doctrines Swedenborg rejects, than to define the system which he adopts. Their trinity has been called "Sabellianism, or a modification of deism, the result of the dilemma which arises from a desire to conform to the Scriptures, and an inability to make the requisite submission of the human understanding—a compromise between the reveries of natural reason and the dictates of revelation." On the atonement, they resort, with some philosophising divines, to the vulgar artifice of misrepresentation, by saying that redemption consists not in the vicarious suffering of one God to satisfy another." A denial of the intrinsic evil of sin, and of the essential holiness of God, which join to prove the necessity as well as excellence of the

° Christian Observer, June, 1806.

Christian doctrine of propitiation, runs through their whole system. Hence arises also their error concerning acceptance with God, which the Scriptures say "is by faith," in the merit of another, "that it might be by grace, and that no flesh should glory in the divine presence:" but the Swedenborgians maintain that it is the joint effect of faith, charity, and good works. For his decided hostility to this amalgamation of law and gospel, Calvin was doomed to hell by the founder of the new church, nor could Luther and Melancthon obtain from him admission into heaven, till they had been purged in an intermediate state from attachment to justification by faith.

The success of the new church in proselyting some persons of considerable intellectual power, which at first sight appears unaccountable, may be attributed to this rejection of the doctrines which offend the carnal mind, aided by that love of the marvellous which often possesses men of strong understandings, and the gratification afforded by a glimpse, or rather a stare, within the veil which conceals futurity from the prying eyes of human curiosity. A sort of Mahomedan heaven, also, is presented in Swedenborgian's visions to the tastes of those who are offended with the pure spirituality of the scriptural representation of future happiness. To become so familiar with our final bliss as not merely to see, but to touch, to handle it; to indulge, in spite of the Redeemer's words, the hope of marrying there, or being given in marriage, of being restored so completely to a world which we were unwilling to leave, as scarcely to be conscious of any transition, and thus to perpetuate the enjoyment of the beloved objects of sense, has been, it is to be feared, the golden

bait which has induced many to swallow even the visions of Emanuel Swedenborg.

When once this fascination has been effected, reason and scripture are set at defiance. With a world of objects presented to their eyes, and ears, and touch while awake, totally distinct from the scenes which others perceive, except when asleep; they often hold language which sounds to ordinary mortals as incoherent raving, while the language of others presents to their minds ideas which were never intended to be conveyed. To reason with such persons is fruitless, for want of that identity of ideas which forms the medium of rational intercourse. To argue with them from the Scriptures is impossible; because they turn from the evident import of the words, to treat them as cyphers, of which only the visions of Swedenborg can furnish the key.

The history of this sect is very little more than that of its founder. Emanuel Swedenborg was born at Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, the twenty-ninth of January, 1689. His father, whose name was Joseph Swedborg, was bishop of West Gothia, and president of the Swedish church in Pennsylvania and London. As he was a man of celebrity for learning and piety, he endeavoured, not without success, to form his son to habits of study, and to the love of sacred meditation. The young man gave early proofs of his ability; and having acquired an elegant Latin style, with considerable skill in mathematics and natural philosophy, he became an author in his twentieth year. From the academy of Upsal he went to the universities of England, Holland, France, and Germany, and returning to Stockholm, in 1714, was soon after appointed to the lucrative and honourable

post of assessor of the metallic college, by Charles the twelfth, who favoured him with many marks of distinguished consideration*.

On the death of Charles, he found another patron in his successor, queen Ulrica Eleonora, by whom having been ennobled, he took his seat among the equestrian order by the title of baron Swedenborg. He was made fellow of the royal academy of sciences at Stockholm, and of several foreign societies. In high esteem with the bishops and learned men of his own country, he maintained also a correspondence with the most distinguished scholars in Europe, and published so many philosophical works, that it is doubted whether any other man, except his countryman Linnæus, ever gave equal proofs of industry. The study of many of his works forms a principal branch of the literature cultivated in many of the universities on the continent.

“ But whatever of worldly honour or advantage,” he says, “ may appear to be in the things before mentioned, I hold them but as matters of low estimation, when compared to the honour of that holy office to which the Lord himself hath called me, his unworthy servant, in a personal appearance, in the year 1743, to open in me a sight of the spiritual world, and to enable me to converse with spirits and angels,

* He accompanied Charles to the fatal siege of Fredericshall, where he proved to the king that knowledge is power. The career of the impetuous conqueror was arrested, as he was unable to bring up his heavy artillery, on account of the badness of the roads and a great fall of snow. The philosopher contrived means to cut through the mountains which divide Sweden from Norway, to raise the valleys and form a canal of two miles and a half in length, on which he sent his master five large boats and a sloop loaded with battering pieces.

and this privilege has continued with me to this day. It was in London that, on a certain night, a man appeared to me in the midst of a strong shining light and said, 'I am God, the Lord, the Creator, and Redeemer. I have chosen thee to explain to men the interior and spiritual sense of the sacred writings. I will dictate to thee what thou oughtest to write.' From this time he devoted himself entirely to the work to which he supposed himself called, studying the Scriptures and publishing his discoveries of arcana, as he termed them."

In his zeal to propagate the doctrines of his missions, Swedenborg frequently visited distant cities, particularly London and Amsterdam, where all his theological works were printed at a great expence. Wherever he resided, when on his travels, he was a mere recluse, almost inaccessible, though, in his own country, of a free and open behaviour. He affected no honour, but declined it; pursued no worldly interest, but spent his time in travelling and printing. "The great Swedenborg," says the Rev. Mr. Hartley, "who employed his peculiar talents, and the greatest part of a long life, for the benefit of

"I could be made present," he says, "with the inhabitants of other planets in our system, and also with the inhabitants of planets that are in other worlds and revolve about other suns. By virtue of such presence, not of place, I have conversed with apostles, departed popes, emperors, and kings, with the late reformers of the church, Luther, Calvin, and Melancthon, and with others from distant countries. After death a man is so little changed, that he does not know but he is living in the present world; he eats and drinks, and even enjoys conjugal delights as in this world. The resemblance between these two worlds is so great, that in the spiritual world there are cities with palaces and houses, and also writings and books, employments and merchandises; there is gold, and silver, and precious stones there."

his brethren ; high in honour and esteem as he was, lived several years in an obscure lodging in London, in which he ended his days. O Lord, how wonderful are thy dealings with thy most favoured servants, to bring them into a conformity with thy low and abject state when on earth, in order to exalt them to that glory which thou hast prepared for them. I saw him in the beginning of his last sickness, and asked him if he was comforted with the society of angels as before, and he answered, that he was²."

He died March 29, 1772, and after lying in state, his remains were deposited in a vault in the Swedish church near Radcliff Highway. His funeral oration or eulogy was delivered in the great hall of the house of nobles, at Stockholm, by Monsieur Sandel, super-intendant of the mines, knight of the polar star, and fellow of the academy of sciences, the members of which attended this funeral ceremony. Mr. Hartley says, " I have weighed the character of Swedenborg in the scale of my best judgment. From the personal knowledge I had of him, from the best information I could procure concerning him, and from a diligent perusal of his writings, I have found him to be a sound divine, the good man, the deep philosopher, the universal scholar, and the polite gentleman."

It is, however, admitted by the translator of his " True Christian Theology," that " he was seized with a fever, attended with a delirium, about twenty years before he died ; and men have gone about to pick up what he said, and did, and how he looked at the time, and have propagated this, both in private and in print, a proceeding so contrary to common humanity, that one cannot think of it without offence,

² Preface to True Christian Theology, p. 9.

may even horror.?" Here is probably a reference to what Mr. Wesley has said of the baron's missions commencing at this season of madness*; which, indeed, is the kindest and most reasonable solution of the mystery. That Swedenborg was a man of upright intentions and eminent abilities, both natural and acquired, is indisputable; but when we are referred to his writings to decide concerning his sanity, what reasonable man can hesitate to say that they afford sufficient evidence that he was insane? His was, indeed, no ordinary insanity, but that of a devotional and philosophic mind, which often appears greater in ruins than when underanged. Availing himself of former stores of knowledge, such a madman will sometimes reason so justly on false ideas, as to perplex for a moment the most sagacious observer to determine whether its effusions are the aberrations of diseased intellect, or the elevation of genius bordering on inspiration.

The theological writings of Swedenborg were not much noticed during his life, but have since his death, been translated into German, English, and

* Though unable to recollect the page in Mr. Wesley's writings which contains this assertion, we present to our readers another passage in which he delivers the same opinion. "I sat down to read and seriously consider some of the writings of baron Swedenborg. I began with huge prejudices in his favour, knowing him to be a pious man, one of a strong understanding, of much learning, and one who thoroughly believed himself inspired. But I could not hold out long. Any one of his visions puts his real character out of doubt. He is one of the most ingenious, lively, entertaining madmen that ever set pen to paper. But his waking dreams are so wild, so far remote both from Scripture and common sense, that one might as easily swallow the stories of Tom Thumb, or Jack the giant-killer. Wesley's Journal, vol. XXXII. p. 289.

French. The first translation into our language was by Mr. Hartley, a clergyman, which attracted so much attention, that all the baron's works soon appeared in an English dress, and passed through several editions. It is asserted, that a society of gentlemen in Manchester, formed for the purpose of publishing and circulating them, printed, in the course of a few years, upwards of sixteen thousand copies, as appears from the annual reports of the society. Some opposition was excited; though many were deterred from entering the lists against a madman, by the persuasion that his reveries would find admission only into minds as disordered as his own, with whom reason and argument, though derived from Scripture, could find no admission.

Dr. Priestley, however, determined to try his polemical powers in the conflict with visions, angels, influxes, and all the arcana of other worlds. He published, in 1791, "Letters to the Members of the New Jerusalem Church at Birmingham," in which he labours with all his zeal and address to overthrow their doctrine concerning the exclusive divinity of Jesus Christ. He was instantly answered, at the request of the body, by Robert Hindmarsh, one of its ministers, who officiated in their metropolitan temple. His "Letters to Dr. Priestley" are written in the true spirit of the new church, and with very considerable ability. While he ingeniously repels the doctor's arguments, he openly asserts that socinians are not Christians, and that their grand peculiarity, the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, is the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost. Were it not that the subject is too serious, involving the interests of eternity, nothing could be more amusing than this conflict between the

opposing elements, fire and water, scepticism and mysticism. Nor can any one who has been accustomed to regard the Swedenborgians as visionary enthusiasts, and their antagonist as an acute logician, fail of being surprised at the appearance of ease and success with which Mr. Hindmarsh combats Dr. Priestley.

But the "Christian Observer," a periodical publication by evangelical clergymen, has been the most formidable opponent of the new Jerusalem church. "We certainly do find," say the writers of the review in that work, "some difficulty in conceiving how a consistent clergyman of the church of England can continue in her communion, accept her emoluments, and join in or lead her service, and, at the same time, hold and propagate the tenets of Emanuel Swedenborg." The controversy with this sect may be said to have closed with their able review of "A few plain Answers to the Question, why do you receive the Testimony of Baron Swedenborg? addressed from a Minister to his Congregation, by the Rev. J. L. Clowes, M. A. Rector of St. John's Church, Manchester, and late fellow of Trinity-college, Cambridge^b."

As the zeal for the erection of gorgeous temples, which this sect displayed in its infancy, has of late declined, nothing now remains to attract strangers; while the charm of novelty having vanished, has left some of the proselytes, which it had acquired, to sink back into mere indifference, or into their former communions. Thus, after commencing with splendid expectations, the new church is gradually falling into disrepute, and the number of its votaries, never very

^b Christian Observer, June, 1806.

great, is now decreasing. This must, to the most liberal and catholic mind, which has not been deranged by Swedenborg's visions, afford pleasure ; for while almost every sect, with its errors and evils, has also its excellencies and uses, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to say what advantage could accrue to truth, to religion, or human society by the increase of this communion.

CHAPTER II.

STATE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

IN the first period of this history, religious liberty was seen obtaining an establishment in England, under the enlightened patronage of king William ; but afterwards trembling for her very existence, in the latter end of queen Anne's reign. A more delightful scene was presented by the second period ; religious liberty advancing with uniform steps, and taking under her protection not only the original dissenters, but both the tribes of methodists, though some of them were almost unwilling to claim her aid. In the third and last period, to which we now proceed, the prospect is more varied, but it is on the whole pleasing : by the superintending care of divine Providence, the way has been safe ; and religious liberty has maintained her ground, and asserted her rights.

In the eventful reign of George the third, the dissenters have not retained that high degree of favour with the court which they had enjoyed ever since the accession of the house of Hanover. They had before been treated with the highest confidence, as cordial and unshaken friends ; but they now began to be viewed by many members of the administrations with jealousy and suspicion, if not with aversion and disgust. To this unfavourable change various causes successively contributed, which with

their influence on the public mind it will be necessary to detail.

Time, which often produces what reason and argument could not effect, had made a considerable alteration in the clergy of the establishment. From the era of the accession, the majority of them were disaffected to the house of Hanover, and cherished in their bosoms the exiled family of Stewart as the legitimate claimants of the British throne. But seeing no prospect of their restoration, they began to despair of success in the attainment of their wishes; and a new generation rising up to the priesthood, of similar political principles, but less strongly attached to the particular object of loyalty, about the beginning of this reign they forsook the Stewarts, and became most passionately enamoured of George the third, and the existing government. So great an accession of strength was of high importance: they were therefore received with open arms, and shared liberally in the favour of the court, and in the dignities and emoluments of the church.

Into this new state of favour they brought with them all their former principles. Like their predecessors, they entertained the most exalted ideas of the powers and prerogatives of kings, and an aversion to all who were without the pale of the establishment, whom they designated by the title of schismatics and fanatics. These sentiments, to which the moderate dignitaries of the two former reigns were strangers, began to echo from the pulpits, and were insinuated into the ears of the court. That a doctrine so palatable should be received with pleasure, and its advocates cherished as faithful and amiable friends, is exceedingly natural. How

few are there who possess power but wish for more? at least they love the ghostly prophets who bring them tidings from heaven that it is their right, and denounce a curse on those who would contract its limits. Insinuations were also thrown out by these new favourites against the dissenters as a dangerous body, disaffected both to church and state, republican in their principles, enemies to kings and thrones, and determined foes to the established clergy and bishops, the great and firm pillars of monarchy. As this doctrine was blended with the former, it was more readily listened to; and as the dissenters were no longer needed for support, they sunk into disesteem, and then became suspected of evil designs against the existing order of things. The part which the generality of dissenters took in some important political questions that divided the inhabitants of England during this reign, seemed to sanction these opinions, and to prove the accusations just.

The first remarkable event which took place, was the American revolution. To particular notice in this history it lays claim from the connection which the dissenters had with the ministers and people of that country, and the interest they felt in the unhappy contest; its influence on the cause of religious liberty throughout the civilized world; and the many important lessons which by placing the citizens of America in a state respecting religion unknown before, it has taught and is still teaching mankind.

The dispute with America was the first political event, since the accession of the house of Hanover, which discovered a difference of opinion between the dissenters and the government. Like most family

quarrels it was injurious to both parties, and peculiarly unfortunate in its issue. Colonies are in general placed in a very unfavourable situation. The primary object of their existence and prosperity is to promote the benefit of the parent state ; and where interests clash, theirs must always be sacrificed to its claims. While they are weak and inconsiderable, and, besides, stand in need of patronage and defence, these disadvantages may be overlooked ; but as they advance in population and opulence, the grievance will be more sensibly felt, and without great moderation in the mother country, a separation with violence will be the final result.

The hardships of the first settlers in all the parts of America had been great, but of those in the North dreadful beyond expression ; and it was by their own energies that they surmounted the numerous difficulties which frequently threatened them with destruction. But time, fortitude, and patience securing to them a firm footing in the country, their progress in population and in improvements became rapid beyond example ; and being cherished by the fostering care of Great Britain, which found her interest in the patronage and prosperity of her colonies, at the conclusion of the war of 1757 they amounted to more than three millions, who were living in a greater degree of comparative abundance and comfort than any [other of the subjects in the empire. That war was terminated in 1763, and, according to the sentiments of the men of the world, in a manner very glorious to the British arms ; but having involved the country in the natural effects of this glory, a considerable increase of the national debt, for which it was found difficult to provide, the

ministers turned their eyes to America, and wished to impose on that country a part of the burden. In 1765 the apple of discord was thrown down by the British parliament, when the stamp act was passed, to subject the Americans to direct contributions for the benefit of the empire.

No sooner were these proceedings known on the other side of the Atlantic, than the affection and confidence which had hitherto reigned there, gave place to jealousy and distrust. The Americans were a high spirited people; their ideas of political liberty bordered more on the republican than the monarchial form. They lived too in a degree of practical freedom from restraint, and of uncontrouled management of their internal affairs, which was scarcely known in Europe, and which tended to fill them with more exalted thoughts of their own personal consequence. Having no nobility among them to decorate society they grew up without the sentiments of veneration for the order which were, at that time, universally felt in Europe: nor were the few who were sent to them in the form of governors the best calculated to inspire it. Feeling nothing analogous to the influence of these restraints which the various lines of subordination create among us, and conceiving themselves equal to any of the sons of Adam, their high spirits were not to be terrified with threatenings, nor soothed with flatteries, nor overawed by the pomp and ornaments of official dignity; so that when their wishes were opposed, they were the most difficult to be governed of perhaps any people on the face of the earth. Indeed, unless the measures pursued were agreeable to themselves, and appeared conducive to their welfare, no dependence could be placed on their subjection and attachment.

To manage these self-willed children of the woods, required a degree of political skill, and philosophical moderation which the English ministry does not appear to have acquired. Power carries with it temptations which tend to corrupt the purest minds; and when nobility is added to power, the danger is increased more than twofold. They consider themselves as the legitimate rulers of their country, and all the industrious orders of society as made to be subject to their controul; and it seems to them the very summit of arrogance for such persons to stand up as their equals, and much more to attempt to oppose their will. Had there been puissant princes, dukes of New York and Massachusetts, or right reverend fathers in God, metropolitans of Philadelphia and Boston, to negotiate in favour of their country with the English ministry, they would have been listened to with respect as equals in rank and in claims. But the Americans were a nameless multitude, unadorned with one individual of title, and were looked down upon as an inferior order of beings who ought to be coerced, and made to submit without ceremony to the mandates of the British court. When the Americans remonstrated against their measures, and sent over Dr. Franklin to England for the purpose, the man was but a printer and postmaster; and though he possessed talents which all who were sitting on the highest thrones might have beheld with envy, he was treated with contemptuous harshness, and his remonstrances were disregarded and ridiculed. After a long course of negotiations and disputes, agreements and quarrels, Britain still insisting on her rights to impose taxes on America, and determining to procure submission, though by force, which was

unhappily employed, America, at last, in 1775, drew the sword to assert her liberty; declared her independence; fought for it during seven years with various success; and at last obtained it by the treaty of peace with Great Britain in 1782.

It was one unhappy effect of the American war, that, as it divided the people of Great Britain into two angry parties, which vented their rage against each other with excessive violence, it completely destroyed that national harmony which had subsisted before this mournful event. The dissenters, in general, adopted the cause of the Americans, and reprobated the measures of the ministry as impolitic and unjust. But these sentiments were by no means peculiar to them; they were the sentiments of the great body of the English whigs, who, both in parliament and by all other means, opposed every measure in succession against America, with an ardour and keenness almost unknown before, and who at last brought over the main body of the people to a conviction of the impolicy at least, of the proceedings of the government.

The principles of liberty appeared to the dissenters to be endangered in this unnatural contest. The haughty tone of the British ministry, and the unqualified submission which, in the day of their success, they demanded from the Americans as the condition of reconciliation and favour, gave rise to the strongest suspicion that it was their design to forge chains for the vanquished colonists, and to hold in their own hands the despot's lash. It had been well if they had used milder language, and uttered sentiments more consonant to the feelings of that most respectable portion of the English public, which holds liberty

dear as life itself, and hears with detestation every expression which savours of the tyrant or the slave.

The dissenters were also attached to the Americans by the peculiar ties of religious union, and the intimacy of friendship. Many of the colonists, in almost every state, maintained the same doctrines of faith, and the same system of church government as themselves; and in the northern states they formed almost the mass of the people. A constant and extensive intercourse was kept up between them; mutual assistance was given in whatever related to the advancement of the cause of religion; and they considered themselves as members of the same body. Who will wonder that with such feelings the dissenters were stedfastly opposed to the American war; and that the sufferings of their brethren and friends, which were in many instances exceedingly bitter, excited the most painful sensations in their breasts, and produced the most unfavourable ideas of the men by whose measures these sufferings were inflicted?

In the mean time, a large portion of the English clergy, and that part especially which veered round from the house of Stewart, were fiercely inveighing against the rebellious spirit of the Americans, and uttering the bitterest anathemas against them and all their abettors at home and abroad. Their violence was increased by the reports of the episcopal ministers in America, who, being in general hostile to the cause of the people, were forced to flee to England, and brought with them the most doleful tales of the oppression and cruelty which they had endured for their loyalty to their king, and their attachment to their church.

When the independence of America was confirmed

by peace; speculation on the consequences filled the breast of every man in England, who laid claim to the character of a thinker. As a friend of his country, each man lamented that so large a portion of population, industry, and capital as the colonies contained, should be cut off from the body of the empire. But the lovers of mankind were consoled by the appearance of a constitution embracing the principles of liberty in the fullest extent in which they had ever been established in any country under heaven, rising in the western continent remote from the vortex of European politics, furnishing within its extensive boundaries an asylum for the oppressed of every tyrant's land, and providing for future generations of the human race a catechism of principles favourable to the character of the individual, to social virtue and happiness, and to the interests of pure religion.

Nor was the American revolution less favourable to the cause of religious liberty. It presented, indeed, a system unique in the annals of Christendom. An established religion was destroyed in the states in which it formerly had existence. Religion, in all its forms, was equally protected; and the members of each were eligible to all the offices of the state without distinction. Of the presidents, Washington was an episcopalian; and Adams, the second, an independent. An alliance between church and state, that the temporal sword of the state, with its strong blade and its keen edge, might defend the feeble and unwarlike ecclesiastical body; and that the church with her spiritual sword dipt in anathemas and the flames of hell, might compel the people to yield obedience to the state, was a mysterious jargon which they did not understand, and would not adopt.

Religion was left to her own energies, and to the zeal of her friends for her support. The government aiming at the people's good, felt no need of the cant or thunder of priests to secure obedience to political institutions; and the ministers of the Gospel, disdaining the idea of being the tools of the existing rulers, influenced by the spirit of their office, taught their hearers to love God and their neighbour, to be good parents and children, good masters and servants, and upright and virtuous in all their departments; and by inculcating these principles made them good members of civil society, and subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. The effect of the experiment, after the lapse of near thirty years, has been a perfect harmony among the different sects: no contention about religious sentiments, has ever, in the smallest degree, disturbed the peace of society; and from unquestionable evidence, pure and spiritual religion has been in a progressive state from the establishment of the system to the present day.

Besides this mighty convulsion in the political world, several events took place within the British isles, by which the cause of religious liberty was affected; and various exertions were made to extend its dominion and its triumphs.

The first attempt was made from a quarter which excited the astonishment of the public, and presented a phenomenon which never had its prototype in England. In 1772, several hundreds of the established clergy, supported by laymen who were bound by some of the ecclesiastical laws, presented a petition to parliament praying for deliverance from subscription to the liturgy and articles of the church. In their

petition they express their sentiments to the following purport. "We apprehend that we have certain rights and privileges which we hold of God alone, one of which is, the exercise of our own reason and judgment. We are also warranted by those original principles of the reformation from popery, on which the church of England is founded, to judge in searching the Scriptures each man for himself, what may or may not be proved thereby. From the enjoyment of this valuable privilege, we find ourselves in a great measure precluded by the laws relative to subscription, requiring us to acknowledge certain articles and confessions of faith and doctrine drawn up by fallible men, to be all and every one of them agreeable to the sacred Scriptures. We request to be freed from these impositions, and to be restored to our undoubted right as protestants, of interpreting the Scriptures for ourselves, without being bound by any human explanations, a submission to which is an encroachment on our rights both as men and as members of a protestant establishment." What dissenter, in reading these noble ideas which form the fundamental article of his own creed, but must exclaim with joy and admiration, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

So novel an application may naturally be supposed to have had many enemies in the British legislature, and they did not fail to press their petitioners with arguments which they thought to be of considerable force. The more liberal of them professed that the reasoning of the petitioners would come with a good grace from the lips of dissenters who ought undoubtedly to be left to choose their religious creed; but that an established church must have more special regulations and laws for its government and direction,

The power to enact these and to frame an ecclesiastical constitution resides in the legislature, on whom it is incumbent to frame it in a manner the most conducive to the public good. The clergy, they said, might have their private opinions on religious subjects; but that being teachers of religion salaried by the state, they ought in their public discourses to bring forward for the instruction of the people, nothing but what accords with the ecclesiastical statutes of the realm; because it was dangerous to agitate their minds with theological discussions. They further informed the petitioners, that if they disliked the articles and liturgy, they were under no necessity to enter on the clerical office; or if they had since changed their sentiments, it was always in their power to alter their profession and bid adieu to the established priesthood.

Another, but a more bitter and unreasonable class of opponents, consisted of the high church party in the house of commons. In their eyes the petition appeared so highly to endanger the safety of the church, as to threaten its destruction. If the articles, they said, be taken away, the abolition of the liturgy may be expected to follow; and then where is the church of England, the glory of the reformation! As the church and the state were so closely connected as to depend for their very existence on each retaining its present mode of being, they considered a compliance with the petition as the ruin of both. "Recollect," said they, "the overthrow of the church by the sectaries in the last century; and if you yield to these men's wishes, you must expect a repetition of the same disastrous scenes."

The cause of the petitioners was pleaded with

great eloquence by sir William Meredith, who presented the petition to the house, and by several other members of eminent abilities, who argued with irresistible force from the topics on which the dissenters insist in their controversy with the establishment; but which were supposed to be inapplicable to a body of men salaried by the state for teaching the national creed. After an animated debate, the prayer of the petitioners was rejected by a majority of two hundred and seventeen to seventy-one.

The conduct of the petitioners was exceedingly displeasing to many of their brethren. Among others Mr. Toplady published a pamphlet against them, in which he charges them with "destroying the title deeds which insured the property to others, and then wishing to keep the estate as their own." But why may not men complain if they think themselves aggrieved, and endeavour, as the petitioning clergy did, to obtain redress by legal means? The church of England claims neither infallibility nor perfection; and her sons who conceive themselves injured by their mother's severity, may solicit their father's interference. The question of subscription to articles of faith, the hardship and the inexpediency of the practice, had been a few years before discussed with considerable ability by archdeacon Blackburne in the "the Confessional;" and though a "Vindication of the Right of Protestant Churches to require the Clergy to subscribe to an established Confession of Faith and Doctrines," appeared from the pen of professor Rutherford, the other side of the question had numerous adherents, whose minds were by these means prepared and influenced to make the unsuccessful attempt to obtain relief. They were blamed

by many for not maturing their plan with sufficient wisdom, for acting with precipitation, and especially for not consulting the bishops and ensuring their patronage. But probably they knew that they had no encouragement to expect from that quarter; and judged it best to imitate the conduct of those lovers, who despairing of the approbation of their parents, think it safer to marry without their consent than in opposition to their will.

In the debates on the petition of the dissatisfied clergy, when the case of the dissenters in respect to subscription was mentioned, some of the most strenuous opposers declared themselves willing to relieve them from the subscription to the thirty-five articles and a half of the established church. As the clergy reaped the substantial benefits of an establishment, it was but equitable that they should conform to all the regulations which the legislature had deemed proper for the public instruction; but as dissenters enjoyed none of these emoluments, it was reasonable that they should be allowed to hold and to preach what sentiments they thought good.

This display of liberality gave great pleasure to the generality of the dissenting ministers, few of whom were at this time in the habit of subscribing to the articles. Some had embraced a very different system from that which the articles contained, and could not with a good conscience subscribe what they did not believe. By many, who still retained the belief of the doctrines of the nonconformists, an opinion was entertained that the civil magistrate has no right to demand a subscription to any human creed; and that to submit to such a requisition, is to admit his

authority in matters of religion. There was a more numerous class which did not carry their ideas so far as to account subscription unlawful; but they considered it as improper and ineligible, and were pleased with the hopes of being freed from what they did not approve. All these cordially united in their wishes to apply to parliament for relief from the present subscription, and to substitute in its room a declaration of their belief of the sacred Scriptures as the rule of their faith and practice*. The advocates for subscription were but few.

In the session of 1772, a motion for the relief of protestant dissenting ministers from subscription to the articles, was made by sir Harry Houghton, the representative of an old and very respectable dissenting family in Lancashire, which being seconded by sir George Saville, one of the first characters in England, both for personal and public virtue, leave was given to bring in a bill to that effect. It was ushered into the house with the most flattering expressions of approbation. But there is a certain *mania* which seizes a high church tory, whenever he hears of any privilege or indulgence to be granted to a dissenter; it exerted its influence on the present occasion, and it roused them to speak against the bill with all their might.

* One minister, Mr. Fell, an orthodox dissenter, wrote several pamphlets to prove that it is utterly unlawful to subscribe, as a test, any confession or declaration whatever, proposed or demanded by the civil magistrate. In answer to men of this sentiment, Job Orton urged, "that subscribing is not acknowledging the magistrate's right in sacred matters; but only submitting to the condition on which he grants dissenting ministers an indemnity from civil offices, and the burdens which as subjects they ought to bear in common with others." Orton's Letters, vol. II. p. 10.

To free the dissenters from subscription, they said, would fill the country with enthusiasm, absurdity, and error. When the present wholesome restraint was removed, arians, socinians, and even deists would deface and undermine the Christian religion. As the application of the clergy, who had a prior claim to favour, was refused, certainly the dissenters ought not to be gratified with an acquiescence in their wishes. It might be called a bill not for the relief but for the encouragement of dissenters, by which the church of England would be weakened and injured, and a republican religion, at all times a foe to monarchy and episcopacy, would be strengthened and cherished. The act of toleration was designed for the protection of those who could subscribe the articles enjoined; but those who now came forward with their complaints, must be persons of a different character, and therefore not entitled to its privileges. The penalties of the law, though they hung over them in terror, were never enforced against those who did not subscribe: why then did they trouble the government, from whose lenity they enjoyed so many blessings? To pass this bill into a law, would be to reward them for their disregard of the act of toleration.

The reasoning of the friends of the bill easily dispelled the airy sophisms of their opponents; and more effectually to confirm their arguments in favour of religious liberty, they adduced facts. In neither Scotland nor Ireland is subscription required of any of the sects which dissent from the churches established in those countries; and yet not one injurious consequence has arisen from the enjoyment of their liberty. The weight of these considerations was felt by the house, the bill passed with a general concu-

rence, and could even boast of the approbation, or at least the acquiescence of the minister.

From the lords it met with a very different reception. The bishops, those vigilant guardians of the church, ever anxious for its safety, and tremblingly alive to all its concerns, thought that they descried danger in the bill, and summoning up the powers of their eloquence, gave it the most decided opposition. That deference, which the British nobility may be expected to feel for their spiritual guides in matters of religion, so as to be a fair pattern to their inferiors, was felt on this occasion ; for when the vote was called for, the bill was thrown out by a hundred and two against twenty-nine.

Not driven to despair by the frowns of the episcopal bench, the dissenters determined to make a second attempt, and in the following year (1773) the bill was again introduced, and passed the commons with substantial marks of approbation. But when it was carried to the lords, the former opposition was renewed, and with equal effect, for it was again thrown out. In the course of the debate, Dr. Drummond, archbishop of York, feeling all the spirit of his order, attacked the dissenting ministers with singular violence, and charged them with being men of close ambition. They had, however, the happiness to find an advocate in the great earl of Chatham, who arose in reply, and spoke in the following terms. " This is judging uncharitably, and whoever brings such a charge without proof, defames." Here he paused for a moment, and then proceeded ; " The dissenting ministers are represented as men of close ambition, they are so, my lords ; and their ambition is to keep close to the college of fishermen, not of cardinals ;

and to the doctrine of inspired apostles, not to the decrees of interested and aspiring bishops. They contend for a spiritual creed and spiritual worship; we have a calvinistic creed, a popish liturgy, and an arminian clergy. The reformation has laid open the Scriptures to all; let not the bishops shut them again. Laws in support of ecclesiastical power are pleaded; which it would shock humanity to execute. It is said that religious sects have done great mischief when they were not kept under restraint: but history affords no proof that sects have ever been mischievous, when they were not oppressed and persecuted by the ruling church."

A multitude of pamphlets issued from the press on the occasion, and both the friends and foes of subscription told their tale, and uttered their wishes, their hopes, and their complaints. Israel Mauduit, Dr. Furneaux, Dr. Kippis, Mr. Radcliff, and others in the new scheme of doctrines; Dr. Stennett, Dr. Gibbons, Mr. Hitchin, and Mr. Fell among the orthodox; dean Tucker, Dr. Butler, and some anonymous writers in the establishment, all contended in this field of controversy: some on each side with ability and temper, and others with heat equal at least to their light^a.

Those ministers, whose sentiments were hostile to

^a See the Case of the Dissenting Ministers by Israel Mauduit. Dr. Kippis's Vindication of the Dissenting Ministers. Radcliff's Sermon occasioned by the Denial of Relief respecting Subscription. Candid Thoughts, &c. by an orthodox dissenter. Objections against the Applications considered, by Thomas Gibbons. Remarks on the Postscript to Mr. Mauduit's Case, &c. by a firm friend to truth, &c. A free and dispassionate Account of the late Application, &c. by Samuel Stennett.

the doctrine of the articles, were among the first to engage in the business, and in the beginning, the most active. Such, indeed, was their ardour, that they were accused of acting with imprudent and indecent haste. The meeting of the London ministers, it was said, was fixed on so early a day, that many had not timely notice: and when they assembled the business was so intemperately hurried on and concluded, that some who came a little too late, found every thing settled: nor were the country ministers consulted, as they ought to have been, nor their consent obtained. They were justly blamed too for the strain of their pamphlets, in which they rendered prominent their peculiar notions in theology; and instead of going on those broad grounds, which were common to all as dissenters, they spoke disrespectfully of the ancient nonconformists, as men groping in the dark, while they extolled themselves and their fellows as unspeakably superior in biblical knowledge, in clearer views of truth, and in improvements without number. But had they not asserted this, and had they left us to judge from their discourses and their writings, no one would ever have made the discovery; nor have supposed that Baxter and Howe, Bates and Owen were in the smallest danger of being eclipsed by these panegyrists of themselves.

Greater commendation, in the prosecution of the business, is due to that more numerous body among the ministers who had no quarrel with the doctrine in the articles, but who preferred a declaration of their belief in the sacred Scriptures. While they considered arian and socinian sentiments as diametrically opposite to the principles of the Gospel, yet

because they were friends to universal liberty of conscience, and would not have truth defended by persecuting statutes and the magistrate's sword, they were desirous of lending their aid to free the men who had embraced these errors from the penalties to which they were exposed.

Some of the dissenting ministers opposed the application to parliament, because the relief was desired by men who opposed the truth, and wished to oppose it still more openly, whom therefore they could not conscientiously encourage by their approbation, or even by their silence. Whatever praise may be due to the good intentions of such men; on the liberal principles of general liberty and the rights of conscience, their conduct must be left to be vindicated by themselves: we will not be their advocates.

More may be urged in defence of another class of dissenting ministers, who said to the arians and socinian teachers: "we feel no grievance in the toleration act. If you do, go and apply for relief; but do it in your name and not in ours: we will not oppose you, but we will not patronize your cause, because we think your religious principles dangerous to the souls of men." Such was the reasoning of Mr. Hitchin's pamphlet. Indeed in the various writings published on this subject, the orthodox display a great superiority of temper and moderation to those who had embraced the arian and socinian creed. To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to compare the pamphlets of Hitchin, Gibbons, and Stennett with those of Mauduit, and Radcliff, and some others of that class.

After repeated applications for relief, rendered vain by an opposition so formidable and so decided, the

cause seemed to be set for ever at rest, at least till all those bishops and nobles had slept with their predecessors and their fathers. But the determinations of the British peers are not like the laws of the Medes and Persians which cannot be altered. In the space of a few years, some things occurred which made it appear decent and proper that the dissenting ministers should obtain what they had so earnestly desired, and had been so peremptorily refused. Accordingly in a period not farther distant than 1779, the subject was again brought forward; and, on the motion of sir Harry Houghton, a bill was introduced, and passed not only the commons, but the lords also, with an opposition so feeble as not to be worthy of being named. The dangers to the church and to the state, which, six years ago, were so formidable if the dissenters did not subscribe thirty-five articles and a half, now all vanished, and the noncons might with perfect safety to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of England, put their name to the following declaration: "I, A. B. do solemnly declare in the presence of Almighty God that I am a Christian and a protestant, and as such, that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as commonly received among protestant churches, do contain the revealed will of God, and that I do receive the same as the rule of my doctrine and practice."

In the debates of the upper house, the very liberal sentiments of Dr. Shipley, bishop of St. Asaph, the friend and disciple of Hoadly, are alone worthy of a place in the records of history. He argued strenuously against the imposition of every confession of faith, however brief and general and true. "It is," said he, "the duty of magistrates, it is, indeed, the

very end of magistrates to protect all men in the enjoyment of their natural rights, of which the free exercise of their religion is one of the first and best. All history is full of the mischiefs occasioned by the want of toleration. One might naturally ask a minister of state for a good pension, or a good contract, or a place at court ; but hardly any one would think of making interest with him for a place in heaven."

In the history of religious liberty to be able to record a victory in favour of Roman catholics, must be peculiarly grateful to every enlightened protestant. Though the English language is allowed to excel in copiousness and force of expression, it has no terms to describe the injustice and cruelty of the English government to that body of people, from the accession of queen Elizabeth to the present reign. We have our book of martyrs, in which their sufferings unto death by Roman Catholics are particularly affectingly detailed, but few are informed that Roman catholics have their book of martyrs too, and almost as long and as bloody, in which English protestants were the executioners*.

* It will draw tears from the eyes of every enlightened professor of the reformed religion to read the following list ; which is but a part of the Romish martyrology in England.

Cuthbert Mayne was executed at Launceston, in Cornwall, in 1579.

Edmund Campion, educated at Christ's Hospital, and afterwards at Oxford ; became a convert to the Romish religion and retired to Douay. He returned to England as a missionary, and was considered as a dangerous enemy of the established church. He was executed at Tyburn, December 1, 1581.

Alexander Briant, born in Somersetshire, studied at Oxford, on embracing the religion of Rome he went to Douay ; came back to England as a missionary, was imprisoned in the tower, and cruelly

To the present generation it was reserved as an honour to decree that the persecuting statutes against the members of the church of Rome, which would have disgraced the code of Nero, and which had so

treated there by thrusting needles under the nails of his fingers to force him to a discovery of what was acting abroad in relation to the English government. He was hanged, drawn, and quartered December 1, 1581.

Thomas Cottam, born in Lancashire, studied at Oxford, became a convert to Rome, and went to Rheims. He was sent on a mission to England, but was apprehended soon after his landing. He might have escaped, but would not involve his friends in danger. While in prison he was several times put to the torture, but made no confession. He was hanged, drawn, and quartered with several of his brethren at Tyburn, May 30, 1582.

Edmund Jennings, educated at Rheims under Cardinal Allen; came to England as a missionary; was apprehended in the act of celebrating mass. He was executed by hanging, drawing, and quartering, in Gray's-inn-fields, October 10, 1591.

Roger Filcock and Mark Backworth were executed in the same way, and for the same cause, at Tyburn, February 27, 1601; and with them Mrs. Anne Line, for harbouring and assisting missionaries.

Dominic Collins, an Irishman, was executed in the same way for the catholic faith, at Cork, October 31, 1602.

Edmund Arrowsmith, of Lancashire, suffered in the same way for being a priest and for making proselytes, August 28, 1628. Ambrose Barlow for his diligence and activity as a missionary, at Lancaster, September 10, 1641. Thomas Bullaker, a franciscan friar and missionary, for his zeal and industry in his office as a missionary, October 15, 1642. Thomas Holland by the puritans, because he was a priest, October 22, 1642. Henry Heath for being a priest, at London, April 27, 1643: his head was placed on London Bridge and his quarters on the city gates. Francis Bell, October 11, 1643. Rodolph Corbie, December 7, 1644. Thomas Coleman, died in prison for his religion, 1644. Henry Morse, executed for the Romish faith, at London, July 1, 1645, and many others. See Grainger's Biographical History from Dod's Ch. History.

long been allowed to form a part of ours, were a national injustice and a national infamy; and to erase them from the volumes of the English laws. Who can read without horror, that by acts of parliament "popish priests and jesuits found officiating in the services of their church were declared guilty of felony? If a Roman catholic gentleman was educated abroad, the estate was forfeited to the next protestant heir. A son who became a protestant, might strip his father, if a Roman catholic, of his estate, and take possession of it for himself: and papists were declared incapable of acquiring real property by purchase." To that virtuous senator sir George Saville was reserved the glory of proposing to the house of commons a repeal of these horrid statutes; and he prefaced his proposal in the following terms. "I mean to vindicate the honour and assert the principles of the protestant religion, to which all persecution is foreign and adverse. The penalties in question are disgraceful not only to religion but to humanity. They are calculated to loosen all the bands of society, to dissolve all social, moral, and religious obligations and duties, to poison the sources of domestic felicity, and to annihilate every principle of honour." The motion received the unanimous approbation of the house. The peers concurred in sentiments with the commons; and these inhuman laws were erased from the statute book of England.

Were mankind governed by reason and religion, this act of parliament for the relief of the Roman catholics from some of their heaviest penalties, must have given universal satisfaction. But inveterate prejudices, which have in almost every age been cherished by civil and ecclesiastical rulers, set reason

at defiance and act in opposition to her plainest dictates. In England the law was allowed to take its course; but the Scotch, among whom hatred of popery was one of the leading features of national character, were enraged at the idea of any relief being granted to papists, and any countenance given, as they thought, to popery. Tumults took place in the chief cities of Scotland, Roman catholic chapels were destroyed, and the houses of some of the principal persons in that communion attacked and injured. To secure the continuance of these persecuting statutes, they formed themselves into a society called "the Protestant Association," and chose lord George Gordon, a younger son of the duke of Gordon, for their president; a man of so ambiguous a character, that whether he was sane or deranged, whether weak or wicked, whether an enthusiast or a deceiver is still in dispute.

By the influence of Scotch zealots the spirit extended to England; and a protestant association, which could boast of very numerous members, was formed in London, with a view to procure the repeal of the obnoxious act, and to subject papists again to the iron scourge of the unrighteous laws. Zeal against an obnoxious sect is, perhaps, the most easily kindled, continued, and diffused. It requires the mortification of no evil disposition, and allows the most hateful passions of the heart to take their full swing and exert all their fury; no wonder that the association soon grew to an enormous size. It was then determined to apply for a repeal of the act of 1778: and a petition to parliament was prepared, and signed by the names and marks, it is said, of an hundred and twenty thousand persons, who imagined

they were defending the protestant religion, and doing God service. This petition lord George Gordon was requested to present to the house of Commons, of which he was a member; but he made it the condition of his compliance, that he should be attended by twenty thousand of the men who were enrolled in the lists of the association.

On the second day of June, 1780, they assembled in St. George's-fields, to the number, it is supposed, of fifty thousand; Scotch and English in distinct bodies, carrying their ensigns of zeal; and with their president at their head, they marched in regular divisions to the house of commons. Their petition was presented, and while it was the subject of debate, a multitude of the petitioners remained without, who throwing aside by degrees the restraints of duty began to insult the members of parliament on the way to their respective houses, compelling them to cry "no popery," and to wear blue cockades. To still greater excesses they were stimulated by the conduct of their noble president, who frequently came out to them during the debate, and addressed them in very intemperate language, and at last told them that the people of Scotland obtained no redress till they pulled down the popish chapels. Influenced most probably by this information, they proceeded in the same evening to the demolition of two of their most celebrated places of worship.

During almost a week from this time the metropolis was the scene of tumult and devastation, other Romish chapels were destroyed, and the dwellings of many catholics injured and stripped. The prison of Newgate, in which some of their leaders were confined, was attacked and burnt, and several other jails

afterwards shared the same fate. The houses of lord Mansfield and sir George Saville were demolished; the destruction of many others followed; and a furious mob was extending its destructive steps far and wide, when to supply the defects of exertion by the civil magistrate, the entrance of a military body put a speedy stop to their ravages, and restored tranquility to the terrified inhabitants of London.

The actors in these various scenes were different. In the outrages of the evening after the petition was presented, some of lord George Gordon's followers were concerned; but few, if any, in those of the following days. A new class of men gradually rose up in their place, till at last the refuse of the metropolis, intent only on plunder and mischief, concluded the tragic drama.

Of whom the protestant association was formed, it is natural to inquire. When even at the present time persons of the highest rank, both in church and state, are eager that Roman catholics should not stand on the same level with protestants, and account a difference of religion a just cause of political degradation, it cannot be thought strange that thirty years ago plain men in the middle and chiefly in the inferior classes should have been imbued with a larger portion of the spirit of bigotry. They were collected from different religious denominations: the church furnished its full share: many were of the two tribes of methodists, who had just come out of the church, and still claimed a nearer relation to it than to the nonconformists: the Scotch furnished a numerous band: of regular dissenters there was the smallest number. Neither a minister, nor a layman of note was to be found among them; nor need this

appear strange; for the doctrine of religious liberty was better understood among them, than in any other body of Christians in the country, or perhaps in the world. It had been the object of consideration for more than a century, and was become a fixed and governing principle in their minds. To prevent any sect of people, however erroneous their opinions, from worshipping God according to their conscience, appeared to the generality as unjust as to rob them of their property, and conclude the injury by the murder of the proprietors. From these acts of violence and outrage it is seen how dangerous are false principles; and how many evils will be avoided by an enlightened mind acting under the influence of the principles of the Gospel.

In the midst of the scenes of riot in the metropolis, the house of commons was proceeding on the appointed day, the sixth of June, to consider the merits of the petition; but being interrupted in their debates by the noise and violence of the mob, they adjourned: the subject was never afterwards resumed, and the act of 1778 happily continued in force.

As the deliverance of the Roman catholics from the operation of persecuting statutes was but imperfect, in 1791 a bill was brought into the house of commons to grant them relief from those which still remained unrepealed. The benefit was however limited to such of the body as could subscribe a declaration against the assumed authority of the pope as to temporals. Mr. Fox pleaded with all his force of argument, that the limitation might be expunged, and liberty granted on the broadest basis. He was supported by Mr. Burke, whose liberality for their religious opinions, and eloquence in behalf of those

who held them, never forsook him to the end of his career when Roman catholics had any thing to ask or to receive. Mr. Pitt argued for the limitation; and his voice prevailed. As many of the catholics could not conscientiously assent to the declaration, they were excluded from the benefit of the act.

Some years after the first success of the catholics, a subject which had long preyed on the minds of the dissenters was brought forward to public notice. The corporation and test acts had, from the revolution, been felt as burdens of oppressive weight, and a constant desire of deliverance had been expressed. But the spirit of the times would not admit of application for relief. In 1731 they were anxious to lay their complaints before parliament; and the subject was agitated by the body with a considerable degree of ardour^f. Sir Robert Walpole, the minister of that day, while he expressed himself favourable to their cause, urged with all his energy the postponement of the petition, as it would rouse that spirit of toryism which then raged with peculiar fury among the clergy; and they would inflame the multitude not only against the dissenters but also against the government. On these considerations their application to parliament at that time was deferred, and when afterwards made, in 1736 and 1739, proved unsuccessful.

During a period of almost forty years, which introduced into public life an entirely new generation of men, the public mind, as the dissenters thought, was

^f See Narrative of the Proceedings of the Protestant Dissenters relating to the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Act, from 1731 to the present Time, 1734.

undergoing a gradual melioration in the principles of religious liberty; and the day was arrived when those fetters, which, for more than a century, had not only confined, but degraded them in the eyes of their fellow subjects, would be completely broken off, and thrown away, or hung up by them in triumph, as memorials of their deliverance. The success, with which their attempt to obtain freedom from subscription had been finally crowned, animated them with the hopes of a similar issue in the present business. The kind dispositions too, which had been displayed to the Roman catholics, in breaking down a system of restrictions which had subsisted for centuries, still farther confirmed them in the opinion, that an intolerant spirit had departed from all the intelligent ranks in society, and was becoming feeble in the minds of the lowest vulgar. These expectations of success were still more confirmed by the conversation which those of the dissenting body, who had waited on the premier Mr. Pitt, detailed to their friends. "He did not," they said, "patronize their cause; but, at the same time, he discovered no hostility to the steps which they proposed to take.

With such flattering prospects, the dissenters, in 1787, applied to parliament for the repeal of the corporation and test act, so far as related to them. Mr. Beaufoy, a man of considerable talents and respectability, introduced the subject to the house of commons, and supported his motion by an able speech, in which, after giving an historical account of the two acts, and answering the objections usually adduced of the protection they afford to church and state, he powerfully urged the claims of the dissenters to equal civil privileges with their other protestant fellow

subjects ; and in conclusion he argued for the repeal from considerations of a purely religious nature. The motion found an opponent in lord North, who painted in glowing colours the danger to the church from this proposed innovation ; and insisted that the corporation and test acts were merely political regulations, and that the exclusion of dissenters from offices of trust could not be considered either as an injury or disgrace. With far greater ability, the acts complained of were defended by Mr. Pitt who, while he expressed the highest esteem for the dissenters who had ever been the friends of constitutional liberty, said he could not consent to the repeal of the acts which were obnoxious to them. They enjoyed, he said, every religious privilege ; but offices of honour and trust must lie at the disposal of the state for such as were politically qualified to enjoy them. Mr. Fox supported the motion of Mr. Beaufoy, and though, as he observed, the generality of the dissenters had been his opponents in his struggle with Mr. Pitt, yet as their cause was the cause of liberty, it should have his most strenuous aid. In the course of his speech, he demonstrated the impropriety of making religion a test in political affairs ; and he charged Mr. Pitt with abetting persecution in principle, though he declined to defend it in words. On a division, a hundred members voted in favour of Mr. Beaufoy's motion, and a hundred and seventy-eight against it.

Not discouraged by this refusal, the dissenters made a second attempt in 1789, and Mr. Beaufoy again appeared as their advocate in the house of commons. Lord North and Mr. Pitt were again the opponents of the repeal ; and Mr. Fox, reasoning on general principles, pleaded most powerfully for the

removal of these impolitic acts, which prevented the country from profiting by the talents of men of every denomination in her support. The result of the debate was more favourable to the dissenters than on the former occasion: one hundred and two members voted for the repeal, and one hundred and twenty-two for the continuance of the acts. This decision seemed to the dissenters to be half a victory, and inspired them with still livelier hopes of success on a future application, which it was their determination soon to make.

Hitherto the conducting of the business had been left to the select friends of the cause in the metropolis. The dissenters in the country were spectators merely of the proceedings and the event; and it would have been well if they had continued in that state to the end, for their interference proved a serious injury. Let it, however, be considered, that it is easy even for a simpleton to look back at the conclusion of an affair of magnitude, and to point out mistakes which were committed, obstacles which retarded, and fatal steps which prevented the business from being brought to a favourable issue. But however sagacious this may appear, perhaps the wisest men who undertook the management at the beginning, and conducted it through its various stages, were utterly unable to foresee the evil consequences which would result from their measures, or hinder them from taking effect.

When the subject was brought the second time before the house of commons, it was observed by some of the members that only a few people in London came forward with their complaints; but that the dissenters in the country did not interest them-

* See Debates in the House of Commons, &c. 1789.

selves with the matter, because they had not taken any steps to testify their concurrence and approbation, or their desire of a change. To repel this objection, and to convince parliament that it was a subject of universal concern with the dissenters, meetings in the different counties were held, and resolutions entered into which were published in the vehicles of the day. Some of these were exceedingly defective in that temperate language which is so important in affairs of this nature; but the accusation could not be brought against the general mass of their assemblies. To make the public still more thoroughly acquainted with their claims, pamphlets were published, which stated the reasons of the dissenters for desiring the repeal of these obnoxious acts; and to these as to their strain and wisdom and moderation, the same observations are applicable as to the resolutions^b.

If in these things the dissenters may be conceived to have acted unwisely, let it be remembered, that it was discovered from events and from effects which it was not possible to foresee. When the question of freedom from subscription was in agitation, the public mind betrayed no symptoms of dislike: and when the Roman catholics received their boon, with the exception of some ardent minds in London excited by foreign influence, the mass of the people allowed them to receive and to enjoy it without molestation. From these premises they concluded that a spirit of liberality was diffused through the

^b An immense mass of pamphlets was poured from the press on the subject of the repeal of the corporation and test acts, by S. Palmer, Priestley, Pearce, Capel Lofft, Walker, a Layman, a Dissenter, a Churchman, and many others.

various ranks in the community, and that neither clergy nor laity, neither the government nor the people would exert themselves to prevent their attainment of the privilege which they now sought. Such were the ideas of the dissenters in general. But they were soon convinced that they were wrong. Counter meetings and resolutions and pamphlets, many of them with sufficient acrimony, made them deeply and painfully sensible that the old spirit of bigotry and intolerance was not dead, as they supposed, but had only slept.

In addition to these marks of opposition, events had occurred in the political world which rendered the prospects of success far less favourable than before. But after making such preparations and pledging themselves as it were to the public, the dissenters conceived their honour and their veracity at stake for their perseverance in the attempt to obtain relief. Under these discouraging circumstances, confiding in the goodness of their cause, in 1790, they brought their business a third time before the house of commons. Mr. Fox was now employed to introduce their request. Whether, as he was the opponent of the minister, it was prudent to assign him this office, has been questioned by many. But certainly, as it ought to have been no party question, if reason is the presiding genius of the commons house of parliament, and causes are decided only by weight of argument and strength of reasoning, the dissenters could not have made a happier choice. Mr. Fox's unequalled talents were called forth on the occasion: a firm foundation was laid by him on the principles of religious liberty, which he stated and demonstrated with peculiar felicity and energy, and on them he

founded his powerful reasonings for the repeal of the obnoxious acts. Sir Harry Houghton seconded the motion, and Mr. Beaufoy supported it with more than common ability. Mr. W. Smith and Mr. Tierney spoke on the same side of the question. Mr. Pitt, as on the former occasions, stood forth the patron and the panegyrist of the acts, and pleaded for their continuance with the utmost exertion of his remarkable powers. He was followed by Mr. Burke, in a speech of singular ingenuity and eloquence; but though he was hostile to the repeal, he disapproved of the Lord's supper being used as the test, and mentioned that he had brought with him a proposal for one of a different kind; and he left the house without giving his vote. Sir William Dolben and Mr. Wilberforce closed the list of opponents. On the division of the house there appeared for the motion a hundred and five, and against it two hundred and ninety-four¹. At the former discussions of the question, the members were almost left to the exercise of their own judgment; but now the whole power of the ministry was employed against the dissenters, the burning zeal also of the clergy, and that immense mass which the pulpit, that drum ecclesiastic which its tenants have been so skilful and so forward at all times to beat, was roused to defend the church which was asserted to be in imminent danger. Against such powerful bodies who could hope for success?

The disappointment, while it sat with a painful weight on the minds of the dissenters, as combining in it both injury and insult, will, it is hoped, teach them effectually the folly, the evil, and the

¹ See Debates in the House of Commons on the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, March 2, 1790. Stockdale.

danger of sacrificing a general principle to particular circumstances and present convenience, or of doing evil that good may come. Alderman Love and the friends of the dissenters in the house of commons in 1673, have been praised on account of their zeal for the public good, in allowing the test act to pass and giving it their support, on purpose that Roman catholics might be excluded from every public office. Assurance was given that a bill would soon be passed for the relief of the dissenters. But the promise was not fulfilled; and after some time the church eagerly grasped the advantage she had gained, as the birth-right of her sons, and to the present day has keenly resisted every application of the dissenters for relief. Thus to the false reasoning and ill-judged compliance of men haunted by that old and convenient ghost, or rather bugbear, "the fear of popery," do the dissenters owe that degradation and oppression which they to this day endure. Posterity is thus taught, that general moral principles should never be sacrificed on the altar of convenience or profit, though it were to shun death or to gain a kingdom: *fiat justitia ruat cælum.*

But there is one point of view in which the subject should be considered, and in which it was represented by the dissenters, both in the senate and from the press, wherein the failure of the attempt ought to excite the regret of every one who lays claim to the character of a disciple of Jesus Christ. The acts complained of, requiring a religious test for a civil office, necessarily produce an unparalleled profanation of the most sacred ordinance which the Redeemer has instituted in his church on earth: and though there were not a dissenter in England, the reason will

equally apply to the subject, as long as the horrid injunction continues, to compel every man who obtains an office of trust under government, to receive the Lord's supper as a necessary qualification for entrance and possession.

That in the institution of the Lord's supper, the Saviour of men had nothing in view but a religious purpose, the improvement and consolation of his disciples, is as clear as if written with a sun beam; and that by his disciples alone, it should be received with this view; for it is an ordinance in the administration of a kingdom which is not of this world. How dreadful is the perversion, when one of the kingdoms of this world, seizing on its most sacred institution, wrests it from its original design, and employs it to answer a secular purpose. It is some consolation to reflect that Christianity had been in the world more than sixteen hundred years, before such a profanation of the sacrament became possible to those who professed to receive it as a revelation from God. What Englishman but must blush that his country alone had been polluted by the odious crime; and what churchman but should weep that his communion alone has been contaminated by this foulest of stains! Popery never conceived the idea of any thing so impious: transubstantiation dwindles into a trivial error when placed by the side of the sacrament of the English church, debased into a qualification for an office in the excise, or a commission in the army and navy.

The offence given to the God of holiness, and the dishonour done to the Saviour of sinners by this prostitution of his ordinance, no words of human language can express: angels would in vain attempt to express it in theirs. The guilt contracted from year

to year by multitudes of thoughtless creatures, who though they may be brave soldiers and sailors, or good servants of civil government, yet never professed to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Christ, may justly draw from the eyes of Christians tears of blood. But, for the more criminal conduct of the clergy who administer the sacrament to these men; and perhaps the more tremendous condition at the tribunal of God, of a legislature enjoining the clergy to administer, and the successful candidate for an office to receive; and a part of that legislature consisting of bishops and archbishops who claim to themselves the highest and most peculiar functions in the kingdom of Jesus Christ—there remains nothing but, with fear and trembling, in silence to look for the wrath of heaven in the severest judgments on a land polluted “by crucifying the Lord afresh, and putting him to open shame.”

Nor are these the sentiments of dissenters alone; some of the most respectable sons of the established church have viewed the subject in the same light. The immortal Cowper, at once a Christian and a poet, dips his pen in tears to describe the odious practice, and loudly calls on his countrymen to consider and abolish it as a national crime.

“Hast thou, by statute shov’d from its design,
The Saviour’s feast, his own blest bread and wine,
And made the symbols of atoning grace
An office key, a picklock to a place,
That infidels may prove their title good
By an oath dipped in sacrament blood?
A blot that will be still a blot, in spite
Of all that grave apologists may write;
And tho’ a *bishop* toil’d to cleanse the stain,
He wipes and scours the silver cup in vain.”

As venerable a clergyman as the hand of a bishop ever rested on (and all who knew the Rev. John Newton, of St. Mary, Woolnoth, will allow the justness of his claim to this exalted title), bears his indignant testimony against the heinous iniquity: "I am far," says he, "from supposing that any of our laws now in force were formed with an intention of promoting sin. But some of them, through the prevailing depravation of morals amongst us, do it eventually. For instance, the test and corporation acts, which require every person who has a post under government, or a commission in the navy or army, to qualify himself for his office by receiving the sacrament of the Lord's supper, would occasion no sin, if men were generally influenced by the fear of God, or even by a principle of integrity. They would then rather decline places of honour or profit, than accept them upon such terms, if they were conscious that their sentiments or conduct were repugnant to the design of their institution. But as the case stands at present, while gain is preferred to godliness, and the love of distinction or lucre is stronger than the dictates of conscience, we frequently see professed infidels and notorious libertines approach the Lord's table as a matter of course, and prostituting the most solemn ordinance of Christianity to their ambition and interest. The great number and variety of appointments civil and military, which cannot be legally possessed without this qualification, render the enormity almost as common as it is heinous. If the Lord be a God of knowledge, he cannot be deceived. If he be a God of truth and holiness he will not be mocked. I am afraid we have been long guilty of a contemptuous profanation of the body and blood of Christ^k.

^k Sermon on a General Fast, February 21, 1781. p. 17, 18.

To the testimony of these two excellent men may be added the suffrage of a senator, high in the estimation of multitudes, and who, when it is known to be Edmund Burke, will not be suspected of having in his head or heart one particle of partiality for the dissent. In his speech, when the subject of the test was last before parliament, are the following expressions: "If the corporation and test acts were repealed, some other test ought to be substituted; the present I always thought a bad and an insufficient test to its end. I am convinced that it is an abuse of the sacramental rite; and the sacramental rite is too solemn an act for prostitution. Where conscience really exists, it ought not to be wounded. By wounding a man's conscience, we annihilate the God within (if I may be allowed so to express it), and violate him in his sanctuary¹."

The miserable prisoners in the dungeons of Europe had a Howard to feel for their distresses; and found in him an advocate to obtain an alleviation of their sufferings. The groans and lamentations of the children of Africa, torn from their homes, and dragged into slavery in distant lands, awakened the pity of a Clarkson and a Wilberforce; and the unparalleled labours of the one and the eloquence of the other were employed with success, at last to put an end to the inhuman traffic. And shall Jesus Christ find none to plead his cause, and to rescue his most sacred ordinance from the vilest profanation? Is there no disciple of Christ in the legislature sufficiently enlightened, and zealous to endeavour to put an end to the lamentable perversion of the sacrament, and restore

¹ Debates in the House of Commons, &c. March 2, 1790. p. 495.
Stockdale.

it to its proper use? Is there no individual among the ten thousands of the clergy—not one of all her mitred dignitaries to stand up for the honour of their Master in seeking to remove from their communion the foul reproach? If in public stations such a man is not to be found, is there no Christian in private life who will step forward and endeavour to deliver his country from the divine displeasure, for profaning the most sacred ordinance of Christ? Exertions in this cause, even though not crowned with success, would give honour to his name both on earth and in heaven: if successful, he would merit a niche among the highest benefactors of his country. Already has the sacramental test dishonoured England for more than a hundred and thirty years; again and again dissenters have cried to parliament against the heinous crime, but they have cried in vain: it remains for churchmen now to wipe the patine and the chalice from their deep stains^m.

If this was not the era of gaining triumphs for religious liberty, it was at least the era of attempts to gain them. There were still in the statute book, laws

^m To consider the corporation and test acts as the grand bulwark of the church of England, and to display zeal for them on that account is exceedingly strange. All they can possibly prove is, that the person who receives the sacrament as the qualification for an office, either does not exercise his conscience on the subject, and looks upon it as a thing of course; or that he does not look upon the thing unlawful in itself: but that because he complies with what the law requires, and kneels at the altar, therefore he is of the established church, and loves it, and will defend it against all its foes, is an inference altogether illegitimate. Yet on this foundation of sand rests all the importance of these acts, for the continuance of which so much zeal has been employed.

inflicting penalties on persons who absent themselves from the service of the church of England, or who speak in derogation of the Book of Common Prayer, and many others of a similar nature. To free our venerable code from what he accounted a disgrace to the country and to the age, lord Stanhope, in 1789, made a motion in the house of peers for the introduction of a bill that these vexatious acts might be repealed.

The ire of the episcopal bench was kindled against his lordship and his motion, which they accounted a profane attempt to undermine the foundation of the established church. Dr. Moore, the archbishop of Canterbury, assured the house, that the bill, if permitted to pass, would serve as a cover to every species of irreligion: and if people were allowed without restraint to speak, write, and publish on religious subjects, there was scarcely any mischief to the church or to civil society that imagination could frame, which might not be effected: the very foundation of religion as by law established might be undermined.

Nor did his lordship stand alone in defence of the church, Dr. Warner, bishop of Bangor, Dr. Halifax, of St. Asaph, and Dr. Horsley, of St. David's, the last with his characteristic violence, confirmed by their reasoning the assertions and the fears of the metropolitan. The effect of these speeches on the majority of the temporal peers may be judged of by the expressions of lord Stormont, who may be considered as their spokesman. So powerful did the arguments of the prelates appear, and so meritorious their zeal, that, in raptures of delight, he exclaimed, "our venerable fathers in God have done themselves infinite credit, and rendered their characters sacred in the public

estimation." It need scarcely be added that lord Stanhope failed of success in the attempt.

These repeated failures did not produce despair ; for, in 1792, another effort was made to extend the boundaries of religious liberty. Mr. Fox, who had ever displayed a readiness to advocate the cause, introduced a motion for the repeal of those penal statutes, which notwithstanding the toleration act, still hung over the heads of those who in any way impugned the doctrine of the Trinity. He represented them as a disgrace to the statute book ; adduced instances in which arians and socinians had suffered by their operation ; and expressed an earnest wish that not now, as formerly, heretics should be consumed by fire, but the persecuting acts of the English legislature.

As Mr. Pitt had in the debate on the repeal of the test act, declared in the most unqualified terms, the right of the dissenters to a complete toleration, it was expected by the friends of the repeal, that he would give no opposition to the measure. But they were mistaken ; for he argued against the motion from the irritated state of the public mind, which would be offended by granting such an indulgence ; and the security, which antitrinitarians enjoyed in contending for their opinions to the disregard of statutes which had fallen into disuse and oblivion. On a division of the house, Mr. Fox's motion was negatived by a majority of seventy-nine votes.

It would have been to the honour of the nation to have granted the repeal, and highly to the satisfaction of all the enlightened friends of the important doctrine of the Trinity. It has so broad and so firm a founda-

tion in the sacred scriptures, that no additional stability can be given to it by acts of parliament; and it needs not their pigmy and suspicious aid. It is a triumph to socinians and arians, that they can say, "You dare not allow us to stand on equal ground: you are compelled to shelter yourselves and your doctrine behind persecuting statutes, brandishing the sword of the magistrate for your defence." May the time soon come when the liberality of the British legislature will silence the keen reproach.

About this time (1789) an event occurred in the political world, of a magnitude unequalled in modern times, which excited through the whole of civilized society an attention and interest unknown before. Such was the French revolution, which is introduced in this work on account of its connection with the principles of religious liberty and with the character and conduct of the dissenters, and its influence on the public mind in England in relation to that most important privilege. To describe the enthusiasm with which the downfall of despotism in France was hailed by every Briton who had a spark of genuine freedom in his bosom, is beyond the province of ecclesiastical history: our task is to delineate its moral tendency, and to consider the light in which it was viewed by Christians, and by the dissenters in the character of Christians.

An accurate observer of human nature must have remarked two classes among the disciples of Christ, of a spirit in one respect widely different from each other. Those who compose the first class, regardless of events which are taking place on the theatre of the world, pursue their Christian course in the

diligent performance of personal and relative duties, accounting an active interference in other things foreign to their spiritual character and their business in life. The other class, while not inferior in the observance of the same personal and relative duties, feel themselves bound, because they are Christians and citizens of the great republic of human nature, to take an interest in the welfare of all mankind, and promote their highest happiness. Of persons of this disposition a more considerable number than in an establishment will be found among a sect placed in the situation of the English dissenters, and holding their distinguishing sentiments ; because they depend for their prosperity, and indeed for their very existence on the prevalence and dominion of the principles of political freedom. Accordingly multitudes of the dissenters entered with peculiar ardour into the French revolution, as an event apparently pregnant with happiness to the people of France, who had been for nearly two centuries groaning under the iron rod of despotism, and for more than one century under the uncontrouled rage of popish superstition, during which the unrelenting fury of the clergy never ceased to persecute the protestants, or to instigate the civil power to persecution.

Of the propriety of such a conduct in a Christian, some of the former class doubted ; while others more decided in their judgment loudly condemned it as contrary to the spirit of the Gospel : but the condemnation of their brethren was dictated by their ignorance, which proceeded from their inattention to the subject. From the beginning, an accurate investigation had taken place as to the condition of individuals, their relations, and their personal and domestic

duties. Accordingly every Christian has felt his concern in the subject, his obligations to submit to the divine authority in all things, and in every part of his character to be governed by the laws of God. But by many Christians, the same rule was never applied to the civil government of nations; and it never entered into their thoughts, that the laws of God applied to social bodies as well as to individuals; and that the whole texture of their constitution and their municipal code, and the administration of its jurisprudence ought to be equally subject to the divine authority, and equally agreeable to the divine will. From not considering this infinitely important truth, the principles of Christianity were not applied to civil government; a thousand evils were permitted to remain which would not have remained; and a thousand practical reforms were not made which would have been made, had Christians applied the principles of the Gospel to the civil government of which they were members, with the same integrity and perspicacity with which they applied them to their domestic and personal relations. This improvement was now happily commencing in the minds of many of the disciples of Christ; and they felt it to be of unspeakable importance that the principles and administration of civil government should be agreeable to the spirit and the precepts of the Gospel. Hence it now became a ruling maxim in their system of political sentiments, that every civil constitution ought to be framed with a view to promote the glory of God and the happiness of the people, by the protection of every man's person and property, by the diffusion of knowledge, by the encouragement of virtue and piety, by the extension of the conveniences of

life as widely as possible among the mass of the community, and by the dispensing of justice in a way accessible to the poor as well as the rich ; that these are the ends which rulers should constantly keep in view, because for these ends they were placed in their exalted stations.

To a Christian whose mind has been enlightened by carrying his researches thus far, the principal governments on the continent of Europe presented a very painful prospect. The millions appeared to be made for the one, and not the one for the millions. The object of the ruler seemed to be to gratify ambition or caprice: the nobles rioted in luxury: the church was the tool of the state, and without regard to suitableness of character, its highest dignities were conferred on favourites and the younger sons of distinguished families: ignorance and poverty were the lot of the labouring portion of society: and where trade and commerce were encouraged, it too often appeared to be to furnish a revenue for the court. The people had no power, no controul, no influence. All these they had formerly possessed; but in the interval between the reformation and the French revolution, the rulers had robbed their subjects, and scarcely a vestige of their former privileges now remained. The only concern which the people had with the government was to pay taxes, and the only limit of taxation was what could be wrested from them without provoking insurrection or resistance.

As the consequence of this unnatural state of things, vice reigned among all ranks in its most hideous forms, and with absolute sway. The marquis de Bouillé, a firm adherent to the old order of things, and no very rigid moralist, thus describes the internal

state of France previous to these changes which the revolution introduced. "Whilst the lower classes experienced the extreme of misery, the rich indulged themselves in the most unbounded luxury. The government was without energy, the court despised, and the great were sunk into a state of degradation. Irreligion and immorality were diffused among the first orders, restlessness and discontent among all. The treasury was exhausted, public credit ruined, and all the ordinary resources at an end. Louis the sixteenth, possessed all the virtues of private life, but none of the talents necessary for a man in a situation so difficult." Some of the most extensive governments in Germany presented to the Christian's view a prospect equally gloomy; and in Italy, Spain, and Portugal the moral and political condition of the inhabitants was far more deplorable than in France.

From this view of things, it ought not to excite surprize that the minds of Christian philanthropists in England were engaged in an extraordinary degree with the transactions in a neighbouring country. The united energies of a great nation for the destruction of despotism, and the establishment of a free constitution embracing the enjoyment of religious freedom, communicated the purest delight, and filled their hearts with euthusiastic joy. An era of melioration in the state of society, of liberty to extend the influence of pure religion, and of peace among nations, appeared to be drawing near; and they thought they saw the dawn of the auspicious day.

Of these Christian philanthropists the dissenters formed a numerous and distinguished portion. Those who are acquainted with their history and their principles, know their abhorrence of arbitrary power as

the foe not only of social happiness but of pure religion, and the heaviest curse which can possibly befall the human race. The destruction of such a system in France, and the establishment of civil and religious liberty may be supposed to have been peculiarly acceptable, as an event which they had long most ardently desired. Hence arose that lively interest which the dissenters in general and very many dissenting ministers felt in the French revolution, and the numerous expressions of the most rapturous delight in its rapid progress. While they rejoiced in the triumphs of political liberty, they looked beyond it to what Christians consider as its supreme and final design. They considered it as the handmaid of pure religion, and hailed the auspicious season when the disciples of Christ would no more be doomed to silence and sufferings, but have full liberty to propagate the Gospel without restraint, through the immense population of the French empire. Knowing, too, the influence which France possessed over the other kingdoms of the continent, they were sanguine in their expectations that liberty would also visit them, and pure religion following after, would banish the ignorance and superstition which had so long enveloped them in a worse than Egyptian darkness. But while these were the sentiments of a considerable number of dissenters, it is proper to mention that some of them viewed the French revolution with indifference, and others from the beginning were averse to the change. Of both these classes many were afterwards among the most violent alarmists, and condemned the opinions and conduct of their brethren with no ordinary portion of severity.

Such were the pleasing dreams of multitudes; and

their most cordial wishes were for the prosperity and happiness of the people of France, who in the beginning of their career had the majority of the people of England in their favour: but some were from the beginning opposed to the change, and reprobated the whole. From the magnitude of the object, it became the common topic of conversation; and there was much speculation and reasoning as to the mode of government which the French appeared inclined to adopt, as to the science of government in general, and as to the form which was absolutely best and most adapted to secure the happiness of the community. The subject was, however, usually discussed with moderation and temper; and the disputants allowed each other to maintain their opinions without a breach of friendship or esteem. For nearly two years from the commencement of the revolution this was the spirit of the greater part of the people of England.

But early in 1791 a publication of long promise issued from the press, entitled, "Reflections on the French Revolution," which proved the source of discord, and spread strife and contention among the people of Great Britain, who were before living in harmony and peace. The author, Edmund Burke, a man always more celebrated for the fertility of his imagination than the soundness of his judgment, was furious against the French revolution in all its stages, in all its parts, and in all its instruments. Gall was sweet in comparison of the bitterness of his words. He condemned all in England who had spoken or written in its favour, and he denounced against them the severest anathemas. In addition to these extravagances, he appeared to be

decidedly hostile to the cause of general liberty, and had the hardihood to stand forth as the panegyrist of arbitrary rule. To account for such sentiments from the pen of a man who had always spoken and written in defence of the liberties of mankind, without blasting his character for ever as a man of integrity, is possible only in one way; and that is by supposing that he was seized with an insanity *quoad hoc*; and it was an insanity of the most furious kind. What gives probability to the supposition is, that to his death, though he could speak rationally and ably on other subjects, whenever the French revolution was the theme, he was instantly seized with the *mania*; and the dreadful paroxysms of rage into which he was thrown, and the ravings of a distracted fancy too plainly discovered the derangement of his mind.

From the date of the publication of his book, a melancholy change took place in the public temper. The demon of discord stalked through every part of the land, and scattered his firebrands every where. The enemies of the French revolution were roused to the highest pitch of wrath; became loud in their execration of it, and of all who were concerned in any of its scenes, or who stood up in its defence; keenly reprobated the sentiments and conduct of its friends in England; and charged them with being advocates of the blackest crimes. Because they would not turn round and execrate the French revolution as many did, its enemies appeared to think they had received an injury, and were therefore justified in treating them in the worst way they possibly could, which in very many instances was sufficiently cruel and contumelious.

The friends of the revolution, on the other hand,

would not forsake what they accounted the cause of human happiness; and while they allowed and lamented that the French had done many things rashly, many things weakly, and many wickedly, still they hoped that the struggle would terminate in a system of liberty. They therefore would not renounce their cause, nor be compelled to abandon the defence of men who, they thought, with all their faults, deserved well of the human race.

The advocates of Mr. Burke's system becoming gradually more numerous and many of them more violent, in addition to the bitterest condemnation of those on the other side, expressed sentiments savouring so strongly of despotism and slavery, that none had dared to profess the like, since the downfall of the Stewarts, and the accession of the house of Hanover to the throne of Britain. These novel opinions the others heard with astonishment and terror; and to counterbalance the effect, were as excessive in expressing their sentiments in favour of the liberties of mankind, and in commendation of men and measures in France.

When the minister declared himself on the side of Mr. Burke, fresh fuel was added to the fire. For a considerable time, he had observed a cautious reserve; but, at last, entering into the contest with all the ardour of his soul, he declared his hostility to the French revolution, and his high disapprobation of the conduct of all those in this country who had professed themselves its friends. Unhappily for the honour of Christ, many of the clergy carried the controversy into the pulpit, and cursed in the name of the Lord, all those who had espoused the cause of the French. Their interference was peculiarly unfortunate,

as it drove thousands into infidelity, who, being strongly attached to the principles of liberty, and unwisely judging of the clergyman's religious from his political creed, rashly concluded that both were bad. Perhaps the pulpit was never more profaned by political disquisitions and anathemas than at this time. A very unhappy effect was also produced by the outrages which took place at Birmingham, and were continued for several days to the terror and injury of some of its most respectable inhabitants, and to the disgrace of the police and magistrates of the town. The riots there, created not by a legitimate English mob, but by persons of a superior class to those who were the apparent actors in the disgraceful scenes, had an unhappy effect on the minds of all the friends of general liberty, who conceived that they saw in this instance what the enemies of the French revolution would do if it was in their power. The various measures resorted to by the ministry, some of a more public and others of a more private nature, and the system of *espionage* carried on by persons ostensibly employed, or at least patronised by them, served to fill up the cup of discord to the brim.

Two things, in the conduct and measures of the alarmists, gave inconceivable offence, and created the deepest disgust. They accused all the friends of the French revolution of approving all the extravagancies and cruelties which had taken place in France, and of a desire to introduce such scenes into their own country, and overturn the constitution and existing government. After this crimination, they thought themselves warranted to abuse them in the grossest manner, and to charge them with the blackest designs and the most odious crimes.

The other was still more displeasing as it was conceived to be more hostile to the happiness of mankind. In almost all the speeches, papers, pamphlets, and volumes of the ministerial party, in which liberty was not kept entirely out of view, it was spoken of in a way which would lead people to imagine that they must beware of it as a dangerous inmate. The mad deeds of the French were exposed in colours sufficiently glaring, but instead of considering these as a gross abuse of liberty, they were employed as weapons to destroy it, and an attack was by these means made against liberty itself. Despotism and slavery were represented as harmless, as almost blessings; and the force of the country was combined, in conjunction with the powers on the continent, to restore the old government in France.

Had the rulers and their adherents adopted a different mode of conduct; had they treated the friends of the French revolution with that generous liberality which should always characterise those who exercise authority in a great nation; had they avowed themselves the patrons of genuine freedom, ready in every instance to support and to promote it, and enemies only to its abuse; and especially had they not shewn so marked an enmity to the state of affairs in France, while they cordially coalesced with the most despotic monarchs on the continent against her, the peace and harmony and happiness of the people of England would have been secured in an unspeakably higher degree. But, as has been seen, unhappily a different course was pursued, and it was productive of the most serious evils.

The bitterness of the accusations brought against them, the friends of liberty very sensibly felt. Per-

haps there might be individuals among so large a body who did not regard the peace and felicity of their country, but would delight in a scramble, and the overthrow of peace and order ; but the great mass consisted of people of very different sentiments and character. They were conscious that they loved their country with as strong affection as those who reviled them ; that its peace and happiness were as dear in their estimation ; and that none were more devoted enemies to tumult and disorder. The charges, therefore, which were brought against them, they felt not only as an injury, but a cruel insult ; and indignation at the injustice of the accusation tingled in every vein.

But the attack, which they conceived was made on the general cause of liberty, affected them more than that which was made upon themselves. It was no ordinary season of the exertion of the human faculties. The vigour, with which they fixed on objects, was uncommon, and there had been nothing like it since the era of the reformation. There was an enthusiasm of ardour for the cause of liberty which exalted the mind far above its ordinary level, and gave that sublimity of feeling which those only who entered into it can conceive. In such a temper they spurned at the idea of being dragooned into the renunciation of principles which they believed to be good, and pregnant with happiness to the human race. Hearing the cause of liberty spoken of as evil, and seeing Britain leagued with foreign powers to re-establish despotism in France, they felt themselves impelled to conclude that there was a conspiracy against the liberties of mankind ; and that the ministry, by the harsh measures which they pursued, were

seeking the destruction of that which was England's glory and its strength.

As the spirit of philanthropy had been imbibed in conjunction with a zeal for liberty, the horrors of the general war in Europe, the rivers of blood which were shed, and the miseries which were extended far and wide through the world, excited unutterable anguish in their breasts, and increased their aversion to the measures which were pursued. Those among the friends of liberty who were Christians, were more deeply affected than the rest with the state of things both at home and abroad, and with the gloomy prospect before them. Their minds took a wider range, and they viewed liberty in its connection with religion, and its influence on the propagation of the Gospel. When, therefore, they looked around, and saw a combination against the cause of liberty, they viewed it with unutterable horror, as a conspiracy against the Lord and his anointed, to spread the triumphs of superstition and priestcraft, to bind the consciences of mankind in adamantine fetters, to prevent the propagation of divine truth, and, in short,—to put the great clock of Europe back five hundred years.

Such was the state of the public mind during several years, and such the sentiments of the two parties into which the country was divided. With these ideas of each other, and numberless acts of provocation arising out of them, confidence between them died away; suspicions of an intention to injure arose in their breasts; long and intimate friendships were broken off, and society lost its endearments and its charms.

In addition to the common share of odium which was liberally poured on the friends of the French

revolution, the dissenters had a peculiar portion thrown upon their heads, because they were separatists from the church; and no common measure of industry was employed by persons from whom better things might have been expected, to blast their character. On what principles they acted has been shown, and they were principles of which they had no reason to be ashamed. Happy it was for them, that the wrath of their enemies, which was so fierce, proved almost like Priam's spear, *imbelle telum sine ictu*. In the riots at Birmingham, their enemies were able to urge on the populace to demolish two of their places of worship, and to destroy the houses of some respectable individuals. At Woodstock too, several persons, who had accompanied their minister to open a house for worship, were treated with great barbarity by a mob; but these were almost the only scenes of persecuting fury. In the country in general, they suffered no interruption in the enjoyment of their religious privileges.

To trace the effects of the French revolution on the minds of the people of Great Britain, and the discussions to which it gave birth, is the province of civil history: our limits confine us to those connected with religious liberty and the cause of dissent. In this point of view there are two which merit particular notice; they have continued to the present time, they promise to be durable, and they have been attended with benefit.

One of these effects is the decay, and in many instances the entire removal of the undue influence of titles and office on the mind. Before the French revolution, if a person was decorated with the names and ensigns of nobility, whatever his character and

conduct might be, he was looked up to as a being of a superior order. An office of dignity had a similar charm ; and however destitute of talents and virtue the man might be who filled it, the splendid robes concealed every defect, and he was supposed to be both wise and upright. Ecclesiastical vestments had a talisman of equal potency wrought into their woof. Though gifts and graces might be sought for under them in vain, the highest honours were given to the wearer because he was a priest.

But the French revolution taught tens of thousands to reason who never reasoned before ; and though in many things, like young beginners, they argued falsely, in others they judged rightly : and one instance of this was in their concluding that unless a man was wise and good, though the order of society required that he should be treated with external respect, he was not entitled to the esteem and veneration of the heart. In consequence of this, stars, garters, and coronets lost considerably of their value. Ermine could no longer conceal from view a defect of talents and virtue, or procure the homage of the soul without them. The clergyman's gown and cassock, the presbyterian minister's Geneva cloak, and the methodist preacher's unpowdered head and lank hair lost more than nine-tenths of their former worth : the episcopal mitre, apron, and lawn sleeves suffered an equal depreciation. But this furnishes no cause for regret ; for to seek to procure respect to a defect of excellence, by external ornaments, is an imposition on mankind. Knowledge, wisdom, virtue, piety, and benevolence can never be despised. They will always procure the esteem and veneration of men ; and it is not in the power of wickedness itself

to withhold from them, in our native land, that influence over others, and that pre-eminence in society to which from their intrinsic excellence they have an unquestionable claim. In proportion as these, without respect to adventitious ornament, become the objects of regard, so far there is a progress in mental science, and an advancement in illumination and purity of mind; and an advancement in these is favourable to the cause of virtue and piety, among whatever denomination of the professors of religion they may fix their abode. At the same time men of title and office, if they possess the qualifications which ought always to accompany their rank and station, will have no reason to complain of want of respect and esteem: without these qualifications they are guilty of injustice if they expect them.

The other effect of the French revolution on the minds of vast multitudes of the people of England, is the diminution or extinction of bigotry to a sect. In the mass of the population of Europe, the strength of attachment to the established religion of the country was only equalled by the violence of their prejudices against every party which was separated from its communion. Of this spirit, the people of this land could boast almost an equal share with any of their neighbours. The effects of this bigotry were felt by the dissenters and methodists, when they opened a house for worship in a town or village where there had been none before. In many places few comparatively would attend; and of those who did, a part was disposed to excite disturbance and insult the preacher. But the French revolution has performed wonders in this respect. The partialities and prejudices especially of the inferior classes in

society; have dwindled almost to nothing. It is now a more common idea among them, that it is reasonable every one should judge for himself in matters of religion. Where no prohibition is issued by the nobleman or the squire, they now more readily go to hear a minister of a different denomination from their own; they are sensible of the impropriety of behaving amiss; they hear with greater candour; and if they approve of the preacher and his doctrine, they feel less reluctance to become dissenters or methodists.

During this tempestuous season, in which party spirit raged with uncommon fury, besides these important benefits, the dissenters enjoyed protection and peace. To the honour of the British government it must be mentioned, that their religious liberties continued unimpaired; and the shield of protection was steadily held over their heads to preserve them from injury. When it is considered that during this time of strife, the preaching of the dissenters was extended to a multitude of places where they had not made an attempt before, the merit of the conduct of our rulers is greatly heightened. In consequence of the institution of the missionary society, in 1795, whose design was to send the Gospel to the heathen, multitudes of ministers and private Christians became sensible of their obligations to diffuse the knowledge of Christianity more extensively at home: more general and vigorous exertions were made through every part of the country than ever had been made before; and in hundreds of small towns and villages, houses were opened for the dissenting mode of worship. That in the minds of their enemies, who were men of the world, a suspicion should be excited, that some deep political design which might prove dan-

gerous to the state, lay concealed under this cloak of zeal for religion, it is natural to suppose ; and that the ministry had many a warning of the impending peril. But the peculiar excellence of the grand principles of the British constitution, and the dignity of mind with which the ministry acted on this occasion, in venerating these principles and adhering to that generous conduct which they prescribed, are both the just topic of gratitude and praise. In a few years they had the consolation to observe, that the design of the dissenters was far remote from every thing of a political nature, and had religion alone for its object and its end.

There is likewise a tribute of praise due to the British monarch for his liberal treatment of the dissenters belonging to the royal household, who have never suffered the smallest diminution of favour on account of their religious tenets, and whom his majesty has taken pains to accommodate that they might attend at their own places of worship. The same praise for liberality of conduct to their domestics and dependents, and for paying just regard to the rights of conscience in matters of religion, is due to the younger branches of the royal family, and justly entitles them to very high respect^a. If some of the nobility and gentry who persecute their tenants and dependents on account of their religious creed, were to follow the example of their superiors, they would appear to society in a far more dignified point of view :

^a In 1802 the duke of York, as commander in chief of the army, issued an order, that no soldier in the British service should be compelled to attend on a mode of worship which he did not approve, or be prevented or hindered from following that which he did approve. *Star Newspaper*, March 16, 1811.

but having the lesson yet to learn, they degrade themselves by the contemptible bigotry of a Carthusian monk.

Towards the close of this period, there was an attempt, by a motion in the house of commons, to make some alterations in the toleration act, with a view to abridge the religious privileges of the dissenters, but it did not succeed. It is now too late; and were it carried into execution, the only effect would be to fill the jails with dissenters and methodists. Christians conceive it their duty to seek the eternal happiness of their countrymen, and think that they ought not to be prevented from preaching the Gospel to the ignorant for that infinitely important end. If unrighteous laws be made to hinder them, they must obey God rather than man, and still continue to preach the Gospel of Christ. If they be sent to prison for disobedience, they must endure their confinement with patience: it is persecution for the testimony of Jesus. A year's continuance of such a law would place thousands in a state of confinement; and should the prisons of England, which were built for malefactors, be filled with thousands for preaching the Gospel to make the ignorant wise unto salvation, in what light the conduct of such legislators will be regarded by the British public, it becomes them beforehand seriously to reflect. This they may be assured will be the certain effect of such a law, and not from a spirit of contention or opposition; but solely from this Christian principle, that as God has commanded them to seek the salvation of perishing sinners, no man has a right to forbid them; and if

they do forbid, they must obey God rather than them.

But we hope that our gracious sovereign, who hitherto has always been the patron of religious liberty, will continue to appear in this exalted character to the end of life; and that England will have to boast of the reign of the three first monarchs of the house of Hanover, as securing to all their subjects the uninterrupted exercise of religious liberty.

CHAPTER III.

CONTROVERSIES IN WHICH DISSENTERS WERE
ENGAGED.

SECTION I.

CONTROVERSY CONCERNING DISSENT.

WHILE the establishment exists to provoke opposition by her claims to exclusive privileges, or attract censure by her apparent faults, this controversy must be expected to call forth the talents of polemics among the various denominations of dissenters by which she is surrounded. The battle, which decided the fate of the field, was fought, indeed, during the former periods of the dissenting history, and all that now remains to the historian is to record the continuance of such minor skirmishes, as merely served to show the temper of the combatants. But as the rise of the methodists, under George the second, created an additional host of dissenters; in the present reign, the followers of Socinus attacked the establishment with different weapons, to produce new secessions from her pale, on account of the orthodoxy of her creeds, confessions, and liturgy.

To the attacks which she received from this quarter, Dr. Priestley led the way. His remarks on Dr. Balguy's "Sermon on Church Authority" provoked no reply; but when he attacked some paragraphs in judge

Blackstone's Commentaries relating to the dissenters, that able and popular writer returned an answer in a small pamphlet, and Dr. Priestley published a reply. The latter says in his memoirs, "I wrote also, with the encouragement of Dr. Price and Dr. Kippis, an address to protestant dissenters as such, and as an anonymous respondent thought I had laid too much stress on the principles of the dissenters, I wrote a defence of my conduct." Dr. Priestley, however, drew upon himself much odium for his open attacks upon the orthodoxy of the church of England, and upon the principle of all ecclesiastical establishments.

The vigorous attempt which was made in 1772, to obtain relief from subscription to the thirty-nine articles, being considered as a reflection on the doctrines of the establishment, roused Dr. Tucker, dean of Gloucester, to publish "an Apology for the Church of England." This able and moderate defence was answered, with at least equal talents and candour, by Dr. Kippis, in his "Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers." Theophilus Lindsey, having nobly resigned the vicarage of Catterick, in Yorkshire, in consequence of his adoption of heterodox sentiments, published, in 1773, "an Apology for his Conduct," which may be considered as a socinian's reasons for dissent. This was followed, about five years after, by similar conduct in another clergyman, Gilbert Wakefield, formerly fellow of Jesus' college, Cambridge[†]. In his memoirs, which are designed to answer the same purpose as Lindsey's apology, he says, "my objections to the creed of my forefathers were daily

^{*} Memoirs of Dr. Priestly, p. 59.

[†] Gilbert Wakefield's Memoirs of his own Life, vol. I. p. 184. second edition.

multiplying, and my determination was already made to quit the church¹." The spirit, with which these new dissenters attacked the church, may be learned from the reflections which he makes upon the immoral conduct of a clergyman of Liverpool, who had been a dissenting minister. "My inference is as follows: it is scarcely possible, in my opinion, that any man who has been educated in the true principles of dissent from the establishment, can afterwards conform with a good conscience. By the true principles of dissent, I understand an abjuration of all human authority in propounding and enforcing articles of faith, collected by men, as the doctrines of Scripture, in their own terms, and according to their own interpretation; because a compliance with such authority is a literal abjuration of the supremacy of Christ in his own kingdom, against the most explicit commands of Christ himself. The foundation, on which sensible nonconformists build their opposition, is, that which I have laid, and I must own a very strong presumption would be raised in my mind to the disadvantage of the moral character of an apostate from this principle.

¹ To these departures from the national church, Cowper alludes in his *Task*.

The veil is rent, rent too by priestly hands,
That hides divinity from mortal eyes;
And all the mysteries to faith proposed,
Insulted and traduced, are cast aside
As useless, to the moles and to the bats.
They now are deemed the faithful, and are praised,
Who, constant only in rejecting thee,
Deny thy Godhead with a martyr's zeal,
And quit their office for their error's sake.
Blind and in love with darkness! yet ev'n these,
Worthy, compared with sycophants who kneel
Thy name adoring, and then preach thee man. *Task*, book 6.

In spite of every propensity to a charitable judgment, I could not but regard him in the beautifully allusive language of lord Bacon, as offering to the author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie'. He goes on to prove his position by alluding to some parts of the conduct of a very successful apostate from the cause of dissent, archbishop Secker, and proves that the proselyte from the church had thoroughly learned the principles, if he had not imbibed the spirit of Towgood. In mitigation, however, of the severe censures on the moral character of all who desert the cause of the dissenters, it may be observed, that dissenters are not so diligent, as may be supposed, in inculcating their peculiar principles; so that many who are educated among them, never learn the reasons of their separation from the established religion of the country. The same recent convert from the establishment appeared again in 1790, as the advocate of the dissenters. He was called forth by the publication of "an Apology for the Liturgy and Clergy of the Church of England," ascribed by some to Dr. Horsley, bishop of St. David's, but by others to bishop Halifax. Whoever the author was, he had rudely attacked a publication, entitled, "Hints submitted to the serious Attention of the Clergy, Nobility, and Laity newly associated," by a layman, whom fame reported to be the duke of Grafton, a zealous and able supporter of the new socinian species of dissenters. The spirit, with which Gilbert Wakefield defended the temporal against the spiritual Lord, was unhappily more like the unhallowed passion of the bishop, than the mild and reasonable temper of the duke.

While many were pointing out the faults of the

church of England, one writer attempted, in 1792, to expose the evil of all national establishments of religion. The attempt was not, indeed, entirely new; for many had glanced at the fallacy of the principle on which these monopolies are founded, and had hinted at the evil consequences which they produce; but Mr. Graham, a Scotch seceding minister, of Newcastle, has the honour of making the first grand systematic attack, in his "Review of the Ecclesiastical Establishments of Europe." With much comprehension of view he surveys the extensive subject, with deep reflection he forms his estimate of the good or evil consequences of an alliance between church and state, and with unhesitating conviction he announces the conclusion, that this long established connection is contrary to the dictates of the Scriptures, opposed to the genius of Christianity, fatal to the interests of religion, and dangerous to the civil state. The book, failing at first to excite the attention it deserved, provoked no immediate controversy; but as its merit was gradually discovered, its influence on the public mind was proved by an increased opposition to all exclusive establishments in religion, while the clergy of the state were roused to defend their monopoly, and thus a tone was given to the controversy with the establishment which continues to this day. The periodical publication entitled "the Christian Observer," may be pronounced the most able antagonist of Mr. Graham's system, which is still capable of more complete elucidation; and the attack, as well as the defence of national churches, is yet likely to call forth greater numbers and powers than have hitherto engaged in the contest.

The war of posts which has been carried on during this reign, changed its appearance towards the latter part of it; for after that socinianism had vexed the church by attacks upon her athanasian creed and trinitarian worship, she was more seriously alarmed by the encroachments of the methodists and the orthodox dissenters. Such zeal was displayed, especially after the rise of the missionary society, for the diffusion of the Gospel in the rural parts of the kingdom, by village preaching and sunday schools, that it roused the jealousy of those who would neither teach the poor themselves, nor suffer others to "supply their lack of service." These efforts became the theme of bishops in their charges, and of the clergy in their visitation sermons. Oxford, as might be expected, was among the first to proclaim the church in danger. Dr. Tatham preached a sermon to the university, which he published in 1792, reflecting severely on methodists and dissenters, for the ignorance of their teachers, whose want of apostolic call to the sacred office, also, exposed their unhappy followers to the danger of dying without those sacraments to which nothing but episcopacy could give validity. Mr. Benson, one of Mr. Wesley's preachers, wrote, "a Defence of the Methodists," which drew from Mr. Russel, curate of Pershore, some broad and not very friendly "Hints to Methodists and Dissenters," to which Mr. Benson again replied, in his "further Defence of the Methodists." As this antagonist of high church claims, had himself entered the university to perfect his education, and been disappointed of the advantages which he hoped to have gained there, he hesitated not to retort upon many of the clergy, the accusations of ignorance, which Dr. Tat-

ham had so liberally heaped upon the methodists. Another attack was made, 1794, by Samuel Clapham, M. A. in a sermon preached at the visitation of the bishop of Chester, and published by his command. The preacher professed to consider "how far methodism conduces to the interests of Christianity and the welfare of society," but he merely repeats the vulgar charges of ignorance, enthusiasm, and unauthorised intrusion into the work of the ministry. Mr. Foley, a clergyman of Worcestershire, published a volume of discourses, entitled "a Defence of the Church of England." As this defence consisted, in great part, of evidence in favour of the divinity of Christ, which the preacher said "the dissenters of his day almost universally rejected," Mr. Best, of Cradley, wrote "a true Statement of the Case, or a Vindication of the orthodox Dissenters." He defended dissenters as a body from the charge of unitarianism, and asserted in contradiction to Mr. Foley, that even the presbyterians of that part, who had been particularly accused of heresy, had by no means universally fallen into socinianism.

A local controversy of minor importance scarcely deserves historical notice, except as it serves to afford a specimen of the spirit which prevailed at the time. Dr. Mant, rector of All Saints, Southampton, in a sermon preached at the consecration of his parochial edifice* by the bishop of Exeter, attacked the dissenters, for offering up their public prayers without a liturgy, preferring rather, as the preacher said, "to pour out

* This was not built upon a new scite as might be supposed, but the new edifice covering rather more ground than the old one, took in some that had never been made holy, which rendered it necessary to call in episcopal powers to consecrate the building.

their extemporaneous effusions in enthusiastical nonsense." William Kingsbury, M. A. minister of the independent congregation in Southampton, addressed to him a sensible dispassionate letter, entitled, "the Manner in which protestant Dissenters perform Prayer in public Worship, represented and vindicated." Dr. Mant replied by the publication of his sermon, in order to shew that it was no virulent attack, and called for no serious defence. The same conciliating advocate for the dissenters wrote "an Apology for Village Preachers," who were supposed to be reflected upon by Dr. Douglas, bishop of Sarum, in his charge to the clergy of his diocese. The bishop, indeed, had done nothing more than became him, in warning his clergy of the increase of dissenting places of worship within the diocese of Sarum, and rousing them to zeal in watching over their flocks, lest they should be led astray. But Mr. Clift, a dissenting minister of Marlborough, having published "an incidental Letter" to his lordship on the subject; a controversy was kindled, which for a short time, and within a narrow sphere, was maintained with considerable spirit. A clergyman of the name of Malham, made up what he called "a Broom for the Conventicle," and an anonymous "Appeal," was addressed to the people, in behalf of the clergy: these were answered by dissenters in the neighbourhood of Salisbury.

The singularity of this contest was the appearance of a clergyman as the most strenuous defender of the dissenters. In a pamphlet, entitled, "the Scourge," by Clero Mastix, he boldly avowed that the peasantry of the kingdom were so neglected by the regular clergy, as to render the interposition of lay preachers absolutely necessary to snatch the souls of men from

ignorance and vice. In reply to the complaint, that tradesmen went forth on Sabbath mornings, well mounted to the village conventicle, and were often met by the country curate, who was trudging to his hallowed steeple on foot; this clergyman nobly declared, that if on enquiry he found that the lay preacher was a serious man, devoted to the genuine interests of the Gospel, while the curate was a drunken preacher of salvation by good works; he should rejoice to find, that Christ was so much kinder to his servants than the devil was to his. This was the keenest and most provoking defence of the village evangelists that appeared during this controversy, for the heat and bitterness of it may be fairly laid to the charge of the high church party.

At the head of this party appeared a champion of no inferior powers and of no small confidence in his own prowess, Dr. Horsley, bishop of Rochester. In his charge to the clergy, in 1800, he first inveighed against the French revolution, and then with more than the classical *callida junctura*, against methodists and dissenters, sunday schools and village preaching. After complimenting the eldest son of the church of Rome, and pronouncing the catholic nation of France "one of the most distinguished nations of Christendom, the most distinguished as a Christian nation," his lordship maintains that the revolution was not the effect of any real grievance of the people, proceeding from the rapacity and ambition of the clergy, but of a plot of infidels originating in mere malice." Thus a few infidels overturned an establishment of a hundred and thirty thousand priests, who, because they were established clergy, are pronounced innocent of any thing which could have led to the fatal catas-

trophe. The bishop then proceeds to warn the clergy and the public that a similar conspiracy was carrying on in this country, to overturn the throne and the altar. Glancing at the socinians among dissenters, who are represented by his lordship as atheists, whom he has unmasked, and defeated in their first attempt; he says, "the operations of the enemy are still going on. Still going on by stratagem. The stratagem still a pretence of reformation. But the reformation, the very reverse of what was before attempted. Instead of divesting religion of its mysteries, the plan is now to affect a great zeal for orthodoxy; new conventicles have been opened in great numbers; the pastor is often, in appearance at least, an illiterate peasant or mechanic. Sunday schools are opened in connection with these conventicles, and there is much reason to fear that the expences of these schools and conventicles are defrayed by associations." The increase of these efforts, since the suppression of jacobinism in his country, is considered by his lordship a sufficient indication that the jacobins are now making use of the methodists, as the tools for the accomplishment of their original scheme. The best answer to this prelate was given in the Evangelical Magazine. The reviewer of his charge there asks, whether the discomfited socinians, the concealed atheists, have now made a league with the evangelical sects? "Has the patriarch of the sect been preaching at the Tabernacle, or the Foundry? Or have the orators and oracles of Birmingham and Essex-street been itinerating in the villages? It is said now to be the plan of the jacobins 'to affect great zeal for orthodoxy;' but will the bishop, who is strictly orthodox, say that this is likely to jacobinise the

world? Among the sectaries it is said, the pastor of the newly-formed village congregation 'is often, *in appearance at least*, an illiterate peasant or mechanic.' As if they were more than they appear to be—men of letters, magistrates, nobles, ministers of state, sovereign princes; like the apostles of jacobinism on the continent of Europe. 'Surely my lord is wise according to the wisdom of an angel of God,' for no man living ever before suspected these men to be one whit more important or learned than they appear to be. That atheism and sedition are taught in the dissenting or methodist sunday schools is incredible; for the schools are always open, and children are not remarkable for keeping secrets. Surely infidels were never famous for devoting their time and talents to the gratuitous instruction of the poor, and if they wanted a covert for carrying on their pernicious design, they would be more likely to seek it in the bosom of a wealthy establishment than in a sectarian barn. In France, they filled the superior offices of the church, and there is not an atheistical apostle upon earth but would prefer a snug stall in a cathedral, or a warm living in the church to the hard fare and harder labours of a methodist." That the bishop provoked no controversy, was much to the praise of those whom he attacked; for there was so much of madness or intoxication in his rage, that one is induced to conclude that he had stepped over the fine boundary which separates genius from insanity, or had written and preached, as Burke, another alarmist in the state, is said to have declaimed, under the stimulating fumes of hot water, as a bishop cannot be supposed to be given to wine.

But when bishops lead the way, there will not be

wanting inferior clergy to follow in the attack upon dissenters. Francis Wollaston, rector of Chislehurst, Kent, wrote "a country Parson's Address to his Flock, to caution them against being misled by the Wolf in sheep's cloathing, or receiving jacobin Teachers of Sedition, who intrude themselves under the specious Pretence of instructing Youth and preaching Christianity." This teacher of forbearance was not ashamed to tell the world, that he wished he had "the power of proceeding in a summary way against such as intrude unasked into the fold committed to his care." His accusations of treason and sedition were thrown out so incautiously, that some of them fell upon respectable individuals connected with the government. The charge underwent full investigation by the highest authorities, the injured characters were honourably vindicated, and a severe reproof was given to the reverend calumniator. He republished his address, however, in a cheap edition, omitting only some of the grossest calumnies. He was answered by "a Letter to a country Parson."

This charge of democratic scheming was echoed by Mr. Atkinson, a clergyman of Bradford, in Yorkshire; whose three letters were answered by Mr. Parsons, of Leeds, in his "Vindication of the Dissenters." In Wales, two anonymous publications of the same high church defamatory cast, drew forth a tract entitled; "the Welch Methodists vindicated." One of the attacks, denominated "Hints to Heads of Families," gravely advised all good churchmen not to buy or sell, or maintain any intercourse of civil life, with those who separated from the church. It must be presumed, that the writer was not aware that the divine mind, which inspired the Revelation, had pre-

dicted that the time would come, when none should be allowed to buy or sell, who had not the mark of the beast in their right hand or on their forehead¹. He was probably also as little aware, that, if all those whom he would treat as outlaws, and banish from the market, were to form a commercial community, they would have a very brisk trade among themselves, and that, if they were exempted from supporting the clergy and the poor of the established church, many of her zealous sons would be glad to join with them, for the sake of sharing the profits of their gainful exclusion. It is, however, painful to hear these Welch methodists complain that they were punished for the pertinacity with which they clung to the establishment, and refused to put themselves under the protection of the toleration act, by the loss of one hundred pounds in one year.

The controversial pamphlets last noticed were produced by the zeal of modern times; but an octavo volume of nearly five hundred pages must now be announced, which seems to throw us back to the age of Dodwell and the nonjurors, if not to that of king John, when priests sealed up the gates of heaven against whole nations. "A Guide to the Church," by Rev. Charles Daubeny, placed all the dissenters under the ban of the Redeemer's empire. This *brutum fulmen* was brought upon the dissenters by no fault of theirs, and indeed is to be traced to a cause which no one would have expected to produce such an effect. Mr. Wilberforce's "practical View of Christianity" alarmed Mr. Daubeny, who saw, or thought he saw, in it principles dangerous to the church and to the souls of men. "The Guide to

¹ Rev. xiii. 16, 17.

the Church," therefore, repeated the old alarm of schism, and informed the world that communion with the church of England was worth as much as their hopes of heaven. "From the general tenour of Scripture," says Mr. Daubeny, "it is to be concluded that none but those who are members of the church, can be partakers of the spirit by which it is accompanied. Without, therefore, presuming to determine upon the condition of those who are out of the church, we are at least justified in saying that their hope of salvation must be built upon some general idea of the divine mercy, to which the member of the church has a covenanted claim." This ridiculous attempt, to throw the dissenters upon the uncovenanted mercy of God, with a few little tracts in the same strain, seemed designed to prove that if stout protestants think popery is always the same, the semi-popery of high churchmen is always the same. As the dissenters were not weak enough to be alarmed at this papistical thunder, nor wicked enough to have elicited these unhallowed flashes; though not necessary, it was but equitable that they should be defended from another quarter. A member of the more sane part of the church of England, sir Richard Hill, pleaded their cause in his "Apology for brotherly Love, and for the Doctrine of the Church of England." To Mr. Daubeny's definition of a church, which was, that it is a society under governors appointed by Christ, the baronet opposed that of the articles, that "it is a society of faithful men where the word of God is preached;" which gives him an opportunity of retorting the charge of schism upon Mr. Daubeny himself, whose heretical words are quoted, to prove that he turns his own parochial temple into a conventicle,

and his pulpit into the tub of a schismatic. Mr. Daubeny denies the validity of any sacrament not administered through episcopal ordination. Yet two metropolitans Tillotson and Secker, four heads of the church, James first, William the third, and the two first Georges, were not episcopally baptised. We have bishops appointed by unbaptised heads of the church, and consecrated by prelates excommunicated at Rome, the mother from whom the church of England inherits all her powers.

Against the repeated accusations of schism, the dissenters re-published two tracts, one by Matthew Henry on schism, and the other by Dr. Gill on the true grounds of dissent. A few charges attracted notice, though the episcopal preachers can scarcely be said to have directly attacked the dissenters. Dr. Porteus, bishop of London, ascribed their increase to the indolence and neglects of his own clergy; Dr. Prettyman, bishop of Lincoln, was chiefly intent upon combating calvinism, whether in or out of the establishment, and the bishop of Norwich condemns only the methodistical separatists, while he says of the regular dissenters: "as they have laid aside their passionate invective, it is incumbent on us to feel for them, however differing in the form of religious worship, all that good will which they seem disposed to shew to us." But Dr. Barrington, bishop of Durham, descended from dissenters, published a charge to the clergy in 1807, entitled, "the Grounds on which the Church of England separated from the Church of Rome," on which he exhorts his clergy to watch against papists and dissenters, saying to them, "the errors of the calvinist and the anabaptist demand your vigilance, as far as they are repugnant to Christian

verity, and to our civil establishment." "The Causes of the increase of Methodism and Dissention, and of the Popularity of what is called evangelical Preaching," was the title of a visitation sermon by Aclom Ingram, B. D. Though it recommends the refusal of licences to dissenters, it rather opposes evangelical doctrines, than dissenting principles. While their work prospered in their hands, the dissenters wisely refused to turn aside from it to dispute with their numerous accusers.

SECTION II.

THE ARMINIAN CONTROVERSY.

THE question in dispute between calvinists and arminians, which forms the gordian knot in theology, occupied the talents of dissenters during this period. The eagerness, which some have shown to condemn the gospel, on account of the controversies which alienate men from each other, has only betrayed their own ignorance or prejudice ; for, if the dispute which we have now to record, has formed Christians into hostile sects, did it not also divide heathens into different schools of philosophy ? and if the controversy has been more eagerly agitated in modern than in ancient times, it only indicates that Christianity has rendered the heart of man more sensible to the importance of his relation to a moral governor, and invigorated his intellect to perceive all the difficulties which attend the investigation of the subject.

To borrow an apostolic simile, the first Christians, “like new-born babes,” had few differences ; for a grateful sense of recent deliverance from ruin attached them to their great deliverer, and to all who were fellow heirs of the same grace ; so that “the multitudes of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.” But when arianism had kindled the fire of controversy, pelagianism soon followed to feed the flames. Those who now adopt a modification of this latter system, suppose it to be that of the Scriptures, and, of course, of the first Christians ; but it is undeniable,

that Augustine, who took the calvinistic side against Pelagius, was hailed as the champion of the ancient faith ; though it must be admitted, that he introduced a more rigorous statement of the doctrines of grace than had ever before prevailed. For as controversy gives us a clearer perception of our own system, which is sometimes understood not *before*, but *because* we have written in its defence, so it enflames our attachment to a cause in which we have spent our power, if not spilt our blood, excites a horror of that against which we are studying to say strong things, and a fondness for the object of our patronage which we are desirous of presenting to the world in the most amiable and defensible form. Augustinism was, from the time of the celebrated father, the creed of the church ; but like the catholic doctrine of the Trinity, it gained such a triumph as extinguished the dispute, and left us much in the dark concerning the sentiments of subsequent ages. That the thick night, which enveloped the Christian world during the ninth and tenth centuries, obscured the doctrines of grace is manifest by the martyrdom of Godeschalcus for maintaining the sentiments of Augustine ; though the cause of the condemned monk was afterwards espoused by an assembly of bishops, and his eulogium pronounced by fourteen provinces.

The Waldenses and Wickliffites were charged by the papistical party with holding the doctrines which were afterwards termed calvinistical ; but the reformation so directed the general attention to other objects that this controversy was for a time abandoned. Luther, whose hostility to Calvin has been exaggerated, first among reformers maintained the leading sentiments of the pastor of Geneva, in a book

entitled, "de Servo Arbitrio," written in answer to Erasmus, who had maintained the Romish doctrine of freewill. While, however, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find any thing more calvinistic than these pages of Luther, it has fallen to the lot of Calvin to embody the system, and stamp it with his name. His Christian institutes have entered so fully into this most awfully profound department of theology, that they are considered as the standard of these sentiments; though many who firmly maintain their general truth, consider them capable of a more defensible statement. Calvin saw his system received as the creed of protestants; for the doctrines which bear his name were adopted, not only in Geneva, but in Switzerland, France, Holland, England, and Scotland. That the articles of the church of England are calvinistic can only be disputed by the same perverse logic as would make the apostle Paul an arminian; for as the objections of pelagians confirm the doctrines against which they are levelled, because the apostle anticipates the same replies, so the seventeenth article shows what kind of election it was intended to teach by the objections which its compilers deemed it necessary to confute.

The first grand attack upon calvinism by a protestant, was in answer to Beza on predestination. James Arminius, having been requested to defend the successor of Calvin, chose rather to become his antagonist. To extinguish the controversy thus kindled, the synod of Dort was held, and as the arminians remonstrated against its sentence of condemnation, they received the denomination of remonstrants. The persecutions which followed, and in which the celebrated Grotius felt the consequences

of taking the unpopular side, did more injury to the calvinistic cause than all the arguments of the remonstrant brethren. Arminianism, having been introduced into England by archbishop Laud, took care to repay the cruelties which it had suffered in Holland, but as his semi-popery soon rendered his theology odious, calvinism regained the ascendant in the time of the commonwealth. John Goodwin must be mentioned as a solitary, but brilliant exception to the general character of those times; for he, though a zealous republican and independent, maintained the doctrines of the arminians with as much ardour and ability as were ever displayed on that side of the question. Dr. Owen, who had been brought into notice and raised to the highest posts of literary honour by his attack on arminianism, triumphantly confuted Goodwin's "Redemption redeemed," in a treatise "on the Perseverance of the Saints." Richard Baxter attempted to strike out a middle way, but though he has been considered as the founder of a school of theologians, who avoid the difficulties of both the opposing systems, he has said such things as seem to involve the admission of the calvinistic doctrine to all its extent. The boasted unity of the church of Rome was invaded by this controversy. The jesuits, who were rising to unbounded power and influence, were as determined arminians as they were devoted papists; while the jansenists, the only remaining vital spark in "the body of death," espoused the opposite system, which they called by the name of Augustin, a revered father, rather than by that of Calvin, a reputed heretic. The letters of Pascal have given the calvinistic catholics the palm of honour, but the authority of

the pope was the tool which the craft and power of the jesuits employed to crush their adversaries, and render pelagianism triumphant within the pale of the catholic church.

The restoration of royalty in England was that of arminianism. Hammond had endeavoured to make the New Testament speak the language of this system ; and Whitby, in the next century, attempted to enlist on the same side the ancient fathers, in his book on the five points, by which are meant election, particular redemption, efficacious grace, free will, and final perseverance. He was opposed by Dr. Gill, in his "Cause of God and Truth." The first part of this work, consisting of an examination of the texts of Scripture urged by arminians, is not so good as might be wished, but is quite sufficient for an answer to Whitby ; the second adduces abundant proofs from Scripture in support of the five points ; the third defends them by the arms of reason, shewing, that if calvinists are accused of agreeing with Hobbs and the stoics, the stoics were the best among the heathens, for whose salvation arminians are accustomed to contend, and that the worst tenets of the obnoxious philosophers, that we get virtue for ourselves, is the doctrine of arminianism. The fourth part of the "Cause of God and Truth," shews that Whitby had no reason to boast of the fathers, whose language is largely quoted in defence of calvinistic grace.

But the heat of the battle in this country was excited by the separation between the calvinistic and arminian methodists. The breach of the peace between the two brothers in zeal, Whitefield and Wesley, has been deemed so serious an evil, that each has thrown the blame on the other. To us

the difference between them appears so wide, that to withdraw from a hollow union, and honestly avow all his sentiments, was no disgrace to either. As, however, Mr. Wesley's sermon on free grace was the first publication in this controversy, it fastens upon him whatever blame attaches to the rupture; for it is as decided a declaration of war as was ever made by a herald. Whitefield might well say, "I find it has had expected success, it has set the nation a disputing." The pleonastic title of *free* grace, seems designed to steal a march upon the calvinists, and to snatch from them a popular expression which they claimed as exclusively their own. But if the text which Mr. Wesley chose, be taken as the criterion of the meaning of that term, it decides for the right of the calvinists. "He that spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" By the style of the sermon it seems intended for popular effect, to render his adversary's system odious*. But as Mr.

* Rom. viii. 32.

* The following extract from the sermon may afford a sufficient proof of its spirit. "O how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he cry aloud and spare not! How would he lift up his voice and say, 'to your tents, O Israel!' Flee from the face of this God, or ye shall utterly perish. But whither will ye flee? Into heaven? He is there. Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent almighty tyrant. And whether ye flee, or stay, I call heaven, his throne, and earth, his footstool, to witness against you: ye shall perish, ye shall die eternally. Sing, O hell, and rejoice ye that are under the earth. For God, even the mighty God, hath spoken and doomed to death thousands of souls, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof. Here, O death, is thy sting. They shall not, cannot escape. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Here, O grave, is thy victory. Nations

Wesley admitted the divine prescience, and his followers say of it, as calvinists of the divine sovereignty, that without it there can be no deity; how easy would it be to give a horrible caricature of arminianism by parodying its creed, in imitation of Mr. Wesley's conduct towards his opponents?

Though Mr. Wesley's sermon on free grace commenced the controversy; in the complete edition of his works the first polemical piece is a "Preservative against unsettled Notions in Religion, containing the Scripture Doctrine of Predestination, Election, and Reprobation." "A Dialogue between a Predestinarian and his Friend" was Wesley's next publication, which puts as weak arguments as possible into the mouth of a calvinist, who is thus made an easy

yet unborn, or ever they have done good or evil, are doomed never to see the light of life, but thou shalt gnaw upon them for ever and ever. Let all those morning stars sing together who fell with Lucifer, son of the morning. Let all the sons of hell shout for joy. For the decree is past and who shall disannul it*?" This passage is inserted by one of Mr. Wesley's admirers, in what are called the "Beauties of Wesley." But if such are his beauties, what must be his deformity?

* Sermon on Free Grace, preached at Bristol. Wesley's Works, vol. XX. p. 74.

† He maintains that election is called eternal, or from the foundation of the world, because it was foreseen from eternity, as Christ is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. It may be asked, whether Mr. Wesley's biblical criticism did not extend so far as to know that the passage is quoted as a proof of eternal election, by reading it thus, "they who are written in the book of the slain Lamb, from the foundation of the world." That this is the true construction appears from Rev. xvii. 8. "whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world." And what reason can be assigned why election alone is thus represented as eternal, rather than justification and sanctification, which were equally foreseen from the foundation of the world?

convert to arminianism. In the midst of the controversy, the same writer reprinted "Extracts from a late Author, entitled serious Considerations concerning the Doctrines of Election, Reprobation, and absolute Reprobation." He also gave to the world his own "Thoughts on the Perseverance of the Saints," in which he opposes that doctrine with far less ability than was displayed by Goodwin, who was so completely answered by Dr. Owen. The next publication of Mr. Wesley was entitled, "Predestination calmly considered," which is his most laboured piece, but which indicates any thing rather than calmness or consideration. Against Mr. Toplady he wrote a tract entitled, "the Consequence proved," and then, leaving that gentleman to be answered by Thomas Olivers, he entirely abandoned the controversy to other disputants.

Whitefield, at the commencement of the dispute, had addressed to the friendship of his former brother, a letter on election; but he had mistaken the character of John Wesley, who sought victory by appealing to the tribunal of vulgar prejudice; so that the calvinistic leader, disgusted with the passions of the theological arena, imitated his antagonist and left the contest to be maintained by his friends. The only mighty polemic who appeared on the side of calvinism, was president Edwards, of New England, whose book on the "Freedom of the Will," had it been attended to as it deserved, might have settled the dispute. Dr. Gill, who appeared at an earlier period, Edwards, who interposed in the midst of the controversy, and Dr. Williams, who came up at the close, were the only dissenters who became allies to the calvinistic methodists; but they have the honour

of bringing into the field the mildest tempers and the mightiest arguments. Edwards, absorbed in the profound discussion, lost sight of every thing but the abstract question, which he pursued to such lengths, that not many could follow him. He proved, with what may be called a prodigality of evidence, that from the nature of the human mind *a necessity of consequence* must exist in human affairs, and not only confirmed this, both by the general tenour of Scripture, and a multitude of particular texts, but drove the contrary notion off the field by a *reductio ad absurdum* so complete, that nothing like an answer could ever be given. The calvinists, however, delighted with so able a champion, deprived themselves of his efficient co-operation by vaunting his prowess in an injudicious manner. Toplady either did not understand him, or was induced by polemical zeal to represent him opposed as much as possible to the arminians; so that he was announced to the world a mere necessarian, like Priestley or Hartley. The opposite party presuming that Edwards was not misrepresented by those who gloried in him as their champion, either shut their eyes, or steeled their hearts against his arguments; concluding *a priori* that they could not be true; because they contradicted at once the feelings of nature, the testimony of conscience, and the language of Scripture, which all concurred to prove, that we are moral agents and not mere machines. Hence Fletcher, the ablest of the arminian writers, admits one species of necessity, and contends earnestly for it, in opposition to Edwards, who, strange to tell, wrote his book to establish the same kind of necessity. Once, indeed, the vicar of Madeley seems fairly to face the American, when

Edwards contends that every kind of necessity is not incompatible with that freedom of the will, which is essential to moral agency, praise and blame; because God is necessarily holy, devils are necessarily or irreclaimably evil; yet neither the best nor the worst beings act by compulsion; the one deserves praise and the other blame. The manner in which Fletcher attempts to answer this, would be amusing, were it not a melancholy spectacle, to see such a man attempt to defend himself and others from the force of truth.

Augustus Toplady, vicar of Broad Hembury, whom Mr. Wesley calls "a bold young man," entered the field with such weapons as were admirably calculated to repay the unfair attacks of the arminians. This clergyman's "Historic Proof of the Calvinism of the Church of England," lies not within our province: it was answered, if not confuted, by Mr. Sellon, who was also a minister of the establishment. Another piece by the vicar of Broad Hembury was entitled, "More Work for John Wesley," offending sufficiently by the title alone against the decencies of letters, and the meekness and benevolence of Christians. "The Scheme of Christian and philosophical Necessity asserted," by the same author, in opposition to Mr. Wesley's tract on that subject, too often disgusts by the coarse unhallowed wit which it employs.

But the attention of the public was called to a combatant of very different talents and spirit from either of the former. John Fletcher, a Swiss by birth, had been ordained in the church of England; and was chosen to preside in lady Huntingdon's new college at Trevecca. But when the honourable and reverend Mr. Shirley, who was attached to calvinistic methodism, sent to lady Huntingdon the minutes of

Mr. Wesley's conference, 1770, she doomed them to the flames, and declared that whoever did not disavow them must quit her college. Mr. Fletcher, however, defended them, and when Mr. Shirley invited, by a circular letter, the clergy of all denominations, to assemble at Bristol, and oppose the heresies contained in the minutes, Mr. Fletcher determined to stand forth in their defence, and wrote what he called his first check to antinomianism. The second check attempts to shew that the Christian church then stood as much in need of reformation from antinomianism, as our ancestors of deliverance from popish errors. He was answered by five letters from the author of "*Pietas Oxoniensis*," sir Richard Hill; on man's faithfulness, on working for life, on God's conduct to the heathen, and on the sins of believers. Fletcher's third check was in answer to these letters, and by seizing upon their inaccuracies, he maintains a shew of argument, bordering on victory. To this were opposed six letters from sir Richard Hill, and some friendly remarks of his brother Rev. Rowland Hill, which drew forth Mr. Fletcher's "*Logica Genevensis*, or a fourth Check to Antinomianism." This contained some bitter passages, which betrayed a mind wounded, if not foiled, in the conflict, and was answered by sir Richard Hill's "finishing Stroke." Fletcher's "fifth Check, or the second Part of *Logica Genevensis*," aimed a blow at John Berridge, vicar of Everton, author of "*the Christian World unmasked*," who had entered the field against the arminians. Sir Richard Hill answered again, by "*a Creed for Arminians and Perfectionists*," which is drawn up with considerable ability; and though it was opposed with equal ingenuity by Mr. Fletcher's "*fictitious and genuine Creed*," it left a deep impression.

Amidst the heat of this controversy, appeared a pamphlet, entitled, "arminian Methodism turned out rank Popery at last," and another, entitled, "a Check upon Checks." Mr. Fletcher having paused, returned to the combat with new vigour and a better spirit. He published an answer to Mr. Toplady's "more Work for John Wesley," and a reply to the principal arguments by which the calvinists and fatalists support the doctrine of absolute necessity. These were soon followed by "the Doctrines of Grace and Justice equally essential to the pure Gospel." The controversy was closed by Mr. Fletcher, with the "Reconciliation," or an easy method to unite the professing people of God, by placing the doctrines of grace and justice in such a light, as to make the candid arminians bible-calvinists, and the candid calvinists bible-arminians. An exhortation to peace and love is given in such a style and spirit, as will confer more honour on Mr. Fletcher than he will derive from all his polemical theology.

This controversy has lately been reviewed with great ability by Dr. Williams, of Rotherham, in his "Essay on Equity and Sovereignty," after that he had defended predestination to life, in a masterly sermon. With a mind of sufficient compass to grasp the whole extent of the subject, and powers competent to grapple with its mighty difficulties, he has evinced a heart superior to the passions which convulsed the other disputants, and alive to the necessity of the most accurate distinctions, as well as to the important tendencies of each moral system. Of intellectual force, or holy temper we have scarcely any thing further to expect or wish, but we regret that some of those embellishments which Fletcher gave

to his polemics, though too often at the expense of truth, are wanting to allure readers to examine the pages of Dr. Williams, who will now instruct only those who are least in need of the information which he affords.

On looking back to the heat of the controversy, it is painful to reflect that scarcely ever was so important a subject discussed with so bad success. Both sides discovered towards certain truths feelings which did them honour; the one being jealous for divine sovereignty and grace, with human dependence; the other for infinite justice and holiness, with the moral agency of man. But they seem to have reserved their religion for their friends, and to have thought that any thing was lawful to an enemy. Forgetting that from erring man, the errors, as well as sins, of his brother demand sorrow rather than anger; they let loose all the furies against their opponent's opinion. With whomsoever the victory might be supposed to rest, acquired by such weapons, it could confer no glory.

Where both parties deserve so much censure, with regard to their tempers, the comparative estimate of their delinquency is difficult, and the condemnation of the one implies no praise to the other. The calvinists, however, were the more guilty; for Mr. Toplady bore away the palm of contempt and bitterness, evil surmises and provoking speeches. To Mr. Wesley, indeed, must be attributed the guilt of letting loose the dogs of war; for his horrid appeal to all the devils in hell gave a sort of infernal tone to the controversy. In point of temper, Fletcher was of all the disputants, at once the best and the worst. Too much under the impression of the approaching judg-

ment to indulge himself in the ribaldry, sneers, and contempt in which others seemed to glory, he discovered all the seriousness of Saul of Tarsus, in his opposition to the Gospel, and, transported by that zeal which is not according to knowledge, he is often very devoutly wicked, and almost blasphemes from a sense of duty. In argument, however, he stood alone on the arminian side; for though Wesley was shrewd and perspicuous, excelling in that luminous simplicity of language which controversy demands, he soon turned from disputing with enemies, to ruling his votaries; and left Fletcher to dazzle with eloquence instead of reasoning, and substitute tropes for arguments. If the corruscations of passion and ephemeral wit should go down to them, posterity will pronounce him too loquacious for a deep reasoner, and too impassioned to investigate duly the most profound and awful themes which can occupy the human understanding.

It is as painful as it is remarkable, that the true point on which the whole controversy turns was never brought into view. This could not be expected from the arminians, whose cause it would have injured. But the calvinists by this neglect, betrayed a want of insight into their own system. The contest, concerning what God designed from eternity, must at last be decided by what he effects in time; for his actions are the annunciation of his decrees. As Mr. Wesley professed to admit that God was the author of conversion, that he gave the will its right direction, and sustained the religion which he first produced; when this admission is pursued to all its consequences, it proves all that calvinism requires. Instead, however, of discussing this interesting question which lay

within their reach, and tended to edification as it led them to look into their own hearts, the combatants pushed each other back into the ages of eternity, to speculate upon the order of the thoughts which passed in the infinite mind.

Another singularity of this contest was the difference of the tribunals to which the litigants appealed. The arminians seem to have felt as gladiators exhibiting before the world, which must have been much confirmed in its native enmity to divine sovereignty and grace, by the misrepresentations of Wesley and Fletcher. The church of Christ was the theatre in which the calvinists sought applause; but they seemed not sufficiently solicitous whether that applause proceeded from the best or the worst part of the professors of religion. The arminians gloried in the patronage of the *Monthly Review*, and Mr. Fletcher reproached Mr. Hill for appealing to the children of God. That was indeed more likely to be true which commended itself to those "who had tasted that the Lord is gracious," than that which suits the taste of "the carnal mind, which is enmity against God;" but in appealing to the people of God, we should not forget that those who lay claim to this title without right, are often the worst judges of truth and holiness.

The effect of the controversy was most pernicious. Without eliciting truth, or illustrating difficult texts, the combatants enflamed the spirit of party, and rendered the two bodies of methodists more hostile to each other than almost any other differing sects. Though Wesley and Whitefield appeared reconciled, they were either not very hearty, or their influence was greater to enflame than to cool the passions of

their followers. Both parties were driven to extremes. The calvinists not only shocked their opponents by saying things as strong, rather than as true as possible, against arminians ; but they actually went to lengths which some of them afterwards condemned as the perversion of calvinism : though others unhappily gloried in these extravagancies as the perfection of the Gospel ; so that real antinomianism became the pest of many churches, and the scarecrow of the arminians. These, in their turn, fled from calvinism with such haste, that they almost rushed into the arms of a mystical deism ; for though Fletcher, as he advanced towards the close of the controversy, felt as a Christian on the verge of eternity, and dropped some healing antidotes to the controversial venom ; Wesley seemed only intent on following up his position, that “ we are gone too far towards calvinism.” To such lengths have they gone in their retreat, that unless the efficacious grâcê, against which they contend, should interpose in their behalf, many of this communion will repeat the experiment of the general baptists and English presbyterians, with whom arminian led to arian sentiments, which have at length conducted to socinianism.

SECTION III.

THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.

IF dissenters engaged in the preceding controversy, of this a dissenting minister was the author. The title, which we have given to it, may appear to some to convey an invidious reflection; but as the epithet unitarian, for which these persons contend, appears to others an equally invidious assumption that the believers in Christ's deity deny the divine unity, it could not be expected that we should entitle this the unitarian controversy. The latter epithet would also fail of conveying any information, whether it was the socinian, sabellian, or swedenborgian idea of the divine unity and the person of Christ which was maintained by those who opposed the orthodox doctrine; nor would it give a hint of the dispute concerning the atonement and merits of Christ, or the divine influences, which were all contested at the same time. To us, therefore, truth and reason recommended a term which was most comprehensive, least likely to suggest false ideas, and which could convey no more uncandid reflection than the term calvinistic, as it merely designates a system maintained by a celebrated writer.

If we have too often seen Christians dispute about nothing, here we behold them contend for every thing. For as the person of Christ is, to the believers in his Deity, the golden hinge on which turns all that is valuable in his religion, so they who denied

his divine glory, opposed also his mediatorial performances, his atonement, justification by his righteousness, his presence with his church now, and the hope of being present with him immediately after death.

The followers of Socinus, maintaining that theirs are the sentiments of the Scriptures, suppose, of course, that they were those of the first Christians. But as they evidently are not discernible in the first ages of what is usually termed by ecclesiastical historians the orthodox church, their admirers claim the Ebionites as the first witnesses for the truth. It would be endless to relate all the opinions which have been formed of this early sect, who are represented by the ancients as divided into two parties, as they are regarded by the moderns in two opposite points of view; some honouring them as the genuine Christians, while others reprobate them as the earliest Jewish corrupters of the Gospel. Arius was, however, the first celebrated opponent of the equality of the Son with the Father; but notwithstanding the tendency which his system now betrays towards socinianism, the favourers of his creed would formerly have rejected with horror the thought of degrading Christ to a level with ourselves. The Paulinists, or Samosatzenians, though denominated by some the fathers of the modern socinians, were indeed erroneous concerning the person of Christ; but they were too much inclined to the gnostic doctrine of a derived and temporary deity, to rank properly with those who consider Jesus Christ as a mere man.

Lælius Socinus, or Sozzini, who has given a name to the opponents of Christ's deity and atonement, was born at Sienna, in Tuscany, in 1525, and bred to the profession of the law. Having discovered

many things in the religion of his country contrary to the Scriptures, he abandoned other pursuits to study the sacred writings in their original tongues, and after having travelled among the protestants, he settled at Zurich. He soon communicated his doubts concerning the divinity of Christ, and other important doctrines of the reformed church to his new connections and to some of his relations, who still remained at the place of his nativity. These doubts produced in the mind of his nephew Faustus Socinus a persuasion of the falshood of the common creed of catholics and protestants; so that when the uncle died, in 1562, he took possession of his manuscripts, and compiled from them his book entitled "de Jesus Christo Salvatore." He then retired into Poland.

Among other adversaries to the doctrine of the Trinity who arose at this time, Michael Servetus, a Spanish physician, has acquired an unfortunate celebrity by the circumstances of his death. He published a work on the errors which prevailed concerning the Trinity, and having travelled into France, and settled as a physician at Vienne, in Dauphiny, he printed secretly, in 1553, his "Christianity restored." That kind of genius, which plans a new system of religion, was in him accompanied with ardent zeal for its establishment; but the hopes, which he had indulged in consequence of the extensive and powerful connections which he had formed, were blasted by the storm of persecution. He was seized and thrown into prison, and when he escaped and fled to Geneva, he was there condemned as a heretic and burnt alive.

Mosheim, who rejects as a fable the history which socinians have given of their denomination^x, says,

^x Hist. sæc. 16. sec. 3. part. 2. cap. 4 sec. 7.

that at the reformation many rushed into extremes, and formed sects which papists, lutherans; and calvinists equally joined to condemn. Those who denied the Trinity and divinity of Christ, fled into Poland, where for many years they lived peaceably in communion with the protestants, and assisted in their ecclesiastical councils. But when the avowal of their sentiments kindled dissention, the diet, in 1565, obliged them to separate and form a distinct communion. The palatine of Podolia, having built the city of Racow, permitted them to settle there, where they printed the Racovian catechism, a new version of the Scriptures, and other works in defence of their principles^y.

The name of anabaptists, by which they were called, they wished to exchange for that of unitarians, but they were by no means in unity of sentiment. Though all maintained that Christ was a mere man, they were divided concerning his miraculous conception, and the propriety of paying to him religious worship, for which Faustus Socinus was the inconsistent but strenuous advocate. When Francis Davides superintendant of the socinian churches in Transylvania, opposed this as idolatry, he was resisted by Socinus and the heads of the communion with so much violence, that the prince of Transylvania threw him into prison, where he died in 1759^z.

^y Their principal publication, which comprises the works of all their most eminent writers, is entitled "*Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*," in six volumes folio, of which the two first contain all the writings of Faustus Socinus.

^z This act of persecution is passed over silently by those who keep up a constant deafening outcry against the murderous Calvin, for his conduct towards Servetus. If it be alledged that Socinus left Davides to the civil power, the same excuse may be made for

The socinians, having been driven from Poland with such sufferings as rendered their persecutors infamous, sent out emissaries to seek an asylum ; but no European nation (says Mosheim,) could be persuaded to grant a public settlement to a sect which denied the divinity of Christ. In England, indeed, socinian sentiments had made their appearance soon after the reformation ; but John Biddle was

Calvin. When it is asserted that this reformer ruled in Geneva, so that the acts of the government were his own, it may be replied, that the government once banished Calvin himself, who declared, before Servetus came to Geneva, that it would not be in his power to save him ; so that his influence was little more than that of the Socinians in Transylvania, who had acquired such an ascendant that the man whom they persecuted was sent to die in a jail. Calvin laboured to dissuade a stranger, who was viewed with horror, from coming to a place where the laws, which had been enacted long before by the emperor, would consign him to the flames* ; but the socinians saw their brother, the superintendent of their churches, hurled from his honours to a dungeon, and what efforts did they make to save him ? The death of Servetus, which was cruel indeed, was inflicted for what all the reformers, as well as Calvin, deemed damnable heresies, worthy of death, the blasphemy of degrading the incarnate God to an ordinary man, his death to mere martyrdom, and his worship to idolatry. But the socinians, who are supposed to outstrip all others in liberal principles, hunted Davides to prison from political motives, lest the odium under which they laboured should be augmented. Socinus publicly stigmatised the adherents of Davides as semi-jews, and urged the unfortunate man to renounce his error ; but privately he acknowledged (as in all reason and consistency he was compelled to do) that it was a mere nothing, nay no error at all, but a proof of stronger faith ; so that Davides was made a sacrifice not to honest bigotry, but to mere finesse. The aggravated guilt of Socinus is, indeed, no excuse for that of Calvin ; but it may suffice to expose the conduct of his followers, who adduce the crime of the latter, as a proof of the blackness of his character and of the intolerant tendency of his doctrines.

* Mosheim ubi supra.

the first of our countrymen who openly recommended them to the world. In the reign of Charles the first, he was for his principles immured in prison, where he published "Twelve Arguments against the Deity of the Holy Spirit," which were answered by Mr. Pool. The year after, he sent forth "Seven Articles against the Deity of Christ," with testimonies from the fathers, for which some of the Westminster assembly of divines moved that he might be put to death, instead of which he was, in 1751, set at liberty. He now published his catechisms, which maintain that God is confined to a certain place, has passions and a bodily shape, is neither omnipotent nor unchangeable, and that Jesus Christ was not a priest upon earth, and did not make atonement for sin. For this the long parliament committed him to the Gatehouse, but Oliver Cromwell afterwards liberated him, and when considerable disturbance was excited by a challenge for a disputation between him and Mr. Griffin, a baptist minister, the protector sent him to Scilly, with an annual pension of a hundred crowns. His catechisms were answered by Dr. Owen, in the learned treatise entitled, "*Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*." Mr. Biddle, having returned to London at the restoration, and established a society there, was thrown into prison, where he died, September, 1662, leaving a high character for talents, morals, and learning.

Dr. Owen maintained the war against socinianism through many of his works; but especially his "*Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*," in which he considers the arguments of the most celebrated socinian writers, and shows how completely they are confuted by the apostolic writings. The next attack on these sentiments was unhappily of a very different kind—

the act of William and Mary against heresy and blasphemy.

Soon after the revolution, arianism occupied the public attention ; but though it seemed to step in between the orthodox and Socinus*, it still secretly prepared the way for socinianism. Mr. Emlyn, who was persecuted as an arian, seems, before his death, to have become a socinian ; but Mr. Cardale, a dissenting minister of Evesham, in Worcestershire, is considered as the *avant courier* of the controversy. He published a piece, entitled, " the true Doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ considered ; wherein the Misrepresentations that have been made of it, on the arian Hypothesis, and on all Trinitarian and Athanasian Principles, are exposed, and the Honour of our Saviour's divine Character and Mission is maintained." The last part of this title seems designed as a bait to catch readers ; for who would not suppose that a book written to maintain the honour of our Saviour's divine character, against arians and trinitarians was the work of a sabellian, or of some one who maintained, like the Swedenborgians, that Jesus Christ was the only divine person ? Mr. Cardale published a supplement to this work, in the form of a comment on Christ's last prayer, and a treatise on the application of certain terms and epithets to Jesus Christ. To this writer is ascribed, by the admirers of his system, the praise of leading the way to just and clear sentiments in religion ; but those who oppose his creed, would rather consider him as having only outstripped others in the career of

* Dr. Priestley, in his History of Corruptions, laments, but with little reason, the obstacle which arianism opposed to the progress of socinianism.

unbelief and ingratitude towards Christ, to which human depravity so powerfully impells.

Dr. Lardner, who is considered to have run the usual race of heresy, from thinking Christ to be less than God, to regarding him as no more than a man, may be said to have given the new turn to the dispute. His polemical works were not numerous, and we have only to mention his "Enquiry whether the Logos supplied the place of a human soul in Jesus Christ;" and "two Schemes of a Trinity considered, and the divine Unity asserted." Cool, temperate discussion characterizes all the works of this eminent writer; who was more formed for research than for disputation. Mr. Hopkins, a clergyman of Essex, attempted to recommend arianism to the members of the church of England. He received an answer to his "Appeal" from Dr. M'Donnell, and from two or three other writers. Dr. Clayton, bishop of Clogher, rekindled the fires by his "Essay on Spirit," which was answered by several trinitarians; but especially by William Jones and Dr. Randolph. Mr. Hopkins vindicated him in a "Sequel to the Essay on Spirit," and the bishop published a "Defence of the Essay," as well as "a plain and proper Answer to the Question, why does not the bishop of Clogher resign his Preferments." The arian hypothesis was most ably supported by Mr. Henry Taylor, in his "Apology of Benjamin Ben Mordecai to his Friends, for embracing Christianity," and by Dr. Price, in his "Sermons on the Christian Doctrine."

Dr. Priestley came forth the champion of socinianism, and provoked a contest which is not yet terminated. He had been educated in orthodoxy, but when the works of Lardner had contributed to alter his views;

he shewed to that celebrated writer some manuscript observations, which he had prepared to prove that the sacred writers sometimes reason in a false and inconclusive manner. Though Lardner disapproved, he afterwards published these remarks, which form the clue to all his subsequent aberrations from evangelical principles. Priestley's attacks on the trinity and deity of Christ, were entitled "an Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity;" "a familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture;" "a general View of the Arguments for the Unity of God, and against the Divinity and Pre-existence of Christ, from Reason, from the Scriptures, and from History." His "Institutes of natural and revealed Religion" may be considered as a socinian body of divinity; though it is professedly not polemical. It controverts, however, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the separate state of the soul, and the eternity of future punishments; and as the former part is a mere speculation upon what the light of nature might teach of religion, which the Dr. confesses to be very little; in the latter, the same speculative turn prevails concerning the contents of Scripture. Of this most able and best written work of the socinian coryphæus it may be said, that what is good is borrowed, and what is original is good for nothing. The controversial supplement to the institutes, is Dr. Priestley's celebrated "History of the Corruptions of Christianity." Viewed as a historial defence of socinianism, or rather as a death stroke to the deity and atonement of Christ, which had been promised with some parade, it must strike every intelligent reader as the ridiculous birth of a mountain in labour. One short section of a work that extends through two

thick volumes, contains all the polemical history, which was to prove the earliest Christians to have been socinians; but which only proves that Dr. Priestley, unable to find historic documents, could substitute for them mere suppositions, or the modest assumption that primitive Christians must have believed what the Dr. thinks is taught in the Scriptures. He must have had a monstrous faith in the credulity of his adherents, if he thought that such a work would be taken for a proof that their principles prevailed in the earliest ages; and if he supposed that such an attack would induce his opponents to abandon their faith, he must have imagined that they held it by a hair. The history was attacked by an able writer in the "Monthly Review for June, 1783," against whom Dr. Priestley published a reply. Dr. Horsley, successively archdeacon of St. Albans, bishop of Rochester and of St. Davids, was one of the most mighty antagonists of Priestley; his three publications on this question are collected into a volume, entitled, "Tracts in Controversy with Dr. Priestley," upon the historical question of the belief of the first ages in our Lord's divinity, with a large addition of notes and supplemental disquisitions." This episcopal champion for the orthodox creed, who was singly a host, unhappily enlisted in the cause his passions and his pride, which disgraced his learning, and gave his adversaries an opportunity of attacking him in a weak place. Dr. Priestley's letters to the archdeacon of St. Albans, and his remarks on the Monthly Review of the letters to Dr. Horsley, evince the unbroken spirit of the combatant: indeed it has been observed, that Priestley followed up the reviewers with so much prowess and policy, that "finding their coun-

try was nourished by the king's, they desired peace, and have ever since paid the socinians faithful service." "A History of early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ," and "Defences of Unitarianism for the year 1786, and three following years," may be said to have completed Dr. Priestley's controversial works; but he made all his theological writings the vehicle of his antitrinitarian sentiments.

Dr. Horne, afterwards bishop of Norwich, published, with a view to this controversy, "a Sermon on contending for the Faith," and a letter by an under graduate of Oxford. Parkhurst, the Hebrew and Greek lexicographer, wrote "a Demonstration from Scripture of the Divinity and Pre-existence of our Saviour," and Mr. Whitaker published four dialogues on the doctrine of the Trinity. Dr. Geddes, a Roman catholic divine, turned the tables upon Dr. Priestley, by "a historical Argument to prove that some hundreds of Pastors in the Council of Nice could not have introduced such a Doctrine as Christ's Divinity and the Trinity in the Divine Nature." As Dr. Priestley owns that we cannot discover when the doctrine of Christ's deity was introduced, and it is admitted that the Nicene fathers, convened from different parts of the world, acknowledged Christ to be God, Dr. Geddes contends that this must have been the original Christian doctrine. It is certain that an attempt to reduce him to the condition of a mere man now provokes the warmest controversy, and can we suppose that an attempt to elevate a man to the throne of deity would have excited none?

As Mr. Lindsey, a very respectable clergyman, resigned the vicarage of Catterick, in consequence of his objections to the trinitarianism of the church of

England, he published an apology for that step, and a sequel to the apology ; both which are argumentative efforts to overthrow the doctrines of the trinity and deity of Christ. His attempt to explain away the texts on which those doctrines are founded is exceedingly futile, and most readers would conclude that his quotations from the fathers were either designed to prove that these early writers decide nothing, or that they were believers in Christ's divinity. Mr. Lindsey's "Catechist," "historical View of the Unitarian Doctrine," his "Addresses to the Students of Oxford and Cambridge," his "Examination of Mr. Robinson's Plea for the Divinity of Christ," and "Conversations on Christian Idolatry," were answered by Mr. Bingham's "Vindication of the Doctrine and Liturgy of the Church of England," Dr. Randolph's "Vindication of the Worship of the Son, and the Holy Ghost," "an Enquiry into the Belief of the Christians of the three first Centuries," by William Burgh, esq. and Dr. Hawker's "Sermons on the Divinity of Christ."

Mr. Fletcher, who made such a distinguished figure in the arminian controversy, wrote a very spirited piece, entitled, "Socinianism unscriptural," which will effect more to attach ordinary readers of the Bible to Christ's divinity, than all the writings of Dr. Priestley or his coadjutors could counteract. The Swedenborgians and the Jews, who had been drawn into the controversy by Dr. Priestley, retorted upon the socinians with great spirit, denying that they could with any propriety be called Christians.

Gilbert Wakefield, another clergyman who had abandoned the establishment, on account of its trinitarianism, published an "Enquiry into the Opinions

of the Christian Writers of the three first Centuries, concerning the Person of Christ:" In the "Memoirs of his own Life" also, he laboured to diffuse his theological sentiments. He was a man of fine talents, considerable learning, and stern integrity; but his religion seems to have been the offspring of his passions and his pride. While he acknowledges that the hypothesis of two natures in Christ agrees best with the letter of Scripture, he contends that here also, "the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Had a trinitarian made such a confession, would not this precipitate writer have gloried in it as a relinquishment of the point in dispute, asking where we were to learn the spirit of Scripture but from the letter?

This controversy was warmly maintained in the pulpit, as well as in the press, and was after a time revived by a publication from Mr. Wilberforce, member of parliament, on the difference between the spirit of Christianity, and that of most who professed to be Christians. This writer having affirmed that socinianism was the halfway-house to Deism, was vehemently attacked by Mr. Belsham, Dr. Priestley's successor in the pastoral office at Hackney. The death of Dr. Priestley drew forth funeral sermons, which, containing eulogiums on his sentiments and reflections on those of his antagonists, were calculated to provoke replies. Mr. Belsham's sermon was answered by some able letters from Dr. John Pye Smith, of Homerton. Gilbert Wakefield's translation of the New Testament, which has a strong tinge of racovian theology, has been followed by what the socinians call "an improved Version of the New Testament," accompanied with notes designed to

prove that the sacred writers are antitrinitarians. This has been animadverted upon by Mr. Nares, a clergyman, in "an Appeal to Christians."

Neither the calvinists nor the socinians discovered any extraordinary abilities in this contest. Dr. Priestley and his associates fell below the Polish defenders of the same cause; nor were any of the trinitarian writers equal to Dr. Owen. No new light was thrown upon the subject, and no advantage was derived from the discussion; except that each party appeared before the world in its own colours. The affectation of liberal thinking, which the socinians employ as an engine to overthrow the orthodox creed, lost its effect by the horror which their attempt to sweep away every important tenet of the ancient faith, excited in the public mind.

The amiable temper of Dr. Priestley neutralised the polemical gall, but hatred to calvinism sometimes burst forth in bitter words. His style, lucid and dispassionate, was calculated to make impression rather on his admirers than his antagonists. When pressed with unanswerable arguments from Scripture, he would with philosophic indifference reply, that it was all nothing to the rational considerations which lead to other conclusions; but when general considerations were shown to favour the evangelical system, its opponents would urge texts of Scripture. As, however, the socinians modestly called themselves the rational dissenters, they preferred general reasoning to any other mode of managing the dispute. Dr. Priestley, with amazing coolness, frames his system from what he deems philosophical considerations, and then bids the Scriptures comply. In opposing calvinists, however, he ought to have known that they

deny his first principles ; for selfishness, which they deem the essence of sin, is the soul of his system. Instead of taking it for granted that the universe was made for us, and that the happiness of the creature is the ultimate aim of the Deity, which to evangelical divines appears an impious effort to seat the creatures in their Maker's throne ; he should have attempted to confute such works as Edwards' " Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue," and " on God's last End in the Creation of the World." This, however, would, like Sampson, pull down the whole edifice, and bury themselves in the ruins of revelation ; for it would prove to be false the philosophy of the Scriptures, of which this is the fundamental axiom, " that the Deity is the alpha and omega, the end as well as author of creation ; that of him, and through him, and to him are all things, and to him should be all glory for ever." In consequence of this essential opposition in their first principles, the writings of socinians in this controversy seemed designed to wage war with the Scriptures. He that passes from the one to the other feels that he breathes a different atmosphere, and exists in another world. The tone of scepticism, with which the allies of Priestley speak of every thing in theology (except calvinism, which always inspires them with confident dogmatism), seems designed to expose the certainty which the sacred writers inculcate wherever God has revealed his mind. Exalted esteem and ardent affection for Christ, inspired by the scriptural representation of his person and redemption, and declared to be the vital flame which pervades the living church, is by the socinian writers exchanged for a cold measured expression of respect, extorted by the ardour of prophets and apostles, in

defiance of the frigid tendency of their own system. For if Jesus Christ is originally a being of no higher order than ourselves, but in consequence of the office to which he was promoted, was made Lord and Judge of the rest of his species, and rewarded for a few years of trial with a resurrection to some thousands of years of life and bliss, while the rest of the pious dead are mere non-entities, or at best unconscious dust, it was such an honour and advantage to him that almost any man of aspiring energy would be glad to enjoy the same privilege by which he would attract envy rather than merit gratitude. The language, which the socinians held in this controversy concerning virtue, reminds us only of heathen philosophers: the energy of the human mind, by which alone they suppose it to be produced, proves it to be any thing but that "true holiness" which apostles declare to be the effect of the sanctification of the Spirit; and the merit attached to it, as the price of heaven, proclaims defiance to those who assert that "eternal life is the gift of God, and that it is not of works lest any man should boast." So palpable, indeed, is the discrepancy of the two systems, that the more perspicacious and finished polemics on the socinian side wisely avoid provoking a comparison by a direct quotation from the sacred volume, or by any resemblance of diction; except when the humanity of Christ draws them out to show that they are glad to avail themselves of Scripture when they can, and by which they prove just as much against his Deity, as they would against his priesthood by adducing texts which declare him to be a king. The writers on this side could not agree among themselves what idea should be attached to the Holy

Spirit^b, or what interpretation should be given to the introduction to the Gospel of John ; this, together with their denial of the inspiration of the Scriptures, the divine influences on the human mind, the miraculous conception of Christ, his impeccability, his atonement, his intercession, the existence of a soul in man, and the eternity of future punishment, served as an antidote to the poison of antitrinitarianism, which their talents and boldness would otherwise have more widely diffused. By continual progress in the same road, one rejecting three out of the four Gospels as fabulous ; another despising prayer as nugatory ; a third branding public worship with the name of hypocrisy ; a fourth opposing the morality of the sabbath, and even recommending without a blush the pious pleasures of the play-house on a Sunday ; and, at length, a disciple of the same school denying the resurrection and the general judgment^c, which the others had pronounced the only discoveries of rational Christianity, they have strengthened the antidote, at least as much as the poison ; for it is thus rendered manifest, that the new species of Christian philosophy is only infidelity baptized with a Christian name.

^b Gilbert Wakefield in his memoirs maintains that the Spirit of God in Scripture means only God himself. Now as he is one of those who believe that the Father alone is God ; what ideas are we to attach to the Redeemer's word ; " the Comforter who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father shall send in my name ? " Are we to paraphrase it thus ? The Holy Spirit who is the Father himself, whom the Father shall send in my name ? " Baptize in the name of the Father, who alone is God, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, who is God himself ?

^c Fellows' Body of Divinity.

CHAPTER IV.

SEMINARIES FOR THE MINISTRY AMONG THE
DISSENTERS.

SECTION I.

ENUMERATION OF THE DIFFERENT SEMINARIES AND
TUTORS.

SEVERAL of the institutions for the education of dissenting ministers which flourished under the former periods have now ceased to exist, but so many new ones have been formed during the present reign, that this section will unavoidably extend to considerable length.

The most ancient, and not the least respectable and useful of the dissenting colleges, is that which is established at Homerton, near London. It was removed from Mile End, in the year 1772. At the commencement of the reign of George the third, Drs. Walker, Conder, and Gibbons were the tutors in this institution. John Walker is mentioned with high respect as eminently qualified, by extensive and accurate learning, for his office of classical tutor, which he discharged with diligence till he was removed by death November 19, 1770^d.

^d A letter written by the late Rev. J. Thorowgood, of Bocking, to his parents, gives an account of the last moments of this eminent man.

Dr. John Conder had been fifteen years pastor of a dissenting congregation at Cambridge, when he was invited to fill the theological chair at this seminary. He was soon after chosen by a church in Moorfields to the pastoral office, which he combined with his academical duties till the year 1781, when he died in the sixty-seventh year of his age. The third professorship, which was filled by Dr. Thomas Gibbons, was that of rhetoric and the belles lettres, for which his biography of Dr. Watts and some other publications would not prove him eminently qualified. He was educated under Dr. Taylor and Mr. Eames, and was forty years pastor of a congregation at Haberdasher's-hall, London. Death having removed him

"Honoured parents,

Homerton, Nov. 19, 1770.

"This afternoon died, after a tedious illness, our dear tutor, Dr. Walker, who as his whole heart was fixed on the students, so fixed as even when he was deprived of his reason all his rambling discourse was of and with them, advising them and praying for them, so he was greatly beloved by them and by all that knew him. With the greatest honour and reputation did he fill up his post and station in life, and did abundant service to the church of God. And in his private life ever preserved a character of integrity, uprightness, and the greatest regard to duty towards God and man unblemished. As a Christian he was not indeed so eminent as some are, for talking of religion, but in real heart-holiness, in internal sanctification, he perhaps went greater lengths than most. His excellencies were not generally known; his friends, his intimates alone knew the (to the world) hidden parts of his character. He died with the strongest expressions of his confidence, whilst reason remained: 'Jesus has died, has conquered for me, and I know that my Redeemer liveth. It has pleased God now to humble me, but I shall shortly be exalted. I fear not the consequences of death, 'tis only a painful dissolution I fear. O may I be enabled to bear my testimony even in the hour of death, to the truths of the Gospel, to the honour of him who has upheld and preserved me,' &c. &c.

Your dutiful son, J. THOROWGOOD."

in 1785, he was succeeded by Dr. Henry Mayo, a more able man, pastor of a church in Nightingale-lane. He filled the rhetorical chair till he died, in 1791, when the office was discontinued. Dr. Daniel Fisher, minister of a congregation at Warminster, who had succeeded to the office of classical tutor was, on Dr. Conder's death, raised to the divinity chair. Extremely unpopular as a preacher, he was invited to no pastoral charge, and on the decline of life he relinquished his academical duties and retired to private life, in which he died, 1708, aged seventy-six. He had been succeeded as classical tutor by Dr. Davies, of Abergavenny, who was elected pastor of the independent congregation in Fetter-lane. Ill health compelled this valuable man to retire to Reading, where he is still exercising the passive graces of a Christian, and occasionally discharging the duties of the ministry. He was followed at Homerton by John Fell, who has been described as "rising by native talents, from an obscure station, to become one of the first scholars of the age. Thaxted, in Essex, was the scene of his pastoral care, when he was invited to become resident tutor, and which, together with the duty of teaching the languages, involved the domestic management of the students. This, which is frequently an invidious office, became peculiarly painful to Mr. Fell, who was so tormented with the insubordination which prevailed, and so affected with his expulsion from the office, that he sunk under it Sept. 6, 1797.

The Rev. John Berry, who had been fourteen years pastor at Romsey, and was then at West Bromwich, was chosen to succeed Mr. Fell; but he resigned the chair in about four years, and retired to Camberwell,

in the environs of London, where he continues to preach the Gospel. His successor was John Pye Smith, who was called, 1801, from the forms of the academy at Rotherham, in Yorkshire, to fill the chair at Homerton, for which, notwithstanding his youth and inexperience, wisdom and learning fully qualified him. He has since received a diploma of D. D. Dr. Fisher, having resigned the office of theological tutor, it was for a few months filled by James Knight pastor of a church in Southwark ; but when he quitted it, Dr. Smith was placed in that chair, and Thomas Hill, who was also called from his studies in the academy at Rotherham, was chosen to succeed Dr. Smith as teacher of the classics and mathematics. An eminent professor of elocution gives lectures at this seminary, which contains near twenty students, and its funds have received a considerable addition by the will of the late William Fuller, banker, of London, who bequeathed to it the interest of five thousand pounds. This, which is the dissenting Oxford, is considered to be now in a more flourishing state than it has been for many years. Increased attention has been paid to the personal religion of the students, and the learning of the tutors, which is of the highest estimation, has been ardently devoted to the formation of useful ministers, in which they have so happily succeeded, that the dissenting churches have lately received some of their most valuable pastors from this ancient college.

The other academy which was early established in the neighbourhood of London, and connected in some way with the preceding, was at the commencement of this period under the care of Dr. David Jennings, who presided as theological tutor eighteen years,

and was removed by death in 1762, when he was seventy-one years old. Dr. Samuel Morton Savage was classical and mathematical tutor, and the lectures were delivered in his house in Well-close-square, London: the students boarded in private families. But when Dr. Jennings died, a situation was procured for the seminary at Hoxton, and Dr. Savage removed from the classical to the theological chair. Dr. Andrew Kippis and Dr. Abraham Rees, gentlemen of literary eminence, but of theological sentiments widely different from those of the former tutors, were chosen to fill the other departments in this academy. This heterogeneous association could neither be expected nor wished to continue long. Dr. Kippis withdrew from the institution in 1784, and the two other tutors followed his example, the next year; when the seminary which had furnished many valuable ministers was dissolved.

Dr. Savage was born in London, July 19, 1721, and though descended from dissenting parents^e was strangely destined for the national church; in hopes that he might rise to eminence under the patronage of his relative the lord primate of Ireland. Conscience, which has blasted many a worldly scheme, interposed and made young Savage a nonconformist. Having introduced himself, by a letter, to Dr. Watts, he was encouraged and placed under the care of Mr. Eames. So highly was he esteemed as a student, that Dr. Jennings refused to accept the theological chair until he consented to lecture on mathematics

^e He was a direct lineal descendant of John Savage, first earl of Rivers. Life of Dr. Savage, prefixed to his sermons by Dr. Toulmin, who is by the mother's side descended from him. Wilson, p. 320.

and natural philosophy. He was chosen, also, first to assist, and then to succeed Mr. Price in the pastoral office which Dr. Watts had long filled. He resigned this charge at the end of the year 1787, after having laboriously, but not successfully discharged its duties forty years. He was afternoon preacher seven years to Dr. Earle's congregation, in Hanover-street, and lecturer at Little St. Helens. His theological diploma he received from Aberdeen, in 1767. Midnight studies in early life, injured his constitution and in advanced years he was attacked by a disease of the œsophagus, which rendered it so difficult to take food, that after having been reduced to a skeleton, he was literally starved to death. With consummate patience he endured an affliction so tremendous to nature, and after expressing his composure in the prospect of death, he fell asleep February 21, 1791, in the seventieth year of his age. His talents were the fruit of labour, unaided by what is called genius, for while his sermons attested his extensive reading and accurate learning, they were not illuminated by those corruscations of sentiment, imagination, or passion, which strike and charm,

The academy that now exists at Hoxton, was first established at Mile End. Several friends of evangelical truth, lamenting the heterodoxy or coldness of the seminary which we have last mentioned, associated to provide for the churches pastors of a different spirit. They engaged some ministers of established reputation for piety and orthodox sentiments to give lectures at their own houses, to such young men as were selected from the churches in London and its vicinity. This mode, however, soon proved so inconvenient, that they were compelled to

provide, in 1783, a building at Mile End, to which they invited Stephen Addington, minister of Market Harborough, as tutor of what was now called the Evangelical Academy. The friends of the institution procured him the diploma of D. D. But as he had lately relinquished a similar charge under the impression of declining vigour, he had scarcely begun to "gird up the loins of his mind" to the duties of his new office, with the hope of extensive usefulness, before he was attacked by a severe indisposition which laid him aside for some time. Though he recovered beyond expectation, and resumed his labours with new ardour, he was again disabled by affliction, and at length compelled, in 1798, to resign his office. As he had been chosen pastor of the congregation in Miles' Lane at the close of 1781, he continued to labour there under the pressure of infirmities; but encouraged by the generous attachment of his flock, four years after he resigned his academical charge. In February, 1796, he was called away from his labours and sorrows by death in his sixty-seventh year. He was an amiable man, of correct deportment, ardent piety, and zeal for usefulness; his learning, which was extensive rather than profound, projected more works than he found time to execute, and his dread of living in vain, induced him to grasp at objects to which his strength was inadequate. As a preacher, he was more esteemed than admired, for his elocution was defective, though earnest; and his thoughts, always good, were seldom great. His treatise in defence of infant baptism, and his "Life of the apostle Paul" are the best known among his publications, of which our limits will not allow us to give a full list.

The academy over which he presided was, in 1791, removed to Hoxton, to the house occupied by the former seminary, and placed under the care of Robert Simpson, M. A. who was called from the charge of a congregation at Bolton, in Lancashire. As this gentleman, who is a native of Scotland, is still presiding over the institution, in the office of resident divinity tutor, we are forbidden to indulge our feelings in giving an estimate of his qualifications for the important post. The classical tutors, who have successively assisted in the labours of this seminary, are, Mr. Collison, now at the head of another academy, which will occur to our notice; Mr. Atkinson, who was afterwards elected head master of the dissenting grammar school at Mill Hill, near London; and Mr. Hooper, who now combines, with his labours at Hoxton, the pastoral care of a church in Old Gravel-lane, Wapping. Henry Foster Burder, A.M. has lately been chosen lecturer in logic, rhetoric, and mathematics. From its treasurer, Thomas Wilson, this institution receives the most active and generous services. The building, in which the academy is held, has lately been enlarged by the erection of studies for thirty students, which is their present number; and the plan of education, which was at first rather superficial, has been much extended and improved. Nearly a hundred and fifty persons have been introduced into the ministry by this seminary; several have gone from thence to the university of Glasgow; one is now labouring as a missionary among the heathen; and others are preaching with acceptance and success in our own country.

Hackney, in the vicinity of London, was the seat of another academy, of different principles and spirit.

Those who were called the wide dissenters, resolving to establish an institution for the education of ministers on their own principles, formed, in 1786, what was called the New College, which never lived to be an old one. Dr. Kippis, who has been noticed as tutor at the academy which formerly existed in Hoxton, Thomas Belsham, and Gilbert Wakefield, formerly fellow of Jesus college, Cambridge, were called to instruct the youths destined to be pastors of the arian and socinian churches. As the institution, with all its high promises, expired within ten years after its establishment, but little can be said of its character, and only one of its tutors demands a biographical memoir. Andrew Kippis, D. D. F. R., and A. S. was born at Nottingham, in 1725. He was descended from ejected ministers, and received his education at the grammar school of Sleaford, in Lincolnshire, but derived such advantages in literature from the kind attentions of Mr. Merivale, as he said it was impossible for him to express. After studying for the ministry under Dr. Doddridge, he preached to several congregations before he was chosen to succeed Dr. Hughes, in Princes-street, Westminster. At the recommendation of professor Robertson, the university of Edinburgh, in 1767, presented him with the diploma of D, D. and he was afterwards chosen member of the society of antiquaries, and fellow of the royal society. He died in 1795, in the seventieth year of his age. Gilbert Wakefield pronounces him "a gentleman of unlimited benevolence, eminent literary accomplishments, from whom no one could withhold respect who was himself respectable." As a preacher, his stores of knowledge, felicity of style,

^f Memoirs, vol. I. p. 338.

and energy of elocution, must have rendered him fascinating to those who approved his sentiments. But his labours as an author form the surest basis of his fame. In the historical and philological department of the *Monthly Review*, he instructed the public, and in the preface to the *New Annual Register* he gave a very valuable history of knowledge, learning, and taste in Great Britain. His improved edition of *Dr. Doddridge's Lectures* attests his reading and candour, but the new edition of the "*Biographia Britannica*," will deliver his name to posterity among the first writers of our language.

A recent establishment at Hackney seems designed to form a perfect contrast to the preceding. A costly and finished education was there intended to form preachers of socinianism to the rich ; here a slight and economical course of instruction is designed to prepare itinerants to publish the unsearchable riches of Christ to the poor, where congregations were not yet gathered. Its founder was John Eyre, A. M. who was first a preacher in the countess of Huntingdon's connection, then a curate in the establishment, and finally minister of an episcopal chapel at Homerton, where he laboured with distinguished zeal and success. A society formed by this devoted servant of Christ among the affluent members of his own congregation, called the village itinerancy, for the propagation of the Gospel in the dark villages of England and Wales, led to the establishment of a seminary. For it was soon found that the necessities of the churches left the regular academies no opportunity to furnish the society with itinerants : they therefore formed a plan to give serious young men a more rapid course of instruction, to exclude the dead languages, except so

far as was necessary to furnish an introduction to the original tongues of the Scripture, and to give a short course of lectures on biblical and general science, and the duties of a preacher. Two of Mr. Eyre's friends, Mr. Hanson and Mr. Charles Townsend, warmly patronised the new seminary, and the latter has deserved well of the church of Christ by a contribution of five hundred pounds annually, during his life, and at his death, a bequest of ten thousand pounds. The seminary was fixed in Well-street, Hackney, in 1803, and George Collison, A. M. who had been classical tutor at Hoxton, was chosen to superintend the studies of the young men, whose numbers have never been great: their labours have introduced the Gospel, and formed churches in some dark parts of our island.

The academy over which Dr. Doddridge presided, was, at his death removed to Daventry, as Dr. Caleb Ashworth, who was chosen to the office of tutor, refused to quit his pastoral charge at that place. He entered into his academical labours in 1752, and was removed by death, on the eighteenth of July, 1775, in the fifty-third year of his age. Some of his pupils still occupy important stations in the dissenting churches, and they unite in representing him as a man who fully justified the high expectations formed of him by Dr. Doddridge. His great abilities and learning were combined with consummate prudence, and unaffected modesty, and devoted with unremitted diligence to the improvement of the students; for whose use he drew up the rudiments of the Hebrew language, which were published without his name, and have been very extensively used. Moderate calvinism is the name given to his religious senti-

ments; but as Dr. Joseph Priestley, who was one of his pupils, praises the liberality with which he left the young men to their own views⁵, and the names of Belsham, Kenrick, and Kentish, are found in the list of his students, many will conclude that his calvinism must have been moderate indeed.

Thomas Robins succeeded Dr. Ashworth. He was born in the vicinity of Bedford, where he attended the ministry of the laborious and successful Mr. Saunderson. After finishing the studies which were interrupted by Dr. Doddridge's death, under his successor, he settled as a minister at Stretton, in Warwickshire, and afterwards removed to West Bromwich, near Birmingham. With modest reluctance, he

⁵ Dr. Priestley says, "In my time the academy was in a state peculiarly favorable to the serious pursuit of truth, as the students were about equally divided upon every question of much importance, such as liberty and necessity, the sleep of the soul, and all the articles of theological orthodoxy and heresy; in consequence of which, all these topics were the subject of continual discussion. Our tutors also were of different opinions, Dr. Ashworth taking the orthodox side of every question, and Mr. Clark, the sub-tutor, that of heresy, though always with the greatest modesty.

"Both of our tutors being young, at least as tutors, and some of the senior students excelling more than they could pretend to do, in several branches of study, they indulged us in the greatest freedoms. The general plan of our studies, which may be seen in Dr. Doddridge's published lectures, was exceedingly favourable to free inquiry, as we were referred to authors on both sides of every question. In this situation, I saw reason to embrace what is generally called the heterodox side of almost every question. But notwithstanding this, and though Dr. Ashworth was earnestly desirous to make me as orthodox as possible, yet as my behaviour was unexceptionable, and as I generally took his part in some little things, by which he often drew upon himself the ill-will of many of the students, I was upon the whole a favourite with him." Priestley's *Memoirs*, p. 17, 20.

yielded to the solicitations of Mr. Coward's trustees, to take upon him the care of the academy at Daventry, where he was also chosen to the charge of Dr. Ashworth's congregation. He discharged the duties of these offices for some years with general reputation, but the loss of his voice, in 1781, obliged him to withdraw into retirement.

The assistant tutor at Daventry was Thomas Belsham, A. M. who afterwards succeeded Mr. Robins in the theological chair. This gentleman, who is the avowed opponent of calvinism, was educated in those sentiments by his father, who was a respectable minister at Newport Pagnel, Bucks. After having studied at Daventry, he took the charge of a congregation at Worcester; but, on the death of Dr. Ashworth he returned to take the office of second tutor in the academy. As the institution is supported by Mr. Coward's fund bequeathed with the express condition that the students shall be educated in the principles of the Assembly's Catechism, when Mr. Belsham abandoned those principles for the socinian creed, he with great propriety, relinquished the theological chair, for which he is entitled to the thanks of those who are most hostile to his present system.

Mr. Belsham being succeeded by John Horsey, minister of a congregation in Northampton, the academy was again fixed in that town. The value of that honesty, integrity, and decision of character which the former tutor had displayed, was soon manifested by the painful suspicions which were entertained concerning his successor; for as most of the pupils were found to be socinians, it was concluded that the theological tutor could not be faithfully executing the will of the founder. The state of things,

which is said to have been worse than we could wish to believe, or should choose to publish, being reported to the trustees, they determined to strike at the root of the evil by dissolving the academy.

In the following year, 1799, the institution was revived, and William Parry, M. A. of Little Baddow, Essex, was chosen tutor. A building was purchased for the academy at Wymondley, a village near Hitchin, in Hertfordshire, where it now flourishes. Mr. Burder was for a short time assistant tutor with Mr. Parry. The seminary is supported by ample funds, and since the library has been increased by the removal of the books which were in that belonging to Dr. Savage's academy, at Hoxton, it is thought to be the most valuable among the dissenters.

The dissenting academy in the west of England being dissolved at the departure of Dr. Amory to London, several persons resolved shortly after to establish a seminary, not for the ministry alone, but also for the other learned professions and for civil life. William Mackworth Praed, esq. gave a house at Exeter for the seminary, into which was removed the library of the Taunton academy, much enriched by the books of Dr. Hodge of London, who had bequeathed them to the new institution. It was opened, in 1760, under Samuel Merivale as its superintendant, who was assisted by the celebrated Micaiah Towgood. The former was removed by death 1771, He had been educated under Dr. Doddridge at Northampton, where he was born, and at the expiration of his studies had taken the charge of a congregation at Sleaford, in Lincolnshire, but removed to Exeter, on the commencement of the academy, and was chosen one of the ministers of the arian congregation in that

city, as well as tutor to the seminary. For extensive learning and refined taste, he has been praised by the first scholars, and by his pupils for the mild dignity of his character, and the fairness and perspicuity with which he treated the disputed points in theology, as well as the zeal which he displayed in the cause of truth and piety.

Mr. Towgood died, in 1792, in his ninety-second year: the infirmities of age had compelled him to relinquish his public labours ten years before. Axminster has the honour of being the birth-place of this champion of dissent. Under Mr. Grove he received his education, after which he preached fifteen years at Moreton Hampstead, and twelve at Crediton. He removed, in 1749, to Exeter, where, besides his labours in the pulpit, he gave lectures in the academy on biblical criticism, for which his learning and judgment, though not his orthodoxy, eminently qualified him. Kind and friendly in his disposition, his vivacity and wit produced those sallies which gave interest to his lectures, and fixed them in the minds of his students. The pre-eminent polemical talents which he displayed in his letters to Mr. White have been noticed in another place. Here we can only regret that his superior powers were wasted in vain attempts to give warmth and animation to a theological system, which is essentially cold as death; presenting a melancholy warning to ministers, that the cause of dissent may find in them ardent champions, while their own souls and their flocks may be fatally injured for want of the vital flame of redeeming love.

The other tutors in this academy were men of talents and erudition. Mr. John Turner, who studied under Dr. Jennings, read lectures at Exeter on ma-

thematics and natural philosophy. He died in 1770, and was succeeded by Thomas Jervis, who afterwards removed to London. John Hogg, another pupil of Dr. Jennings, succeeded Mr. Merivale, in 1772; he had in the preceding year removed from Sidmouth, where he had been minister since the year 1759, to preach at the Mint meeting in Exeter. Some years after, he abandoned the pulpit, for the table of the money changers, becoming a partner in a banking house. When it had existed thirty years, the academy was dissolved for want of pecuniary support.

But Thomas Kenrick, who had been first a student and then a tutor at Daventry, having succeeded Mr. Towgood in the pulpit at Exeter, was impelled by his grief for the decline of seminaries on what he termed free principles, to open his own house for such an institution. Subscriptions were procured by his influence, and a prospect of success was opening, when he was removed by a sudden death, as he was walking in the fields, near Wrexham, in August, 1804, in his forty-sixth year. The progress of this gentleman's mind shows the tendency of what are called moderate principles to arianism, and thence to socinianism on the utmost verge of deism.

The friends of evangelical doctrine among the dissenters could not be unconcerned spectators of the progress of arianism, which first diseased and then destroyed the academies of Taunton and Exeter. The congregational fund board in London, determined to establish a seminary on orthodox principles in the west of England, and selected for the tutor John Lavington, jun. minister of St. Mary Ottery, Devon. They commenced the institution by sending down four young men who had received a classical education

at their academy in London. As the rules, by which the employment of time in the seminary was regulated, are dated 1752, this was, perhaps, the year in which it was opened, and as they are signed by twenty-three names, Mr. Lavington probably educated that number for the ministry. This good man was removed from his labours by death, in consequence of a mortification which followed the operation of bleeding in December, 1764. "He was," says his successor, "a man of excellent natural temper, extensive learning, distinguished piety, and great prudence. Well furnished for his work, he applied closely to it, and his mode of communicating knowledge was so easy, that though he kept up strict discipline in his house, and narrowly watched the moral and religious conduct of his pupils, they all loved him as a father." From the pulpit, Micaiah Towgood lamented his death in the following eulogium; "he was more pious, more learned, and more useful than us all^h."

After Mr. Wheeler, of Axminster, had resisted the solicitations of the London board, James Rooker, of Bridport, consented to succeed Mr. Lavington in the office of tutor. The King's-head society in London for some time allowed an exhibition for the classical education of the young men under Mr. Samuel Buncombe, Mr. Lavington's successor in the pastoral office, previously to their going to attend the lectures at Bridport. A paralytic stroke incapacitated Mr. Rooker for the duties of his office in 1779, and in the following year, which was the fiftieth of his age, he died, leaving a high reputation for superior learning

^h Manuscript information. He published an Enquiry into the Nature of the Gospel Offer, and a few sermons. After his death a volume of his discourses on desertion and affliction was printed.

and ardent attachment to evangelical truth, which exposed him to much reproach from those who were fierce for moderation. Thomas Reader, minister of Taunton, succeeded to the vacant chair of this academy, in 1780. For the fourteen years during which he presided, only eighteen students were admitted; so that the reputation, or at least the extensive usefulness of the academy, declined under this tutor. Both Mr. Reader and Mr. Buncombe, who may be called the classical tutor, died in 1794. The latter had been educated in the academy under Mr. Lavington, and was most ardently attached to the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, which afforded him peculiar satisfaction in his last moments. Mr. Reader was one of three pious ministers, the sons of eminently devout parents, who lived at Bedworth, in Warwickshire. He first went from the tuition of Mr. Kirkpatrick to settle at Weymouth, whence he removed to Newbury, and at last to preach to the extensive congregation at Paul's meeting, Taunton. Early devoted to the Redeemer, he used to pray "that his head might be filled with schemes for the divine glory, his heart with the love, and his hands with the work of God." Though exceedingly earnest as a preacher, he was not eminently successful; for he was excessively fond of expounding the prophecies and the Revelation, an exercise not the most calculated to edify a promiscuous audience. Diligence and piety, rather than eminent talents, distinguished his conduct as a tutor, and impressed their character upon his students.

Mr. Reader was followed by the present tutor, James Small, minister of Axminster, of whose qualifications for the work we, of course, cannot give a testimony. Under the patronage of the London board, he com-

inenced his labours in 1796, and when that support was about to be withdrawn, the Devonshire association procured its continuance by exertions to procure additional subscriptions in the county. John Saltern, minister of Bridport, is the treasurer and valuable friend of the institution. The average number of students here at a time is eight, who are admitted upon a profession of evangelical sentiments and experience, and after having received classical instruction, are admitted to a theological course of four years. The fund board, the King's-head society, and subscribers in the west of England are the supporters of this institution.

Looking towards the north of the kingdom, we observe the ancient seminaries extinct, and new ones rising up in their place. In Yorkshire, the academy which flourished under Mr. Jollie may be said to be now succeeded by that which is established at Rotherham, about five miles from Sheffield. This institution arose from the pious zeal of a few ministers and public spirited Christians in London, who, at the close of the former period, consulted together on the necessity and "the means of dispelling the cloud of of socinian darkness, then spreading over the northern counties of England." They formed themselves into a society for educating young men for the work of the ministry in the west riding of Yorkshire, and, in May, 1756, resolved to support an academy in those parts, and chose James Scott, minister of Heckmondwicke, to superintend the studies of the young men. Justly concluding that unregenerate ministers had been the cause of the evil which they wished to counteract, they determined to admit no one into their

seminary who did not give a satisfactory account of his experience of the vital change, as well as a declaration of evangelical sentiments. The young men were also received on probation for three months, that opportunity might be afforded of judging whether their conduct accorded with their professions. The labours of Mr. Scott repaid the devout solicitude of the founders, who deeply regretted the stroke of death which deprived the church of God of his services in January, 1783. He was a native of Scotland, and had studied in one of the universities of that country. His memory is yet dear to such as duly appreciate the value of superior talents and literature, consecrated by holy zeal to the glory of the Redeemer, and the best interests of men. He educated about sixty ministers, who laboured in the northern counties, and of whom several are the living ornaments of the churches and the most eminent ministers of Christ; "but some are fallen asleep."

His successor was Samuel Walker, who served as a foil to his superior worth; for it soon appeared that the important post was not filled equally to the satisfaction of the benevolent patrons. The institution had been removed to Mr. Walker's residence at Northouram, near Halifax, where upwards of thirty persons were educated in twelve years. At the expiration of this period, which was in June, 1794, it was found, at a general meeting of the friends of the institution, that dissatisfaction with its present state had induced many of the subscribers to withdraw their aid. William Fuller, banker, of London, who had been the munificent patron of the institution, and had advanced to it five hundred pounds, informed its supporters in Yorkshire, that they must now take it

into their own hands, at the same time, assuring them that there were those in London who would aid them in the good work,

It was determined, as a provisional arrangement, to transfer the students to the care of Mr. Vint, of Idle, who will again occur to notice at the head of an academy. After several unsuccessful applications, they prevailed on Dr. Williams, then pastor of a congregation in Birmingham, to accept the office of tutor. As he yielded at the same time to an invitation from the church at Masbrough, near Rotherham, the latter place was fixed upon as the scite of the academy. Three gentlemen of Rotherham, Joshua, Joseph, and Thomas Walker, deserve honourable mention for their munificent donations to the institution: the former, in the office of treasurer, has rendered it the most distinguished services. With the liberal aids of these and other friends, the premises were enlarged, the library of the former academy was purchased and much increased, and a philosophical apparatus was procured, of which indeed the liberality of the females laid the foundation. Maurice Philips, of Brigstock, was chosen second tutor, and from the students of this academy, Homerton has received both its tutors, Dr. John Pye Smith and Thomas Hill, whose election to such stations forms no faint eulogium on the education which is received at Rotherham.

But many of the churches in the West Riding of Yorkshire soon felt serious inconveniencies from the distance to which the seminary was now removed; for the surrounding congregations derive the most important advantages from the occasional labours of the young men who are educating for the ministry. Feeling, therefore, for the wants of his native district,

Edward Hanson, esq. then resident in London, offered sixty pounds annually for the education of two students, near the former scite of the academy. William Vint, of Idle, the minister just mentioned, as the temporary tutor of the former academy, was chosen to superintend this, to which Mr. Hanson bequeathed, at his death in January, 1802, an annual income of a hundred and fifty pounds. Contributions from the neighbouring churches increased the number of students to eight or nine. Their course of studies occupies between four and five years, and their occasional preaching, which is very frequent, diffuses the knowledge of divine truth to the surrounding country.

Of more private seminaries there were several established during this period. William Bull, the venerable minister of Newport Pagnel, superintends one, of which the history is rather singular. About the year 1772, he educated a young baptist minister, who died shortly after his ordination to a pastoral charge. He was succeeded by John Goode, now the respectable minister of one of the largest dissenting congregations in London; who was again followed by a relation of Mr. Bull, a gentleman of the same name, who afterwards went to Oxford, and is still preaching the Gospel in the establishment. There were hitherto no funds to support the seminary, but, in 1782, John Newton, a justly celebrated minister of the church of England, formed a scheme for the establishment of a catholic academy, of which the students were, at the close of their studies, to labour in the establishment or among any class of dissenters as they chose. Mr. Newton expressed his ideas in a pamphlet, entitled, "a Plan of Academic Preparation

for the Ministry," which was sent to Mr. Bull by the poet Cowper, with this sentence, "behold the plan of your future operations, which as I have told Mr. Newton, the man being found who is able to carry it into execution, ought no longer to be called Utopian." By Mr. Newton's exertions and influence, subscriptions were procured, and Mr. Bull entered on his office in January, 1783, but four years after John Thornton, esq. of Clapham, took the expense upon himself. After supporting the students and remunerating the tutor and assistants, till his death, Mr. Thornton bequeathed two hundred pounds a year, for the support of the institution during Mr. Bull's life. Samuel Greatheed, who had studied in the academy, was for a few years assistant tutor, and upon his resignation was succeeded by Mr. Bull's son, who still labours in that office, as well as in the ministry of the Gospel.

George Welch, banker, of London, merits the grateful remembrance of Christians, for his liberality and zeal in supporting seminaries for the ministry. Cornelius Winter, a venerable minister of the Gospel, at Painswick, in Gloucestershire, was enabled by the munificence of Mr. Welch to employ his excellent talents in the useful work of tuition. He had previously laboured in that good work, when he had nothing but his own superior confidence in the kind providence of God to encourage him to incur the heavy expense; but the liberality of his patron enabled him afterwards to enlarge the sphere of his operations. Mr. Thornton, also, contributed to the expenses of this private seminary, and enabled Mr. Winter to educate one in whose usefulness he enjoyed great pleasure. The success which attended the

instructions of this eminently good man, is sufficiently attested by the excellence of his pupils ; among whom might be mentioned two of the most valuable ministers of the present day ; while his worth as a Christian and a minister has by one of them been exhibited to the world, in a memoir so well known, as to leave us little occasion to attempt any addition to his praise¹. He died in January, 1808.

The same liberal friend to religion founded an academy for the South of England, by placing students under David Bogue, at Gosport. This seminary was opened in the year 1789. The course of studies occupies three years, and the funds provided by Mr. Welch were for the support of three students, but the subscriptions of other individuals increased the number. On the death of its founder, it appeared that he had made no provision for the continuance of the academies which he had established, but the liberality of several friends supported the seminary at Gosport, till the year 1800 ; when Mr. Robert Haldane, of Edinburgh, was the means of adding ten more students to the original number. He offered for this purpose a hundred pounds annually for three years, on condition that the friends of religion in Hampshire would contribute the remaining sum requisite for the education of ten additional young men. This was accepted, and at the termination of their studies, the county association, aided by friends in other parts of England, became the patron of the academy, which they continue on a smaller scale to the present time. The missionary society, 1800, having resolved to prepare their missionaries for their future

¹ Memoirs of the Rev. Cornelius Winter, by the Rev. W. Jay, of Bath.

labours, by a course of instruction, placed them under Mr. Bogue, who now gives to one class lectures suited to form them for foreign missions; and to another education for the ministry at home. The latter class, according to the wish of the original founder of the seminary, attend principally to theology. Of the three years to which the course of instruction is limited, the two first are occupied with lectures on the principles of Christianity, and the last with lectures on the sacred books. During the whole time Latin, Greek, and Hebrew are studied, and instructions are given in geography and astronomy, on language and composition, on Jewish antiquities, ecclesiastical history, and the pastoral office. Two French students have been educated at this academy, and six more, who are the fruit of their labours, are now preparing to preach the Gospel in French.

Warrington, in Lancashire is well known as the former seat of an academy, which may be said to have been established in 1757. Previously to that period however, some respectable ministers had been educated in this town, under Dr. Charles Owen, among whom are mentioned the celebrated Hugh Farmer, of Walthamstow and Job Orton. But the first tutors of the academy, which was established at Warrington in this period, were Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, Dr. Aikin, of Kibworth, and John Hiot, of Lancaster. This was a mighty triumvirate, but some differences among its members, on the important subject of precedence and authority in the institution, as well as a serious dispute on a question of morals, kindled a flame which endangered the existence of the academy at its very commencement. Dr. Taylor, who had purchased the honour of his appointment at the ex-

pense of his peace, was so much wounded by some reflections, that he had determined to relinquish the chair, when he was called away by death, in March, 1761, at the age of sixty-six. His Hebrew Concordance will secure his reputation for learning and diligence, and may remind the student of the rare phenomenon of a Hebrew scholar, who abandoned the doctrine of Christ's deity and atonement, for the cheerless system of Socinus. His publications in defence of the Racovian theology were opposed by Dr. Watts and Dr. Jennings, but most powerfully by president Edwards. It was unfortunate for the credit of Dr. Taylor, as an able theologian or acute logician, that he fell into the hands of the latter, where he looks little and feeble almost to contempt. Dr. Priestley also concurs in forming, though for very different reasons, a mean estimate of Dr. Taylor's polemical powers^k.

John Seddon supplied Dr. Taylor's place as resident classical tutor at the academy, till death removed him in 1769. He was equally distinguished for talents and for departure from the principles of the first dissenters; for he was zealous not only for heterodoxy, but for the introduction of a liturgy into the dissenting worship.

Dr. Aikin first taught the languages in this academy and afterwards held the chair of theology and moral philosophy, till the year 1780, when he died. His talents, acquirements, and morals were eminent; but he is perhaps more celebrated as the father of an eminent physician and writer, and of Mrs. Barbauld, who is equally distinguished in verse and prose.

Dr. Joseph Priestley was invited, in 1761, to suc-

^k His Memoirs, p. 33.

ceed Dr. Aikin as classical tutor. Uniting to the duties of this office lectures on general grammar, logic, and elocution, with instructions in Hebrew, he continued in the academic chair for six years. Dr. Reinhold Forster, who afterwards accompanied captain Cook on his second voyage, as naturalist, was for a short time a tutor in this seminary. But Dr. William Enfield held the office of superintendent and classical tutor here, from the year 1770 till the academy was dissolved in 1783. Two years after this event, he removed to Norwich, where he finished his course Nov. 3, 1797, in his fifty-third year. He was born at Sudbury, and educated under Dr. Ashworth. He took, in 1763, the charge of a congregation in Liverpool, where he published two volumes of sermons, which were well received. He was a very superior scholar, though not a man of genius, and is well known to the public as author of several compilations, particularly the "Speaker," and the "Abridgment of Brucker's History of Philosophy." In conjunction with Dr. Aikin, and other literary men, he compiled the general biographical dictionary, a work of so much merit, as every one must wish to see completed.

The dissolution of the academy at Warrington, was a fatal blow to the wide dissenters, of whom it was the pride and boast. Its tutors were, indeed, worthy to be entrusted with the education of youth, if talents and learning and respectable character were all the qualifications required in a tutor; but those who wish to hear ministers declare with the apostle, "I am determined to know nothing among you but Jesus Christ and him crucified," will not regret to see such tutors quit the academic chair.

As those dissenters who had departed from the ancient faith of the nonconformists were now destitute of a seminary for the education of ministers, on their own principles, they established one at Manchester, in the year 1786, over which Dr. Thomas Barnes, minister of the presbyterian congregation in that town was called to preside. To this institution the library and philosophical apparatus of Warrington academy were transferred. Mr. Ralph Harrison, Dr. Barnes's assistant in the pastoral care, was also his colleague in the duties of the seminary. But the same cause which contributed to the dissolution of the former institution occasioned the removal of the academy from Manchester; for Dr. Barnes, finding himself unable to maintain proper discipline, resigned the chair in 1798, after having filled it with much reputation. He was born at Warrington, and educated there under Dr. Aikin and Dr. Priestley. Leaving the academy in 1768, he took the charge of a congregation at Cockey Moor, near Bolton, where he is said to have seen his flock doubled in twelve years. He removed to Manchester in 1780, and two years after established an evening lecture, to which his popular talents drew crowds of genteel hearers. His diploma of D. D. he received from Edinburgh in 1784. To him belongs the honour of having been one of the first promoters of the Manchester literary and philosophical society, of the academy over which he presided, and of the auxiliary bible society. He died deeply regretted by his friends, in 1810, in the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the forty-second of his ministry. Dr. Barnes, who had been professor of theology, metaphysics, ethics, and Hebrew, was succeeded, in September, 1798, by George Walker, of

Nottingham, F.R.S. Advancing years and ill health compelled him to resign, in June, 1803. Mr. Harrison also was induced by the state of his health, in 1789, to relinquish the office of classical tutor, in which he was succeeded by Rev. Mr. Loyd, till the year 1792, when he quitted it, and is said to be now a banker in London. Charles Saunders, B. A. of Queen's College, Cambridge, was then appointed classical tutor, but in 1799, he was succeeded by William Johns, minister of Totness, who held the office only one year.

In the mathematical department, Mr. Davis was succeeded in 1789, by Mr. Nicholls, who after four years resigned his office to Mr. John Dalton, since celebrated for his discoveries in chemistry. When he resigned, in 1800, Mr. Walker took upon himself the whole business of the institution, for three years. The number of students under this succession of tutors, was usually from twenty to thirty, but they were not all intended for the ministry.

Mr. Walker resigned in 1803, when the New College, as it was called, was removed from Manchester, and placed under the care of Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, of York. In the following year, Hugh Kerr, M. A. of the university, of Glasgow, was appointed classical and mathematical tutor. He was succeeded, in 1808, by Theophilus Brown, of Peterhouse, Cambridge, who, on being chosen minister of the Octagon chapel, Norwich, was followed in the academic office by William Turner jun. A. M. John Kenrick, A. M. has been chosen to teach the classics and the belles lettres. Since the removal of the institution to York, the number of the students has never exceeded twenty. The seminary is chiefly supported by the

contributions of dissenters in the vicinity of Manchester, but donations and subscriptions have lately been received from other parts, as it is now the only institution for the education of what are called presbyterians, in the modern and improper application of that term^a.

The academical institution which we have traced from Gloucestershire, where it was superintended by Mr. Jones, to Carmarthen, continued under the care of Dr. Jenkin Jenkins till he removed to London in 1779. Robert Gentleman succeeded him in 1780, but the orthodoxy of the institution becoming suspected, the independents, who had joined with the presbyterians in its support, instituted an enquiry which induced them to withdraw their aids, lest they should contribute to propagate arminian and arian sentiments. Mr. Gentleman soon after removed from Carmarthen to take the charge of a congregation at Kidderminster, formed by the separation from Mr. Baxter's former flock. He died in 1795. The independents formed another academy at Abergavenny, in Monmouthshire, of which Dr. Benjamin Davies was appointed tutor.

Several ministers, in different parts of the kingdom, educated one or two young men for the ministry; but as they were not constantly employed in tuition for any considerable time, they are not mentioned in this account of academies.

During the reign of George the third the baptists

^a Private information, kindly communicated by Rev. Charles Wellbeloved, who now presides over this college.

paid increased attention to the education of their ministers. The general association, at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century, strongly recommended raising of funds for instructing young men in the learned languages with a view to the ministry. Such funds were obtained, and young men received, at Bristol, instruction for a number of years. Edward Terril and Caleb Jope engaged in this service. But an academy for theological and philosophical studies for the ministry, did not exist in England till the reign of George the second. The classical instruction was then accompanied with the theological and other studies, which had always made a part of ministerial education in dissenting seminaries. Mr. Foskett, under whom it is probable it gradually began, was assisted by Hugh Evans.

Mr. Foskett was the son of a gentleman of fortune in Buckinghamshire, and was born near Wooburn, in Bedfordshire, March 10, 1685. After receiving a liberal education he studied medicine, but soon quitted that profession for the ministry of the Gospel, in which he first laboured at Henley Arden. He laboured nearly forty years at Bristol, and died with hopes full of immortality, in the seventy-fourth year of his age. The companion of his labours, during twenty-four years, pronounced him "a man of fine talents, matured by constant and severe studies, consecrated by ardent piety to the service of the church, and adorned by extensive charity and amiable unspotted conduct."

Hugh Evans, A. M. who succeeded Mr. Foskett in the academic chair, had been also formed by him for this important station. He was honourably

descended, for his grandfather, Thomas Evans, passed his examination for the ministry before the triers in the time of the commonwealth, and received a donation to assist him in the work, for which they pronounced him well qualified. He laboured in Wales, his native country, where he was succeeded by his eldest son Caleb Evans, who was the father of the tutor now under our notice. Hugh Evans, after studying under Mr. Foskett at Bristol, was called in 1733, to assist him in his labours. In what manner he filled the pulpit at Broadmead, and presided in the academy during forty years, his son, Dr. Caleb Evans, has informed the world. He peculiarly excelled in the valuable gift of prayer. With copiousness, dignity, and ardour of devotion, he poured out his heart to God on all occasions, and though he prayed without ceasing, he maintained such variety that he was scarcely ever heard to repeat the same expressions. He was an able eloquent preacher, and as his students enjoyed his friendship, as well as instruction, during life, in the approach of death he said, "I am happy to see these young men rising up, I hope, for great and eminent usefulness in the church of God, when I and many others shall be here no more."

Caleb Evans, D. D. who had for some time assisted his father, succeeded to his vacant chair. He had been educated in the Homerton academy under Dr. Walker, Dr. Conder, and Dr. Gibbons, and was received into communion with the church in London, of which Dr. Stennett was pastor. Called to assist his father in 1759, both the church and the academy felt the advantage of his talents and influence. With him originated the Bristol Education Society, formed, "not only for the more effectual supply of

ministers to the churches at home, but also for the education of missionaries to be sent to those places where there is an opening for the Gospel."

As the academy was now to be conducted on a more extended scale, James Newton, A. M. minister of the other baptist congregation at Bristol, was invited to assist in the education of the students. Eminently qualified for the professor's chair by classical and Hebrew erudition, as well as for the pulpit by pure religion and theological knowledge, he was too diffident to be popular; but while his discerning friends hoped for the long continuance of his usefulness, he was called away from earth, April 8, 1780, in the fifty-seventh year of his age. Dr. Evans, the companion of his labours, followed him to the place of rest in August, 1791, when he had attained only his fifty-fourth year. Many who are still living bear testimony to the superiority of his mind, the extent of his learning, the ardour of his zeal, and the holiness of his character. A handsome style aided the natural grace and energy of his elocution, which allured great numbers to the pulpit, where he preached "the unsearchable riches of Christ." On the bed of death, he said, "as for those who deny the doctrine of atonement, I cannot tell how it may be with them in the near prospect of death; for my own part, I have nothing to rest my soul upon but Christ and him crucified, and I am now unspeakably happy to think of my feeble effort to vindicate that glorious doctrine in my four sermons on it."

After looking around, for some time, in quest of a successor, the society happily fixed upon Dr. John Ryland, who still presides over the academy. Robert Hall, M. A. afterwards of Cambridge, and Joseph

Hughes, M. A. now of Battersea, near London, for a time assisted in the instruction of the students. The present assistants are the Rev. Henry Page and Mr. Isaac James. In addition to the pastors, which the churches in this country have received from the academy at Bristol, it has the honour of having sent forth some valuable missionaries to the heathen. For the accommodation of the increasing numbers of the students, an extensive edifice is now erecting, with a hall for the reception of the museum, first bequeathed by Dr. Gifford, and since increased by valuable curiosities, particularly of Hindoo mythology, which have been sent by the baptist missionaries in India.

A similar institution has been recently formed for the education of baptist ministers in Yorkshire, which bears the title of the Northern Education Society. It took its rise at an association held in May, 1804, at the meeting house of Mr. Fawcett, at Hebden Bridge, near Halifax. One individual then present nobly subscribed five hundred pounds towards the object, which was also promoted by considerable contributions from others. Generous friends in London and other parts of the kingdom, have so far aided the funds of the institution, that it has now a capital of two thousand pounds and annual subscriptions to the amount of two hundred, which, together with annual collections in the churches, enable the society to educate sixteen young men. The site of the academy, which commenced its operations in October, 1805, is Little Horton, a village about half a mile from Bradford, and the choice of William Steadman, minister of the latter place, to be the tutor, inspires the most confident hopes of its subserviency to the Redeemer's glory, and the dearest interests of mankind.

Four years are occupied with the course of instruction, of which the first three months are considered as probationary. A law of the institution forbade the students to preach during their first year, but the necessities of the churches in the vicinity compel this academy, as well as most others, frequently to violate this rule. A library and philosophical apparatus have been provided by the friends of the seminary, who meet once a year to adjust its affairs, and to judge by the exercises, through which the students then pass, of the progress they have made in their studies.

The Rev. Mr. Sutcliff, minister at Olney, Buckinghamshire, is engaged in preparing young men for the ministry of the Gospel among the baptists; and an academy upon a small scale was established about four years ago at Abergavenny, in Monmouthshire. These, together with one which is now forming at Stepney, near London, may be more distinctly noticed by the future historian of the church.

William Clarke, M. A. educated several persons for the ministry, while he was pastor of a baptist church in Southwark, and afterwards when he had taken the charge of a congregation at Exeter. Under him were educated Mr. Button, of London, Henry Coxe Mason, who afterwards studied at Oxford, and became a minister in the establishment, and Peter Edwards, who wrote "Candid Reasons for renouncing the Principles of Antipædobaptism." Mr. Clarke was born in London in 1732, and by his own testimony, his heart was savingly changed when he was about ten years of age, under the preaching of the celebrated Mr. Whitefield. He studied for the ministry under Dr. Llewelyn and Dr. Samuel Stennett, and, in 1761, succeed Mr. Josiah Thompson as pastor of

the baptist church in Unicorn-yard, Tooley-street, where he laboured with so much success for twenty years that the congregation was greatly enlarged. But when his usefulness seemed to decline, he removed to Exeter, where he died in 1796, in his sixty-fourth year. He was judged eminently qualified by classical and biblical literature for the duties of a tutor, and in the pulpit he was so devoted to the Redeemer's glory and the welfare of his hearers, as to maintain that simplicity which adorns rather than conceals genuine erudition; while his purity of life and catholic liberality of spirit endeared him to Christians of all denominations.

The general baptists, though of considerable antiquity as a religious body, and including within their pale many respectable persons, appear to have remained, till late in this period, destitute of a seminary for the education of their ministers. As the whole denomination formerly contented itself either with self-taught ministers, or with educating its students at the academies established by other bodies of dissenters; so that large division, which has advanced from arminian to arian and socinian sentiments, still depends in some measure upon fortuitous supplies to fill their vacant pulpits. What is called the General Baptist Education Society, was formed in 1794, by the general baptist assembly which meets annually in Worship-street, London. From fifteen to twenty ministers, chiefly from Kent and Sussex, assemble to hear a sermon and regulate the affairs of the churches. Rev. John Evans, of London, is the tutor of the academy, which is held at his residence at Islington, and is supported by annual subscriptions

a few legacies, and occasional collections at the general baptist churches. It is on a small scale, never having more than three or four students at one time*.

That which is denominated the evangelical part of the general baptists formed, in the year 1797, a plan for the establishment of a seminary. At their annual association, the subject was seriously considered, a subscription was opened, and a letter written by Dan Taylor, a venerable minister of London, was addressed to the general baptist churches. After declaring that they did not pretend to make ministers, which they considered the work of God, the writer asks, "Have not the wisest and best of men in all ages, since the cessation of miracles, encouraged instruction for the ministry? Have not all denominations except the general baptists (unless we also except the people called quakers) institutions for this purpose?". In the following year, 1798, the institution denominated the General Baptists' Evangelical Academy, was opened, and placed under the care of Dan Taylor. It has never contained more than four students, and the whole number received under its patronage has been nineteen. The period was at first too short to admit of much improvement; but three years are now allowed to introduce the students to the elements of the original languages of the Scriptures, and of other species of knowledge requisite for a minister. Advanced beyond threescore years and ten, the tutor has proposed to resign his office, and in a judicious discourse delivered at Loughborough, before the governors of the academy in 1807, he sketched the

* Private information kindly afforded by Rev. John Evans the tutor.

* Letter to the General Baptist Churches, p. 7.

character to be required in his successor ; but no such person having been yet procured, he still labours to form others for the work in which he has spent his days.

The countess of Huntingdon established a college, in 1768, at Trevecka, near Talgarth, in South Wales. Here Mr. Flecher, the advocate of arminianism, was tutor, till the controversy on that subject separated the methodists into two bodies. Before lady Huntingdon's death, her friends, aware that she would not be able to endow her institution, formed a subscription for its support. The academy was removed, in 1792, to Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, where Rev. Isaac Nicholson, a clergyman from the establishment, superintended the education of the students. He quitted the chair to take the charge of a congregation in London, and after Mr. Horne had for a time succeeded him at Cheshunt, Dr. Draper, a clergyman of London, presided in the college for a few months. The present tutor is Mr. Richards, a dissenting minister.

This section will close with an account of seminaries in Wales. The institution which has been traced from Tewkesbury to Carmarthen, had been supported by the united funds of the presbyterians and independents, but when Samuel Thomas, the tutor, embraced arminian sentiments, the independents withdrew their aid, and formed an academy at Abergavenny. On the death of Mr. Thomas, in 1766, the whole care of the academy at Carmarthen devolved on his assistant, Dr. Jenkins, who removed, in 1775, to London, where he shortly after terminated his useful life. Robert Gentleman left Shrewsbury in 1779 to take the charge of the congregation and

academy at Carmarthen, from which he removed in 1784, to preach at Kidderminster. He died in 1795. Solomon Harries, minister of Swansea, being chosen tutor, the academy was removed to that place. He was removed by death in 1785, and was succeeded in the following year by William Howell, of Chilwood, near Bristol. On the death of Thomas Loyd, the assistant tutor, David Peter, one of the students, took his office, which he afterwards resigned to settle at Carmarthen. John Jones succeeded him, but some differences now arose in the academy, and it was dissolved. In the following year, 1795, it was however established again at Carmarthen, where Mr. Peter, minister of the place, and Mr. Davies, minister of Lanybre, were appointed tutors, which office they still hold. The number of students at this seminary, which is rising in reputation and usefulness, is twelve, and none are admitted on the funds of the institution who are not well recommended for piety and talents. The four years to which their studies are limited, are occupied with languages, mathematics, and theology.

When the independents withdrew their aid from the former seminary, they placed the new one which they formed, under Mr. Jardine, at Abergavenny. Dr. Davies, who was afterwards tutor at Homerton, removed from the academy at Carmarthen, and assisted Mr. Jardine, on whose death he became the principal tutor, to the great satisfaction of the independents in Wales. The removal of this valuable minister to London, was followed, in 1782, by the removal of the seminary to Oswestry, where it enjoyed the tuition of Dr. Williams, the present tutor at Rotherham. When he resigned the chair in 1795, the insti-

tution was fixed at Wrexham, where it is now under the care of Jenkin Lewis. The congregational fund board here supports nine students, who being usually natives of Wales, have to employ a part of their four years of study in the acquisition of the English language. This institution, which has been a great blessing to the surrounding country, deserves more support than it has received.

SECTION II.

REVIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF EDUCATION
FOR THE MINISTRY AMONG DISSENTERS.

AN enlightened and comprehensive view of this subject, producing a just and complete estimate of the real state of the dissenting academies, their excellencies and defects, would be of the utmost value to the interests of religion ; for the prospects of the churches may with considerable certainty be learned from the condition of the seminaries. But as the theme of investigation is too extensive and various to admit a hope of perfection, all that is pretended is to give such an outline as every one acquainted with the subject, may acknowledge to have an useful portion of information, though individuals may in some parts be able to supply deficiencies.

The alteration that has taken place in the dissenting academies during the present reign, first invites attention. A few eminent long established colleges existed at the close of the former period ; but these, with the exception of Homerton, having been infected with heresy, were gradually abandoned to desolation. To supply the place of the larger institutions, many smaller seminaries arose during the present period. The orthodox who laboured to provide for the education of ministers, either acted without any general system, so that the friends of the Gospel, like the sons of Noah, separated, after the flood of error, to cultivate that portion of the waste which happened

to attract attention; or else, fearing that there was something in large and eminent establishments fatal to the simplicity of truth, they designedly formed many small academies in various parts of the kingdom.

The wide dissenters pursued a contrary course. Not having been able to retain possession of the academies in the center and the west of our island, where their sentiments had by stealth acquired the ascendant, contrary to the intention of the founders, they made several efforts to provide new seminaries for the education of ministers on their own principles. These were all designed to be splendid establishments. Hackney, Exeter, and Warrington colleges were for a time imposing names, and the projectors of these institutions supposed, that unless they enjoyed considerable patronage, and acquired distinguished celebrity, they would not further the interests of literature or the dissent. But as all the former academies have been annihilated, those who call themselves unitarian dissenters have now no seminary but that which was removed from Manchester to York. This, though reduced to a smaller scale, is more splendid in its aims and professions, than many of those which are devoted to the orthodox faith.

While one party was thus struggling to afford a more costly and finished education to its ministers than is, perhaps, practicable for dissenters under their present disadvantages, many of the friends of evangelical truth verged to the contrary extreme, by giving what by some has been called a *half education*. It had been seen with bitter regret, that the elegant classic, the profound metaphysician, often lost the spirit of the man of God in the taste of the man of letters, and studied to recommend himself to the

great by his literature, rather than to the good by his usefulness; while not a few of those who had ascended the pulpit uneducated, had, by the purity of their aim and the ardour of their zeal, won from the finished scholar, the palm of wisdom which heaven awards to him "that winneth souls." Many liberal friends of pure religion were induced, therefore, to project the formation of seminaries in which the time of education should be shorter, and the objects of attention should be only those which were essential to the formation of the plain useful pastor. As the modern efforts for the propagation of the Gospel increased the number of congregations in villages and smaller country towns, the slighter species of education given by calvinistic methodists, and by some of the evangelical dissenters, became absolutely necessary to supply the demands of the churches. It lowered, indeed, the standard of general knowledge among dissenters, so that to the superior information of the old dissenting congregations, which were often assemblies of divines, succeeded the comparative ignorance of the methodistic societies. In too many instances, the student never contracted enough of the habit, to acquire the love of study, nor gained sufficient information to enable him to spend his future time to advantage. Where this was the case, the churches were injured, and they not only soon grew weary of the sameness of ignorance, but were sometimes wounded by the discovery that the natural effect of an incapacity for study was indolence, which exposed ministers to dangerous temptations.

Serious as was this deduction from the benefit, the less finished species of education was productive of immense good. Many came out of the new acade-

mies with so much attachment to divine truth, and such solicitude for the salvation of men, that they proved far greater blessings to the churches than the arianised or latitudinarian divines, who issued from some of the seats of learning. Though truth was worth the sacrifice, it was still an evil to be obliged to forego the advantages of learning. The first race of dissenting ministers who, to the erudition of the universities, added the piety of minds purified from its dross in the fire of persecution, were as far beyond many of the preachers of modern days, as these are superior to the mere philosophic divines who had just learning enough "to corrupt them from the simplicity that is in Christ."

As the good intentions of those who formed the academies for theological studies, rather than for classical or philosophical learning, have succeeded in supplying the churches with some such pastors as will shine among those who have turned many to righteousness, while many a scholar has proved "a wandering star, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever;" so they have also brought forward some distinguished minds, which received sufficient aids at the seminary to be able to learn while teaching, and at last, without losing the honours of usefulness, to share in those of science and letters. The institutions themselves, also, like many of their sons, have proved that they possessed so much literary wealth as will secure the desire and the acquisition of more. Hoxton, which was placed by its original projectors on that part of the ascent of science, which is with difficulty distinguished from the vast flat by which it is surrounded, has been constantly rising to a respectable eminence, and will probably settle on

a summit, far beyond the wishes as well as the views of its early friends. The Yorkshire seminary, now at Rotherham, has also been gradually acquiring a more elevated character. Nor should this be regretted as an infelicity; for if it be admitted that the necessities of the churches render it proper to thrust out plain unlettered pastors, there can be no doubt but the demand will produce a supply of institutions, which, like their predecessors, may rise to higher objects, leaving room for the formation of other institutions to succeed them in the humbler departments of education. This progress of academies, as well as of individuals, is favourable both to learning and religion.

That the number of seminaries for the education of dissenting ministers is increased, may be seen by the preceding section, which aimed only to give the most brief enumeration of each distinct establishment. Presbyterian academies, indeed, are less numerous than formerly; but the independents never educated so great numbers as at present. The calvinistic methodists have produced two colleges, which often supply pastors for independent churches. Among the baptists, seminaries being viewed with less jealousy than formerly, are now multiplying, as they are not yet sufficiently numerous to answer the demands of their churches. The Wesleyan methodists have no academy, unless the school at Kingswood may be deemed one. Their increase of preachers, however, is great, though they are of a ruder cast, and are therefore doomed to struggle with greater difficulties in the acquisition of knowledge. The more enlightened among their ministers are anxious to supply this defect; but those who are so totally

devoid of learning as to be incapable of appreciating its worth, oppose the project, as an useless and dangerous innovation. Upon the whole, it may be said, that the number of persons now educating for the ministry, among the different denominations of dissenters, is far greater than at any former period.

It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that their system of education should be calculated to secure in the most effectual manner the Redeemer's glory, by sending forth into the churches "pastors after his own heart." Different academies may be chargeable with different defects, but some general causes of regret may be seen in all. A want of classical knowledge is not to be attributed to the defects of the seminaries, but to the system which demands a previous Christian character, and therefore forbids to educate boys for the ministry at grammar schools; for it is well known that Oxford and Cambridge owe their classical celebrity to Eton and Westminster, Winchester and other preparatory institutions. In the regret which Gilbert Wakefield expressed at the inferior attention paid to this object in dissenting academies, those who take a more serious and enlarged view will not participate. Unless the time devoted to education for the ministry were enormously extended, the delicacies of classical literature could not be acquired, but by the sacrifice of more important objects. If this acknowledged inferiority in Greek and Latin, and in a capacity for enjoying the higher classics, lead to the neglect of languages in general, and of those in which the Scriptures were written in particular, it would be a very serious evil. But the Greek testament and the Septuagint may be well understood by those who are unequal to Pindar or the

Greek tragedians; nor does the knowledge of the Hebrew bible, or even of the Chaldee Targums, the Syriac, or other oriental versions, depend upon exquisite classical skill. It must, however, be regretted that some have so far lost sight of the value and importance of the original languages of the Scriptures, as to remain willingly ignorant of them.

In the attention paid to the religion of the students, lies the prime excellence of the dissenting academies. Formerly these institutions were not so exclusively devoted to education for the ministry, as they have been during this period; and when it was not determined what profession the youth should pursue, it was not deemed requisite to enter so deeply into his religious character; nor did even those who avowed their wish to enter the ministry, pass that severe test which was necessary, but were admitted on the recommendation of their friends, or of the churches to which they belonged. While persecution raged, it prevented men of the world from becoming dissenting ministers; but when halcyon days returned, the want of stricter examination into the religion of the candidates was severely felt. It cannot be expected that the wide dissenters would seek a remedy for this evil; for, not believing the necessity of regeneration, nor of the reception of certain vital truths, to constitute a man a Christian, they still admit students without inquiry into these points, and still allow their seminaries to educate for civil professions. But as the patrons of the orthodox academies now universally feel the necessity of ascertaining the experimental religion of those whom they admit, and of devoting their resources solely to the education of ministers, another change has been produced. In-

stead of being youths from school, as formerly, a great part of the students have been engaged in secular callings, till their own change of heart, and consequent desire for the ministry, induced them to seek emancipation from business, in order to enter the study and the pulpit. Unfavourable as this in many instances certainly is to the hope of literary eminence, it affords the best prospect of sacred decision of character, which usually distinguishes those who are not following a profession chosen for them by their parents, but have been induced by the influence of religion to change all their pursuits in life. Instead of the prepossessions of friends, or the caprice of children, the choice of God now supplies the churches with pastors. To this new turn which affairs have taken in the academies, may be attributed much of the prosperity which the churches have of late enjoyed, and which would naturally be expected from thence, by all who believe, that "pastors and teachers for the work of the ministry, are the gift of him who ascended up on high that he might fill all things."

Theology may be pronounced the *forte* of dissenting students. To the lectures constantly given by the professors, they bring that experimental knowledge of the subject, and preference for the study, which will usually be found in men introduced to the work in the manner already described. Aware, also, that they will be expected to preach frequently, without the assistance of notes, they feel the necessity of accumulating those stores of theological knowledge, which alone can enable them to fill the pulpit with pleasure to themselves or benefit to their audience. One who was himself educated at Oxford, which boasts of being the first university in the

world; says of the students in lady Huntingdon's college at Cheshunt: "I may speak, as a witness of the fact: the first student, in the preceding year, was ten times a better biblical scholar than usually goes from our universities; besides his theological acquirements, which to compare with the run of students in our universities, would be like comparing Dr. Parr to a school-boy." It is not merely a solitary individual who has acknowledged the theological superiority of dissenting students over those of the universities, but many competent judges have joined in the same confession. Some portion of the gift of teaching is required in those who are admitted into the seminaries for the ministry. Conceiving that the divine will should, as far as possible, be ascertained, the candidate for the work is usually brought forward in the social exercises of the church to which he belongs, in order to judge whether or not he possesses the gifts which the Redeemer bestows on all whom he calls into the field of labour. The talent is, however, cultivated afterwards in the academy with that laborious diligence which would be intolerable to many who ridicule what they call extemporary preaching, as the effect of indolence and presumption in the speaker, meeting with ignorance and enthusiasm in the hearers.

To the instructions necessary for the due exercise of the pastoral care, a laudable attention is bestowed. Doddridge's lectures on the subject, which are before the world, furnish a specimen of the manner in which the tutors address those who are going forth to feed the church of Christ. This is a species of instruction not to be expected in the universities, where the

* Dr. Haweis, *Evan. Mag.* for 1796, p. 154.

teachers of youth are often mere scholars, who have spent their days within the enclosure of the college, and have never experienced the nature and difficulties of the pastoral office. The grand advantage, indeed, of the dissenting academies lies in the direct tendency of all their studies to solid usefulness, and as those who fill their professorships are themselves elder pastors, who have gone before in the work, they are able to prepare their pupils for its duties and dangers. In the dissenting seminaries they study no *difficiles nugæ*, have no prize essays, which, like the ornamental work of a ladies' boarding school, turns to no account in future life. But the study of the Scriptures, either in their original tongues, or in the form of systematic theology, the knowledge of the best divines or ecclesiastical historians, the art of preaching or of spending time in the study to the greatest advantage, form the incessant objects of laborious attention.

The dissenters have, however, something yet to acquire in order to perfect their system of education for the ministry. One of the most important of these *desiderata* they have already begun to supply—grammar schools for the early initiation of their youths into classical knowledge. For when these institutions become more common, it may be expected that a greater proportion of those who enter the ministry will have had an introduction to the learned languages, which will render their future studies more easy, and their attainments more considerable.

Whether it arises from the earlier initiation or longer course of study enjoyed by the clergy, so that they have had time to wear away their youthful affectation, or whether they have been brought to their level by intercourse with a larger circle of superior

minds, or to whatever other cause it may be attributed, it is a fact that serious young clergymen frequently excel in that modest concealment of learning and simple mode of instruction, which indicate at once the great and good man. In these respects they furnish an example which the students from the dissenting academies ought to imitate with unwearied attention; for they are excellencies in which they are too frequently defective.

The establishment of an university, to which students from the seminaries of the various denominations may resort, to perfect their education, has occupied the attention of dissenters. As Oxford and Cambridge, at which the nonconformists were educated, have been shut by illiberal statutes to all but members of the church of England, dissenting ministers who sought a superior education, formerly went to the universities of Holland and Germany; but in the present state of the Continent of Europe, the only resource is in Scotland, which, with the liberality worthy of science and letters, opens her colleges to all communions. If the advocates for the monkish system of exclusion, which obtains at the English universities, plead that the founders of the colleges intended them for the benefit of the established church; it may be replied, that the only church they intended to serve was the Roman catholic, and rather than found seminaries for heretics, excommunicated at Rome, they would have cast their money into the depths of the sea. Were enlightened and candid reason to speak, it would declare that the universities were national property, consecrated to the preservation of sound learning in the kingdom, and that to this purpose they ought to be devoted, without any

sectarian distinctions. As long as the majority of the English are attached to the established church, she will have a majority of her sons enjoying the benefits of these institutions, and reaping alone the harvest of tithes in the gift of the colleges. But the dissenters of every name are, in all reason, entitled to such a share of the literary advantages of the universities as is equivalent to their portion of the population and wealth of the country, and the share they contribute to the exigencies of the state.

As, however, a thorn hedge of oaths and subscriptions and regulations is raised for their exclusion, it becomes them to provide for themselves an institution which shall possess all the real advantages of the universities. The dissenting academies allow only a certain number of years for education, in most of them but three or four, and when a student has arrived at the close of his term, he must retire to make room for others, though he may have only just learned to aspire after higher acquisitions. The lectures of the tutors are very properly adapted to the great majority, and not to the superior minds which are constantly found in the seminaries. It is true the universities of Scotland are accessible, and a few English dissenters are usually found attending the lectures of the northern professors; but the distance is great, and to those who have no connections beyond the Tweed, appears formidable; while other considerations also operate to prevent many from resorting to those seats of learning. Were an institution established in a central part of England, upon a liberal plan, open to all denominations, Christians or Jews, and were the incomes of the professors to arise, like those of Scotland, in great measure from the students,

whom their celebrity would attract, it would find sufficient support. A lecturer on humanity would give information on the higher Greek and Latin classics. By a professor of oriental languages, superior information might be given in Hebrew and Chaldee, Syriac, Samaritan, and Arabic, or perhaps in all the languages of the best Polyglots. This would powerfully serve the cause of missions. Mathematics and natural philosophy should have their professor, and lectures should be delivered on logic, metaphysics, moral philosophy, rhetoric, elocution, and history both civil and ecclesiastical.

It should, however, be mentioned that while the most laudable attention has been paid to the education of ministers during this period, an unusual number of excellent men have entered on the work without any previous academical preparation. Of these, some have become distinguished blessings to the churches, and a few have risen to very considerable eminence by the diligent improvement of the hours of study, as well as by the faithful ardent employment of their powers in preaching the Gospel.

CHAPTER VI.

OUTWARD STATE OF DISSENTERS.

SECTION I.

NUMBER AND RANK OF DISSENTERS.

THE opinion of bishop Burnet, that noneconformity would be *res unius ætatis* (a thing of one age) has been already proved destitute of truth. Its history during this period will more abundantly confute the episcopal prediction. It can now boast an existence of a hundred and fifty years, and betrays no symptoms of senility or decay; but still retains all the marks of youthful vigour.

Various things were favourable to the dissenting cause. The spirit of religious liberty continued to diffuse itself more widely among the people, and was gradually acquiring a more powerful influence over the public mind. Nonconformity was not now a stranger which had just appeared in the British isle; but was an old inhabitant, acknowledged by all to be of English birth, was received and treated with greater respect, and in most places escaped those reproaches which it had been accustomed to hear, and forced to bear. It was on this account easier to be a dissenter than in former times.

There had been likewise, during two generations, a full display of the nature of their principles, in the conduct and character of those who avowed their

dissent from the establishment. It had been formerly noised abroad, both from the pulpit and the press, that they were sons of Belial, the abettors of rebellion, murderers of kings, full of enmity to bishops and clergy, and had done a thousand evil things. But by looking narrowly at them for full fourscore years, their enemies could discover none of these wicked practices, and were constrained to own that they demeaned themselves like peaceable and useful members of society, and were as much attached to the constitution and government of the country as any of their fellow subjects. All those who required only arguments in order to produce conviction, were led to a far more favourable opinion both of the principles and characters of the dissenters. As this tended greatly to lessen the bigotry of their adversaries, it conduced to increase the number of their converts.

But the grand means of augmenting the dissenting body, was the faithful and zealous preaching of the Gospel by its ministers. The religious principles of the old nonconformists had an inconceivable weight and power on the hearts of their hearers ; and where their successors still continued to display them with ability, affection, and zeal, their influence was seen to be unimpaired. From the commencement of this period the number of evangelical preachers was increasing, and has continued to increase with progressive rapidity to the present time.

That the fervour of address which had distinguished the nonconformists was greatly impaired during the second period has been already observed. But it was now happily revived, and the warmth of affection and ardour of zeal which had formerly performed such

wonders, were again displayed. To the diligent perusal of the writings of the nonconformists and puritans which were now eagerly sought after and read, this happy change may be in part ascribed. It was owing also to the influence of the Calvinistic methodists. Mr. Wesley's mode of preaching in its effects as a pattern, was confined chiefly within the limits of his own sect which he was continually labouring to augment. Though the body which was attached to his fellowship, was not very numerous, and he did not seem very anxious to increase it, Mr. Whitefield was a man of most extensive and beneficial influence; for his mode of preaching has been in some degree adopted by most of the calvinists in England; to whatever denomination they belonged, but especially by the evangelical clergy and the independents. The dry, stiff method which too much prevailed under the former period, gave place to that plain, serious, affectionate, and zealous manner which had so eminently distinguished a Baxter, a Flavel, and their fellow labourers; and of which Mr. Whitefield furnished so splendid an example. From hence originated that home, straight forward, and pointed address to the consciences of men, and those continual exhortations "to impenitent sinners to seek the salvation of their souls," which were so powerful in their effects, both in attracting hearers to the dissenting places of worship, and in fixing them there, by fixing the principles of the Gospel in their hearts. This, let it be remembered, is the grand cause of the increase of the dissenting body during this period. A devoted affectionate, active, and zealous minister, unless in situations and circumstances peculiarly unfavourable, is uniformly found to prosper; and the church and

congregation under his care, to be enlarged in numbers, and to grow in grace. This may be considered as the main spring of the dissenting cause, on which the motion of the whole machine depends.

To village preaching also the dissenters are indebted for an increase of the numbers of their communion. It was practised from the beginning of nonconformity, and had never wholly fallen into disuse. But in the latter part especially of this period, it became more general than it had ever been before. The consequence was, that people who were before as sheep without a shepherd, attached themselves to the ministry of the men who brought to them the glad tidings of salvation, and formed in many places no inconsiderable addition to the congregation. But in a great variety of instances, from the distance, and from the number of those who attended on the village preaching, a new society was formed, which gradually improved both in the piety and number of its members. To this cause the dissenters may justly attribute much of their prosperity; and it is a prosperity greatly to their honour; for it arose from rescuing the people from all the grossness of ignorance, and all the debasement of vice, and by conveying to their minds the knowledge of the Gospel, and to their hearts the power of the truth.

To the preaching of the methodists, both calvinistic and arminian, the dissenters owe a considerable increase both in the number of congregations and of hearers. As the dissenters did not pretend to be rotaries of the established church, those who were very strongly attached to her communion refused to hear them; but the methodists in general professing to belong to the church of England, they were on this

account received as brethren by many of the people, who listened to their preaching, and by this means became accustomed to hear sermons out of their parish church, and to join, without knowing it, in the dissenting mode of worship. By the impressions there made upon their hearts, a more effectual and powerful alteration took place. The preaching of the clergyman now began to appear flat and dead ; and something (as they more powerfully felt from week to week) was wanting which they deemed essential to their edification and comfort. As in many places the visits of the methodists were but temporary and occasional, the people who had been awakened by them had no other refuge but the dissenting meeting-house ; and in many instances, after some time of attendance they gave it the preference, and became dissenters by choice. Though the arminian methodists, from Mr. Wesley downwards, endeavoured by every means in their power to prevent this change, and eagerly recommended their hearers to keep to their parish church, when deprived of Wesleyan preachers, they could never prevent some from quitting their standard in consequence of having imbibed an attachment to the principles and preaching of the evangelical dissenters.

But the obligations of the dissenters to the methodists are not limited to the gift of individual members : to the calvinistic branch they are indebted for whole congregations, and in no inconsiderable number. By the labours of some good man in connection with Mr. Whitefield, more eminent for piety and zeal than for literature and theological knowledge, a small body of people was collected, which gradually increased both in numbers and in piety. Rules were then found necessary for the government of the

society, and methods for preserving the purity of their communion. In the adoption of these, they gradually stepped into the discipline of the independents which is the natural state of a congregation left to act for itself, and having no other object in view but the advancement of religion^s. Though at first, some of the elder ministers of that communion were reluctant to acknowledge their legitimacy, in a course of years the prejudices subsided, and they ranked among the regular independent churches.

By many of the members of the establishment, it has been supposed that to the bad lives of some of the clergy, the dissenters are indebted for a considerable part of their success. In this, however, they are greatly mistaken ; for it can only be reckoned among the minor causes of their increase. Indeed it not unfrequently happens, that in a place where there is an immoral clergyman, the people are so much corrupted by his example and influence, that they will pay little attention to a more pure instructor ; and in numerous instances, the parson's vices conduce but little to cure the people's bigotry. It is a clergyman's neglecting the souls of his people which introduces the dissenters into his parish : his manner of life, whether regular or irregular, has comparatively no considerable influence in promoting or impeding their success.

That the dissenters are indebted for an increase of their numbers to the good clergy as well as to the bad may be thought paradoxical, but it is a fact. Where a faithful minister has been labouring in a parish from year to year, he collects around him a company of truly devoted Christians. They love the Gospel and its ordinances ; and they venerate their pastor, under

■ See Jay's Memoirs of the Rev. J. Clark.

whose care they are training up for a state of eternal blessedness. But if he is a curate, he is removed by the rector or promoted to a living; or whatever may be his rank, he is called away by death to rest from his labours. His successor is often a man of a different spirit. Attachment to the establishment chains the people to his ministry for a season; but they no longer hear the same doctrine as before. As they would fain be pleased, they eagerly grasp at any thing which sounds at all like the truth, and hope that the preacher will improve. A few months attendance, however, opens their eyes, and throws them into despair. They cannot bear the idea of quitting the church, and leaving the place where the Gospel was so purely preached. But where the love of the truth has established itself in the heart, they are constrained to seek it, and to follow it wherever it may be found. The dissenting meeting is often its only sanctuary; and though, at first, their prejudices against the place may be strong, they are gradually overcome, and the once zealous votaries of the church with their families become members of a dissenting congregation. In some instances, where the converts of an evangelical clergyman are numerous, they secede from the parish church in a body, and form themselves into a society retaining the use of the liturgy and the forms of the church in their worship; but they become virtually dissenters protected by the toleration act, and cordially uniting with dissenters both in ministerial and Christian communion. In a course of years they are brought to esteem every thing external in religion, only as it is conducive to the spiritual edification of Christians.

While the dissenters view with delight these causes of their increase, they are constrained to behold with pain the causes of decrease, which were operating at the same time, and producing an opposite effect. A person standing on the bank of the river of the establishment, who saw a variety of streams separated from its channel, and running in a direction remote from its course, might conceive that they were for ever lost to its waters; but on descending by its side he would observe no small part of them returning again, and reuniting themselves to the parent flood. By what means this change has been produced, is an important subject of enquiry.

Error was the grand cause of decrease in the presbyterian congregations. Arianism and socinianism to which the former period gave birth, were still in existence, and still brought forth their poisonous fruit: their progress was now becoming far more rapid than at first. In this period arianism grew bolder and more open in the declaration of her sentiments; and socinianism followed her example. To Dr. Priestley the Christian world is indebted for this alteration of behaviour: and both for his conduct and his counsel he deserves applause. Scorning the crafty concealment and cunning equivocation of his predecessors, he frankly told the world his creed, and warmly exhorted every other socinian, if he would be an honest man, to follow his example. To his counsels both socinians and arians listened with reverence; and with the exception of a few old adepts in the art of concealing their sentiments, who wished to live and die in quiet, the rest preached what they believed, and the people saw what their preachers were. The effect of the discovery was beyond cal-

culation both powerful and rapid. Those who had any regard for evangelical truth, were filled with horror at the sight of the heretic in his native form, and bid him and his adherents an eternal adieu. Others, though not disgusted at the opinions of their teacher, growing weary of dissent, found it more agreeable to stay at home: or when at any time they went to public worship, to join in that which was established by the state. Many who drank the cup of arianism first, and then of socinianism to the very dregs, ceased to be members of the dissenting congregation; and with a perfect hatred of the doctrines of the church of England, pusillanimously and disingenuously bore a part in her very explicit trinitarian worship. By the operation of these causes many a presbyterian congregation dwindled from a giant into a dwarf. Aged people, who remember their respectable condition in the metropolis at the commencement of this period, must be convinced that heresy has acted like an enchantress in silently, by her fatal spells, accomplishing their destruction. They are in general now but the shadow of what they formerly were, and many of them have ceased to exist. Devonshire, the cradle of arianism, has been the grave of the arian dissenters; and there is not left in that populous county a twentieth part of the presbyterians which were to be found at the time of her birth. More than twenty of their meeting-houses, it is said, have been shut up; and in these which remain open, there are to be seen the skeletons only of congregations which were full and flourishing before error had banished prosperity.

In the other counties of England where these sentiments prevailed, the effects have been the same. Like the devouring pestilence, arianism and soci-

nianism have with few exceptions, carried desolation with them into every congregation where they have obtained an entrance ; and some scores more of their meeting-houses would have been shut up, but for the pious benevolence of persons of a different creed in the former generation. By their endowments, many of the present presbyterian ministers have been enabled to retain their office, and to preach to what deserves not the name of a congregation, but is better described by the prophet's account of what remains after the shaking of the olive tree : " two or three berries on the top of the uppermost bough, four or five on the outmost fruitful branches thereof." So great is the change which these sentiments have produced, that perhaps there are not now in England twelve of their congregations which can boast an attendance of five hundred people ; whereas before the introduction of arianism, they could in more than two hundred places count five hundred hearers, and in several more than double the number. To account for the decrease, let it be remembered that shoals of converts, if they deserve the name, or of people weary of dissent, passed over from the presbyterians into the bosom of the established church.

Indifference has been another enemy to the increase of the dissenting cause. In a second generation it is impossible to secure the ardour of zeal which influenced the parents to dissent. While some of their posterity imbibe their principles and possess their piety, others resist all their endeavours to convey impressions of religion, and grow up with cold indifference to the doctrines and spirit of the Gospel. In this state of mind they are prepared for a removal into the establishment. Marriage into episcopal

families drains a part of the young people away. In the course of life something occurs which creates disgust with the meeting-house, and serves as a pretext for going over to the church. The discourses of the socinians have nothing to banish indifference, but much to render it more cold, and thus facilitate the passage to the parish house of worship. In an evangelical congregation, to a person of indifference the preaching must often be peculiarly irksome, while it strives to rouse from his slumbers one who wishes to sleep at his ease. Unfrequent attendance too, which indifference generates, is a thing of bad report with them; and who wishes to lie under infamy? He bids adieu therefore to the conventicle, and seeks refuge in the church, where he may slumber without disturbance, and attend as seldom as he pleases without being pointed at for a neglect of duty.

The spirit of the world has furnished a third harvest from among the dissenters to increase the members of the established church. In the plan of life which many form on arriving at maturity, and others in later years, one great object is to stand well with the world, and enjoy its good opinion. But they find that it is not fashionable, to be a dissenter, and that it is considered a blemish in the character of a person who aspires at distinction, and who wishes to join in all the amusements of the age. He begins to be ashamed of his religious connections; and if he be himself reluctant to give them up, the solicitations of his wife and the influence of his children overcome his repugnance, and away they all march to the established church, and seem to feel themselves relieved from their plebeian degradation.

Riches may be justly mentioned as another power-

ful cause of the decrease of dissenters. When a person has attained to affluence, a multitude of new passions rises in his breast. He pants for distinction, for intercourse with the great, and for honours for himself and for his children. But among dissenters these are difficult to be obtained: the members of their body seldom rise above the middle class of society; and their ministers are plain men, who make no figure among the gay and the great. In the establishment, among both the clergy and laity he will find genteel and elegant company and acquaintances: to associate with them is the way to rise to that distinction to which he conceives himself intitled by his fortune and manner of living. As the power of religious principles too often decays in the minds of men as they increase in wealth, the love of this wicked world with its pomps and vanities gains a mightier ascendancy over the heart. When a rich dissenter, who perhaps unites in his treasures the sober industry of two preceding generations, has sunk into these sentiments and feelings, his only remaining difficulty is how to quit his old connections with a tolerable grace. A quarrel with the minister, or with some leading persons in the congregation, if it can by any means be procured, serves admirably to furnish a reason for the change. If that, unhappily, cannot be obtained, he is obliged to be satisfied with one less substantial, which, however flimsy, suffices to accomplish his escape, and to place him in the social and Sunday's intercourse with many as rich, and with many still richer and greater than himself. He can now from his pew in the parish church cast his eyes on persons of affluence and rank, and receive as he retires, the smiles of a baronet or a lord; and his wife

and daughters be honoured with the same attentions from the ladies. These are more regarded by them than the smiles of the Saviour and the honour which cometh from God. The family now obtains admittance with a grace to the card table, the assembly room, and the theatre; and nothing remains to complete their felicity, but that their former dissent could be buried in eternal oblivion.

The diminution of bigotry has of late rendered such changes more easy than they once were; and persons who formerly could scarcely find courage to break up the religious connections of their ancestors and of their own early years, now perform the task with comparative facility.

Such have been the causes of decrease during this period among dissenters, and they have operated to the restoration of tens of thousands to the established church. Let those who are afraid that she will fall, behold the pillars which in addition to those in the original fabric, the dissenters are numerically furnishing for her support. And let it be remembered by these timid friends of the hierarchy, that those who return from the conventicle to their communion, cannot adopt the words of Naomi, "I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." On the contrary, whatever may be the case as to spiritual things, in worldly concerns many of them went out empty and they are brought back full: when they left it they were minnows, and they are returned whales.

The departure of these classes of people from the dissenting body, when considered in a religious point of view, is by no means to be looked at with regret. The secession of socinians and arians is an absolute

benefit: their sentiments have been a curse to the cause by their contaminating influence, and also "the abomination which maketh desolate." As for those who had imbibed the spirit of the world, while it is to be lamented that they have withdrawn from the preaching of the Gospel, which might have proved the power of God unto salvation to them and to their children; and while their affluence was beneficial for promoting religion in the congregation, in their country, and through the world, still their departure has been a blessing to the general cause. It is of the utmost consequence to the prosperity of the dissenting body, that they should be a religious body of people¹. Their political importance, as it is a thing of very inferior consideration, lies beyond the limits of the design of this history. In the second period, attachment to the dissent from education and connections, detained many who were destitute of piety and amused themselves with speculations till they fell into dangerous heresies, and others who, without paying attention to religious principles, sank into the spirit of the world, and joined in all its fashionable amusements and follies. The influence of such persons on the rest of the congregation, was exceedingly injurious, and had the most unhappy effects on the rising generation. The departure of such men therefore was a real good; and

¹ A nobleman, who was profane in his conversation, having hinted to Mr. Howe, that it would be of importance to the dissenters to have a patron at court, and that he would have no objection to the office, Mr. Howe answered, that the dissenters were a religious body, and that if they had a patron, it was necessary it should be a person whom they would not be ashamed of, and who would not be ashamed of them.

what was lost in opulence, was more than compensated in principle and strength. Religion is the bond of the dissenters; it is their safeguard and defence, and the only sure foundation of their prosperity. Where religion loses ground they will decline; where religion flourishes they will increase and multiply.

One cause of the decrease of dissenters may be conceived by some to have been omitted; for they think that where an evangelical clergyman comes to a place, he will not only put a stop to their farther progress, but diminish their numbers, and ruin their cause. But no such consequences have been found to ensue. Where a dissenting congregation has been previously established, the preaching of the Gospel in the church has in general had no effect to injure its prosperity; for that very preaching has, in ordinary cases, given it as many hearers as it has taken away. From the diversity of tastes among mankind, the simplicity of the dissenting worship will be more agreeable to many pious people than the pomp and splendor of the episcopal ritual, and the suitableness and variety of extemporary prayer than the constant repetition of liturgic forms. Purity of communion will be considered by many a privilege of so high importance, that they will prefer a society where it is a fundamental principle, to the church which allows the mixed crowd to kneel at her altars without impediment or distinction. The private means of improvement in a dissenting congregation, which the rigid laws of the church neither provide nor admit, will always attach some to the conventicle. The personal consequence of every individual in a voluntary society acting on the principles of independency, from his concern and influence in the affairs of the

body, will have charms to not a few above a more splendid ecclesiastical constitution, where men are only cyphers. These will always be, in the eyes of multitudes, benefits and privileges to which the established church can throw nothing into the balance of equal weight.

Having enumerated the causes of increase and decay among the dissenters during this period, it is left to the Christian reader to decide whether the reasons which made and kept some men dissenters, or those which influenced others to depart from their communion and return to the establishment, have the greater weight. What the operation of these two classes of causes has been, will be perceived from the following list of the dissenting congregations in England and Wales at the present time. From the changes which are continually taking place, and from the diversity of judgment whether some smaller societies should be considered as congregations, or only as branches of congregations, no two persons would perhaps agree in the precise number. The account subjoined, which has been furnished by the kindness of friends in different parts of the kingdom, will be found to possess sufficient accuracy to enable the reader to form a view of the number of the dissenting congregations on which he may depend.

OUTWARD STATE OF DISSENTERS.

327

	Presbyterians.	Independents.	Baptists.	Total.
Bedfordshire	0	4	16	20
Berkshire	1	12	8	21
Buckinghamshire	3	14	17	34
Cambridgeshire	0	24	20	44
Cheshire	12	20	5	37
Cornwal	0	28	7	35
Cumberland	15	7	5	27
Derbyshire	10	20	11	41
Devonshire	19	30	16	65
Dorsetshire	5	23	4	32
Durham	14	3	6	23
Essex	1	47	17	65
Gloucestershire	3	17	16	36
Hampshire	2	26	17	45
Herefordshire	2	3	4	9
Hertfordshire	1	13	10	24
Huntingdonshire	0	5	14	19
Kent	7	28	24	59
Lancashire	33	57	27	117
Leicestershire	4	11	17	32
Lincolnshire	3	21	22	46
Middlesex	20	53	33	106
Norfolk	3	10	20	33
Northamptonshire	0	18	16	34
Northumberland	37	7	5	49
Nottinghamshire	1	7	9	17
Oxfordshire	3	8	6	17
Rutlandshire	0	2	2	4
Shropshire	3	20	11	34
Somersetshire	6	29	15	50
Staffordshire	4	22	6	32
Suffolk	5	26	16	47
Surrey	1	20	15	36
Carr ^d . forw ^d .	218	635	437	1290

	Presbyterians.	Independents.	Baptists.	Total.
Bro ^c . forw ^d .	218	635	437	1290
Sussex	2	7	16	25
Warwickshire	5	16	8	29
Westmoreland	2	4	3	9
Wiltshire	2	38	17	57
Worcestershire	3	4	9	16
Yorkshire	20	95	42	157
	<u>252</u>	<u>799</u>	<u>532</u>	<u>1583</u>
SOUTH WALES.				
Brecknockshire	0	14	13	27
Cardiganshire	9	16	11	36
Carmarthenshire	2	46	36	84
Glamorganshire	7	36	28	71
Pembrokeshire	0	25	19	44
Radnorshire	0	4	5	9
Monmouthshire	0	9	15	24
NORTH WALES.				
Anglesey	0	10	11	21
Carnarvon	0	13	13	26
Denbighshire	0	13	12	25
Flintshire	0	8	1	9
Merionethshire	0	16	3	19
Montgomeryshire	0	15	9	24
	<u>18</u>	<u>225</u>	<u>176</u>	<u>419</u>
England	252	799	532	1583
Total	270	1024	708	2002

In the islands of Guernsey and }
 Jersey, 6 French, 1 English } 7

* Most of the presbyterians in the northern counties, and some in London, consider themselves as of the order of the church of Scotland, and there are upwards of twenty of their congregations Scotch seceders. Six of the London presbyterian congregations are Scotch.

* Nearly a hundred of the congregations of this denomination are general baptists, and twenty Sandemanians.

There are at least a hundred congregations of a non-descript character, which as they do not come under any one of the three denominations, have not been inserted in the list.

From this list it will be seen that during the reign of George the Third, the dissenters have not been idle; but that as it has been a busy and active season in the political, it has been no less so in the religious world. The increase is the more pleasing, as the great object has been to make the people Christians: their being made dissenters was a consequence of this, and generally arose from the spiritual benefit which they received from the labours of the dissenting ministers. This was the first bond of attachment, and afterwards the many religious advantages resulting from the institution of a voluntary society, were the chains which fastened and detained in their dissent multitudes of converts from the church and from the world. By impartial men of every denomination, it will certainly be thought not to their dishonour, that practical benefit formed the first tie of attachment, and with many almost the only one. An examination of the reasons of dissent, which afterwards took place in the minds of the more inquisitive, confirmed them in a conviction of the propriety of their conduct, by pointing out to them the strength of the fortress into which they had entered.

During the whole of this period, the presbyterian congregations have been falling into decay, and many of them into ruin. At the end of queen Anne's reign, they formed at least two-thirds of the whole dissenting body; at present, they perhaps do not exceed a twentieth part of the three denominations. Though their congregations, as stated in the list, bear a much larger proportion, they are in general so small, that with a few exceptions, it would require five or six of them to compose one of a moderate size. But for the

endowments of pious calvinists of old, some scores more of them must have been shut up, and the arian and socinian preacher fairly starved out'. If some pious London presbyterian, who died in the year 1714, were now to rise from the dead, and be carried round to their meeting-houses in the time of service, he would be filled with amazement and horror. "Where," he would say, "are the numerous bodies of people which used to worship here?" On finding so few congregations, he would naturally inquire, "what is become of the rest." He would be told that they were first shut up, and then applied to other purposes, or occupied by other denominations. If the cause was unknown to him, he might be told that arianism and socinianism had driven them away.

During the whole of this period, the independents have continued steadily to increase, and at the present time they have a greater number of congregations than either of the two other denominations, and more of them are large. Their original principles both in doctrine and discipline they still retain; and it may be confidently asserted, that no one class of ministers in any ecclesiastical body of protestants in the world, are more united in their religious sentiments. They now form the largest body among English dissenters, and what redounds to their honour in the highest degree, no one denomination of Christians on the face of the earth can boast of so great a number of ministers who preach the Gospel in purity as the English independents; and as a body none in a more judicious

* The presbyterian congregations in the four northern counties are not comprehended in this description: they are in general connected with the Scotch, and have, with some exceptions, been preserved from those errors into which their southern brethren fell.

manner. Men of very profound learning among them are not numerous. They have no sinecures by means of which scholars can spend their years in uninterrupted literary pursuits. They are all men of action, and their studies are blended with the labours of the pulpit, and the care of a congregation. At the same time there are fewer of them ignorant of theology than in any other body. The generality possess that portion of knowledge of the truths of sacred scripture, and of those things which may be called the peculiar science of ministers of the Gospel, which qualifies them for the duties of their office. To the honour of the younger ministers it may be mentioned, that there never was a greater spirit of improvement, nor a more eager desire to acquire that knowledge which is most important to the service of the sanctuary. If the consideration of this distinction lead every independent minister, both old and young, to endeavour by laborious study, by active exertions, and by fervent piety to maintain it, and rise to greater eminence, it will redound greatly to the glory of God, and the happiness of mankind. With great earnestness it is wished, that the idle may receive reproof, become ashamed of their ignorance, and from this hour not be satisfied till they have acquired an intimate and extensive acquaintance with the doctrines of the Gospel of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*.

* If that portion of the ministers, who, like too many of the last generation, still remain insulated, satisfying themselves with the routine of service in their own congregations, should persevere in their refusal to unite with their brethren in spreading the Gospel through the towns and villages of their county, and will not be prevailed on to join with their whole soul in sending the knowledge of Christ to the heathen, they must be considered as a blot and a dis-

been exceedingly perilous to the virtue of the quakers. That seclusion which their system demands from what they account the vanities of the world, presents no ordinary trial of principles to their sons and daughters; and we are not to wonder, if, in very many instances, the spirit of the world has gained the victory. From this unreputable cause, there has been a decrease in numbers, which perhaps has not been balanced by the converts who have been brought out of the world to join their standard. The whole number of the English quakers is said not to amount to twenty thousand: and vital piety not to be on the decline within the last forty years. The love of money is an evil with which this respectable community has been often charged as their besetting sin; but something might be adduced by way of apology, even though the charge should not be altogether destitute of truth. The system of most other sects allows a wider range of concupiscence. The pleasures of life are open to their embraces, and the honours of the world are deemed lawful objects of pursuit. By these means, a greater variety of passions are indulged, and the force of the soul which, if confined to one, would rage with violence, is weakened by being divided among many. A quaker, therefore, who loves money something more than these followers of divers lusts and pleasures, may not be inferior to them in virtue or principle. Let not the friends, however, take refuge behind this rampart, but aim to be free from the vice of which they are accused, and present to the world the pattern of every excellence.

Besides the original dissenters, during the last period, other denominations arose, which in a course

of years have very considerably increased. The calvinistic methodists who glory in Mr. Whitefield as their founder, form a respectable, though not a very numerous body. Few ministers ever discovered a more truly catholic spirit than that extraordinary man. His great aim was to promote religion, not to raise a sect ; and when any were converted to Christ, he had obtained his end, and left them to unite with whatever body of Christians they thought fit. The two tabernacles which he built in London, remain nearly on his original plan, and contain the largest congregations which assemble for the hearing of the Gospel, perhaps in the whole Christian world ; and it may be questioned if any two places of worship can count a greater number of true disciples of Christ. In one part of their institution, they have admitted an alteration. Open communion was practised by them at first ; and, like the church of England, they admitted to the Lord's supper any person who chose to come ; but they have, in the course of this period, adopted the grand independent principle of purity of communion, and consider regeneration and faith necessary to qualify a member for a place at the Lord's table. So important does this principle now appear in their eyes, that when a few years ago, an association was formed in conjunction with other large and respectable societies in the metropolis and its vicinity, by the name of the calvinistic methodist union, it was a fundamental article, that none should be admitted into their body who had not adopted purity of communion. The value of a good principle is here displayed. When first brought forward by some adept in the study of truth, it may be disregarded and derided ; but the due consideration of its excellence will in time procure it acceptance

from those who appeared the most unlikely to embrace it. How entertaining is it to see the ministers of the calvinistic methodist union sitting at the feet of Dr. Owen ! Let the friends of mankind not be discouraged at want of success, but continue to press home those great truths which conduce to human happiness: they will not be lost, but in due time find a more extensive reception than the fondest hopes of philanthropists could ever anticipate.

The religious body to which lady Huntingdon gave a name, has in its forms and practices kept nearest to the church of England, and is that to the English, which the burghers are to the Scotch establishment. Dissenters, most of them refuse to be called: some have allowed the name of seceders; but they in general say, that they are of the established church. How this alliance can be properly claimed by those whose ministers, with the exception of two or three clergymen who officiate in their chapels, have not received ordination from a diocesan, and are not, according to the economy of the establishment, qualified to perform any one part of the clerical office, it is their business to explain. If they should allow that they are without the pale of the church of England, but plead that they are episcopals, it might be asked, "Where are the bishops among you, who confirm and ordain?" Their college, which has existed almost half a century, has been frequently under the superintendence of a clergyman; but the necessities of the country have too often called away their students at an early period of their course, to supply their destitute congregations,

or to itinerate among the ignorant and profane. The increase of this denomination has not been considerable of late years; and they have sustained a very serious injury from a tendency to supralapsarianism, which has made some of their preachers afraid of calling sinners to repent and believe the Gospel, lest they should offer violence to the sovereignty of the grace of God. Their congregations in London, and some of the great towns, are large and respectable. The whole number of their places of worship in England and Wales will scarcely amount to fifty.

The Moravians can scarcely be considered as an increasing body; nor can it be said that of late they have eagerly sought to augment their numbers. On this account they merit reprehension. If they conceive, as they certainly do, that their religious principles, and their peculiarities of discipline are more conducive to the interests of true piety than any other, they are greatly to be blamed for not endeavouring to propagate their system to the utmost of their power. There are few denominations whose increase would be heard of with greater pleasure. Their congregations in Great Britain amount to sixteen.

Against the Wesleyan methodists a charge of want of zeal for the increase of their body will not readily be adduced, or if adduced, be credited. Next to the regular dissenters, they constitute the most considerable portion of those who have separated from the established church. Their separation some of them have stoutly denied. But can those who have different places of worship, different ministers dis-

pensing all the ordinances of religion, and different rules of discipline; who acknowledge no jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical rulers; who allow no interference of the state with their proceedings; who would scorn the thought of the clergyman of the parish exercising any authority over them,—with the slightest shadow either of propriety or truth call themselves members of the established church? This sect was happy in a leader who possessed the skill of governing a religious body, beyond any protestant in modern times; and his long life enabled him to nurture it to maturity and strength. Whatever effects his death produced, it did not lessen the ardour of their zeal, nor prevent their increase; for they have continued to multiply with accelerating rapidity to the present time. In England and Wales the number of their chapels we cannot ascertain. Their travelling preachers, who are the regular ministers of the body, amount to six hundred and thirty-nine. The local preachers, usually persons in business, who officiate as assistants, are much more numerous. The members in society, consisting of those who profess to be desirous to flee from the wrath to come, by the computation of the last conference, were numbered at one hundred and forty thousand, five hundred and fifty.

In Wales, during this period, the cause of dissent continued to prosper. Ministers laboured with increasing zeal, and were rewarded with adequate success. When it is observed that from one hundred and sixty congregations, the number has risen to four hundred and nineteen in the course of the present reign, the English dissenting ministers must be constrained to yield the palm of victory and glory

to their Cambrian brethren. In the rapid augmentation may be seen also the existence, extension, and influence of evangelical doctrine, while the arians and socinians were hiding their heads, and departing from the enlightened land.

But in addition to the auspicious labours of the old dissenting denominations, much has been done for the advancement of religion by a new sect which sprang up during this period, the members of which have lately taken to themselves the name of the "Welch Calvinistic Methodists." Thomas Charles, of Bala, in Merionethshire, an unbeneficed clergyman of considerable learning, eminent piety, and ardent persevering zeal, may be considered as the founder. This truly apostolic man has exerted himself in the cause of Christ with extraordinary success. Aided by the zealous exertions of David Jones of Llangan, and one or two other clergymen in South Wales, he has been the instrument not only of awakening multitudes to a concern for their eternal happiness, but of stirring up many faithful men to assist him in preaching the truth. Their chapels and preaching places, where worship is regularly maintained, amount to three hundred; and there are about two hundred preachers in the connection. In their different societies they compute that there are upwards of thirty thousand members.

Hitherto the work has been carried on by them on the itinerant plan. Their discipline partakes more of the presbyterian form than of any other. Till of late

* Besides their societies in Wales, they have two chapels at Liverpool, one at Manchester, one at Chester, one at Shrewsbury, one at Bristol, and two in London, in all of which the worship is conducted in the Welch tongue.

the Lord's supper only was dispensed in their chapels by the clergymen in the connection, but now both sacraments are to be administered; and eight of the preachers in North, and as many in South Wales have been appointed and set apart to administer baptism and the Lord's-supper, in conjunction with the few clergymen who are connected with them. This appointment, which may appear an innovation, makes no change, they say, in the general constitution, government, and discipline of the body, but is only an addition to the privileges on the former plan. The exertions of Mr. Charles and the preachers of his denomination in the establishment of Sunday schools, and his labours in composing, translating, and publishing a great variety of useful treatises in the Welch tongue, at a printing press under his own inspection, solely for the diffusion of divine truth among his countrymen, deserve the highest praise. There are indeed few, if any, in the British isle who have been more laborious, and more successful in advancing the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

From the view which has been taken of the outward state of these religious bodies which have forsaken the worship of the established church, it is evident not only that there has been a considerable increase during this period among the old dissenters, but that the various bodies of separatists usually, with the exception of the moravians, comprized under the name of methodists, which had their birth under the former period, have grown to an unexpected degree both of size and strength. So powerful have been the effects of the labours of the ministers and private Christians in these denominations which all agree

in their dissent or separation from the hierarchy, that some consideration at least is due to the assertion which has been made, that there are more professors of religion out of the established church than within its pale". It is to be remembered in the calculation of increase, that the population has considerably risen during the present reign, and that though the dissenters are more numerous than formerly, they might bear only the same relative proportion to the whole mass of the people; but it will be necessary to allow them a still greater augmentation of their numbers. We cannot however refrain from expressing it as our firm opinion, that both by the friends and by the enemies of the dissenters and methodists, the increase has been exaggerated beyond the reality.

But whatever the increase may have been, the fears of danger or injury to the established church are destitute of foundation. Whoever will impartially reckon the whole number of separatists, and compare them with the general mass of the people of England, will be thoroughly convinced that there is not the smallest cause of alarm. If they even wished to overthrow existing institutions, it is unspeakably beyond their power: it would be a hopeless contest. But these persons do not understand the principles of dissenters, who suppose that it is consistent with them either to produce, or to profit by such a disaster. The laity among the dissenters wish their ministers to be men of labour, with moderate in-

" By a professor of religion (a term which has gained admittance into the language of a considerable part of the religious world, and which we adopt for its brevity) is meant one who has the worship of God in his family, who sanctifies the Lord's-day, and who is persuaded of the necessity of conversion in order to the salvation of the soul.

comes, which they shall receive from their congregations as the reward of their services; and not masters, independent of their people, vested with authority by the state, demanding tithes by law, and living in affluence and splendour. Such is the universal sentiment of the dissenting laity; so that if the ministers wished for tithes and dignities, they would have their own flocks to oppose them, as well as all the members of the established church; but the ideas of the ministers in general are in unison with those of the people. The writers of this history profess that they should account the possession of the tithes and estates of the hierarchy, the most serious calamity which could possibly befall the dissenting body. Though multitudes of the ministers are very slenderly supported, and have considerable difficulties to encounter in this respect; yet considering the dissenters as a religious body, and the object of their dissent to be the advancement of pure religion in the country, we tremble at the idea of dissenting ministers possessing the independence and revenues of the established church, and should regard it as one of the heaviest curses which God could inflict upon them. If any of those bodies of separatists who claim kindred to the establishment, entertain a different sentiment, their numbers are not so considerable as to render it any thing more than an amusing speculation to themselves; for they can no more affect the public tranquillity, than a fly lighting on the wheel of a chariot, can drag it from its course.

SECTION II.

LABOURS OF MINISTERS AND THEIR SUPPORT.

HAD ecclesiastical history more fully recorded the lives and labours of the clergy, it would have been a more useful branch of study; for the sloth of the lazy would have made the drones of every succeeding age ashamed, and the activity of the zealous would have furnished a stimulus to their successors to emulate their pious assiduity, and if possible to excel them. He who narrates the events of ages long past, is unable to recover the general tone of the mind and manner of the ecclesiastics of the day, and must be satisfied with specifying the institutions formed for the regulation of their conduct and labours; but he cannot tell with what punctuality and spirit those institutions were observed. By the writer of the history of his own age, a considerable advantage is enjoyed, for he has every thing before his eyes; and, provided his information be sufficiently accurate and extensive, he is qualified to give an interesting detail, which, though not attractive to those of his own walk in society, because daily seen, will afford entertainment and instruction to those who move in different circles, and be useful to succeeding generations.

As to the quantity of labour performed by dissenting ministers of evangelical principles (the religious principles of the old nonconformists), they need not blush at a comparison with those of the preceding period. To the two public services of former times, a third

has now been generally added, and evening lectures are become in most congregations the stated practice. In the course of the week too, there is a public season for worship in one of the evenings, so that the minister has to preach four times from Sabbath to Sabbath. In country towns this is the common routine of duty.

How ministers can perform so frequent services with any tolerable degree of propriety, may excite inquiries in the minds of many. That some have performed them in a slovenly manner must be allowed. Others and especially the young have not improperly repeated on a week evening the discourses of the preceding Lord's-day; but many have not recourse to this for ease. To account for what must appear almost impossible to persons who are strangers to such intense application, let it be remembered that those who are accustomed to hard labour of mind can do four times as much as they who are not; and that the extensive study of theology at the seminary, enlarged by habitual application from day to day to the reading of the Scriptures and the best divines, gives a fulness of ideas to the mind, and a facility in preparing for the pulpit, of which those who have not a body of divinity in their head and heart, can form no idea.

As new sects are generally fond of modes of their own, the calvinistic methodists differ from the old dissenters in their seasons of worship. The afternoon is with them generally a season of leisure, and they confine their services to the morning and evening. The reason at first most probably was, that they might not interfere with the canonical hours of the church, and thereby more

favourably attract the attention of the people. By some independent congregations recently formed, they have been imitated in this practice; but it is devoutly to be wished that it may not gain ground. To the greater part of a congregation, especially to mothers of families, to the labouring classes, and to the poor, the afternoon is the most convenient time of the day: and it will be found that there is then the greatest number of the hearers who belong to the society. Should there be no worship at that season, many must be deprived of the only opportunity of instruction which they could enjoy in the whole course of the day. The long interval between the services is also a serious inconvenience, and exposes the people to great temptations to mispend the sacred hours by visits, by walking abroad, or by sitting long at table. A judicious Christian can improve the time to advantage, but who can say that one third part of his congregation has a claim to this character? The mass will receive unspeakably greater benefit from public worship than in any other way.

The objection frequently adduced, that the afternoon is unfavourable for speaking and hearing, is of modern invention, and reminds us of some poets who have intimated that they felt their inspiration only in the spring. But if instead of indulging such fancies, if poets and other literary men will buckle to (as one expresses it), and exert their faculties with vigour, their conceptions will be powerful at any season; and the spring will continue through the whole year. The dissenters of former generations were unconscious of this afternoon infirmity, and it never entered into their minds that they could not hear with as much attention and benefit then, as in other parts of the

day. If people think now that they have different feelings, the fancy (for such, except with invalids, it is) should not meet with one grain of indulgence, but by every means be resisted as contrary both to duty and happiness. The man who harbours the imagination that he cannot exert the faculties of his soul in some particular hour of the day, is unwittingly annihilating a profitable and important part of his existence. Let those who speak favourably of this practice, and wish to adopt it, consider the serious evils which flow from so long an interval of worship, and the mass of instruction which is lost.

Among the evangelical dissenting ministers, the reading of their sermons in the pulpit has almost gone out of fashion. Where it is retained, instead of procuring, as in the former period, commendation for a display of dissenting regularity, it is now generally considered as the staff of the feeble, and the crutch of the lame. A considerable alteration has also taken place as to the mode of preaching, by what may be called an amalgamation of methodism with dissent. Instead of the marked difference which formerly prevailed though both professed the same theological sentiments, there is now in general an agreement in something between the two. The dissenter has adopted the more natural address and easy conversation style of the methodist; and the methodist has taken to the more regular divisions and orderly method of the dissenter; and in proportion as methodism or dissent predominate in the mind, the preaching partakes more liberally of the spirit of the more favoured sect. Where the mixture is in a due proportion, the effects are salutary; for the well arranged ideas of

the dissenter will be delivered in the natural language and with the fire of the methodist. But in general the labour of the dissenter has been harder to attain than some sparks of the methodist's fire, and the ease of preaching without much previous study has given a leanness to discourses, which has proved unfavourable to the growth both of knowledge and of piety.

In consequence of this mode of preaching, the taste of the religious public is considerably changed. Methodists would not now tolerate the rambling discourses of the ordinary class of their first ministers; nor would dissenters now endure the colder compositions and the slavish reading of sermons, which formerly prevailed among them. Should the carelessness of the methodist be banished, and to his natural language and his ardour be added the labour, the method, and the ideas of the dissenting student, the mode of preaching resulting from the union will be in the highest degree beneficial to the cause of pure religion, and most effectually promote its two grand purposes, the conversion of sinners, and the edification of Christians.

The arian and socinian dissenting ministers continue in general to read their discourses; and if there is any difference in their mode of preaching, it consists in its being more destitute of the peculiarities of the Christian system. The minds of the first generation of these men retained some savour of those doctrines which they had studied in their youth, and which, when they did not contradict their new opinions, formed part of their public instructions; but the rising generation, being taught heresy in their schools of theology, or despising the truth which they heard,

never had their minds imbued with evangelical principles, and scarcely proceeded beyond the boundaries of natural religion, of which they make Jesus the prophet, and his resurrection the evidence. The sacred Scriptures were treated by them with growing disregard; and perhaps during the whole existence of Christianity upon earth, so many disrespectful things have never been said of the inspired volume, as by the arian and especially socinian dissenters in the course of this period.

Veneration for the sacred Scriptures may certainly be considered as a test of the general purity of religious sentiments. Whether any will be found to equal calvinists in this respect, shall be left to the judgment of those readers who have made extensive observations on the subject. Perhaps it cannot be contradicted, that in proportion as any sect recedes from calvinism, their veneration for the scriptures is diminished. The Bible is the calvinist's creed; whatever God has spoken, he feels himself bound to receive and believe, however mysterious the doctrine may be. Arminians, in general, will not be found to be equal to them in this respect and many of that creed lay down their ideas of the moral perfections of the Deity as the foundation, and explain every part of Scripture in consonance with them; though in order to accomplish this, no small degree of force must be employed. The arian venerates the Scriptures still less than the arminian; his ideas of inspiration are lower; his canons of criticism less honourable to the sacred writers; human reason is exalted to a higher office, and what is not comprehensible by its grasp, is not readily received. The mind of the socinian feels still less veneration for the word of God; for, according

to his sentiments, some parts of it are not inspired; mistakes occur in the reasoning of the apostles; not a few passages are unauthentic, and what remains is interpreted with a latitude as to the expressions and language of Scripture, which would not be tolerated in expounding the sense of any other writer.

Of the theological publications by the dissenting ministers of this period, the number is considerable, and the merit various. Perhaps they have not been in proportion to those in the former periods, or to the multitude of the pastors; but the reason is not to their discredit. The frequency of the public services, and the active duties of their office prevent them from enjoying that leisure which authorship necessarily

" In proportion to the veneration will be the degree of attention to the perusal and study of the sacred volume; and for this the calvinists may claim the pre-eminence. By no one sect has the book of God been more carefully studied, and with deeper reverence; and wrought into the very essence of their writings. Few arminians have so attentively studied the word of God. Their writers usually present more of general reasoning; and those hidden treasures of wisdom for which the calvinists dig so deep, the arminian does not seek after, because he conceives that they are not to be found. To the arian and socinian the Scriptures afford still less inducement for study, because their veneration is in an inferior degree.

That these remarks are not unfounded, will appear from the pursuits of the presbyterian and many of the general baptist ministers during this period, who had embraced the arian and especially the socinian creed. Scarcely one man of note among them confined himself to theological studies. The evidences of Christianity detained a few; but the greater part of them gave themselves up to history, to criticism, to polite literature, to philosophy, to civil jurisprudence, and to ethics. The Scriptures occupied no considerable portion of their time. From this list it is uncertain whether even the name of Dr. Priestley should be erased. Why indeed should it be supposed, that persons of those sentiments should pay a particular attention to a book for which they entertained so little esteem?

requires: and it is no dishonour to a man that he does not publish books, if he is zealously employed in communicating instruction with the living voice. A specimen of the manner of preaching among the independents may be found in the sermons of Richard Winter, Stafford, Lavington, Lambert, Lowell, and Jay. Dr. Stennett, Robinson, Beddome, Martin, and Fuller exhibit the sentiments and mode of preaching among the ablest of the particular baptists. An orthodox presbyterian among the writers of this period, it will be difficult to find. Examples of the method of teaching by those of a different creed, will be found in the discourses of Price, Priestley, Kippis, and Rees. The general baptists number Bulkley, Evans, and Dan Taylor among their writers of sermons. Whitefield and Cennick will furnish specimens of preaching among the calvinistic methodists; while Pawson, but especially Wesley's numerous sermons, will display a sample of the instruction which the arminian methodists received from their head. An innumerable multitude of occasional sermons by ministers of all denominations will give a still juster, because a more extensive view of the measure of talent, theological knowledge, literature, and professional skill which they possess.

If a comparison be made between them and their predecessors of the two former periods, in the great qualification of a Christian minister conveying instruction to his flock, in respect to the weight of doctrine, and the fire and spirit with which it has been delivered, they will not be able to stand in competition with the higher order of nonconformists; nor can they boast of a Watts or a Doddridge, who were the glory of the second period. But with these

exceptions, the ministers of the present period need not be afraid of entering the lists with those who preceded them; and whoever reads with impartiality the volumes and occasional sermons of the present period, will be convinced that they are not inferior to those which were published in the two preceding reigns.

Whether equal attention has in the present period been given to the private duties of the minister's office, in visiting the families of the congregation with a pastoral design and effect, may be a matter of doubt. The less frequent public services gave more leisure for private inspection, which was considered as an essential part of duty; and the old congregations viewing it as a privilege, felt themselves bound to attend to it, while those newly raised by converts from the world have been frequently less sensible of its importance. The benefits resulting from it are so many and so great, that it is most earnestly to be wished it were attended to with the same seriousness and punctuality as in former times. The visiting of the sick, as it ever has been, is still considered a necessary part of a minister's duty, which must not be neglected. The instruction of the rising generation has of late become more general than it ever was before; and Sunday schools have diffused catechising so extensively, that the children of the poor find in these admirable institutions, teachers who pay greater attention to their improvement than ministers amidst the multiplicity of their duties possibly could. If from the manners of the age, the sons and daughters of the rich do not receive pastoral instruction in their early years, the parents are under the greater

obligations to teach them; and if they do not, in addition to other consequences resulting from the neglect, will have the mortification to see them outstripped in the noblest of all kinds of knowledge by the children of the poor.

In the course of this period, congregational prayer-meetings have gradually increased, till they are now become universal among evangelical dissenters. In the earlier times of the dissent, meetings for prayer were common, but under a different form: they then consisted of a select company of Christians by whom free access to others was not allowed. The independents had their stated meetings of the church, in which the minister and deacons, or elder brethren employed the time in prayer to God; but the assembly was confined to the members. At the congregational prayer-meetings now established all are permitted to attend, and the service is conducted by the minister and the brethren of the church (by whom, in the phraseology of the dissenters, are meant men who receive the Lord's-supper), and the time is spent in prayer and singing of hymns. One evening in the week is by almost all congregations allotted to this service. We need scarcely add, that it has been found unspeakably beneficial in promoting the spirit of religion, while it has had the happiest effects in improving the gifts of the disciples of Christ. Among arians and socinians such services are rarely to be found.

Of late years a new species of congregations has arisen, which blends together the worship of the dissenters and the church. The liturgy is used, and to

it is superadded the dissenting service. This practice originated perhaps in the tabernacles, and in the chapels under the patronage of the countess of Huntingdon. Others unconnected with either, have since adopted this mode. The reader of the liturgy is sometimes a clergyman, sometimes a layman who loves the book of common prayer, and has learnt to read it well; and sometimes the stated minister of the place, who preaches once in the day, or a certain part of the year, who is in only pretended holy orders. The vacant part of the day, or of the year, is supplied by dissenting ministers, who are chiefly from among the independents. In some chapels they have no fixed preacher, but depend entirely on one of these occasional labourers, who succeed each other after officiating for a month or six weeks.

Formerly, when the bishops held the reins of government with a looser hand, the tabernacles and lady Huntingdon's chapels were supplied by clergymen, who at stated seasons left their parochial cures to officiate for a season in places which were opened under the sanction of the toleration act. The liberality of these men certainly intitles them to honour and praise. But as this period advanced, these were removed by death; the same taste did not prevail among the rising generation of the clergy; and a stricter system of episcopal jurisdiction has brought the practice nearly to a close: one or two only remain, at whose death it must entirely cease, and their places must be supplied by ministers out of the pale of the church.

So novel a system naturally excites observation, and according to men's different ideas, some will praise and others blame. The introduction of the liturgy

into unconsecrated places, rigid churchmen consider as a degradation of that solemn ritual ; while by strict dissenters this mixture of services, and the preaching of their ministers in chapels where the liturgy of the establishment is read, has the appearance of symbolizing with the church. But if the system be impartially examined, perhaps it may be found that there will not be the evil consequences resulting from it of which some are afraid.

The mass of the members of such congregations consists of people from the establishment ; and they have the partiality for its forms, which persons naturally contract for that mode to which they have been accustomed from their earliest years. If the liturgy were not used, they would not attend : it is the loadstone which attracts them. By their attendance they have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel preached in its purity, which they would not otherwise have enjoyed. To the dissenting ministers who occasionally officiate there, a field is presented of more extensive usefulness, by preaching to a multitude of people, very few of whom would ever have entered a dissenting place of worship. Two of the noblest objects are thus attained ; people are brought to hear the word of God, who would not otherwise have heard it ; and ministers are brought to preach the Gospel in places where it otherwise would not have been preached. By some it has been urged, that ministers who officiate in such places, give up the principles of dissent. But the objection is considered by others as destitute of force ; because hearing the liturgy read, and occasionally joining in it, can by no means be construed into an approbation of the system of government of the church of England. So

plainly do the readers in such chapels declare this, that they omit or alter passages in the common prayer, which appear not to accord with the general ideas of Christians. The fears which have been expressed by some, that the practice will prove injurious to the dissenting cause, are conceived by those who are friendly to the system to be without foundation. Strict dissenters, like strenuous churchmen, they say, will seldom attend statedly in such places, because the repetition of forms of prayer is unsuitable to their taste, so that it will not affect that class at all; and for one person who begins to dislike extemporary prayer and grows fond of a form, there are ten who grow weary of the liturgy, and give the preference to extemporary prayer. They further argue, that the influence of this system tends to break the shackles of inordinate attachment to party, to produce conciliation to dissenting ministers and their worship, and to increase the body of liberal professors of religion who are forward to every good work.

The presbyterians who had adopted forms of prayer under the preceding period, continued to use them: and when any congregation drank of the cup of socinianism, a liturgy became a desirable help to the people, or at least to their minister; for by a certain operation of sentiment, socinianism and extemporary prayer do not well accord. Among the rest the mode of worship remains the same as in the former period.

For their temporal support the dissenting ministers still depended on the contributions of the congregation, furnished according to their ability under the

influence of the equity of the maxim, "that those who impart to them spiritual good things, should receive of their temporal good things." To flesh and blood this method of provision does not appear so desirable as the salary of the state, or the tithe of the flock, and of the herd, and of the produce of the field: but with all its disadvantages nothing has yet appeared to alter the opinion, that as it was the first, it is the best, best for the minister, best for the people, and best for the cause of religion. Endowments on some particular congregations, made by opulent Christians, have an inviting appearance, and perhaps there are few ministers who would not wish to enjoy them; but experience has proved, that where they are large, in nine instances out of ten they are injurious to the minister, to the congregation, to the dissenting interest, and to true piety. Independence begets pride, and pride generates indifference or error, and sometimes both. Considerable sums of money left to train up young men for the ministry in the principles of the Assembly's Catechism, have been employed to give an academical education to the disciples of the racovian school. Valuable bequests for the benefit of ministers who were preaching the word of life to the poor who crowded the place, now support teachers of very different sentiments, who deliver their cold lectures to the pews and to the walls. An important lesson is thus taught by the voice of God in his providence, which may be said to establish it as a general principle, "that to make provision by stable funds for the advancement of religion in future ages is beyond our capacity: it is but to scatter on the ground pearls which may be trodden under foot of swine: that what can be done by men during their

life they should do ; and that what is left by will should be expended for the cause of religion before the ordinary time of the decease of those into whose hands it is entrusted by the donor. If there be exceptions from this general rule, they by no means destroy the propriety of its adoption.

The funds established in the former period by the dissenters of the three denominations in London, still continue to exist, and they have furnished very seasonable relief to many poor congregations in the country. Their contributions were gradually aided by legacies, which created a durable capital. The independents and baptists give only to those of their own denomination. The presbyterians, more liberal, have dispensed of their bounty in numerous instances to both the others.

In the course of this period many benefactors, though not of considerable note for the amount of their gifts, communicated of their substance for the assistance of the ministers of poor congregations, and the relief of their widows. The most eminent of these was William Fuller, a banker in London. Frugality was necessary to him in youth, and the habit followed him when affluence had poured upon him her most abundant streams, and seemed to demand a more liberal mode of living. His peculiarities were not honourable to himself, for they brought reproaches on his character, but they were beneficial to others. He would take such pains to save a sixpence as to appear narrow in the extreme ; but he had always his guineas ready for every application in behalf of the interests of religion. He would haggle for a

shilling, but he would cheerfully give away a hundred pounds for an object of Christian benevolence. With all his oddities, he was a pious and sensible man, well informed on religious subjects, and zealous for the doctrines of the Gospel. His patronage of the Heckmondwicke academy was an inestimable blessing to Yorkshire, which enjoys extensively the salutary fruits to the present time. His benefactions to the orthodox dissenters in various forms, were far beyond those of any other person since the commencement of the second period. He will deserve also the praise of liberality to other denominations besides his own, when it is mentioned, that he left a handsome sum to a fund for the benefit of the poor clergy. We have been informed, that an independent minister, who was intimately acquainted with him, declared, that in the course of Mr. Fuller's life, and at his death, he gave to the support of the cause of religion in different ways, to the amount of sixty thousand pounds. With the exception of lady Hewley, of York, who died in the end of queen Anne's reign, the dissenters have not had a greater benefactor to their cause than William Fuller.

With all these aids to the contributions of the people, the salaries of the dissenting ministers are exceedingly moderate. The immense rise in the price of every article of living, has been felt by none more painfully than by them. Though the salaries of many of them have been increased, they have in general by no means kept pace with the augmented rate of every thing necessary to subsistence*. When the relative

* Whether blame be due to any on this account it may be proper to inquire. The labouring class deserves no censure; they in

proportion between the depreciation of money and the expense of living is considered, we may confidently assert, that there is not to be found within the limits of Christendom, a body of men so well instructed in the duties of their office, who perform so much service for such moderate salaries, and who receive so little money for saving so many souls.

general give according to their means. In many places the middle rank might and ought to do more. A load of censure will fall upon the rich, few of whom contribute their due proportion. Splendid exceptions are to be found, of persons whose liberality is entitled to the highest praise; but by far the greater part of them do not perform their duty, by giving for the support of religion, in the congregation to which they belong, the proportion which the Gospel demands. To plead for wealth is not our aim. Wealth has seldom done churchmen good. By the possession of it they never became either wiser or better men. Riches too often generate pride and indolence, for the connection between these is much more close and frequent than superficial observers may be disposed to allow. All we plead for is, that where a congregation is able, they should allow the minister a decent support.

SECTION III.

PUBLIC SERVICES AND ASSOCIATIONS OF
DISSENTERS.

AMONG public services, ordination first occurs. That the person, who undertakes the Christian ministry, should enter on his arduous office with solemnity, will be allowed by all who have just conceptions of its nature and design. This important purpose, the ordination service among the dissenters accomplishes with peculiar propriety and effect. Some indeed have asserted the inutility of ordination, which they say savours of priestcraft, and nourishes pride. But when it is considered, that they were men of the new notions in theology, who had thrown away most of the doctrines of the Gospel, their rejection of this service will excite the less surprise. If any of the orthodox thought with them, they were those peculiar individuals who have an unbounded rage for speculation, who imagine that a practice is bad because it is old, and that the introduction of something new is excellent, because it was never practised before.

Ordination is a service which recommends itself by its suitableness, and its good effects, to the reason, the conscience, and the heart of a Christian. The person who, in this age, would speak of any virtue in the laying on of hands, or suppose that any dissenter thought there was, is far beyond the reach of argument: his disease must be removed by other means. So powerfully adapted are the various parts of this

See Protestant Dissenters' Magazine.

service to make a deep impression on the minds of all who have one spark of true piety, that few will depart from it without receiving benefit. During the present period, it has received some improvements; and when properly conducted, an ordination among evangelical dissenters is the most edifying service of the kind which has ever been in any age of the Christian church; and no denomination, either in ancient or modern times, can exhibit a mode equally appropriate and instructive. The first question now usually asked of the person to be ordained is, "what reason have you to conclude that you have been converted to God, and are a true disciple of Jesus Christ?" This is an addition of the present period; and an addition which is an high improvement; for the answer is often peculiarly instructive and affecting to the whole auditory, and gives new interest to all the succeeding parts of the service. The sermon now commonly succeeds the charge, and it is much more appropriate. Formerly it was often of a general nature, and remotely applicable to the occasion; but of late years it is become as explicit an address to the congregation respecting their duties, as the charge to the minister is on the obligations of his office. For this, much commendation is due, as it contributes greatly to the edification of the people, by making them acquainted with what they owe to their pastor, and fixing a sense of duty more deeply on the understanding and the conscience. The place in the service which the sermon formerly occupied, is now supplied by a discourse on the nature of a Christian church, its institution, head, offices, members, design, and end. Such is the method of ordination commonly practised among the independents: it is

adopted also by the particular baptists, except that many of them omit the laying on of hands, The chief parts of this service are also observed by the calvinistic methodists of the tabernacle. Indeed where voluntary societies are guided, not by modes formerly established, but by the reason of the thing, they will naturally fall into the various parts of the ordination service, which is practised by the independent churches.

Associations, which, during the former period, had, in many parts of the country, fallen into disuse, began now to be revived; and with such vigour has the principle of union for the advancement of religion exerted itself, that in the southern part of England scarcely a county can be found in which the different denominations of evangelical dissenters have not their regular meetings. In this line of conduct, the independents, who were formerly the most tardy, are now the most strenuous and active. Some of these associations meet once a year, but the greater part twice; and much of the time is spent in public worship. In addition to the ordinary service, it has of late become the practice to dispense the Lord's supper, in which as many of the ministers as can be employed, take a part, and which the pastors and private Christians from the associated churches unite in receiving as a token of their love to their Saviour, and affection to each other. Most justly may this be numbered among the improvements of the present period, as it is peculiarly calculated to bind them all together in the bonds of Christian love, and to inflame their zeal for the Redeemer's cause. If this practice has not escaped censure from some good men, we can only express

our wonder and regret that a thing so reasonable so beneficial, so agreeable to the example at Jerusalem of the apostles and elders and brethren, and bearing so near a resemblance to the heavenly state, should be disapproved by any of the disciples of Christ.

The benefit, derived from uniting in worship and conversation, and the augmented zeal with which every minister and private Christian returns home to the scene of his ordinary labours, furnish arguments in favour of associations sufficiently strong. But in addition to them, it should be mentioned that one part of their business and design is to form and execute plans for the advancement of religion in the county, by the more extensive preaching of the Gospel, and by such private methods as are best adapted to promote the diffusion of sacred truth. In this department of Christian benevolence, the exertions of many of the associations are entitled to the highest praise; they have received their reward in part, for their labours have in many places been crowned with eminent success: and they enjoy the pleasing prospect of the more extensive propagation of the Gospel through the land, and a great accession of subjects to the kingdom of the Redeemer. To accomplish these glorious objects, many associations employ one, some two, and a few have even three or more itinerant preachers. The only limit of their exertions is the scantiness of their funds. It is to the independents, that the praise of county associations and of the vigorous efforts to do good by these means, is due in the highest degree. Other denominations have been stimulated to follow their example; even the arians and socinians have not been able to withstand its force. Whether new congregations of these creeds

shall be the consequence of their union, time will declare.

By many of the members of the establishment, especially by the clergy, it is supposed that the great and only aim of the dissenters is to increase their sect. But the supposition arises from want of knowledge of their principles and spirit; for the dissenters can affirm, that their grand aim is to bring the ignorant and impenitent to the Saviour of sinners for mercy and salvation. Their being made dissenters is a secondary thing, but the natural consequence of the other; for as there must be some order in the new societies which are formed, it is but reasonable to conclude that they should adopt that which is their own, and which, from their having chosen it in preference to every other, they must conceive to be the best.

As to the eligibility of associations, they may be left to be decided on both by their causes and effects. In all those counties where religion is in the most flourishing state, and the ministers are most zealous and active in the Redeemer's service, they are found invariably to exist. Counties, in which there are no associations, will on examination exhibit a less prosperous state of vital piety; and either sloth or discord prove to be the mournful cause of their remaining in an insulated state. For the honour of the Gospel it is to be hoped, that unassociated evangelical ministers and congregations will not have a much longer existence. It is only for a few of the most zealous of the pastors and private Christians to begin the work: there is little reason to doubt but that their success will far exceed their expectations; and that the result will be an increase of religion in their souls, in their congregations, and in the county in which the

great Head of the church has fixed their abode, that they might improve its spiritual state. Let not the charge of singularity deter them. To be singular, in what is good is godlike ; but to be singular in sloth, or as the victims of discord and strife, is dishonourable and odious beyond the power of words to express.

In this period, as during the former ones, the dissenters still continued to approach the sovereign, and on every proper occasion to testify their respectful homage by a suitable address. The two which follow will serve as a specimen of their sentiments and language. The former was presented in November, 1760, by the London ministers on his present majesty's accession to the throne of his grandfather.

“ Most gracious Sovereign,

“ We, your majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the protestant dissenting ministers, in and about the cities of London and Westminster, most humbly beg leave to approach your majesty's throne, and to express our deep sense of the great loss your majesty, your kingdoms, and Europe in general, have sustained by the death of his late majesty, your royal grandfather ; and with hearts full of affection and joy, to congratulate your majesty's happy and peaceable succession to the imperial crown of these realms.

“ The numerous blessings these nations enjoyed, for a long series of years, under his late majesty's auspicious government, and the great events that were depending in Europe, made the preservation of your royal grandfather's important life, the common desire and earnest prayer of all good men in these nations ; and their concern for his sudden removal, would have

been more painful and durable, had not the knowledge of your majesty's virtues, and great abilities for government, alleviated our anxieties, and dissipated our fears, and filled us with the most pleasing prospects of the sure continuance of our prosperity.

“ Illustrious and ancient descent, princely education, prime of life, dignity of person, early piety and virtue, love of probity and truth, regard to liberty and the rights of conscience, and your known affection to this your native country, peculiarly endear your majesty to all your subjects, and promise them every thing their hearts can wish from the best of kings.

“ Your majesty ascends the throne in a time of difficulty, and amidst all the great expences and uncertainties of war. We adore the good providence of God, for the distinguishing successes that have attended it; and we trust, that by his constant blessing on your majesty's counsel and arms, your majesty will soon become the glorious and happy instrument of establishing such a peace in Europe, as shall effectually support the protestant religion and liberties, and secure the prosperity of these kingdoms upon solid and immoveable foundations.

“ We recollect, with joy and unfeigned gratitude, that glorious era, which settled the succession to the throne of Great Britain, in your majesty's royal house, and perpetuated to these nations, under God, the free and undisturbed enjoyment of all their civil and religious liberties. And we humbly beg leave to assure you, most gracious sovereign, that entirely confiding in your majesty's government, we shall not fail, from dictates of conscience and gratitude, to be examples ourselves of loyalty and duty, and to inculcate on all who attend on our ministry, that submission

and obedience to your majesty's authority and government.

"Nor shall we cease to offer up our most ardent supplications to almighty God, that he would render your majesty's prosperity so distinguished, as that when Great Britain, in future ages, wishes well to any of her most beloved kings, the descendants of your royal house and family, your felicity, most illustrious prince! may bound all her desires, and she may with joy and triumph, say—May their reigns be as long, as glorious, and happy as your majesty's!"

To which address his majesty was pleased to give this most gracious answer.

"I thank you for this loyal affectionate address. You may be assured of my protection and of my care and attention to support the protestant interest, AND TO MAINTAIN THE TOLERATION INVIOLEABLE."

At the conclusion of the war of the French revolution, in 1802, they congratulated his majesty on the restoration of peace in the following address, which was presented by Dr. Abraham Rees.

"Most gracious Sovereign,

"We, your majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the protestant dissenting ministers in and about the cities of London and Westminster, approach your royal presence with profound respect, to testify the gratitude and satisfaction which we feel on the termination of the calamities of war, and on the restoration of peace not only to your majesty's dominions, but to Europe in general.

"We participate the joy which your majesty must

have experienced on the present happy occasion, and we are thankful for the result of those operations and counsels which have produced effects so interesting to our country and the world.

“ We beg leave to express our cordial wishes, that the blessings of peace may be uninterrupted, and that it may conduce to the stability of your majesty’s throne, to the permanence of the British constitution, and to the increasing prosperity of every part of the British empire.

“ May your majesty long enjoy the satisfaction of witnessing the union and welfare of the dominions over which you preside, and the prevalence of true religion and social order, under the influence of your salutary counsels, through the various nations of the globe.

“ It is our earnest wish, that the blessings which we possess under your majesty’s administration, may be preserved by your protection to a distant period, and transmitted with every security and increase of which they are capable, to future generations; while it shall be our unremitting endeavour to extend the influence of the gospel of peace and charity, both by our instruction and example, and thus to maintain the attachment of those of your majesty’s subjects, with whom we are immediately connected, to your majesty’s person, family, and government; it will be our unfeigned and fervent prayer that your valuable life may be long continued, that when Providence removes you hence you may exchange an earthly for a celestial crown, and that the blessings which you have perpetuated, may descend in the illustrious line of your family to the remotest posterity.”

CHAPTER VI.

INWARD STATE OF RELIGION AMONG DISSENTERS.

IT was not without reason that the exhortation to self knowledge was thought by philosophers to have descended from heaven. That it would contribute to conduct us thither, Christians may infer from the earnestness with which the sacred writings inculcate the necessity of knowing ourselves. To assist our readers in the attainment of this important science, is the object of the present section. For if, under the first and second periods, the view of the inward state of religion presented only an instructive historical picture, the following pages are designed to hold up to dissenters a mirror in which they may see themselves, while they are incited to the contemplation of the object by the consideration that here the world will see them too. Those who are happily accustomed to self-examination, while they will be best able to appreciate the advantages of such a view of the present character of dissenters, will be most alive to the difficulty of forming an estimate sufficiently comprehensive, accurate, and faithful, and least sanguine in their expectations of procuring for it a candid reception.

Only the more aged readers, however, will survey their own picture in the former half of the section, for George the third has seen the active generation, over which he first stretched the sceptre, retire, the greater part to the shades of death, the rest to those

of privacy ; while a new race has risen up to occupy the stage of human affairs: It will be necessary; therefore, to take a distinct view of the state of religion in the former and the latter half of the present reign. The estimate of religion during the whole period may have been already anticipated from what has been said of the external condition of dissenters ; for though a church, which is in alliance with the state, may, by means of its sword, extend her territories and her influence while her piety declines ; those who, like the dissenters and the primitive Christians, depend on principles alone, will not triumph abroad, but as religion prospers at home.

When George the third ascended the throne, the effects of the arian controversy, which spread from the west through the kingdom, were secretly, but powerfully felt among the presbyterian churches. Many, who were not aware of the tendency of error, swallowed the fatal poison because it was gilded with the specious professions of free inquiry, candour, and liberality. Arian preachers were tolerated in congregations which were not yet positively heretical, and the urbanity of their private manners often charmed the families which rejected their creed. Christians were thus kept from hearing in the church, that which should nourish their faith, and from conversing in the parlour on those themes which should inflame their devotion. The heterodox themselves, having been educated in calvinism, retained the ancient air of seriousness, forms of devotion, and modes of expression which concealed the naked deformity of their system, and prevented it from exciting the horror and alarm which are now produced by its superior honesty and decision. That

heresy thus stole upon the church by means of the serious garb derived from truth, may be learned from the testimony of Dr. Priestley, whose memoirs deserve the more attention as they were written by himself; and while his admirers applaud his honesty, his candour, his extensive information, and philosophical mind, those who wish to oppose his system, may find its antidote in his auto-biography.

It was manifest, however, that if the external form of piety was generally preserved, from many the animating spirit had fled. The influence of habit, the sense of duty, or the hope of merit, for some time seemed to supply that incentive to the exercises of the closet, which was formerly furnished by the Spirit of Christ, inspiring a pure delight in secret communion with God: In the family also, morning and evening prayer were often practised; because they had been so identified with the forms of a dissenter's house, that breakfast or supper could scarcely be eaten without the accustomed sacrifice; while the general use of a form, and the coldness with which it was read, led the sagacious observer to remark, that the fire was going out, and the altar itself would soon be overturned. Where visits or amusements were not tolerated on the Lord's day, it was often, not because, like their forefathers, they were too full of more sacred and delightful employment to need or to relish them; but because they had not yet cast off the ancient reverence for the day, which could embitter the pleasures of the world, though it could not impart sweetness to the exercises of religion. The public assemblies of the presbyterians often presented a melancholy contrast to the awful seriousness, the ardent devotion, the preference for the most impor-

tant truths, which distinguished the first dissenting churches. That indifference to orthodox sentiments and experimental religion in the admission of members, which destroyed the distinction between the church and the world, prevailed in the general baptist as well as the presbyterian congregations, where the ministers, who were often the first to abandon the truth, kept the keys, and employed them to fill the churches with those who were like themselves.

The state of the academies painfully manifested the irreligion of the rising generation. A great proportion of the students, who filled the presbyterian seminaries during the former part of this period, were most lamentably destitute of the apostolic spirit of the puritans and nonconformists. Instead of aspiring to resemblance to the father of believers, who was "strong in faith giving glory to God," they seemed ambitious only of proving how cordially they adopted Voltaire's maxim, that "incredulity is the foundation of all wisdom;" so that these destined preachers of the Christian faith, far from entering the seminaries because they wished to acquire the utmost skill in diffusing sentiments to which they were ardently attached, went only to determine whether they should believe any thing or nothing. Hence, instead of the fellowship of Christians in edifying conversation and mutual prayer for the cultivation of their own religion, that they might be fit examples to their flocks; they employed themselves only in what they called free inquiry, converting the academy into a gymnasium to try the strength of their speculative powers in disputatious contests. The complaints which were made of the disorderly state of the academies,

by the more serious dissenters, too often were levelled against the conduct, as well as the principles of the young men, which loudly proclaimed that those who were preparing to teach religion to others, had yet to learn it themselves.

This false candour was the crying sin of presbyterian dissenters in the early part of George the third's reign, and it polluted their churches by sending forth arians and socinians to preach in the pulpits of the nonconformists, at a time when racovian theology had no academy of its own. The indifference to sentiment and to vital experimental religion which this manifests, was dishonourable to many who still professed orthodox principles; for who that considers how many preachers they educated to oppose their own creed, can acquit them of culpable neglect? The open apostacy, which was thus introduced, has justly punished the indifference that opened the door for its admission; for the strenuous advocates for what they term unitarianism, now pronounce evangelical doctrines no innocent errors, but pour their anathemas on them as forming a pernicious compound of idolatry and blasphemy.

The decided heterodoxy of some, the latitudinarianism of many, and the formal coldness of more, began to render the presbyterians, who had been "the salt of the earth," despicable as "salt which had lost its savour." But the strenuous independents, who have ever been the glory of the dissenters, were now their life. The pure decided sentiments expressed in such works as Dr. Guyse's commentary, were maintained in the pulpits of the independent churches, which were composed of members admitted by the vote of the

body, upon a declaration of their faith and their regeneration. The sentiments of the pastors and the progress of religion were here watched with a jealous eye. Meetings for prayer and religious conference, both in the places of worship and at private houses, fanned the flame of religion where it existed, and kept alive a zeal for its diffusion in the world. In many of these churches, the pure and faithful preaching of the unsearchable riches of Christ was attended with such displays of the divine power and blessing, as constantly increased their numbers and their religion. Those of their members who are still living, acknowledge, indeed, with gratitude, that the present zeal of the churches for the propagation of the Gospel is far superior to any thing they ever witnessed in early life; but still they look back with regret at former days, when they saw the success of the Gospel by the labours of those whom they first heard with edification and delight.

In London, not a few churches were then increasing as rapidly as they have since decayed. It would be easy to mention the names of ministers which are still dear to the hearts of those who duly appreciate fidelity and usefulness in the church of Christ. Nor would it be difficult to point to those churches in the country, where very considerable revivals attested the divine approbation on the labours of the pastor. The late publication of some volumes of sermons by Mr. Lavington, of Bideford, furnishes a specimen of the kind of preaching which many dissenting churches enjoyed at the commencement of the present reign; and those who have watched the effects of sentiments, will acknowledge that the hearers of such sermons were likely to have been worthy successors to the first puritans.

Many letters written by Christians at the commencement of the present reign, though not published, contain so much instruction and devotion, as to fill the mind with a high esteem for the generation which is just gone down to the dust. In these, indeed, as well as in the sermons of the same period, there is a more rigid attention to form and method than would suit the present fashion of the churches. But if they were tardy in yielding to the taste of others, it was often because they had thought more for themselves. Their closets were kept warmer than those of many modern Christians. In these secret retirements, the elder generation read the Scriptures, meditated, and prayed with such effect, that they were entitled to retain with some firmness what they had acquired with so much diligence. They had not so frequent social meetings in the church as at present; but they had more religion at home, where their superior knowledge of the Scriptures and of theology enabled them to conduct devotional services to greater advantage. If, in public worship, the performances were less animated than those of modern preachers, there was more to inform the judgment and preserve the mind from the aberrations of falsehood, or enthusiasm, which too often produce a motion like that of the "troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt." It would be difficult to bring Christians now to listen to those enlarged and correct statements of theological truth, which ministers were then encouraged to give; nor would the exact, laboured expositions of the Scriptures which were common at the commencement be endured at the close of this period. It is at present necessary to vary, to embellish, to enliven public instruction, in

every way, in order to suit the more volatile turn of the public mind.

If, however, there be some portion of juvenile conceit in the contempt that is now poured upon the cold regularity of our fathers, it must be admitted that they were not without their share of senile obstinacy, which often adhered to practices because they were old, and condemned too indiscriminately the rising spirit which they should sometimes have welcomed. A dread of methodistic practices and spirit was the hydrophobia of many excellent men, whose usefulness was thereby considerably impeded.

The particular were to the general baptists, what the independents were to the presbyterians: they held fast their principles, and proved their efficacy in many flourishing churches. The character given of the independents would, indeed, exactly apply to the calvinistic baptists, with these exceptions, that the latter had a greater number of uneducated preachers, and a stronger tendency to the high calvinism of Dr. Gill, whose writings were rising to great repute with his own denomination. Among the general baptists a less evangelical arminianism than that which forms the system of Wesleyan methodists was leading its votaries into arian coldness and socinian indifference, though there were some happy instances in which the ancient sentiments and spirit of this body were preserved. The quakers were in the first half of this period nearly in the same state as during the whole of the former, except that the wealth for which they have become almost proverbial, rapidly increased, while the number of their speakers, and of course the life and efficiency of the public worship, proportionably diminished.

At the commencement of the present reign a peculiar class of dissenters had so much influence on the state of religion as to deserve special notice. These were converts from the world, by means of dissenting or methodistic preaching, who imperceptibly adopted dissenting principles and practices, while their spirit was that of calvinistic methodists. Among these may be reckoned also, some who became acquainted with the Gospel by means of evangelical clergymen. Many ministers who left lady Huntingdon's connection, increased this species of dissenters. With the fire and freshness of their former communion, they brought with them also a laudable preference for that style of preaching which gave prominence to the truths most likely to awaken the careless and increase the church from the world. On the other hand, some of them were at first deficient in those effects of good education, a correct deportment, eminent family religion, theological wealth, and accurate sentiments, in which the more regular dissenters excelled. They were irregular troops, but they often brought home more captives than the disciplined squadrons. That they were upon the whole eminently serviceable to the cause of real religion among the dissenters, cannot be denied. In many instances, they seemed to pour young blood into a body exhausted with age. Among them were bred several of the more useful dissenters of the present day, who rose up with growing attachment to dissenting principles, and with such zeal for the interests of religion, as was peculiarly acceptable to the Redeemer, and useful to the communion to which they belonged. This class deserves high praise for having warmly patronized the modern schemes for the diffusion of divine truth.

That new class of separatists from the establishment, avowed methodists, who are now grown into so much importance, maintained, during the former part of this period, the original neutrality between church and meeting. Confined principally to the poorer classes of society, they went on silently doing much good and suffering much evil. The calvinistic methodists, though deprived of Whitefield, about the middle of the present reign, enjoyed the labours of other men of apostolic spirit, who, with great simplicity and self-denial, laboured incessantly to exalt the Saviour and recommend him to the hearts of men; while the divine influence crowned their efforts, and rendered them eminent blessings to the world, in which they were unknown or despised. But the tendency to hyper-calvinism, which was the bitter fruit of their controversy with the arminians, too frequently appeared in their preaching, and threw suspicions upon all addresses to sinners and exhortations to moral duties. The desultory style of public instruction, the absence of expositions of the Scriptures, the frequent neglect of family worship and of pastoral inspection, all contributed to render the calvinistic methodists a more easy prey to the bastard species of calvinism. A pure attachment, however, to the genuine honours of divine grace, nourished by the works of the puritans and eminent dissenters, which were in high repute with this communion, powerfully checked their faults and increased their evangelical virtues.

The Wesleyan methodists were at this period so intirely under the influence of the founder of the sect, that they suffered no change of their original character. Mr. Wesley, who was the animating soul

of the society, kept alive their attachment to the mother church and suspicions of the dissenters, as well as preserved their purity of moral character and simplicity of appearance; while he was himself outstripped in the career of propagation by some of his preachers, who sprang up in humble life, and to whom he could not impart his own literary or intellectual advantages.

The first half of the reign of George the third presents a chequered scene, of which it is difficult to say, whether the dark or the bright spots predominate. The tendency to departure from the truth among the original dissenters, had not yet been opposed with sufficient talent and earnestness; nor had the solicitude to extend the kingdom of Christ, which has distinguished dissenters in the present day, been duly manifested. The sin of this period was denounced by the prophet, when he said, "cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully, or negligently." Too many ministers and other public persons resembled musical instruments, the strings of which were never strained to the proper pitch, so that all their performances filled the mind with a conviction, that they had not thought it worth while to do their best. There were, however, some happy intimations of the rising spirit of benevolence and energy which has rendered the close of this period so auspicious to the best interests of mankind.

The unlawful truce with error, which was too long the sin of many dissenters, and which did more mischief than any form of warfare, was broken about the middle of the present reign. To Dr. Priestley must be attributed, in a great degree, the violation of the

unholy league; for if the orthodox owe him no thanks or praise for any intentional services, many of them learned from him that decisive declaration of sentiments and solicitude for their diffusion, which they ought to have learned from a different teacher. With a very just and inviolable attachment to liberty of opinion, unfettered by interference of the civil power, he displayed in advancing life a zeal for his peculiar principles which broke all terms with those who opposed his creed.

Socinianism having now dropped the mask of candour, and avowed its hostility to almost all that was dear to thousands, they startled at the horrors of her visage, and fled from temporising commerce to avowed hostility. Arians, holding the pre-existence of Christ, and ascribing to him a sort of divinity, had employed language which often deceived the orthodox; but the open degradation of Christ to the rank of a mere man, the denial of his miraculous conception, atonement, and even infallible wisdom, shocked and alarmed all who had sincerely joined with Thomas to say to him, "my Lord and my God." When, to support these errors, whole sections of the Scriptures were swept away with contemptuous rejection, those who believed that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God," could see in unitarianism nothing but deism baptised with the Christian name, in order to carry the ancient war into the heart of the church.

As the death of Christ was admitted by arians to be of some importance to a Christian's hopes of forgiveness, it was not always easy to perceive that they did not admit a proper atonement for sin; so that they who built their hopes of acceptance on his obedi-

ence unto death, flattered themselves that those with whom they held communion were partakers of the same grace. But the honest avowal of Dr. Priestley and his followers, that their own virtues were the foundation of their eternal hopes, drove from them all who felt that, having "sinned and come short of the glory of God, they must be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The denial of divine influences on the mind, naturally led to such forms of devotion as could not suit those who came to the throne of grace to ask not only mercy, but "grace to help in time of need."

While each party was thus driven from the other, and the two camps were ranged at due distance, under their proper colours, Dr. Priestley's zeal exposed the folly of the orthodox in being induced by the sounds of charity, candour, and forbearance to tolerate fatal errors; for they saw him charitably pronounce believers in the Trinity and deity of Christ tritheists and idolators, candidly avow that unitarians were the only rational dissenters, and with much forbearance express his pity for the ignorance and bigotry of those who adhered to the horrible doctrines of calvinism. From this time dissenters ceased to seek an equivocal middle course; for they saw that there was no neutral ground for any one to stand upon. Arians were no longer invited to preach to calvinists, nor calvinists to arians; the adherents of one system were not found in communion with those of another, nor did the county associations present a heterogeneous mixture of creeds and principles and characters. Now if the two parties met on public occasions to petition the legislature for the repeal of the test laws, or the abolition of the slave trade, it was with the

explicit avowal that, on the same principles they could unite with Roman catholics, to seek their common rights as citizens of the state, or to promote the interests of the great family of man.

This decided change was highly advantageous to the cause of evangelical religion. Its friends, disentangled from those with whom they could never cordially co-operate, and who hung upon them as a dead weight, began now to contend strenuously for truth, which becoming more dear to them by the contest, they sought more earnestly to diffuse through the world. Energy and warmth, which had too long been wanting, were now imparted to their public services. They laboured to defend calvinism in the most effectual way, by a display of the true condition of man, which renders the stupendous work of redemption essential to the hope of salvation.

To this decision of mind in the friends of evangelical truth, the character of its enemies powerfully contributed. The tendencies of the new system became every day more painfully manifest in the sceptical coldness of its disciples, and their entire conformity to the spirit and manners of the world. For with the faith, they shook off the practices of the first founders of the dissent. The morality of the Sabbath was denied, and visiting on that day grew into fashion among wide dissenters. Theatres were represented as innocent scenes of amusement, and the card table, warmly recommended by Dr. Priestley's own example, was the constant resort of those who were withdrawn from the closet and from meetings for prayer by the denial of divine influences, which alone can render prayer a reasonable service. The complete amalgamation with the world, which pre-

ailed among the presbyterians, formed a disgraceful exception to the general truth of the remark, that the dissenters are a religious body. But every day rendered this deduction from their original excellence of character smaller; for while the other denominations were rapidly increasing the desolating effect of error, which has already been noticed, reduced the presbyterians to a very small proportion of the whole. The departure of the Gospel annihilated many congregations, and left the high churchman to insult over their ruined walls, or write upon their closed doors, "a meeting-house to let;" while the orthodox dissenter would inscribe, "Ichabod, the glory is departed."

The state of religion among the independents, in the latter part of this period, has been eminently prosperous. The zeal for truth, which was awakened by the heresy and consequent ruin of the presbyterians, was, at first, attended with a considerable portion of polemical asperity; but the flame afterwards burned with greater purity, and impelled them not merely to regain from the world more than had been lost to dissent by the apostacy of the erroneous, but to diffuse without regard to sect, the knowledge of Christ to the ends of the earth. This public spirit, which has elevated the character of the independent churches of our day, is so intimately connected with the formation of the missionary society, that it becomes necessary now to direct the attention of the reader to this auspicious event which has created a new era in the religious world.

Elliot, the American apostle to the Indians, had long ago furnished an encouraging example of the success of the Gospel when preached to the most

benighted heathens, and the Danish mission to the east had given additional stimulus to exertion in the extensive field. The Moravians also more recently displayed a most apostolic spirit, which breathes in "Crantz's History of the Mission established by the United Brethren, in Greenland," one of the most interesting and improving works in ecclesiastical literature. In their steps followed the Baptists, who sent out two valuable men to Bengal, where they established a mission, which is still exhibiting to the world the power of the Gospel to triumph over the mightiest superstitions. But the formation of the missionary society, by the union of Christians in different communions, was the grandest effort for the conversion of the heathen which the church of Christ has seen since the apostles went forth to evangelise the world. An independent minister first called the attention of the churches to the object, by an address which was published in the Evangelical Magazine. The churches and their pastors entered into the design with great ardour, and were joined not only by several Scotch presbyterians, who had retained the ancient faith, but by the calvinistic methodists as a body, and by many evangelical clergymen. It was agreed to wave the distinguishing tenets of either of these denominations, and to send forth missionaries into the world, to diffuse the grand principles of the Gospel in which they were all united. They sent out at first uneducated men, but a missionary seminary is now established at Gosport, where those who devote themselves to the service of the heathen, receive preparatory instructions.

To describe the influence of the society on the public mind, would be difficult, for it drew together by the

most benign and powerful attraction, Christians of different communions: it roused multitudes to the noblest zeal and the mightiest exertions, and thus gave rise to other societies both among dissenters and in the bosom of the establishment, by which the most important blessings have been conferred on the church and on the world.

To the annual meetings of the missionary society in London, immense numbers of Christians and ministers resorted from all parts of the kingdom, producing a striking scene, which powerfully attracted attention to the most improving themes, expanded the mind, enlarged its views, invigorated the character, and warmed the heart. The spirit of prayer, which is the harbinger of revival in the church, was excited, not merely by these greater assemblies, but by the appointment of a monthly meeting in all the congregations, where Christians improved their own religion, while they interceded for the salvation of the heathen. With these sublime views, the minds of ministers were often elevated to the highest pitch, and while they were expanded and invigorated by these occasional services, they learned the possibility and sacred duty of rising above the tame mediocrity, with which they had usually been contented. Attempting to excite their flocks to new zeal and exertions in the grand cause, some were consoled by discovering that the attempt had been the means of reviving a drooping church, while others were agreeably surprised to find that their hearers anticipated their wishes, and surpassed their hopes.

To the other good effects produced by zeal in the cause of missions, must be added the spirit of liberality which was excited, and which has the happiest

influence on the Christian character. Voluntary churches have ever been benefited by the appeals made to their Christian principles and affections for the support of their pastors and the relief of their poor members; but the efforts for the conversion of the heathen gave tenfold force to their liberality, by the greater demands made upon their substance. It was manifestly impossible to establish missions in the most distant parts of the world, and to go on sending forth evangelists from year to year without immense funds. These were furnished with delightful promptitude and liberality, not only from the superfluities of the rich, but also from the scanty savings of the labouring poor. The sums which were thus contributed, must, after the deductions of the coldest calculator, leave many thousands offered from the purest motives of zeal for the divine glory, gratitude for redeeming mercy, compassion for the perishing heathen, and benevolent solicitude for the holiness and happiness of man. If such offerings are twice blessed, conferring on the giver also those advantages which he intended only for the receiver, how powerful and auspicious must such contributions have been to the cause of pure religion at home! When, also, these calls upon Christian benevolence were more than doubled by the additional schemes of usefulness which were formed and executed, the happiest method was devised to rescue the disciples of Christ from that indulgence of pride and luxury in the expenditure, or of covetousness in the accumulation of property, which are so destructive to the religion of the heart, and so pernicious to the children of Christians. It would be difficult to enumerate all the benevolent plans formed about this time, by those who worship

apart from the establishment, and which furnish the criterion of the state of religion in their hearts and in their churches. The institution of the tract society, which was one of the consequences of the missionary society, has produced some millions of little popular addresses on sacred subjects, the distribution of which has called the zeal of Christians into incessant action. At the annual meetings of this society, such scenes are presented, and such reports are delivered as would inflame all but those who are "twice dead."

Village preaching was the consequence of an objection made to the numerous missions to the heathen; for when it was said "we have heathens enough at home, seek first to evangelise the multitudes in our own country who are destitute of the Gospel, before you go to the ends of the earth;" some of the friends of missions replied, "go you to these heathens at home, as you will do nothing for those abroad," by which a few were stung to action; while the more general reply was, "we have indeed been too long indifferent to the perishing state of our countrymen around us, and now feel that we 'are debtors both to the Greeks and to the barbarians.'" Thus the objections of lukewarmness blew up the flames of zeal. Sunday schools, also, which had been long patronised by the public, were now fostered by dissenters as nurseries of religion. The new mode of instruction, which Mr. Lancaster and Dr. Bell have introduced, tended much to improve these institutions, and to accelerate the progress of knowledge among the humbler classes of society. Fuller scope was thus given for religious instruction, and elementary books were so improved and multiplied, that the children of the

poor, and ignorant, and vicious received advantages which were before scarcely attainable by the offspring of the rich, the wise, and the pious *.

Many efforts were now made to render the press, which had been prostituted to the service of the world and sin, subservient to the interests of truth and religion. Some of the most celebrated journals of criticism had, since the controversy between Dr. Priestley and the *Monthly Review*, been devoted almost wholly to socinianism or infidelity; but other works were at this era of zeal established to give to the public a different estimate of religious books. Indeed, if the first happy moment of existence is that when, like Paul, we give up ourselves willing captives to victorious grace, presenting a *carte blanche* to the conqueror, and only asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do;" the felicity of this moment and the ardour of this inquiry seemed now to be perpetuated among Christians. The only study of the churches appeared to be to know what ought to be done, and what yet possibly could be effected for the interest of religion in the world. Like Cæsar, they esteemed nothing done, while any thing yet remained to do. The zealous exertions of dissenters received the highest eulogium from the complaints of their enemies, who publicly deplored the dangers threatened to the world,

* The success of these efforts has in most instances amply rewarded the pious exertions of the young persons, who have kindly laboured in the instruction of the rising generation; and one example seems to deserve peculiar notice. In a Sunday school in the north of England, one class of fourteen boys so rewarded the labours of its teacher, that every one of them became decidedly pious, was received into communion with a Christian church, and every one is now either preaching the Gospel at home, or labouring as a missionary abroad.

by the efforts of men who set every thing in heaven and earth in motion for the diffusion of evangelical religion.

As the independent churches and pastors form the great body of those who are engaged in these benevolent exertions, their zeal is a sufficient indication of religious prosperity. This indeed has caused them to throw off the stiffness which once hindered their usefulness, and to inquire how they might become the greatest blessings to the world. What has been already said of the labours of the ministers, proves that they are diligent in public ; and the spirit which breathes in the pulpit, leads to the pleasing conclusion that many of them are much devoted to God in secret. The numbers that attend on the meetings for prayer, and the spirit of devotion which prevails there, inspire an equal confidence in the personal religion of many of the members of the churches. These are in some places twice, and in others three or four times as numerous as they were in the former part of this period, so that it may be confidently asserted, that the increase of religion has been far greater than the augmentation of numbers among the independents.

It has been feared, however, that family religion has not proportionably advanced. Some accuse the pulpit of encroaching on the closet, and charge the evening lectures with producing the neglect of family instruction. But the intervals of public worship leave sufficient time, if well improved, for personal and domestic exercises, and if any are drawn off from the private excellencies of the ancient dissenters, the greater quantity of popular preaching is rather the occasion or the pretext than the cause. It is, however, to be regretted, that in the larger towns a roving

spirit has infected some of the members of churches, which is equally at war with their own edification and the welfare of the societies to which they belong. Nor should it be unnoticed or unlamented that there are churches which, by a disgraceful coldness, are prevented from co-operating with the rest in the propagation of the Gospel, or sharing with them in their prosperity and increase.

The state of religion among the particular baptists also has been prosperous during the last half of this period. In this denomination have been raised up some men of distinguished talents and usefulness, who have raised its character by the most laudable means. The zeal which established the baptist mission in Bengal, the theological publications which arrested the progress of socinian and antinomian sentiments, the solicitude for the supply of suitable pastors which has multiplied their seminaries, and the zeal for the diffusion of truth which has increased their congregations, all speak in praise of their religion. But while the writings of some now living have diffused the sentiments of the Edwardian school of theology in opposition to the supralapsarian spirit of Dr. Gill's writings, the latter have concurred, with many uneducated ministers, and the hasty admission of members into this communion, to produce so much antinomianism, that the churches in various places are suffering severely by this noisome pestilence.

The general baptists, who have accompanied the presbyterians in their departure from evangelical sentiments, are with them losing the spirit of piety. But the new connection, which has been formed upon more evangelical principles, enjoys greater religious prosperity,

Of the quakers it is difficult to speak ; for while they have high and universal praise for their philanthropy, which entitled them to a large share of the praise due to the abolition of the slave trade ; the interior of their religion is hidden from all but themselves. Socinianism has of late years appeared among them, and produced controversy and schism, but it has been decidedly protested against by the majority ; and upon the whole it is said, that religion has increased among them during the latter part of this reign.

Of the methodists, the calvinistic part first claims attention. The state of religion among them, if we were to judge from the distinguished share which they have taken in the exertions for the best interests of mankind, would be pronounced highly prosperous. The additional seminary, which has been established by one portion of those who bear this name, has been produced by two pleasing causes, an increase of congregations and a solicitude to supply them with preachers not entirely uneducated. With all the vivacity of a youthful communion, the calvinistic methodists want the accurate extensive knowledge of theology, and the eminent family religion which distinguished the old dissenters. Like the baptists, they have suffered severely from the inroads of antinomianism, but the taste for good preaching has increased, and is we hope counteracting this evil.

The Wesleyan methodists have not suffered by the death of their founder, but have perhaps increased in religious excellence as well as in numbers and in influence during the latter part of this period. They have among them able men who aim at the noblest objects, and see their recompence in a number of pious people who are the salt of the communion. Though much

deduction be allowed for the sectarian zeal which prevails among them, great praise is still due to their persevering efforts to call sinners to repentance. But the want of competent knowledge in the great body of their preachers, has nourished error and enthusiasm among the people, and too fully justified the heavy censure which has been passed upon this communion, as containing a greater sum of ignorance of the Scriptures than was ever found in any body of protestants since the reformation.

Antinomianism has made, during the latter part of this period, so much progress in many dissenting congregations, as to demand some attention. Where the operation of principles is left uncontrouled, the progress of error will be strongly and distinctly marked. Hence some pernicious principle has always been seen to struggle, among dissenters, against the truth, which in the end is invigorated by the contest and diffused by the victory. The hyper-calvinism, which had long lurked as a cocatrice egg in the sand, during this period, broke out into the fiery flying serpent of antinomianism. If some have attempted to trace socinian principles from Dr. Priestley up to the candour of Dr. Doddridge, and to what they call the Baxterian medium of Dr. Williams, we may with much more evidence contend, that Dr. Crisp was one of the first patrons of calvinism run mad, which has of late polluted and tormented the churches. Socinianism having too completely thrown off the mask to have much more influence with the multitude, and being evidently on the decline, except among the rich, the father of lies introduced, as the popular poison, a bastard zeal for the doctrine of salvation by grace. Glorifying in the name of Calvin, whose works

they never read, or they would have branded him with the epithet of an arminian, these zealots proclaimed the sovereignty of God, not in the spirit of Jesus or his apostles, with humble awful adoration, but with the temper of fiends who wished to render it odious and repulsive. The terms believer, disciple, saint, and other more ordinary appellations, which the Scriptures give to Christians, were abandoned for the less common name of the elect, who were addressed, not in the language of inspiration "put ye on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering*;" but as if the words were intended to be parodied, and the elect taught to insult over others as reprobates, in whose damnation they delighted. Eternal justification and sanctification were made to supercede repentance for sin, and pursuit of holiness; the very word duty was abhorred; the law of God vilified; and, while the most ridiculously allegorical interpretations of Scripture were applauded as proofs of inspiration, all addresses to sinners were anathematised as rank arminianism.

Such erroneous notions produced the bitterest fruits. Conceit, asperity, and all the evils enumerated by the apostle among the works of the flesh, were canonised by these pretended calvinists for cardinal virtues: so that they valued themselves upon despising every teacher who would not foster their pride and their lusts. In too many who are possessed of this unclean spirit, open profaneness has published their shame to the world; while they have been so completely besotted, as to suppose that drunkenness was consistent with seriousness, and lewdness with

* Coloss. iii. 12.

spirituality. Wherever this disease is caught, it seems incurable, and wherever those who are infected with it go, they fling firebrands into the churches, which have in some instances been consumed by the unhallowed flames. Among all but Mr. Wesley's followers this is the most prevailing evil of the day. The erection of antinomian chapels too frequently proclaims its triumph. The essential rectitude of the divine nature, government, and law, which rendered the redemption of Christ necessary to our salvation, is here blasphemed by prostituting the Gospel to the purpose of abrogating the law and giving license to sin. It is this perversion of calvinism which has hardened both socinians and arminians in their hatred to some of the most important truths, and furnished them with arms to maintain their warfare. It should however be noticed that this poison has been swallowed by evangelical churchmen, and even by some of the clergy, as well as by dissenters.

An antidote to the poison was furnished by the works of some of the most eminent divines of the past and preceding ages, which now rose greatly in estimation and request. Besides the republication of many single pieces, new editions of the whole or the larger works of Howe and Owen, Baxter and Flavel, Watts and Doddridge, Henry and Edwards, attested the demand, and honoured the taste of those who succeeded to the privileges procured by the labours of these eminent men. Such, indeed, is the disposition for the most instructive and edifying productions, that it is manifest, the religious magazines and other ephemeral works have rather increased, than diminished a taste for the ponderous folios of valuable theology published by the old divines.

The exact estimate of the religion of any individual, who but the Searcher of hearts can supply? How much more difficult then to say what is the clear sum of truth and holiness among a whole body, composed of such different members as are ranked under the name of dissenters! Without, however, pretending to any thing further than a rough estimate, such a judgment may be formed as may answer inquiries, suggest instruction, and afford delight. That there is now more religion among dissenters from the establishment than at any former period, may be confidently asserted. It would be easy to give a long list of churches, formed of genuine Christians, called out of the world, where it cannot be discovered that the Gospel of Christ was ever before preached. To this might be added another list, still longer, of churches which contain not only a greater number of devout persons, but some of them many times more than ever composed the societies from their earliest commencement. If many congregations have been annihilated by error, their deserted places are now re-opening, and prove again that the preaching of the cross is "the power of God to salvation." The zeal for the formation of new congregations, and for the erection and enlargement of places of worship, is not, indeed, confined to those in whose success every liberal Christian would rejoice, but extends to those who are actuated by errors fatal to the hopes of men, or passions dishonourable to the name of Christian. But still the good principle so decidedly predominates, that the number of real Christians must be greatly increased. In this respect, also, the religion of individuals is improved; for zeal to diffuse the knowledge of divine

truth, and to make the most costly sacrifices to win the souls of men from death, tends to nourish and improve all the other graces of the Christian character. To borrow a simile from the Scriptures, the present religion of dissenters compared with former periods, may be pronounced "like to a tree planted by the river of waters," which increases in height rather than in girth; while it throws out more numerous and extensive, but not more vigorous branches, and bears fruit in greater quantity as well as of more inviting bloom, though in many instances of less exquisite flavour, and in some reduced by a blight to mere apples of Sodom; nor is the growth of the root, though considerable, equal to the extent of the tree and the appearance of the fruit; so that, upon the whole, there is much to excite gratitude and hope, and something to demand sorrow and fear.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIVES OF EMINENT DISSENTERS.

THE chapter devoted to biography under this period will, probably, disappoint many, who will expect to find a distinct memoir of every faithful minister who may be still fresh in their remembrance and dear to their hearts. But our limits will suffer us to give no more than a selection of such as will furnish by their excellencies, or their faults, some special instruction to the world. The presbyterians, as they are of the oldest denomination, claim the precedence, and it will be seen by the following memoirs that they have not ceased to be distinguished by eminent men.

GEORGE BENSON, D. D.

His parents, who lived at Great Salkeld, in Cumberland, were eminently pious, and had the pleasure to see several of their children walk in their steps. George was born in 1699, and discovering early a serious spirit and a love of learning, was designed for the ministry. After attending the grammar school, in 1716 he went for a year to an academy kept by Dr. Dixon, at Whitehaven, and from thence to the university of Glasgow, where he prosecuted his studies till 1721. Determining to exercise his ministry among the dissenters in England, and being approved by some of the most eminent

presbyterians there, he began to preach in that communion. Dr. Calamy, in whose house he resided for a time, recommended him to a congregation at Abington; he was invited to become their pastor, and he continued with them seven years. Here he began to swerve from the orthodox doctrine which he had till this time professed, and being on this account less agreeable to the people, in 1729 he accepted a call to a society of dissenters in St. John's-court, Southwark. From this situation he removed in 1740, in consequence of an invitation from the congregation in Crutched-friars, to succeed Dr. Harris as their pastor, and to be colleague to Dr. Lardner; and this was the last field of his labours. The infirmities of age having, in 1751, compelled Dr. Lardner to relinquish his office, the whole of the service devolved on Dr. Benson, who continued to officiate till his constitution, impaired by his studies and by years, could no longer endure the labour, and he was obliged, though reluctantly, to retire from his public station. Soon afterwards his remaining health rapidly declined, and he was removed by death on the sixth of April, 1762, in the sixty-third year of his age. He was twice married but had no children.

In the first years of his ministry, he was a calvinist, and while at Abington published three practical discourses to youth on orthodox principles: these discourses he afterwards suppressed. Dr. Priestley is reported to have said, that there is no safe dwelling place between the house of Calvin and that of Socinus. The observation was verified in the case of Dr. Benson; for after leaving Geneva he could find no rest for the sole of his foot, in the intermediate stations through which he passed, till he came into

the abode of the *fratres poloni*; and he had reached them many years before his death.

The biographer of Dr. Benson designs to give him a high degree of praise when he says, that he exercised the right of private judgment, and thought for himself: it is indeed represented as the appropriate excellence of the dissenting ministers of this age, who departed from the faith of the nonconformists. The judgment is, no doubt, intended to perform that office to the mind which the eyes do to the body; and it is as natural and proper that a person should be guided by his own judgment, as that he should see with his own eyes. If a man leaves the road and wanders into a morass, where he sinks in mire up to the neck, we think it no proof of his wisdom and goodness that he was guided by his own eyes: but why should greater praise be given to the person who falls into heresy and error, because it was by the judgment of his own mind? Besides, to instance in the ministers of this society, Dr. Harris continued all his days a calvinist, Dr. Price, an assistant, was an arian, and Dr. Lardner and Dr. Benson became socinians; but there is no evidence to satisfy any rational man, that the first did not think for himself, and without regard to human authority derive his sentiments from the sacred Scriptures as truly and sincerely as the others. Persons may be as much biassed by human opinions in arian and socinian writers, as in those of calvinists: Dr. Priestley boasts that the mind of Mr. Robinson, of Cambridge, was greatly enlightened by his writings, and that they seemed to have conduced much to his adoption of the socinian creed.

In study Dr. Benson was indefatigable; and con-

ceiving the world would receive benefit from his researches, he became a voluminous author. Being fond of criticism he thought he could illustrate the New Testament, and became the continuator of the commentaries of Locke and Pierce on the epistles. In learning he was not deficient, of pains to excel there was no want, all that toil could do was done; but he had not the talents of his predecessors: he was an impenetrably dull man. He wrote also a history of the apostolical church, a treatise on the evidences of Christianity, a collection of sermons, and a large volume on the life of Christ. Some German divines having imbibed the same sentiments, highly commended the doctor's works. He sent copies of his books to the archbishop of Canterbury, and several of the bishops. Those who wear mitres, and frequent king's houses, are all polite men, and thus returned the civillest notes of commendation. By his biographer, Dr. Amory, these are all introduced at full length, as evidences of superior merit^b.

In the composition of his sermons the doctor took great pains. As soon as he returned home from the afternoon's service, he sat down to prepare for the following Lord's-day. His manner was first criti-

^b Among Dr. Benson's miscellaneous pieces is an account of Calvin's concern in the burning of Servetus, written *con amore*. It is remarkable that a French sceptic, if not infidel, should have investigated the subject with impartiality and candour, while by English arians and socinians it is usually treated with malignant bitterness. To Bayle's dictionary on the article Calvin, those are referred who wish to examine the matter without prejudice; and the conduct of Calvin will there appear, as it really was, widely different from the representation given of it by Dr. Benson and his associates. These gentlemen, as if blind of one eye, never see Socinus's treatment of Francis Davides, which was more reprehensible than the other.

cally to explain the text, and then to illustrate points of doctrine, and enforce rules of duty. In the critical part he sometimes gave quotations of Greek and Hebrew of two or three minutes length, which must have contributed greatly to the admiration if not the edification of the city dames.

It is instructive though painful to remark, that while he and Dr. Lardner were writing very learned books, and gaining extensive fame, the congregation was gradually diminishing, till it scarcely was intitled to the name; and having received the deadly poison from their lips, after a precarious existence of twelve years, under Dr. Price, Mr. Radcliff, and Dr. Calder, it became extinct. The meeting-house was sometime afterwards opened by William Alldridge, a calvinistic methodist, from lady Huntingdon's college at Trevecca. The faith of the ancient nonconformists, which had sounded so clearly and so powerfully from the mouth of Mr. Cruso fourscore years before, and which had not been heard within the walls since the decease of Dr. Harris, was now heard again; and the place was filled anew with attentive and serious hearers. "Let him that readeth understand." As hewers of wood and drawers of water were required for the service of the temple, the writings of Lardner, Benson, and their fellows were useful for similar purposes; and for their ingenuity and learning let them have great praise, for it is due; but to officiate as ministers in the sanctuary, and lead the people to the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, in that new and living way which he has consecrated through the veil of his flesh, they knew not how: it was beyond their power.

* See life of Benson, by Dr. Amory, prefixed to his life of Christ,

JOHN MASON, A. M.

This useful writer, who is well known by his deservedly popular treatise on self-knowledge, was most honourably descended. His father was minister at Daventry, afterwards at Dunmow, in Essex, and at length in the town of Spaldwick, in Lincolnshire, where he died in 1723. His grandfather was the excellent man whose "Select Remains" form the golden volume, which Dr. Watts so warmly recommended to the public. The subject of this memoir was born at Dunmow, in 1705, and, after studying for the ministry under Mr. Jennings, at Kibworth, became chaplain and private tutor in the family of governor Feaks, at his seat near Hatfield. He was soon called from thence to take the pastoral charge of a congregation at Dorking, in Surry. Having published, though without his name, "a plain and modest Plea for Christianity, or a sober and rational Appeal to Infidels," he received, by means of Dr. Walker, of Homerton, the unsought honour of a diploma of master of arts, from Edinburgh. But the highest and most deserved reputation was derived from the publication of his "Treatise on Self-knowledge," which appeared in 1745, and has, to the honour of the public discernment, passed through nearly twenty editions.

After a residence of seventeen years at Dorking, he removed, in 1746, to Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, where he preached to a considerable congregation. Amidst his constant labours for the pulpit and the press, he devoted a part of his time to the education of several young persons for the ministry. About

the time of George the second's death, he published two volumes on Christian morals ; and at the close of this work added a sermon on the recent death of the king, in which he noticed the temper of the times ; observing, that the " tories who had laboured to restore the Stuarts, were most clamorous for non-resistance under the worst government, and most forward to resist the best."

Mr. Mason died in the midst of his usefulness, at the age of fifty-eight, in the year 1763. His diligence is attested by his labours as a pastor, tutor, and author. In the pulpit, he pleased by a grave simplicity, but never rose to the higher excellencies of a preacher. His " Lord's-day Evening Entertainment, or fifty-two Sermons on the most serious and important Subjects in Divinity," in four volumes, was the result of his solicitude to promote family religion among the people of his charge. For the instruction of his students, he composed " the Student and Pastor," a work fit to be the companion of Baxter, Burnet, Mather, and Watts on the pastoral care. With a view to the improvement of his pupils in the oratorical art, he published, also, " Essays on Elocution, and on the power and harmony of poetical and prosaic Numbers," in which he displays great good sense, and knowledge of his subject. As an author, however, good intentions are more conspicuous than superior talents ; for his thoughts are not distinguished by novelty or vigour, nor has his style any other recommendation than that of perspicuous simplicity^d.

^d He left a daughter, who was married to Peter Good, a dissenting minister, who lived some time at Romsey, his native town, but afterwards at Havant, in Hampshire, and at length died near

SAMUEL CHANDLER, D. D. F. R. S. and A. S.

The man decorated with all these marks of literary honour, was, as may be supposed, one of the most eminent among the presbyterian ministers of his day. He derived his descent from ancestors remarkable for piety and zeal. His grandfather, who carried on business at Taunton, was one of the noble army of confessors who suffered in the cause of nonconformity. Henry Chandler, his father, was a dissenting minister first at Marlborough, then at Hungerford, afterwards at Bath; and was always deservedly held in high estimation by the body: the few pieces which he published, discover him to have been a man of talents. His son Samuel, the subject of this article, was born at Hungerford in 1693; and after having acquired a considerable knowledge of the Greek and Latin classics, he engaged in a course of theological study first under the tuition of Mr. Moore, at Bridgewater, and afterwards with Mr. Jones, at Gloucester.

In 1716, he was called to the pastoral office by a congregation of presbyterians at Peckham. While he was in this place, like many others, hastening to be rich, he engaged in the South Sea scheme, and lost the fortune which a little before he had gained by marriage. To support his family, which was reduced to straitened circumstances, he for some years kept a bookseller's shop in London. In 1726 he was chosen assistant at the Old Jewry, which was then one of the most respectable dissenting congregations in England; and on the removal of Mr. Taunton. From this gentleman, by his first wife, the daughter of Mr. Mason, is descended John Mason Good, a distinguished writer of the present day.

Leavesley their pastor, he was appointed his successor. In this situation he continued during the remainder of his life for almost forty years, preaching with great ability and acceptance, respected by his people, and retaining a full audience to the last. Some of the Scotch nobility and gentry, who at that time had more zeal for the principles of their church than, with very few exceptions, they manifest at the present day, formed a part of his congregation.

Dr. Chandler was a hard student all his days ; and it was no difficult thing to find him in the midst of his books. In the earlier part of life he experienced several attacks of fever, which threatened a termination to his literary pursuits ; but by betaking himself to a vegetable diet, the seeds of the disease were intirely eradicated ; and though after twelve years he returned to his former way of living, his health continued vigorous till the year before his death, when a direful scourge of studious men robbed him of his ease and rest, and warned him of his approaching end. He finished his course on the eighth of May, 1766, in the seventy-third year of his age, and received the funeral honours of Bunhill Fields, with the general respect of his denomination.

With abilities naturally great, a deep and strong foundation of classical and philosophical knowledge laid at the school and the academy, and a solid superstructure of biblical and theological learning, reared by the assiduous labours of more than half a century, it is no presumption to assert, that he is intitled to a place among scholars of the first class. As a preacher he presented to his audience, on every subject, much good sense and solid reasoning, expressed in language more remarkable for strength than sim-

plicity and elegance; and in his delivery he displayed much energy, but was deficient in grace. As a writer his works are both numerous, and on a diversity of subjects. The deistical controversy engaged his attention from first to last, and he wrote many volumes on the subject; on miracles; on the history of Joseph; on the prophecies of Daniel; on the life of David in two volumes, a very considerable work; and several others. He published some pieces in favour of civil and religious liberty, for which he was a strenuous advocate. He was the author also of a multitude of sermons, printed singly on particular occasions; and four volumes of his discourses were published from his manuscripts after his death. Applying his critical skill to the sacred Scriptures, he wrote a commentary on Joel; and intended to have given another on Isaiah, but did not accomplish it. Some years after his decease, a quarto volume appeared, containing his notes on the epistle to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Thessalonians.

That such a man should have offers of preferment in the church if he would conform, need not excite surprize. That he did not accept them is a thing of course. Such virtue, in a man elevated as Dr. Chandler was, and indeed in any dissenting minister of principle, is not to be ranked high, and discovers no traits of heroism. An obscure or unsuccessful individual among dissenting teachers may conform, and benefit by the change; but should a minister of any note turn to the establishment, no preferment which he could receive, would be sufficient to purchase a veil thick enough to hide his blushes, or to enable him to hold up his head in society, and look men of uprightness in the face.

Of the doctor's religious sentiments, it is not easy to speak with certainty. In a sermon preached in 1752, to the society for promoting religious knowledge among the poor, "on the Excellence of the Knowledge of Christ," he speaks the language of Calvin, and in very striking terms*, and it was at a

* "The doctrine of election hath been made a very thorny and difficult point; and yet there is no man of common sense, but instantly perceives upon the first mention of it, that as eternal life must be the gift of God, it is impossible he can ever obtain it, unless God is determined to give it him, *i. e.* unless God elect or choose him to the possession of it. Many disputes have arisen about the corruption of human nature, and yet nothing is more evident than that it must be introduced by the first offender, hath passed from him through all the various successions of his posterity, and every man, I imagine, finds somewhat of it in himself; and if he be a wise man, will be much more concerned how to cure it, than busy and solicitous to know how he came by it. Large volumes have been wrote, I wish I could say, to explain the doctrine of justification; and yet 'tis what every man knows, that an offender, who hath forfeited his life, can be restored to life and fortune only by the undeserved favour of his prince; and 'tis a principle of natural religion, that an offender against God can have no claim to forgiveness, but from the unmerited grace of God; and that therefore the justification of sinners, *i. e.* the forgiveness of their past sins, their full restoration to the divine acceptance, and an interest in the promise of eternal life, can, as to such, in no sense be the claim of past works, or due in justice to any former piety or virtue; for if that were the case, and they could usually urge such a claim, they would have no need of the Gospel justification, which supposes men sinners, destitute of the claim to life and happiness, and restored to both only by the unmerited grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ. The doctrine of imputed righteousness, *i. e.* of the righteousness of Christ so reckoned to our account, as that we by reason of it are entitled to pardon, favour, acceptance with God, and the blessing of eternal life, is too strong for the digestion of weak and delicate stomachs. And yet what more true in theory, what more frequently confirmed by a fact, what more universally allowed and acknowledged, than the two principles

time of life when men have commonly made up their mind, for he was in his sixtieth year: but the usual phraseology in his writings bears a greater analogy to the arminian system. Like many of his denomination, he does not appear to have been sensible of the importance of bringing forward the doctrines of the Gospel into full and constant view. It used to be said of him, that after any illness he always preached in a more evangelical strain^f.

Dr. Chandler was a man of a public spirit, greatly concerned for the prosperity of the dissenting cause, and on every occasion employed all his talents and influence for its support. To him the dissenters are indebted for the fund which has relieved the necessities of so many of the widows and orphans of their ministers. The design originated with him, he prevailed with many of his opulent friends to contribute to its establishment, and he continued to cherish it as long as he lived.

In the year previous to his death, when he was frequently attacked by a painful disorder, he felt that there was something better than learning, and which on which this disputed article depends: *viz.* that the good effects of one person's merit may reach far beyond himself, and be very extensively beneficial to others; and that these very beneficial effects may reflect back, and contribute greatly to the reward, honour, and happiness of the person to whose merits they are owing. Thus a father's merits are often imputed to, *i. e.* placed to the account of, and derive hereditary honours to his family, and he himself is rewarded in the reversionary privileges conferred upon his posterity." Page 27, 28.

^f This gave occasion to an anecdote which is told of him: a gentleman who occasionally heard him, said to one of his constant auditors, as they were coming out of the place of worship, pray has not the doctor been ill lately? Why do you think so, was the answer. Because the sermon was more evangelical than those he usually preached when he is in full health.

affords more solid pleasure. Religion was his support; he became more disengaged from temporal things, and spoke like a man who expected soon to leave this world, and enter into a happier state. He frequently declared, "that to secure the divine felicity promised by Christ, was the principal and almost the only thing that made life desirable: that to attain to this, he would gladly die, submitting himself intirely to God as to the time and manner of death, whose will was most righteous and good; and being persuaded that all was well which ended well for eternity."

NATHANIEL LARDNER, D. D.

This eminent writer was born the sixth of June, 1684, at Hawkhurst, in Kent. His father, Richard Lardner, a valuable nonconformist minister, sent him first to a grammar school, and then to study for the ministry under Mr. Oldfield, at Hoxton, near London. At the end of 1699, when he was in his sixteenth year, he went to the university of Utretcht, and from thence to Leyden. He returned to England in 1703, but he waited till he was five and twenty, before he preached at Stoke Newington, his first sermon on Rom. i. 16. "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God to every one that believeth." He still, however, remained a private member of the church, over which Matthew Clark presided, and in 1713, went to reside with the widow of the lord chief justice Treby, as domestic chaplain, and tutor to her youngest son, with whom he made the tour of France, Holland, and the Netherlands. On the death of lady Treby, in 1721, he writes, "I am yet at a loss to dis-

pose of myself. I can say I am desirous of being useful in the world, without this, no external advantages could make me happy. Yet I have no prospect of being serviceable in the work of the ministry, having preached many years without being favoured with the approbation and choice of one congregation."

It is not surprising that Dr. Kippis should say, "this reflected no honour on the dissenters;" but it would be no difficult task to defend their conduct. Lardner had not yet acquired celebrity by his writings, and those who now read them feel that his style wants the animation and vigour, which are essential to render public instruction interesting. A very defective elocution contributed also to render him unpopular in the pulpit, even after he had established his reputation as an author. He engaged, however, in 1723, in a course of lectures with several other ministers on Tuesday evenings, at the Old Jewry. The subject, which was allotted to Dr. Lardner, was the proof of the credibility of the Gospel history, and from this time, he applied to his great work, which bears that title. For some time his excessive modesty refused to publish, but in 1727, the first part appeared in print. An occasional sermon, which he preached at Crutched Friars, procured him his first settlement among dissenters, as assistant to Dr. Harris.

In 1740, he lost his colleague, but resigning to Dr. Benson the office of pastor which was offered him, he continued to preach once a day till the year 1751, when he quitted the pulpit, partly on account of his deafness and the decrease of his hearers, and partly for the sake of redeeming time for the publication of his work on the "Credibility of the Gospel History." He published in 1759, without his name, a letter

written nearly thirty years before, on the question, whether the *Logos* supplied the place of a human soul in Jesus Christ. The nature of the work may be learned from this circumstance, that it has the honour of having made Dr. Priestley a socinian. Lardner opposed the arian scheme, to which he had formerly been attached, as completely unreasonable, and laboured to prove Jesus Christ a mere man.

His diploma of D. D. was conferred in 1745, by Marischal college, Aberdeen. He was seized with a decline in the summer of 1768, and a few weeks after was removed from the world in his eighty-fifth year.

His works in defence of revelation, which have deservedly obtained the praise of the learned in all denominations of Christians, were so badly received at first, that he was glad to sell the copyright and the remaining copies for a hundred and fifty pounds. His modest diffidence, amiable disposition, and strict integrity secured the esteem of all who knew him.

WILLIAM LANGFORD, D. D.

This divine merits a place in these biographical sketches for his respectability of character, and also for the purity of his principles, because at the latter part of his life he is said to have been the only English presbyterian minister in London, who retained the faith of the nonconformists. He was born near Bat-tel, in Sussex, the twenty-ninth of September, 1704, and had the honour to be descended from pious parents. His father dying while he was yet a child, his mother removed to Tenterden, in Kent, where he received a classical education. In 1721, he was sent to

the university of Glasgow with a view to his entering on the ministry of the Gospel*. There, in the midst of his literary pursuits, his papers present a display of his piety in a solemn dedication of himself to God. Nothing is more important and more pleasing than to observe that while ardour for the acquisition of learning keeps every power of the soul in vigorous action, the spirit of religion suffers no abatement, and loses none of its power and influence in the government of the heart and temper.

After taking the degree of master of arts, in 1727 he returned to England, and settled as pastor of the dissenting congregation at Gravesend. At the end of seven years, he removed to London in 1734, to be co-pastor with Mr. Bures, at Silver-street; and as he was employed but one part of the day, he was invited in 1736, to be assistant to Mr. Wood, at the Weigh-house meeting, in Eastcheap. He continued to labour in both these places till 1742, when, on Mr. Wood's decease, he received a call from his congregation to the pastoral office, which he accepted, relinquishing his connection with Silver-street. In this situation he continued for thirty-three years, when the relation was dissolved by his death. During the greater part of the time, he performed the whole of the service himself; in his latter years he had several young ministers in succession as his assistants. In

* On his journey to the north, just after entering Scotland, at an inn he saw a place of confinement, the use of which he did not understand. On making inquiry, the landlady told him it was to keep *fools* in. This excited new reflections in his mind, and no small surprise that a class of people who, in England, were left at large, and injured none so much as themselves, should be so harshly treated in the north. When he was more accustomed to the Scotch pronunciation, he found it was a coop for *fowls*.

1760, Aberdeen that quick-sighted observer and liberal rewarder of merit by the abundance of its degrees, conferred on Dr. Langford the title of D. D. and he brought no stain on their discernment, for he was a wise and a good man, faithful in the discharge of the duties of his office, universally esteemed and beloved, and he had a sufficiency of learning to support with propriety his academical honours. He published only some occasional sermons and a charge.

It has been remarked of some eminent ministers, that as they approached the close of life, they seemed to breathe the air of heaven. This was the delightful frame of Dr. Langford's soul, and in public it particularly displayed itself in the dispensation of the Lord's supper. He was now in his seventy-first year; his health had been declining for some time; and to other infirmities was added a hoarseness, which rendered it difficult for him to speak in the congregation. A friend in the spring of 1775, invited him to his country seat in hopes of his receiving benefit from a change of air; but in the night after his arrival he was seized by the hand of death, and after a struggle of a few hours, expired on the Lord's-day morning, the twenty-second of April, and went to join the worship of the church of the first-born in heaven. He was buried in Bunhill-fields, that first of repositories of the dead in Christ, which will, at the resurrection of the just, give up so many bodies of the saints to be made like to the glorious body of the Redeemer.

In this man, who, like Abdiel, stood alone in adherence to the truth, may be seen the happy and important effects of soundness in the faith. While many of the congregations of the arian and socinian presbyterians have been, with few exceptions, reduced to a

mere skeleton of their former size, and many more of them are annihilated, Dr. Langford's faithful preaching of the truth preserved the flock. At his death they chose an evangelical minister as his successor; and under Mr. Clayton, who followed him, the congregation retains the ancient faith of the nonconformists, and is one of the most flourishing in London both for numbers and piety.

PHILIP FURNEAUX, D. D.

He was born at Totness, in Devon, and after spending his early years in his native place, about the year 1742, he came to London, and entered on a course of theological studies under Dr. Jennings. When he had completed the usual course, he became assistant to Mr. Henry Read, at St. Thomas', Southwark; and afterwards was chosen successor to Mr. Lowman, at Clapham. In this congregation he officiated with great reputation, and for many years preached a Sunday evening's lecture at Salter's-hall, alternately with Dr. Prior. His services there were highly valued and well attended.

Dr. Furneaux's character among the presbyterians stood very high. From his sermons to the number of six, on particular occasions, which were published, he must be acknowledged by all to be a man of superior talents. His composition was truly elegant, but his delivery by poring on his notes and a whine which would have disgraced a Scotch seceder, was most disagreeable. Ardent in the cause of liberty, he was one of the most zealous patrons of the application to parliament for relief from subscription to the doctrinal

articles of the church; and he wrote an able pamphlet on the subject. His letters to judge Blackstone on his exposition of the act of toleration, and some positions relative to religious liberty in his celebrated commentaries on the laws of England, display the hand of a master. When the cause of the city of London against Evans, so interesting to dissenters, was tried, the amazing strength of Dr. Furneaux's memory was seen in committing to paper, after he returned home, lord Mansfield's speech on the occasion, with such accuracy, that when his lordship perused it, he found but two or three trifling errors to correct.

Like many of his brethren, he does not appear to have been fully sensible of the importance of evangelical doctrine, and did not bring it forward with the frequency and fulness which the Gospel demands. On his return from occasionally visiting his friends in Devonshire, some of his hearers thought that he used for a time to preach in a more orthodox manner than usual. Good company to a minister is a great blessing, while to associate with such as are erroneous and evil has proved to thousands a heavy curse.

After having for more than thirty years supported his public character with great respectability, Dr. Furneaux was laid aside from every service by a visitation of providence the most awful and humiliating which human nature can feel. Insanity seized him, and the man who had appeared with so much applause in the pulpit and from the press, was confined during the remainder of his life in a private madhouse, where the benevolence of friends procured him support. One of the biographers of Mr. Cowper the poet, can hardly allow that his disease should be thought insanity; as if so great and good a man ought

to be exempted from so distressing a malady. But poets need to be taught humility as much as any men on earth ; and God made Cowper their instructor. Ministers of Christ too require to have a lesson given them that their powers are from God, and that the use and continuance of them, and of the exercise of reason which is the foundation of all, are his gifts. Dr. Furneaux did not suffer in vain, if every minister who reads his mournful history, is influenced to lift up his heart with lively gratitude to God for the exercise of reason, feels a deeper sense of his dependence for this and every blessing, and endeavours to improve it to the utmost through the whole of life for the honour of God, and the happiness of man.

JOB ORTON.

He was born at Shrewsbury, in 1717, deriving his descent from a line of pious ancestors, and on the mother's side from the family of the great Mr. Perkins, the puritan, of Cambridge. To his parents who were the patrons of piety and good men, he was indebted for early instruction in the Christian faith, and he imbibed from them the principles of pure religion^b. At the free grammar school in his native town, he acquired a considerable portion of classical

^b In a memorial of the family which Mr. Orton drew up for the benefit of his nephews, he thus expresses himself, " you will find no lords, or knights, or persons of rank, wealth, or station among your progenitors ; but as far as I am capable of judging from the best information, there is no one, either male or female, in the line of your ancestors for many generations, but has been serious, pious, and good, and filled up some useful station in society with honour."

learning. In his sixteenth year he was put under the tuition of Dr. Charles Owen, of Warrington, who had usually with him a few young men designed for the work of the ministry. The year following he was sent to Dr. Doddridge's academy at Northampton; and after going through the ordinary course of studies, he was, in 1739, appointed assistant to the doctor in his academical labours, and discharged the duties of his office with singular ability, prudence, and success. In 1741, he was drawn from this situation to his native town by the united voices of the presbyterian and independent congregations, which joined to receive him as their pastor. On Dr. Doddridge's decease, he was pressinglly invited to succeed him in the academy and congregation; but this, as well as a call to succeed Dr. Hughes, in London, (a place which he never saw) he declined, and continued his labours at Shrewsbury. Ill health, under which he laboured for a time, led him to seek for help which, during the greatest part of his ministry, he had from Mr. Fownes, who was first his assistant, then co-pastor, and at last his successor with a part of the charge¹. Few men were more diligent than Mr. Orton, or more conscientious in performing the various duties of his office. He spoke the language of his heart, when he directed the ministers who were to preach his funeral sermon, in the following words: "let them assure my hearers that serving them in all their interests, especially their best, was the delightful business of my life, and that all my time and studies were directed this way." Before old age arrived, the nervous complaints with which he was frequently

¹ Mr. Fownes published a volume on toleration which procured him a considerable name for acute and masterly reasoning.

troubled, made him conceive himself unable to continue longer in the pastoral office; and in 1765, while he was but in his forty-eighth year, he resigned his charge. In the following year, he went to reside at Kidderminster that he might be near a physician in whom he had great faith; and there he lived for eighteen long and solitary years. His infirmities gradually increased, and his sufferings becoming at last exceedingly acute, terminated in death, in July, 1783, in the sixty-sixth year of his age.*

In the life of Dr. Johnson it is mentioned, that he assented to the observation of a friend, "that small certainties have been the bane of literary men."

* His nervous complaints were heightened by his celibacy, and from these he became a man of hours and minutes like a clock. The children of the street he lived in, when they saw him returning home, ran in with eagerness, crying, "mother, is dinner ready, it is twelve o'clock, for here is the tall parson coming." From indulging in such peculiarities, his hours became inconvenient to those who associated with him. If a friend who had supped with him, made no sign of going away when the clock struck nine, he grew uneasy; and by way of hint would say, "wont you take another glass of wine, sir, before you go?" Regularity is good, but particularity to a moment is bondage. No man ever ranked high among the benefactors of mankind, who was the slave of a minute. He that would do extensive good, must disregard hours for meals and sleep, and give up his time by day and night to accomplish business which requires immediate attention. There is also an injury as well as a littleness in a person accustoming himself to such hours, that he cannot enjoy social intercourse with his friends in their houses, but must mope at home as a solitary recluse. The mind is injured by such a system of life, and the person is deprived of opportunities of communicating and receiving both pleasure and benefit. If Job Orton had had a good cheerful wife, and two or three romping children around him, they would have rubbed off his rough corners, dispelled his low spirits, and made him a much more useful and a happier man.

With equal truth the remark may be applied to the church as to the world. An independent fortune has seldom been beneficial to a minister of Christ; and far more harm than good has in general resulted from it. Had Job Orton been unable to live without the contributions of his people, it would never have entered into his mind at the age of forty-eight, that he was unable to preach; and instead of finding it necessary to retire into private life for eighteen years, he would have found no difficulty in retaining his easy co-pastoral station at Shrewsbury till the close of life: and it would have been with more enjoyment to himself as well as benefit to others.

To the character of a devout and laborious minister, Mr. Orton is well entitled. He possessed a more than common seriousness of mind, and assiduously cherished it by reading, meditation, and prayer¹. His diligence in preparing for the pulpit was exemplary, and his sermons were evidently designed to edify, not to amuse his hearers. In visiting his flock as a Christian pastor, he was truly a pattern; and he took more than ordinary pains in the instruction of the rising generation. So sensible was he of the importance of these things, and so tender was his conscience, that long after his removal from Shrewsbury, he expresses the most painful fears that he had not discharged the duties of the ministry with becoming zeal. To the end of life his heart was set on doing good, and when

¹ In the strictness of his life, in the simplicity of his manners, in the plainness of his dress, in his house, his furniture, and mode of living he sought to imitate, and he certainly did resemble the old puritans; but the resemblance did not hold in that which was the main spring of all their excellence—he did not possess their orthodox sentiments, nor their views of evangelical truth.

he had ceased to preach, conversation, letters, plans of sermons were sent to his friends, and every private method in his power was resorted to. With the same view he published books—discourses on eternity, on zeal, on Christian worship, meditations for the sacrament, and several volumes of sermons. His life of Dr. Doddridge, which is one of the most useful books to a student and a minister, had been published before. The preacher who has not read it, has much pleasure to enjoy, and much benefit to receive. The reader of his works will every where find good sense, perspicuity, simplicity, seriousness, and a desire of utility^m.

Amidst all his labours he complains bitterly of want of success, and not without reason, for one thing was lacking. The inefficacy of socinian sentiments he plainly saw; but calvinists as such had none of his love and praise, and independents shared little of his favour. He is strenuous in asserting the necessity of preaching evangelical doctrine; but that doctrine he neither fully understood nor preached. He appears to have early imbibed some notions relative to the person of Christ which were exceedingly injurious in their influence on himself and on his preaching, and he had not received those enlarged views of the power and grace of the Redeemer which the New Testament displaysⁿ. So that however serious he was, and how-

^m After his death, Mr. Gentleman, his successor to a part of the congregation, published the exposition which Mr. Orton had written on the sacred Scriptures, in the form of a paraphrase with reflections, in six octavo volumes.

ⁿ When Mr. Orton was expounding Isa. ix. 6. his more orthodox hearers, who had doubts concerning his belief of the divinity of Christ, were all attention in hopes of hearing their pastor's sentiments; but they were cruelly disappointed, for when he came to the

ever desirous to do good, the weapons of his warfare wanted the due temper, edge, and weight. In order to convert and save souls, it is not only necessary that a minister be pious and zealous, but he must preach the truth in its purity and fulness. His instrument must be adapted to the work, or there will be no success. Job Orton attempted to cut down the largest oak in the forest with his penknife. As to the natural result of his sentiments and mode of preaching, not a few of his hearers were from year to year verging nearer and nearer to socinianism; and though his gift in prayer was uncommon for suitability, variety, and fervour, they were sighing for a Liverpool liturgy. On his resignation of the charge, a division immediately took place.

RICHARD PRICE, D. D. L. L. D. F. R. S.

He was the son of a dissenting minister at Bridge-end, in Glamorganshire, and was born the twenty-second of February, 1723. After acquiring a classical education under two different masters, at the age of sixteen he was sent to the academy of Mr. Griffiths, at Talgarth, in Brecknockshire. His father died the same year, and his mother in the year following, leaving him an orphan at a very critical time of life. On his mother's death he went to London to his uncle, a very excellent man, who was co-pastor with Dr. Watts for more than forty years. Cherished by his patronage, he pursued his theological studies for four years, under the tuition of the celebrated Mr. Lames.

words, "the mighty God," all he said, was, "the meaning of this I cannot tell, and how should I, when his name is called wonderful."

When he had completed his course, he went to reside with Mr. Streatfield, of Stoke Newington, as his domestic chaplain, and continued in the family for thirteen years; but during the greater part of that time he assisted Dr. Chandler at the Old Jewry.

Soon after Mr. Streatfield's death, he was chosen minister of a congregation at Newington-green; and while he officiated there in the morning, he was for some years afternoon preacher at Jewry-street. This last service he resigned on being chosen pastor of the congregation of the Gravel Pits Meeting, at Hackney, where he afterwards preached in the morning, and at Newington-green in the afternoon. These two stations he continued to fill till February, 1791, when taking leave of both societies in a farewell discourse, he resigned his charge. Soon afterwards, he suffered the attack of a nervous fever, which was succeeded by other complaints that brought him down to the grave in the following summer, in the sixty-ninth year of his age.

That Dr. Price was a man of superior talents, and that they were carefully improved by persevering study, all will acknowledge. Like most of the presbyterian ministers of his day, he did not confine his pursuits to theology and the sacred Scripture. For profound skill in mathematical calculations, he had perhaps not his equal in the kingdom; and this skill he generously employed in promoting the benefit not only of individuals but of the nation. By exposing the fallacy of the numerous schemes which at that time were formed for the insurance of lives and the benefit of survivorship, he put an end to the delusive hopes of many, but he taught them and others to build on a solid foundation. The widows' fund for

the clergy of the church of Scotland, which has proved a blessing to tens of thousands, was formed under his direction; and to him the nation is said to be indebted for the idea of the sinking fund, which since its adoption has been found so beneficial to the community. On these subjects he published various treatises of singular ingenuity and accuracy.

He wrote also on civil liberty, and with the fire and energy of Brutus. Looking around him in the world, he beheld despotism swaying an iron sceptre stained with blood, over almost the whole earth. He heard the groans of misery from the oppressed, he felt their woes, and with the voice of thunder he claimed their release. With multitudes of mankind in every age, and especially of those who make the most conspicuous figure in society, civil liberty has been no favourite: next to pure religion she has met with the most uncourteous reception: what welcome his publications on this subject found from his countrymen, may naturally be supposed.

But with Dr. Price as a mathematician and writer on political subjects we have little concern, it is beyond our limits: he has a place in this list as a minister and a divine. Early in life he appears to have imbibed the arian opinions. His father was of the faith of the nonconformists—a calvinist; and persuaded of the truth and importance of these sentiments, he endeavoured to instil them into his son, who did not relish his father's creed, and had been taught the new opinions by Mr. Jones, one of the schoolmasters under whom he studied the classics. Being eagerly employed one day in reading a volume of Dr. Clarke's sermons, his father caught him and was so much displeased that he snatched it from him

and threw it into the fire. Dr. Price's biographer, while he exposes the unwise and intemperate heat of the father, does not consult the honour of the son when he adds, "it is by no means improbable that this orthodox bigotry contributed more than any other circumstance to lay the foundation of his son's arianism.

Dr. Price's publications on religious subjects are not numerous. His sermons contain much good sense. His essays on Providence and prayer display great talents; and his "Questions on Morals" are considered as the ablest defence of the system of Cudworth and Clarke. In the controversy with Dr. Priestley on materialism, both have been highly praised for the temper with which it was carried on. They certainly appear more like men fencing with foils for a shew of skill, than fighting with swords for their life. When Dr. Price reasons against the enemies of civil liberty, he burns with indignation against them as the enemies of human happiness. But is not religious truth more important than political verities, and are not its adversaries greater foes to mankind than political heretics? In order to maintain consistency of conduct, ought not Dr. Price to have displayed here an equal degree at least of energy and zeal?

The doctor is highly commended for his amiable deportment in private life. There was a simplicity and a naïveté in his character, very remarkable in a man who had mingled so much with the world. His biographer speaks also in the highest terms of his piety, and his ardent devotion in family prayer.

Of literary honours he enjoyed great abundance. About the year 1763 he was chosen a fellow of the royal society, and to the transactions of that learned

body he liberally contributed. The university of Aberdeen, in 1769, conferred on him the degree of doctor of divinity; and in 1783, from Yale College, in America, he received the title of doctor of laws. His correspondents included many of the most eminent characters in England, in America, and in France.

JAMES FORDYCE, D. D.

His father was a merchant of great respectability in Aberdeen. James was born there, and pursued his studies in the university of his native city. Being early licensed as a preacher, according to the forms of the Scotch church, he was first settled as one of the ministers of what is called the collegiate charge at Brechin. Some years afterwards he received a presentation to the parish of Alloa, near Stirling. The people, having a partiality for another minister, received the doctor with great coldness, and some with great aversion. But by the able and affectionate manner in which he conducted the public services; and by the kind condescension, seriousness, and punctuality in the private duties of his office, he overcame every prejudice, was highly esteemed and beloved, and when he left them his removal excited a general regret. Here it is probable the doctor spent his best and most useful days. While he was in this place, some occasional sermons which he published, especially one before the general assembly of the church of Scotland, "on the Folly, Infamy, and Misery of unlawful Pleasures," raised his character very high for talents and eloquence. About this time, and

perhaps on this account, he received from the university of Glasgow the degree of doctor of divinity.

Having had occasion to preach in London, while on a visit to his friends, in 1760, he received an unanimous invitation from Dr. Lawrence's congregation in Monkwell-street, to be co-pastor with their aged minister, and afterwards his successor. The invitation he accepted, and spent the remainder of his public life in the metropolis of the British empire. Dr. Lawrence did not long survive his coming, and the whole of the pastoral care devolved on him. The congregation very rapidly increased, and by his manner of preaching he drew around him a multitude of genteel admirers.

The eloquence of the pulpit was the doctor's darling study and pursuit, and whatever could give it effect, both in sentiment and composition, he carefully sought: nor was he less attentive to the charms of elocution; and whatever the voice or action could contribute to produce, he sought to give.

Dr. Fordyce was a man of unfeigned piety, and some ministers who were intimately acquainted with him, said that his conversation was eminently devout, and that he appeared in the parlour to be the warm-hearted, evangelical Christian.

In his public services, though he was for years greatly admired and followed, he was by no means one of the most successful preachers. The radical defect consisted in his not bringing forward, habitually and abundantly, the peculiar principles of the Gospel of Christ. In order to success, which consists in bringing souls to the possession of the heavenly blessedness, these must be prominent in the discourses of the Christian orator. Without these, the effect of

fine sentiments, elegant language, a melodious voice, and the most powerful action, is feebleness itself.

Dr Fordyce saw himself surrounded by multitudes of genteel people, and especially of young gentlemen and young ladies of the first respectability in the city. To them he considered it his business to preach, and he framed his sermons in a manner which he conceived to be peculiarly adapted to their circumstances. Specimens of them we have in "his Discourses to young Women," and in his "Addresses to young Men." Such distinctions as arise from wealth, elegance, refinement, and literary attainments, Christ has not taught his ministers to make. They are to consider their hearers as saints or sinners; and to those who are sinners they are to say, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." To the genteel fathers and mothers, and the elegant young men and women of his congregation, Dr. Fordyce did not speak in this way, but seemed to look on them in general as having some portion of goodness which needed only to be cherished and improved. To those who had the principles of the Gospel planted in their hearts, his moral maxims might be exceedingly useful; though even in this department his views of life were in some things too romantic for ordinary use.

To the elegance of his compositions much praise is to be given. His elocution was all that he could make it by intense study and labour. In a simple, natural delivery he did not excel: some thought there was too much the appearance of affectation and art. He was more allied to Cicero than Demosthenes. Sometimes, however, he would attempt all the vehemence of the Grecian orator, but frequently he did

not succeed : some of his hearers laughed when he was labouring to make them cry, and sat unaffected while he hoped to make their hair stand on end.

Towards the close of his ministry the congregation declined. A dispute with Mr. Toller, the morning preacher, injured it. Men who are borne high on the wings of popular applause, are in danger of making unreasonable claims for themselves, and of forgetting what is due to others. But the main reason of the decay was a deficiency of evangelical truth ; for whatever ornaments, or beauties, or excellence an orator's preaching may have, if he has not Christ in it, people grow tired of it at last. In 1782, listening to his own feelings and the advice of medical friends, he bid adieu to the pulpit, and retired into the bosom of private life. His public labours were closed with a charge to his successor, Dr. Lindsay : it is the best of his publications, and contains principles so excellent, counsels so wise and good, and views of divine truth so truly scriptural, that if his own ministry had been conducted by them in all their extent, he would have never had reason to complain of the decay of his congregation, or of want of success.

After quitting his public station, he spent several years in a retreat near Christchurch, in Hampshire, where he enjoyed the intimacy of lord Bute, who was his neighbour, and who had bid adieu to the busy world like himself ; and he had free access to his valuable library. Here he published his "Addresses to the Deity." The doctor afterwards removed to Bath, and died there suddenly on the first of October, 1796, in the seventy-sixth year of his age ; " with the peace of God in his heart (says Dr. Lindsay in his funeral sermon), and the triumphant

hope of Christianity to illuminate his future prospects, and dispel the terrors of impending dissolution."

JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L. L. D. F. R. S.

This celebrated philosopher and polemical divine, who has instructed the world by his discoveries, as much as he has agitated the church by controversy, was born at Fieldhead, near Heckmondwicke, the thirteenth of March, 1733. His parents were pious, orthodox dissenters; but he was brought up by an aunt, who spared no cost to give him such an education as should qualify him for the ministry. After acquiring a considerable knowledge of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, he studied under Dr. Ashworth, at Daventry. Fondness for books was, according to his own account, the motive which induced him to enter the ministry; and as "the most heretical ministers, in the neighbourhood were frequently his aunt's guests," he seems to have acquired, before he went to the academy, a predilection for their heresies. Having experienced "great horror of mind," from a conviction that he had never been regenerated, and having been denied communion with the church where his aunt attended, on account of his rejection of the doctrine of original sin; it should excite no surprise to hear him say, "I was, before I went to the academy, an arminian, and when there, saw reason to embrace the heterodox side of almost all the questions which were continually debated, though I was not yet more than an arrian."

He first settled at Needham Market, in Suffolk;

* *Memoirs of his own Life.*

but as he betrayed his arian sentiments, his "hearers fell off apace". Here also he says, "I became persuaded of the falsity of the doctrine of the atonement, of the inspiration of the authors of the books of Scripture as writers, and of all the ideas of supernatural influence, except for the purpose of miracles".

He settled, in 1758, at Nantwich, in Cheshire, where his whole time was occupied with the labours of a school, and with experiments in natural philosophy, to which he now began to apply himself with great diligence. He removed to Warrington, in 1762, to become tutor to the academy, which was established there under the auspices of the heterodox dissenters. Here he married and resided six years.

Till this time, he says, he had "no particular fondness for the studies relating to his profession as a minister;" and no one who reads the memoirs of his subsequent life, could perceive in them any increased attachment; for now the foundation of his future fame was laid by application to the study of chemistry. Meeting with Dr. Franklin in London, and engaging, at his suggestion, to write the history of electricity, his attention was forcibly directed to a subject in which he was destined to excel. Having published his "Chart of Biography," Dr. Percival, of Manchester, then a student at Edinburgh, procured for him a diploma of L. L. D. and he was admitted to the royal society, in consequence of his new experiments in electricity.

After he had attained to these honours, he accepted in 1767, an invitation to become minister of Millhill chapel, Leeds. Here he "became what is called a socinian." When he says, "I always considered the

office of a Christian minister as the most honourable of any upon earth, and in the studies proper to it: "I always took the greatest delight," it must be left to the reader to determine how this declaration can be reconciled to a former avowal and to the chief pursuits of his life. At Leeds he commenced his discoveries in air and in chemistry in general, on which he published in 1772. But he soon exchanged the office of a Christian minister for that of librarian to the earl of Shelburne, afterwards marquis of Lansdowne, which induced him to quit Leeds, in order to reside near the earl. He travelled with his noble patron on the continent of Europe, in 1774; but some difference afterwards arising between them, he removed to take charge of a congregation in Birmingham. Here he published his "History of the Corruptions of Christianity," which drew him into the controversy already reviewed. The application of the dissenters for the repeal of the test act, involved him also in a contest with the established clergy of Birmingham. But the celebration of the anniversary of the French revolution, July 14, 1794, became the occasion of his quitting the kingdom; for though he had done nothing to deserve it, the mob was excited by some who had malice to devise what they had not courage to execute, to burn his meeting-house and dwelling, where they demolished his library, apparatus, and every thing belonging to him on which they could lay their violent hands.

Dr. Priestley fled to London, where the congregation of the late Dr. Price, with much magnanimity, chose him to succeed their former pastor. Feeling, however, that he was an object of abhorrence to many of his countrymen, his own attachment to his native

land was weakened, and in 1794, he migrated to America, where he received the kind treatment and assured protection [which he ought to have enjoyed in Britain. He settled at Northumberland, in Pennsylvania. "Though he was," says his son, "uniformly treated with kindness and respect by the people of the place, yet their sentiments in religion were so different from his own, and the nature and tendency of his opinions were so little understood, that the establishment of a place of unitarian worship, perfectly free from any calvinistic or arian tenet, was next to impossible. All therefore that he could do in that, was, for the two or three first years, to read a service either at his own or my house, at which a few (perhaps a dozen) English persons were usually present. In time as their numbers increased, he made use of a school-room, near his house, where from twenty to thirty regularly attended'."

About the beginning of the year 1804, he was alarmed by the increase of a complaint which he suspected to be a stoppage of the œsophagus. He was at one time incapable of swallowing any thing for nearly thirty hours. "He dwelt," says his son, "with satisfaction on having led a useful as well as a happy life, and on the advantages he had derived from reading the Scriptures daily. Desiring me to reach to him a pamphlet, which was at his bed's head, 'Simpson on the Duration of future Punishment;' 'it will be a source of satisfaction to you to read that pamphlet,' said he, giving it to me. 'It contains my sentiments, and a belief of them will be a support to you in the most trying circumstances, as it has been to me. We shall all meet finally; we only require

' *Memoirs*, p. 191.

different degrees of discipline suited to our different tempers, to prepare us for our final happiness'." To his grand children he said, as they were retiring to bed, "I am going to sleep as well as you, for death is only a good long sound sleep in the grave, and we shall meet again'." Thus he departed, February the sixth, 1804, in the close of his seventy-first year.

His character as a chemist and natural philosopher, which is the only firm basis of his fame, is foreign to this history. As a man, the mildness of his disposition, the urbanity of his manners, and the uniform integrity of his conduct demand respect; while in the relation of a member of civil society, his peaceable demeanour and valuable discoveries deserved treatment far different from that which he received. Impartial truth must affix the brand of ingratitude, as well as of injustice on the conduct of his native country towards him; for his political principles were in favour of the British constitution, and if ever he was a republican, it was not till after his experience of its practical effects had weaned him from our system of government, and his hospitable reception in America had made him, from gratitude, a convert to her politics. Previously to that period, he is said to have declared that he was in theology, an unitarian; but approving of king, lords, and commons, he was a trinitarian in government. Whatever, indeed, was his opinion, it furnished no excuse to his persecutors; for he never violated the genuine laws of our constitution in his writings which were addressed to the judgment of the discerning, not to the passions of the mob, and were rather tame than intemperate.

As to his theological creed, it could not justify the

* *Memoirs*, p. 217.

* *Memoirs*, p. 218.

usage he received; for though he led the way to an open determined avowal of socinianism, no patron of liberty of conscience will impute this to him as a civil crime; nor should the friends of the orthodox creed condemn him for the frankness which rendered him the real, though unintentional friend of the truth, which has triumphed ever since Priestley tore the mask of concealment from error, and bade it be honest. The reflections which he poured upon evangelical sentiments, were often bitter enough, indeed; but the same may be said of the charges brought against him and his creed; and it was Horsey rather than Priestley, who enlisted the depraved passions of men, and the cruel prejudices of party politics, to contend in the arena, which should have been occupied solely by the authority of revelation, and the evidence of unimpassioned argument. If "the heresiarch" ever enjoyed a triumph, he owed it not to his own prowess, but to his enemies' violence; and if he may exult over the ruins at Birmingham, orthodoxy must weep to think that her name was usurped by those who rushed into the field and lost her cause.

When, however, we look into the memoirs of Priestley for the Christian and divine, what language can express sufficient regret for the disappointment which we experience? Induced by the love of books to enter the ministry, into which zeal for the glory of Christ and compassion for the souls of men should have led him, the consequences to himself and the church were just such as every discerning Christian would have anticipated with anguish and alarm. To rid himself of the dread which he had felt from a consciousness of being unregenerate, he adopted the compendious but hazardous method of denying the

necessity of regeneration. Hence all his future aberrations from the truth; for to the carnal mind, light appears darkness and darkness light, evil good and good evil, bitter is put for sweet and sweet for bitter. Hence also the mere man every where shews himself, instead of the Christian. The student, the author, the chemist, the philosopher meets us in every page of his auto-biography; but if, for a moment, we conceive we have caught a glimpse of the Christian divine, on a closer inspection, we find it was only his shade. His diary seems to have been preserved to convince the world, that though true religion is the divine spark, the ethereal soul, breathed into us by the lips of the eternal, false religion is at best the mere carcase, formed from the dust whence the beasts were taken. The best specimen of mere human nature is, indeed, here set off against Christ and the grace of the Gospel:—mildness, prudence, science, literature, morals, and public spirit appear in the doctor's memoirs. Yet what a display of a fallen creature! What an illustration of the truth, that mere man at his best estate is altogether vanity! Self is the animating soul of his system, it beats in every vein, and though it is modest and retiring, in consequence of literary culture, it is self still. If, on any occasion, Priestley thinks of others, it is not God, but the creature. Through life and on the verge of death, he exults either that he has lived a happy life, respected by the respectable, or that he has been useful to the world. When his young friends at Birmingham expressed their regard for him after the riots, he exults not in the evidence this afforded of his having been a blessing to them, but in the thought that he had done his duty to them. All this had not been

evil, if it had not been every thing. But we ask what has become of the Deity? Where is the pure vital flame of regard for his glory? Has heaven revoked the precept, which was to prophets, apostles, and ancient saints, the compendium of all religion, "whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

For a profound theologian, fit to explode errors and elicit truth, Dr. Priestley was by far too careless and precipitate. He never afforded time enough to mature his own sentiments, much less to correct those of a world. He was perpetually removing from place to place; in one part of his life a laborious schoolmaster, in another, travelling companion or librarian to a nobleman; spending much of his time in walking or other exercises, more in philosophical experiments or preparing for the press; and though a philosopher and a minister of religion, not only reading novels and plays, but, "for many years of his life, giving never less than two or three hours a day to games of amusement, as cards and backgammon." He seems to have imagined, that discoveries for eternity were to be made by the same mechanical process as experiments in physical science, and that nothing further was necessary for the attainment of truth than such a sceptical indifference as shall hold the mind *in equilibrio*, and a few hours study. Almost all his works bear the marks of this haste and rashness. Unhappily for him, to precipitancy in adopting error, he added pertinacity in adhering to it. He could always advance in the road of heterodoxy, but never recede. As he found himself before he died, the last stubborn defender of the phlogistic theory, and was considered

by other chemists as a good experimentalist, but a bad systematiser; so he was regarded by profound divines as obstinately adhering, in spite of evidence, to doctrines which he had espoused upon the most superficial and inadequate research.

His death completed the scene exhibited through life. The eternal fate of the individual must be left to his judge, who alone can say what passed after he ceased to hold intercourse with those who watched his dying moments*. But as the cause of socinianism lived in this champion, it died in his death. When he bids his family good night, and speaks of death as "a good long sleep," we almost fancy ourselves transported to Paris at the era of the infidel and revolutionary fury; for, alas! Priestley speaks only of sleeping in the grave, and not like Paul, of "sleeping in Jesus." Nor is this the worst; for when we see the dying philosopher pointing to a book on the termination of hell torments, declaring that it had been his support in trying moments, and recommending it to his child as a source of consolation, can the benevolence of the Christian refrain from pouring over the afflictive scene the tears of bitter regret? Are these thy consolations, O Socinus? Could the amiable,

* His brother Timothy Priestley, of London, preached a funeral sermon for him, in which he says, "Curiosity has brought numbers to hear what I say of his eternal state. This I say, not one in heaven, nor on the road to that happy world, will be more glad to find him there than myself. When I consider that the praise and glory of free grace is that which God principally designs, and that we find in divine revelation some of the chiefest offenders have been singled out, and made monuments of mercy, such as Manasseh, Paul, and others, and also that he who can create the world in a moment, and raise the dead in the twinkling of an eye, can make a change in any man in one moment, here and here alone are founded my hopes."

the upright, the scientific Priestley turn from his family with no better alleviation to the parting pangs than this consideration, "we shall all meet finally, we only require different degrees of discipline (the discipline of hell !) to prepare us for final happiness." If the creed of this distinguished man were true, the veriest wretch that died unpardoned, unbelieving, unrepenting, might say as much as Priestley, "we shall all meet finally, for we only require different degrees of discipline." And what turned the eyes of the philosopher downwards to the state of punishment? Was it because he could not, with Stephen, "look upward, see Jesus at the right hand of God, and invoke him, saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit?" But from such a scene of clouds and darkness, of sleep before the resurrection, and punishment for ages after, we turn away with the anguish of deep commiseration, only repeating again, that the death-bed of Dr. Priestley should be regarded as pronouncing the damnation of the socinian creed.

JOHN GUYSE, D. D.

Our list of independent ministers begins with this eminent man, who derived his descent from pious parents, and was born at Hertford in 1660. Highly favoured of heaven, he early felt the renewing influence of divine grace, and at the age of fourteen years was admitted to communion with the dissenting church in his native town. Having the work of the ministry in his heart while a youth, he applied himself with great diligence to classical learning, and afterwards pursued a course of academical studies under the

tuition of Mr. Payne, at Saffron Walden. In his twentieth year he began to preach, and was chosen assistant to Mr. Haworth, the ejected minister from St. Peter's church at St. Albans, who had now been for twenty years pastor of the congregation at Hertford. Not long after Mr. Haworth rested from his labours, Dr. Guyse was unanimously invited to succeed him; but so diffident was he of his fitness for the office, that a considerable time elapsed, before their earnest intreaties could prevail on him to undertake the pastoral charge. Here he continued to labour for many years with great acceptance and success; and though he had invitations to more advantageous situations, a sense of duty detained him in the first field of his ministry. The arian heresy, which spread through the land, and infected individuals in most congregations, reached Hertford, and threatened the ruin of the flock. Dr. Guyse aware of the danger, like a good shepherd, would not quit them at a season so perilous, but boldly stood forward in defence of the truth. That his discourses might have a more lasting and extensive effect, he published, in 1719, a small volume on the divinity and person of Christ, and another in 1721, on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Some years after this dreadful curse had been averted from the congregation, his health became impaired, and the services of the Lord's-day so much oppressed his frame, that he was scarcely recovered before the arrival of the next; so that there appeared a danger of his being wholly laid aside from active labour. A change of situation and a diminution of public services being represented as absolutely necessary to his continuance in the ministry, in 1727 he listened to a call from London

by a part of Matthew Clarke's congregation which had separated from his successor; and he became their minister at a meeting-house in New Broad-street⁷. There his talents, matured by assiduous reading and reflection in the retirement of the country, found a proper field for their exercise, were called forth in the public services of the metropolis, and had their weight, influence, and utility in all their deliberations.

In 1732, the university of Aberdeen conferred on him the degree of D. D. It is said to have been without his knowledge, and the diploma was conveyed to him in the most respectful manner. Sometimes a university struck with uncommon merits, or wishing to bestow a peculiar favour on a friend, confers her honours free and unsolicited; but those who are behind the scenes, know that in most cases some kind friend secretly makes application to the learned body, pays the fees (which is a more important consideration than many imagine), and the diploma comes as it were by magic to the happy man, who is astonished to find himself so extensively known and so highly honoured. But in whatever way the degree came, it was richly merited. If profound and accurate knowledge of theology and biblical criticism gives a claim to the literary honours conferred on a divine, John Guyse could prefer that claim; and the univer-

⁷ A sentiment suggested to him by Mr. Bragge is supposed to have had considerable influence in determining his mind on the occasion: "there are various reasons for a minister's lawfully leaving his people, and one certainly is, when upon a full trial his labours are too great for his health. Christ does not call upon his servants to kill themselves in his service: he is too good a master to require it, and too great a one to need it."

sity which bestowed it upon him, did honour to itself.

For a long course of years Dr. Guyse continued his labours among his people, and during the greater part of the time he was assisted by his only son, who died two years before his father. In the latter part of life he was afflicted with a painful lameness in his leg, and a decay of sight which ended in blindness. He however determined still to continue to preach; and after the morning service of the first day, an old lady of his congregation, it is said, enraptured with the discourse, went into the vestry, and in the fulness of her heart exclaimed, "doctor, I wish you had been blind these twenty years, for you never preached so good a sermon in your life as you have done to-day." That the good woman's remark was not wholly void of foundation, is more than probable. He had been accustomed to write all his sermons, and to read them according to the evil practice of the age. The language was more studied, sentences more stiff, the delivery more formal, and the tones more monotonous and cold. But when, after his blindness, his well-furnished mind framed a discourse in the thoughts, every thing was more suited to a popular audience: the language became that of conversation, more free and perspicuous: the illustrations were by a man preaching in the pulpit, not studying in his library: there was a greater simplicity and edge in the ideas, and the delivery was more animated as well as more natural. We wish no man blind that he may be a better preacher; but we wish all to preach in a natural, simple, instructive, animated, and affectionate manner, while they have eyes to see.

It would be doing injustice to Dr. Guyse to con-

sider him as an ordinary man in his day: he was undoubtedly one of the chief of the independent ministers, and became so by no illegitimate means. He attained his eminence and his influence by his talents, his wisdom, his piety, his zeal, and his public spirit. Students found him an affectionate father, and a faithful counsellor; and younger ministers had recourse to him in their difficulties, for they could confide in his prudence and his friendship. For his indigent brethren (and this has always been a numerous class among the dissenters) he deeply felt, and was always ready to give every assistance in his power. In promoting the interests of the King's-head Society, an institution to which the highest praise is due, he was ardent, persevering, and active.

As a champion for the doctrines of the Gospel, Dr. Guyse stood forth in the first rank of the army of Christ, and braved the reproach of want of candour, charity, the spirit of free inquiry, thinking for himself, and all the cant of the wide dissenters of that day: from none of them had he a single line of praise. In the discharge of his pastoral duties he was eminently exemplary; and during the whole course of his ministry, his church continued harmonious and flourishing. Viewed in his domestic relations, he was peculiarly amiable; and those who dwelt in his house, perceived the pure and beneficent influence of evangelical principles on his heart, his temper, and his conduct. Some of his contemporaries accused him of covetousness; but when his death brought the true state of his affairs to light, they acknowledged that the charge was without foundation. For a man in business to be thought richer than he is,

may prove a benefit; but it is always disadvantageous to a minister, for both his character and circumstances are injured by the mistake.

His works were numerous. In addition to the two which have been mentioned, he published, "the standing Use of the Scriptures," "Youth's Monitor, in several discourses," a volume of occasional sermons, some preached at Coward's lecture, and a sixth part of the Berry-street sermons: these discourses, all of which were first delivered from the pulpit, the reader will find judicious, weighty, serious, evangelical, and instructive. For want of exercise of the understanding no one will have cause to blame him; but the heart, the affections, and the imagination might have been more vigorously exerted: and he was not so free from dulness and coldness (the indwelling sin of the independents of that day) as we wish him to have been. In the controversy with Dr. Chandler "on preaching Christ," he had evidently the advantage both in argument and temper; and his opponent never appeared to so little advantage as in that dispute. But Dr. Guyse's great work was his "Paraphrase on the New Testament," first published in three quarto, and since in six octavo volumes. It displays a sound judgment, an intimate acquaintance with the original, considerable critical acumen, with much seriousness and zeal for truth. Great fault has been found with him for not giving what he conceived to be the meaning of the sacred writers, but collecting together the various senses put on the text by orthodox divines. Amidst the inconveniencies of this mode, one singular advantage will result to students in divinity and young ministers, that there is scarcely a book wherein they will find

in so narrow a compass so great a variety of excellent ideas on almost every text.

At last, worn out with years, when the time drew nigh that he should bid adieu to life, he displayed the spirit of a good minister of Jesus Christ. His serenity of mind, and hope of a blessed immortality were beheld by his friends with delight. "Thanks be to God," said he, "I have no doubt; no difficulty in my mind as to my eternal state; if I had, I could not bear what I now feel. I know in whom I have believed; here my faith rests. The peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, which I have long preached, are now the support of my soul: I live upon them every day, and thence I derive never failing comfort."—"How gracious is my God to me: how often has he made good to me that promise, 'as thy day so shall thy strength be.'—I am not afraid of death: I am afraid lest I should err on the other side in being too desirous of it." He entered into rest on the twenty-second of November, 1761, in the eighty-first year of his age.

SAMUEL WILTON, D. D.

His father was a man of business, in circumstances of great respectability in London; and his mother was a descendant of Timothy Cruso: he was born in 1744. During his earliest years he was placed under the care of a maiden aunt, whose pious instructions, united with those of his parents, were the means of producing those deep impressions of religion which he ever afterwards displayed*. For acquiring a classical

* Her name was Elizabeth Wilton, who, in conjunction with

education he enjoyed the advantages of the grammar school of Christchurch hospital, in the vicinity of which was his father's house. He began his academical studies for the ministry under Dr. Jennings, and completed them under Dr. Savage and Dr. Rees. Samuel Wilton had the true spirit of a student: the ardour of his mind urged him on to a constant pursuit of knowledge, and produced an eager and persevering desire of improvement. To the benefit derived from reading he united the advantages of conversation with fellow students whom he invited for that purpose to his house, and with ministers who frequently visited there as his father's friends.

He entered on the office of the ministry at Tooting, in Surry, as successor to the celebrated Dr. Henry Miles, F. R. S. and was ordained in 1766. The congregation, which was very small, soon began to increase both in numbers and in piety; nor will this appear strange if we consider the means which he employed, means which are seldom employed without success. To the ordinary services of the Lord's-day, which he performed with affection and fervour, he added an evening-lecture in the week, and thus arrested impressions which were ready to depart, and revived the ardour which the preceding Sabbath had created, and which before another would have died away. He catechised the children, visited the flock, conversed with the poor, and was peculiarly attentive to the afflicted. He exerted himself also

Mrs. Rachel King, sister of Dr. King, minister at Hare-court, for many years kept a boarding school of young ladies, at Hackney. For the eminent services they rendered to the cause of religion, in their important and honourable employment, as well as for their personal piety they deserve to be mentioned in a history of dissenters with the highest respect.

to establish, in connection with his brethren, evening lectures in the neighbouring towns and villages, that the knowledge of the Gospel might be more extensively spread abroad. His heart was in his work, and his fervent mind could not rest satisfied unless he did all for the cause of religion, which it was in his power to do.

In the application to parliament in 1772, for relief from subscription, he took a very active part. Ardent to enthusiasm for civil and especially religious liberty, he was appointed one of the members of the committee for conducting the business. Some of the London ministers having opposed the measure, he addressed to them an apology for renewing the application; and in 1774 he published a "Review of some of the Articles of the Church of England, to which a Subscription is required of Protestant Dissenting Ministers:" both were received by those of his side of the question with more than common approbation.

On the death of Dr. Langford, he was chosen his successor. The congregation at the Weighhouse was then small; but under Dr. Wilton it gradually increased. It pleased, however, the Head of the church soon to call him away from his labours. His last sermon was preached in an evening lecture at Hackney, the twenty-ninth of March, 1778, from Psalm cxix. 125. He was on the following Lord's-day to have delivered a funeral discourse, and spent in preparing for the service a great part of the Saturday night. On retiring to rest, he found himself attacked by a violent fever, which being neglected at first, in a few days put an end to his valuable life. Though surprised, as it were, by a mortal disease in the midst of his days, he expressed no regret at his sudden departure; but

welcomed death with firmness, or rather with cheerfulness and joy. On the day in which he died, he said to a friend who came from the city to visit him, "you now see me in the near view of death, and I rejoice in the prospect. It has been my delight to preach the Gospel of Christ, and to promote his glory. I am not afraid to die, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." He then added, "you will go to prayer with me: let us offer a few more petitions to God before we enter the world of praise, from which I am at no great distance." To another friend he lamented his imperfections, but at the same time expressed his confidence in God: "I have had my doubts, but my hope is well founded. I have had such manifestations of the love of God, that I do not and cannot doubt." Such was the frame of his soul when the delirium of the fever returned, which speedily wasted his remaining strength, and at midnight of the third of April, 1778, he expired.

Dr. Wilton was a man of more than common powers, of solid judgment, a lively imagination, and a strength of memory equalled by few. He possessed a wonderful ease in composition, as well as fluency of expression. In his preaching there was a remarkable savour and fervency, and in prayer an eminent degree of devotion, copiousness, and variety. But his style was not simple, he spoke too fast, had a monotonous delivery, looked down on his Bible as if he had been reading his notes, and was very long in his services: these were a considerable bar to his popularity. What a pity that a man who laboured so hard to acquire knowledge, should have been at se

little pains with his composition and delivery, in order to render it agreeable to his audience. It is not to be considered as a harmless imperfection, but a fault of considerable magnitude: it was one of the sins of the dissenters in the age in which Dr. Wilton lived.

But while these faults are noticed, let it be remembered that he was a superior man and an excellent minister of Christ. A fire was constantly burning in his breast, the fire of zeal for his Master's cause; he exerted himself to the utmost, and he had this additional excellence, that he made others exert themselves too. There is a class of worthy men in the church of Christ who wish to do good; but they need a person of energy to set them on, and to keep them in motion from year to year. Dr. Wilton possessed this valuable talent, and he did not hide it in a napkin. His death at so early a period is justly to be deplored as a loss to the cause of religion. He left a widow and four children; may his sons inherit his spirit, and imitate his example.

THOMAS STRANGE.

His father was a humble pious farmer at Evenley, in Northamptonshire, who, though he died when his son was only six years of age, perceived in him such a spirit of seriousness and study, as made him desirous that he should be devoted to the Christian ministry. By a step-father of the same character and employment, Thomas Strange was some time afterwards called to agricultural labour: with the prophet Elisha he followed his father's oxen in the plough, and with

king David fed the flock upon the hills. In such services, vigour of constitution is often acquired, the benefit of which is felt in all the labours of the study and the pulpit during the whole of life. But the mind of the shepherd's boy was improved as well as the body: he read whatever he could procure, and his eagerness for new books can be conceived only by those who, with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge, have no money to purchase them. His choice, however, appears to have been well directed; for before his sixteenth year he was truly devoted to God, and in the absence of his step-father conducted the worship of the family with unusual propriety.

The providence of God having removed the abode of the family to some distance, he had an opportunity of hearing Mr. Hayward, of Pottersperry, a man highly celebrated in the neighbourhood for his popular preaching and his zeal; was so charmed with his gifts, that in company with another youth of similar dispositions, he used to walk ten miles every Sunday to attend on his ministry; and afterwards joined in communion with his church. Let not these youthful ardours be discouraged or condemned; they often kindle in the bosom a fire of piety and benevolence which burns during the remainder of life.

All this time his heart was eagerly fixed on the ministry of the Gospel, and he used to say, "I would be willing to live on bread and water, if I might be but a faithful and useful servant of Jesus Christ:" it was however the language of a hopeless wish; but the Head of the church had work for him to do, and he gave him the desire of his heart. Mrs. Strange having mentioned the desire of her son and his companion to Mr. Hayward, he represented the case to

Dr. Doddridge, who, with the amiable benevolence and fervent zeal which shone so conspicuously in his character, invited the young men to participate of the advantages of his seminary at Northampton. After a day of prayer spent by some ministers and Christian friends, in which he was peculiarly recommended to the grace of God, he set off with eager expectation to commence his studies in 1745, and he continued to pursue them for six years with exemplary diligence and assiduity.

At the close of his academical course, he was invited to the pastoral office by a congregation at Kilsby in his native county, the members of which dwelt partly there, and partly in three neighbouring villages. They were collected by the labours of two nonconformists, but had not till now been numerous enough to call a minister. Though the situation was destitute of every worldly recommendation, he accepted the invitation. Every Lord's-day, he preached twice at Kilsby, once at Creek, and generally once at one of his two other villages; and in this course he persevered to the end of life. His assiduity in the private offices of the ministry was not less worthy of praise. The attention he paid to the catechising of the children of the congregation was unwearied; neither time nor pains were spared. His visits to the house of sorrow and pain were frequent and edifying; and that he might convey instruction to the families of his charge in health as well as in sickness, four evenings in the week, were, during the winter, devoted to the important service. So desirous was he of doing good at all times, that when he was employed in his garden, he used to have one of his children or scholars present, with whom he conversed on some improving subject.

It too frequently happens that when a minister has laboured for some years in a place, especially if the people are poor, he begins to think that he would be more comfortable in some other situation, for which he begins to look around with eagerness. He now does every thing with discontent; his heart is taken off from his people, and he is unconcerned about their welfare. Satan has not a fiery dart to cast into the soul, more injurious both to the minister and to the cause of Christ; and the effect has often been felt to their anguish and dishonour during the rest of life. From this evil, Mr. Strange was happily preserved; he persevered in the love of his people and of his situation to the end; and the consequence was, as might be expected, honourable to himself and advantageous to his flock. Their number gradually increased, and after exhausting their skill in finding room for every addition they could make, a larger place of worship became indispensibly necessary. It was a bold attempt, but he was a man of energy; and he succeeded in erecting a commodious and substantial meeting-house, and providing funds to discharge the cost. In one of his other villages, a new place was also built; and in a third, a cottage was purchased and fitted up for worship. Let not the rich and great look down with contempt on these pious efforts to accommodate the hearers of the Gospel among the poor.

Although he commonly preached four times and walked eight miles on the Lord's-day, it was his practice to rise on the Monday morning an hour or two before his family, to choose subjects of discourse for the following Sabbath, and to draw out the plans, that he might have respect to them in his thoughts, his conversation, and his reading in the course of the

week. This was taking time by the forelock ; and how much more beneficial must it have been to the congregation to receive the mature fruits of their pastor's meditation and study, than where the minister does not think of the services of the Sunday till the preceding evening, or the morning of the day itself. If such sluggards were cast out of the vineyard, it would be making room for better men.

The habitation and domestic economy accorded with the simple character of a *chorepiscopus*, with his small salary and humble congregation. His parsonage was a cottage, with a rude orchard adjoining to it. Though the house retained its old walls and its thatch, one internal improvement after another made it a decent and commodious abode. The orchard by the labour of his hands became a delightful garden, producing fruits, flowers, and wholesome vegetables in abundance; and his bees filled their hives with honey. Unable with a salary of forty pounds a year to procure the aid of a servant, his wife, well fitted for her station, and afterwards his daughters when they grew up, managed all the domestic concerns with his aid; and they lived in ancient simplicity, having every office performed by the hand of love, without an attempt at shew, but free from want, contented and grateful.

For independence of mind Mr. Strange has a claim to high praise. Sometimes in a similar situation, men have betrayed the spirit of a beggar: always expecting, always asking, what they have received carelessly spending; and when they die, their family looks to the religious public for relief. Superior to this way of living, he pursued a nobler course: he lessened his wants, he diminished his expenditure,

he increased his exertions, he saved what the others would waste. In consequence of this, he made additions annually to a small sum which he received in marriage; and at his death left some hundred pounds for the support of his widow and four children. How much more dignified was this than to have depended on a collection throughout the country.

Let it not be supposed that this was the fruit of niggardly penury: the man was liberal, and had the spirit of a prince. At his first settlement, perceiving the need of a village school, he undertook the instruction of the children, and devoted the profits to pious and charitable uses. For some part of his time he had a few boarders at twelve guineas a year; but he was forward to every good work. "Economy and exertion (says his biographer) constitute the barrel and the cruse, out of which most families of every rank and profession might freely take for themselves and their family, without danger of exhausting them."

Mr. Strange's delivery was exceedingly disagreeable both in tones and gesture. If the defect was not natural, it would have been worth the labour of years to conquer the vicious habits: but his own people did not perceive any thing amiss. A defect of sight, which increased with his years, prevented him from reading so much as he desired; but perhaps this inconvenience was more than compensated by greater degrees of thought and reflection: which matured his views, and made him more fully master of the subject before him.

As he was the first dissenting minister at Kilsby, the villagers, as is natural from the prejudices of those who never saw any resident minister among

them but their own, felt the strongest aversion to a nonconformist, and regarded him with a very evil eye, which rendered even civility to him a difficult task. But by the wisdom, the sanctity, and the meekness of his deportment, he overcame these unreasonable sentiments, and was very highly esteemed by all. Such too was the influence of his life and doctrine, that when one of his congregation married a member of the established church, it was observed he generally gained a proselyte: and they made no bad choice who preferred him as their teacher.

After persevering in a course of faithful labour in his villages for more than thirty years, he began to feel infirmities, which seemed to him to indicate the approach of death. To his youngest son, who was with him for some weeks, he frequently intimated these expectations. "I shall not be with you long: seek, my son, another father, and dont delay preparation for eternity." In the summer of 1784, attendance at an ordination, at Bicester, appears greatly to have injured his health, which from that time gradually declined.

The sentiments of such a man in the views of death, will be read with no common feeling. In a conversation with three of his brethren, who met accidentally at his house, he said, "I have always valued and preached the doctrines of grace, but nothing gives me so much concern in the review of my ministry, as that I have not more insisted on and pressed the fruits of grace." Part of the last fortnight of his life was spent at Kettering with his eldest son, where being frequently asked by his Christian friends his sentiments and views in the near prospect of death, his answer was; "I wish to die a broken-

hearted sinner, renouncing every thing of my own, and depending entirely for future happiness on the free grace of God, through the atonement and righteousness of Christ." Finding all medical aid vain, he desired to go home and die at Kilsby, the scene of his labours and success; and a few days after his return he calmly yielded up the ghost, on the fifth of September, 1784. His last words to his surrounding friends were: "farewell till the day of our Lord, Jesus Christ: the Lord have mercy, spiritual and everlasting mercy, on every one of you, upon this congregation, and upon the whole Israel of God. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath a right to take away, blessed be the name of the Lord." The tears and groans of his flock attested the greatness of their loss: it would be indeed a less difficult task to find a suitable successor to the see of Canterbury, than to the village of Kilsby.

SAMUEL BREWER, B. D.

This excellent man was born at Rendham, in Suffolk, and educated for the ministry among the dissenters under the tuition of Mr. Hubbard. Not long after the completing of his studies, his tutor died; and he became his successor in the congregation at Stepney, where formerly Matthew Mead had exercised the office of the ministry for more than fifty years.

The number of his hearers when he accepted the pastoral care, was small. His predecessor, though a very able and very pious man, possessed only in a moderate degree that most important quality which

the apostle Paul comprises in the words, "apt to teach." In this quality Mr. Brewer excelled, and the consequence was, that the congregation immediately increased, and became the largest among the dissenters in London. His intellectual powers were not of a superior order; but the knowledge which he had acquired, he laid up in a warm heart; and when he brought it forth, it was not in a cold, dry, scholastic form (for he was not *Moulin raisonnant*, a reasoning mill, as Voltaire calls Dr. Clarke), but with a holy fervour, addressed to the hearts and affections of his hearers; and though the light of divine truth might not be peculiarly strong, it had life and heat in it, and diffused its vivid influence through the whole soul.

The popularity which he gained at his first entrance into the pulpit, he retained to the close of life: nor need we wonder that he did. The ardour of his preaching was not an ebullition of the fire of youth, but the expression of an unquenchable zeal for the glory of God, and the tenderest compassion for the souls of men. Hence flowed the continuance of his animated discourses and of his popularity to the end. And during the whole of this time he was giving additional force to his preaching by the sanctity of his life, by a blameless and inoffensive conduct, by a display of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and by a conscientious and diligent performance of the duties of his office.

The permanence of popularity with a minister is by no means universal nor general: and scarcely any thing is more mortifying to a person who has enjoyed it, than to see that he has lost it. Self-love indeed comes to his aid, and throws the blame on the fickle-

ness of the people; but the minister who makes the study of the sacred Scriptures his daily employment, that he may bring forth out of his treasure new things and old; who prepares with diligence and with prayer for the services of the sanctuary; who brings with him to the congregation a rich mass of evangelical truth; who endeavours to render that truth so plain that none can misapprehend it, and kindles it into a flame by pouring it forth from a soul burning with love, into the hearts and affections of his people; and who crowns all these with a holy life, and habitual exhortations and prayers in the houses of his hearers, and in the apartments of the afflicted, need not fear the dispersion of his flock. It will seldom be heard that such a minister is becoming unpopular, and his audience dwindling away; for if some who are fond of novelty take their flight, an equal or superior number of more valuable persons will fill their place.

Mr. Brewer's life was spent in the cares and duties of the pastoral office; for these he considered as the grand business of his existence. No learned volumes came from his pen; but sinners were from year to year converted by his ministry, and he was training up a multitude of immortal souls for eternal glory. These are the first and the highest ends of the servant of Christ, and demand the first attention and the prime energy of the soul. The composition of books is but a secondary thing, and he who cannot do both, must omit the latter.

Mr. Brewer was remarkable for great particularity in prayer. Some good people used to say, that when it was his turn to preach the Tuesday lecture at Broad-street (which before had been for a century at

Pinner's-hall), they learnt from his prayers all the religious news of the city and neighbourhood. In his own congregation he also took particular notice of every event. Having many seafaring people among his hearers, when a merchant ship was going to sail, he specified the captain, the mate, the carpenter, the boatswain, and all the sailors with great affection; and it is said that impressed with a belief of the benefit of his prayers, they frequently brought him home, as a token of gratitude, something of the produce of the country to which they went. To the episcopalian of the English establishment, and the presbyterian of the Scotch, and those who secede from it, such particularity sounds oddly, and is disagreeable: they dwell more in generals. But among the English independents and baptists it has long been customary, and they are greater adepts. The skill of some in mentioning the particular cases of persons is singularly felicitous; it is also peculiarly interesting, and is calculated to impress on the minds of individuals a deeper attention to the subject.

Few men preserved through life a more uniform display of piety, prudence, and of an inoffensive and peaceable deportment; and an offer from the partiality of kindness which promised great pecuniary advantages to himself and his family, was directed by him in such a manner as to impress all with the highest ideas of his integrity and disinterestedness.

When he advanced in years, he felt the need of help, and Mr. Ford was appointed his fellow labourer. He continued however to do what he could, and he preached at the lecture in Broad-street on the Tuesday preceding his death, from 2 Tim. i. 12. The frame of his heart in the prospect of departure,

was that of an eminent Christian. Submission to the divine will, reliance on the power and grace of the Redeemer, and the hope of the heavenly glory; all shone forth with conspicuous lustre. His last words were those of the psalmist, "thou shalt guide me with thy counsel; and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee: my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." He expired on Saturday the eleventh of June, 1796, in the seventy-third year of his age.

Were there a score of Samuel Brewers to fill the London pulpits as they become vacant, and had the members wisdom given them to choose such men, it would be the greatest blessing which God could bestow upon the independent congregations in the metropolis.

ISAAC TOMS.

He was born in London on the twenty-second of August, 1710, and had the happiness to descend from a line of ancestors eminent for their piety and their sufferings in the cause of Christ. The first part of his classical education he received at Duckenfield, near Manchester; and at the same time, what was infinitely better, deep impressions of religion which continued to his dying day. In his thirteenth year he returned to London, and was four years at St. Paul's school.

His father designed him for trade, but the son's inclination led him to study. In his seventeenth

year, his fervent piety and skill in the learned languages recommended him to the office of chaplain and private tutor in the family of Sir Daniel Dolins, at Hackney. It was here a considerable part of his employment to promote the improvement of his son, whose organs of vision were so defective that it depended on Mr. Toms' reading and conversation. Much time was daily spent in these exercises, and directed to the most important subjects ; for he was anxious to make Mr. Dolins, who was an amiable and pious youth, intimately acquainted with the principles and evidences of natural and revealed religion, that he might be fortified against the snares of infidelity, to which, from his exalted station he might be exposed in future life. These studies, while they improved the pupil, were no less beneficial to the tutor.

Soon after Mr. Toms came into this situation, he entered on a course of theological studies under the tuition of Dr. Ridgley and Mr. Eames ; and he afterwards preached in the congregations of the metropolis and its vicinity with acceptance.

At this period of his life Mr. Toms may be justly hailed with veneration as the precursor of the Tract Society, for he composed and printed a variety of useful tracts, which he endeavoured to distribute. Five of them were afterwards adopted by the society for propagating religious knowledge among the poor ; and many thousands of these dispersed through the world.

In this situation he continued nearly sixteen years. The office of chaplain was then by no means uncommon among the most opulent dissenters, and students and younger ministers were usually called to fill it.

Whether it was favourable to their future character as pastors of congregations, may be doubted. They saw the great world, but it was a world with which in their future connection they were to have little intercourse or concern. If it improved their manners, there was no small danger that more than was gained by the gentleman, was lost by the minister. If a fondness for high living and genteel company became a fixed habit in consequence of their residence with the great, it proved injurious to the future pastor of a dissenting congregation, who, if he would be faithful and successful, must mingle chiefly with humbler classes of mankind. Ministers of the present day have lost nothing by the office of chaplain falling into disuse, whatever the families themselves may lose. But if some have sustained injury in such situations, Mr. Toms appears to have escaped unhurt. Possessing the spirit of a zealous disciple of Christ, he was anxious to be employed in a more extensive sphere of usefulness. A valuable living was pressed on him by a man of rank, with whom he became acquainted at sir Daniel's table; but we give no great praise to virtue in refusing the offer, for it is what every man of integrity with his principles would do. The plea which has been alleged of a more extensive field of usefulness is not valid; for every dissenting minister, if he finds his field of labour too confined, may extend its boundaries: of this Mr. Toms' future exertions furnish a fair example.

An invitation from a congregation at Hadleigh, in Suffolk, met with his acceptance, though the salary was but thirty pounds a year; and he settled there in 1743. He was now the country minister, intent on doing good in every way that his situation would

allow, or his heart could devise. Besides the services in his own place of worship, he established lectures in the neighbouring villages, and schools in which the children of the poor were taught to read ; and they were catechised by him at stated seasons. His affection for the young was exceedingly great, and he was peculiarly concerned for their salvation. In dispensing the ordinance of baptism, he showed the tenderest regard for the child, and his whole heart flowed forth in his earnest exhortation to the parents to train it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. He is said never to have engaged in the service without previously devoting some time in prayer both for the parents and the child. In the choice of subjects for the pulpit, it was his invariable practice to ask counsel from God ; and when remarkable events occurred, he constantly endeavoured to convey by them instruction to his flock.

To exemplary activity in the work of the ministry, Mr. Toms united the most amiable conduct in private life. The natural irritability of his temper he subdued by imposing silence on himself in seasons of provocation, till he had read over the passages in the Old and New Testament relating to the subject, which he kept always by him for the purpose, in the original tongues. In the discharge of domestic duties he was truly a pattern, and scarcely could more perfect harmony and tender affection subsist than between him and Mrs. Toms, who was the daughter of the Rev. Samuel Say, of Westminster, and was the partner of his days from the time of his settlement at Hadleigh, till the year preceding his death.

For two and forty years he laboured as a good minister of Christ ; but, in 1785, he felt old age

creeping upon him, and inability to perform the whole service of the Sabbath. From that time till 1798, resigning the morning service to another, he preached regularly in the afternoon; but at the close of that year, he was constrained to bid adieu to the pulpit, a station so dear to his soul, and from which he had so long proclaimed the words of eternal life. Still he was carried to the house of God to join with his flock as a private worshipper; and when he could say no more, he used to dismiss the assembly with the apostolical benediction. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Increasing infirmities obliged him on the second of November, 1800, to bid his last farewell to the place of public worship; and from that time he was confined to his house.

Soon after he felt himself unable to go up stairs to his study. Of that hallowed retreat, where he had for more than fifty years enjoyed communion with God in prayer, and laid up treasures of divine knowledge in the mind with so much pleasure as a student, a minister, and a Christian, he is now compelled to take a final leave. In the pain of such a separation, those who love their studies as they ought, can sympathise. Obligated at last to leave the parlour too, and confine himself to his apartment, he said, "I perceive that I am gently slipping into eternity;" and under the pressure of weakness which was daily becoming greater, he used to express himself thus; "O to be humble, to be patient, to be thankful, to be increasing in grace, to be fitting for glory, to prize the great salvation more and more." Being visited by a neighbouring minister, who spoke to him of the great reward laid up for him in heaven, he replied, "sir, if ever I arrive at the world of blessedness, I shall shout, grace, grace!" So long as he was capable

of speaking, he repeated the words of the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" and when he could speak no more, his looks expressed the devotion of his soul.

This truly apostolic man fell asleep in Jesus, the second of January, 1801, in the ninety-first year of his age, having lived just to see the commencement of the new century.

JOHN GILL, D. D.

This eminent writer forms an honourable commencement to our list of baptist ministers. He was born November 23, 1697, at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, where his father was deacon of the baptist church. He made rapid advances in classical learning at a neighbouring grammar school, in which he was placed while very young, and even then he resorted so frequently to a bookseller's for the purpose of reading, that it became proverbial to say, that a thing was as certain as that John Gill was in the bookseller's shop. Being driven from the grammar school by the bigotry of the clergyman who presided over it, his friends endeavoured to procure him admission into a seminary for the ministry, by sending specimens of his advancement in different branches of literature. These, however, defeated their object; for they produced the following strange answer: "he is too young, and should he continue as it might be expected he would, to make such rapid advances, he would go through the common circle before he would be capable of taking care of himself, or of being employed in any public service." It is to be hoped, that this frozen reply was accompanied

with some explanation which made it appear more justifiable than in its present detached state ; or we should suspect that the guardians of this seminary felt but little solicitude to see the finest talents consecrated to the noblest of causes.

Not discouraged by this repulse, young Gill pursued his studies with so much ardour that before he was nineteen, he had read the principal Greek and Latin classics, had gone through a course of logic, rhetoric, natural and moral philosophy, and acquired a considerable knowledge of the Hebrew tongue. But it is supremely gratifying to find that religion was still dearer to him than learning ; for instead of resembling those sciologists who suppose it is a proof of genius to disdain the study of their Maker's will, he imitated him who in early youth resorted to the temple as his father's house, and there employed in sacred researches that understanding at which all were astonished. The baptist church in his native town first received this extraordinary youth as a member, and then called him forth into the ministry. For this work he went to study under Mr. Davies, at Higham Ferrers ; but was soon invited to preach to the baptist congregation in Horsely-down, near London, over which he was ordained in 1719, when he was in his twenty-second year.

He now applied with intense ardour to oriental literature, and having contracted an acquaintance with one of the most learned of the Jewish rabbies, he read the Targums, the Talmud, and every book of rabbinical lore which he could procure. In this line, it is said, that he had but few equals, and that he was not excelled by any one whose name is recorded in the annals of literature. Having published in 1748, "a

Commentary on the New Testament," in three folio volumes, the immense reading and learning which it displayed, induced the university of Aberdeen to send him the diploma of D. D. with the following compliment, "On account of his knowledge of the Scriptures, of the oriental languages, and of Jewish antiquities, of his learned defence of the Scriptures against deists and infidels, and the reputation gained by his other works, the university had, without his privity, unanimously agreed to confer on him the degree of doctor in divinity."

He published also "a Commentary on the Old Testament," which, together with that on the New, forms an immense mass of nine folio volumes. At the close of this herculean labour, he was so far from sitting down to rest, that he said, "I considered with myself what would be next best to engage in for the further instruction of the people under my care, and my thoughts led me to enter upon a scheme of doctrinal and practical divinity." This he executed in three quarto volumes. Amidst these labours of the study, added to those of the pulpit, he lived to a good old age, and departed to his rest in the year 1771, when he was far advanced in his seventy-fourth year. He was married and had a numerous family, but his wife died seven years before him, and he was survived by only two of his children.

Besides the works already mentioned, he maintained the five points of calvinism in his "Cause of God and Truth," with much temper, argument, and learning. He published also "a Dissertation on the Hebrew Language," discourses on the Canticles, to which considerable objections have been made, and many sermons, as well as smaller controversial pieces.

His private character was so excellent, that it has been said, "his learning and labours were exceeded only by the invariable sanctity of his life and conversation. From his childhood to his entrance on the ministry, and from his entrance on the ministry to the moment of his dissolution, not one of his most inveterate opposers was ever able to charge him with the least shadow of immorality. Himself, no less than his writings, demonstrate that the doctrines of grace do not lead to licentiousness. Those who had the honour and happiness of being admitted into the number of his friends, can go still farther in their testimony, they know that his moral demeanour was from first to last more than blameless, it was exemplary."

As a divine, he was a supralapsarian calvinist; but in his body of divinity, he is so far from condemning sublapsarian sentiments as heretical, or arminianised, that he attempts to show how the two systems coalesce. He discovers, however, an anxiety to support his high scheme at every opportunity, and often betrays its weakness by catching at the shadows of arguments for its defence. He seems to inquire how much, rather than how well he could write on every subject; and while he displays vast reading, he neither discovers much reflection himself, nor excites it in others. Indeed he possessed knowledge rather than wisdom; for his learning was not inspired by genius; and while his works impress the judicious reader with esteem for the purity of his intentions, and admiration for the magnitude of his labours, they excite regret that they had not been prepared with greater delicacy of taste, and revised with more accurate

* Body of Divinity, book II. chap. ii. p. 303.

judgment. It is above all to be lamented, that they have diffused a taste for extravagant calvinism, which has induced many who were devoid of his sanctity to profane his name in order to sanction their errors or their lusts.

ROBERT ROBINSON.

On the eighth of January, 1735, he was born at Swaffham, in Norfolk, in circumstances by no means propitious to future eminence. He was, however, sent for some years to a grammar school, and made rapid progress in the knowledge of the French and Latin tongues. But the death of his father and some of his mother's friends, obliged her to take him away at the age of twelve; and we find him in a situation, where most probably necessity compelled her to place him — apprentice to John Anderson, a hair-dresser, in Crutched-friars, London.

Religion appears to have been with him the subject of early investigation, for during his apprenticeship, Dr. Gill, Dr. Guyse, and Mr. Romaine were his favourite preachers; but Mr. Whitefield in his esteem excelled them all. He began a diary in the manner of that celebrated man; and before he had completed his nineteenth year, he seems to have conceived the idea of becoming a preacher. Previous to the termination of his apprenticeship, his master perceiving that he paid more attention to the reading of religious books, and the hearing of sermons from popular ministers, than to shaving and dressing his customers, gave up his indentures, and left him to follow his own plans^b.

^b A person, zealous for the dignity of the dissenting ministry,

It is probable that he immediately began to preach. His first sermon was delivered to a few poor people at Mildenhall, in Suffolk; and he soon received an invitation to officiate in the tabernacle at Norwich. After he had preached there for some time, he quitted the calvinistic methodists, and formed an independent church of thirteen persons who had imbibed his sentiments. Of this church he became the pastor, baptising infants and performing all the other offices of an independent minister. In a short time he

feeling great indignation at the reflections thrown by a high-minded churchman on Robert Robinson for the meanness of his early employment, thus vindicates his favourite preacher:—

“Surely his having been apprenticed to a barber is no proof nor rational presumption of deficiency in either natural or acquired abilities; if it were, I could furnish abundant instances of a similar kind in the establishment. I could tell this gentleman of one bishop who was apprentice to a pastry-cook; another, a wool-comber; a rector of a city parish, who in early life was a gold-wire drawer; of a lecturer of St. Andrews, who had been a stay-maker; of another lecturer of a church in East Cheap, London, who had been a baker; of a rector of a large parish just out of the city, who had been an upholsterer, and after that a lawyer; of another who had been a linen-draper; of another now living, who was an ironmonger. All these last had been not only apprenticed, but actually in business; and shocking, dreadfully shocking as it may be to ecclesiastical aristocracy, some of them had been even journeymen! Many more instances of a similar kind might be easily found, but these are sufficient to show the dissenters are not, and even poor Robert Robinson was not in this respect below par.” *Monthly Magazine*, for August, 1809, p. 6.

But this is performing a needless task; *non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis Christus eget.*

Where men are under the influence of the spirit of the world, such reasoning may apply; but it is inapplicable to the kingdom, the disciples, and the ministers of Christ. Here,

“Worth makes the man, the want of it the fellow;

The rest is all but leather or prunella.”

changed again, and became a baptist. All these changes must have taken place in the space of a few years; for, in 1759, when he was only twenty-four years of age, he was invited to the pastoral charge of the baptist church at Cambridge, and after a trial of two years, was settled there in 1761. He was then married, and had his mother to support; but it appears that neither the church nor he had spent much time in considering how his family were to live, for the first half year's salary, which they brought him, amounted only to three pounds, twelve shillings, and five pence. It, however, gradually increased, till in 1770, his annual income amounted to more than ninety pounds. So acceptable were Mr. Robinson's services, that in a few years, the place of worship could not contain the flourishing congregation. The old meeting-house was pulled down, and a commodious building erected at their own expense; "an example (says his biographer, Mr. Dyer,) which it were to be wished dissenters in general would attend to, and not indulge themselves, as they frequently do, with houses for worship unnecessarily large and improperly elegant, by laying a severe tax upon distant societies, and especially those of the metropolis." In 1773, Mr. Robinson removed from an obscure village in the neighbourhood, where he had hitherto lived, to Chesterton, with a family of nine children, commenced farmer, some years afterwards merchant, and dealt in coals and corn. Some of his brethren strongly expressed their fears that his engagements in business would injure his spirit as a minister; "but he was not pleased at their interference, and the only notice which such imputations received from him, was smiles at their impertinence. Godly

boobies, he would say, too idle many of them to work, too ignorant to give instruction, and too conceited to study, spending all their time in tattling and mischief. —Are these the men to direct my conduct, to censure my industry.”

The rapidity of the changes in shifting from one denomination to another in his youth, was unhappily followed by a versatility in maturer years, which betrayed itself in regard to subjects of unspeakably greater importance. After being twenty years a minister, it became evident (says Mr. Dyer.) that Mr. Robinson by no means adhered to the systems which have obtained the name of orthodox. The discovery produced a coldness in many of his former friends and admirers, and by many of them he was entirely deserted. In consequence of this, he threw himself into other and very different connections. His own account of the matter is : “ I have been seven weeks in London ; my own party treated me with neglect, and even preached against me in my presence about mental errors, which *ita dii me ament*, not one of them understands. I preached, however, for the general baptists, and for Dr. Rees, Kippis, Price, Worthington, &c. so that now the slandering orthodox name me an arian and socinian with apparent grace.” His own congregation is said to have been more steady in its attachment : “ he was (they said) the man of our choice, and is still of our esteem ;” and if some grew cold, by the most valuable part of the society he was admired to the last.

His constitution appears to have decayed at rather an early period, and for some time before his death he laboured under a dejection and languor of mind. To remove the complaint, “ his friends hoped that a

journey to Birmingham, and an interview with Dr. Priestley which he had long desired, would prove beneficial to him." He set out, and travelling slowly arrived there on Saturday, the fifth of June, 1790. The next day he preached twice; in the new meeting in the morning, and in the evening at the old. Dr. Priestley was charmed with his conversation, but much disappointed in his preaching: "his discourse (he said) was unconnected and desultory, and his manner of treating the doctrine of the trinity savoured more of burlesque than serious reasoning. The impression left on Dr. Priestley's mind by his conversation and preaching, was, that "he (Mr. Robinson) was of the unitarian faith, and had received considerable light from his theological writings." On the Tuesday evening following he retired in good health, and on the Wednesday morning was found dead in his bed, with the clothes not in the smallest degree discomposed. He is said to have often expressed a wish, that he might die softly, suddenly, and alone; and he obtained it. He was in the fifty-fifth year of his age.

Mr. Robinson's works were numerous, and many of them shew the author to have been a man of uncommon talents: they all make it evident that he was the more than ordinarily strenuous, and sometimes almost the furious advocate of civil and religious liberty. His "Plea for the Divinity of Christ" is very able. The translation, with notes, of "Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon," though it resembles an *olla podrida*, is a very useful book. His translations of Saurin's sermons have been much read: but Saurin and Robinson were cast in two of the God of nature's most different moulds; so that

the bold nervous spirit of the latter, was not the most proper organ for conveying the elegant expressions and delicate turns of the former. The volume of "Village Sermons," marks him out as a very great man, and extraordinarily qualified for the office of a religious instructor. If they had been written when evangelical sentiments had a stronger hold of his mind, they would have been almost unequalled. Had he possessed the patience of investigation, the calmness of research, and impartiality in narrating the result, which Lardner so eminently displayed, his "History of Baptism," and "Ecclesiastical Researches" would have been in greater repute.

The indulgence of eccentricity, and a fondness for novelty, were strong features in his character. For some time, in order to follow nature, he would only eat when he was hungry, and go to bed when he was overpowered with sleep, so that day was turned into night, and night into day. How absurd and inconvenient these fancies must have been in the head of a large family, may be easily conceived. Eccentricity, it has been often said, is one of the attributes of genius, but nothing can be farther from the truth: it is the pretext of men who could lay claim to genius on no other account. True genius will prove the corrector of eccentricity. Who ever heard of the eccentricities of Grotius, of sir Isaac Newton, of Locke, of Baxter, of Howe, of Owen, or of Bates? If there was any difference between them and other men, their genius dictated a greater propriety of conduct. That some men of genius have been eccentric is acknowledged; but men still more eccentric can be produced in unspeakably greater proportion, from whose souls one spark of genius never appeared. The eccentricity of

Some men of genius is to be considered as a painful proof that their genius was not complete, that there was a weak part in the soul to which it did not extend and which was the cause of the eccentricity. If this will not satisfy, then it may be asserted, that some men to whom genius has been given, not having it under the guidance of wisdom, become odd and eccentric, and sink beneath the dignity of that rank in the intellectual and moral world, in which they were entitled to stand.

Mr. Robinson's talents as a public teacher, were of the highest order. He knew how to draw every ear to attention, and his dominion over his audience was absolute. Had he retained the piety which he appeared to have, the humility, the zeal, and the evangelical principles of his younger years, there would have been few more useful, as there were few more able ministers in England. His influence over a multitude of well-educated and well-principled youth among the dissenters was powerful and extensive. If the effect of his instructions had been to make them docile, humble, lovers of the pure Gospel of Christ, and devoted to God, thousands of parents would have risen up to bless him, But if the usual result was, that they despised their former creed and teachers, became proud of their own understanding, speculative, sceptical, and undevout, praise must be withheld, and blessings not poured upon his name.

That Mr. Robinson should quit the camp of the orthodox, will not excite surprise in those who have observed his spirit in the course of the preceding narrative. That unbounded self-conceit and more than sovereign contempt of others, which he frequently betrayed, expose a heart already removed

from under the influence of evangelical truth, and fully prepared to drink the cup of socinianism to the very dregs.

JOHN RYLAND, A. M.

This eccentric man was born in 1723, and before he became solicitous for his eternal welfare, shewed the characteristic ardour of his mind in the eager pursuit of worldly follies. But in the spring of 1741, he was one among forty persons who were all, about the same time, gathered into the church under the ministry of Benjamin Beddome, at Bourton-on-the-water, in Gloucestershire. Mr. Beddome perceiving something extraordinary in this youth, introduced him to the academy at Bristol, under Mr. Bernard Foskett, where his intense application to learning was impeded by the mental conflicts he endured^c.

His first pastoral charge was at Warwick, in which town he was ordained over the baptist church in 1750; but removed, after nine years, to Northampton. Here his labours were eminently successful; for the church, which consisted of no more than thirty members when he took the charge of it, received, under him, an addition of three hundred and twenty persons. But some pecuniary embarrassments occa-

^c Perplexed with doubts concerning the existence of God and his own eternal safety, he wrote the following resolution, which admirably displays his peculiarity of mind: "June 25, 1744, æt. twenty years. If there is ever a God in heaven or earth, I vow and protest in his strength, or that God permitting me, I'll find him out, and I'll know whether he loves or hates me, or I'll die and perish, soul and body, in the pursuit and search. Witness John Collett Ryland."

sioned his removal, in the year 1786, to Enfield, where he had a flourishing school and preached only occasionally. He was removed, however, to a heavenly mansion July 24, 1792, in his sixty-ninth year. His body was interred at Northampton, the scene of his most successful labours, where his son, Dr. Ryland afterwards preached, till he was called to take charge of the baptist academy at Bristol.

The eccentricities of his mind and manner, have often been the theme of anecdotes^d, which his surviving relatives say were not always true. The warmth of his disposition appeared indeed principally in a noble ardour for the divine glory and the diffusion of evangelical truth; but it sometimes produced effects over which he mourned. In his personal religion, he christianised the heathen's maxim by beginning

^d When he was dangerously ill, the people of the town, as they passed by the corner of his house would exclaim, "God send that man may live; if there is a good man in the town, he is one." At this general concern for his recovery, one poor profane creature was so provoked, that hearing the ejaculations of others for his safety, he wished on the contrary that he might die and be damned. He uttered this imprecation as he passed through the church-yard, which was near the parsonage-house where Mr. Ryland then lived. But he recovered, and was the instrument of that man's conversion, who was perhaps the only person in the town who had wished for his death. For, some time afterward, this man courted a young woman who attended at the baptist meeting, and expressed his determination to obtain her in marriage, though he vowed he would cut off her legs but he would prevent her going to meeting. He used, therefore, to wait for her on the back hills near the meetings-house, and then go home with her. But one evening, after standing about the door pretty early, he felt himself inclined to go in, and look at the place, when others following him into the gallery, before he was aware, he found it difficult to make his retreat; he was obliged therefore, contrary to his intention, to stay and hear the sermon: he heard it, was pierced to the heart, and was afterwards added to the church.

with God, whose word he studied early every morning, and in the pulpit he was always lively, generally striking, frequently eccentric, and sometimes sublime and impressive beyond description.

SAMUEL STENNETT, D. D.

To be not only a minister of superior talents and virtues, but the son of a minister of superior endowments; and he too the son of a minister of superior eminence, is an honour which falls to the lot of few: it was however a distinction which Dr. Stennett enjoyed. He was born at Exeter, where his father Dr. Joseph Stennett officiated for many years as pastor of the baptist church in that city; and who afterwards removed to London to take charge of the congregation at Wild-street, Lincoln's-inn-fields. Samuel was his younger son, and having early discovered a pious disposition, he was admitted a member of his father's church. The work of the ministry was his choice, and he received an academical education under Mr. Hubbard, at Stepney. Most of the eminent baptist ministers of that period were educated at the seminaries of the independents.

His talents as a preacher meeting the approbation of the church to which he belonged, he was appointed assistant to his father, at whose death he was chosen the successor, and was ordained in the year 1758. From that time he continued to labour there all his days, dispensing the ordinances of religion with great acceptance, with success, and with an eminent degree of mutual affection. In 1763 he received unsolicited, his biographer says, the degree of D. D.

from Aberdeen, which he asserts did not make him proud; and we can easily give full credit to his testimony.

Dr. Stennett's natural talents were good, and highly improved by assiduous and extensive study. He possessed a respectable portion of classical knowledge, and he paid considerable attention to modern literature. As a preacher he greatly excelled. The pure principles of the Gospel he exhibited with great clearness and precision, so as to attract the attention and engage the mind to receive the truth with pleasure. In elocution he was superior to most of his denomination, and possessed the enviable art of addressing the heart and carrying it along with him in a stream of warm affections. His eloquence was not of the ardent and vehement kind—he was no Demosthenes; but in a soft, tender, insinuating persuasion and influence he was a master. In the private duties of the pastoral office he exhibited a becoming example of diligence and zeal.

Such a man, it may naturally be supposed, made a conspicuous figure among the dissenters. In whatever related to the cause of religious liberty, he felt himself deeply interested, and ever afforded his most vigorous exertions. To his own denomination he was a most active and zealous friend. He was perhaps the last of the dissenting ministers who cultivated social intercourse with the great; a practice common in the former generation, and conceived to be beneficial to the body. In private life Dr. Stennett was remarkably amiable and engaging, and in the performance of relative duties highly exemplary. As a minister, a Christian, and a man, Dr. Stennett was very highly esteemed, and the pleasing lustra-

which politeness gave to his excellence, procured an additional degree of respect and affection.

As an author too the doctor appeared highly respectable. He published a volume on the baptist controversy; and on a subject where it was difficult to say any thing new, he has the praise of saying what he had to say, with a better temper than most of his predecessors. His two volumes "on personal Religion," were well received by the public: had they contained more principles and less reasoning, they would have been more useful. His sermons on relative duties are very valuable, and his book on the Scriptures may be read with much profit. That display of genius which consists in originality of thought and profoundness of reasoning, he did not possess in a high degree; but the reader is ever sure of finding good sense, instructive matter, and always to the purpose. His style is very pleasing, and if some will not allow the praise of elegance which is given by many of his friends, they must acknowledge that it is at least exceedingly neat.

The praise of exemplary piety, which is the highest honour of man, none will deny to Dr. Stennett. Under its influence he lived from the days of his youth; and he felt its benign and cheering power in old age. A few months before his death, he lost his wife, a very pious and amiable woman, with whom he had lived in great domestic felicity for more than forty years: one feature of her character we wish all her countrywomen possessed—she was never heard to speak evil of any one. The decay of his own health rapidly succeeded. The frame of his mind happily accorded with the infirmities of his body, and he considered himself as one just about to

depart to another state of existence. When his complaints increased so as to place death full in his view, he said to those around him, "the sufferings of Christ are my support: what should I do now if I had only such opinions of him as Dr. Priestley? Christ is able to support to the uttermost them that come unto God through him." "He is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Many other devout expressions dropped from his lips, which displayed the Christian raised above the fear of death, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God. He died on the twenty-fourth of August, 1795, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

SAMUEL PEARCE, M. A.

The excellencies of this young minister, who was little more than shewn to the church, have been honourably recorded by a living writer. If this short memoir, which is all that our limits will allow, should send any one who is entering on the care of souls to the perusal of his biography, he will see a model worthy of diligent study and faithful imitation; and if he should catch the same spirit, thousands will have to bless God for it to eternity.

Plymouth was the birth-place of Samuel Pearce. Born in the year 1766, he was early inspired with the love of evangelical truth, under the ministry of Mr. Birt, pastor of the baptist church in his native town. To his eminent and ardent religion it soon appeared supremely desirable to devote his life to the service of Christ and his church. He studied for the ministry under Dr. Ryland, at Bristol, and from the

academy removed to take charge of a baptist church at Birmingham. Here his judicious, fervent, and incessant labours rapidly increased the congregation and the church, while his affectionate and devout deportment endeared him not only to his own flock, but to all who had wisdom to perceive, or virtue to approve the image of Jesus Christ.

But a mistaken confidence in the firmness of his constitution, which is the frequent error of the noblest minds, early deprived his communion of one of its brightest ornaments. Prodigal of his strength and health, he not only preached very frequently, but took many journies, which exposed him to cold; and, unable to arrest for a moment his rapid course, he preached while his lungs were dangerously affected, so that at length he sunk under a consumption. When his eyes were open to his case, he observed, "I always felt a peculiar aversion to the idea of dying by a consumption, but I have now been reconciled to it by reading the words of the evangelist, 'this spake Jesus to Peter, signifying by what death he should glorify God.' I am pleased to die by whatever death I may most glorify God." He was removed from the world which he improved, in October, 1799, when he was only thirty-three years of age.

With an elegant mind, and cultivated taste, he was never "corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ;" and while his benevolent heart burned with unquenchable ardour for the salvation of Britons and Hindoos, he displayed in an eminent degree the meekness and gentleness of the Saviour. If he preached, the most careless were attentive, the most prejudiced became favourable, and the coldest felt that in spite of themselves they began to kindle; but

when he poured out the devotions of his heart in prayer, the most devout were so elevated beyond their former heights, that they said, "we scarcely ever seemed to pray before." While he thus stood on the threshold of heaven, he conceived the design of devoting himself to the baptist mission in Bengal, to the establishment of which he powerfully contributed; but a council of his friends forbade, and he who said, "it was well that it was in thine heart," called him to worship with the spirits of the just gathered from every land. Let young ministers learn from his example to work while it is day, and to remember that the bloom of youth, and the splendour of talents, never appear so lovely as when ardently consecrated to the Saviour of men.

CHAP. IX.

STATE OF RELIGION IN THE WORLD.

STATE OF RELIGION IN ENGLAND.

SINCE the restoration, the church of England has not enjoyed a course of greater quiet and prosperity than during the present reign. In 1766 Dr. Cornwallis succeeded Dr. Secker in the see of Canterbury; and in 1783 gave place to Dr. Moore, who possessed his honours during a very stormy period, and lately resigned them to Dr. Sutton, the present metropolitan. At the beginning of this period the exercise of episcopal authority was exceedingly gentle, some would say lax, but the reins have been gradually tightened, so as now to gall the mouths of some and make them complain of harshness. By a clause in an act of parliament for another purpose, the constitution of the church of England has been rendered more despotic, for the bishops have been invested with new authority over the inferior clergy, but especially over the curates who are now entirely subjected to their absolute disposal*.

That there are great and numerous faults, both in the constitution of the church, and the mode of its administration by the state, may naturally be supposed to be our opinion; or why should we dissent? But at the same time we entertain the highest respect for

* See a pamphlet entitled, "Reflections on the recent Extension of the Powers of their Lordships the Bishops."

every good minister in her communion ; and record, with unfeigned pleasure, the advancement of true religion within her pale, during this period, by the faithful preaching of the Gospel in all its native purity. The deplorable state of the church in the former period, and the pleasing change which was taking place, are thus described by one of her most venerable sons, in a letter written in 1797. "The times are dark, but perhaps they were darker in England sixty years ago, when, though we had peace and plenty, the bulk of the kingdom lay under the judgment of an unregenerate ministry, and the people were perishing for lack of knowledge. In this respect the times are better than they were. The Gospel is preached in many parts ; we have it plentifully in London ; and many of our great towns, which were once sitting in darkness, have now the true light. Some of these places were as a wilderness in my remembrance, and now they are as gardens of the Lord. And every year the Gospel is planted in new places—ministers are still rising up—the work is still spreading. I am not sure that in the year 1740, there was a single parochial minister who was publicly known as a Gospel minister in the whole kingdom. Now we have ; I know not how many, but I think not less than four hundred^f." In another letter in 1801, he delivers his sentiments on the state of religion in the church at the commencement of the present century : " I am told there are ten thousand parishes in England ; I believe more than nine thousand of these are destitute of the Gospel^g." Accord-

^f See Letters and conversational Remarks, by the late Rev. John Newton, rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, published in 1809, p. 75, 76.

^g Ditto, p. 146.

ing to Mr. Newton's calculation a portion only of the tenth thousand preaches the Gospel in purity: their number is said to be increasing every year; they profess to believe and to publish the doctrines contained in the articles; and they are known in the religious world by the name of the evangelical clergy.

At the head of the list may be placed the Rev. William Romaine, rector of Blackfriars, who as he was the first who stood forward, had the still greater honour to be perhaps the most successful parish minister in England, in the conversion of sinners to God. The labours of Mr. Venn, at Huddersfield, were crowned with uncommon success; Dr. Conyers at Helmsley, and afterwards at Deptford; Mr. Cadoxton, at Reading; Mr. Milner, at Hull; and Mr. Newton, at Olney, and in London, were eminently useful. To Mr. Grimshaw, of Haworth, Mr. Berdridge of Everton, and Mr. Jones, of Llangan, must be awarded the praise of a still more successful ministry; but to the care of their parish, they added very extensive itinerant preaching. These were all truly apostolical men, justly revered for their sanctity and zeal, and entitled to the highest veneration of all the disciples of Christ, in every denomination. Indeed of the evangelical clergy as a body, it is but justice to say, that they are truly pious and exemplary, and labour for the salvation of their hearers as those who must give account to the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls. Nor have they laboured in vain; for by their means a spirit of piety has been diffused among considerable numbers of every rank in society; and from the attention to the subject which has been excited in the higher walks of life, religion has in a manner been brought home to every mans door. The

zeal of these good ministers of Christ has lately been directed also to the heathen world, and a society instituted for spreading the Gospel in Africa and the East.

Among the clergy it has been more warmly disputed during this period than ever before, whether the articles of the church of England are calvinistic or arminian. Mr. Toplady first, and many years after him Mr. Overton strenuously contend that they plainly speak the language, and contain the sentiments of Calvin: but they have been furiously assailed by a multitude of their brethren, and lately by a father in God (bishop Tomline) who think they can prove the articles to be arminian. Most of the clergy, and especially of the dignitaries, have ranged themselves on this side; and the arminianism of the articles is conceived to be fully demonstrated. Among the evangelical clergy now (for the oldest of this body were to a man, calvinists), the sense of the articles is likewise a subject on which the same difference of opinion subsists.

The sentiments of the clergy towards the dissenters are scarcely so pacific as they were fifty years ago. By many of the priesthood they are still considered as senseless fanatics: others feel jealousy and fear of their increase, which forms a ground for strong aversion: some view them as entirely beneath their notice: but there is a class, though it may not be numerous, which regards them with fraternal affection. Among the mass of the laity in the establishment, the very strong prejudices which formerly existed against presbyterians and methodists (as dissenters were successively called) have certainly suffered a considerable diminution; but many still retain them in all their force.

The people in general profess to be willing that every one should think for himself in matters of religion, and make a public profession of his faith ; but still there is room for a great increase of Christian affection. Among all denominations there is more of the appearance of catholic love than of the reality. Multitudes are very liberal in their declarations, and imagine themselves sincere ; but when another sect interferes with their objects and pursuits, catholic love takes her flight, and party spirit perches on the stand. All have yet much to learn, and when they examine the frame of their heart in circumstances which, they conceive, affect their usefulness or comfort, they will find that if catholic charity were to set up school, they have need to become her scholars. At the same time it may be remarked with pleasure, that in matters which intrench not on their distinguishing peculiarities, persons of different denominations can act together without discord, in associations for general good ; and this is an evidence of progress in Christian feelings.

STATE OF RELIGION IN SCOTLAND.

A few years before the accession of George the third, a new system of ecclesiastical politics was framed under the auspices of the celebrated Dr. William Robertson, principal of the college of Edinburgh ; a system stern and rigorous in its principles, repugnant to the popular spirit of the constitution of the church of Scotland, and hostile at once to the sacred privileges of the laity and the advancement of true religion. To resign the choice of their minister, and

submit to a man presented by the patron, the people loudly refused, and used every possible exertion to resist the imposition ; but resistance was vain : their adversary had the gigantic arm of the law on his side, and of its force he was not unwilling to avail himself. Military aid was in some instances employed to preserve an ordination from tumults ; and the glittering bayonets of the soldiery were unsheathed to overawe the Christian people, while the clergy were laying their hands upon their brother, and committing to him, with all solemnity of form, the awful charge of immortal souls. But every violent settlement, though it was a victory to Dr. Robertson and his party, proved a severe defeat to the church of Scotland ; for it drove from her communion the most pious of the people, and in many instances left none but the careless and the irreligious behind.

In the foresight, as it were, of such enormities, heaven had graciously provided the seceders to take the charge of the scattered flocks. Burgher and anti-burgher congregations arose in succession, from year to year in the towns and villages which had been thus insulted. The presbytery of relief gave its friendly aid also in the same benevolent service. Thus were the people whom Robertson and his party thought to coerce into abject submission, supplied with teachers ; and they carried with them not only unimpaired but invigorated, the invaluable principle of religious liberty, that a pastor should be elected to his office by the people to whom he is to minister. Their reward was ample, for they found faithful guides who preached to them the Gospel in its purity. To drive such persons from the communion of a church seems a compound of fatuity and impiety ; it is to rob it of its glory and its strength.

Such were the laurels which adorned Robertson's brow. Each successive minister of state gave him all the aid of office and influence to carry on his ecclesiastical warfare, from which he retired in 1780. Successors in a service which had all the power and fashion of the world on its side, it was not difficult to find. Honour and emoluments were the certain reward; and the work was become comparatively easy. By them and their numerous adherents has the system been triumphantly supported to the present day. That, by their proceedings, they have driven more than a third part of the inhabitants of the country, and more than one half of the pious people to quit the communion of the establishment, so that there is more true religion without than within her pale, will excite astonishment and grief in the hearts of Christians in England. In the minds of those by whom the deed has been done, it is not likely to produce much effect; for in the decision of their ecclesiastical courts which operated the change, less regard has been shown to the spirit and even the appearance of vital godliness, than perhaps by any church on earth, without excepting that of Rome in the days of her grossest corruptions.

To these odious proceedings, opposition has always been made, though without effect, by a portion of the Scotch clergy who, retaining the ancient orthodoxy, devotedness, and zeal, have struggled with unwearied perseverance to restore their church to its ancient purity. Possessed of the learning of a divine in a superior degree; evangelical and judicious in their preaching; faithful and assiduous in the private duties of their office; highly exemplary in their life and conversation; and animated in all their services by a

spirit of fervent piety, they give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, and are eminently useful in their stations. Among this class, Mr. Robert Walker, Dr. John Erskine, and professor Hunter claim a conspicuous place. The only cause of regret is the smallness of their number, for they do not amount to a fifth part of the clerical body: but it is said that they increase. Happy will it be if they should become the majority, that the detestable system which has been deluging their highly favoured country with ignorance and irreligion, may be totally and finally overthrown.

It is impossible not to be struck with a very dishonourable peculiarity in the presbyterians of the Scotch establishment,—a want of zeal for the doctrine and worship of their own church. That numerous regiments of Scotch should be destitute of chaplains of their own faith, and left to the constant use of a service which they neither understand nor relish, is not to the praise of their clergy. That no effort should be made to establish presbyterian congregations in the great towns of our colonies and foreign possessions, for the accomodation of the multitude of North Britons who are settled there, argues a very culpable neglect of the best interests of their countrymen. So important a subject, it is hoped, will speedily and successfully engage the attention of the friends of religion in the North.

The seceders were, during the whole of this period, continuing to increase in numbers, but not perhaps in piety to an equal degree. The second generation will seldom equal that which separated from a corrupt church for conscience' sake. Indeed, the only thing which can preserve them from sinking into

formality, is the adoption of the independent principle, to admit none into their theological seminaries, but such as can give satisfactory evidence that they are born of God. The evils arising from the want of it, the burghers, it is said, already feel. The seceding congregations amount to nearly three hundred, and the presbytery of relief to about seventy. The followers of Glass and Sandeman have considerably diminished; but a new body of independents has arisen, which more than fills their room. The baptists are more numerous than ever before. The episcopalians keep their ground. The immense mass of religious principle in Scotland has displayed its influence in the most active exertions and liberal contributions to propagate the Gospel among the heathen.

STATE OF RELIGION IN IRELAND.

In the Hibernian isle, so justly famed for its natural advantages, pure religion still remained at the commencement of this period, in a confined and languid state. The zeal of the Roman catholic clergy was effectual, not only for the preservation of their flocks from the influence of the protestants, but likewise for drawing many from the protestant communion into their own; so that they are more numerous in proportion to the other inhabitants, than for the last hundred and fifty years. From the degraded state in which they lay at the beginning of the present reign they have been gradually raised; and they are now applying for an equality of civil and political privileges with their protestant fellow subjects. Every enlightened Christian must unite in cordial wishes

for their success ; both as it is their undoubted right, and as it will most effectually conduce to the propagation of pure religion in that country.

In the protestant establishment, the inattention of the clergy to the people has continued to be such, that to seek a parallel in any other church in Europe, of whatever name it may be, would be a vain attempt. In consequence of this, the protestants were far more ignorant of their distinguishing principles than the Roman catholics, who took advantage of it to lead thousands of them into their own fold. Towards the close of this period, there arose that valuable and useful class of men whom Mr. Newton distinguishes in England by the appellation of the awakened clergy. They in general conceive that the articles of their church speak the language of Calvin. They are pious, laborious, and zealous men ; and their ministrations have been crowned with considerable success. If Ireland ever become protestant, it is by men of their spirit that the work must be accomplished. Of late they have been rigorously opposed and grievously harassed by some of the highest dignitaries of the church, who, by such proceedings, must gratify those who seek her degradation or her ruin.

The spiritual state of the presbyterians by no means presents so pleasing a prospect as in the second, but especially in the first period of this history. Error continued to spread, and with it all the evil consequences which have been described. In 1782, they obtained from parliament a repeal of the test act. A more ample allowance has been made by it for the support of the ministers, who, divided into three classes, enjoy pensions of a hundred, seventy-five, or fifty pounds a year. Though their congregations

in the North scarcely amount to two hundred, and those in the South are few, they claim to themselves a population of nearly half a million.

The seceding ministers, who came over from Scotland in the former period, continued to diffuse their sentiments with great success. The burgher congregations amount to sixty, and the anti-burghers to thirty. Their ministers have likewise salaries from government but inferior to those of the old presbyterians. By both these denominations the Gospel is preached in purity.

Of late the independents have erected their standard, but hitherto not with distinguished success. The baptists still continue to exist, and more than existence it can scarcely be called. The Wesleyan methodists have continued their exertions through this period, and considerably extended their stations. The number of travelling preachers amounts to one hundred and twenty-five, and the members in society are twenty-eight thousand one hundred and ninety-four. The Hibernian society, instituted a few years ago, is exerting itself both in the establishment of schools and the patronage of preachers of the Gospel. Their pious labours it is hoped, will be crowned with an eminent blessing.

STATE OF RELIGION BEYOND THE BRITISH EMPIRE.

The United States of America still continue to enjoy those revivals of religion which have been noticed under the former periods. Though the revolution, which separated the colonies from the mother country, diverted the minds of the Americans from religion to the politics of this world, no sooner was their inde-

pendency secured than a new effusion of the divine influence attending the Gospel, began to rescue the country from the serious injuries which it had suffered by the spirit of war and the presence of hostile armies. It has been asserted, indeed, that there scarcely ever was a body of men collected for war so humane and moral, and who returned to their farms so little corrupted, as those who composed the American army; and the religious liberty which the new republic established, was so complete, that the dearest rights and interests of men were eminently promoted by the revolution.

The increase of population having created new states in that immense tract of country which lies on the south-west of the original colonies, religion has lately displayed there some of its most extraordinary triumphs, where indeed they were most needed. To many the relation of the effects attending the preaching of the Gospel in the western woods may appear incredible; but the utmost investigation tends only to prove the reality and excellence of the work and excite the most ardent gratitude to the author. The American colleges also, shared in the benefits of these revivals, and some of the students, participating in the zeal for missions which America now displays, have devoted themselves to the welfare of the heathen.

On the continent of Europe the French revolution irresistibly attracts attention. Among the causes which produced it, has been reckoned the persecution of the protestants by the old government, which was more fiercely instigated to cruelty by the catholic clergy during the reign of George the third than

many could imagine. The total overthrow of the catholic church has hitherto done little more than leave an open field for the exertion of the protestants. The Roman pontiffs have of late become in the balance of human affairs trifles light as air. He who now fills the chair of St. Peter, is not permitted to reside at Rome, but is dragging on his life in an obscure imprisonment. After abolishing, during this period, the order of the jesuits, who had made Europe tremble, the papacy itself seems likely to sink into annihilation. The house of Austria, which is now allied to the new dynasty of France, had vacillated between its ancient persecuting bigotry and a pleasing indication of more tolerant principles, till the French revolution absorbed its attention and almost annihilated its influence.

Upon the whole, religious liberty has gained by the tremendous changes in the state of Europe, which yet waits to receive the men who will rise up to cultivate the immense field that now lies open to the Christian labourers.

CHAP. X.

THE INFLUENCE OF DISSENTERS.

THAT the principles of dissent have operated powerfully in the world, will not be doubted by any one who reflects on the influence which they had in creating a new empire on the American continent, which has already contributed to the most mighty revolution in the state of Europe, and promises to become one of the most extensive and powerful on the globe. It may then be expected, that the existence of dissenters has deeply affected the state of our own nation; and as this is to our countrymen an interesting and instructive inquiry, though but little attended to, the object of this chapter is to show the influence of the dissenting communions on true religion, on sacred literature, on public morals, on civil and religious liberty, and on the national prosperity of Britain.

THE INFLUENCE OF DISSENTERS IN PROMOTING
TRUE RELIGION.

To form a satisfactory estimate of the effects of any communion in this most important department, is manifestly a task of peculiar difficulty; because each one will naturally honour his own with the name of true religion which will therefore be considered to prosper in proportion as his party is advanced. The sacred Scriptures are, indeed, the true standard of

religion, but as all profess to bow to this authority, we shall attempt to combine truth and candour by taking the sentiments and spirit of the most devoted clergymen of the established church, as the criterion by which to judge of the influence of dissenters in promoting the interests of true godliness.

It may then be affirmed, without fear of contradiction, that the dissenters have most powerfully promoted this grand object, for which some hundreds of the established clergy are spending their lives. From the restoration to the rise of methodism, dissenters stood up alone in defence of the best of causes. They alone maintained the depravity of human nature, which no baptismal waters could wash away; they preached the doctrines of justification by faith alone, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, when these were ridiculed as the dogmas of fanaticism; and they singly dared to protest against the fashionable vices of the nation, at the hazard of being treated as outlaws from society and traitors to the state. Of them it may be said in sacred language, that "except the Lord of hosts had left us that remnant, our country had been as Sodom or Gomorrah." The apostacy of the nation from the sentiments and spirit of the Gospel had been total, but for the dissenters: by their means a vital spark was preserved, and the nation is now warmed with the spreading flames.

To have been, for almost a century, the witnesses for God in the land, though prophesying in sackcloth, was a high honour. A thousand dissenting churches were during all that time, receiving into their communion those who were converted by the preaching of the Gospel among them, while no such effects were looked for by the established ministers. To

form an adequate estimate of all the benefits direct and indirect, which must have been produced in our cities, towns, and villages from such a practical testimony borne to the most important of all truths, is beyond the power of a finite mind. But he who exults in the prosperity which now attends the Gospel of Christ in various communions, must look back with veneration to the people who once professed alone what now forms the glory of our land.

Though the numbers of the dissenters are more than doubled, and their activity is much increased, it is become difficult, if not impossible, to calculate the influence which they have at present on true religion; because they share it in common with new sects, and with a new party in the establishment. But as their ministers form more than twice the number of the evangelical clergy, it is sufficiently manifest, that so many labourers added to those who preach the Gospel within the established church, must produce the happiest effects in diffusing religion through the land. Nor should it be forgotten, that many of the dissenting churches are of as much importance as ever they were, since they are placed in situations where all around them is still as dark as before the rise of the methodists, or the revival of religion within the bosom of the establishment.

The fire which was secretly cherished by the dissenters, has, however, at length communicated its heat to many who avoid their name. Those clergymen who were the fathers of the methodists, might never have been heard of beyond the boundaries of a single parish, had not the dissenters opened for them the way, and taught them that the whole kingdom is the parish of him who has a heart to take so extensive

a cure. The social religion which is cherished by dissenters as the life of the Christian church, has not only produced the happiest effects among themselves, but has also been imparted in a considerable degree to the friends of evangelical truth in the establishment. Many who remain under episcopal government are induced also to imitate the dissenters in the choice of their own ministers. Thus several parishes in London have obtained the benefit of afternoon lecturers of evangelical principles, and not a few livings have been procured for those who preach the creed to which they have sworn. In another way, the example of dissenters has had the most mighty and beneficial influence; for, observing that the dissenting seminaries for the ministry are supported by voluntary contributions, the zealous friends to the doctrine of the articles have established a similar fund to support serious young men while preparing at the universities for the ministry of the church of England. The missionary society, formed among various classes of dissenters, has given rise to another which is confined to churchmen; and some new proofs are continually exhibited of the happy effects of the dissent on the cause of true religion even beyond the circle of dissenting churches.

THE INFLUENCE OF DISSENTERS ON SACRED LITERATURE.

As liberty is the patron of science and the muses, to the liberal spirit which dissenters have cherished, our country owes much of its eminence, even in those branches of literature, in which they have not them-

selves acquired distinction. The press has always been more under the influence of dissenters than many would suspect or would wish to believe. From the time that Elizabeth compelled the puritans to establish private circulating presses, to the last of the Stuarts, who subjected the nonconformists to the tyranny of a licenser, they struggled to avail themselves of this means of appealing to the tribunal of the public. But when the revolution threw the press open to all parties, it became more manifest that dissenters had availed themselves of this powerful ally. To the periodical papers, such as the "Spectator," and others which followed in its popular track, by which the public mind was powerfully influenced under the reign of Anne and the first Georges, dissenters largely contributed. It was a dissenter also who introduced those compendiums of science, Encyclopædias, which still diffuse so much general knowledge. "Chambers' Cyclopædia," which was the first, is, in the edition published by Dr. Rees, a dissenting minister, esteemed by many as still the best of the works which profess to give the whole circle of sciences. "The Abridgment of the philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society" attests the high rank which Mr. Eames, a dissenting tutor, held among the literati of his day. Not to mention the Magazines and Reviews which are avowedly conducted by dissenters, it is well known to many, that several of the others are in a great measure the production of writers who disapprove of the established church.

It may indeed be safely affirmed, that all the most popular productions of the British press were written by dissenters. To mention Milton's "Paradise lost" might provoke contradiction; though he was un-

questionably a separatist from the church established by law, for which he has been severely treated by those who ought to have shown towards the British Homer a more liberal mind. It will not, however, be disputed that the "Pilgrim's Progress" was the work of a baptist minister, or that it has had a larger circulation than any other book, perhaps, except the Bible. Next, among works of imagination, must be ranked De Foe's "Robinson Crusoe," which, in addition to its immense indigenous sale, was at one time raised by the whims of Rousseau to the highest celebrity in France. The "Divine Songs," which Watts wrote for the use of children, have been so cordially adopted by all parties, that they now belong to none. For his catechisms might be claimed the praise of teaching the art of Christian instruction; while his "Improvement of the Mind" and his "Logic," which, till lately, taught the universities the method of reasoning, have contributed more than any other works to the formation of an intellectual character in the British youth. To his "Psalms and Hymns" for public worship the nation owes that superior taste in devotion, which is rapidly producing a general disgust for such monkish rhymes as those of Sternhold and Hopkins, or even of Tate and Brady.

It is, however, to the honour of dissenters, that their laurels are principally gathered on Mount Zion; and their literary labours like those of the Hebrew sages, consecrated to the service of the temple of God. Ainsworth, the rabbi of the independents, gave the first specimen of just expositions of the Scripture, and struck out the path in which Lowth and Horsely have since made so honourable advances. Among popular commentaries on the whole of the

sacred volume, adapted to the bulk of the Christian world, none can for a moment vie with that of Matthew Henry^b. No work on a single book of Scripture is equal to Dr. Owen's "Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews," which is valuable on many accounts, but chiefly for diligent research into the mind of the spirit in the Scriptures. Doddridge and Guyse are almost the only commentators on the New Testament, who have acquired celebrity; but if Scotch presbyterians were to be mentioned among dissenters, Brown, Macknight, and Campbell would deserve honourable mention as valuable writers on the Christian Scriptures. The Hebrew concordance of Dr. Taylor has afforded great assistance in the study of the Old Testament; and the Hebrew grammar which has been most generally used, was the work of Dr. Ashworth, another dissenting tutor. Almost all the bodies of divinity in the English language are the productions of dissenters. Baxter, Lawson, Ridgley, and Gill have each of them laboured to give such systems of theology, which have been objected to, indeed, as distorting the parts, but must be valued as giving a comprehensive view of the whole. In the philosophy of theology, our language contains no works which can rival those of president Edwards and Dr. Williams, his editor and commentator. The established church would have carried off the palm of merit in defending the outworks of Christianity, had not Lardner written his "Credibility of the Gospel," which is as much to be prized for the assistance

^b The labours of Mr. Scott, an evangelical clergyman, deserve to be mentioned with high praise, particularly for the valuable collection of marginal references; by which he has surpassed Brown, on whose shoulders however he had the advantage of standing.

which it has afforded to other advocates of the Christian Revelation, as for its own intrinsic merits. Of detached theological publications, the far greater part have been written by dissenters, especially if we take into the account the ponderous folios of Owen, Howe, Baxter, Flavel, and Bates, with many others of scarcely inferior worth. That the most popular sermons which are published, should have been those which were preached by dissenters, might have been expected, since preaching is deemed of more importance among them than in the establishment, where the liturgy often takes its place,

INFLUENCE OF DISSENTERS ON PUBLIC MORALS.

While the devout Christian regards the prayers of the faithful as an immense blessing to their country, the mere politician values religion only for the sake of the superior morals which it inculcates and inspires. Industry, essential as it is to the cultivation of the soil, as well as to the progress of arts, manufactures, and commerce, will seldom be carried to the utmost degree, but by the influence of the religious principle. The temperance and frugality which husband the produce of labour, and leave to the individual a surplus to supply the demands of the state, must proceed from the prevalence of the mental over the sensual part of our nature: and the good order which leaves a government nothing to fear from the open insurrection of the many, or the secret crimes of the few, is most effectually secured by the fear of that supreme Ruler who can equally detect secret villany, and punish prosperous violence.

That dissenters are not, as a body, chargeable with open vice, is virtually acknowledged even by their enemies, who are accustomed to accuse them of hypocrisy which conceals odious tempers under a decent exterior. But as the national church avowedly embraces the whole population of the country, it must have whatever character belongs to the nation; so that declamations against the vices of our land, ultimately fall upon the church which claims the aggregate body of Englishmen as her children. When excommunication was practiced, its thunders fell not on notorious sinners against morality, but on rebels against ecclesiastical authority; and now that its thunders are silent, lest they should be derided, all who are not avowed dissenters are considered as members of the established church, from the splendid debauchees whose divorce bills continually occupy the attention of the legislature, to the culprits recorded in the calendar of Newgate. While this scandal cleaves to national churches, it prevents them from practically promoting the cause of morality, by excluding from their communion those who grossly violate the pure code of morals which they may publish from their pulpits.

But the dissenting churches can follow up the moral doctrine which all parties profess to inculcate, by the strictest discipline. As excommunication among them involves no injury to civil rights, it is practiced whenever the vices of a member are considered as a disgrace to the body. Knowing that they are objects of notice and of censure, dissenters are unwilling to be identified with the loose and immoral; and within the limits of a single congregation the character of an individual cannot be long

unknown. The independent churches, in general, feel themselves bound by the authority of Scripture, to "put away from among them a wicked person;" and even the less honourable motive of zeal for the party would induce any sect to watch for its moral reputation, as essential to the accession of proselytes and even to the preservation of its own members; since the grossly profligate will cease to trouble themselves with any profession, or sink into the easier and more fashionable religion of the state. While on the one hand, therefore, some are deterred from vice by the fear of exclusion from a society composed of their most intimate acquaintances, friends, or relations, on the other, those who are lost to fear or shame, usually abandon the dissent altogether, and transfer their character and their influence to the national church.

If, on these accounts, the interest of morality is more powerfully promoted by dissenters than by the establishment, to this cause must be attributed much of the odium attached to dissent. For while the religious condemn and abhor every species of vice, the vicious will not fail to retaliate by the ridicule or the calumny which they pour upon the stricter profession of religion. Hence the national rage against the non-conformists at the restoration. Had they been content to join the revels of the debauched monarch, their dissent from the religion which he established, would have been considered a venial crime; for while he was reconciled to the church of Rome, he was in perfect good humour with the church of England. But they wounded at once his pride and his conscience, by moral conduct too far beyond his own. For the same reason, dissenters are frequently

unpopular at the present day, especially in villages and smaller towns, where men are better acquainted with each other's characters than in great cities. The supporters of the village alehouse or playhouse are the greatest enemies to those who attend the meeting-house, who are frequently reminded as they pass the Sunday cricket-players or tipplers, how hateful their superior strictness is to those who are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

Good example, however, has a most beneficial influence, even when most hated. The societies for reformation which sprang up immediately after the revolution, were the first fruits of the superior moral sense which the dissenters had preserved in the country, and the strict manners of the methodists, who emanated from these societies, may be traced up to the ancient puritans. The modern associations for the suppression of vice, and for the observance of the Lord's-day, find their most zealous members and patrons among dissenters, who have by these and other means elevated the standard of public morals.

In another way they have improved the morality of the country, for as the reformation compelled the clergy of the church of Rome to adopt a more correct conduct, the influence and increase of dissenters often obliges the established ministers to regulate their conduct so as to avoid odious comparisons. Even this constrained morality is advantageous to the parish; for though it will not render the parson or his hearers real Christians, it precludes the triumphs of vice which would otherwise be sanctioned as by law.

INFLUENCE OF DISSENTERS ON CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

It was the opinion of Hume, that the English owe their free constitution to the struggles of the puritans. Whatever exceptions may be taken to their conduct in the time of the commonwealth and of the revolution, by which our country obtained its present liberties, it will not be denied that dissenters have the same right as others to give their vote to such legislators as will express their mind in the debates of the senate. This right they have almost invariably exercised in favour of civil liberty, and by their means not only a Hartopp and an Abney, but many a more modern senator, has been enabled to plead in the parliament the cause of mankind. If, as Fuller facetiously observed, in "all political changes the pulpits of the established church are made of the same wood as the council board," it is well for the liberties of the country to have other pulpits, where no panegyrics will be pronounced on despotic measures. For though the dissenting preacher may wisely abstain from political discussions, his silence may be sufficiently expressive, when all around are applauding the councils which lead to slavery and ruin.

Mr. Howe, whose penetrating eye had seen much of the interior of courts, declared that the grand cause of the hostility of governments to dissenters, was their known abhorrence of arbitrary rule. The despotic house of Stuart reproached the dissenters as an unyielding race, who could not be won by any price to sacrifice their country's liberties; and the

tories who favoured the exiled dynasty have ever been implacable foes to the cause of dissent. But those princes who have been least unfriendly to the people's liberties, have been also most desirous of extending the toleration, and of abolishing the odious restrictions of the test laws; and the most zealous whigs have usually deemed it essential to the appearance of consistency to advocate the cause of dissenters. These opposite tendencies of the two parties into which the governing powers of our country have been divided, are perfectly natural and reasonable. For, as the very existence of churches dissenting from the religion of the state, is an avowal of the duty of thinking for ourselves, and of the right of differing from our rulers, the patriot prince or minister alone can view this indication of a free spirit with a favourable eye, while the lovers of passive submission must regard it with abhorrence.

If the mere political reformer should deny the obligations of our country to the influence of dissenters in the civil state, the Christian patriot must own that religious liberty, the glory of our island, is the offspring of the dissent. The puritans and non-conformists pleaded only for the right of enjoying their own sentiments because they were true; but the dissenters, their successors, have added to the ardour which this selfish feeling inspires, the benevolence that contends for the liberty of every man to profess whatever he thinks to be requisite to his own eternal safety.

Even within the pale of the establishment, dissenters have diffused a portion of religious liberty. So completely has the increase of separatists lowered the haughty tone of the hierarchy, that it now piques

itself on its liberality, and pleads for its own existence on the ground of its being essential to the preservation of religious liberty in the kingdom, as if only the years and experience of the elder could keep the younger and more ardent communions from persecuting each other. While we smile at this plea, so different from her former style, it is highly consoling to observe the influence of dissenters in inducing the establishment to adopt a more gentle rule towards her own sons. It is now nearly half a century since the rise of the evangelical clergy, who have increased till they have formed, what is lamented by the dignitaries, as a formidable schism in the body. But instead of the stern inquisitorial measures which cut off the nonconformists, the ecclesiastical governors have contented themselves with such timid palliatives as have only left the evil to become incurable; for, whatever disposition they show to expel the evangelical party, they dare not give the dissenters the majority, by adding such formidable hosts to their numbers.

INFLUENCE OF DISSENTERS ON NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

Nations have been too generally supposed to prosper in proportion as they extend their conquests. But as more wealth is produced by the cultivation of a small estate, than by the mere possession of a larger, it is not the extent of its territory, but the numbers of its subjects, their industrious habits, their correct morals, their superior comforts and their intellectual eminence which form the prosperity of a nation. The voice of history attests that these important objects have been promoted in proportion as

religion has prevailed. But nations cannot expect the advantages of religion unless they afford it the liberty which it at once demands, deserves, and repays. While Spain, which most completely succeeded in extinguishing the free spirit of the reformation, sunk, in spite of its immense advantages, into a poor decrepid state, Holland rose by its more liberal policy to a rank far beyond that which its territory could have claimed. That spirit of religious liberty which dissenters have cherished, has enabled our diminutive island to contend with France for the empire of the world. The mental vigour produced by free discussion of the most important of all subjects—religion, is not only favourable to intellectual eminence in every other department, but is also a stimulus to physical exertion, by which the productions of the soil are multiplied, while the temperance which religious sects confessedly possess, husbands capital, the germ of wealth. The full effects produced by the spirit of dissenters may be seen in the United States of America, that most surprising example of a rising empire. There the men who were driven from this country by the persecuting spirit of a hierarchy, have grown into a mighty empire, which regards religious liberty as its palladium, suffering no exclusive establishment to impede agriculture by tithes, or exclude talents by religious tests.

Besides exciting a disposition for physical and mental exertion, the dissenters have contributed to national prosperity by the free spirit which has compelled the government to pay some attention to public opinion, for this has frequently prevented despotic measures at home as well as destructive

schemes abroad. The persecutor who decreed the revocation of the edict of Nantz, signed the death warrant of his descendant Louis the sixteenth; for, ceasing to respect the sentiments of the people, the dynasty of the Capets advanced without a check in that course which ended in the revolution that blew up their throne. Had not the efforts of the Stuarts to crush the dissenters been blasted by the revolution which gave birth to the toleration, England might now have been trembling at the ominous calm which precedes, or bleeding under the horrors which follow a violent convulsion of the state. But while the other nations of Europe have fallen an easy prey to revolutionary France, because their inhabitants were benumbed by the torpedo of despotism, and felt no attachment to governments which had shewn no respect for their rights or interests, England stood the shock; because her sons have felt that if they have much to endure, they have something to lose. The religious liberty which France has established in her own and the conquered territories, could be no lure to those who reflected, that on the continent it depends on the will of a ruler, while in Britain it rests on the broad basis of public sentiment.

Amidst many sources of national prosperity it is as difficult to determine how much we owe to any one of them, as to ascertain what proportion of the light is admitted into an apartment by one of its windows while several others remain open. If, unhappily for France, her bigotted princes discovered that the protestants were more valuable to the state than they had been willing to believe, we have to bless the Governor of the world, that the British empire has not been left to learn how much more

pernicious would be the repeal of the toleration, than the revocation of the edict of Nantz. The dissenting congregations consisting almost entirely of those to whom religion has given abundance, and taught benevolence, or of such as feel it their duty to work with their hands, that they may eat their own bread and have to give to him that needeth, they reflect with satisfaction on contributing not to swell the multitude of those who are supported by the parochial rates, but to feed the poor of another communion. Nor is it less grateful to their benevolence and patriotism to know, that their industry, their capital, their mental energy, and their public spirit give far greater circulation to wealth and accession to manufactures, commerce, and revenue, than is derived from an equal number in the established church.

The influence which these considerations should have on the members of the dominant communion, it may seem superfluous to specify ; for can they need to be told, that they should learn from hence to feel towards those who dissent from them, that spirit of charity which neither envies their liberties, nor repines at their prosperity ? While dissenters themselves should learn to improve to the utmost the advantageous distinction which they enjoy, determined never to forfeit the character of public benefactors, whatever treatment they may receive from the less enlightened part of their countrymen ; remembering that the God whom they serve, has decreed, that his people shall be “ among the nations as a dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass, which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.”

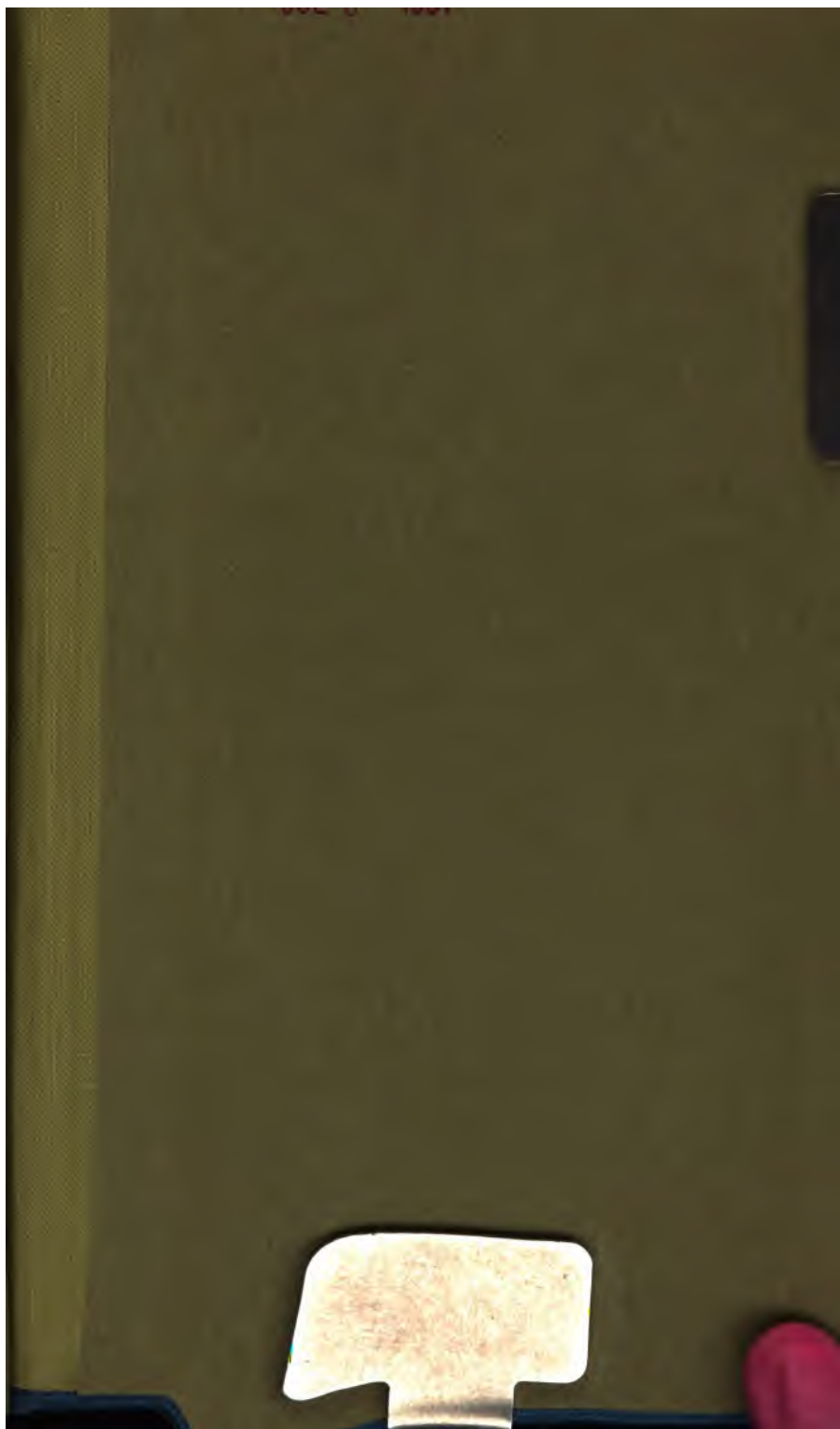
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34







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