

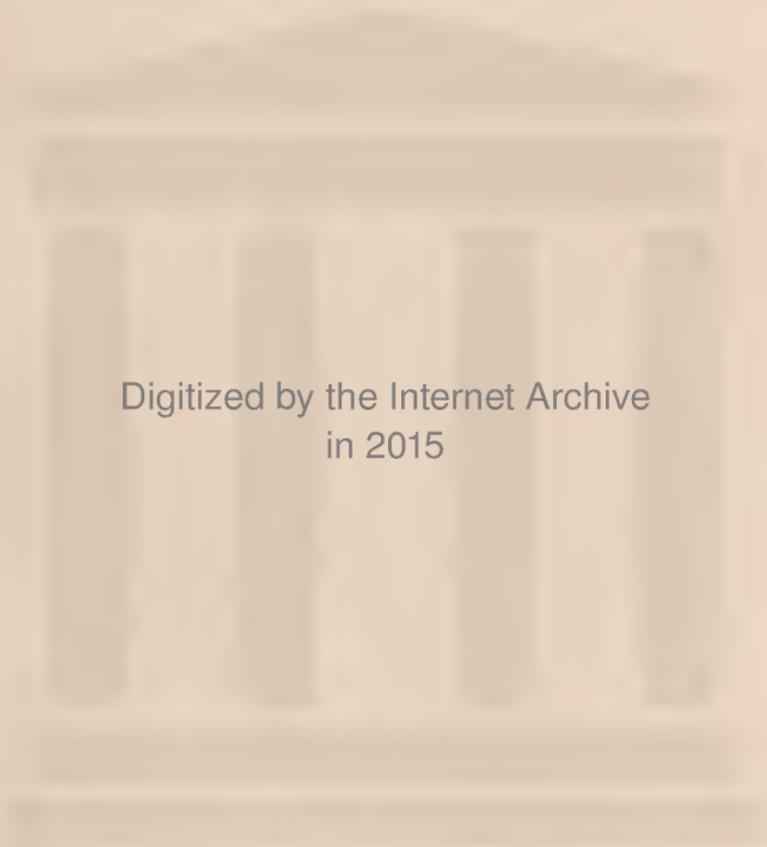
Library of The Theological Seminary

PRINCETON · NEW JERSEY



PRESENTED BY

The Alumni Library
BX 5203 .B46 1833 v.2
Bennett, James, 1774-1862.
The history of Dissenters



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

THE
HISTORY OF DISSENTERS,

FROM THE

REVOLUTION TO THE YEAR 1808.

BY

DAVID BOGUE, D.D. AND JAMES BENNETT.

SECOND EDITION.

BY JAMES BENNETT, D.D.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON :

FREDERICK WESTLEY AND A. H. DAVIS,

10, STATIONERS' COURT, AND AVE-MARIA LANE.

MDCCCXXXIII.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Stamford Street.

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

	Pages
Of the Methodists	1—62
— Moravians	63—75
Religious Liberty	76—134
Controversies	135—205
Seminaries	206—242
Outward State of Dissenters	242—298
State of Religion	299—330
Lives of Eminent Men	331—433
Sandemanians	434—447
Swedenborgians	447—460
Religious Liberty	460—489
Controversies	489—518
Dissenting Seminaries	519—542
Outward State of Dissenters	543—570
State of Religion	571—586
Lives of Eminent Dissenters	587



HISTORY OF DISSENTERS.

SECOND PERIOD.

FROM THE DEATH OF QUEEN ANNE TO THE ACCES-
SION OF GEORGE III.

CHAP. I.—NEW SECTS.

SECT. I.—*The Methodists.*

THIS name, which was originally given in derision, has been claimed by two opposite sects; while it has also been applied to others, who, forming no separate communion, have gone as far as conscience would permit in high-church principles, to escape the sectarian appellation. Such is the folly of attempting to put religion out of countenance with odious epithets: for if they never become current, they fall harmless, as an arrow which has missed its aim; and if ever they give a name to the communion, they lose all their original venom, and acquire as much respectability as is deserved by the sect, which soon learns to glory in its own name.

The founders of Methodism, being students at Oxford, having united in exercises of devotion, and in frequent communion, were ridiculed, at first, under the name of the Sacramentarians, and the holy or godly

club. But, a fellow of Merton College, observing the regular method in which they divided their time between their devotions, their studies, and their rest, said, "Here is a new sect of Methodists sprung up, alluding to an eminent college of physicians at Rome, who were called *Methodistæ*, for putting their patients under a peculiar regimen*." But there was a party in the Church of Rome called Methodists, from the peculiar method which they adopted in the controversy with the Protestants †. It is, however, not generally known, that the name of Methodist had been given, long before, to a religious sect in England, or at least to a party in religion, which was distinguished by some of the same marks as are now supposed to apply to the Methodists. John Spencer, who was librarian of Sion College during the protectorate, speaking of the eloquence and elegance of the sacred Scriptures, asks, "Where are now our Anabaptist and plain pike-staff Methodists, who esteem all flowers of rhetoric in sermons, no better than stinking weeds ‡?"

The present Methodists, however, sprang from Oxford, so that the nurse of high-church prejudices has given birth to sons who have enlisted thousands in the ranks of dissent. It is, indeed, remarkable, that at a time when the peace of the grave reigned there, and from the fellow of a college, who had imbibed the true Oxonian abhorrence for sectarianism, should have arisen the sect which has carried the ministrations of unordained laymen to their utmost lengths.

* Wesley's Journals, vol. i., Preface, p. 10. Ainsworth calls them *Methodici*.

† Mosheim, *Eccles. Hist.* 17th cent., sect. ii., p. 1.

‡ Spencer's *Things New and Old*, p. 161, anno 1658.

Mr. John Wesley, a student of Christ Church, being elected fellow of Lincoln College, seized that opportunity to shake off his old companions, who had been a snare to him; to new model his life, regulate his studies, and choose his future companions, with a view to his religious improvement. Being designed for the ministry, he was ordained by Dr. Potter, who was afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. As tutor of Lincoln College, Wesley laboured to form the young men to a just sense of the importance of religion; and some, who differed from him in sentiment, gratefully acknowledged his attentions. A serious man, whom Mr. Wesley had travelled many miles to see, said to him,—“ Sir, you wish to serve God, and to go to heaven, remember you cannot serve him alone. You must, therefore, find companions, or make them; the Bible knows nothing of solitary religion.” It has been observed, that a sentiment boldly conceived, and happily expressed, may overturn an empire. This sentiment, so just in itself, and so vigorously expressed, though intended only to benefit an individual, has created not merely a religious sect, but several hosts, which have given an impulse to the moral world. Mr. Wesley never forgot this remark, and immediately began to act upon it, by communicating his views to his younger brother, Charles, who was then a student at Christ Church. They soon after associated themselves with Mr. Morgan and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College. When this little band first began to meet, in the month of November, 1729, they read divinity on Sunday evenings, and on the other six, the Greek and Latin classics; but, as they advanced, they become more de-

cidedly a religious party. It soon appeared to them necessary to keep the fasts of the Church of England: they received also the Lord's Supper, every week, and visited the prisoners in the castle, as well as the sick poor in the town. "We were now," says Mr. Wesley, "fifteen in number, and of one heart and mind." Their scheme for self-examination, at this time, indicates the mystical turn of mind with which they were feeling their way to heaven. They "interrogate themselves whether they have been *simple* and recollected; whether they have prayed with fervour, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and on Saturday noon; if they have used a collect at nine, twelve, and three o'clock; duly meditated on Sunday, from three to four, on 'Thomas à Kempis; or mused, Wednesdays and Fridays, from twelve to one, on the passion."

They were joined by several of the students, and by Mr. Ingham, of Queen's College, Mr. Broughton, of Exeter, and Mr. James Hervey, who afterwards became celebrated for his Meditations. But their grand acquisition was in the year 1734, when Mr. George Whitfield, then about nineteen, joined himself to the society, of which he was destined to be the great Apollos. While yet ignorant of the Gospel, he practised such austerities as reduced him to extreme debility. In this state of mind, he was relieved by the kind attentions of Charles Wesley, who recommended him to the society of more experienced Christians, whose conversation, with the judicious application of medicines, healed both body and mind.

The two Wesleys, during the latter part of their stay at Oxford, maintained a close intimacy with the cele-

brated mystic, Law, the author of *Christian Perfection*, and the *Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Two or three times in a year, these young seekers travelled sixty miles (on foot, that they might save their money for the poor), to visit this oracle, and listen to its responses. At one time, Mr. Law said to John Wesley, "You would have a philosophical religion, but there can be no such thing. Religion is the most simple thing; it is only, we love him because he first loved us." With an affectation of luminous simplicity, this dictatorial sentence is as ambiguous as any response which was ever delivered from the delphic tripod; for the text of Scripture, as it is here quoted, may signify two opposite sentiments,—either that our only motive for loving God is, because he loved us, which is the selfishness of Arminianism; or, that the true reason why we are brought to love God is, because he, in love-for us, gave the disposition, which is the humble and generous acknowledgment of Calvinism. But these young Methodists were not sufficiently acute divines to see through the amphibologies of their oracle. It was a pity that they who were looking around on every hand for tutors and guides in the way of heaven, could discover no better luminary than this ignis fatuus. If such was the light, what must the darkness have been? What Mr. Wesley himself afterwards thought of the system which he then adopted, we may judge from his own words: "In this refined way of trusting to my own works, and my own righteousness, by pursuing inward holiness, or an union of soul with God, so zealously inculcated by the mystic writers, whom I declare, in my cool judgment, and in the presence of the most high God, I believe to be one

great Anti-Christ, I dragged on heavily, till the time of leaving England*.”

But the Methodist Society in Oxford was broken up in 1735; for John and Charles Wesley, Mr. Ingham, and Mr. Delamotte, embarked for America. The death of his father had called John Wesley to London, where he met with Dr. Burton, one of the trustees for the new colony of Georgia, who requested him to go thither to preach to the Indians. Mr. Wesley received his mother's consent, in language which spoke her a genuine daughter of Dr. Annesley, a puritan:—“Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more.” During the voyage, the company of missionaries employed their time in acts of devotion, in the study of the Scriptures, and in the instruction of those who were willing to learn. “A woman desired to receive the sacrament,” says Mr. Wesley, “but I thought it necessary to instruct her first in the nature of Christianity, and therefore read to her, every day, out of Mr. Law's Christian Perfection.” Thus he instructed her in the nature of Christianity, by the lessons of what he afterwards pronounced the great Anti-Christ.

On board the vessel were several Moravian brethren, in whom Mr. Wesley saw a meekness, purity, and benevolence, an air of heartfelt satisfaction and joy, a superiority to the ills of life, and a victory over the fears of death, to which he was conscious he had never attained. The storms, which filled him with dread of eternity, awakened their joy in the prospect of speedily beholding a reconciled God. He saw the difference

* Wesley's Journal, vol. i. p. 27.

between their religion and his own. His biographers observe, that “ though he gave all his goods to feed the poor, and sacrificed ease and honour, and every other temporal gratification, to follow Christ, yet it is certain that he was very little acquainted with true experimental religion. This, the Lord began now to show him, first, by the fear of death, which, notwithstanding all his efforts, brought him into bondage whenever danger was apparent, which made him say, ‘ I plainly felt I was unfit, because I was unwilling to die ;’ secondly, the lively victorious faith he evidently perceived in his fellow-passengers, the Moravians, still more convinced him that he possessed not the power of religion*.”

Though it may astonish many, that such a man should undertake such a mission, it can excite no surprise in the breast of any real Christian, that the mission should prove abortive. But, to the Indians, who were the intended objects of Mr. Wesley’s ministry, he found no opportunity of going ; for General Oglethorp, the governor of the colony, detained him at Savannah. Here, however, he soon became an unwelcome guest. Several persons disliked his rigid attachment to the rubric of the Church of England. “ High-church principles, as they are called, continually influenced his conduct ; an instance of which was his refusing to admit one of the holiest men in the province to the Lord’s Supper (though he earnestly desired it) because he was a Dissenter, unless he would submit to be re-baptized.” When high-church principles had afterwards tortured him and his friends, till they were sore,

* Coke and Moore’s Life, p. 97.

he remarks, "Have I not been finely beaten with my own staff*?" It seems, however, that the blows of this iron crosier are more severe than salutary, that it is only a rod of persecution, and not of correction; for he that was finely beaten for his fault, was not beaten out of it. He that professed to be then convinced by the Moravians, that he was destitute of real religion, of which he saw incontestable evidences in persons of other communions, was not the man who was entitled to indulgence in unchristianising those who did not see with his eyes, and would not be baptized into his sect.

Mr. Wesley was, indeed, regarded as an Ishmael; for his hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him. Only among the Moravians he found refuge and consolation. But the immediate cause of his leaving America has, for a long time, lain under a veil, which, till of late, has not been lifted up by his friends. The governor, perceiving in Mr. Wesley an unusual energy of character, studied to decoy him from the heights of mysticism to the level which would render him a convenient instrument to execute the schemes which the general had formed. For this, he sagaciously selected one of the daughters of Eve, whose charms had nearly succeeded. But, on consulting with the Moravians, whether it would be expedient for him to marry Miss Causton, the governor's niece, they forbade the banns, and Mr. Wesley escaped the snare. The lady afterwards betrayed the deep hatred of despised beauty, and proved a persecutor of her former lover, who, after having been pursued by a malicious lawsuit, judged it proper to leave America, where all his suc-

* Life, p. 112.

cess seemed to consist in enlarging his own knowledge of mankind and of himself. So unpropitious was the first mission of the Methodists to that part of the globe, where they were destined afterwards to reap a harvest so large.

During all this time, the cause of Methodism was rising to unparalleled popularity in England, by the zeal and eloquence of Mr. Whitfield. When the first societies broke up from Oxford, he went to Gloucester, for the benefit of his native air; for the mistaken austerities which he had practised, had so reduced him, that he was scarcely able to walk. But it pleased the God of all grace to reveal to him the way of salvation by faith; so that, while Mr. Wesley was discovering that he had no religion, his younger companion was rejoicing in the power, and riches, and sovereignty of divine grace. Devoting himself to the study of the Scriptures, in which, under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, he made eminent advancement, he panted to tell of the divine goodness; for which purpose, he formed a little society in his native place, and braved the reproach, which he knew would be heaped upon them, for forming conventicles. He read to a few poor people, several times a week, and visited and prayed with the prisoners in Gloucester jail.

Being now about one-and-twenty years of age, Mr. Whitfield was informed by Dr. Benson, Bishop of Gloucester, that although he had resolved to ordain none under three-and-twenty, he should reckon it his duty to ordain him, whenever he should choose to apply. With this view, the young evangelist began to study, with great seriousness, the thirty-nine articles of the

Church of England, to know whether he approved of them or not, in which, if he had more imitators, the establishment would have fewer ordained contradictors of her articles. Mr. Whitfield perused the epistles of Paul, to know whether he possessed the qualifications of a Christian bishop, and was at length ordained at Gloucester, in the year 1736, and, on the following Lord's-day, preached his sermon, "On the necessity and benefit of religious society." "Curiosity," says he, "drew a large congregation together. The sight, at first, a little awed me. But I was comforted with a heartfelt sense of the divine presence, and soon found the advantage of public speaking when a boy at school, and of exhorting and teaching the prisoners, and poor people at their private houses, whilst at the university. By these means I was kept from being daunted. As I proceeded, I perceived the fire kindled, till at last, though so young, and amidst a crowd of those who knew me in my childish days, I trust I was enabled to speak with some degree of authority. Some few mocked, but most for the present seemed struck; and I have since heard, that a complaint was made to the bishop, that I drove fifteen mad the first sermon. The worthy prelate wished that the madness might not be forgotten before next Sunday*."

Whitfield shortly after removed to Oxford, and from thence to London, where his first sermon, at Bishopgate church, fixed the attention and excited the serious surprise of those who seemed disposed to sneer at his boyish looks. But his principal field of labour, in London, was at the chapel in the Tower, where he took

* Whitfield's Letter.

great pains with the soldiers, and drew many serious young men to his sermons. Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Scriptures was the book from which he derived that knowledge of scriptural theology, that serious evangelical train of thinking, and that simple, popular mode of instruction, for which he afterwards became so deservedly renowned. He is said to have studied this book literally on his knees, to have read it through four times, and to have spoken of the author with the most profound veneration, ever calling him the great Mr. Henry.

Mr. Whitfield went to preach at Dummer, in Hampshire, but being invited by the Wesleys to go over to Georgia, to their help, he went to London, to wait on General Oglethorp. During this visit to the metropolis, he frequently preached to the most numerous assemblies; for the hearers hung on the rails outside the parish churches, climbed on the leads, and, after all, multitudes went away unable to hear. These were new scenes to the members of the Church of England; for since the days when Baxter, Vincent, and some others of the Puritans, filled the parish churches, they had seldom been troubled with excessive popularity. But now, the managers of all the charities in London invited Whitfield to preach for them, and replenish their exhausted coffers. Though he generally preached four times on the Lord's-day, he could not comply with all their invitations, without procuring the use of the churches on the working-days. Nine times a week he preached; and when he administered the Lord's Supper before day-light, the streets were illuminated with lanterns. He refused a very lucrative curacy in London,

that he might go and preach to the ignorant inhabitants of Georgia. In the ardour of youth, when such popularity as he enjoyed is peculiarly intoxicating, he resolved to tear himself from London, which he might easily have persuaded himself was a field of usefulness, superior to the deserts of America. But having determined on his departure, he visited first his native place, and from thence made a tour to Bath and Bristol, attracting, by his popular preaching, immense numbers in every place, and rousing not a few to a serious solicitude for their eternal happiness.

Such popularity and zeal provoked envy, and kindled opposition. Two clergymen told him, he must not preach for them any more, unless he would recall a part of the preface to a sermon, which he had lately published on regeneration. The obnoxious sentence expressed a wish, that his brethren would entertain their auditories oftener with discourses on the new birth. Those gentlemen must have been excessively delicate, who could not bear a hint so gentle. If they objected to the doctrine of the new birth, they should have insisted on his renouncing it, as contrary to the principles of their church. But, if the clergy approved of the doctrine, as Mr. Whitfield preached it, surely he might be allowed to express, in decent language, a wish that it were more frequently taught. The Dissenters flocked to church to hear Mr. Whitfield; and some of them told this zealous churchman, that if the doctrine of the new birth, and justification by faith, were preached powerfully in the established church, there would be no Dissenters in England. Those who made this assertion were probably dissenters from the preaching, but not

from the principles of the establishment; for they were evidently not aware of a fact, which has been proved since evangelical preachers have increased in the Church of England, that there are multitudes, who are so deeply convinced that the whole constitution of the hierarchy is unscriptural in its principles, and pernicious in its tendency, that no preacher could allure them into its communion.

Having parted with his London friends, amidst many prayers and tears, Mr. Whitfield embarked for Georgia. On the voyage he endured much distress from the profligacy of the crew, but was shortly delighted with the change which his presence and counsels produced in their behaviour. "They were now as regular as a church. Mr. Whitfield preached, with a captain on each side of him, and soldiers all around; and the two other ship's companies, being now in the trade winds, drew near and joined in the worship of God. The great cabin was become a Bethel, both captains were daily more and more affected; and a crucified Saviour, and the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, were the usual topics of their conversation. The children were catechised, the soldiers were reformed, and the women exclaimed, 'What a change in our Captain!' The bad books and packs of cards, which Mr. Whitfield had exchanged for bibles and religious publications, were thrown overboard, and a fever which prevailed added considerably to the general impressions of eternity*."

The cause of Methodism, which Mr. Wesley had left in a dying state, was revived by the arrival of his

* Life, p. 22.

more popular successor. On taking an attentive survey of the civil and moral condition of Georgia, Mr. Whitfield determined to found an orphan hospital, in imitation of the one which Professor Franklin had established at Halle, in Saxony. But the German institution had been established in a cultivated, populous country, and "this at the tail of the world," where it was deprived of every resource. The well-meant institution involved Whitfield in expenses which perplexed his mind, and exposed him to severe reflections. It would, indeed, have been far more prudent to have abandoned the scheme as soon as its impracticability became apparent; but perseverance was the characteristic of the man, and this, in particular instances, is liable to degenerate into obstinacy, which led Mr. Whitfield to expend upon his favourite project much more than it deserved. It was, perhaps, wisely ordered, to furnish him with a counterpoise to his dangerous popularity. This scheme drew him, also, into New England, where he not only collected money for the hospital, but enlarged his own knowledge of theology, by an acquaintance with a class of Christians to whom he afterwards owed much; and as America could never furnish sufficient donations for the charitable establishment, he was induced to travel over a great part of England, to solicit further aid; so that the desert to which he retreated, was the means of introducing him into unbounded popularity.

On his return to England, to receive priest's orders, and to collect for the orphan house, the clergy received him with coldness, but the people welcomed him with extravagant applause. From five of the

pulpits in which he had been accustomed to preach he was now excluded, and the Bishop of London asked him, whether his journals, which had been published were not a little tinctured with enthusiasm? He replied, that they were written entirely for private use, and published without his consent; and he afterwards confessed that he had written his journals too hastily, and taken up ill reports concerning good men, especially the colleges and ministers of New England. For this youthful fault he afterwards, with a noble ingenuousness, begged pardon, both in the pulpit and in the press.

The societies for reformation of manners, to which the national establishment owed all its credit for serious regard to religion or morals, were much respected by Mr. Whitfield, at the commencement of his popularity in London, and were helpful to him in promoting various schemes with which his generous heart always teemed. But, on his return from America, they were alienated from him; so that his friends were induced to form other societies, composed of those who wished for more than mere reformation of manners. They hired a large room in Fetter-lane, where they frequently met for religious exercises, which they considered purely as social helps to religion, not suspecting that they would lead to the establishment of congregations and sects separate from the national church. Thus originated the term *society*, which still prevails among the Methodists.

The formation of a new sect was daily becoming more inevitable; for Mr. Whitfield was excluded from most of the parochial pulpits. After having received

priest's orders from Bishop Benson, at Oxford, and taken a journey to Bristol, to collect for the orphans in Georgia, he found himself compelled to adopt some new method to prevent his usefulness from being totally annihilated. "I thought," says he, "it might be doing the service of my Creator, who had a mountain for his pulpit, and the heavens for his sounding-board, and who, when his Gospel was refused by the Jews, sent his servants into the highways and hedges*." He had often heard that the colliers in the vicinity of Bristol were barbarians who had no place of worship, and were so wild that no one chose to venture among them. After much prayer, he went to Hannam Mount, and preached to about a hundred colliers. The news flew so swiftly, that the second and third time of his preaching out of doors, the numbers greatly increased, till the congregation was computed at twenty thousand. Many of these despised outcasts, who had never been in a place of worship in their lives, received the Gospel with an eagerness which defies all description. Mr. Whitfield was affected "by seeing the white gutters made by their tears, which plentifully fell down their black cheeks as they came out of their coal pits. Several hundreds of them were soon brought under deep convictions, which ended in a sound and thorough conversion. The change was visible to all, though numbers chose to impute it to any thing rather than the finger of God. As the scene was quite new, and I had just begun to be an extemporary preacher, it occasioned many inward conflicts. Sometimes, when twenty thousand people were before me, I had not,

* Life, p. 37.

in my own apprehension, a word to say. But I was never totally deserted, and frequently (for to deny it would be lying against God) so assisted, that I knew, by happy experience, what our Lord meant by saying, 'he that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.' The open firmament above me, the prospect of the adjacent fields, with the sight of thousands on thousands, some in coaches, some on horseback, and some in trees, and at times all affected and drenched in tears together, to which sometimes was added the solemnity of the approaching evening, quite overcame me*."

Many of the higher ranks went out of Bristol to hear him, and then invited him to preach in an unconsecrated spot in the city, under the blue vault of the heavens. From Bristol, he went into Wales, where a similar revival of religion had commenced, some years before, under the ministry of the Rev. Griffith Jones, and was now carried on by means of Howel Harris, a layman. To employ laymen to preach was yet far from the thoughts of even the Methodists; but when Mr. Whitfield visited many of the towns in Wales, he cordially united with the man whom God had honoured to build up his kingdom, though no episcopal hand had communicated an undefined, invisible, indelible something. To the multitudes who flocked to hear, Mr. Whitfield first preached in English, and Mr. Harris afterwards in Welsh. From Wales Mr. Whitfield went to Gloucester, and as the parochial pulpit was shut against him, he went abroad and preached to thousands. The same scenes followed his

* Life, p. 58.

arrival at all the principal places in that country. "To wander thus about from place to place, to stand in bowling-greens, at market-crosses, and in highways, especially in his own country, where, had he conferred with flesh and blood, he might have lived at ease; to be blamed by friends, and have every evil thing spoken against him by his enemies, was, especially when his body was weak and his spirits low, very trying*."

After a short visit to the Methodists at Oxford, the cradle of the cause, he went to London, and attempted to preach at Islington church, as Mr. Stonehouse, the incumbent, was a friend to the rising communion; but, in the midst of the prayers, the churchwarden came and demanded his licence, forbidding him to preach unless he produced it. He went out, therefore, after the communion service, and preached in the churchyard. On the following Lord's day, having reflected on the mighty blessings which had been produced by his being driven to preach out of doors, he improved his exclusion from every pulpit, by going into Moorfields, and commencing that scene of labour and success, which has since been so renowned. The public notice for this new and singular measure drew such numbers, as struck him with astonishment. He had been threatened, that if he attempted to preach there, he should not come away alive. But, though his friends were soon parted from him by the violent pressure, the mob, over whom he acquired great ascendancy, formed a lane for him; and when the table, on which he was to have mounted, was dashed in pieces, he ascended a wall, and preached to the

* Life, p. 41.

listening myriads. The same evening, he went to Kennington common, a short distance from London, and preached to still greater crowds, who were as silent and orderly as if they had been in a place of worship. "Words cannot express," says Whitfield, "the displays of Divine grace, which we saw, and heard of, and felt*." Blackheath was afterwards added to these methodistically consecrated spots, where from twenty to thirty thousand are said to have assembled, whose voices in singing could be heard two miles off, and Mr. Whitfield's voice nearly a mile."

When this novel and surprising scene commenced in England and Wales, Mr. Wesley was travelling in Germany, for a reason which many will deem sufficiently strange and romantic: he went to see the place where the Christians live. On his return from Georgia, the leisure and quiet of the voyage afforded him an opportunity of reflecting on his own state, the result of which he thus expresses. "It is now two years and almost four months, since I left my native country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity. But what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why (what I least of all suspected) that I, who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. I am not mad though I thus speak †." Without disputing the truth of the conclusion, the validity of the evidence may not only be questioned, but absolutely denied; for Mr. Wesley pronounces himself unconverted, "Because he had not that faith, which consists in a sure

* Life, p. 43.

† Wesley's Journals, vol.

48.

trust and confidence which a man hath in God, that, through the merits of Christ, his sins are forgiven, and he reconciled to the favour of God." His biographers call these the words of the church of England; but the faith of the Gospel, which brings salvation, consists in believing a truth that remains eternally the same, whether we receive or reject it, "that there is eternal life in Christ the Son of God;" while this kind of faith, of which Mr. Wesley speaks, consists in believing a something which is not true, till it is believed—that a man's sins are forgiven. That a genuine faith *produces* an assurance of our being reconciled to God is admitted; but this assurance is essentially distinct from the faith by which it is produced, and no one can affirm that the man has never believed who has not a sure confidence that his sins are forgiven.

Shortly after his arrival in England, Mr. Wesley met with a new band of Moravian brethren, who had just arrived from Germany. With one of them, Peter Bohler, he went to Oxford, and conversed largely on the nature and effects of Christian faith. "By this man," says Mr. Wesley, "I was, on Sunday, clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved." But, when Peter Bohler affirmed, that true faith was always accompanied with dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness, Mr. Wesley disputed warmly against him, being accustomed, as he says, to "explain away the Scriptures, which seemed to speak that language, and to call all those Presbyterians who spoke otherwise." His brother Charles, who had been offended with him for calling himself unconverted, and for hesitating to

preach till he had faith, now adopted the same views of the way of salvation, and began to enjoy the delights of assurance. But the way in which John Wesley obtained this happiness, may be learned from his own narration. "In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart, through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed, I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins." Now, beginning to preach salvation by faith, instantaneous conversion, and assurance of pardon, it is not wonderful that he was forbidden to preach any more in the parish churches. He resolved, therefore, to retire for a time into Germany, to the settlements of the Moravians. After a visit to Count Zinzendorf, at Marienbourn, he went to Hernhuth, where he conversed with the leaders of the Moravian church, and then returned to London. Different opinions will be formed of his expedition to the Continent, which seems to have fixed the character of Mr. Wesley's creed, and the complexion of his societies.

Immediately on his return to England, he began to preach the doctrine which he had learned at Hernhuth. His journals discover a surprising state of mind, which it is difficult to characterize; considerable attention to the sacred Scriptures, with such an abandonment to impressions of mind, as would go to make the Scriptures useless; much scrupulous regard to the real sense of Scripture, while passages are applied accord-

ing as they happen first to strike the eye, on opening the Bible. Great success, we are told, attended his preaching, and yet some are said to have been born again in a higher sense, and some only in a lower. In this anomalous spirit he was called to assist Mr. Whitfield, who, from field preaching near Bristol, was now about to return to Georgia. Mr. Wesley trod in Whitfield's irregular steps at Bristol; though he confesses, that he had been so tenacious of decency and order, that he should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if not done in a church. The multitudes which attended the preaching of Mr. Wesley were not so numerous as those who had flocked to Mr. Whitfield; but the sudden impressions and loud cries of the hearers were far greater than anything we find recorded in the life of Whitfield; for Mr. Wesley was exactly in that state of mind which welcomes the marvellous. At a time of general impressions of religion, a little encouragement from the preacher will give a vogue to miraculous effects, and turn men from silent retirement before God, to uttering all they feel before men. Mr. Wesley having formed a place of worship, called Kingswood school, near Bristol, put it into the hands of trustees; but Mr. Whitfield disapproving of the plan, lest the feoffees should abuse their power to the exclusion of the Gospel, went again to Bristol, and by putting Mr. Wesley in full possession of the place, was himself afterwards excluded. By the large contributions which he raised in England, Mr. Whitfield established the orphan hospital in Georgia with favourable omens. He preached through a great part of North America, and was received with open arms by

many of the ministers, and by thousands who expressed their delight to see puritanism revived by a minister of the church of England. From these descendants of the Puritans, he acquired a larger acquaintance with the best writers in theology, which, added to their conversation, matured his gifts and graces for the ministry. But on his return to England, in 1741, he says, "What a trying scene appeared! During my journey through America, I had written two well-meant, though injudicious letters, against England's two great favourites, the *Whole Duty of Man*, and Archbishop Tillotson, who, I said, knew no more of religion than Mahomet. Mr. John Wesley had been prevailed on to preach and print in favour of perfection and universal redemption, and very strongly against election, a doctrine, which I thought, and do now believe, was taught me of God, therefore could not possibly recede from. I had written an answer, which, though revised and much approved of by some judicious divines, I think had some too strong expressions about absolute reprobation, which the apostle leaves rather to be inferred than expressed*."

The differences between Mr. Whitfield and Wesley were soon communicated to their hearers, and many viewed Whitfield as a fallen star. The calvinistic brother was allowed to preach, only once, in the Foundery. Charles Wesley, who was more kind and generous, less positive and arminianised, than his brother, wept and prayed that the breach might be prevented, but John Wesley seems to have parted from his old companion with great coolness. Mr. Whit-

* *Life*, p. 68.

field is said to have told Mr. Wesley, " You and I preach a different Gospel*:" thus they turned, one to the right hand, and the other to the left, so that, from this time, we must view the Methodists as forming two distinct sects, of which the distinguishing tenets and subsequent history will be given in the following sections.

SECT. II.—*The Arminian or Wesleyan Methodists.*

THE members of this society usually call themselves *the* Methodists, to the exclusion of all others; and as Mr. John Wesley was the senior and leader of the band, to whom the name was originally given, his followers may be considered as the proper heirs to the honorary legacy. Yet, since Mr. Whitfield, at length, took the lead in those measures which gave a distinguishing character to the new communion, by striking out the path of field-preaching, and employing laymen to aid the exertions of the clergy, those who adopt his creed protest against the monopoly of the name by the Arminians. It is, however, useless to conflict with events which we cannot control; and as the disciples of Mr. Wesley are, in England, considered the genuine Methodists, it might seem unnecessary to prefix any distinguishing epithet to that name. But the word having become equivocal, by the division of the claimants into two distinct communions, that which regards itself as the parent stock may best be distinguished by the term Arminian, which conveys to the

* Wesley's Journal, vol. i. p. 77.

public mind a knowledge of the points wherein these differ from the other Methodists. To be called Arminians would indeed be offensive to many, but it must be presumed, that as the Wesleyans entitled their periodical publication, the *Arminian Magazine*, they cannot consider the epithet as dishonourable.

The two Methodist communions being originally formed by ministers of the Church of England, who, though driven from her walls, professed still to remain attached to her communion, and disavowed all intention of forming a dissenting body, it may be inquired, how came they to find a place in the *History of Dissenters*? This question is answered by observing, that seldom have the original founders of any religious community anticipated all the consequences of their conduct, or been aware to what their societies might grow. The two thousand ministers, who were ejected from the establishment by the Act of Uniformity, had little more thought or intention of forming such a body as the present dissenters, than Wesley or Whitfield had of producing the modern Methodists. It is more than probable, however, that both these distinguished men saw, before they died, that their societies would form a permanent dissent, of which the separation from the national church would, in course of time, be much more strongly marked.

Mr. Wesley, indeed, maintained with jealousy his high-church professions, and kept at a suspicious distance from Dissenters; but if, in this respect, he attempted to retard, in others he much accelerated the progress of dissent among the Methodists. His Arminian creed separated him at once from the great body

of the clergy who profess a religious adherence to the doctrines contained in the formularies and articles of the establishment. An ingenious man may put an Arminian sense upon the seventeenth article of the Church of England, as a barrister will give to an act of parliament the meaning which will promote his client's interest; but to us, who have never sworn to her orthodoxy, and who are not implicated in the praise or blame of what she believes, all attempts to interpret the thirty-nine articles in any other than a Calvinistic sense, prove nothing but the futility of established creeds, which are sure at length to fall into contemptuous desuetude, or to be interpreted, in defiance of all conscience and honesty, in that way which happens to please the prevailing party in the church.

Pelagianism, which the church of England condemns in her articles, asserts that the death of Christ was intended alike for all, and that all men have a certain light, or grace, which they may by their own powers improve, and that this makes the difference between one man and another. Such is the creed of the Arminian Methodists. They, of course, deny that the conversion of men to the faith of the Gospel is in consequence of the divine election, or peculiar influence, distinguishing them from those who perish in their sins; but maintain that it is the result of a superior improvement of that general mercy and universal light, which would equally have saved others had they been equally diligent.

To this same influence of the human will they attribute the continuance of religion, and the final salvation of the regenerate; for while they speak strongly of the

absolute necessity of being born again, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, they suppose that many who have been regenerated, pardoned, justified, and sanctified in a high degree, are now in hell. This is called the doctrine of falling from grace.

Justification by faith alone, and the immediate forgiveness of all sin, is maintained with earnest zeal by this community. It was the grand sentiment which Mr. Wesley learned from the Moravians, and which he made the distinguishing theme of his preaching. But neither their faith, nor its use in justification, accords with the views of Calvinists. Mr. Wesley's notion of faith, as consisting in the belief of something concerning ourselves, "that our sins are pardoned," we have already opposed to what appears to be the scriptural view of faith,—a belief of the record concerning Christ, that there is eternal life for us in him. Even his kind of faith, however, Mr. Wesley seems to have put in the place of Christ; for the minutes of conference say, "in what sense is the righteousness of Christ imputed to all men or to believers? Answer, We do not find it expressly affirmed in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any. Although we do find that faith is imputed to us for righteousness*." Thus, with an extraordinary appearance of zeal for justification by faith, and not by works, the whole doctrine is

* Wesley's Life, p. 272. It is singularly curious, that immediately after this unhappy statement, it is said, the text, "as by one man's disobedience *all* men were made sinners, so by the obedience of one *all* were made righteous," we conceive, means, "by the merits of Christ, all men are cleared from the guilt of Adam's actual sin." Now, this text, upon which such a doctrine is built, is not in the Bible, for the words of the Apostle to the Romans, v. 19, are, "by the obedience of one shall *many* be made righteous."

overturned, by making our faith itself, and not Christ, the object of it, the ground of our justification. The whole strain of the apostolic reasoning on this important theme shows, that if we make anything of ours, either actions or dispositions, the foundation of our justification, we pervert the whole Gospel, from a system of grace, into a covenant of works. Another question, "Is not the whole dispute of salvation by faith or by works a mere strife of words?" is answered thus: "In asserting salvation by faith we mean this, 1st. that pardon, salvation begun, is received by faith producing works; 2d. that holiness, salvation continued, is faith working by love; 3d. that heaven, salvation finished, is the reward of this faith. If those who assert salvation by works, or by faith and works, mean the same thing (understanding by faith the revelation of Christ in us, by salvation pardon, holiness, glory), we will not strive with them at all. If they do not, this is not a strife of words; but the very vitals, the essence of Christianity, is the thing in question."

As the Wesleyans accord with the Quakers in the doctrine of universal light, or grace, and in that of falling from grace, or the favour of God, so they both agree in affirming that sinless perfection is attainable in this life. One of the questions of conference asks, "What is implied in being a perfect Christian?" The answer is, "The loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our mind, and all our soul and strength. Does this imply, that all inward sin is taken away? Without doubt, or how could he be said to be saved from all his uncleanness, as Ezekiel xxxvi. 29*." It

* Life, p. 278.

is admitted, however, that the greater part of those who have died in the faith were not thus perfectly sanctified, till just before death dismissed them from the world; nor is it denied that by the sanctified, the Scriptures rarely, if ever, mean those who are saved from all sin; that the inspired writers almost continually speak of, or to those who are justified; and to them is applied the term sanctified; and that, consequently, it behoves us to speak in public almost continually of the state of justification, but more rarely in full and explicit terms concerning those who are entirely sanctified." Hence arises the difficulty of determining exactly what the present Methodists mean by perfection; for they frequently express themselves so cautiously, that it should seem as if they meant no more than the scriptural idea of a Christian, whose mind is well informed in all evangelical doctrines, whose heart is in a considerable measure conformed to the temper of Jesus Christ, so that his habitual disposition is holy and benevolent, his conscience enjoys a peaceful sense of the divine favour, and his life is uniformly honourable to his Christian profession. But Mr. Wesley's expressions, and frequently those of his followers, seem to teach an absolute sinless perfection; that men may live on earth in the full possession of what appears the peculiar privilege of "the spirits of just men made perfect;" with this only difference, that the perfect on earth may lose their privilege and even fall short of heaven itself, while the perfect in heaven are irrevocably fixed in their happy state.

It must, however, be observed, that as few, even of the Apostles themselves, perhaps none but John, are by

the Methodists supposed to have obtained the blessing; so not many now pretend to have scaled this giddy height. It would, indeed, be a hazardous profession, exposing the hardy pretender to be stared at as a faultless monster, more rare than a phoenix; for, in spite of Mr. Wesley's assertion, that it is difficult to decide whether a man is perfect or not, without the miraculous discernment of spirits; most persons would think that as common sense perceives men in general to be far enough from spotless innocence, so it would require no supernatural perspicacity to discover one who was by this attainment so completely distinguished from all the rest of his species.

In point of discipline, or church government, the Wesleyan Methodists profess to admire the episcopal constitution of the establishment, so that Mr. Wesley's ordination in the national church gave him great weight. The lay preachers whom he called forth, and sent through the kingdom, possessed no more power than he chose to afford them, as a delegated portion of his own. Of this he says, "What then is my power? It is a power of admitting into, and excluding from the societies under my care, of choosing and removing leaders and stewards, and of receiving or not receiving helpers, and appointing them when, where, and how to help me*."

Since the death of their founder, the Wesleyans have become a new species of Presbyterians; for the ministers exercise, what is in Scotland called the power of the keys, admitting members into their communion and to the table of the Lord, by their sole authority;

* Life, p. 535.

and meeting in an annual general assembly, which is called the *Conference*, where the preachers receive their route for the subsequent year, and where all business which affects the whole body is finally determined.

The whole field of Methodism is divided into distinct departments, termed circuits. To each of these the conference appoints as many preachers as its extent, or number of societies may require; and at their head is placed one, who was called the assistant, because he was originally chosen to assist Mr. Wesley. The peculiar duties of the assistant are, 1st. to see that the other preachers in the circuit behave well and want nothing; 2d. to visit the classes quarterly, regulate the bands, and deliver tickets; 3d. to take in or put out of the society or bands; 4th. to keep watch-nights and love-feasts; 5th. to hold quarterly meetings and therein diligently to inquire, both into the temporal and spiritual state of each society; 6th. to overlook the accounts of all the stewards.

Besides these assistants, there are others who are called the travelling preachers, many of whom are yet on probation for what is termed full connexion. For the gradations of ecclesiastical promotion among the Methodists are thus described:—1st. they are received as private members of the society on trial; 2d. after a quarter of a year, if they are found deserving, they are admitted as proper members; 3d. when their graces or their abilities are sufficiently manifest, they are appointed leaders of classes; 4th. if they then discover talents for more important services, they are employed to exhort occasionally in the smaller congregations, when the preachers cannot attend; 5th. if approved in

this line of duty, they are allowed to preach ; 6th. out of these men, who are called local preachers, are selected the itinerant preachers, who are first proposed in conference, and if they continue faithful, for four years of trial, they are received into full connexion*.

All those hearers of the Methodists, who wish to be considered members of their society, must join one of the classes ; at the head of which is the most experienced person, who is called the class-leader, whose business Mr. Wesley thus defines : “ to see each person in his class once a week, at least, in order to inquire how their souls prosper ; to advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require ; to receive what they may be willing to give to the poor ; to meet the minister and the stewards of the society, to inform the minister of any that are sick, or disorderly, and will not be re-proved, and to pay to the stewards what they have received of the several classes in the week preceding †.” The classes meet together once a-week, usually in the place of worship, when each one tells his experience, as it is called, and gives a penny towards the funds of the society : the leader concludes the meeting with prayer.

But the classes being composed of different ages and sexes, the members complained that they could not make known all their minds, especially concerning their easily besetting sins, and the temptations by which they were most exposed to danger. To remedy this inconvenience, another subdivision was formed, under the name of the *bands*. “ In compliance with their desire,” says Mr. Wesley, “ I divided them into smaller companies, putting the married, or single men,

* Wesley's Life.

† Wesley's Works, vol. xv. p. 253.

and married, or single women together. The chief rules of these bands run thus: In order to confess our faults one to another, and pray for one another, that we may be healed, we intend, 1. to meet once a week at least; 2. to come punctually at the hour appointed; 3. to begin with singing or prayer; 4. to speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly, the true state of our soul, with the faults we have committed, in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting; and, 5. to desire some person, thence called a leader, to speak his own state first, and then to ask the rest in order, as many and as searching questions, as may be, concerning their state and temptations*.”

At certain times, the Wesleyans keep what are called watch-nights, which are now almost confined to the last night in each year. Another extraordinary service among the Methodists is the celebration of what are called love-feasts. “In order to increase in them a grateful sense of all the mercies of the Lord, I desired,” says Mr. Wesley, “that one evening in a quarter they should all come together, that we might eat bread (as the ancient Christians did) with gladness and singleness of heart. At these love-feasts (so we termed them, retaining the name, as well as the thing, which was in use from the beginning †), our food is only a little plain cake and water. But we seldom return from them without being fed, not only with the meat that perisheth, but with that which endureth to everlasting life ‡.”

As Mr. Wesley designed to keep his societies in

* Life, p. 237.

† Jude 12.

‡ Life, p. 238.

some sense members of the church of England, the Lord's Supper was not at first administered by those lay-preachers whom he called to his assistance; but the Methodists were taught to communicate at their parish churches, except when those episcopally ordained clergymen who were in the connexion administered the sacred ordinance at the Methodist chapels. But, since Mr. Wesley's death, many of the Methodists, dissatisfied with receiving the Lord's Supper at the hands of clergymen whom they considered unconverted, and in communion with such persons as were frequently found at the parochial altars, petitioned the conference to grant them the indulgence of celebrating the feast in their own chapels. The conference has generally deemed it prudent to yield; but these deviations from the original methodism have produced in many places, and especially in Bristol, much dissatisfaction, and various instances of separation. It is believed also, that baptism, as well as the Lord's Supper, is pretty generally administered by the Methodist preachers

The history of the Arminian branch of the Methodists, as a distinct communion, commences in the year 1741, when Mr. Wesley differed from his former coadjutor, Mr. Whitfield, on the subject of universal redemption and Christian perfection. The controversy will be reviewed in another part of our work.

Mr. Wesley being now left sole patriarch of one large body, gave full scope to his talent and taste for government. As he erected a chapel in Moorfields, London, on a spot where cannon had been formerly cast, it was called the Foundry. This was now the head quarters

of Arminian methodism, for Mr. Wesley himself had a house adjoining to the chapel, and preached most constantly there, while in London. But, when called away to propagate his principles in other parts of the kingdom, he left Thomas Maxfield to watch over the society at the Foundry, and to pray with them. This young man, endued with good natural abilities, and considerable knowledge of the Scriptures, felt himself disposed to step beyond the line of praying and private exhortation prescribed to him, and to encroach upon the province of his superior. His first attempts at preaching were received in that flattering manner which naturally encouraged him to go forward; but when Mr. Wesley received from some, who were not so well pleased with him, complaints of this irregularity, he hastened to London to suppress the rising evil. On his arrival, however, his mother, who then resided at his house near the chapel, and for whom he entertained a sacred deference, cautioned him against opposing what she called the work of God, saying to him, "Thomas Maxfield is as surely called of God to preach as you are." Mr. Wesley then consented to hear him preach, examined into the good effects which were said to have attended his public labours, and from that time became a convert to lay preaching. In this career, indeed, Mr. Wesley, though last, soon became first.

In a similar unexpected manner, another coadjutor was raised up in Yorkshire. John Nelson, a mason of Birstal, in that county, having heard the Methodists in London, was so deeply imbued with their principles and spirit, that he hastened back to his native place,

to impart the joyful discovery. Such were the effects of his preaching, that a large congregation was soon formed of persons who had imbibed all the principles of the Methodists. At the request of Nelson, Mr. Wesley visited them, took them under his patronage, and at length saw his societies planted throughout Yorkshire.

About the same time, the founder of methodism visited Newcastle upon Tyne. The Methodist system of discipline, like most other ecclesiastical constitutions, grew with circumstances, and was perfected by degrees. "It was not long," says Mr. Wesley, "before an objection was made which had not once entered into my thoughts. Is this not making a schism? Is not the joining these together, gathering churches out of churches? It was answered, if you mean only gathering people out of buildings, called churches, it is. But if you mean dividing Christians from Christians, and so destroying Christian fellowship, it is not. For these were not Christians before they were thus joined: most of them were bare-faced heathens. The fellowship you speak of never existed; therefore it cannot be destroyed. Look east or west, north or south, name what parish you please—Is this Christian fellowship there? Rather are not the bulk of the parishioners a mere rope of sand? What Christian connexion is there between them?"

But now the rude, brutal kind of persecution for religion, which has been the opprobrium of Englishmen ever since the Restoration, began to try the Methodists, and to prove whether they possessed the spirit of martyrdom, as well as of propagation, to

suffer with patience, as they had laboured with diligence. That species of opposition which the Non-conformists endured from the iron sceptre of an intolerant government, the Methodists have never experienced; for when the mob assembled round the new places of worship at Bristol, the magistrates of that city soon dispersed them, and ever after ensured to the new sect the quiet enjoyment of its principles and worship. In London and its vicinity, indeed, the populace raged more violently, following Mr. Wesley and his disciples with showers of stones, and, at one time, almost unroofing the chapel at the Foundry. But Sir John Ganson, the chairman of the Middlesex justices, called on Mr. Wesley, to assure him that he need not submit to endure these insults, for that the magistrates had particular directions from the government to do them justice, whenever they should apply for protection or redress.

On a tour to Birmingham and its neighbourhood, Mr. Wesley endured still more severe trials. Mr. Charles Wesley having been invited into Cornwall, by Captain Turner, a Methodist, from Bristol, a society was formed at St. Ives, which Mr. John Wesley shortly after visited. But here the rector and the curate of the parish, and the neighbouring gentry, set the mob upon them at every opportunity; so that many of the hearers were wounded, and the preaching-house rased to the ground. As usual, however, the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church; for the more they were persecuted, the more they grew; so that methodism here struck its roots deep, and spread its shade over all Cornwall.

But the Methodists, feeling that they had the government on their side, wisely appealed to the magistracy. When they applied, in vain, to the country justices for redress, they moved their cause into the Court of King's Bench, where the judges invariably administered to them ample justice, in such a tone as discouraged the persecutors from continuing their outrages. John Nelson and Thomas Beard, having been sent into the army, for no other crime, either committed or pretended, than that of preaching what they deemed the truth, on an application to government, Nelson was released by an order from the Secretary of War, but the other sunk under the sufferings which he endured, and may be regarded as the proto-martyr of the Methodists.

On Friday, August 24, 1744, Mr. Wesley preached, for the last time, at Oxford, before the university. "I am now (says he) clear of the blood of those men. I have fully delivered my own soul. And I am well pleased, that it should be the very day on which, in the last century, near two thousand burning and shining lights were put out at one stroke. Yet what a wide difference is there between their case and mine! They were turned out of house and home, and all that they had; whereas I am only hindered from preaching, without any other loss, and that in a kind of honourable manner, it being determined that, when my next turn to preach came, they would pay another person to preach for me. And so they did, twice or thrice, even to the time that I resigned my fellowship."

In the year 1747, Mr. Williams, one of the Methodist preachers, crossed the channel, and began to preach in the metropolis of Ireland. The lower classes of the

people, who were chiefly Catholics, gave him some disturbance; but as he succeeded in forming a society, he sent an account of his labours to Mr. Wesley, who immediately visited Dublin. But, after a short mission, he left Ireland, with a society of two hundred and eighty members, to the care of two preachers, Mr. Williams and Mr. Trembath. Mr. Charles Wesley followed, and preached in Dublin, Cork, Athlone, and Bandon. The magistrates, at first, secured to them a peaceful opportunity of preaching in the sister island, but they soon changed their system of policy, and let loose the infuriated mob, who put the faith and patience of the Methodists to a severe test. Mr. John Wesley returned again to Ireland, accompanied by two additional preachers, Mr. Meriton and Mr. Swindells. The labours of the latter were successful, in a high degree, by the conversion of Thomas Walsh, who was himself a host. Having been educated in the darkness of Popery, he knew the horrors of that realm of night, and when he became a Methodist, he devoted himself to the conversion of his countrymen. Athirst for knowledge, he employed night and day in the study of the original languages of the Scriptures, and became a respectable Hebrew scholar, which gave him great weight as a preacher; but he died in the morning of his days, leaving behind him a character which would adorn the records of any Christian communion.

The persecution of the Irish Methodists assumed the form of a state measure; for the grand jury, at Cork, made a presentment, in which they say, "We find and present Charles Wesley to be a person of ill fame, a vagabond, and a common disturber of his Majesty's

peace; and we pray that he may be transported. We find, and present also, Thomas Williams, Robert Swindells, with several others." Thus sanctioned, one Butler, who headed the rioters, scoured the streets, day and night, proclaiming, as he went, "Five pounds for a swaddler's head." For Mr. Cennick, one of the first Methodists, having preached in Ireland on these words, "Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger," the ignorant populace made no scruple of mocking at the Bible and the Saviour, the professed objects of their reverence, by affixing the nickname of swaddler to the Irish Methodists. At the Lent assizes, the preachers who were presented, appeared in court, accompanied by some respectable inhabitants of Cork. The judge behaved like one who was worthy to fill the seat of justice. After having been shown the persons presented, he called for the evidence. When Butler appeared, and, in answer to the first question, said he was a ballad-singer, the judge desired him to withdraw, observing, that it was a pity he had not been presented. No other witness coming forward to criminate them, he turned to the preachers, and said, "Gentlemen, there is no evidence against you, you may retire. I am sorry that you have been treated so very improperly. I hope the police of this city will be better attended to for the time to come."

The breach between Messrs. Wesley and Whitfield, which had occasioned the formation of two Methodist communions, was, in some measure, healed, about the year 1750, when both these eminent men met and interchanged kind services. Mr. Wesley says, in his journals, "On Friday, January 19th, in the evening,

I read prayers at the chapel in West Street, and Mr. Whitfield preached a plain, affectionate sermon. Sunday, the 21st, he read prayers and I preached. Monday, I prayed in the morning at the Foundry; and Howel Harris preached, a powerful orator by nature and grace, but he owes nothing to art or education. So, by the blessing of God, one more stumbling block is removed*.”

The increase of the Methodist preachers, who were now entirely devoted to an itinerant life, having rendered it necessary to make some provision for the education of their children, Mr. Wesley was induced to form the seminary at Kingswood. His biographers give the following account of the institution. “It was intended for the children of our principal friends, that they might receive a complete education in the languages and sciences, without endangering their morals in the great schools, where vice is so prevalent. In time, many of the preachers married, and had families. Their little pittance was not sufficient to enable them to support their children at school. The uninterrupted duties of the itinerant life would not permit the father to give his son the necessary education he required; and it is well known how impossible it is, in general, for a mother to instruct, or even to govern a son, after a given age, especially during the absence of the father. On these considerations, after a few years, the school was appropriated to the education of a considerable number of the preachers’ sons, as well as of the children of private independent members. At present, the sons of the preachers make about three-fourths of the

* Wesley’s Life, p. 379.

children. These are instructed, boarded, and clothed ; and the charity is supported by an annual collection, made in all the chapels belonging to the societies in these kingdoms. The collection is now so increased, that a few sums out of it are allowed towards the education of preachers' daughters."

Mr. Walker, of Truro, in Cornwall, wrote to the father of Methodism, proposing to him to give up the Methodist societies to the care of those evangelical clergymen in whose parishes they were formed. They said to him, " If you love the church, why do you not give up your people to those in the church whom you yourself believe to be real ministers of Christ ?" If they expected him to comply, they must have formed very erroneous views of Mr. Wesley's characteristic features, and greatly undervalued his penetration, which had not enjoyed the instruction of so many years' unrestrained labour, without producing in him the spirit of a complete Dissenter from the dominant hierarchy. He first objected to some things in the evangelical clergy, and then pleaded, that he could not, in conscience, leave the societies to them, till he was assured they would have the same advantages for eternity, as they now enjoyed ; that unless the Methodists themselves were also assured of this, they could not in conscience give up themselves ; and that even he had no right or power to dispose of them contrary to their conscience. " But you plead," says Mr. Wesley, " that the Methodists already belong to the clergy by legal establishment. If they receive the sacrament from them thrice a year, and attend their ministrations on the Lord's-day, I see no more which the law requires. But, to go a little

deeper into this matter of legal establishment: do you think that the king and parliament have a right to prescribe to me what pastor I shall use? If they prescribe one which I know God never sent, am I obliged to receive him? If he be sent of God, can I receive him, with a clear conscience, till I know he is? And even when I do, if I believe my former pastor is more profitable to my soul, can I leave him without sin? Or has any man living a right to require this of me?" Who will wonder that the proposed union came to nothing, or that the Wesleyan Methodists have become a dissenting body, when their founder taught them so much of the principles and language of dissent?

SECT. III.—*The Calvinistic Methodists.*

IT will be observed, that Mr. Whitfield's name is not affixed to this division of the Methodists, for he may be said to have founded no sect. He left, indeed, a few places of worship, where his labours had collected large congregations; yet, in most instances, he was satisfied with impressing upon the multitudes who flocked to hear him, the importance of their salvation and the excellencies of the religion of Jesus, and leaving them to the constant care of those evangelical clergymen, or dissenting pastors, with whom he maintained affectionate communion. But to those distinct congregations, which he raised, have been added, what is called Lady Huntingdon's connexion; for this devout peeress not only built chapels in many of the principal places

of the kingdom, and assisted in the erection of others, but also founded a college for the instruction of pious young men who chose to devote themselves to the ministry in this communion.

The doctrinal system held by this branch of the Methodists, is sufficiently announced by the epithet *Calvinistic*. While both divisions of the Methodists profess to believe the articles of the church of England, they differ widely in their theological sentiments. The Arminians, who follow Mr. Wesley, plead that the articles of the establishment *may* be interpreted according to their views, but the Calvinistic Methodists contend that they *must* be intended to express what is called moderate Calvinism. The article on election is triumphantly adduced to prove that the followers of Mr. Whitfield, hold the genuine sentiments of their mother church, when in her original purity. They also insist that, in condemning pelagianism and free will, the established church equally renounces all connexion with Arminian Methodists. This contest between the rival sects, concerning the meaning of articles designed to establish uniformity of opinion in matters of religion, should not surprise any one; for the same controversy reigns among the clergy within the walls of the establishment.

The Calvinistic Methodists, indeed, profess to derive their creed originally from the sacred Scriptures. Yet, as there are not only divisions, but sub-divisions among Calvinists—some of them softening down the opinions of Calvin, while others glory in the attempt to stand higher than their master,—the Methodists who follow this celebrated reformer, may in general be pronounced

high Calvinists. For this communion was formed by a contention on the subject, which rendered the disputants angry, and induced them to think that the perfection of orthodoxy lay in being at the utmost possible distance from their opponents. But Calvinism is, of all other systems, the most unfit to be studied in a passion, or maintained out of spite.

Although Mr. Whitfield deserved the title of a judicious scriptural Calvinist, impartial truth forbids us to say as much for a great proportion of his followers. Both of the Methodist communions sent forth teachers exceedingly rude and uninformed; but such men were much better fitted for Arminian than Calvinistic preachers. Arminianism being the common creed of the careless world, it is readily welcomed by the carnal mind, without any rigorous examination of its proofs or tendencies; for there is no difficulty in convincing men of what they already believe. The opposite doctrine, however, is so opposed to the pride of reasoning, and the conceit of self-importance, that it meets as many opponents as hearers, and has to prove its divine authority against hosts of objections, which men in general regard as self-evident propositions.

Howel Harris, in Wales, warmly espoused Mr. Whitfield's cause against Mr. Wesley, but his native vigour and religious zeal were not guided by enlarged knowledge and sound discretion. Others who were raised up, like him, to wage war against the world and Mr. Wesley, were uneducated men, who did not see all the bearings of their own system; and when Lady Huntingdon professed to give an academical education to her preachers, the demands of her societies were so

numerous, and there was such a rage for much preaching, and lay preaching, that the young men were, in various instances, called out, after a mere apology for an education, which just served to tinge them with the confidence, without imbuing them with the spirit of science. Hence they formed a body of more injudicious Calvinists than England had ever before seen; for instead of the sound views which the first Puritans derived from an extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures, this new host of Calvinists affected to despise those whose works would have taught them to understand their own system. What wonder, then, if the spirit of party induced such men to fly off from Arminianism, without considering that there was also an opposite error?

The same eagerness of zeal, devoid of the light of knowledge, produced a fondness for crude, allegorical interpretations of the sacred Scriptures, which gained them, among the raw disciples whom they called out of the world, the reputation of wonderful men, at the cheap rate of a wild imagination, and a voluble tongue. Thus they excited disgust in the Calvinistic Dissenters, and laid themselves open to the attacks of the Arminians, who did not fail to charge their tenets with antinomianism. The preponderance of Whitfield's sentiments and example, indeed, preserved the Methodists from falling at first into that ignorant perversion of Calvinism, which has since withholden many of their preachers from addressing sinners, or exhorting them, as Christ has taught his ministers, "to repent and believe the Gospel."

The discipline of the Calvinistic Methodists is not

so regular and defineable as that of the Wesleyans. For while Mr. Wesley was raising a well-disciplined army, his less politic brother neglected to provide for the perpetuity of his name, and with generous indifference to self, raised only a popular standard, around which detached parties of flying troops voluntarily ranged themselves. It was, therefore, not till after the death of him, who alone could animate and sway the mass, that the Calvinistic Methodists were reduced into any kind of order. Hence we can no more be expected to give an exact draught of this communion, than to describe the illuminated disc of the moon, or to fix the forms of the ever-varying clouds.

A great proportion of the Calvinistic Methodists approve the forms and hierarchy of the church of England; but as they imagine that no divine model is to be found in the Scriptures, they hold themselves at liberty to adopt, to imitate, or to desert the established communion, according as they find their spiritual welfare injured or advanced, and feel no obligation to follow the pattern of those Dissenters, who have formed churches according to what appears to them the institution of Jesus Christ. But as Whitfield adopted the doctrinal principles of the old Puritans, his followers more easily became Dissenters than those of Mr. Wesley, who frequently communicated at the parish churches, and attended on the ministration of men whose character they disliked, and whose doctrine they rejected. The promiscuous communion which prevails in the establishment, was received into the Calvinistic Methodist chapels, where persons who were not bound to the communion by any ties, were admitted

to the Lord's table, without previous examination. This, however, was more early abandoned in those tabernacles established by Mr. Whitfield himself; for there the dissenting mode of admission to the Lord's table has been adopted; not, however, according to the views of the Independents, who require the consent of the church to those who are admitted to their communion, but according to the sentiments of Presbyterians, who commit the keys of the church to the minister's hands.

In all the older congregations which form this branch of the Methodists, they had what was called *the Society*, which has been already noticed in the account of the Wesleyans, and which answers to the church among the Independents, being composed of such persons as profess to have been converted by Divine Grace to the faith of the Gospel, and have been admitted by the vote of the body. But in this it differs from a church, that reception into the society, and admission to the Lord's table, do not depend upon each other. Once a week the society meets in a room adjoining the chapel, when the members relate to each other their Christian experience, and occasionally receive from the minister a select address. In some places this society is subdivided into classes, like that among Mr. Wesley's followers; but they are not considered as an important part of Calvinistic methodism, and are small in number, when compared with the communicants or the hearers.

The persons who regulate the temporal affairs of these congregations are called Managers, of whom there are two at each chapel, though only one of them takes a particularly active part in the administration.

They continue for life, unless any misconduct should make their removal necessary. In the tabernacles, these managers choose and invite the ministers, who come from different parts of the kingdom to preach, for a month or six weeks. But the appointment of ministers to all the chapels under the patronage of Lady Huntingdon was held in her own hands, as long as she lived, and is now invested in a committee for the whole connexion.

The Calvinistic Methodists are chiefly found in larger towns. But their places of worship are the largest and most crowded of any in the kingdom, or perhaps in the world; and they are now increasing the number of small chapels in the inferior towns and rural parts of the island. The college established by Lady Huntingdon, at Trevecca, in Wales, and since removed to Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, was the only seminary for the ministry which this communion could boast, till within a few years, when another was formed at Hackney, near London, for the education of those who are not in Lady Huntingdon's connexion. The Calvinistic Methodist preachers have, in general, adopted the bold impetuous style of address, which may be considered an imitation of Whitfield's pulpit eloquence, as Mr. Wesley's preachers have copied *his* dispassionate manner and infantile simplicity. The official publication of this communion, for some years, was the Gospel Magazine, which was the rival of the Arminian Magazine. It was, for a time, conducted by a clergyman of the establishment; and, in its literary and theological character, may be regarded as an index of the mind which animated this body. It was, however, dropped,

after some years, and may be said to be succeeded by the *Evangelical Magazine*, in which Independents are united with Methodists and Churchmen.

The history of this communion, like that of the Wesleyans, commences at the time when Mr. Whitfield openly protested against the Arminianism of his former coadjutor. The biographers of Mr. Wesley represent the separation between the two religious champions as arising from a change in Mr. Whitfield's creed; and Mr. Wesley himself attributes the breach to the letter which his Calvinistic brother published on election. But the creed of the Calvinist was fixed, while he who, at last, determined for Arminianism, had no settled opinion; and the publications of Mr. Wesley on universal redemption, and sinless perfection, were the forerunners and occasions of Mr. Whitfield's letter. When Mr. Wesley was travelling to Moravia, in quest of Christians, and even before that period, when he discovered that he had never been converted, Mr. Whitfield was exulting in the experience of redemption, and publishing it to others with unrivalled success. He had then studied with delight the *Commentary of Matthew Henry*, while the other was consulting *Law*, or *Count Zinzendorff*. Hence Mr. Whitfield was, before his separation from the Arminians, much caressed by many of the Calvinistic Dissenters, who perceived in his preaching the savour of their popular commentator.

It is, however, more than probable that his visit to the northern states of America, the region of Puritans, increased his attachment to Calvinistic divines and modes of expression. The descendants of the American

refugees perceived in this flaming young evangelist, together with the irresistible eloquence of Apollos, his want of a more perfect knowledge of divine truth, which induced them to recommend to him the perusal of the Puritan divines. With the ingenuousness of Apollos, he complied; and while he was confirmed in the views he had before adopted, Mr. Wesley's Arminianism becoming also more explicit and determined, he felt himself roused to enter the lists against his former friends*.

* In a private letter, dated from Boston, September 25th, 1740, Whitfield expostulates thus with his friend:—" I think I have, for some time, known what it is to have 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.' These are the liberties of the children of God: but I cannot say I am free from indwelling sin. I cannot see wherein the heterodoxy of the article of our church consists, which says, that corruption remains even in the regenerate: and if, after conversion, we can neither sin in thought, word, nor deed, I do not know why our Lord taught us to pray, forgive us our trespasses. I am sorry, honoured Sir, to hear, by many letters, that you seem to own a sinless perfection in this life attainable. I think I cannot answer your letter better than a venerable old minister did a Quaker,—' Bring me a man that has really arrived to that, and I will pay his expenses, let him come from where he will.' Whether or not the seventh of the Romans be applicable to a converted person (as many great and eminent saints have thought) is not at all to the purpose, for there are many other passages which show that a sinless perfection is not attainable here below. Besides, dear Sir, what a fond conceit is it to cry up perfection, and yet cry down the doctrine of final perseverance! But these and many other absurdities you fall into because you will not own election; and you will not own election because you cannot believe the doctrine of reprobation. What is there in reprobation (I can see nothing) that makes it so horrid? I see no blasphemy in holding the doctrine, if rightly explained: if God might pass by all, he surely might pass by some. Judge you, if it is not a greater blasphemy to say, that Christ died for souls now in hell. Surely, dear Sir, you do not believe there will be a general gaol delivery of damned souls hereafter. O that you would study the covenant of grace! O that you were rightly convinced of sin! Elisha Cole, on God's sovereignty, and *Veritas Redux*, written by Dr. Edwards, are worth your reading: but I have done. If you think so meanly of Bunyan, and other Puritan writers, I do not wonder you think me wrong. I find your sermon hath had expected success; it has set the nation a disputing. You will have

Mr. Wesley, however, had the advantage of Whitfield, in being in possession of the field of action when the difference was first agitated, which he took care to improve, so as to entrench himself deeply, not only in the power over the places of worship which they had procured in concert, but also in the popular favour, by spreading terrific reports of the horrible doctrine into which Whitfield was fallen. Thus, when the Calvinist returned to England, he found himself turned out of doors into the open fields; and when he attempted to preach in Moorfields, he was at first attended only by a handful; multitudes passing by, with their fingers in their ears, lest they should hear the horrid sound, reprobation; and others sending him word, that his fall was as great as Peter's, and that some judgment would overtake him. "A like scene (says he) opened in Bristol, where I was denied preaching in the house I had founded. Busy-bodies, on both sides, blew up the coals. A breach ensued; but as both sides differed in judgment, not in affection, and aimed at the glory of our common Lord, though we hearkened too much to tale-bearers on both sides, we were kept from anathematizing each other." Mr. Cennick, with others of the first labourers in the cause of Methodism, having

enough to do to answer pamphlets: two I have seen already. O that you would be more cautious of casting lots! O that you would not be so rash and precipitate! If you go on thus, dear Sir, how can I concur with you?—it is impossible. I must speak what I know. This I write out of the fulness of my heart. I feel myself an accursed sinner. I look to Christ and mourn, because I have pierced him." He then concludes with a solemn fervent prayer, that God would lay proud self-confidence, and every towering imagination of the creature, in the dust; that the free and sovereign grace of the incarnate God may reign unrivalled.—*Gospel Magazine*, vol. v., p. 39.

espoused Mr. Whitfield's cause, joined with him at Bristol, and assisted him to build another place at Kingswood, near that of which Mr. Wesley kept possession; so that a congregation was established there on Calvinistic principles.

About this time, Mr. Whitfield was ordered to attend the House of Commons, to give information concerning the state of the new colony of Georgia. When he waited on the speaker, he was very kindly received, and assured that there would be no persecution in George II.'s reign. This animated him to adopt measures for more permanent and extensive usefulness; and as the clergy of the establishment were now more angry with him than ever, for avowing the sentiments of Calvin, he sought a substitute for the parochial pulpits from which he had been excluded. But the same cause which procured him enemies, won to him also the hearts of many zealous friends; "for the free-grace Dissenters," as Dr. Gillies, the biographer of Whitfield, calls them, "stood firmly by him in this time of trial; and having procured a piece of ground in Moorfields, they erected a temporary shed to screen his hearers from bad weather." As this place was designed to last only till Mr. Whitfield returned to America, it was called a tabernacle, in allusion to the moveable tent constructed by divine direction for the devotions of the Israelites while they were travelling in the wilderness. Mr. Whitfield did not like the site of his new temple, because it was near the Foundry, where Mr. Wesley was preaching alone, which gave it the appearance of one altar set up against another. "All was wonderfully overruled for good, and for the

furtherance of the Gospel. A fresh awakening immediately began. Congregations grew exceeding large; and, at the people's desire, I sent (necessity reconciling me more and more to lay preaching) for Messrs. Cennick, Harris, Seagrave, Humphries, and several others, to assist. Sweet was the conversation I had with several ministers of Christ. But our own clergy grew more and more shy, now they knew I was a Calvinist; though, no doubt, as Mr. Bedford told me, when going to the Bishop of London, our articles are Calvinistical." New scenes of usefulness opened upon him daily, and invitations being sent to him from places where he had never before been, he was enabled to visit them, with the advantage of leaving his lay assistants to preach to his own flocks. At a common, near Braintree, in Essex, upwards of ten thousand persons crowded to listen to his message. Having received a pressing invitation to Scotland, he crossed the Tweed, in the year 1741. In that country his Calvinism strengthened, and increased the popularity acquired by his powers of elocution. From Scotland, he went into Wales, where he married Mrs. James, a widow.

The zeal which blazed forth in all his conduct, now prompted him to devise a new and hazardous effort for the destruction of Satan's empire. It had been the custom, for many years, to erect booths in Moorfields for mountebanks, strolling players, and puppet-shows, which attracted immense crowds to keep a kind of fair, during what were called the holidays, which thus became the most unholy days in the year. Whitfield, who had long viewed this as the Vanity fair, which his favourite, Bunyan, had so happily described, was not

contented with sighing over the compound of madness and depravity, but determined to intrude upon their sports, by preaching the Gospel in the midst of the fair. On Whit-Monday, at six o'clock in the morning, he marched forth to the assault of this stronghold of Satan, attended by a considerable number of serious persons, who determined to share in his dangers, and poured out their prayers for his success*.

His next year was spent in Scotland; but the cause

* His text was, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." His words seemed to fly like pointed arrows from the bow of steel. The gazing crowd was hushed to solemn silence, and, stung with conviction of guilt, began "to look at him whom they had pierced, and mourn" with floods of bitter tears. "Being thus encouraged," says he, "I ventured out again at noon, when the fields were quite full; and I could scarcely help smiling to see thousands, when a merry-andrew was trumpeting to them, upon observing me mount a stand on the other side of the field, deserting him, till not so much as one was left behind, but all flocked to hear the Gospel. This, together with a complaint that they had taken near twenty or thirty pounds less that day than usual, so enraged the owners of the booths, that when I came to preach a third time, in the evening, in the midst of the sermon a merry-andrew got upon a man's shoulders, and advancing near the pulpit, attempted to slash me, with a long heavy whip, several times. Soon after, they got a recruiting serjeant, with his drum, to pass through the congregation. But I desired the people to make way for the king's officer, which was quietly done. Finding these efforts to fail, a large body, quite on the opposite side, assembled together, and having got a great pole for their standard, advanced, with sound of drum, in a very threatening manner, till they came near the skirts of the congregation. Uncommon courage was given both to preachers and hearers. I prayed for support and deliverance, and I was heard; for just as they approached us, with looks full of resentment, I know not by what circumstance, they quarrelled among themselves, threw down their staff, and went their way, leaving however many of their company behind, who, before we had done, were brought over, I trust, to join the besieged party. I think I continued, in praying, preaching, and singing (for the noise was too great, at times, to preach), above three hours. We then retired to the Tabernacle, where thousands flocked. We had determined to pray down the booths, but, blessed be God, more substantial work was done. At a moderate computation, I received, I believe, a thousand

was so powerfully advanced in London at the same time, by means of the lay preachers, that they were obliged to enlarge the Tabernacle. They were faithful men, whose whole souls were consecrated to the cause of religion among the Methodists, and though not brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, they sat, while hearing Whitfield, at the feet of such a teacher as seldom failed to kindle a flame of pulpit eloquence in the breasts of all who had any kind of capacity for the work. That would be no dull planet which borrowed and reflected Whitfield's light; and it appeared to be God's design, at this time, to stain the pride of all human glory, by calling the refuse of mankind, by means of preaching in highways and hedges, and by the labours of those whom the world derided as the most despicable babblers.

In Wales, Mr. Whitfield found many associates among the ministers of the Gospel, some of whom were eminently devoted to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, and surprisingly successful in their labours. Howel Harris, a layman, was rendered the means of converting several clergymen; and the ministry of Mr. Jones kindled a flame through both south and north Wales. Several of the Welsh Methodist preachers came into England, to assist Mr. Whitfield and his fellow-labourers; so that the congregations were kept up by variety, increased by novelty, and powerfully

notes from persons under conviction; and soon after, upwards of three hundred were received into the society in one day. Some I married, who had lived together without marriage. One man, who had exchanged his wife for another, and given fourteen shillings to boot. Numbers, that seemed, as it were, to have been bred up for Tyburn, were, at that time, plucked as brands out of the burning."—Life, p. 107.

affected by the Welsh fire, displayed in the animated addresses of these Cambrian brethren.

About this time, Mr. Whitfield and the Methodists were attacked by the higher ecclesiastical powers. Some anonymous papers, entitled, "Observations upon the conduct and behaviour of a certain sect, usually distinguished by the name of Methodists," had been printed and circulated among the religious societies of London and Westminster. Whitfield having publicly challenged his enemies (who attributed to him unworthy motives) to bring forward their charges in such a way as would admit of a proper defence, was informed that the Bishop of London was concerned in composing, or revising the printed papers. In answer to a private letter which he wrote to the bishop, to know whether his lordship was the accuser or not, and to request a copy for his own use, the bishop sent word that "he should hear from him." Mr. Whitfield, therefore, published an "Answer to the Observations," addressed to the Bishop of London and the other prelates concerned with him in the publication. This answer occasioned the Rev. Mr. Church's "Expostulatory Letter" to him, to which he soon replied, with thanks to the author for prefixing his name; for Whitfield, strong in the purity of his motives and conduct, only wished to meet his opponents in a fair field with open day-light*.

The Calvinistic Methodists now obtained a large accession to their strength, and a zealous propagator of their sentiments, from a quarter whence it was least expected, from the seat of wealth and grandeur, in the

* Life, p. 136.

person of the Countess of Huntingdon. Our readers may prefer hearing of her in the words of one who presided in her connexion*.

* "The noble and elect Lady Huntingdon," says Dr. Haweis, in his Church History, "had lived in the highest circle of fashion: by birth, a daughter of the house of Shirley; by marriage, united with the Earl of Huntingdon, both bearing the royal arms of England, as descendants from her ancient monarchs. From her childhood she felt serious impressions by the sight of a child's corpse. Though no views of evangelical truth had opened on her mind, she frequently retired for prayer; and when she grew up she continued to pray that she might marry into a serious family. None kept up more of the ancient dignity and decency than the house of Huntingdon. With the head of that family she accordingly became united. Lady Betty and Lady Margaret Hastings, his lordship's sisters, were women of singular excellence. The zealous preachers, branded with the name of Methodists, had awakened great attention. Lady Margaret Hastings happening to hear them, she received 'the truth as it is in Jesus,' from their ministry, and was, some years after, united with the excellent Mr. Ingham, one of the first labourers in this plenteous harvest. Conversing with Lady Huntingdon, one day, on this subject, Lady Huntingdon was exceedingly struck with a sentiment which she uttered; that since she had known and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, she had been as happy as an angel. To any such sensation of happiness, Lady Huntingdon felt she was a stranger. A dangerous illness having, soon after this, brought her to the brink of the grave, she was greatly distressed. Hereupon she meditated sending for Bishop Benson of Gloucester, who had been Lord Huntingdon's tutor, to consult him. Just at that time, the words of Lady Margaret returned strongly to her recollection, and she felt an earnest desire, renouncing every other hope, to cast herself wholly upon Christ for salvation. She instantly, from her bed, lifted up her heart to Jesus the Saviour, with this importunate prayer, and immediately all her distress and fear were removed, and she was filled with joy and peace in believing. She recovered, and devoting herself wholly to God, sent a message to the Messrs. Wesleys, who were then preaching in the neighbourhood, that she was one with them, wishing them success, and assuring them of her determination to live for him who had died for her. The change wrought on her soon became apparent, and to turn her from her Methodism, Bishop Benson was sent for. But she pressed him so hard with articles and homilies, and so urged upon him the awful responsibility of his station, under the great head of the church, that his temper was ruffled, and he rose up in haste, lamenting that he had ever laid his hands on George Whitfield, to whom he imputed, though without cause, the change wrought in her ladyship. 'My lord (said she), mark my

Many, who entertained strong prejudices against Dissenters, and the unattractive plainness of their worship, and who equally disliked Mr. Wesley's connexion on account of their ecclesiastical tactics, classes,

words, when you come upon your dying-bed, that will be one of the few ordinations you will reflect upon with complacence.'

"The life of this lady was now consecrated to Christ. The poor around her were naturally the first objects of her attention. These she bountifully relieved in their necessities, visited in sickness, and led them to their knees, praying with them, and for them. On the death of my Lord Huntingdon, she was left the entire management of her children and of their fortunes, which she improved with the greatest fidelity: become her own mistress, she resolved to devote herself wholly to the service of Christ, and of the souls redeemed by his blood. Her zealous heart embraced cordially all whom she esteemed real Christians, whatever their denominations or opinions might be; but being herself more congenial in sentiment with Mr. Whitfield than the Wesleys, she favoured those especially who were ministers of the Calvinistic persuasion, according to the literal sense of the articles of the church of England. And with an intention of giving them a greater scene of usefulness, she opened her house in Park-street, supposing, as a peeress of the realm, she had an indisputable right to employ, as her family chaplains, those ministers of the church whom she patronised. On the Lord's day, the great and noble were invited to spend the evening in her drawing-room, where Mr. Whitfield, Mr. Romaine, Mr. Jones, and other ministers of Christ, addressed to them faithfully 'all the words of this life,' and were heard with apparently deep attention. The illness of her younger son, which proved fatal, led her to Brighton for sea-bathing. There her active spirit having produced some awakening among the people, she erected a little chapel contiguous to her house, that the Gospel might be preached to them. This was so well filled that it was a third time enlarged, and the success led to future exertions. Bath, the resort of fashion, beheld an elegant and commodious place of worship raised by the same liberal hand. Oathall, Bredby, and various other places, received the Gospel by her means. At first, she confined herself to ministers of the established church, but her zeal enlarging with her success, and many through the kingdom begging her assistance, she purchased, built, or hired large chapels for divine service. As these multiplied through England, Ireland, and Wales, the ministers who had before laboured for her ladyship, were unequal to the task, and some were unwilling to move in a sphere so extensive, which began to be branded as irregular, and to meet great opposition. As the work greatly enlarged, beyond her power to supply the chapels with regular ministers, Lady Huntingdon resolved to employ the same methods which Messrs. Whitfield and Wesleys had

bands, and the government of a supreme patriarch, were charmed with the churchified appearance of Lady Huntingdon's chapels, the crimson seats, the outspread eagles which formed the pulpits and reading-desks, the organ's solemn peal, the much-loved surplice, and responses in the liturgy, together, perhaps, with the hope that the odium of the cross would be lightened by the pompous sound of the Right Honourable Lady Selina, the Countess Dowager of Huntingdon's chapel. Hence, when Mr. Whitfield returned from America, in the year 1748, though he found his congregation at the Tabernacle much scattered, and himself involved in debts, on account of the orphan house in Georgia, he was cheered with the intelligence that Lady Huntingdon had ordered Howel Harris to bring him to her house at Chelsea, as soon as he came on shore. He went, and after he had preached twice, the countess wrote to inform him that several of the nobility desired to hear him. The Earl of Chesterfield, and a whole circle of titled hearers, in a few days attended, and were not contented with hearing once, but desired that the favour might be repeated*.

pursued with so much success before. She invited laymen, of piety and abilities, to exhort and keep up the congregations which she had established. In order to provide proper persons for the work, she now retired into Wales, where she erected, at Trevecca, a college for training up young men for the ministry. As the calls were often urgent, her students were too often thrust forth into the harvest before they had made any considerable proficiency in the languages or sacred literature, in which it had been her intention they should have been instructed. Few of them knew much more than their native tongue; yet, being men of strong sense, and real devotedness to God, their ministry was greatly blessed."—Haweis' Church History, vol. iii., p. 239-258.

* " I, therefore, preached again (says he) in the evening, and went home never more surprised at any incident in my life. All behaved quite well, and were, in some degree, affected. The Earl of Chesterfield

In the month of September, he made a tour through the midland counties, and visited, at Haworth in Yorkshire, Mr. Grimshaw, a clergyman who had the soul, if not the sphere of a Whitfield. This good man was one of those who were raised up at this time, to pursue the same object, within the established pale, which the Methodists were aiming to accomplish in the highways and hedges. They were called and considered Methodists, which began now to be the nickname for a Christian, and they, undoubtedly, were of one soul with the new communion; but as they did not step forth from the enclosure to form any permanent body, separate from the establishment, they were not such Methodists as demand a section in the History of Dissenters*.

Instead of the temporary tabernacle in Moorfields, in 1753, Whitfield erected a building eighty feet square, which his enlarged soul, and mighty powers of elocution, filled for some time, when he set out again, according to his own language, to range after precious

thanked me, and said, Sir, I will not tell you what I shall tell others, how I approve of you, or words to this purpose. At last, Lord Bolingbroke came to hear, sat like an archbishop, and was pleased to say, that I had done great justice to the Divine attributes in my discourse. Soon afterwards, her ladyship removed to town, where I preached, generally twice a week, to very brilliant auditories. Blessed be God, not without effectual success on some."—Life, p. 174.

* Mr. Grimshaw may, however, be considered as an exception; for he itinerated through a great part of the surrounding country, riding an astonishing number of miles, and preaching an incredible number of sermons every week, till, by his ministry, a multitude of dissenting churches sprang up in a country where he told a friend, that, on his first arrival, looking east and west, north and south, for many miles, he believed he could not see the abode of one real Christian. In the parish church, where this venerable apostle constantly laboured, Mr. Whitfield administered the Lord's Supper to upwards of a thousand communicants, and preached in the churchyard to six thousand hearers.

souls. He came to Bristol, and opened a new tabernacle. After another voyage to America, he went to Norwich, and reared a tabernacle there.

In the year 1758, was raised up another mighty coadjutor of the Methodists, who, having regularly preached for some years in the tabernacles, demands special notice in the history of the progress of Calvinistic Methodism. The Rev. John Berridge, vicar of Everton, in Bedfordshire, had, like many others, been preaching for years in a serious, diligent manner, seeking very sincerely to make his hearers good Christians, by dint of exhortations to good works. But, as must be expected, where the preacher knows not the power of the Gospel on his own heart, he saw no fruit of his labours. Grieved and perplexed, he was led to question whether he was a Christian himself or not, which it pleased God to crown with a discovery of his fallen state, and of salvation by grace. Now a grand change took place in his preaching; for he burned all his old sermons, as so many recipes for the composition of deadly poison, and began to preach justification by faith. His parishioners, on whom his former urgent exhortations to good works produced no more effect than on the walls of the building in which they assembled, now began to move, like the bones in Ezekiel's vision, and to live for God. Being led by a singular necessity to deliver one extemporary sermon, he adopted the method of preaching without notes, and then began to itinerate*.

* Mr. Hicks, a clergyman at Wrestlingworth, in the neighbourhood of Everton, accompanied him to Milred, where he preached to about ten thousand people, in a large field. Such was the blessing which

SECT. IV.—*The Moravians, or United Brethren.*

THE first of these names indicates that the communion we now introduce to our readers is of foreign growth, and directs us to Moravia as its original seat: the additional title of the United Brethren is expressive of the internal union maintained among the very different materials of which it is composed.

“The unity of the evangelic brethren,” the general name of all the churches and missions usually called Moravians, comprises three distinct classes of members. The first consists of those who belong to what is termed the ancient church of the brethren, which conceives itself to be superior in antiquity to all other Protestants. In this class are ranged all those, who, before they joined the unity, were of a communion different from the two principal Protestant churches, the Lutheran and the Reformed. The second class of persons who compose the grand body of the united brethren, consists of those who were educated in the Lutheran profession. The third is formed of such as have belonged to the Reformed, or Calvinistic Protestant communion; who, as well as the Lutherans, are allowed to retain their former connexion. Hence it is evident, that the title of United Brethren designates a body; not amalgamated by a sacrifice of opinion, in order to

accompanied the first year of his evangelical labours, that he was visited, in that time, by upwards of a thousand persons under serious impressions, and it is affirmed, on the best authority, that by his own and the joint ministry of Mr. Hicks, about four thousand were awakened to a concern for their eternal salvation, in little more than one year. Mr. Berridge was at first an Arminian, and connected with Mr. Wesley, but he afterwards joined the Calvinistic Methodists.—*Evangelical Magazine* for 1793, p. 17.

conform to any exclusive creeds, but by the influence of a certain spirit diffused through the whole mass. "Living faith, vital religion, love for the mutual communion of Christian brethren, zeal which aims by united efforts to propagate the religion of Jesus, bind together," say they, "these different classes of Christians." This communion must not, therefore, be supposed to resemble an individual, composed of subordinate members, which have no separate existence; but should be compared to a church, formed of members who all retain their own perfect individuality, though associated to attain a common object.

The three different classes of persons who compose the unity, bear among the brethren the name of tropes, or tropuses, from a Greek word which signifies modes of discipline. They will be better known to the English reader by the term *branches* of the unity. To each of these is appointed an administrator and honorary president, who is considered as the patron to watch for the welfare of that particular division over which he presides. Count Zinzendorff, who is usually supposed to have been the patriarch of the whole unity, was administrator of the Lutheran branch.

The ministers of the unity receive ordination of different kinds, according to the countries in which they labour. There are among them bishops who confer episcopal orders, which might satisfy a Laud, were it not that those who receive this apostolic grace, are associated with others who are contented with the Lutheran, or even Reformed, or Presbyterian ordination. They have, indeed, discovered the way of combining episcopacy with liberality, so that if a brother of the

ancient episcopal church should be placed in a congregation where the minister has been ordained by Presbyters, he will not hesitate to receive from him the Lord's Supper, or baptism for his children. Abhorrence of controversy is characteristic of the United Brethren.

They consider the rights of an episcopal church, which they enjoy, as real and valuable. Yet the bishops of the unity, with the pastors and deacons whom they have ordained, are subordinate to a college of elders, to whom, as to safer hands than those of the prelates, the synod commits the care of the whole unity; so that the bishops cannot confer orders, without the permission of the elders.

To cement the union of the brethren, they convoke, at certain periods, synods composed, first, of the brethren who were entrusted, for a time, with the general direction; secondly, of those persons who are at present employed in the public service of the community; thirdly, of deputies sent by the different congregations. They admit, also, female elders to be present, but not to vote. The business of this synod is of the highest importance to the interests of the unity; for here the condition of each church and mission is minutely inspected. As it is one of the peculiarities of this communion to recur to a religious use of the lot, to determine what is the will of God, where neither Scripture nor reason decide; "the synod names and constitutes the council, called the Direction of the Unity, which is elected by all the members, and approved of the Lord, by casting the lot." This council watches over the state of religion,

the education, doctrine, preaching, printing, and appointment to charges in the church.

Another regulation distinguishes this society. The members of the church are divided, according to their sex and state of life, into different classes, called church bodies. Unmarried men, and those who are termed lads adolescent, remain in the house of the single brethren. Unmarried women, whether elder or younger, live apart in the single sisters' house. In the more numerous churches, there are similar abodes for the widows and widowers. They are under the inspection of an elder of their own sex, and work for their support.

Marriages among the Moravians are always under the direction of the church. If the parties have previously made no choice, the elders point out whom they judge suitable: but where an attachment has been formed, it is submitted to their final decision. When unable to determine in any other way, they seek to know the Divine will by casting lots, which, however, are considered as deciding only what shall *not* be done.

Since the year 1731, at the commencement of each year, a collection of texts is printed for every day: to each text is added a line or two of a hymn suited to the subject. Thus, say they, all the churches are fed with the same truths on the same day; for the book being sent through all the unity, the preachers usually make it the guide of their public ministrations.

Some of their devotional meetings are occupied with the reading of the Scriptures. From Christmas to Easter, they read the life and death of Christ. At Whitsuntide, they begin the Acts of the Apostles;

afterwards, they read the epistles in the order in which they were written. The Lord's day is filled up with public services; and on Friday evening, they meet and sing a hymn in celebration of the Redeemer's passion.

At the baptism of children there are three or five witnesses, frequently called godfathers and godmothers, who join with the minister in laying hands on the infant, and pronouncing the baptismal benediction. Something like exorcism, to expel the powers of darkness, was formerly practised.

The minister officiates at the Lord's Supper in a white surplice, and is assisted by the deacons in the distribution of the bread, which every communicant holds in his hand till all have received it, when the whole company kneel and eat, while the minister repeats the words, "Take, eat, this is my body which is delivered for you." The time of celebration is every fourth week, on a Saturday evening; but if the business of life render this time inconvenient, it is deferred to the following day. Before the communion, the minister exhorts to self-examination, and all the assembly, kneeling down, asks absolution.

On Easter-day, at the rising of the sun, the members of the church hasten to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, at the burying-ground, which, among the Moravians, is kept with religious care. The minister first repeats the words of Scripture, "The Lord is risen," when the assembly replies, "He is risen indeed." The preacher then reads aloud a confession of faith, in the form of a prayer, in which he makes mention of the brethren and sisters who have slept in

Christ, during the preceding year. The meeting concludes with a petition for grace to keep the survivors in eternal communion with the spirits of the just arrived at perfection.

This community adopts the practice of washing each other's feet, once a year, previously to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The women wash those of their own sex, in a place apart; and the men the feet of their brethren. The dying receive a benediction, and the imposition of the hands of the elders. In some of their meetings, they give the kiss of peace, men to men, women to women.

It is difficult to give an opinion concerning this singular body. Those who are attached to the establishment of this country may esteem it as a sister church which has preserved the venerable marks of antiquity; while Dissenters will regret to see an additional proof that the waters of the sanctuary are not to be found pure, till we ascend up to their source in the first churches of Christ. Some will admire, as edifying rites, what others will condemn as superstitious ceremonies. The music and responses of their liturgy, with many of their ceremonial observances, are beauties of holiness, or relics of Popery. The high churchman will despise the Methodistic hymns, as well as the compound of Episcopalian and Presbyterian ordination, both of which will charm the Methodist. Where one denomination will see Christian simplicity, allied with edifying modes of worship and fellowship, another will behold childishness, engrafted on superstition.

That the Moravian brethren have been cruelly aspersed, is well known. The charge of immorality

brought against them, has dishonoured none but their accusers. The reader will remember, that their superior sanctity and devotion first convinced the mortified Wesley that he was not a Christian. As the same keen-sighted observer crossed land and sea, to visit their abode at Hernhutt, and see where the Christians lived, the purity of their morals is placed beyond a doubt, by the testimony of such a witness*.

How much is it then to be regretted that the judicious, candid, and benevolent Jortin should speak of Count Zinzendorff, as “one of the vilest of men, the infamous head of the modern Moravians †.” They have employed, indeed, a phraseology which, to those who require a rigid propriety in every religious expression, must appear highly exceptionable. In their hymns and ancient formularies, the humanity of the Redeemer, and the sufferings which he endured for our salvation, are treated in a way offensive to a taste disposed to be

* It may, however, afford satisfaction to hear the additional evidence of one who says, “I feel myself bound, from near forty years’ acquaintance with many of the Brethren, to speak of those whom I have known, as men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and truly devoted to the work and service of our crucified Lord. I am perfectly convinced of the unfaithful reports of a Rimius, excluded from their society for immorality; as of a Warburton, a Lavington, and the translator of Mosheim, who have adopted the calumnies of so prejudiced an accuser. I am informed, that the impure and malignant note against the Brethren, inserted by the latter in his Ecclesiastical History, he would, from a conviction of its injustice, have expunged; but the copy being shown to the author of the Divine Legation, the bishop engaged him to let it stand, and there it remains, a monument of the bitterness, the bigotry, and the falsehood of these accusers of the Brethren. With peculiarities, perhaps some of them exceptionable, yet admitting no such impure ideas as these men have imputed to them, the more the principles of the Brethren are truly known, and the more intimately their lives are scrutinized, the more will they be acknowledged among the few faithful who follow the Lamb of God.”—Haweis’s Church History, vol. iii., p. 177.

† Vol. ii., p. 321.

fastidious. Yet their books produce an impression which a pious mind wishes to perpetuate. Their worship is exceedingly soothing and pleasant to the senses; for their organs, of which they are very fond, are played in a soft and solemn style, and their preachers are not often sons of thunder.

Concerning their theological system, it is difficult to speak. Calvinists or Arminians they must be, since there is no neutral ground on which any one can stand. But, while they refer to the confession of Augsburg as their creed, they speak almost constantly of the person of the Redeemer, and avoid the discussion of those points on which the two grand parties in theology are divided. Their habit of praying to the Son of God, rather than to the Father, seems unscriptural, and contrary to that peculiar kind of honour which the inspired writings teach us to pay to the Saviour.

“The crown of glory and diadem of beauty,” which adorns the United Brethren, is their zeal for the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen. In this noble career they have outstripped almost every other communion; and though they are neither numerous, nor wealthy, nor powerful, they have accomplished what would have seemed to require the treasures of princes.

The history of the United Brethren is a subject of controversy. Many will smile at their high claims to antiquity; but as they are known to have existed ages before they appeared in this country, it may be but equitable to allow them a hearing. They ascend up to the preaching of Paul and Titus, in Illyricum and Dalmatia. When the Slavonians rent these provinces from the Greek empire, they soon adopted, as their

own, the Christian religion, which they found here. The clergy of this country made a stand in behalf of purity of worship; for they united with those of Lombardy, the native land of the Waldenses, in refusing to appear at the Sixth Council of Constantinople, on account of image worship, which then obtained in the Greek church.

In the year 890, Bohemia and Moravia received the Gospel from two Greek monks, who are thought to have diffused the purer principles of the Slavonians; for when Otho united Bohemia to his empire, and brought the Greek Christians under the see of Rome, they succeeded in obtaining for themselves a liturgy in their own tongue, and freedom from several Popish corruptions. In the year 1176, the Waldenses arrived in Bohemia, and contributed to the preservation of pure religion. After having combined purity and zeal, with concealment from the rulers of the apostate church, for more than two hundred years, they were discovered, in 1391, and dispersed by the blast of persecution. Re-animated by the exhortations of one Gregory, in the fifteenth century, they attempted to combine in closer union, and took the name of *Fratres Legis Christi*, or Brethren of the Law of Christ. But, perceiving that they were thought to be one of the new orders of monks, which were now springing up, they took the name of brethren, and when joined with others from Bohemia, they assumed their present title of *Unitas Fratrum*, the Unity of the Brethren.

While they were studying truth and purity, in the very bosom of ignorance, corruption, and bigotry, persecution induced them to cast their eyes around, for an asylum from the dragon's rage. Seeing no retreat within the

sphere of their own knowledge, they sent four deputies to travel, and inquire “if there were anywhere a living church free from errors and superstition, and regulated according to Christ’s laws, with which they might unite.” Failing in this research, they resolved, that if God should, in future, raise up reformers of the church, they would make a common cause with them*.

When Erasmus began to attract the attention of the Christian world, the United Brethren sent their confession of faith to this distinguished scholar, who, with his characteristic indecision, professed to approve, but refused to espouse their cause †.

The fame of Luther induced the Brethren to send to him John Horn and Michael Weiss. The reformer, delighted to find that a people yet remained to cooperate with him, hailed them as brethren, and said, “Be ye apostles of the Bohemians, and I and mine will be apostles of the Germans.” When Calvin became acquainted with them, he also assured them of his fraternal affection. John Alasco is claimed by the United Brethren as the first person who brought their principles and worship into England.

At Fulneck, in Moravia, the former cure of the celebrated scholar Comenius, a company of the Brethren remained, among whom a considerable revival took place, in the year 1720, by means of Christian David. Availing himself of their new ardour and detachment from the world, and reflecting on the evils which they had suffered from want of toleration, he applied to Nicholas Lewis, Count of Zinzendorff, who allowed them to settle on his estates in Upper Lusatia. A number of families were conducted thither by Christian

* Crantz, p. 38.

† Ibid., p. 41.

David, who formed their new settlement, which they called *Hernhutt*, or the *Lord's Watch*.

From this period, the Moravians date their modern history. Count *Zinzendorff*, after a time, joined their communion, which, when other Protestants were contenting themselves with their own privileges, laboured for the conversion of the heathen. This introduced the society into England. Count *Zinzendorff*, visiting London, in the year 1737, to confer with the Archbishop of Canterbury, became acquainted with General *Oglethorpe* and the trustees of the colony of Georgia, with whom he arranged measures for the establishment of a Moravian mission on the American continent. On his return from Georgia, Mr. *John Wesley* commended the Brethren as the first specimens of living Christianity which the world afforded; so that, *Crantz* says, "The Brethren were much sought for by pious persons, who took them into the church vestries, where conversations were held on religious subjects."

But, Mr. *Wesley*, who had introduced them into this country, began to dislike many of their expressions, and to meditate a separation. The causes and manner of the division are differently represented by the opposite parties. From this time, Mr. *Wesley* waged war with the sect; for he not only charged them with Antinomianism, but with a gross imposition on the government, in the account which they gave of themselves to parliament, and even with such immoralities as must render either them or their accuser highly blameable*.

* "As for the teachers in their church, it is my solemn belief (I speak it with grief and reluctance), that they are no better than a kind of Protestant Jesuits."—*Wesley's Journals*, vol. ii., p. 151.

When Count Zinzendorff revisited England, in the year 1749, he found the Brethren bitterly maligned, in the press and in conversation, in the senate as well as among the people. The petition which they presented to parliament, to obtain for their more scrupulous members exemption from oaths and bearing arms, was therefore not carried without most violent opposition. For the origin of the odium, under which the Brethren laboured at this time, the reader is referred to their own words*.

The death of Count Zinzendorff, in 1760, was a severe loss to the Brethren. They have been accused, by Mr. Wesley, whom some will think the last who should fling about such accusations, of making the Count an infallible head of their church. But they protest, that while they honour his memory, and value his writings, they pay him no other respect than is due to an eminent minister, who powerfully contributed to promote the cause of religion in that communion in which he lived and laboured. After the death of this distinguished noble-

* " In Wetteravia, in the year 1746, the evil appeared, and spread, of trifling, ridiculous, and censurable expressions, of a figurative kind, concerning religion, which, in some, produced licentious impudence. The beginning of it arose not from irreligious principles, nor did it end in immoral practices. The cause of it was an extravagant and fanatic joy, which gave rise to inconsiderate expressions. A joyous perfection was eagerly pursued, which, however, was not attained, since the depth, both of human depravity, and of the atonement and sanctification through the blood of Christ, which two-fold knowledge can alone produce and preserve a true and solid peace of mind, was forgotten. It was a terrible sifting time. Count Zinzendorff himself is said to have adopted the reprehensible language of the fanatics, with a view to win them back to the soberness of truth. But the charges of immodesty brought against him are thrown back on those who wrote his extemporary sermons, and published them without his knowledge or consent. His utmost efforts could scarcely purge the society from accusations which were industriously propagated against them by some distinguished names."

man, the interests of the Unity were extensively promoted by the labours of other brethren. Peter Boehler is mentioned, as a burning and shining light. The Brethren revere the memory of Benjamin La Trobe, who has deserved well of the church, by translating into English, Crantz's interesting account of the Moravian mission to Greenland. John Caldwell laboured, with success, both in Scotland and Ireland. Mr. Gambold, Rector of Stanton Harcourt, in Oxfordshire, resigned his living, to enjoy the happiness of living wholly with the Brethren, among whom he became a bishop. In another way, the Church of England contributed to the credit and support of the United Brethren; for Dr. Wilson, Bishop of Sodor and Man, consented to accept the office of administrator of the reformed tropus, or branch of the Unity, and thus held towards the Calvinistic and Presbyterian brethren, the same relation which Count Zinzendorff sustained towards the Lutherans. The Brethren, however, seem to have derived no other advantage from his Catholicism than the honour of his name.

CHAP. II.

HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

SECT. I.—*State of Religious Liberty during the Reign of George I.*

ON hearing of Anne's fatal illness, the Whig lords, who had retired from court, returned, unasked, and resumed their places at the privy council, under the profession of rallying round the constitution, and securing the Protestant succession. The Tories affected to welcome them at this crisis, and betrayed no symptoms of having ever entertained any serious design of restoring the exiled family. But, before we discard the accusation as the mere calumny of party violence, let us reflect how long the Tories had been in power, and ask whether they had not done all that was possible, or, at least, prudent; and whether it was not natural for them, when they found their schemes blasted by the death of the queen, to assume an air of innocence and satisfaction, and thus pay their court to a prince from whose sceptre they could not escape. In this light the conduct of the defeated party seems to have been viewed by George I., who, ascribing the quiet possession of the throne to the active zeal of the Whigs, gave them the necks of their enemies. The Duke of Marlborough returned to England, and was succeeded

in his exile by Bolingbroke, who had proved that infidels can persecute.

The language of the government now sanctioned the former suspicions of Whigs and Dissenters, by official declarations, that the late ministry were working in the dark, to introduce a Popish instead of a Protestant prince, to the ruin of the civil and religious liberties of the empire. After the Stuarts had made an unsuccessful effort to regain the throne, the preamble of the land-tax bill thus addresses the king: "The most implacable of your majesty's enemies will not attribute the late unnatural rebellion to any one act done by your majesty, since your happy accession to the throne of your ancestors, but even they will allow that all the mischiefs, burthens, and calamities which shall attend the rebellion, are in truth owing to the pernicious counsels given by some persons in the late maladministration, when, under pretence of procuring peace abroad, the present destructive war was projected to be brought into the very bowels of our native country at home, when a Popish army was to be the protector of our holy religion." After such a declaration, it will not be deemed wonderful that the Dissenters, whose fears of future evils were heightened by the sense of present sufferings, should credit the worst reports of Tory machination, and expect that, as they gained the toleration by the expulsion of the Stuarts, they should be deprived of it by their return. Had the king, however, imitated the air of unsuspecting candour assumed by the Tories, and abstained from insulting a fallen foe, he would have more completely rivalled them in policy, and might have ruled a unani-

mous people. But conduct so wise and magnanimous, would probably have been less propitious to religious liberty, to which the Tories had proved themselves deadly enemies; for if they had been admitted to a share in the early councils of the House of Hanover, they might have impeded the national return from its retrograde course, and prevented the rescinding of those acts which embittered the lives of the Dissenters. To the best interests of men, therefore, it was an advantage that George I. set himself instantly and heartily to unravel the web woven by his predecessor to entangle the consciences of his subjects.

As the king, immediately on his arrival, declared to the Privy Council that he was determined to adhere to the principles of toleration, and endeavour to unite all his Protestant subjects, by affording them all equal protection, he confirmed the hopes which the Dissenters had entertained. Mr. Thomas Bradbury, one of their ministers, gloried in being the first man in the British empire who publicly prayed for King George. Mr. John Bradbury, his brother, was employed, during Queen Anne's last illness, to watch the event; and when he received from the Hanoverian resident, information of her death, which happened on the Lord's-day morning, he instantly went to Fetter-lane, where Thomas Bradbury was preaching, and by holding up a white handkerchief, the appointed signal, announced the joyful tidings. The preacher immediately proceeded to offer up to heaven the prayer, as sincere as it was loyal, "God save King George," and closed the service, according to the custom of those days, by giving out a part of the Eighty-ninth Psalm in Patrick's

version, which was admirably adapted to the important occasion. The same ardent friend of civil and religious liberty, whose wit was as prompt as his courage was undaunted, going with the dissenting ministers to court, to congratulate the king on his accession, was accosted by a nobleman*, who seeing them dressed in cloaks, in which they were accustomed to appear at court, asked with a sneer, "What is this, Sir, a funeral?" Bradbury replied, "No, my lord, it is a resurrection." The Quakers also showed their attachment to the same generous cause; for George Whitehead, who presented their congratulatory address to the king, having requested to be introduced to the Prince of Wales, said to him, "If the king, thy father, and thyself do stand for the toleration, for liberty of conscience to be kept inviolable, God will stand by you †."

One of the first of those laws which were passed, in this reign, for the extension or security of religious freedom, was in behalf of the Quakers. Their affirmation was already accepted in civil causes instead of an oath. But as this was conceived to be an untried and hazardous experiment in legislation, the indulgence, when granted in King William's reign, was limited to a certain term of years, that opportunity might be afforded to ascertain whether a nation could exist, where the solemn affirmation of a man who shows so much conscience as to suffer for his religion, could be deemed equivalent to the oath of a profligate, whose execrations and appeals to the Deity accompany every sentence he utters. The result of this grave, national

* This is said to have been Lord Bolingbroke.

† Gough's History of the Quakers.

experiment was, that the Quakers, having passed honourably through their course of probation, obtained, in the year 1715, a renewal of the indulgence, without any limitation of time. It must not, however, be supposed that the whole nation was yet perfectly sane. There were multitudes who, considering it hard not to be allowed to persecute by law, determined to avenge themselves and their defeated party, by setting the law at defiance, in order to enjoy the luxury of worrying Dissenters. For who could expect such a party to die without a struggle? With the revival of the old cry, "The church is in danger," they introduced the additional remark, that if the good old church of England was to be destroyed, it mattered not whether by a Lutheran King, George, or by a Catholic, James III. But the expiring tiger was too weak to rouse the spirit of the nation by his roar. The seditious pamphlets which were industriously circulated, though not deficient in venom, wanted point to sting; for, considering the talents and learning of some of the Jacobites in church and state, their productions were contemptibly feeble and spiritless*.

* At Oxford, however, they succeeded in blowing into a flame the malice and bigotry of the populace. "On the evening of the 28th of May, in the year 1715, a great mob of scholars, and other inhabitants of Oxford, rose, and gutted, as they called it, the Presbyterian meeting-house, breaking all the windows, and carrying away the doors, benches, wainscot, and seats, with which they made a bonfire." "Having heard of their intention (says a Quaker) to use our meeting-house as they had done that of the Presbyterians, an advertisement thereof was drawn up, directed to the mayor and sent by a friend: the mayor was not at home, but his servant promised to deliver it to him. But we obtained no benefit by our application to the magistrate for protection. After the meeting, we returned to our quarters, and about nine in the evening, hearing a great noise of the mob at a distance, we had soon an account that they were using our meeting-house as they had done that of the Presbyterians the night before. They broke in by violence, and took

The demolition of meeting-houses was innocent sport, when compared with the grand measures of the party for the destruction of all liberty, civil and religious. A rebellion broke out in the north, and was, after a time, headed by the Pretender himself, but with the fatuity which seemed entailed on the counsels of the family; so that the rebels were soon crushed, and many both of the leaders and the tools of the party paid the forfeit of their lives. Among these was a clergyman, who was drawn to the place of execution in the canonical habits of the church of England, which

away all the forms and seats that were loose, and taking off the doors from their hinges, they burned them in their bonfire. They broke into the dwelling-house of our ancient friend Thomas Nichol's daughter, who was a widow, making great destruction, and shedding some blood. From thence they went to the Baptist meeting-house, and destroyed it in like manner. By the time all was over, it was two o'clock in the morning, and there came in to us some of the sober neighbours, who told us the mob's unreasonable reasons for their violence and outrage. They said that some of the low party being at a tavern in the town, drank healths and confusions, and talked of burning the pictures of the late queen and Sacheverel; so that, in revenge, they gutted the Presbyterian meeting-house. Their pretence for using the friends in the same manner, was, because we voted for the low members of the present parliament. But it seems to have been principally intended as an act of celebrating the festival of the Restoration, it being the 29th of May, and also the first day of the week, their Sunday, on which day, considering the temper of the times, of which this riot is but one specimen, and the spirit of many of the public teachers, and the usual topics insisted on in their discourses on this day, it is rather more than probable that their sermons had no tendency to allay this ferment. We went the next morning to view the ruins of the meeting-house, and of our friend Nichol's dwelling, and as we were at the former, I stood upon a small eminence, and looking over the ruins, many scholars and other people being there, I said pretty loudly, so that all might hear, Can these be the effects of religion and learning? Some of the scholars seemed ashamed, and said it was the mob. But a spectator replied, You yourselves were that mob, and you will be overtaken with just punishment."—Gough. A kindred spirit raised similar tumults at Birmingham, Bristol, Chippenham, Reading, Norwich, and some other towns, where Dissenters were insulted, and their places of worship burned.

so raised the compassion of those who had no mercy on meeting-houses, that many of them sighed, sobbed, and wept bitterly, and some, particularly of the softer sex, snatched kisses from him as he passed by. When he was removed from the sledge at Tyburn, and put into a cart, he began to read his speech to the people, which was soon perceived to be so inflammatory, that the sheriff forbade him to proceed*.

* It was the next day printed and published, under the title of a "True Copy of the Paper delivered to the sheriffs of London, by William Paul, a clergyman; who was drawn, hanged, and quartered at Tyburn, for high treason against his Majesty King George." After observing that he was just going to appear in an eternal world, he says, "I ask pardon of God and the king, for having violated my loyalty, by taking most abominable oaths in defence of usurpation against my lawful sovereign, King James III. You see, my countrymen, by my habit, that I die a son, though a very unworthy one, of the church of England. But I would not have you think I am a member of the schismatical church, whose bishops set themselves up in opposition to those orthodox fathers, who were unlawfully and invalidly deprived by the Prince of Orange. The next thing I have to do is, to exhort you all, Christian friends, to return to your duty. Remember that King James III, is your rightful sovereign. Before the revolution, you thought your religion, liberties, and properties in danger, and I pray you to consider how you have preserved them by rebelling. Are they not ten times more precarious than ever? Is it not evident, that the revolution, instead of keeping out Popery, has let in Atheism? Do not heresies abound every day? And are not the teachers of false doctrines patronised by the great men in the government? This shews the kindness and affection they have for the church! And to give you another instance of their respect and reverence for it: you are now going to see a priest of the church of England murdered for doing his duty (reading prayers in the rebel army, and praying for the Pretender at Preston.) For it is not me they strike at so particularly, but it is through me they would wound the priesthood, bring disgrace upon the gown, and a scandal upon my sacred function. But they would do well to remember, that he who despises Christ's priests, despises Christ, and he who despises him, despises him that sent him. As to my body, I wish I had quarters enough to send to every parish in the kingdom, to testify that a clergyman of the church of England was martyred for being loyal to the king." About the same time, another clergyman of the church of England, Edward Bisse, was convicted at the assizes at

As Oxford was considered the nursery of these clergymen who raised the cry of church and king (meaning, by church, intolerance; and by king, the pretender), that university was strictly watched, and treated with some severity. Major-General Pepper, with a strong detachment of dragoons, took possession of the city, one morning at day-break, declaring that he would instantly shoot any of the students who should appear out of the bounds of their own colleges. Two or three young scholars, having discovered, when wine had thrown them off their guard, the bent of their inclination, by uttering good wishes for the pretender, and drinking his health, it was industriously reported to the government. The vice-chancellor, heads of houses, and proctors of the university, aware of the unfavourable reflections to which they were exposed, thought it necessary to publish a declaration of their abhorrence of seditious practices, and their determination to punish all offenders to the utmost rigour of their statutes. This, however, did not satisfy the ministry, who, instead of treating the lads with magnanimous forbearance, betrayed the soreness of a feeble mind, and sent down a messenger of state to take the offenders into custody. Two of them were tried in the Court of King's Bench, and, being found guilty, were sentenced to walk through the courts of Westminster, with a specification of their crime affixed to their foreheads, to pay a fine of five nobles each, to be imprisoned for two years, and to find

Wells, in Somersetshire, on four several informations against him, for making his ministry the vehicle of opposition to the House of Hanover.—Historic Register, for 1718.

security for their good behaviour, for the term of seven years after their liberation.

The administration acted an impolitic part, in seizing this opportunity to vent its hatred against the whole body to which the offenders belonged. Oxford now had an opportunity of tasting the bitterness of popular odium; for when the university presented to his majesty an address of congratulation on the re-establishment of peace, it was rejected with disdain, as the disgusting pretence of hypocritical disloyalty. An attempt was made to subject their statutes to the inspection of the king's counsel, but this, when argued in the Court of King's Bench, was condemned by the judges. The court, however, granted an information against Dr. Purnel, the vice-chancellor, for his behaviour in the affair of the disorderly students, which was afterwards countermanded; for, on investigation, it appeared that his conduct was unexceptionable. But, by order of parliament, the Oxford decree, passed in the days of the Stuarts, pronouncing the doctrine of the lawfulness of resistance to tyranny a damnable tenet, was burned by the hands of the common hangman.

Whatever may be said of the impolicy of provoking a nest of hornets, and of the injustice of making a whole body accountable for the faults of some of its members, it certainly is consoling to see the enemies of men's dearest liberties deprived of the power to execute the mischief which is in their hearts. If there are times when governments cannot make all their subjects easy, who would not wish that the heavy arm of power should be laid on those who hate their neighbour's wel-

fare; so that they may be at large whose principles would admit others to share with them in all their privileges? Oxford and high church having thus rendered themselves obnoxious to the government, were exposed to the mortification of seeing the former victims of intolerance bask in the sunshine of royal smiles.

Cambridge, distinguished by the liberality which should ever accompany science and religion, rose in favour, and, taking prudent care to cultivate the good opinion of the court, received some peculiar tokens of kindness. The king purchased, at the price of six thousand pounds, the library of Dr. Moore, the lately deceased Bishop of Ely, containing about thirty thousand valuable books, and presented them to the favoured university, where they now form the best part of the public library*.

To Dissenters, the progress of religious liberty, in another direction, is more interesting. The Test and Occasional Conformity Acts, and the Schism Bill,

* This, added to the circumstance of the troop of horse sent to Oxford, gave occasion to the pair of well-known epigrams.

“ The king observing, with judicious eyes,
The state of both his universities,
To one he sends a regiment : for why ?
That *learned* body wanted *loyalty*.
To th' other, books he gave, as well discerning
How much that *loyal* body wanted *learning*.”

Which was answered by the following :

“ The king to Oxford sent his troops of horse,
For Tories own no *argument* but *force* ;
With equal care, to Cambridge books he sent,
For Whigs allow no *force* but *argument*.”

The former of these jeux d'esprit has been attributed both to Dr. Trapp and Mr. Wharton; and the latter epigram, which compelled even Dr. Johnson to praise a Cambridge man, is ascribed to Sir William Browne, the physician.

which had odiously oppressed them, began now to attract the attention of the government. Some members of parliament having privately discoursed on the breach of court promises to the Dissenters, agreed to meet in order to discuss the propriety of seeking the repeal of the intolerant laws. Their numbers increased so rapidly, that, in March, 1717, upwards of two hundred members of the House of Commons assembled at a tavern, to deliberate concerning a repeal of the act against occasional conformity.

Lord Molesworth, Mr. Jessop, and Sir Richard Steele, addressed the company, to prove the justice and propriety of relieving the Dissenters of those odious disabilities imposed on them in the last reign, on account of their zeal for the Protestant succession. They urged the expediency of putting these hearty friends of the king into a capacity to serve him and their country in every way; and said that they had reason to believe such a bill would be very acceptable to his majesty. The majority of the assembly were of this opinion; but Mr. Tufnel, who had consulted a person high in office, and found that the court was apprehensive such a bill would meet with serious opposition in the House of Peers, advised the assembly to defer the measure rather than risk a defeat.

Several members were of a different opinion; and Mr. Stanhope having urged the immediate introduction of the bill for the repeal of the odious act, the assembly agreed to meet again on the subject. At this subsequent meeting, where Lord Molesworth was chairman, an intimation was received from one of the ministers of state, that most of the obstacles to the passing of the bill

were removed, which encouraged the assembly to proceed in preparing to introduce the business in parliament.

In the following April, these meetings occasioned angry reflections in the House of Commons. Mr. Smith, in a speech, full of reproaches on the errors of the ministry, said, "Was it not an error to form parties and cabals, in order to bring in a bill to repeal the act against occasional conformity?" To which, Mr. Barrington Shute replied, that nothing, in his opinion, was either more just, or more reasonable, than the repeal of the act against Dissenters; and he could not but wonder, that a gentleman who had been turned out of his employment in the last reign, and restored since the king's coming to the crown, should account it a mistake, on the one hand, not to grant an indemnity to his majesty's declared enemies, and, on the other, to bring in a bill to make his majesty's undoubted friends easy. Mr. Smith defended his inconsistencies, on the ground of expediency, contending, that though he was for allowing liberty of conscience to the Dissenters, and had voted against the occasional bill, yet, now it was passed into a law, it could not be repealed without disquieting the whole nation*.

At the opening of the sessions of parliament, in 1717, the king thus pleaded the cause of his dissenting friends: "I could heartily wish, that, at a time when the enemies of our religion are, by all manner of artifices, endeavouring to undermine and weaken it, both at home and abroad, all those who are friends to our present happy establishment, might unanimously concur

* Historic Register for 1717, p. 164.

in some proper method for the greater strengthening the Protestant interest, of which, as the Church of England is unquestionably the main support and bulwark, so will she reap the principal benefit of every advantage accruing by the union and mutual charity of all Protestants. As none can recommend themselves more effectually to my favour than by a sincere zeal for the just rights of the crown and the liberties of the people, so I am determined to encourage all those who act agreeably to the constitution of these my kingdoms, and consequently to the principles on which my government is founded." The Lords, without any debate, voted an address of thanks, and indicated their willingness to accomplish the object which his majesty declared lay near his heart. But, when a similar address was moved in the Commons, the tories asked, whether the church was to come over to the Dissenters, or the Dissenters to the church; and then moved, that instead of employing the king's general expression, they should say, "To concur in the most effectual methods for strengthening the Protestant interests of these kingdoms, as far as the laws now in force will permit." This was rejected, and the original address passed*.

The Dissenters, however, considered themselves entitled to relief, not merely from the Occasional Conformity and Schism Bills, but also from the Corporation and Test Acts. They considered, therefore, that as the king was heartily desirous of removing the odious distinction between Churchmen and Dissenters, in civil society, it was proper to meet and present their claim. The meetings which they called through the kingdom,

* Continuation of Rapin, p. 100.

in order to take the subject into consideration, were generally of opinion, that they ought to seek the repeal of all the invidious acts, or else let all remain till a more favourable opportunity should occur. But they were informed, that the king having pressed the affair with his ministers, was assured by Lord Sunderland, that "it was impracticable; and that to press the repeal of the Test Act, at that time, would ruin all." The king, therefore, told Lord Barrington, a Dissenter, that if there were any hopes of carrying the whole, he would not be against it; but if, as he was assured, there were no hopes, he believed the Dissenters were too much his friends to insist upon a thing which might be infinitely prejudicial to him, and, instead of doing them any service, would only turn to their injury*. As it appeared to be the wish of the king, that they should now obtain what relief they could, the Dissenters dropped all mention of the Test Act, receiving assurances that it should be repealed at a future time.

On the 13th of December, when the lords had just passed a bill for quieting and establishing corporations, by removing any disabilities which arose from not having abjured the solemn league and covenant, Earl Stanhope rose and said, that in his opinion a thing of far greater importance, and well becoming the wisdom of that august assembly, remained to be done, in order to settle the minds and unite the hearts of the well affected to the present happy establishment, and that, for this purpose, he had a bill to offer to the house, entitled, "An Act for strengthening the Protestant Interest in these Kingdoms." A bill was then

* Gough. Belsham's History of George I.

read, to repeal the law against occasional conformity and the growth of schism, and some of the clauses in the Corporation and Test Acts. When Lord Stanhope moved the second reading of the bill, it occasioned a warm debate, but he endeavoured to convince the house of the propriety of restoring the Dissenters to their natural rights, and rescuing them from the stigmatising and oppressive laws, which had been enacted in turbulent times, and obtained by indirect methods, for no other reason but because they showed their determined adherence to the Revolution and the Protestant succession. He was supported by the Earls of Sunderland and Stamford, and opposed by Lord Buckinghamshire, and several other peers. It was alleged, in general, that if this bill passed into a law, instead of strengthening, as its preamble pretended, it would certainly weaken the church of England, by plucking off her best feathers, and investing others with those offices which she then exclusively enjoyed. The Earl of Nottingham observed, that the church of England was certainly the happiest church in the world, since the greatest contradictions contributed to her support; for nothing could be more contradictory than a bill to strengthen the Protestant interest and the church of England, which, at the same time, repeals two acts that were made for her further security.

When the debate was resumed, on the 18th of December, the Earl of Cholmondely said, that before they proceeded any further in an affair wherein the church was so nearly concerned, he thought it highly proper to have the opinion of that venerable bench (pointing to the bishops). This being unanimously

approved, the Archbishop of Canterbury rose, and declared against the bill. He said, he had all imaginable tenderness for well-meaning Dissenters, but endeavoured to prove both that they had very little share in the merit of the Revolution, and that they had abused the liberty which that event afforded them. He urged that the scandalous practice of occasional conformity was considered by the soberest part of the Dissenters themselves as censurable, and that though the law to prevent the growth of schism might carry a face of severity, it was needless to make an act to repeal it, since no advantage had ever been taken of it against the Dissenters. Had his grace sat under the suspended sword of Dionysius, while feasting on the good things furnished by the see of Canterbury, would he have thought it needless to remove the weapon, because it had never fallen upon him?

Sir William Dawes, Archbishop of York, followed on the same side; but having thrown out some reflections on Dr. Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, he was answered by that prelate, who said that he was so far from having altered his principles, as was insinuated, that both before and after he had been promoted to his present station in the church, he had endeavoured to bring over the Dissenters; though he ever was of opinion, that gentle means were the most effectual. He showed, at large, the unreasonableness and ill policy of imposing religious tests as a qualification for civil or military employments, which abridges men of their natural rights, deprives the state of the services of many of its best subjects, and exposes the most sacred institutions and ordinances to be abused by

profane and irreligious persons. He confuted the assertions that the Occasional Conformity and Schism Bills were not persecuting laws, and affirmed, "If we admit that the principle of self-defence allows us to lay restraints on others in matters of religion, all the persecutions of the Heathens, and even of the Popish inquisition, may be justified." "As to the power of which some clergymen seem so fond and so jealous," said he, "I own that the desire of power and riches is natural to all men, but I have learned, both from reason and the Gospel, that this desire should not be allowed to entrench upon the rights and liberties of our fellow creatures and countrymen."

The sentiments of Dr. Hoadley received the sanction and support of another prelate, Dr. Kennet, Bishop of Peterborough. He declared that, without reflecting on his brethren for opposing this bill, he was assured the repeal of the odious acts would, far from injuring the church, redound to her advantage and security. The evidence of history proved, that the church was most safe and flourishing, when the clergy, instead of affecting power which did not belong to them, were tender of the rights and liberties of their fellow-subjects; but that arbitrary measures and persecutions first brought scandal and contempt upon the clergy, and, at last, ruin both upon church and state. "The church," said Dr. Kennet, "is a term, indeed, of sacred and venerable import, when properly understood; but in the mouths of bigots, or malicious and designing men, it has often produced the most fatal effects. The cry of the church is in danger, has often made a mighty noise in the mouths of silly women and children,

and been employed to carry on sinister designs. The Dissenters, though the most zealous promoters of the Revolution, have hitherto been no gainers by it; for they might have enjoyed toleration under King James, if they would have complied with his measures; while the establishment has gained all its present honours and emoluments. To exclude Dissenters from serving that government of which they are the firmest supporters, is, (said the bishop) the grossest political absurdity*. Lord Lansdowne was the most violent opposer of the bill. His speech, full of stings, replete with poison, proved, that only the power, not the disposition to persecute, was extinct. At length, it was agreed to leave out some clauses concerning the Corporation and Test Acts, by which concession the bill passed the Lords, and was sent down to the Commons, where, after some debate, it was carried by a majority of two hundred and twenty-one, against one hundred and seventy voices. It received the royal assent, February 18th, 1719†.

Another measure rendered this period highly propitious to the religious liberties of Britain. King George imitated the prudent conduct of William III., by selecting those clergymen who displayed the most liberal principles and conciliatory temper, and placing them in the first posts of dignity and influence in the establishment. Dr. Benjamin Hoadley had so distinguished himself in the last reign, by his rational views of ecclesiastical power, that as soon as the House of Hanover acceded to the throne, he was rewarded by the

* Historical Register for 1719. Belsham's History of George I., p. 123.

† Historical Register for 1719.

see of Bangor. He had already given provocation by his "Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Non-jurors;" and now he rendered himself doubly odious to the party, by preaching before the king, at the Chapel Royal, a sermon which explained the true "Nature of Christ's Kingdom." That Christ's kingdom is not of this world; that its nature, sanctions, rewards, and punishments, are entirely spiritual; that the ministers of the Gospel, as such, have no right to busy themselves in secular government; and that the magistrate has no real authority to punish men for matters purely of a religious nature, seem to Dissenters mere truisms, so evident and so innocent, that no one can, with any face, set himself to contradict or persecute the believer in such doctrines. But, for these principles, the convocation fell upon Dr. Hoadley with more fury than could have been supposed to dwell in reverend breasts. The Lower House appointed a committee of six doctors, to draw up a representation against those doctrines, to be laid before the archbishops and bishops. When read for the approbation of the house, it was unanimously passed, accusing the bishop of asserting in the two obnoxious publications, principles tending, first, to subvert all government and discipline in the church of Christ, and to reduce his kingdom to a state of anarchy and confusion; and secondly, to impugn and impeach the regal supremacy in causes ecclesiastical, and the authority of the legislature to enforce obedience in matters of religion by civil sanctions. To prove their charge against the bishop, they quote such passages as the following: "Since the church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, he himself

is king; and in this it is implied, that he himself is the sole lawgiver to his subjects, and the sole judge of their behaviour in the affairs of conscience and salvation; and in this sense, therefore, his kingdom is not of this world, that he hath in these points left behind him no visible human authority, no vicegerents, who can be said properly to supply his place, no interpreters, upon whom his people are absolutely to depend; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people. All his subjects, in whatever station they may be, are equally subjects to him, and no one of them, any more than another, hath authority either to make new laws for Christ's subjects, or to impose a sense upon the old ones, which is the same thing, or to punish the servants of another master in matters relating purely to religion." The Lower House of convocation gravely asked their lordships, the bishops, "Whether the pernicious tendency, which they ascribe to the writings of Dr. Hoadley, is not proved by such language, and whether, if his assertions be true, all acts of government in affairs of religion have not been an invasion of Christ's authority, and an usurpation upon his kingdom?"

Who, indeed, can wonder that the clergy should be indignant at these assertions, which were nothing less than a public declaration, that the Dissenters had justly claimed a liberty to form churches according to their own views of the Scriptures, and that persecution for this imaginary crime of schism, was the grossest violation of truth, and justice, and religion? But that such sentiments should be held by a bishop of an exclusive establishment, should be so honestly and

boldly avowed, should be preached to a king, and received at court with most decided approbation, was such a triumph of Christian truth and religious freedom, as had not been seen since Dr. Owen, the favourite chaplain of the protector, addressed to the high court of parliament his Plea for Toleration.

While the convocation declared that the king ought to be angry with these sentiments, as subversive of the regal supremacy in matters ecclesiastical, his majesty was so enamoured of them, that he would not suffer the Lower House to carry their accusation before the bishops, but sent a writ to the Archbishop of Canterbury, commanding him to prorogue the convocation from the 10th of May, to the 19th of November following*. How equitable was it, that those who were so deeply in love with the regal authority in the church, should feel it, so far as to prevent them from hurting a bishop! From the year 1665, when the clergy in convocation gave up to the parliament the right of taxing their order, they were seldom allowed to do much business; but, since the persecution of Dr. Hoadley, they have been suffered to meet only and disperse. To this, several angry allusions were now made by the Tories, both in church and state. When some objections were raised in the House of Commons to the nomination of Dr. Snape to preach before the members, because he had been one of the abettors of Sacheverell, a member exclaimed, "It was because he had been an opposer of Hoadley." "Yet," said he, "if the court had not interfered, the doctor would have shown the bishop fine play; but the king having commanded his minis-

* Historic Register for 1717.

ters to disband the army, they have, instead of it, disbanded the convocation."

It occasioned, indeed, angry murmurings among those who longed to rule the conscience, when they found themselves stripped of this power. They complained that the convocation was become the butt of ridicule to the whole nation, as an assembly which could not safely be trusted together long enough to do anything; but was called to meet and disperse, like a regiment of soldiers on parade. They were tortured by the mortifying reflection that the assembly of the Presbyterians in Scotland, and even the Quakers, and other Dissenters in England, had their constant meetings for the settlement of their own discipline; while the church of England, which moved as the moon among the smaller stars, no sooner assembled her sons, than they were dispersed again by the breath of authority. "Why is this, it is asked, but because *they* are voluntary societies, not incorporated with the state, as we are? whereby, if we have gained some advantages, we have lost greater*."

But how few would resign the advantages of a connexion with the state, in order to enjoy the "greater" privileges of voluntary societies! It is, however, not true that the established clergy are deprived of civil advantages which Dissenters enjoy; for there is no law to prevent clergymen from meeting for mutual consultation. To legislate for the consciences of men with penal sanctions, the real object of ambition, is a power which Dissenters cannot boast; and, happily for Bri-

* Free and Candid Disquisitions relative to the Church of England, p. 170.

tons, the parliament has taken away this power from the convocation; for the senate now passes all laws relative to the church as well as to the state. This alteration has been highly advantageous to liberty of conscience, which generally felt some ill effects from an ecclesiastical court, assembled to debate upon the means of rearing the dignity of the sacred order upon the ruins of free inquiry.

The Bangorian controversy, besides giving a death-blow to the convocation, was, in other respects, favourable to the rights of conscience. Hoadley was so provokingly cool, that the enraged tories betrayed before the world their defeat, by displaying the difference of their spirit, while they started and flew off from his weapons of celestial temper, like the fiend of darkness from the touch of Ithuriel's spear. The public eagerly gazed at this battle, and did not fail to profit by the instructive spectacle; for they discovered, to their consolation, that ecclesiastico-political terrors, like what mariners call quaker-guns in a merchant vessel, need only to be closely viewed, in order to be despised. The convocation seems to have cared but little for its credit, when it hazarded an attack on the sentences quoted from Hoadley, which, like light, bring with them at once the evidence of their own worth, and of their superiority to their opposites.

The Dissenters were drawn into the controversy by Dr. Snape, who, writing against the bishop, says, "Awake, ye Calamys, ye Pierces, ye Bradburys: what! all in a profound lethargy, when your own honour and that of Calvin is thus at stake?" James Pierce, of Exeter, woke at the call, and, in a printed letter to

Dr. Snape, entitled, “The Dissenters’ Reasons for not writing in behalf of Persecution,” proved that the Bishop of Bangor had attacked no ecclesiastical powers which the Dissenters were disposed to defend. He showed also, that whatever veneration Dissenters entertained for Calvin, as an eminent reformer, they neither bowed to him as infallible, nor approved of all his actions, but unequivocally condemned his conduct towards Servetus. In this much-censured act, however, Pierce, who verged towards the opinions of Servetus rather than those of Calvin, candidly declared that the latter acted as all other Protestants, as well as Papists, would have done at that time, when the doctrine of toleration was unknown to the world. With admirable coolness of temper, keenness of irony, and elegance of style, he proved that the Dissenters were delighted to see the Bishop of Bangor lay the axe to the root of persecution, “which,” says he, “if we have not yet learned to abhor, it must be confessed that the high-church party has not yet treated us sufficiently severely.” To evince that the Dissenters were not practising, as Dr. Snape insinuated, a temporary political dereliction of their principles, in order to give Hoadley an opportunity to sap the foundations of the Church of England, their last address to the king was quoted, in which they said, “our principles are, as we hope, the most friendly to mankind, amounting to no more than those of a general toleration to all peaceable subjects, universal love and charity for all Christians, and to act always in matters of religion as God shall give us light*.”

* Dissenters’ Reasons, by James Pierce. London, 1718.

The parliament pursued its enlightened and liberal course, by passing another bill for the extension of religious liberty. An act of the twelfth year of the reign of Queen Anne contained a clause which breathed all the unchristian bigotry of that period, by declaring that no person should be capable of being guardian for the poor in the city of Bristol, who should not have taken the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England. This clause, which excluded the Dissenters of Bristol, a highly respectable and wealthy body, from all influence in managing the fund for the poor, to which they so largely contributed, was now repealed. But, deeply as the act was stained with barbarian prejudices, the Bishop of Bristol was not ashamed to become its advocate, and to use all his influence, both to procure a petition against the repeal, and to induce several lords to join him in his opposition. The Dissenters triumphed, and left the bishop and his coadjutors to record their own disgrace in the form of a protest*.

It was now once more proved, that, from the greatest good, serious evils may arise. Knowledge enables men to commit crimes impossible to the ignorant. Religious liberty was, in the year 1721, accused of generating Socinianism, heresy, and blasphemy; because many fugitive pieces were published against the divine inspiration of the Scripture, and all its principal doctrines. One pamphlet, entitled, "A Sober Reply to Mr. Higgs' Merry Argument for the Tritheistical Doctrine of the Trinity," attracted peculiar attention; because it was said to have been written by an officer of his majesty's household. Though the heretic was

* Historic Register for 1718.

dismissed from his post, the mistaken friends of orthodoxy still complained that little or nothing was done to punish him.

The Dean of Windsor brought into the Upper House an act for the more effectual suppressing of blasphemy and profaneness. The preamble of the bill set forth, that many books had lately been published against the Christian religion, which the laws in being were not sufficient to suppress. It was, therefore, to be enacted, that any person who should, by advised speaking, deny certain doctrines as set forth in the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England, should, over and above the penalties of the statute of William III. against blasphemy, be imprisoned for several months; unless he should renounce his error, and make profession of his faith in a certain prescribed form of words. It was further to be decreed, that if any preacher, in any separate congregation, should, by writing or advised speaking, deny any fundamental articles of the Christian religion, he should be deprived of the benefit of the Toleration Act. The justices of the peace were to summon any such preacher, or any person called a Quaker, to appear before them, and to subscribe the declaration of his belief contained in the act, or be denied the benefit of the toleration.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury moved that the bill be committed, Lord Onslow declared that he was as much against blasphemy as any man; but he would not vote for a law which enacted persecution, as this bill did, and therefore he moved that it be thrown out. The Duke of Wharton rose, and said, "I am not insensible of the common talk concerning me, and there-

fore I am glad of this opportunity to justify myself, by declaring that I am far from being a patron of blasphemy, or an enemy to religion. I will not, however, vote for this bill, which I believe repugnant to Scripture." Then pulling an old Family Bible out of his pocket, he read several passages, and, as a comment upon them, moved that the bill be rejected. The Earl of Peterborough declared, that though he was for a parliamentary king, he did not choose a parliamentary God or religion; and if the house were for such a one, he would go to Rome, and endeavour to be chosen a cardinal; for he would rather sit with the conclave than with their lordships, on these terms. The Bishop of Peterborough, also, declared that he would never be the executioner of such a law, which seemed to lead to the setting up of an inquisition.

But the Bishops of London Winchester, and Lichfield and Coventry, with several lay lords, voted for this Protestant inquisition. One of the peers said, that he believed the calamity of the South Sea project, which then blasted the credit and destroyed the peace of the country, was a judgment of God upon the blasphemy and profaneness of the nation. To which Lord Onslow replied, "Certainly, the peer who made that remark, must have been a great sinner; for it is said, he has been a great sufferer by the South Sea scheme." The bill was thrown out by a great majority.

Cordial attachment to the great doctrines which this bill was designed to guard, as well as love for truth in general, and jealousy for the rights of private judgment, should induce every one to rejoice in the failure of this mistaken project. The being of a God, the divinity of

Jesus Christ, the Trinity, and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, needed not this act of parliament to secure the belief of them among men. The provisions of the act were as iniquitous as the whole design was useless. To oblige men to hold certain doctrines, as they are set forth in the articles of the Church of England, wherein is this less papistical and inquisitorial than to compel them to believe as the council of Trent decrees? But to condemn men to imprisonment for asserting their sentiments in common conversation; to summon preachers to give an account of their theology to a country justice; to oblige millions of men to subscribe to the words which a few scores of politicians have dictated on the most abstruse questions in divinity, was a compound of folly and iniquity which no ingenuity can brand with a name sufficiently opprobrious.

But the liberality of the government, not of the times, was further displayed in an extension of the indulgence granted to the Quakers. One of the Friends had written a letter to the king, and a petition was presented to the legislature, to alter the form of their affirmation, because some of their members thought the words, "In the presence of Almighty God," equivalent to an oath. Thomas Story, being introduced to the Secretary of State, said, that the favour which the government intended to the Quakers, in perpetuating the Affirmation Act, as it then stood, was rendered nugatory to many of their Friends, who could not avail themselves of it, because they thought the words of the act contrary to the law of Christ concerning an oath. He then produced the form, and afterwards read that to which the yearly meeting had agreed. The Earl of

Sunderland said to him, "You might have had the latter, as soon as the former."

The king and the ministry being satisfied, a bill was brought into the House of Commons, to grant relief to the Quakers, by altering their affirmation into the following words: "I solemnly, sincerely, and truly affirm and declare." Though it had passed without difficulty till it came to the House of Lords, it there encountered violent opposition. Atterbury said, "I do not know why such indulgence should be given to a people who are hardly Christians." To which a northern peer replied, "I wonder that the reverend prelate should doubt whether the Quakers are Christians or not, since they are so, at least, by act of parliament, being included in the Toleration Act, under the general name of Protestant Dissenters." At this the bishop took fire, thinking it a sneer at the Church of England, which was created by act of parliament.

But when the lords were going into a committee on the bill, they were unexpectedly presented, by the Archbishop of York, with a petition from some who called themselves "the clergy in and about London." It stated, that the bill might much affect the property of the subject, and the legal maintenance of the clergy by tithes; "because the people called Quakers pretend to deny the payment of tithes upon conscience; and therefore may be under a strong inducement to ease their consciences in one way, by violating them in another." The reverend petitioners tell the legislature that government cannot be administered without oaths. "But," say they, "that which chiefly moves your petitioners to apply to your lordships, is their serious

concern lest the minds of good men should be grieved and wounded, and the enemies of Christianity triumph, when they shall see such condescension made by a Christian legislature to a set of men who renounce the divine institutions of Christ, particularly that by which the faithful are initiated into his religion, and denominated Christians, and who cannot, on this account, be deemed worthy of that sacred name." They also express their Christian solicitude, lest multitudes should turn Quakers, in order to screen themselves from oaths. Did these clergymen expect the peers to believe, that they who showed so much selfishness, in preferring the security of their tithes to the peace of the Quakers' consciences, and so much malevolence in branding the Quakers for heathens, were, in reality, so full of benevolence, as to be chiefly moved with a fear lest the minds of good men should be grieved with concessions to tender consciences? The two archbishops and several bishops warmly supported the petition, but other prelates opposed it, and it was at last rejected as a libel.

One of the Quakers, in an interview with the Duke of Somerset, told him that he heard* the two universities intended to imitate the London clergy in petitioning against the bill. The duke replied, "Perhaps Oxford may attempt it; being influenced by the Archbishop of York and the Bishops of Rochester and Chester; but if they should, they are obnoxious. As to Cambridge, they have done nothing. A set of fellows, calling themselves the clergy in and about London, have sent in a petition, in which they pretend to

* Gough.

blame both houses of parliament for encouraging a sect which they rank with Jews, Turks, and Infidels; as if we were to be imposed upon by them, and knew not what to do without their directions. Besides, we do not know who they are; for out of five hundred of the London clergy, we find only forty-one names, and these very obscure." It was to the honour of the London clergy that so few of them chose to affix their name to such a deed.

When the bill was in the committee, the Archbishop of Canterbury moved, that the Quakers' affirmation might not be admitted in courts of judicature, but only among themselves; which was no more than they could have done for themselves, without applying to the legislature. The Archbishop of York proposed, that their affirmation should not be admitted in any suit for tithes, the very cause in which they most needed legislative relief. But the archbishops were outvoted.

Among the events favourable to religious liberty, may be mentioned the fall of Bishop Atterbury, the great Goliath of priestly domination and intolerance. Lord Carteret informed the House of Peers, on the 17th of October, 1722, that his majesty had committed Dr. Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, to the Tower, for having entered into a dangerous conspiracy against his person and government, and desired the consent of the House to the detention of him and of two lay peers prisoners, which was immediately granted. A bill was brought in to inflict on the bishop certain pains and penalties, which the mover prefaced by applying to him the prediction concerning Judas, "Let his days be few, and his bishopric let another take." Against

the bill, Atterbury pleaded before the Lords with much force, but in vain; for he was condemned to exile. The evidence on which he was hurled from his proud height, stripped of all his honours, and sent to bear the accumulated ills of comparative poverty, painful disease, and extreme old age, in a foreign land, was extremely slight. But our sympathy for the sufferings of the old man is diminished by the consideration that he was an unrelenting foe to those rights, which, of all others, ought to be dearest to accountable immortal creatures.

The fall of their patriarch was a mortifying stroke to the whole host of advocates for dominion over conscience, while it proportionably inspirited the friends of free inquiry and unlimited toleration, who now rallied round the throne of George, and enjoyed his warmest patronage. The king made a tour through the western parts of the kingdom, and was everywhere received with the liveliest satisfaction. The Dissenters, who were, of course, eager to testify their joy at the triumph of the House of Hanover over their old enemies and persecutors, in the address which their ministers presented to the king, forcibly expressed such sensations as their known principles must produce. "It is no small satisfaction to us (say they), that we are engaged with a people so well disposed to loyalty and fidelity to your majesty as the body of Protestant Dissenters, of whom we can with safety declare, that, in all parts of the kingdom, they adhere most inviolably to your majesty, as their only rightful and lawful sovereign, and are very sensible of the many blessings of your auspicious reign." His majesty received their address very

kindly, and said to them, "Your steady and constant adherence and affection to my person and government give you a most just title to my protection, on which you may always depend."

Shortly after, the king set off for Hanover, and was arrested on the road by the hand of death, June 22, 1727, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign. His political conduct belongs not to the ecclesiastical historian; it is for us to record only the influence of his reign upon religion.

Like William III., the first George was vehemently suspected of heresy and infidelity*; because, in his tolerant court, there were those who avowed their scepticism, without imitating Bolingbroke, the infidel minister of Anne, by combining it in monstrous alliance with intolerance. The lovers of liberty, the patrons of the rights of conscience, will ever cherish the memory of him who founded the regal dynasty of the House of Brunswick. But Dissenters must, with peculiar delight, tell their children how he came to snatch their dearest liberties from threatened destruction; with what dignified firmness he covered their churches with the broad shield of justice; how many

* To expose the moral character of George I., *Mist's Journal*, a Tory newspaper, of which complaint was made in the House of Commons, contains the following reflections on the 29th of May. "Austin's wish was to have seen Christ in the flesh, Paul in the pulpit, and Rome in its glory. Next to these, I could have wished to have seen the restoration. Then we were ruled by gentlemen, now we are governed by whores." Against this, and some other papers of a similar spirit, was balanced the *Independent Whig*, a periodical publication, which, to the elegance and hilarity of the *Spectator*, added a keenness of satire and an ardour for liberty, which must have been perfectly intolerable to the satellites of tyrants, and the abettors of priestcraft. "The *Craftsman*, after the manner of Daniel Burgess," was enough to sting them to madness.

of their present privileges weré restored to them by his administration; and how much more he intended which the ignorance and intolerance of the times forbade him to accomplish; while they will ever close the grateful detail with the observation, such was the father of the family which now inherits the British throne.

SECT. II.—*State of Religious Liberty during the Reign of George II.*

GEORGE II. ascended the throne under the happiest auspices. In the prime of life, already the popular favourite, married to a princess of superior accomplishments, and skilled in the art of government, having been accustomed, during his father's absence from the kingdom, to the weight of the British sceptre, which he well knew how to wield, the Whigs hailed him as a parliamentary king, the heir of the Protestant succession; while the Tories, who had hated his father as a usurper of the throne of the Stuarts, were disposed to drop their enmity to the son, who, unstained with the guilt of the usurpation, quietly succeeded to the regal patrimony. The names of Hanoverians and Jacobites were exchanged for those of the court and country party. By the banishment of Atterbury, and the death of many of the Non-jurors, the clergy were left under the influence of the low churchmen, whom the preceding reign had exalted. The Dissenters congratulated themselves on the quiet accession of a prince who owed his throne to those principles of which they

were the avowed patrons. Rendered more liberal themselves, by the ease and security which they enjoyed, they beheld with pleasure the growing liberality of many of the established clergy, with whom they maintained, not merely a literary correspondence, but also an affectionate Christian intercourse.

After decent expressions of sorrow for the loss of his father, the king, in his first speech to the council, declared his attachment to his subjects' rights and liberties, both civil and religious, and his determination to maintain them inviolate. To the parliament he observed, that the kingdom was happy within its own bosom, and venerated by all the nations of Europe. "At home (said he) I find among my subjects such mutual charity and forbearance diffused through the kingdom, that the national church repines not at the indulgence given to scrupulous consciences, and those who receive the benefits of the toleration envy not the established church the rights and privileges which they by law enjoy." Having taken the oath to support the church of Scotland, the king assured his northern subjects, by his commissioner, that he was determined to support the Presbyterian church in all its rights and privileges.

In the church of England, some symptoms of the resurrection of high church claims now appeared. The convocation of the clergy seemed disposed to seize the opportunity, afforded by a new reign, to obtain a deliverance from the constrained inaction, and disgraceful inanity, to which they were grieved to find themselves reduced. The clergy of the province of Canterbury being prorogued to the 20th of March, were

again, on that day, further prorogued to the 10th of April; but before this was signified to the Lower House, a member addressed the prolocutor in a remarkable speech. The speaker observed, "As his majesty has answered the late address of both houses with an assurance that he will be ready on his part towards a vigorous execution of the law against profaneness, blasphemy, and inmorality, it will, doubtless, be more effectually accomplished if the church representative, that is to say, the convocation, point out to him what persons or things are most likely to promote or impede his royal and pious design." After admitting that it is his majesty's undoubted prerogative to call the convocation, and to dictate the subjects of discussion, he says, "It cannot be deemed unseasonable for any dutiful son or servant, both of the church and state, then to loosen his tongue-strings, when the several parts and offices of our holy religion are exposed to mockery, and the doctrines and mysteries of religion are furiously attacked by men of profligate principles." He then modestly proposes that the Deists and Soci-nians should be "struck dumb by an awful censure from the convocation*."

The king, however, well understanding the import of this harangue, did not choose to be told by the convocation "what persons and things" he should smite with the royal sceptre, nor did the ministry think that the gorgon head of an ecclesiastical body would petrify the infidels; so that the vigorous policy of the preceding reign was still pursued, and the members of the convocation were scarcely warm on their benches be-

* Historic Register for 1727, p. 175.

fore they were politely told to "go and feed the few sheep which they had left in the wilderness." Never, indeed, was prince less priest-ridden than George II.; for, he proved that he thought it no infelicity to have his subjects' affections divided among various ministers of religion, which might prevent his throne from being shaken by the insolence of a dominant hierarchy. He was, besides, too great a lover of tranquillity to expose himself, or his kingdom, to the vexation of the ecclesiastical broils which had often arisen in the clerical parliament; while he was too sincerely attached to Dissenters and toleration to admit the hazard of injuring both, by the proposed interference of the clergy to crush the errors which then abounded. The Arians, Socinians, Sceptics, and Deists, were therefore left to fall by weapons more formidable than the fulminations of a clerical assembly, which would have alarmed the friends of truth and freedom, while the infidels would have been confirmed in their hatred and contempt of a system, which they would have said threatened when it should argue, and cursed where it ought to bless.

But while the true method of defending truth was too little understood, the efforts of error were certainly shameless and incessant. The grand jury of the county of Middlesex having presented two infidel books to the court of King's bench, their conduct was severely condemned in a pamphlet, entitled, "Remarks upon two late Presentments of the Grand Jury, wherein are shown the folly and injustice of men's persecuting one another for difference of opinion in matters of religion, and the ill consequences wherewith that practice must

affect any state in which it is encouraged, by John Wickliffe." The grand jury afterwards presented these remarks upon them, observing, that "The said author avowedly contends for a liberty to write in behalf of infidelity, and has, in violation of good manners, decency, and law, stigmatized the late presentments as foolish, and unjust, and branded them with the odious name of persecution. We therefore, notwithstanding the insolent defiance which late presentments of this nature have met with, and the discouragement which we apprehend may still make them, and all others, unsuccessful, unless supported by this honourable court, do present the said pamphlet as an impious and scandalous libel, tending to the subversion of our religion, laws, and liberties, and hope this honourable court will give proper directions for punishing the author, printer, and publisher*."

Dissenters, or rather Puritans and Non-conformists, had formerly been the only advocates for freedom of opinion; but now that they were in the quiet enjoyment of the liberty for which they had suffered and bled, a new host, of a different genius, arose, under the shade of their toleration, to vex and torture those who loved to breathe only the stagnant air of cold indifference, or servile deference to established creeds. By the tone of the grand jury, it seems that the infidels pleaded for unrestrained freedom of sentiment, in a bolder style than had ever been adopted by the Puritans. In the course of the government of the world, it is frequently seen, that if men will not learn truth and justice from the voice of wisdom and benevolence,

* Historical Register for 1729, p. 54.

they shall be compelled to hear it from terror and defiance; and that they who will not be taught by the rod of gentle correction, shall be disciplined with scorpions. From this time, unbelievers have availed themselves of toleration, to attempt, by various methods, the overthrow of those truths, for the sake of which the first Independents accounted religious freedom dearer than life.

The increase of Deists, however, has, in some respects, tended to perpetuate and diffuse a tolerant spirit; for while secret or avowed infidels have filled the highest offices, they have insensibly rendered it as unfashionable, as it is absurd, impolitic, and iniquitous, to attempt to bind the intellect in chains. Because the first advocates for toleration were Christians, mortified to the world, it was fashionable to hate them and their doctrines; but when they had, by the sacrifice of all that was dear to men in this life, secured their mental liberties, they were succeeded in the inestimable birth-right by men of the world, who, unencumbered with any conscientious scruples, were admired for that charming indifference to religion, which will always fascinate the world. The Christian advocates for toleration may, therefore, repeat to the Deist the words of their Redeemer: "Other men have laboured, and ye are entered into their labours. The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify against the deeds thereof, that they are evil." There is but little danger of seeing the world governed by speculative and avowed infidels, as it has too frequently been by the bigots to a false and intolerant religion, or who could assure us that Deists would be more tender of the rights of conscience than Monks?

During this period, however, the increase of those who were incredulous to the evidences of the Christian system, threw a powerful weight into the scale of toleration, and contributed to render the reign of George II. favourable to the rights of conscience.

But a more pleasing occurrence, of a nature totally opposite to the former, now marked the progress of religious liberty, of which it contributed to extend and perpetuate the dominion. The rise of the Methodists displayed the happy difference between the state of the public mind, at this time, and during the struggles of the Puritans and Non-conformists: When the Wesleys and Whitfield, with their coadjutors, began to attract public notice, by the ardour of their zeal in the cause of religion, and the boldness which they employed for its diffusion, they professed to be true sons of the Church of England; so that they properly came within the jurisdiction of the bishops, to whose government they were attached. To have shown that episcopacy was not what the Dissenters represented it, a mere non-entity, as to all effective spiritual regulation of the church, the bishops should have summoned these anomalous churchmen to their bar, and, after examining the tenets and practices of Methodism, either condemned it as an ebullition of fanaticism and error, or honoured it with their sanction, as an auspicious revival of primitive zeal. But the days of Laud and the Star Chamber were gone by; and while the wiser part of the spiritual authorities had no wish to try the hazardous experiment of reviving ancient methods of ecclesiastical restraint, those who were less prudent and tolerant were prevented, by the temper of the prince and the

spirit of the times, from adopting such coercive measures as might reduce the new zealots within the bounds of a tame regularity. The bishops, therefore, can scarcely be accused of having fallen into the error of their predecessors, by driving the Methodists out of the establishment, and thus compelling them to form a new communion; for their lordships did little more than look on with jealous eyes, and give that tone to the rest of the clergy, which soon led to the expulsion of the irregulars from the pulpits of those who looked for preferment.

Whitfield, excluded from the buildings in which he was expected to appear, seized the opportunity to preach in the open air. But, though he praised the heavens as the best sounding-board, he found that another roof was needed to screen his hearers from the rain and snow, which soon compelled them to seek some tent or tabernacle, where he might preach whenever an English sky should forbid him to take the field. In these buildings the Methodists were exposed to the insults of the rude mob, who had not yet lost the art of disturbing conventicles, nor the relish of those delights, which they enjoyed, when terrifying the women or children whom they found in those assemblies. It, therefore, became necessary for the new sectarists, either to endure all the injuries which the Non-conformists suffered for nearly thirty years, or to contradict their solemn professions of indissoluble union with the established church, by classing themselves with Dissenters, taking refuge under the Toleration Act, registering their places of worship, and licensing their preachers, as that act required. They were not so in

love either with persecution or the Church of England as to hesitate long between the unequal alternatives, but instantly became Dissenters in the eye of the law, in order to become Christians according to the dictates of conscience.

Even the Moravians were driven to adopt the same expedient. This singular people had long associated with different reformed communions, on the continent of Europe, and had usually dwelt securely under the protecting wing of the established church; so that when introduced into England, a land of freedom and toleration, it seemed not unreasonable to look for the same liberality. As the Brethren retained the office of a bishop, with the use of a liturgy, they were by no means disposed to set up as a sect separate from the English establishment; but would gladly have been allowed to wait upon her as a tender nurse to her children, and, without disputing the parental claims of the original mother, to cherish them in a warmer bosom, and feed them at fuller breasts than she could furnish. This, however, being rejected with disdain, the Moravians were compelled, by the disturbances to which they were exposed, to flee to the shelter that protects all those who are by law considered Protestant Dissenters.

It was, indeed, a curious phenomenon to behold a whole host of persons, who rejected the name of Dissenters, and professed themselves the truest sons of the church, attached to her doctrines, ceremonies, and hierarchy, many of whom retained, even in their conventicles, her liturgy and vestments, and who still communicated at her altars, yet resorting for protection to “an act passed to exempt persons, dissenting from the

Church of England, from certain pains and penalties." Had they professed to dissent, it would have been a question whether the Toleration Act could have afforded them legal protection; for neither this nor any other law could be intended to provide for all possible futurity, and to gather under its wing every sect, of whatever principles or practices, which might arise in the revolutions of ages. But when the Methodists declared they were not Dissenters, how could they claim the advantages of an act made to protect persons dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties of certain laws?

Yet, such was the liberality of the times, during the reign of George II., that, whenever any people chose to ask the protection of the Toleration Act, the courts of law kindly considered them as Dissenters, and defended them in the enjoyment of their principles and worship. Had not this more silent and prudent measure been adopted, justice and liberty seemed to demand that an act should be passed to defend the new sects from the unauthorised violence of the mob, and to rescue them from the degrading and perilous condition of holding their religion by mere sufferance. It would have been hard to punish them because they did not choose to call themselves Dissenters, and to reward their lingering fondness for their old parent by leaving them naked and defenceless. But the introduction of a new act would have been a delicate and difficult affair, which might have occasioned so much noise as to create the most imminent hazard of raising the evil spirit, which might not be easily laid again. The politic conduct of the government, in choosing rather to give

a large and liberal interpretation to the Toleration Act, was a grand step in the progress of religious liberty; for it converted this law into a much more extensive and mighty blessing than it was ever designed to be. Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, and Quakers, were the persons for whom the act was made. From the year 1730 it became a shield, not only for every new sect which might separate from the establishment, but for all her own children, who chose occasionally to play a truant part, and, like mendicant friars, to be at home or abroad, in the church or the world, as best suited their convenience.

The Methodists formed a body which put the practical liberality of the government and the nation to a severe test. The Dissenters had long settled down to a determinate character and conduct, and their congregations were now well known in the various towns where they were settled, so that, as they and the government were considered fast friends, they were but little disturbed. The Methodists, on the contrary, came forth as a foreign army, and traversed the kingdom through all its extent. Professing to belong to the establishment, they entered into its precincts, sought their converts in its very bosom, and thus roused attention, jealousy, and rage, by the novelty, nearness, and anomalous singularity of their attack. The practice of field-preaching, introduced by Whitfield, was a measure as daring as it was unprecedented. When the government heard that this wild son of the church drew out of London the almost incredible number of thirty thousand persons, to hear him preach on Kennington Common; when he regularly collected numbers not much inferior

in Moorfields; when the cautious Wesley imitated the bold measure, and thus rendered it a Methodist fashion, to stand upon Tower Hill, in the streets of Bristol, amidst the colliers at Kingswood, or Newcastle, the miners of Cornwall, or wherever else immense crowds could be collected; would it have been surprising, if the usual jealousy of governments had been displayed by the new dynasty, which had but just begun to sit firmly on the British throne? What, then, must have been the wisdom of the prince, and the conscious strength and dignity of the government, that in such circumstances, the rising sect, not only gave neither alarm nor offence to the civil powers, but was even defended by the sword and the mace?

Whenever the mobs were excited, by their own depraved passions, or by the insidious arts of Gothic gentry or clergy, to disturb the worship of the Methodists, though inferior magistrates might hesitate to give redress, the superior courts were a sure refuge, where, not scanty justice, but liberal countenance was afforded to the new species of Dissenters. At Bristol, the magistrates instantly quelled the persecuting spirit of the populace, and placed the Methodists in perfect peace and security. If the London mob was more violent, the persecuted people received the satisfaction of being informed from high authority, before they made application for redress, that the justices of the peace had received particular orders from the government to afford them full protection. The House of Hanover, being assured of the affections of the Dissenters, regarded them as among the firmest supporters of the throne; it is, therefore, not improbable, that this new acces-

sion to their numbers was far from being disagreeable to the court, which gladly extended to the Methodists, the protection originally designed for other denominations.

The infant sects thus quietly stepped into the enjoyment of privileges, for which others had long struggled, suffered, and bled. The liberty of worship, purchased by the Dissenters, at the price of ages of cruel persecution, the lives of ten thousand of their brethren, and the sacrifice of property to an incalculable amount, became at once the inheritance of a people, many of whom were little sensible of their obligations to those of whose labours they now tasted the sweet fruits. The new denominations had not been tried, to prove whether they possessed the same inextinguishable vital spark as, in the breasts of the regular Dissenters, bade defiance to the floods of persecution. The occasional violence of the mob, against which it was known that the government would afford them ample protection, was no test of the spirit of martyrdom, compared with that long and systematic oppression which the Non-conformists endured from the heavy arm of power; nor can it now be ascertained, whether, if the government had resorted to the same treatment towards the Methodists, they would not have sunken under it into complete annihilation. Not having, like the Independents, or Quakers, any definite principles, which should make it a sacred duty to hold meetings separate from those in the parochial edifices, it is probable that the different sects of Methodists owe their present existence to the circumstance of their growing up at the side of the Dissenters, under the shade of their toleration, che-

rished by the liberal maxims of government which the Non-conformists had contributed to establish.

The Methodists, however, having just emerged from the bosom of an exclusive establishment, owe more thanks to religious liberty, than she owes to them. George Whitfield, indeed, was a man of a generous soul, which quickly felt, and justly appreciated, the worth of his dissenting predecessors in the glorious work to which he consecrated his life. But John Wesley presents us with a perfect contrast ; for, though he preferred his mother, who inherited the good spirit of her Non-conformist ancestors, to his father, who was a convert to high-church bigotry, he loved and inculcated the principles of his father, while he acted upon those of his mother. It was his constant care to carry the narrowness of the establishment into his new species of dissent ; and in order to keep his societies from sinking into dissenting churches, which his perspicacity instantly perceived to be their natural tendency, he not only framed a code of discipline, which should supply a centripetal, to counteract the centrifugal force, but also breathed a subtle ether through the system, by diffusing suspicions of the Dissenters, whose blood had purchased the liberty he enjoyed.

So far, therefore, as the spirit of the Wesleyans is concerned, liberality in religion gained but little from their rise ; yet, in an indirect and unintentional way, the most happy and powerful effects grew out of the new separation from the established church. In addition to the very liberal interpretation given to the ecclesiastico-civil code of jurisprudence in our country, a powerful weight was thrown into the scale of practical

dissent, vast numbers were added to the advocates for worship separate from the parochial assemblies, and a host of preachers unconsecrated by episcopal hands, not only published their doctrines, but administered the sacraments of religion through the kingdom. Great multitudes thus became Dissenters, without knowing or intending it; for, instead of the prejudices which were before awakened by the sight of the conventicle, it now appeared perfectly practicable to adopt all the essentials of dissent, and yet remain good churchmen. A favourable change was also produced in the tone of high churchmen, who now frequently affected to be converted to a good opinion of those who upon principle dissented from the episcopal church, and adopted sentiments nearly allied to the regular establishment of Scotland; while they inveighed bitterly against those fanatics, who set up their altars, in opposition to a church to which they pretended to be conscientiously attached. Thinking that the older sects were grown sober, the establishment complimented them, at the expense of the new apostates, who attempted to engraft all the wild ardour of a recent discovery, upon the established vigour of the dissenting stock. Thus religious liberty gained on every hand, and the Dissenters hail even the most contracted of the new sects as valuable coadjutors in the contest of voluntary churches, and the rights of private judgment in religion, against the intolerance of exclusive establishments.

The rise of the Methodists, however, put the liberality of the Dissenters to a severe test. Accustomed to regard themselves as the asylum of all those who renounced the errors or the restraints of the

establishment, they now beheld other communions rising up to share with them the same honours. What impartial judge of human nature will wonder, that the elder sects should look with the jealousy which accompanies strangeness upon a people emerging from the establishment, without professing to differ from it, and yet combining this unaccountable latitude with a liberal quantity of high-church prejudices? When they saw Mr. Wesley establish a dissenting hierarchy, by means of an assembly of lay preachers, of which he was himself to be the autocrat, the disapprobation of the Dissenters arose out of their attachment to religious liberty. It appeared to them immaterial whether an ecclesiastical synod was called a conference, or a convocation, if the ministers assumed a legislative authority over the people. To hear Mr. Wesley claim a supreme authority, with the same language as the kings of Lombardy employ, when putting on their iron crown, "God has given it, and I will keep it," excited in Dissenters as much indignation as to hear Pope Hildebrand, or Archbishop Laud, plead the possession of power, as a reason for the exercise of dominion over the conscience.

For Mr. Whitfield and his followers, the Dissenters felt kinder sentiments. Though the indifference which this great man expressed for all the peculiarities of ecclesiastical order appeared to them, not only unscriptural, but founded on the enthusiastic assumption, that he was called to mind greater things; his disinterested ardour of soul in the cause of catholic Christianity won their hearts, and induced them to forget the imperfections of the man, in the excellencies of the devoted minister. He was, therefore, welcomed to the bosoms,

the abodes, and the pulpits of many, who thus proved that the peculiarities of their own communion were held in due subordination to the grand vital truths of religion. Such phenomena of liberality were then exhibited, as the world would never before have thought credible; an independent pastor, educated at the regular academy of Homerton, preaching in the chapel of a clergyman, where the liturgy enjoined by the Act of Uniformity was read by a lay curate in a surplice.

These discordant materials could not coalesce without some previous collision. Where the spirit of religion was decaying in a dissenting church, they sometimes made their differences of opinion a pretext for illiberal conduct towards Mr. Whitfield; who, in his turn, gave them too much provocation, by imprudent and unfounded reflections on the niceties of a system which he had never studied. If Christian prudence induced some faithful ministers to stand aloof, till they could see the lawfulness of welcoming these new lights; Whitfield's youthful ardour too frequently branded them, though his superiors in knowledge and experience, with the odious character of dead formalists, who were feeding their flocks with the chaff of church government, instead of the nutritious doctrines of grace. When, however, his maturer judgment detected the error, he acknowledged it with an ingenuousness which added to the lustre of his meridian the mildness of a setting sun. Alluding to Peter's injudicious zeal in cutting off the ear of the high-priest's servant, he said, "Many a man's ear have I cut off, by harsh censures on those who were faithful ministers of Christ." The re-action which these mistaken cen-

sures naturally produced, might give to the Dissenters the appearance of illiberality towards the rising sects ; but when all circumstances are considered, they will be found to have been as thoroughly imbued with the genuine spirit of religious liberty, as we can reasonably expect to find men in this state of imperfection*.

Their increased disapprobation of all national establishments in religion tended, at once to fortify the attachment of Dissenters to religious liberty, and to weaken their antipathy to the particular faults of the Church of England. Many of them, beginning now to consider the connexion of a church with the state as the mark of "the harlot who commits fornication with the kings of the earth," deemed it an idle warfare, to contend with one defiled by such a connexion about the lesser blemishes of her person or character. Their opposition was thus purified from the most envenomed of the passions, envy at the happier state of the established church ; for they now congratulated themselves on their escape from this gilded chain ; while they divided their censures, by levelling a part of them at the Presbyterian establishment of Scotland. In his controversy with Dr. Snape, James Pierce challenges the high church party to prove that Christ had, in the New Testament, prescribed any national establishment of religion.

The Dissenters stood forth as the advocates of unrestrained liberty of conscience, in the controversy with Woolston, the Deist. Having attacked him with the only weapons which they deemed lawful in this war-

* Dr. Watts recommended Count Zinzendorf and the Moravians to the American Dissenters.

fare, when they observed some of his antagonists among the churchmen shake the sword over his head, and threaten him with civil penalties, they protested against recurring to such methods, which would, in their view, snatch the honours of victory from the Christian cause. The celebrated Lardner, in the year 1729, wrote "A Vindication of our blessed Saviour's Miracles," in answer to Woolston, and embraced this opportunity of protesting against the prosecution, by which the infidel was condemned in one year's imprisonment, and a fine of a hundred pounds. Lardner observes, in his preface, that if men be permitted to deliver their sentiments freely on the subject of religion, and to propose their objections against Christianity itself, there can be no reason to be in pain for the event. "On the side of Christianity," says he, "I expect to see, as hitherto, the greatest share of learning, good sense, true wit, and fairness of disputation, which things, I hope, will be superior to low ridicule, false argument, and misrepresentation."

Dr. Waddington, Bishop of Chichester, expostulated with Lardner concerning these sentiments. But, after the interchange of a few letters, he seemed to concede to the Dissenter the principle in debate*. Mr. Simon Brown, another dissenting minister, wrote against Woolston, "A fit Rebuke for a ludicrous Infidel," with a preface concerning the prosecution of such writers by the civil powers. This preface was a noble apology for liberty of conscience, and of the press, and a severe condemnation of civil prosecutions for matters of opinion. Dr. Doddridge also published, in the year 1736, a

* Lardner's Life.

sermon on "The Absurdity and Iniquity of Persecution for Conscience's Sake, in all its Forms and Degrees." It had been preached on the 5th of November, and was recommended to the public, in a preface by Mr. Some, as the best that he had ever seen on the subject in so narrow a space. Dr. Kippis also pronounces it an elaborate and excellent discourse, displaying, with great energy and elegance, the grand principles of toleration and religious liberty.

The Quakers, encouraged by the success of former applications, and confident of the liberal views of the king, made, in the year 1735, a grand, but unsuccessful effort to obtain legislative relief from some modes of persecution which they still endured. The first act of King William, by which their affirmation was admitted, instead of an oath, contained also a clause which pointed out an easier and less expensive method of recovering small sums for tithes and church rates. Yet, as the act did not prohibit the clergy from applying to the more oppressive prosecutions in the exchequer and ecclesiastical courts, too many were unhappily disposed to adopt the mode which put the Quakers to most trouble and expense. The Friends, therefore, drew up a statement of their case, and a petition, which they presented to the parliament. They showed that above eleven hundred of their body had been prosecuted in the exchequer and spiritual courts, that nearly three hundred of them had been committed to prison, that several had died there, and that above eight hundred pounds had been taken from ten persons, where the original demands upon them all did not amount to fifteen pounds.

In compliance with their petition, a bill was brought into the House of Commons, not to take from the clergy anything which they claimed, but to compel them to resort to less expensive modes of recovering what they considered their due. "The clergy," says Gough, "now mustered all their strength against the bill for relief to the Friends, whereby they manifested themselves no less eager to hold fast the power of oppression which the law had left them in the recovery of tithes, than the tithe itself*." On this subject were published three anonymous pamphlets, which were all attributed to mitred heads. But Dr. Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, who for his *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici*, was considered the champion of the clergy, wrote, as is supposed, the most able piece, entitled "The Country Parson's Plea against the Quaker's Bill for Tithes." It was answered by one who styled himself a member of the House of Commons, but was found afterwards to be Lord Hervey. As the bishop had admitted that no wise or good clergymen would adopt any other method than that prescribed by the intended bill, Lord Hervey argues, that, if the wisest and best use it of choice, the unreasonable and unjust should be driven to it by necessity; for it would be a miserable case to have no better security against oppression than the wisdom and goodness of clergymen."

In addition to the pamphlets, circular letters were addressed to the clergy, which produced petitions from them against the bill. Lord Hervey's "Answer to the Country Parson" contends, that the bill should pass, were it only to prove that it is not in the power of a

* Gough's History of Quakers under George II.

mitred doctor, by his letters-missive stirring up petitions from every diocese, to intimidate a House of Commons, in a matter of this high concern to the justice of the kingdom. "I hope," says he, "a body of Englishmen will never weigh petitions in quantity against any bill whatever, especially bills for the reformation of the church, against which they are certain of having as many remonstrances as there are deaneries, archdeaconries, chapters, colleges, or ecclesiastical precincts in England and Wales." Counsel was heard in behalf of the petitioners against the act, and several alterations were proposed, when, after a vigorous resistance, the bill passed the House of Commons.

The opposition was renewed with increased eagerness among the Peers. Petitions were presented, and counsel was employed against the act, but the friends of the measure took care that counsel should be heard also in its favour. When the grievances of the Quakers appeared too evident to be denied, and too serious to be slighted, the adversaries of toleration affected to consider the bill, as it came from the Commons, incorrect, and unfit to pass into a law; and, by this artifice, they succeeded in throwing it out. In the disgraceful majority were fifteen bishops; and two of these, having exerted themselves vigorously against the proposed relief to the Quakers, received the public thanks of their clergy, "for their care and vigilance, in maintaining the constitution of the Church of England in its present happy establishment, and the legal rights of the clergy against the late strange and unheard-of infringement of their rights."

When it is remembered that the Quakers were not

so bold as to apply for exemption from tithes, but asked only for an act which should prevent unreasonable and bitter men from recurring to ruinous modes of obtaining their demands, it should seem, that those clergymen, who were so grateful to the bishops, judged the power of carrying on persecuting law-suits one of the "just rights of the church." The failure of the measure produced a controversy, which was maintained with great asperity, for a long time; the clergy asserting, that their opponents had falsely aspersed them, without being able to make good their accusations of litigious and oppressive suits; while the Friends maintained, that their persecutors were fully convicted of conduct which would expose any men, much more the ministers of religion, to universal indignation and contempt. Lord Hervey affirmed, that such facts were substantiated, as would be a just reason for abolishing tithes, if suits for them could not be carried on by more humane methods.

In the early part of the year 1736, a motion was made in the House of Commons for the repeal of those clauses in the Test Act which excluded Protestant Dissenters from civil employments. The attempt failed; for though the king was favourable to it, his ministers durst not countenance the measure, lest, to the popular odium which taxation had already excited, they should have added the more inflammatory cry of danger to the church. A repetition of the attempt in the next session of parliament was attended, as every judicious person must have expected, with a renewed failure. Notwithstanding these retrograde movements, so much mildness and good sense prevailed in the senate, as

abolished the laws against conjuration and witchcraft, which had, for ages, exposed the miserable objects of suspicion to the most brutal treatment, for crimes of which no legal proof could be furnished.

But that which most alarmed the friends of liberty, and, in the end, most contributed to establish its dominion, was the rebellion in the year 1745. The exiled Stuarts, who had ever been the dupes of the Catholic princes, were again thrown upon our shores, to divide our attention and procure a diversion in favour of the enemy. The Young Pretender, as he was called, landed in Scotland, when there were no hopes of shaking the throne of his rival; and, with all the silly fondness for royal pomp, which characterized his family, wasted his precious moments of unexpected prosperity in proclaiming his father, and disposing of seats in the Paradise which he had not yet regained. Having, in the battle of Preston Pans, beaten the British force which was sent against them, the rebel army marched into England, and, by an unaccountable coincidence of circumstances, arrived within a hundred miles of London, which was thrown into the utmost consternation.

While the civil and religious liberties of our country were thus exposed to jeopardy, it was natural for the government to look around with the keen eye of jealousy, to see which way men's hearts turned. After the storm was dispelled by the victory of Culloden, the Dissenters were elevated in the esteem of the government. The rebellion called forth all their ardour in the cause of liberty, both civil and religious. They were agitated with an indescribable solicitude for the

safety of the tolerant throne of Brunswick, and the preservation of that liberal constitution, under which they had, for half a century, enjoyed the dearest blessings. The sermons of the pastors, and the prayers of the churches, spoke the lively interest they felt in the success of the contest.

Dr. Doddridge exerted himself with great zeal, and at considerable expense, in the cause. His biographer says, "When a regiment was raising in Northamptonshire, to be under the command of the Earl of Halifax, he wrote many letters to his friends in that county and neighbourhood, to further the design. He went among his own people, to encourage them to enlist, and had the pleasure to find many of them engaging cheerfully in the cause. He drew up, and printed at his own expense, a friendly letter to the private soldiers of a regiment of foot, which was one of those engaged in the glorious battle of Culloden*." When his friend Colonel Gardiner fell in the struggle between the House of Hanover and the family of Stuart, Dr. Doddridge honoured him as one who had poured out his blood for the sacred, as well as civil liberties of Britons. It was his high sense of the importance of the contest to the religious interests of the kingdom, that inspired the biographer with the unusual eloquence which glows in his memoirs of the colonel. Watts and Doddridge both employed their poetic talents in hymns, designed to aid the patriotic devotion of the Dissenters, and to express their grateful confidence in the protection of heaven to the righteous cause of freedom.

In the midst of the internal tranquillity which his

* Orton's Life of Doddridge, p 208.

paternal administration secured, and of the national superiority that Britain will, probably, ever enjoy, in proportion as she is free and united, died George II., October 25th, 1760, in the thirty-third year of his reign, at the advanced age of seventy-seven. He trode in his father's best steps, and, with a fidelity equalled only by his prudence, maintained the principles that seated his family on the throne. Thus our country enjoyed, for the first time, two successive reigns of sovereigns, who, superior to the bigotry of a dominant sect, defended, with firm and impartial hand, the religious privileges of all their subjects. George II. steadily aimed at restoring to the Dissenters the rights of which he was convinced they were unjustly deprived; but he ever found himself thwarted by the prejudices of those who would exalt the prince's will into a law, except when he wished to do justice to others, at the expense of their monopoly. It was the glory of this prince to have stood a test which has generally proved too severe for those who have worn a crown,—the rise of a new, active, and prosperous sect of religionists. Excepting, perhaps, the Quakers, who have little reason to complain of Oliver Cromwell, every dissenting communion had found, to its cost, that princes are alarmed at what they deem a new religion; but the Methodists owe unrivalled honours to the memory of George II., who chained up the dragon, which lies watching the birth of each new denomination, to devour it while young and feeble.

CHAP. III.

CONTROVERSIES IN WHICH DISSENTERS ENGAGED.

SECT. I.—*Controversy respecting the Dissent.*

THE ecclesiastical establishment set up at the reformation, was supposed to be for all the inhabitants of the land, and every individual was considered as bound to conform to its regulations. Like Luther, the English reformers do not seem to have searched the Scriptures for the mode of church government which it contains or warrants; but to have adopted that which was in use in the worst times of popery, and, with a very few alterations, to have framed and fitted it to their new ecclesiastical constitution. Calvin appears to have been the first, and indeed the only one of the heads of the reformation, who made it his business to inquire what was the decision of the holy oracles on this important subject. The result of his inquiries was a system of Presbyterian church government, which, in his eyes, was deemed to be “according to the pattern shown in the Mount,” and was the model exhibited and used by the apostles.

This scheme, whether from their own researches, or from their perusal of Calvin’s works, met the approbation of some of the first friends of the reformation in this country; and in the reign of Edward VI. the dif-

ference began to appear. When Queen Mary's persecution had compelled the warmest patrons of the glorious cause to seek refuge on the Continent, among foreign Protestants, the exhibition of Calvin's simpler mode of worship and government won the entire affections of many, and they became proselytes to Presbytery. On their return, the more pompous ritual of the Anglican church was beheld with dislike; and, from that period, two parties appeared in the bosom of the establishment. There were some who did not go so far, but embraced what was afterwards Archbishop Usher's scheme of episcopacy: they, however, agreed with the others in the essential parts of their ecclesiastical polity. By carrying their conformity as far as they could with a good conscience, these malecontents strove to live in one communion. But they also aspired after a higher degree of reformation, and, by their writings, and still more by application to parliament, they sought to have the platform of the church adapted to their model. Controversy was, as might have been expected, the result, and both the friends of the hierarchy and the Puritans crowded into the field.

The priestly robes furnished one of the first subjects of contention. The Puritans were unwilling to wear them, and, indeed, viewed them with abhorrence. The rulers of the church were as strenuous for their use, and insisted that they should be worn. The Dissenters of the present day wonder that the ecclesiastical governors should have been so rigid; and those who inherit the spirit of these rulers are astonished that the Puritans should have been so weak. But if we consider the state of things at that period, reasons, of con-

siderable weight, may be assigned for the conduct of the Puritans, which are now generally overlooked. If, after a merry-andrew had exhibited his tricks, and performed all his antic gestures, he was ordered to strip, and a clergyman was commanded to put on his fantastic apparel, and officiate at the altar, might he not be allowed to have scruples to appear in the dress of the mountebank's stage? To the costume of a false religion, there might be objections equally strong. If, after the priest of Venus, at Paphos, clothed in his discriminating robes of office, had presented a sacrifice on her altar, and then committed lewdness as an act of religion, the apostle Paul had been ordered to take these robes and wear them as the appropriate dress of the Christian ministry, in all his public functions, while he remained at Cyprus, might he not have pleaded that it would, in the eyes of the people, identify a minister of Christ with a priest of Venus, and awaken in their minds ideas diametrically opposite to Christian purity? In both these cases, good men might refuse the proffered dresses, without being exceedingly scrupulous or remarkably weak.

The Puritans conceived that they had as good reasons to allege for their dislike of the wardrobe of the church. The garments in which they were commanded to officiate, were worn by the popish priests in the days of superstition, and were considered, both by priests and people, as essentially connected with the wonder-working parts of their office, and without which these marvels could not be done. When Bishop Latimer, in the course of his degradation, on being stripped of one of his garments, said, " Now I can

make no more holy water," he spoke both the sentiments of the multitude, and the sentiments of the prelates of the Romish church. If the Puritans refused to wear these robes, while they were excused on the score of sobriety of mind, they may be allowed to have religious scruples on higher grounds.

Two classes of people were likely to receive injury from them. Those who still adhered to popery in their hearts, a very numerous body, and who connected the Romish robes of ecclesiastics with the Romish ritual and Romish priestly power of binding and loosing, in heaven and on earth. The other class consisted of those who had cordially embraced the Protestant faith, and who, both from the spirit of the times, and the natural influence of persecution on the mind of the sufferer, hated popery and her priests, and the garments which they wore, and who were so disgusted with everything in the system, that they felt the strongest prejudices rise in their breasts, when they saw a minister officiate in a Romish guise. Hence arose the scruples of the Puritans, and their aversion to the ecclesiastical costume.

Equally strenuous, on the other side, were the persons who had the power to prescribe the ghostly fashions of that day, and as Queen Elizabeth was fond of show and parade, the Puritans had to contend, not only with the rulers of the church, but also with the head of the state. Disputations were held on the subject, but without conviction; remonstrances were made, but without effect. The press presented to the public the labours of the disputants on both sides; but whatever might be the force of arguments, the question was decided by the

arm of power. The Puritans must submit, or be no longer allowed to preach the Gospel. Some of them, unable to comply, with a good conscience, quitted their livings, and convinced their opponents, if of nothing else, at least of their sincerity.

While, in the New Testament, we read nothing of any kind of garments as proper for ministers of the Gospel, how strange is it that, to a church of Christ, professing to be formed on the model of the New Testament, a garment of a particular colour and of a particular form should appear so important, that, according to the rubric, a minister of that church cannot officiate without it! Could it ever have been imagined, that the tailor should be so important a personage in the church, that the cut of a robe was necessary, almost to give validity to Christian ordinances? May we not hope that the time is coming, when the littleness of mind, which laid so undue a stress on these and similar minutiae, will vanish from the Christian church; when a cordial union in the fundamental principles of the Gospel will alone be thought necessary in order to Christian and ministerial communion; and when the shape and hue of the garment in which a minister officiates, will appear of no more importance than the cut or the colour of his hair?

The complaints of the Puritans did not rest here. The stately pomp and extensive authority of diocesan bishops, the multitude of clergymen who were unable to preach, the want of discipline, and many other things, called forth their petitions for reform. It was a bold age, and these sentiments were poured forth from the pulpit into the ears of their congregation; and they

appeared in a more legitimate form from the press. Whitgift stood forth in defence of the church, and Cartwright was the champion of the Puritans. The *Admonitions to Parliament*, drawn up by the latter body, and circulated through the country, were considered as demanding an answer. Whitgift undertook the task, and performed it with great ability. Cartwright replied, with ability and learning not inferior. A defence appeared from the former; and a second reply, in two parts, by the latter. The dispute embraced almost the whole of what is still considered as defective or objectionable in the established church. Their principles of reasoning were different: Cartwright grounded his whole system on the New Testament, and admitted no other authority: Whitgift demanded that the practice of the third and fourth centuries should be deemed a proper platform for an ecclesiastical establishment; and he rested the weight of his arguments on this foundation. But, however defective this might be, he had the smiles both of the civil and ecclesiastical rulers. It is a charming thing to sit down and write under the protecting shadow of a throne, while the monarch, who sits there with his sceptre in his hand, raises it against the antagonist of his champion, and threatens him with a blow which he will never forget. The person thus menaced must, while he is composing his book, have a part of his attention drawn to the throne, and spend some of his time in observing the monarch's hands. Such was the relative situation of Whitgift and Cartwright in this controversy. The result was what might be expected from the spirit of the times. Whitgift wrote himself into the archiepis-

copal throne of Canterbury, and the palace of Lambeth : Cartwright's reward was poverty, exile, and a jail.

About twenty years afterwards, Richard Hooker stood forth as an able champion for the ecclesiastical hierarchy in all its parts. He was a fortunate man, for his convictions were favourable to his interest. The rewards, as to this world, were all on the side of the advocates for the church. A rich rectory was the smallest favour that they had to expect. The acclamations of their numerous brethren, the caresses of soft and delicate lawn sleeves, in due time a pair for themselves, and the fascinating smiles of the court, which in those days raised the soul to extasies, were the certain prize of defending the establishment. Hooker's talents and learning are universally acknowledged; and it has been generally allowed, that he said all that could be said in defence of the established church, and in refutation of the books of Cartwright, whom he all along keeps within his view. He may be said to have dedicated his life to the subject. For this purpose, at his own request, he was removed from the mastership of the Temple to a country living; and the *Ecclesiastical Polity* was the result of his long, assiduous and painful labours. It consists of eight books. Three were published in 1594, and two more in 1597. He lived till 1600, in the vigorous prosecution of his favourite theme. But the last three books were not published till more than half a century after his death. Whether the whole of these, or a part, or any of them were his, has been, among his greatest admirers, a matter of doubt*.

* See Life of Hooker prefixed to his Works.

The architecture of the fabric resembles Dagon's temple; it rests mainly upon two grand pillars, which, as long as they continue sound, will support all its weight. The first is, "that the church of Christ, like all other societies, has power to make laws for its well-being;" and the second, that "where the sacred Scriptures are silent, human authority may interpose." But if some Sampson can be found to shake these pillars from their base, the whole edifice, with the lords of the Philistines in their seats, and the multitude with which it is crowded, will be involved in one common ruin. Grant Mr. Hooker these two principles, and his arguments cannot be confuted. But if a Puritan can show that the church of Christ is different from all civil societies, because Christ had framed a constitution for it, and that where the Scriptures are silent, and neither enjoin nor forbid, no human association has a right to interpose its authority, but should leave the matter indifferent; in such a case, the system would be not more stable than that of the philosopher, who rested the earth on the back of an elephant, and that upon a tortoise, and that on nothing, or he knew not what.

The book, we are told by Mr. Hooker's biographer*, was rapturously extolled by Cardinal Allen and Dr. Stapleton, two celebrated English Papists, who strenuously recommended it to the Pope, as a masterpiece of conclusive reasoning. The first book being read in his presence, his holiness was in raptures too; and he considered it as almost a miracle, that any heretic in England should write so well, and argue in so conclusive and masterly a manner. The approbation

* Hooker's Life, pp. 18, 19.

of these men, however, is not to be viewed with surprise, because Mr. Hooker used the very same arguments in contending against Dissenters from the establishment, that the Church of Rome employs in arguing against the separation of the Church of England from her communion; and, with some variation in names and dates, the book will prove the ablest defence of the Popish cause. His ideas of church power, authority, and influence, went far beyond those of most of his brethren in the present day; and when his biographer informs us of his own and Mr. Hooker's veneration for ecclesiastical institutions, "and their belief of the benefit, necessity, and safety of the church's abolition," which was administered to him just before his death, we seem to feel ourselves not treading upon Protestant ground*. Nor does he appear less remote from the true spirit of the reformation, when he lays it down as one of his maxims, "That all who are born within the limits of an established church, and are baptized into it, are bound to submit to its ecclesiastical laws, under such penalties as the church in her wisdom shall determine."

Hooker was not permitted to occupy the field of controversy alone. Bilson, Bancroft, Bridges, Cosins, and Dr. Adrian Saravia, a German beneficed in England, appeared on the same side. Bradshaw defended the cause of the Puritans against Bilson, Fenner against Bridges, Morrice against Cosins, and Beza against Saravia, although the press was shut against them by law, and their books could only be published by stealth.

* Hooker's Life, p. 23.

Of the champions for the church, Bancroft acquired the greatest name, by his boldly asserting the divine right of episcopacy. Most of the English reformers were Erastians, who considered the church as a creature of the state, and grounded the ecclesiastical institutions of the realm on the authority of the civil magistrate, who had appointed the bishops as his servants, for the oversight of the rest of the clergy. Whitgift proceeded a step farther, and defended the ecclesiastical constitution, and the order of bishops, on the foundation of their conformity to the primitive church, in the third and fourth centuries. It was reserved for Bancroft to assert their celestial origin. In a sermon at St. Paul's, in 1588, he maintained that the order of bishops was of divine right, and originally distinct from and superior to the office of Presbyters. This was new doctrine to the ears of an English audience, and made a considerable noise at the time; but it was eagerly embraced by such as wished in one way to magnify their office, and it afterwards became the favourite sentiment of all the Laudean party in the church. By the Puritans, the doctrine was strenuously opposed, and the breach became wider than before; while at the same time, nearly all of them wished to live in the communion of the church. But during Queen Elizabeth's reign, many hundreds of pious ministers were suspended, and deprived of their livings, for want of conformity to the ceremonies.

In reviewing the state of the controversy during this and the two following reigns, it is impossible not to be impressed with the unhappy state of the country, by reason of their religious differences. There were two

remedies to which they might have had recourse, either of which would have restored peace. The first and best was to reduce the terms of conformity to an agreement in the great fundamental principles of Christianity, and to have left the parochial ministers at liberty to regulate the worship and discipline of their respective congregations to their mutual satisfaction. Had this not been thought consistent with the unity or dignity of the Anglican church, a liberal toleration to such as could not conscientiously conform would have set the hearts of multitudes at rest, and have effectually prevented those calamities which at last ensued. But neither of these methods was suited to the taste of the rulers of the church or state, who refused to sacrifice even a *cope* or a *rocket* to the peace of the country. For the space of fourscore years, they laboured with unremitting assiduity at a third way of healing the country's wounds, which, to our astonishment, after numberless unsuccessful attempts, they could not perceive to be hopeless, namely, to reduce the whole nation by force to a rigorous uniformity in all matters of religion, both in faith and practice.

During the reign of James I., Bishop Moreton, Dr. Burges, Dr. Downham, Messrs. Sparkes, Covill, Hutton, Rogers, and Ball, wrote in defence of the rites and ceremonies of the church. Dr. Ames, Bradshaw, Baynes, and some others, were their opponents, and supported the Puritan cause. A book, of the greatest note on this side of the controversy, was written, about this time, by David Calderwood, a Scotch minister, who found it expedient to conceal himself under the name of Edwardus Didoclavius, and which had for its title,

Altare Damascenum. It was so much esteemed abroad, that an elegant edition of it was published in Holland, almost a century afterwards. In the preface, it is mentioned, that King James, having perused it, was uneasy and displeased. One of the bishops coming in at the time, and learning the cause, thought to console him with the promise of confuting it. "Man," said the king, "what answer can you give? there is nothing here but Scripture, reason, and the fathers."

In the next reign, by the persuasion and under the patronage of Laud, good Bishop Hall entered the field, and produced a treatise on the divine right of episcopacy, in which he endeavours to fix it upon the same basis of apostolical institution, and to demolish the system of the Puritans, by demonstrating that Presbyterianism had no existence for the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era; and that it owed its being to the inventive faculties of Calvin. After the worthy man had framed the work according to his judgment, it was submitted to the correction of the archbishop and his abettors, who erased some things, added others, and made such alterations, in order to exhibit and confirm their more elevated system of prelatical dignity, that when the book was afterwards attacked, he found himself unable to go all its lengths.

To engage in a controversy is generally giving the pledge for a continued warfare. When some petitions were, in 1640, presented to parliament against the hierarchy and their proceedings, Bishop Hall again took up his pen, and wrote "An Humble Remonstrance to the High Court of Parliament," and, afterwards, "A Defence of the Remonstrance;" in both

which he strenuously exerted himself to vindicate the authority of liturgies, and the celestial origin of diocesan episcopacy and claimed to the prelates the sole right of ordination and spiritual jurisdiction. The parliament, considering itself as the bulwark of the people's liberties, and the guardian of their privileges, was not unwilling that the other party should be heard, and that Hall should not turn everything his own way. Greater freedom being now enjoyed, an answer to his ecclesiastical polemics was drawn up by five Presbyterian divines, which, from combining the first letter of their names and surnames, had the title of *Smectymnuus**. In these volumes, the controversy between the Episcopalians and Presbyterians was fully investigated, and whoever will peruse them may make himself master of the subject.

But perhaps a more strenuous advocate on the side of episcopacy will scarcely be found, than the unhappy monarch himself. Kings would do well to remember, that there are none in disputation and argument; that though it be the monarchy of the state, it is the republic of letters; and that there is no royal way to confutation and proof. While at Newcastle with the Scotch army, Charles had a controversy on the subject, with Mr. Henderson, one of the most eminent ministers of the Kirk of Scotland. When the king was confined in the Isle of Wight, a more ample debate took place, for the purpose of giving ease, if possible, to his conscience, that he might comply with the proposals of the parliament for his restoration to power. Several of his most emi-

* Stephen Marshal, Edmund Calamy, Thomas Young, Matt. Newcomen, and William Spurstow.

ment divines were appointed to assist him with their advice. Of this number were Drs. Juxon, Duppa, Sanderson, Turner, and Haywood. The parliament's commissioners brought with them four Presbyterian ministers, Dr. Seaman, Mr. Vines, Mr. Caryl, and Mr. Marshal. They went through the whole of the controversy, but, as in most instances of this way of proceeding, they ended as they began, and both parties were more deeply riveted in their own opinions. It was an unpleasant office for the Presbyterian ministers. To dispute with a king is like disputing with the ladies. A well-bred man cannot find it in his heart to push the arguments home.

Till this time, the Independents had attracted but little notice in the Puritan controversy. But now they gradually appeared, and brought forward their distinguishing principles into public view. As their arms were of different materials, and of a different form, from those which the Presbyterians had used, a different kind of warfare became necessary, and many of the most destructive weapons became now entirely useless. General principles were advanced, which, if proved to be just, laid the axe to the root of the episcopal tree, and utterly destroyed the force of arguments on which the fullest confidence had been placed. During the commonwealth, the controversy concerning church government suffered a temporary suspension; but the restoration, by bringing back the old order of things, in all its rigour, kindled the fires of contention anew. The Savoy conference, between twenty-one of the Episcopal party and an equal number of the Presbyterians, while it exhibited the talents of the disputants,

did nothing to end the controversy: nor was it the intention of the ruling powers, either in church or state; but appearances must be saved, and some external regard shown for their former solemn promises in the time of their need of Presbyterian help. Mr. Baxter, who took the chief part in the debate on one side, in opposition to Dr. Pearson and Dr. Gunning on the other, has favoured the world with a very particular account of this interesting conference, which, instead of producing peace and union, widened the breach, and rendered the terms of conformity more severe*.

To take notice of every publication on the subject of Dissent would be tedious. Between the restoration and the revolution, this controversy, conducted with considerable bitterness, was the order of the day. In 1680, Dr. Stillingfleet, Dean of St. Paul's, published a sermon, which he had preached before the Lord Mayor, "on the Mischief of Separation." This discourse made a deep and painful impression on the minds of the Non-conformists. The doctor had commenced his literary course with an excellent temper; and his "Irenicum," which appeared the year after the restoration, breathed so excellent a spirit, and proposed such measures, as justly endeared his name to all the friends of peace and union; and, had they been adopted, would have retained nearly all the Presbyterians within the bosom of the church. After the lapse of eighteen years, when it might have been supposed his heart would be still more mellowed down by the painful events that had passed before his eyes, he comes forth with great asperity and less seriousness than formerly,

* Baxter's Life and Times, part ii. p. 303—369.

accuses the Non-conformists of schism,—a heinous crime! desires them not to complain of persecution, orders them into the church again, will not allow them to plead conscience for remaining in a state of separation, and charges them with contributing, by their schismatical conduct, to the increase of Popery. Bishop Burnet observes, “ He not only retracted his Irenicum, but went into the humour of the high sort of people beyond what became him, perhaps beyond his own sense of things*.” There are days of folly in the life of man, which he ardently wishes to be erased from the page of his existence. The wisest are sometimes overtaken by them, and have reason bitterly to lament them. Such was, at this time, the fate of Dr. Stillingfleet.

But, insulted and injured as the Dissenters were, they would not suffer their adversaries to triumph without resistance. Mr. Baxter, Mr. Alsop, Mr. Howe, and Dr. Owen, all stood forth in defence of the principles of Non-conformity. Greater talents, on both sides, have never been called into the controversy, during the whole period of its existence. All the acuteness and ingenuity of Baxter were exhibited in his “ Answer.” “ The Mischief of Imposition ” was the title chosen by Mr. Alsop, and displayed his extraordinary wit and keenness in aid of his arguments. Mr. Howe’s “ Letter written out of the Country to a Person of Quality in the City,” shows his mind to be deeply affected with the unseasonable attack, but at the same time discovers his dignity of soul, and strength of reasoning, and respect for his hot and inconsiderate adversary. But to Dr.

* Burnet’s History of his Own Times, vol. i., page 189.

Owen the praise is due of having produced the most valuable work. Stillingfleet, provoked by the answers to his sermon, published, in 1681, a quarto volume on "the Unreasonableness of Separation," in which the same principles are presented to view, and the arguments of his opponents considered. To this angry book, Dr. Owen wrote an answer, entitled, "An Inquiry into the Original Nature, &c. of Evangelical Churches." The reader will here perceive those general principles which are now usually, or perhaps universally, held by Dissenters: he states the nature and economy of a church, as described in the New Testament, and proves that the sentiments, as well as practice of Christians, continued the same during the first two centuries. He contrasts this with Dr. Stillingfleet's church, and points out the numerous differences, from the foundation to the top stone, and then strenuously argues, that a person who is endeavouring, in everything, to conform to the church of Christ, as delineated in the sacred Scriptures, cannot be guilty of schism, for non-conformity to a system which is wholly of human invention. The learning, the moderation, the strength of reasoning, and the seriousness, which pervade the whole, entitle the work to pre-eminent distinction in the controversy on church government. Perhaps it was the first ample treatise on the subject which was grounded on the principles of the Independents, and which, by sweeping away one-half of Dr. Stillingfleet's book, as irrelevant, presented at the same time a mode of attack, which the weapons used by the Episcopalians against the Presbyterians were not fitted

to resist*. Dr. Rule, another eminent Non-conformist minister, more minutely investigated every point of "The Unreasonableness of Separation," in his "Rational Defence of Non-conformity." Nor were these the whole: various treatises on the Dissent, which the confined limits of this work prevent us from noticing, appeared about the same time. But it would be injustice to pass by "The Conformists' Plea for the Non-conformists," a work which does the greatest honour both to the writer's understanding and his heart.

A few years afterwards, three volumes were published on this controversy, by some of the ablest of the clergy in the establishment, Dr. Scott, Dr. Claget, and others, in order to reclaim Dissenters to the church. They were entitled, "The London Cases," and contained twenty-three discourses on the leading points of difference. Mr. Delaune's answer to one of them brought him, first to Newgate, and from Newgate to the grave. The two discourses on church communion were replied to by Nathaniel Taylor.

During James II.'s reign, the controversy appears to have been suspended, by the awful uncertainty whether Protestantism itself, or Popery, should bear sway in the British isle. But, in the year immediately succeeding the revolution, Mr. Baxter, who was from the beginning a champion of the dissenting body, and had written various treatises on the subject, closed the

* The similarity of Dr. Campbell's reasoning and statement of the form and order of the primitive church, in his lectures on ecclesiastical history, is exceedingly striking. If he had not seen Dr. Owen's book, the coincidence is very remarkable, and displays the harmony of two superior minds in the investigation of the same subject.

whole with a quarto volume, entitled, "The English Non-conformity, as under King Charles II. and King James II., stated and argued." His biographer says, that this work remained without an answer.

Though there were skirmishes, from year to year, the next regular campaign of the controversy on the Dissent was not till the beginning of the eighteenth century. Dr. Edmund Calamy, wishing to preserve from oblivion the names and characters of the Non-conformist ministers, published brief memoirs, and where these could not be obtained, the mere names of those who had quitted the establishment for conscience-sake. By way of introduction, he abridged the life of Richard Baxter, drawn up by himself, who had interwoven in it the history of the times in which he lived*. In the tenth chapter of the abridgment, Dr. Calamy enumerated the reasons given by the ejected ministers for their non-conformity. These reasons he placed in as strong a light as he possibly could. An historian of the Dissenters would, indeed, not be doing

* Dr. Calamy rendered an important service to the dissenting cause by his abridgment of "Mr. Baxter's Life and Times," a work replete with valuable information. Into a second volume, he collected a list of the names of the ejected ministers, with brief biographical sketches, where they could be procured. Some years afterwards, he was enabled, by diligent researches, to produce two volumes of additions to the names and lives. A new edition of this work, altered, in some parts abridged, and much improved, was printed, in two large octavo volumes, in 1774. For this, the religious world is indebted to the Rev. Samuel Palmer, of Hackney, who, in 1801, published a third edition, in three volumes, with additions and improvements. The portraits of many of these excellent men give a pleasing interest to the pious reader. If, to blend entertainment with spiritual instruction, be a recommendation to a book, few will be found more effectually to have accomplished the object, than the "Non-conformists' Memorial."

them justice, if he did not present their arguments in the strongest and most striking point of view.

Two clergymen of the establishment, Dr. Hoadley and Mr. Olyffe, appeared in defence of their church; the former is well known in the ecclesiastical and political world; both were low churchmen, and of great respectability of character. Dr. Hoadley had been accustomed to a different warfare; but he now hung up in the hall the proof-armour which he formerly wore, when he contended with the high-church party, and took down an old suit which had remained there for ages, and which all the champions of Rome used to put on when they entered into single combat against the reformers. As Dr. Calamy's tenth chapter, which contains nearly all the reasons of dissent, was the subject in debate, the disputants went over nearly the whole of the controversy. Every point was contested with great vigour. Dr. Hoadley's work was entitled, "The Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of England, in two parts." He afterwards returned to the charge, and published "A Defence of Episcopal Ordination." Mr. Olyffe's "Defence of Ministerial Conformity to the Church of England" appeared, about the same time.

To these two opponents, Dr. Calamy wrote an answer in one publication, to which he gave the title of "A Defence of Moderate Non-conformity." The first part appeared in 1703, and the second and third in the two following years. The objections of both, on each point, were considered at the same time; and advantage was taken of the difference of their sentiments, which on some occasions served for a confuta-

tion of their hypothesis, and saved Dr. Calamy the trouble of any additional answer. To this defence, Mr. Olyffe replied in 1706; and here the controversy dropped. But the gentlemen had furnished the world with a full view of the arguments on both sides, so as to enable every one to form a judgment for himself, and they had managed the controversy with tolerable temper.

The Dissenters could now write without danger or fear, as the ruling powers had thrown away all the chains and fetters, with which, before the revolution, a Non-conformist could not but have his imagination haunted, while he was writing against the church. Poor Delaune's case showed that their fears were not groundless. Dr. Calamy now proved to them, that this freedom might be enjoyed without being abused. His defence was the fullest which had for a long time appeared on the subject, and it was written with great judgment, considerable ability, and a better temper than controversy usually inspires.

Some years afterwards, Dr. William Nichols, chiefly known by his comment on the Service Book, composed in the Latin tongue, "A Defence of the Doctrines and Discipline of the Church of England." There is in some men a greediness of praise, which hurries them on to court it, not only from their superiors, and their equals, but from those whom they consider to be unspeakably their inferiors, and whom they look down upon with contempt. The church of England denies the validity of the ordination of the foreign Protestants, while she sustains the goodness and purity of that of the church of Rome. But so

eager is Dr. Nichols for applause, that to those foreign Protestants he refers his cause, solicits their approbation, and is anxious to engage them on his side. The Dissenters thought it hard to be misrepresented abroad, as they had been at home, and applied to James Pierce, one of their ministers, to advocate their cause. He was prevailed on to be their champion, and in 1710, published in the Latin tongue also, "A Vindication of the Dissenters," in answer to Dr. Nichols's Defence of the Church.

For a time, both these performances were shut up in a learned language, and were read only by literary men. At last, Dr. Nichols began to translate his work into his native tongue; but, dying before it was far advanced, a friend completed the translation, and sent it abroad into the world, for the benefit of English readers. This was considered by Mr. Pierce as a signal, and a warrant for him to do the same, and thus the controversy was again brought before the public. By both these writers the same method was pursued; an historical introduction paved the way, and was followed by a defence of the principles, discipline, and worship of their respective denominations, blended with an attack on the opposite system. They went over the whole of the subject, and left nothing of importance untouched. Dr. Nichols was looked upon as a person of note in the establishment; and his opponent was regarded by the Dissenters as a considerable man, both for his learning and his judgment. It may indeed be questioned, whether an abler book has appeared on his side of the controversy than "Pierce's Vindication of the Dissenters."

From the reformation to the death of Queen Anne, the peculiar circumstances in which the Puritans, Non-conformists, and Dissenters were placed, kept the controversy alive; and the writers had engaged in it, from time to time, with the spirit of men who felt the subject. It was now almost exhausted, and scarcely a topic remained untouched. In consequence also of the Dissenters enjoying the blessing of religious liberty, during the second period of this history, little comparatively was written on either side. Pamphlets might be collected in abundance; in larger works a part might be found which bore upon the subject; and some volumes, but of inferior fame, were wholly occupied by the controversy; or, though ably written, containing but little that was new, have not descended to the present time with so much repute as to be in common use. One brilliant exception is to be found in the writings of White and Towgood, the former of whom was the advocate of the establishment, the latter of the dissent.

Their controversy took its rise from a cause which was never intended to produce such an effect. In 1731, Dr. Watts published a treatise under the title of "An Humble Attempt towards the Revival of Practical Religion among Christians." His design was to stir the Dissenters up to more eminent purity of life, and more fervent zeal for the advancement of true religion. With this view, he reminds them of their peculiar advantages and obligations, and strenuously and affectionately exhorts them to a temper and conduct becoming the Gospel of Christ. The book falling into the hands of John White, B.D., Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Ospring, in

Kent, produced a zealous advocate for the establishment, and a long succession of publications in its defence. From 1743 to 1751, no fewer than eight pieces were produced by his fertile pen. To the first three, he gave the name of "Letters to a Gentleman Dissenting from the Church of England." For a person to consider the system of religion which he professes as superior to every other is exceedingly natural, and when claims of pre-eminence are made by the advocates of a different denomination, he may be expected to appear in its defence. An establishment wherein everything has long been fixed, and rendered unalterable by law, is, in general, unfavourable to such pretensions, as it cannot throw off what is acknowledged to be objectionable and wrong. But, on the other hand, the weight of public opinion in its favour, the superiority to any sectary which its clergy conceive they possess, and the prospect of ecclesiastical exaltation to opulence and fame, give courage even to timidity, and supply zeal to the man who ventures to stand forth in defence of a national church.

Highly displeased he was with Dr. Watts, who took it for granted that the Dissenters enjoyed greater advantages for knowledge and personal religion than the members of the establishment, and therefore ought to be more eminent for wisdom and goodness. Feeling, too, for the honour of his communion, he indignantly denies the doctor's position; he asserts the equality at least, if not the pre-eminence, of the members of his church, as to their life and conversation, when compared with the Dissenters; and insists on the superiority of their advantages for improvement in the Chris-

tian temper. Such is the substance of his first letter : in the second and third he descends to the common topics, and placing his shield before the body of the church, empties his whole quiver against the friends of the dissent. The temper with which he assails his opponent is as decent as can be reasonably expected from a controversialist, whose mind is wrought up, in the course of its exertions, to a heat and edge with which the calm and unmoved reader does not always sympathise.

Attacks so numerous and varied, it may easily be supposed, would not be permitted to pass without notice. They brought into the field Michaiah Towgood, afterwards one of the ministers of the united congregations at Exeter, who attained considerable fame by the manner in which he conducted the controversy. He published, in 1745, "The Dissenting Gentleman's Letters to Mr. White." They are three in number, with an appendix. The Dissenters had certainly reason to boast of an advocate who did not betray their cause, and who displayed superior skill in their defence. He was perfectly master of the subject; his style was well adapted to controversy; he reasoned with force, brevity, and point; was acute in discovering the weak parts of the arguments of his opponent, and had a singularly happy faculty in returning them upon himself. To give that pungency to reasoning which would render it interesting to his readers, he had wit at command; while he is luminous, he compresses; and by brevity, avoids the tediousness of arguments expanded and protracted to excess. It will be difficult to find a volume of controversy which,

in so small a space, combines so much light of information with so much strength of reasoning. The greatest defect of the book is its form. As he followed Mr. White through his three letters, the same subject, instead of being discussed at once, recurs in different parts. To introduce his peculiar theological sentiments, (as they were widely different from the Puritan creed, and condemned by the two thousand Non-conformist ministers, whose advocate he was,) must be considered as a greater blemish. The general merit of the work is evident from the avidity with which it has been read. Six editions were published during the author's life, and several have appeared since. During the whole continuance of the controversy, there is no one work which has had so long continued, and so extensive a demand.

Here the main current of the controversy between the church and Dissenters may be said to stop. After this, though particular parts have been investigated, or brief abstracts of the matters in debate have been, from time to time, presented to the public, which will be noticed under the third period of the history, no considerable work has since appeared on either side.

In taking a general survey of the whole, it will be evident to every person who patiently examines the subject, that, before an agreement between the parties can take place, there are formidable difficulties to surmount; and he will perceive the different principles on which they ground their system, and the different modes of reasoning which they adduce for its support. What the one party considers as axioms carrying more than demonstration with them, the other looks upon as

doubtful *postulata*, the proof of which remains to be produced.

The advocates for high church step boldly forward to the contest, taking it for granted that the civil establishment of religion in a country is almost a necessary thing. Without it, devotion would die or decline, and the mass of the people have neither the knowledge nor the appearance of religion; and that to it Christianity is indebted for her stability and support among the nations of the earth, and almost for the continuance of her very existence. The formation of such an establishment they consider as the province of the rulers of a country, with or without the co-operation of the clergy. As they have the right to form a civil constitution, it is likewise a legitimate exercise of their authority to enact an ecclesiastical economy. They unanimously maintain that the Christian church, in the fourth century, presents a fair specimen of what it was when first framed by the hands of the apostles of Christ. If any additions or changes had taken place, they were unimportant; and the articles of faith, as well as the rites and ceremonies then in use, have a sufficient warrant from the word of God. Another of their maxims is, that if there be nothing in the system which can be proved to be forbidden in the sacred Scriptures, it is not improper to retain it, and no one has a right to complain of hardships on that account. Things not mentioned or enjoined in the Oracles of God may, they think, be established by the authority of rulers, civil and ecclesiastical.

They then proceed to lay it down as an acknowledged principle, that it is the duty of all the people

in a country to submit to this establishment in all things. The clergymen appointed by the state are their lawful teachers; and as children ought to obey their parents, and subjects their rulers, so ought the inhabitants of a parish to submit to the instruction and government of these spiritual guides. To refuse submission to them, and to unite with ministers of another communion, involves the unhappy persons in the guilt of schism, which the church, in all ages, has reprobated as a very heinous crime, and extremely dangerous to the souls of men. Union among Christians they represent as a very important thing, and they quote some passages out of the Scriptures, and many out of the fathers, in which this union is highly extolled: wonderful virtues are ascribed to it, and dreadful miseries are represented as falling upon those who break its bonds and enter into another communion. But, by union, they always mean that every one must think as *they* think, and in all things conform to their ecclesiastical constitution. This is the pattern according to which union is to subsist, and from which it derives all its virtues.

In consequence of these principles, it is evident that many of them come to the controversy with ideas of their superiority, and consider their system as a privileged system. Because it is established, they conceive that by this means they have acquired a pre-eminence, and are too apt to look upon their opponents as weak, narrow-minded, and bigoted people, whom it is not improper to treat with contempt, or else to consider, in some degree, in the light of culprits, who, by forsaking the national religion, have been guilty of a

crime. Such are the principles and spirit of those who have appeared on the side of the established church, as they are exhibited in their polemical works.

The Dissenters come next into the field, and bring with them their code of principles, which they consider as self-evident, or capable of demonstration. The sacred Scripture, they say, contains the whole of religion; and it alone has an authoritative power to bind in matters of faith and practice. Nothing ought to be inserted in any creed or system of religion which is not to be found in this book. The traditions of Rome they reject as old wives' fables; and to the inventions and additions of any other church, they pay no greater regard. Things not enjoined in the sacred Scriptures, they insist should be left indifferent; so that Christians may practise or abstain from them, as conscience dictates, or expediency directs. They consider no church as possessing any authority in this respect; and that, where the word of God has given no decision, men are at liberty.

The civil magistrate, they say, has no authority in the church of Christ. The Jewish economy was a theocracy; it comprehended a political as well as a religious system, which were essentially interwoven. The performance of many of the duties, and the execution of the laws, religious as well as civil, were, by the explicit appointment of Jehovah, the supreme legislator, placed under his inspection; and, in confirming them, he was performing the office which the code of Moses assigned him as his duty. But the Christian religion is entirely spiritual, and not blended with the smallest mixture of political institutions. Its offices

are to be filled, and its duties are to be performed, by disciples of Christ, in an individual capacity. It interferes not with the regulations of human government; "Christ's kingdom is not of this world," but is fitted to subsist under any government, Pagan or Mahometan, without interfering with their operations. And in the exhibition of Christianity, through the whole of the New Testament, not a single hint is ever given, that the civil rulers of any country are, in that capacity, at all to interfere with the church of Christ, so as to frame regulations for his disciples, and exert an authoritative influence in its affairs. Against all civil interference Dissenters solemnly protest. Nothing more, they assert, should be required, in order to Christian communion, than Christ has required; and all terms, of human invention, in addition to Christ's, authoritatively enforced on the consciences of men by civil or ecclesiastical rulers, are exceedingly sinful. When any church makes such terms, it is not acting according to the Holy Oracles, but assuming a power unauthorised by the Gospel of Christ. They say that, if things not enjoined in the Scriptures were left indifferent, Christians, amidst their various apprehensions about them, may enjoy full communion with each other, and live together in harmony and peace. They maintain that every man has a right to judge for himself in matters of religion; that no one has a right to dictate to him, or compel him to belong to a church which he does not conceive to be according to the model in the New Testament; and, as it is his duty, so he is fully authorised to belong to that society of Christians which he most approves. They also assert, that all are on a level with

respect to the right of enjoying liberty of conscience and of worship; and that each is under equal obligations to yield to another, for the sake of peace, and in order to the maintaining of brotherly affection and Christian communion.

The reader is now in possession of the leading sentiments of the Dissenters, which they lay down as the foundation of all their reasoning in this controversy. In arguing from these different principles, it is evident that the two parties will come to very different conclusions, while each will think that he has arrived at them in a legitimate way. In order to settle the dispute, it becomes necessary to ascertain whose principles are just and pure. If human authority is to be admitted in aid of the Holy Scriptures, and the form of the Christian church in the fourth considered as a faithful representation of its state in the first century, then the writers on the side of the establishment are able to defend her cause. But if the sacred Scriptures are the only rule of the doctrine and government of a Christian society, and nothing ought to be authoritatively enjoined, except that which can, by fair reasoning, be thence deduced, then the Dissenters build upon an impregnable rock, and none of their adversaries will be able to prevail against them.

SECT. II.—*The Arian Controversy.*

IN the beginning of the fourth century, Arius, a Presbyter of the church of Alexandria, gave his name to

the heresy which places Christ in the rank of creatures. It found many advocates, but in a series of years it died, and for centuries scarcely an Arian was to be found. After the reformation was established, Arianism again revived, but with inconsiderable success. Almost everywhere discouraged, and in some places very harshly treated, the greater part of them retired into Poland, where they blended with the Socinians. In England there were a few, but the inflicting of the unjust punishment of death upon an Arian, in the reign of James I., pollutes the page of our history. During the commonwealth, Arianism had a most strenuous advocate in Mr. Firman, whose treatment, by the divines of that day, reflects no honour on their ideas of religious liberty. Mr. Emlyn, of Dublin, who, towards the close of the seventeenth century, avowed himself a disciple of Arius, was a solitary instance among the dissenting ministers of that age, and the horror which it excited, both among his colleagues and his congregation, produced consequences almost fatal to himself.

In England, Arianism had, for its first champion, William Whiston, professor of mathematics in the university of Cambridge. He regarded the "Apostolical Constitutions," a work which, by the most judicious critics, is accounted of no earlier date than the fourth century, to be of equal authority with the books of the New Testament. Nothing more is necessary to characterize the man. From these sources he drew his system, which he distinguished by the title of Eusebianism, which represents the Son, or *Logos*, as formed before all ages by the will and power of the Father, and the Holy Ghost, as created by the Father, by the

ministration of the Son. In 1710, the university expelled him from his professorship for heresy; and, in the following year, he published his "Primitive Christianity," and launched all his opinions into the world.

The system found a more able advocate in Dr. Samuel Clarke, Rector of St. James's, Westminster, who, in 1715, published his book on the Trinity, and ushered in Arianism to the view of the religious public, in the most orthodox garb which he could possibly make up. The Father, he says, is the supreme God. The Son is inferior; but he would not say, he was created. The second edition, however, goes a step farther, and says, "the Son was produced by the power and will of the Father; and the Holy Ghost is inferior to the Son*."

These works, which were the only large systems of Arianism written by English divines, attracted considerable attention. In the established church, the effects were not very powerful, because they did not influence the body of the people. Many of the clergy, and some speculatists among the laity, became converts to the system. But the mass did not concern themselves about it; perceiving no difference in the preaching, they were not sensible of the change of doctrine.

But, among the Dissenters, where the people concerned themselves about religion as much as their teachers, and many of them understood as well the doctrines of the Gospel, when the heresy found an entrance, it created a convulsion in the body. An entrance,

* The doctor was called before the convocation to answer for his heresy; but he clung to his preferments, gave an equivocal explanation to his sentiments, and promised, for the future, to be silent on the subject.

however, it did find; and, in a few years after the publication of Clarke and Whiston's books, made its appearance in the city of Exeter, under the patronage of two Presbyterian ministers, Joseph Hallet and James Pierce.

Hallet, the son of an ejected minister, had been pastor there from 1689. Mr. Pierce, a man of very eminent abilities, and of the highest influence among the Dissenters in that city, was first minister at Cambridge, where he became acquainted with Whiston. He afterwards removed to Newbury, and was called to Exeter in 1713, as one of the ministers of the three united congregations. He was, beyond measure, valued and beloved, and his ministrations were in the highest degree acceptable in the west of England.

In the year 1717, Arianism began to rise above ground. A few individuals, who were said to be in the confidence of these ministers, were heard to speak contemptuously of the orthodox doctrine, charged the common notions of the Trinity with blasphemy, and argued boldly for the Arian system. Some, they perverted, and others they filled with horror. The city of Exeter was in a blaze; the favourers of the new system, and the converts, were active and bold; and, by the friends of the orthodox doctrine, the most powerful alarm was felt for the purity of divine truth.

In the mean time, with the exception of Mr. Lavington, who was of a different spirit from his brethren, the ministers were still as death, and cold as the grave. Not a word on the subject would they utter from the pulpit; nothing could be extorted from them in private conversation; and their silence was a source of the

bitterest grief to their people, as they conceived it to be the duty of their pastors, in this time of trial, to stand up in defence of the truth, and raise their voice against the champions of error. At length, the managers of the congregations, consisting of thirteen persons, who were among the most respectable for character and station, and conducted all the business, felt it to be their duty to entreat their ministers to preach on the divinity of Christ, for the satisfaction of the friends of truth. This was in the summer of 1717. Mr. Pierce complied, but with an ill grace; and his discourse, both as to sentiments and delivery, tended to strengthen their suspicions of his unsoundness in the faith. The enemies of truth increased in boldness and in zeal, and their attempts were crowned with success. Those who were sound in the faith became more impatient and uneasy, and the ministers, in some cases, less reserved. A respectable preacher, who lived in Exeter, having, in the close of a sermon, adduced some arguments in defence of the divinity of Christ, Mr. Pierce, on a complaint of some of his adherents, proposed to his brethren that he should not be allowed again to enter their pulpits. Still, however, the friends of the Gospel continued to wait, in hopes of better days. But, finding their hopes frustrated, and perceiving that Arianism was gaining ground, it was resolved that another attempt should be made, to prevail with the ministers to appear openly on their side. In the beginning of 1718, the committee appointed some of their own number to represent to their ministers the state of the city, and request them to preach in defence of the "eternal Deity of Jesus Christ." Their reception was

unfavourable. Mr. Pierce, especially, felt himself insulted by the request, was unable to conceal his resentment; and expressions, which dropped from him in conversation, tended to strengthen the suspicions of his heresy.

The controversy was not confined to Exeter, but spread over the neighbouring country, and excited the most lively alarm in the minds of all the zealous ministers around. When, therefore, the assembly of Devon and Cornwall met, in September 1718, the distracted state of some of the churches, the apprehended defection of some of the ministers and people, and the distress of the most pious, on account of the prevalence of the new notions, influenced the assembly to take the subject into consideration. As suspicions had been entertained of some of the body, it was proposed and adopted, that each of the ministers should make a confession of his faith, either in the words of the first article of the church of England, or in the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Assembly's Catechism, or in appropriate words of his own selection. Some opposition was made, but it was over-ruled; and the ministers, beginning with the most advanced in years, uttered a declaration of their belief. Mr. Hallet's was wholly in words of Scripture. The confession of Mr. Pierce was in words of his own, but it was such as an Arian might make. Some refused to declare their sentiments. But it was remarked, that the most eminent for theological knowledge, wisdom, piety, zeal, and usefulness, delivered a good confession before many witnesses. Some of the young and less esteemed, in addition to the Exeter ministers, excited suspicion. No remarks,

however, were made in the assembly on anything which was said.

Soon after this meeting, various pamphlets in favour of Arianism, some of them printed in Exeter, and others sent down from London, were industriously circulated among the people. They were filled with complaints of blasphemy, imposition, bigotry, persecution, inquisition, and tests*. The students for the ministry, under the tuition of Mr. Hallet, were discovering an attachment to the growing error. A Baptist minister, to whose house they used constantly to resort, was dismissed by his church for imbibing the Arian heresy. In addition to these sorrows, the members of the establishment were holding up the Dissenters as the just objects of contempt and horror. They could not appear in the public markets without being told, "You denied your church first, and now you are denying your Saviour." An archdeacon at Barnstaple, in his discourse to the clergy, accused a minister of Exeter, and most of his congregation, of being contaminated with Arianism. The clergy of the city from their pulpits warned their hearers against the Dissenters, because "they denied the Lord that bought them, and made the press to groan with their blasphemies." So general was the effect on the public mind, that the judge at the Exeter assizes, in his charge to the grand jury, spent the greater part of the time in inveighing against the abettors of the Arian heresy.

The impression made on the minds of the most pious

* "The Innocent Vindicated." "Letter to the Dissenters." "Answer to Mr. Trosse's Catechism."

and peaceable disciples of Christ, by these painful occurrences, caused still deeper distress. None appear to have felt more deeply than the members of the committee, who, perceiving that the contagion of heresy spread itself more widely, conceived it their duty to come closer to the point, and to inquire of their ministers what were their sentiments as to the doctrine of the Trinity, and, for the sake of the congregations, to give them satisfaction. Mr. Lavington alone complied. The others refused, and by their conversation strengthened the suspicions of their unsoundness in the faith. About the same time, Mr. Pierce gave orders to the clerk, that he should not sing the doxologies which had been always in use among them: these ascribed glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as one God, and were given out at the end of the psalm. Mr. Hallet, to shew his zeal in the same cause, having been accustomed to ascribe *all* glory to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, now omitted the word *all*; and having once used it inadvertently, he immediately recalled it in the face of the whole congregation.

The distress of the friends of the orthodox doctrine now became extreme, and their patience was almost exhausted. The committee, however, determined to use every method for the restoration of peace, as well as for the preservation of truth. They had before applied to the most eminent ministers in the neighbourhood, who, by conversation with Mr. Pierce and his brethren, and by resorting for counsel to some of the ablest divines in London, had done all in their power to put an end to their differences at Exeter; but their efforts proved vain. The committee, resolving to

leave no means untried, made application themselves to these London ministers*, and requested their interference and advice. It cannot be said that they were forward in their interference. They again strongly urged forbearance and conciliation, and recommended an application to the ministers in the neighbourhood of Exeter, as far better qualified to serve them in their present difficulties by counsel and influence. If this method did not succeed, they professed themselves willing to use every method in their power for healing the wounds of the afflicted congregations.

That nothing might be wanting on their part, the committee called in seven of the most respectable ministers in Devonshire, to assist them in their perplexities. These good men felt deeply for the cause of religion, and entered on the service with a most Christian spirit, and an earnest desire to promote the cause of truth and peace, if they could possibly be attained together. They conversed with the ministers of Exeter in the most affectionate spirit, though they found a cold reception and little encouragement in their mediation; they investigated the subject fully with the committee; and after due deliberation, they agreed to the three following resolutions.

“ 1. That there are some errors in doctrine, which are a sufficient ground for the people to withdraw from their ministers holding such errors.

“ 2. That the denying the true and proper divinity of the Son of God, *viz.*, that he is one God with the Father, is an error of that nature, contrary to the

* Dr. Calamy, Jeremiah Smith, W. Tong, Benjamin Robinson, and Thomas Reynolds.

holy Scriptures and common faith of the reformed churches.

“ 3. That when so dangerous an error is industriously propagated, to the overthrowing of the faith of many, we think it the indispensable duty of ministers, who are set for the defence of the Gospel, earnestly to withstand it, and to give reasonable satisfaction to their people of their soundness in the faith. And we likewise recommend to the people as their duty, to hold fast the truth in love, avoiding anger, clamour, and evil speaking, and to behave themselves with all sincerity and meekness as becometh Christians.”

Fearful of acting with rashness, they submitted the resolutions to their brethren around, and then to those ministers in London who had been consulted on the subject; and after receiving their approbation, a month still elapsed before they were delivered in to the committee, which was then left to act for itself, with only this advice, “to proceed with wisdom and deliberation.” On the following day, they applied to the four ministers of the city, for satisfaction as to their sentiments on the doctrine of Christ’s divinity. Mr. Lavington’s orthodoxy they knew. Mr. Withers, after some hesitation, affixed his signature to the first article of the church of England. Mr. Hallet and Mr. Pierce refused to give satisfaction in any way. This brought the business to a conclusion; for, in the following week, which was about the middle of March, the committee, who held the meeting-houses as proprietors and trustees, refused Mr. Hallet and Mr. Pierce permission to preach any longer in their places of worship, and broke off all connexion with them as their ministers.

During the whole of the dispute, Mr. Pierce acted as the principal, and displayed remarkable firmness and energy. He conceived that he had a right to enjoy his own private opinions; and as he never brought the controversy into the pulpit, that the people did him a great injury in not suffering him to hold them without molestation. Every application made to him to preach on the divinity of Christ, he considered as an insult; and his resentment was kindled to a flame. His dismissal, which was unexpected, he looked upon as the highest injustice, and loudly complained to the world of unmerited sufferings and cruel persecution. The committee, on the other hand, conceiving that their ministers, by introducing dangerous doctrines in a clandestine way, had forfeited all claims to their esteem, threw the whole blame on the ministers, who had apostatised from the true faith of the Gospel.

While the Arian controversy was agitated with uncommon eagerness in the West of England, the metropolis felt its unhappy influence. The Dissenters there, too, had their peace disturbed by the proceedings which took place in consequence of the application that had been made to some of their ministers for advice. Their extreme caution, and the cool moderation of their conduct, have been already noticed; and had they stopped there, they would, in the opinion of many, have secured both their honour and their peace. But a desire to restore harmony between the pastors of Exeter and their congregations, led them to attempt additional measures; and they might be prompted, too, by the entreaties of the most zealous

Christians there, who urged them, in earnest and affecting terms, to assist them in their distress.

Some gentlemen in London, who felt deeply for the sorrows of their brethren, drew up a paper of advices, which they conceived to be suited to the occasion, and delivered it to the general committee of the three denominations. After it had undergone repeated discussion before that body, thinking themselves unauthorised to send it to Exeter in their own name, as it was extremely important, and concerned the general welfare, they called together all the Dissenting ministers in London and its vicinity, that if it were approved by them, it might be conveyed to the West, strengthened with all the weight of their united recommendation.

On the 19th of February, the general body met, and in a numerous assembly it was agreed to consider the paper with minute attention. Some progress was made, and a second meeting fixed for the 24th. In the course of their proceedings on that day, it was proposed by one of the members, that the advices should be accompanied with a declaration of their own faith in the doctrine of the Trinity. Such a step, he said, would give them greater weight with the friends of truth, and serve to discountenance the votaries of error. An eager debate was the consequence of this motion, and it was carried by a majority of fifty-seven to fifty-three, that a declaration concerning the Trinity should not be inserted in the paper of advices*.

While the subject was thus in agitation, the people

* By those who espouse the side of the non-subscribers, this decision is celebrated as the triumph of liberty over oppression, of liberality over bigotry, of Divine authority over human usurpation, of the sacred Scriptures over creeds and articles and confessions of faith

felt themselves as deeply concerned in the question; and the refusal of their ministers to make a declaration of their faith as to the doctrine in dispute, awakened in the minds of many private Christians, a fear that they either did not believe the doctrine of the Trinity, or were not so zealous for it, as they ought to be. These fears were loudly expressed, and a considerable number of the ministers now perceived an agitation in the hearts of the most pious of their flock, which it was of the utmost importance to allay. With this view, when the assembly met, on the 3d of March, a motion was made, that, without relation to the advices, and as a step entirely distinct, the ministers should make an explicit declaration of their belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, and especially of the divinity of Christ, which was the subject agitated in the West. This measure, it was urged, became necessary, in order to vindicate themselves from the misrepresentations which were abroad against their character, to give satisfaction to the members of their respective congregations, and to exhibit their sentiments to the Dissenters in general throughout the country.

The moderator, conceiving the motion to be an interruption of the business which was then discussing, refused to put it to the vote. Highly displeased with his conduct, sixty of the ministers immediately withdrew from the assembly, and, meeting together at another place, they unanimously resolved to adopt the words of the first article of the Church of England, and the answers to the fifth and sixth questions of the Assembly's Catechism, as a form of sound words in which the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity is pro-

perly expressed. Acting now as a separate body, they drew up a new series of advices to the Dissenters of Exeter, and accompanied them with the information of their stedfast adherence to the divinity of Jesus Christ, and of their subscription to two summaries of acknowledged orthodoxy in the churches. But these testimonies of their zeal did not arrive at Exeter till a month after Mr. Pierce and Mr. Hallet were excluded from their places of worship, and the connexion between them and the congregations was dissolved.

In the mean time, those ministers who remained at Salters'-hall, more numerous, according to some, than their subscribing brethren, while others say that they were inferior in number, having the advantage of the moderator on their side, proceeded with the business before them; and, in an adjourned meeting, on the 10th of March, put the finishing hand to their advices, which, on the 17th, they sent off to Exeter, accompanied with a letter, in which, while they professed their own belief of the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, they earnestly recommended to the people the exercise of moderation, peace, and love. But their counsels also arrived too late; the ministers had been already dismissed.

The dissenting ministers in the west, roused by the proceedings in London to a more thorough investigation of the subject, thought that something still remained to be done, in order to testify their adherence to the orthodox faith. When, therefore, the Exeter assembly was convened, at its half-yearly meeting, in May, 1719, the doctrine of the Trinity naturally became the topic of conversation. It was resolved to publish their senti-

ments of it more explicitly to the world; and they thought that they could not do this in a more unexceptionable manner, than by affixing their names to the first article of the Church of England. It was accordingly subscribed by the ministers of Devon and Cornwall, to the number of fifty-six. Nineteen, professing to act on the principles of the non-subscribers of London, refused to concur: Joseph Hallet and James Pierce stand at the head of the list. The fifty-six ministers, who subscribed the article on the Trinity, accompanied that act with a letter of advice to their respective congregations,—“to adhere stedfastly to the received doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity.”

Having espoused the cause of the subscribing ministers in London, they also addressed a letter to them, and expressed their sentiments in the following words: “We, the united ministers of Devon and Cornwall, are very sensible of the great service you have done to the common cause of Christianity, in so open and vigorous an opposition to the dangerous error relating to the doctrine of the holy Trinity, which of late has been so industriously propagated; and take this opportunity, now that we are assembled together, to express our joy in the harmony that is between us, and our thanks for your seasonably interposing in a matter of so great importance*.” That, if possible, the introduction of the Arian heresy might be prevented, they entered into a resolution that no person should be admitted to preach as a candidate, nor ordained by them, nor recommended to any congregation, unless he gave satisfaction, by subscribing the first article of the Church of England,

* Account of the Exeter Assembly, May, 1719, pp. 23, 24.

and the answers to the fifth and sixth questions in the Assembly's Catechism, or assenting to the collective sense of the preceding assembly: viz., "That there is but one living and true God, and that the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost are that one God;" or, in words of his own choosing, which sufficiently express the same sense.

Here the controversy terminated, as to the interference of public bodies of men, but it continued to be agitated extensively by individuals; and, in a course of years, Arianism obtained a multitude of votaries in the Presbyterian denomination, and that of the general Baptists, both among their ministers and persons in private stations*.

* A detailed account of the foregoing particulars will be found in the following publications. "The Case of the Ministers ejected at Exeter," by James Pierce. "An Account of the Reasons why many Citizens of Exeter have withdrawn from the Ministry of Mr. Pierce; being an Answer to his State of the Case." "A Defence of the State of the Case," by James Pierce. "A Defence of the Account, in Answer to James Pierce." "A Justification of the Case," by James Pierce. "A true Account of what was done in the Assembly at Exeter, May 5th and 6th, 1719;" published by order of the Assembly. "Remarks on the Account, &c." by James Pierce. "A particular Account of the Proceedings of the Assembly at Exeter," by George Jacomb. "A Defence of the Proceedings, &c." by John Enty. "An Answer to Mr. Enty's Defence," by James Pierce. "A plain and faithful Narrative of the Differences among the Dissenters at Exeter, &c." "An authentic Account of some Things done, &c. by the Dissenting Ministers at Salters'-hall." A Vindication of the Subscribing Ministers, in an Answer to the Authentic Account, &c." "A Reply to the subscribing Ministers' Reasons," in two parts. "A true Relation of some Proceedings at Salters'-hall." "Animadversions on a true Relation," by James Pierce. "An Account of the late Proceedings at Salters'-hall, in a Letter to Dr. Gale." "The Unreasonableness of the Charge of Imposition against several Dissenting Ministers," by Thomas Ridgley. "A Letter to a Subscribing Minister, in Defence of the Animadversions on a true Relation," by James Pierce. "The Noble Stand," in three parts, by Daniel Wilcox. "The Western Inquisition," by James Pierce; and "An Answer to Mr. Pierce's Western Inquisition."

The vast importance of this controversy, and its extensive influence on the state of the Dissenters, while they furnish reasons sufficiently strong for entering so minutely into the various transactions which have been mentioned, also warrant, and indeed call for, additional illustration by some reflections on the sentiments and conduct of the persons who were engaged in this mournful dispute.

The abilities of Mr. Pierce, his learning, and the soundness of his judgment on subjects unconnected with this controversy, will be acknowledged by all who are conversant with his works. His letters to Dr. Wells discover him to be a man of talents. His "Vindication of the Dissenters" is a first-rate performance. His sermons are weighty and convincing. In his commentary on four of "Paul's Epistles," there is a superior degree of critical acumen, and, with the exception of its Arianism, a very large portion of valuable matter. He took up the pen to continue the exposition of the celebrated John Locke, but, dying before he had completed the task, he was succeeded by Dr. Benson, who finished the illustration of all the epistles in the New Testament. Of the three, Mr. Pierce's part is the most valuable, for he as much exceeded Mr. Locke in biblical learning, as he did Dr. Benson in talents and in acuteness of investigation. With sentiments of Mr. Pierce, so justly favourable, it is with reluctance and grief that we view his deportment in the course of this angry controversy.

His acceptance of the pastoral office at Exeter was radically wrong. Before he left Newbury, he confesses himself to have been a convert to the opinions

of Whiston and Clarke. But the Dissenters at Exeter were zealous Trinitarians, as he must have known. To come to them in such circumstances, and to conceal his sentiments; and, by the use of ambiguous terms, to endeavour to make them believe that he held the same opinions with themselves, cannot be justified. This was the source of all the evils which followed; and, if Mr. Pierce was made to drink the cup of wormwood and gall, he had himself alone to blame, for disingenuously professing to be what he was not.

There are some things of very inferior moment, in which a minister may differ from his congregation, and harmony still prevail. But in a subject so important as the doctrine of the Trinity, it is impossible that this should be the case. Mr. Pierce, indeed, considered the difference between the common doctrine of the Trinity and Dr. Clarke's scheme to be of little moment; but he knew that he was singular in this idea, that the people of Exeter considered the difference as an insurmountable barrier to Christian communion, and that an Arian minister would be shunned by them with horror as the murderer, instead of being embraced as the friend of immortal souls. Yet, with the knowledge of this difference, he accepted their invitation to be one of the ministers of Exeter. By those who would decide impartially on the matter, this is ever to be kept in view.

Nor will Mr. Pierce's behaviour, after he was settled in Exeter, more successfully stand the test of examination. There is reason to fear that it was his endeavour, in a secret way, to diffuse his own sentiments among his people. His colleague, Joseph

Hallet, an inferior, though an older man, had begun before to speculate on the subject; but the honour of making him a complete convert, if honour it be thought, was reserved for Mr. Pierce. The students of Mr. Hallet had the books of Whiston and Clarke put into their hands, as masterpieces of theological skill; and, while they should have been applying their minds to the study of the great doctrines of the Gospel, they were amusing themselves with those pernicious speculations, and poisoning their souls with the Arian heresy. A Baptist minister, afterwards dismissed by his people for heterodoxy, was an active instrument in the work; and some individuals in private life, who had been made converts to Arianism, were indefatigable in bringing over others to their opinions. In the mean time, Mr. Pierce, the mainspring of all, was concealed within the cabinet, and discoursed with none but the *illuminati*; and while his adherents were all busy, not a whisper, could the public say, ever escaped his lips. Such a wily scheme is ill entitled to approbation, and savours more of the arts of Jesuitism than the frank uprightness of a Christian.

When, at last, an alarm was raised, that Arianism was rapidly spreading, and the gentlemen of the committee entreated their ministers to preach on the divinity of Christ, if he had acted as an honest man, he would have avowed his sentiments; and if the people would not have borne with them, he would have quietly retired to some other congregation, more congenial with his views. He, however, who before was silent concerning the divinity of Christ, as if there had been no such doctrine in the sacred Scripture, now preaches

on the subject, and strives to conceal his meaning under ambiguous terms, that the congregation may be impressed with the idea that he is an assertor of the orthodox faith. It is also said, that he delivered the discourse like a man in a violent passion, and with such rapidity, that his hearers could scarcely follow him.

Mr. Pierce's behaviour to the gentlemen of the committee, when they respectfully entreated him to stand forth in defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, cannot be viewed but with regret. He could scarcely behave to them with civility, and he poured forth the bitterest complaints of what he called their inquisitorial spirit. But to whom should the people, in their difficulties, apply more properly than to their ministers? Engaged in business, from morning to evening, they have little leisure for controversial disquisitions. His time is devoted to such pursuits, that he may distinguish truth from error; and when any of his people inquire concerning the doctrine of Scripture on a particular subject, what is more reasonable than that he should frankly inform them what appears to him to be the truth? It is but acting according to the divine rule:—“The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.”—Mal. ii. 7. To refuse assistance in such a case, whatever it discovers, does not discover the spirit of a minister of Jesus Christ. He who can perceive, in such a request and refusal, a criminal inquisitiveness on the one side, and a noble spirit of liberty and independence on the other, has certainly more than eagle's eyes.

There is another circumstance in Mr. Pierce's conduct as little to his honour. Having voluntarily accepted the office of pastor in a Trinitarian congregation, he has nothing to say in favour of the orthodox doctrine. When he is asked to write in its defence, he is unable to perform the task; when his people wish to converse on it, he is shy and silent. He confines himself to practical preaching, which, when separated from the doctrines of the Gospel, must be very defective and inefficacious. But no sooner is he dismissed from his orthodox station, and becomes the minister of an Arian congregation, than he can openly preach, write, and argue for Arianism. Just before, when the committee wished him to preach the received doctrines, he was loud in his complaints, and accused them of oppressing and persecuting him without a cause. After writing numerous pamphlets on the subject in dispute, he summed up the whole in the "Western Inquisition." Truth compels an impartial examiner to say, that Mr. Pierce exhibits a hauteur, and a contempt of his opponents, which does him no honour: he loses his temper, and brings forward accusations which he is unable to support by proof. The "Answer to his Western Inquisition" invalidates many of his charges, and is written in a more Christian spirit.

Against the gentlemen who formed the committee of the united congregations, accusations, of the blackest kind, have been generally adduced by the writers on the Arian side, and they have been generally credited. But their zeal for the orthodox doctrine, their fears of the growth of Arianism, their strenuous endeavours to prevent it, and their respectful though earnest entreaties

that their ministers would defend the divinity of Christ, must redound to their honour, in the eyes of every one who is a friend of the truth. The grief which they felt when they saw reason to suspect that their ministers held erroneous opinions; the pains they took, by personal conversation, and by the assistance of neighbouring pastors, to remove their objections; their application to the London ministers for advice, and afterwards desiring to be counselled and assisted in their difficulties by seven of the most respectable ministers in Devon; display no mean share of judgment, patience, and prudence, and are far from bringing discredit either on their intellectual or moral character.

The greatest advantage which, in the course of these transactions, they gave to their numerous adversaries, was, by the manner in which they dismissed their ministers; and this has been always urged as a proof of a bad spirit and an unchristian deportment. That they bore with their ministers so long, may well excite surprise, and can be accounted for, only from the extraordinary degree of veneration in which Mr. Pierce was held, and their astonishing attachment to him. But when they had reason to conclude that he and Mr. Hallet were infected with heresy, it is no wonder that they were anxious to be rid of them with all possible speed. To consult the members of the congregation, and act according to their decision, was the proper method; but when, instead of this, they assumed the whole power to themselves, and dismissed the ministers by their own authority, their conduct was altogether unwarrantable, on the principles of independency; and every individual of that persuasion must be shocked at

their proceedings. But the Exeter Dissenters were Presbyterians, who manage their concerns, not by the members of the church, as the Independents do, but by a committee of persons, who act as the representatives of the whole society. Such was the method at Exeter; and it is evident, from the testimony of Mr. Pierce, that the people had never been convened for business, during the whole six years that he had exercised his ministry among them. It had been promised that they should be called together once a year, to be acquainted with the state of affairs, but the promise had never been fulfilled; and it does not appear, that Mr. Pierce and Mr. Hallet complained of this neglect, till the power of the committee was exerted against them. As a further apology for themselves, the committee plead, that they knew they were acting agreeably to the sentiments of the people; that when they afterwards called them together, and informed them what had been done, their conduct was approved, and that the congregations presented to them their warmest thanks for the vigorous steps which they had taken, as a favour conferred on the body, and a highly commendable expression of zeal for the cause of truth. Had they, instead of assembling the people after the dismissal of their ministers, assembled them before, and acted by their authority, the conduct of the committee would have been wholly unimpeachable.

The proceedings of the London ministers, on the same subject, excited the most eager attention of the Dissenters in every part of England. The difference of judgment which took place, as to the manner of

giving advice to their brethren at Exeter, broke to pieces long-contracted friendships, produced suspicious jealousies of each other's principles, and created a party spirit, of considerable strength and duration, both among ministers and private Christians.

According to the sentiment which has most generally prevailed, the subscribing ministers were wholly in the wrong: they are charged with a load of guilt; they are said to deny the sufficiency of the sacred Scriptures, to be advocates for human authority in spiritual things, and enemies to religious liberty and free inquiry; but when they are heard in their own defence, they have much to say in vindication of their conduct. The general question of the propriety of drawing up a list of articles of religion, and the form of church government, and demanding subscription from every candidate for the pastoral office, as a necessary condition of communion, has been attacked and defended by the ablest pens. While the friends of confessions have insisted on the advantages of uniformity of sentiments in an ecclesiastical community, and the importance of securing to the laity the blessings of sound doctrine, the opponents of that system have demonstrated with success the inefficacy of the means, the too powerful temptations for bad men to prevaricate in the most sacred things, and the evil of excluding men of conscience who cannot say amen to every article of the multifarious creed. But, to this subject, the subscription of the London ministers was conceived by them to bear no resemblance.

In a peaceful state of the church, men of a thoughtful turn of mind, and little piety, will entertain them-

selves with speculations on theological subjects. Where the heart is not established by grace, and they have no zeal for the salvation of the souls of men, it is more than probable that their speculations will end in error. This was the case with some of the Dissenting ministers, and their people, in different parts of England: the writings of Whiston and Clarke were industriously circulated and eagerly read, and Arianism became the heresy of the day. The religious world heard the report with grief and terror, and every one, in proportion to his zeal and public spirit, took an active part for the preservation of the truth. As some ministers were accused of having imbibed the new opinions, every one was desirous to have satisfactory evidence of the orthodoxy of his own. Such was the temper of men's minds in London, as well as in the country. Many of the ministers there, perceiving the agitated state of their congregations, conceived it of high importance to satisfy them on this head, as a step necessary to the peace of the people's minds, and the success of their own labours; and also as well adapted to confirm and animate the friends of the orthodox doctrine in every part of the country, and especially in Exeter, where the controversy raged.

Being convened to give advice to their brethren in the West, they judged this a proper opportunity to bear an explicit testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity, and thought it would be most unexceptionably accomplished by subscribing those definitions of the doctrine which were held in veneration, both by the Dissenters and the members of the established church.

Against these ministers, who consisted of almost all

the Independents, some of the Presbyterians, and one half of the Baptists, loud cries were raised on account of what they had done. By the Non-subscribers it was alleged that the others had given up the principles of dissent, exalted human creeds in the place of, or rather in opposition to, the Word of God, and cast a reproach on their brethren who could not conscientiously cooperate with them. But however warmly these accusations were brought forward and credited at the time, it is difficult at this distance to discern their criminality.

The subject in dispute was the doctrine of the Trinity. As to the sufficiency of the Scriptures, both parties were fully agreed. The question in debate was, not concerning the words, but concerning the meaning of the Scriptures, namely, whether the doctrine of the Trinity was contained in them. The Subscribers believed it was, and that the Arians perverted the meaning of the passages which related to it; that they were called upon, from many weighty reasons, to declare their belief of the doctrine; and though they did it in human words, yet these expressed the meaning of the Word of God. It was conceived by the Non-subscribers, that this was giving too much weight to human authority in religion. But when the question was only concerning the meaning of the Scriptures, it is difficult to say how that meaning could be expressed otherwise than in human words. If application were made to a counsellor for the meaning of a particular statute, of which it was supposed a person before consulted had mistaken the sense, we should not admire his judgment, if he were to say, "Sir, here is the statute, it contains the words of the legislature:

and I will cheerfully subscribe it as the law of the land; but I will not set my name to any words of my own, instead of those of the statute, because mine are the words of a private man"—his client might justly reply, "The authenticity of the statute I do not call in doubt, but I wish to know what you conceive to be its meaning." Wherein the Non-subscribers differed from the counsellor in this supposed case, it is difficult to say; and what praise is due for their superior regard to the sacred Scriptures, and their opposition to human authority, is left to the reader to determine. He will perceive an immense difference between the civil magistrate interfering in matters of religion, and presenting a creed to be subscribed as the term of admission into the clerical office, and the ministers of Christ on an extraordinary occasion, for the glory of God, and the benefit of the church, standing forth as individuals to check the progress of error, and declaring, by their signature, their belief of an important doctrine of Scripture. This distinction, however obvious, does not appear to have been made by those who have so loudly condemned the Subscribers, and praised the Non-subscribers in this controversy.

The measures of the Non-subscribers were less decisive than those of their brethren. The former body consisted of a majority of the Presbyterians, a few Independents, and about one-half of the Baptists who came to the assembly. Some of the Baptists were known to be Arians, and one or two were Socinians; some of the Presbyterians were suspected of leaning towards heresy; but the chief part of them was sound in the faith, and not a few were among the most respectable

ministers in London. The zeal of some of this body, in opposition to subscription, was, like that of the Exeter ministers, entitled to little praise, for it was to screen their heresy from public view. Others, who were less concerned on their own account, sought to shield these men from the shafts of notoriety; and both these classes were very active in the work. But the greater part of them acted upon general principles unconnected with the present controversy, though they appear in this instance to have been misapplied. Nor will it be easy to clear them from the charge of inconsistency; for while they refuse to subscribe an article of faith, they declare in their letter sent to Exeter, and signed by the chairman, Dr. Oldfield, in their name: "We utterly disown the Arian doctrine, and sincerely believe the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity, and the proper divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ." Wherein this strong declaration differed from the subscriptions of the other party, it is not easy to say. Such inconsistencies sometimes appear in the wisest and best of men, and furnish lessons of caution to those who live at a later period. It is extremely difficult for a heterogeneous body to act with unity and decision, and make their operations bear upon one point; but generally there is a part which suits one, and a part which suits another. The Subscribers, on the contrary, were perfectly united in their views, and, in consequence, there is a consistency in their decisions and their counsels.

In information, or in judgment, the Non-subscribers appear inferior to their brethren. The design of their counsels was to reconcile the ministers and people of Exeter to each other. If they supposed the ministers

to be sound in the faith, nothing can be more evident than that they were ignorant of the real state of things ; or if they knew them to be tainted with Arianism, and yet wished the people to submit to them as their pastors, there is reason to impeach the soundness of their judgment, if not the fervour of their zeal. Till now, Arianism had never been able to boast of so many votaries in England, as to render its influence visible to the world, so that some of them were not aware of its effects upon the religion of the heart.

As to the propriety of convening the assembly at Salter's-hall to assist in the determination of the dispute at Exeter, there is reason to hesitate. From the days of the apostles, thousands of councils have sat ; but, taking them in the mass, they have done far more harm than good. A few might be mentioned, where their proceedings were conducted in the spirit of the Gospel ; but there have been so many more in which pride and passion reigned, and the decisions sanctioned superstition and error, that the others are lost in the crowd. The meeting at Salter's-hall does not furnish an exception to this general remark. The debates were carried on with excessive acrimony ; the breach which took place was discreditable to their character as a religious body ; and two letters and papers of advices, differing from each other, lost much of the weight, which one would have had. What was equally injurious—it broke up ancient friendships among the ministers who took different sides ; and as the people were divided as well as the ministers, it produced alienation of heart between those who had formerly lived in the most endearing cordiality. It would have been well, if they had listened

to the advice of Mr. Bradbury, who proposed, that instead of meeting as a council, they should repeatedly assemble for fasting and prayer; that they should then choose a few of the wisest and best of their number, and send them down to Exeter, to see and hear upon the spot, and give such counsel for the maintenance of truth and harmony, as an accurate and personal knowledge of the whole should dictate*.

But how comes it to pass that the clergy have, in every age, exhibited in their councils so much of a spirit of passion, bitterness, and strife, while mercantile men and men of science have generally discovered less heat in their commercial and philosophical deliberations? Is it because teachers of religion, who, in their parochial or congregational capacity, regarded themselves, and were regarded by others as oracles, unaccustomed to contradiction, when called to sit in an assembly of their fellows, carried along with them the ideas of their own superior knowledge, and expected the same deference to their opinions, as in their own diocesan or parochial circle? This being the prevailing spirit of the body, difference of sentiment creates dissension and debate; debate rouses the passions of those men of consequence; indecorum and violence succeed, and all their unhappy progeny. Allowance must be made also for the operation of another cause. The subjects of discussion in ecclesiastical councils are frequently the most important to the happiness of mankind. If the members conceive the grand doctrines of the Gospel in danger of being perverted or denied, and the opposite error established, to the ruin of immortal souls, we are not to wonder, nor

* Bradbury's Letter to Shute.

hastily to condemn the men who rouse their whole souls to defend the cause of sacred truth, and have every latent energy of the heart exerted in the eagerness of debate. Coldness, in such a case, would be disloyalty to God. But how pleasing is it, when all this ardour is combined and chastened by meekness of wisdom and the tender feelings of Christian love !

When the violence of the controversy had exhausted its strength, and the original causes of the strife had been removed by dismissing the Exeter ministers from their congregations, the immediate effects of the contest did not appear so injurious, as good men had been led to fear. The ardent spirit of the orthodox for a while stopped the progress of Arianism ; and with the exception of Pierce and Hallet, and a few who, in different parts of England, adhered to them, and had the hardihood to espouse their opinions, the rest who favoured them, if they did not array themselves with the robes of orthodoxy, at least took care not to appear publicly in the garb of a heretic. A shrewd observer, who drew up an account of the dissenting congregations in London, from 1696 to 1730, though rather high in Calvinism himself, does not charge any of the Presbyterian ministers with preaching the Arian doctrine : in a threefold list of Calvinists, Baxterians, and Arminians, he includes the whole ; and that of the Calvinists is the largest of the three. The Independents and particular Baptists were all strenuous for this system. He accuses none of going farther than Arminianism, except some of the general Baptists, among whom, not only Arianism, but Socinianism was already professed.

But before the conclusion of this period, a more melancholy scene was presented to view. In every part of England, Arianism was not only embraced, but openly acknowledged by not a few of the Presbyterian ministers. The heresy polluted some of the London pulpits: in Lancashire it was prevalent, and in the counties to the south; it gained ground also in the west, whence it first sprang. The generation of ministers, who contended so zealously for the orthodox faith, had finished their labours, and received from their Lord a dismissal into eternal rest. Among those who succeeded them were too many who embraced the Arian creed. Those champions among the laity who, at the beginning of the controversy, stood up so firmly for the truth, had entered into the joy of their Lord. Though their children continued Dissenters, too many of them did not possess the same sentiments or spirit; but with a liberal education, and little religion, the Arian opinions gratified their literary pride, as being remote from the creed of the vulgar, and less hostile to the depravity of the human heart than that which they renounced. To this unhappy change, the example and conversation of many of the younger Presbyterian ministers did but too much contribute. In one or two of the seminaries, the tutors were accused of giving countenance to the heresy among the students. In consequence of these exertions, before the end of the period, Arianism spread far and wide in the Presbyterian congregations, both among the ministers and the people. In a few places a Socinian preacher appeared. Mr. Seddon, of Manchester, was,

perhaps, the first who openly professed that creed; and Mr. Cardale, of Evesham, wrote in its defence*. This unhappy controversy proved the grave of the Presbyterian congregations, and of those of the general Baptists. Like the forbidden fruit which did not produce the immediate destruction of the body, but rendered the event certain at a future time, the effects of Arianism, though at first scarcely visible, gradually produced desolation and death. Could Pierce and Hallet rise from the tomb, and see the doleful effects of their new opinions on the congregations in Devonshire, and wherever Arianism has been espoused, it would chill their souls with unutterable horror.

SECT. II.—*The Deistical Controversy.*

THE first of the English Deists was Lord Herbert of Cherbury, a man respectfully spoken of by the writers of his time. But a nobleman inspired, in that age, a veneration which the people of the present day have ceased to feel. His first work, "On Truth," was published at Paris in 1624, and his last and most renowned, "On the Religion of the Gentiles," at Amsterdam, in 1663, both in the Latin tongue. Dreading opposition to his work "On the Truth," but anxious to publish it, he fell down on his knees with his manuscript in his hand, and in a most devout prayer begged of God a sign from heaven, if he approved the book. "I had no sooner," says he, "spoken these

* Toulmin's Life of Bourne. Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers.

words, but a loud, though yet gentle noise came forth from the heavens (for it was like nothing on earth), which did so cheer and comfort me, that I took my petition as granted; and that I had the sign I demanded; whereupon also I resolved to print my book*." Does it not appear to have been the will of God to pour contempt on Deism by the ridiculous credulity of its patriarch? He fancied he had a revelation from heaven to authorise him to publish a book against divine revelation!

Thomas Hobbes, of Malmesbury, son of the minister of that place, educated at Oxford, tutor to the sons of the Earl of Devonshire, published, in 1650, the "Leviathan," containing all his ideas on religious, political, and moral subjects. He professed to be of the church of England, and used to receive the Sacrament among her sons. He lived to the age of ninety-one, and when told that his disease was incurable, exclaimed "Then I shall be glad to find a hole to creep out of the world at."

Charles Blount, a man of talents and learning, became a Deist, from his hatred of superstition, and from seeing that men made a trade of religion. In 1693, he published his "Oracles of Reason," in which he advances the same principles as Lord Herbert of Cherbury. After the death of his wife, becoming enamoured of her sister, who refused to marry him, on account of their relationship, he was seized with a frenzy, and put an end to his life.

John Toland always professed himself a Christian, but made it the business of his life to promote the cause

* Leland's View, vol. i., p. 24.

of Deism. In his "Christianity not Mysterious," published in 1696, he endeavoured to show that there is nothing in the Christian religion above reason. And in his "Amyntor," which he afterwards wrote, he endeavoured to invalidate the canon of the New Testament, by extolling spurious gospels as entitled to equal credit.

Lord Shaftesbury's "Characteristics" entitle him to a high rank in the list of infidels. He frequently speaks with respect of a wise and good providence; and says that men are formed for the practice of virtue and religion. Yet there are many things in his writings designed to vilify Christianity and the sacred Scriptures. Another active partisan of Deism is Anthony Collins, who, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, published "A Discourse on Freethinking," and "Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion." In the former, he inveighs against the vices of the clergy, and attempts to prove that the divisions among Christians are a proof of the uncertainty of their principles. In the latter, he maintains that Christianity derives no confirmation from the prophecies of the Old Testament. He became a justice of the peace, and when entering on his office, received the sacrament as a qualifying test. "This," says Whiston, "I call gross immorality, impious fraud, and lay craft."

Woolston, while he pretended a zeal for Christianity, was one of its most bitter enemies, and treated it with less respect than any of his elder brethren. He set himself up as an advocate for the allegorical sense of the Scripture; but it seems only to be put on as a cloak, while he endeavours to show the absurdity

of the literal meaning. He is at great pains to represent some of Christ's miracles as absurd, false, and incredible. His discourses on the subject were published in 1727, and the two following years. Some have said that he was insane. Had he been sent to Bedlam by his friends, instead of being committed to prison for his infidelity, it would have been more for the honour of the country.

Dr. Tindal was a more plausible advocate for infidelity than Woolston. In his "Christianity as old as the Creation," while he professes a great respect for the Gospel, he strenuously endeavours to show that revelation is altogether needless, and sets himself particularly against the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. He extols with the highest praises the religion of a Deist, and asserts the absolute universal clearness of the law of nature.

Dr. Morgan's "Moral Philosopher," in three volumes, contains his attack on the religion of Jesus Christ. He seems to acknowledge the great utility of revelation, but discards Divine authority in matters of religion, and all evidence from miracles and prophecies. He is full of invectives against the law of Moses, and the writings of the prophets; and while he professes to be a Christian, on the footing of the New Testament, he speaks of it in the most reproachful manner, and insinuates things dishonourable to the character of Christ.

In 1742, a pamphlet was published, to which the writer gave the title of "Christianity not founded in argument." It was drawn up with great ingenuity and subtlety, and excited much attention. There is an

attempt to prove that its proper foundation is faith only, without evidence or reason. It was afterwards found to be the work of Henry Dodwell, educated for the law, who became a sceptic, to which, perhaps, his father's absurd and peculiar notions might not a little contribute*. "The Resurrection of Jesus considered," published in 1744, was the production of an anonymous writer, who does everything in his power to discredit that infinitely important doctrine. About the same time, Mr. Chubb began to write as a rational Christian, and never explicitly renounced Christianity. But in his posthumous works he insinuates many things to its disadvantage. He speaks against Providence and prayer, and rejects the Jewish revelation. Lord Bolingbroke is to be considered as among the apostles of infidelity, and may perhaps lay claim to the primacy, for his eloquence and his zeal. He attempts to discredit both the Old Testament and the New: and, in his posthumous works, shows equal violence against some of the most important principles of natural religion. At the same time, "the law of nature," he asserts, "is clear and obvious to all mankind; and there is no need of a supernatural revelation."

David Hume, the idol of infidels, wrote against the credibility of miracles, universally considered. In his posthumous works, he denies a future state, and treats with the greatest contempt the constitution and government of the world: he rejects with ridicule, the doctrine of the being of God and of a Providence †.

* Biographia Britannica, vol. v., p. 327.

† On the continent, Voltaire was the most successful preacher of infidelity, and made more converts than any other man. He always pro-

While Christianity was assaulted by such adversaries, numerous defenders arose for her support. To enumerate those who were cherished in the bosom of the established church is beyond the design of this work. Suffice it to say, they were a numerous host, and many of them eminently qualified for the service. Those without her pale, it is our province to exhibit.

Among the first who appeared on the side of revelation was the celebrated Richard Baxter, who, in his "Reasons for the Christian Religion," examines Lord Herbert's book "on Truth," and furnishes some ingenious, judicious, and valuable remarks, by way of answer. But to a volume of Mr. Halyburton, professor of divinity at St. Andrew's, entitled "Natural Religion insufficient, and Revealed necessary to Man's Happiness," and published with the express design to confute the whole of his lordship's system, there has appeared nothing, in the whole of the deistical controversy, of superior merit.

During the second period of this history, the deistical controversy was the order of the day. It seems to have engaged the first attention of the literary world, and of that part of the theological body which enjoys leisure, or is not fixed by its office to particular objects. There is, besides, a class of men whose taste determines them to the consideration of a favourite subject, and makes them ever ready to enter the field against the avowed himself a Christian, and continued to do so upon his death-bed. He never enters into serious argument against the Gospel, which indeed he did not understand, but throws the shafts of ridicule all around him, and treats Judaism with the most sovereign contempt.

Rousseau had likewise, during this period, begun his career, and allured his thousands into the infidel camp. For extent of success, these two men are far above their brethren.

cates for the opposite side. Among the Dissenters, some of the most eminent ministers engaged with ardour in the defence of the Christian faith. When Toland endeavoured to shake the foundation of the sacred Scriptures, Jeremialh Jones, in his work on the canon of Scripture, made manifest the futility of his objections, and gained to himself deserved honour. Simon Browne displayed great ability in his Answer to Tindal and Woolston. Tindal found another antagonist in Dr. James Foster, whose character is well known in the republic of letters. Joseph Hallet brought his superior abilities, and ingenuity, and learning into the field of contest, against Woolston, against Morgan, and against Chubb. The profound learning of Moses Lowman defended, against the ill-informed but bitter zeal of Morgan, the constitution and government of the Hebrews, with complete success. Besides the very elaborate defence of Christianity, in his theological lectures, Dr. Doddridge published a judicious answer to Dodwell's "Christianity not founded in Argument." Dr. Benson's laborious pen was engaged in the same cause; and, in his "Reasonableness of the Christian Religion," replied both to Mr. Dodwell and to a work entitled "Deism fairly stated." But a more voluminous writer on the controversy than any of these, is the celebrated Dr. Samuel Chandler, who defended Christianity against Collins, and Morgan, and Tindal, and the author of the "Resurrection of Jesus considered." The energy of his mind, as well as his extensive learning, are universally owned. But the most powerful and successful champion among the Dissenters was Dr. Lardner, to whom England did not, in the Deistical

controversy, produce an equal in any communion; and though he outlived this period, nearly all his works were published before its close. To mention the name of Dr. Lardner is enough; his works on this subject are above praise. Next to him, among the celebrated writers in this controversy, stands, without dispute, Dr. Leland, a dissenting minister in Dublin, whose "View of the Deistical Writers," and treatises on the "Necessity of Revelation," and on the "Authority of the Old and New Testament," all display the superior powers of his mind, the soundness of his judgment, and his intimate acquaintance with all the subterfuges of Deism. In a volume on the presumptive evidences of the Christian religion, Dr. Duchal, his fellow-labourer in the ministry, in the same city, rendered eminent service to the cause, and filled the literary world with the highest ideas of the ingenuity, depth, and vigour of his mental powers. It would be injustice not to mention, that, about the middle of this period, there appeared a posthumous volume, of more than common excellence, from the pen of Benjamin Bennet, author of the "Christian Oratory," on the "Truth, Inspiration, and Usefulness of the Sacred Scriptures." This book should have a distinguished place in the library of every theological student, for few books of its size contain a more abundant treasure of divine doctrine.

To preach against Deism was, during this period, exceedingly fashionable, and common in the established church. "Formerly," says one of its most learned prelates, "the office of the preacher was to explain the Scriptures, for the salvation of the people's souls; now we are called to convince them that they have souls to

be saved." Many among the Presbyterians and general Baptists followed their example, especially those who embraced the Arian creed; for, by means of the change, they lost a variety of the themes on which they used to insist, and were left in possession of a narrower field than they occupied before; so that the Deistical controversy came seasonably to their relief. But the propriety of this method may be called in question. On particular occasions, a sermon on the evidences of Christianity may be both fit and necessary; and brief remarks on the subject, in the course of a minister's labours, may be exceedingly suitable and beneficial; but to make it a common theme of discourse in a dissenting congregation, as many of them did, was by no means conducive to the edification of the people. Few Deists come to their places of public worship; the subject is too cold for a society of Christians; and if the preacher attend to his grand business, which is to illustrate, confirm, and enforce the principles of the Gospel, he will more effectually establish his congregation in the belief of the Christian religion, than by the ablest discourses on its divine original. Many a congregation was starved under a long series of good discourses on the evidences of Christianity.

For a full discussion of the subject, the press is certainly the fittest place; but if it is to come into the pulpit, the dissenting pulpits of that day were the least suitable. The controversy, during this period, was nearly confined to the literary world, and those in the higher walks of life. Among the plain congregations of the Dissenters, a Deist was hardly to be found; and the people were but little in danger from this revolting creed.

CHAP. IV.

SEMINARIES OF THE DISSENTERS DURING THIS PERIOD.

SECT. I.—*Historical Review of the Seminaries.*

FOR want of a succession of Calamys to record the lives of dissenting tutors, while the most memorable circumstances of their career were fresh in the memory of their survivors, little at this day is known concerning many of them, besides their names. With regard to some, this is a serious loss; but as to others who were not men of eminence, and furnish no striking lessons of instruction to mankind, the world sustains little injury, and the fruit of research would not repay the labour. Superior excellence will generally find a biographer to record the salutary example.

To resume the narrative in order, from the former period, the loss sustained by the academy at Attercliffe, in the death of Mr. Jollie, was not repaired by John Wadsworth, his successor, who ministered to a part of his congregation at Sheffield. His introduction was inauspicious; for it was in opposition to a majority of the church, who elected John De la Rose, Mr. Jollie's assistant, for their pastor. Mr. Wadsworth continued in the ministry there nearly thirty years; but it is more than probable that he ceased to be a tutor, some time before his death.

A seminary, at Kendal, in Westmoreland, under the tuition of Caleb Rotheram, D.D. minister of the Presbyterian congregation in that town, is supposed by some to have been a continuation of that at Sheffield. From the imperfect memorials which remain, there is reason to conclude that he held the office for many years. His character is thus drawn by one of his students. "As a minister, his abilities were great, his delivery graceful, his performances instructive, lively, and entertaining, his sentiments nervous, his arguments strong, and his expression just. What he delivered was first tried upon his own mind. When you felt the force of truth, the weight of all had been first poised in his heart. He spoke to the edification of all, so that every individual among you might think the address was only to himself. In sacraments he excelled. He is the fittest to declare the love of God to others, who has felt it shed abroad on his own heart. As a tutor, his capacity was equal to his department. His public spirit, desirous to propagate useful knowledge, and his tender concern for the interests of young persons, inclined him to take upon himself the direction of youthful studies, for which he was excellently well qualified. He was of a most communicative temper, and his lectures were rather the open informations of a friend, than the dictates of a master*." Dr. Rotheram's influence among the Dissenters in that part of England was very considerable. After exercising his ministry for thirty-six years, he died, June 8th, 1752, in the fifty-ninth year of his age, and the seminary was discontinued.

In the beginning of this period, Mr. James, Mr.

* Dr. Rotheram's Funeral Sermon, by James Daye.

Darch, and Mr. Grove presided over the academy at Taunton. Henry Grove was descended from a line of progenitors eminent for piety and goodness. He was born at Taunton, in 1683, and received his education for the ministry partly under Mr. Warren, and partly under Mr. Rowe, of London, to whom he was related. By his appointment to the academy, in 1706, being fixed at Taunton, he preached for eighteen years to two small congregations in the neighbourhood. On Mr. Darch's resignation of his office, mathematics and natural philosophy were added to Mr. Grove's department. In 1725, on the death of Mr. James, he was appointed to fill the divinity chair, and he succeeded him also in his pastoral charge. In both these departments he continued till his death, in February, 1738.

Mr. Grove's theological learning was considerable, and his attainments in polite literature were superior to those of most of his brethren. Several papers of the *Spectator* were written by his pen. To the study of moral philosophy he was peculiarly attached. In every branch of knowledge requisite for a tutor, he was sufficiently skilled; and he is said to have possessed the temper and patience so necessary for those who are engaged in the tuition of youth. His discourses for the pulpit were prepared with considerable attention, and delivered in a pleasing and affectionate manner. And to crown all, he was a man of great seriousness of spirit, and of an exemplary life. His writings are numerous. Besides a great number of sermons and treatises, published during his life, six volumes of discourses and tracts, and two on moral philosophy, appeared after his death.

But important and valuable as all these qualities are, one thing was wanting to complete his character, and give efficacy to the whole; and the want of that rendered many of the others worse than useless. It is by the principles of religion which a tutor instils into his students, that they become a blessing or a curse to the human race; assassins of souls or instruments of their salvation. Unhappily Mr. Grove was not sound in the faith; and as he advanced in years, he became more averse to evangelical doctrines*. The greater part of the students imbibed the spirit of their tutor, and going forth with their new divinity, they starved and scattered the flourishing churches, which the pure doctrine of Christ had gathered and increased. The writer of the manuscript account of the London churches complains bitterly of their evil principles, and useless or pernicious labours.

Mr. Grove was succeeded in the academy by his nephew Thomas Amory, D.D., who was born at Taunton, in 1701. He acquired his classical knowledge under Mr. Chadwick, a distinguished scholar. In 1717, he went to the academy at Taunton, and on leaving it, in 1722, he pursued a course of philosophy in London under Mr. Fames. Returning to the country in 1725, he was called to assist his uncle, and taught the classics and philosophy. He was a preacher as well as a tutor, and for some years officiated along with Mr. Batson at Paul's meeting; but, in 1732, some of the people built a new place of worship, and chose Dr. Amory for their pastor. On the death of Mr. Grove in 1738, he became chief tutor in the academy, and continued to perform

* See as an illustration of this remark, his sermon on the conversion of the apostle Paul.—Grove's Posthumous Works, vol. i. p. 302—346.

the duties of his office till 1759, when he accepted an invitation from London to assist Dr. Chandler, as afternoon preacher to his congregation in the Old Jewry. On Dr. Chandler's decease in 1766, he succeeded to the pastoral charge, from which death removed him in 1774, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

According to the testimony of his biographer, "he was an amiable man in private life. As a preacher, he did not meet with popularity to which he was entitled. His sermons, though practical, serious, and affecting to attentive hearers, were rather too close, judicious, and philosophical for the common run of congregations. If any thing disputable was introduced, it was to expose the doctrine of rigid calvinism, which he much disapproved, as giving very narrow and unworthy ideas of the supreme mind*." From his uncle, Dr. Amory inherited the *calvinophobia*, and this disease, instead of being milder, grew more inveterate, so that he sought relief in arianism, a system which few of the Presbyterian ministers of London, in his day, professed so openly as himself. The academy, under his management, fell into decay, and, at his departure, it was dissolved.

The academy at Shrewsbury was, at the commencement of this period, under the care of John Reynolds and Dr. Gyles. Mr. Reynolds, the more eminent of the two, was the son of an ejected minister at Wolverhampton, and born there in 1667. Fervent piety adorned his early years, and he felt an earnest desire to be employed in the work of the ministry. When the

* Biographia Britannica, &c. article, Amory.

time arrived for his receiving an academical education, deterred by the gloomy aspect which the affairs of the Dissenters wore, he conceived that he should find a more certain and extensive field of usefulness within the pale of the established church. With this view, he went to Oxford, a little before the revolution, and studied at Pembroke college, for four years, under the care of Dr. Hall, afterwards bishop of Bristol. In order to enjoy the benefit of the public libraries, and the conversation of learned men, he continued in the city for another year. But his prospects from the establishment were rendered abortive by the study of the controversy on the dissent. His conscience would not permit him to conform, and he was constrained by the convictions of his mind to become a dissenting teacher. After leaving college, his first stated employment was with Mr. Noble, of Bristol, as a tutor and a preacher; but after a residence of three years, with much acceptance of his labours, both in the academy and in the pulpit, ill health compelled him to retire into the country.

In 1699, he was, with three others, ordained at Oldbury chapel by four aged confessors, who still survived the sorrows of St. Bartholomew's day. For some years afterwards, he was chaplain to a gentleman's family. He was called, in 1706, to labour among the Dissenters at Gloucester, with the venerable Mr. Forbes. Not without much reluctance, he was drawn from that situation in 1708, by the invitation of the congregation at Shrewsbury, and the entreaties of the neighbouring ministers, who urged him to undertake the pastoral charge of that church, and carry on the business of the academy with Dr. Gyles, who was chosen at the same time.

On this two-fold office, he entered with deep humility, an exalted spirit of devotion, and dependence on divine help*. Of his labours in the academy his biographer speaks in the following terms: "he carefully instructed the pupils in those parts of literature that fell to his share to teach. He made conscience of his duty in this respect; he was concerned to maintain the honour of the Christian ministry, and knowing that learning is very requisite to this end, he took great care to instil it into the minds of those under his care, and to lead them into the knowledge of those truths, that would furnish them for their work, and enable them, when they entered upon it, honourably to perform it. His concern was, that they might be able ministers of the New Testament. He had a great love for their souls, and was earnestly desirous to promote their spiritual and eternal welfare: he studied to make them virtuous and holy, as well as learned, to have Christ formed in them, and to possess them with a godlike temper and disposition, as being necessary to render their work pleasurable and delightful to them, and to engage them to a faithful and cheerful discharge of it†."

During ten years, Mr. Reynolds laboured in this important station, when bodily infirmities again obliged

* Life of John Reynolds, p. 121—124. He concludes his pious exercises in the following words: "O that the little academy may be blessed and taught of God! O that the young members of it may be humble, tractable, studious, inclined to God and to religion! O possess their early minds and hearts for thyself, for thy kingdom and glory! The good Lord, bless instruction, education, and studies! O, by thy grace, cure youthful lusts, prevent immoralities, licentiousness, and scandals! Let religion, seriousness, virtue, and learning grow and flourish among them! O that there and thence a seed may arise to serve thee, to bear thy name, and spread the word of thy grace about this distinguished isle!"

† Life of John Reynolds, p. 125.

him to resign his charge; but, before this time, the academy was dissolved. Leaving Shrewsbury in 1718, after frequent changes of abode for several years, he at last settled at Walsal, in 1721, and, as far as he was able, assisted Mr. Godley, an eminently pious minister in that town, till it pleased God to give him rest from his labours on the 24th of August, 1727, in the sixty-first year of his age.

John Reynolds was a man of superior learning and piety, to the utmost ability of a feeble constitution, laborious in the duties of his office, devoted to God in a more than ordinary degree, and making it the great business of life to do good. His treatises on "Zeal," on "Reconciliation with God," the "Religion of Jesus delineated," and his "Confirming Catechism," &c., will impress the judicious reader with high ideas both of his intellectual and spiritual endowments*.

At the beginning of this period, the Hoxton academy was under the tuition of Dr. Oldfield, Mr. Lorimer, and Mr. Capel. William Lorimer, M. A., an able instructor, was educated in the Marischal College of Aberdeen, his native city. In 1664, when he was twenty-four years of age, he came to London, and having received episcopal ordination, was first curate at the Charter-house, and was afterwards presented to a living in Sussex. On examining the canons of the church, many of them appeared contrary to the sacred Scriptures; and he considered his oath of canonical obedience as an unlawful oath. Quitting, therefore, the establishment, he united himself to the Non-con-

formists, at a time when none could doubt of his sincerity; for he had nothing to expect by the change of communion but poverty and a dungeon. His first employment afterwards, was that of chaplain in a gentleman's family; and, during a few years, he had the charge of a small congregation at Lee, in Kent. In 1695, he was invited to be professor of divinity in the university of St. Andrews, but he did not accept the office. Hoxton academy enjoyed the benefit of his labours as a tutor, for which he was amply qualified by his learning, integrity, and piety. He used also to assist his brethren with his occasional services, and was very highly esteemed by all. His old age was cheered with the liveliest hopes of eternal glory. He died in 1722, in the eighty-first year of his age.

The theological tutor of this academy, Joshua Oldfield, D. D., the son of an ejected minister, was born in Corsington, in Derbyshire, the place of his father's charge. He spent some time at Christ's College, Cambridge, under Dr. Henry More and Dr. Cudworth, but being unable to take the oaths, he left the university, without a degree. Residing, for some time, as chaplain to the family of a gentleman of note, a living which became vacant was offered to him; and some of the clergy in the neighbourhood were employed to argue him into conformity; but they could not produce conviction, and he entered into the ministry among the Dissenters. He preached first in London, then at Tooting, and afterwards, for some years, at Oxford. From that city, he removed to Coventry, in 1694, where he preached, in conjunction with Mr. Tong, and commenced his academical labours.

In 1700, he removed to London, and succeeded Mr. Kentish in the pastoral office at Maid's-lane, Southwark, where he laboured during the remainder of his life. He was deservedly held in high estimation. In the Salters'-hall conferences, he took an active part, was chairman of the body when they divided, and afterwards of the party of the non-subscribers. But while he conceived subscription to be inexpedient, he was zealous for the orthodox doctrines, and published his sentiments on the Trinity, in a sermon which united principle with practice, and combined the truth of the doctrine with its important use. He closed a very useful and honourable life in 1729, when he was seventy-two years of age.

We live at too great a distance from the period of Dr. Oldfield's labours to be able to recover from tradition a particular account of his seminary. His qualifications were of the first order, but the Hoxton academy appears to have ceased before his death.

In the academy of the Independents, Dr. Chauncy's successor was Thomas Ridgley, D.D., a native of the city of London. He was born in 1667, and is supposed to have received his education for the ministry under Mr. Davidson, who kept an academy at Trowbridge. On his return to his friends, he was, in 1695, appointed assistant to the celebrated Mr. Thomas Gouge, whose congregation met at the Three Cranes, in Thames-street. He excelled in the illustration of the sacred Scriptures, and was equally eminent for piety, meekness, and zeal. On his death, in 1700, Dr. Ridgley succeeded him in the pastoral charge.

But it is as a tutor that he appears in this catalogue. Theology was his department; and his fitness for the office may be safely inferred from the lectures to his students, published in two folio volumes, composing a body of divinity. That they display soundness of judgment, extensive learning, and an intimate acquaintance with the sacred oracles, every impartial reader will allow. That he was a Calvinist, when we have mentioned his connexions, need scarcely be told; but he differs in several instances from their commonly received opinions, and discovers a freedom of thought which shows a man determined to explain the Scriptures for himself. But his style was deficient in neatness, elegance, and force. The doctor entered deeply into the Arian controversy; and, ranking on the side of the subscribers, appeared from the press in their defence. After labouring in the ministry nearly forty years, and upwards of twenty in the academy, he finished his course March 27th, 1734, in the sixty-seventh year of his age.

The students in this academy, while they had the happiness to receive lectures in theology from Dr. Ridgley, were instructed in classical learning, mathematics, and natural philosophy, by a tutor of equal or superior abilities, John Eames, F.R.S. He was a native of London, studied the learned languages at Merchant Tailors' School, and afterwards received an academical education for the ministry; but extreme diffidence, and a defect in the powers of elocution, deterred him from preaching more than one sermon. But he employed his talents, with great diligence and benefit, in the instruction of youth; and was, for many

years, Dr. Ridgley's colleague in the Independent seminary. His very superior attainments in the branches of science which he taught, entitle him to more than common praise, which it would be the more unjust to withhold, because excessive timidity and bashfulness veiled them so as almost to conceal his extraordinary talents. He was intimately acquainted with Sir Isaac Newton, and, it is said, assisted him on some occasions. By that wonderful man he was introduced into the Royal Society, by which he was so highly esteemed as to be employed, with another gentleman, to draw up an abridgement of their transactions.

He was prevailed on, after the death of Dr. Ridgley, to take the theological department in the academy, in which he continued to labour for the space of ten years. From his active and useful pursuits, death called him suddenly away, in June, 1744. "What a change (said Dr. Watts) did Mr. Eames experience! But a few hours between his lecturing to his pupils and his hearing the lectures of angels." *Laudari a viro laudato* has been accounted the highest praise. This praise Mr. Eames received from Dr. Watts, who thus expressed himself to one of his students,—“Your tutor is the most learned man I ever knew*.”

While Mr. Eames was theological teacher, he was assisted by Joseph Densham, one of his former scholars, who had attained to a considerable proficiency in the various branches of science. Though earnestly solicited by Dr. Jennings to continue his useful labours, he, on Mr. Eames's decease, bade adieu to an acade-

* Biographia Britannica, vol. i. p. 175. Monthly Magazine for April, 1803.

mical life, preached for some time in the country, and afterwards retired into a private station, and died, at an advanced age, in 1792.

On the death of Mr. Eames, David Jennings, D.D., was appointed divinity tutor, and Dr. Morton Savage assisted him in the other departments of literature. Both these gentlemen survived this period.

Another academy, under the patronage of the Independents, sprang up in the metropolis during this period ; and, as it was not unconnected with the other, may be most properly mentioned in this place. The first theological tutor was Abraham Taylor, D.D., whose father, Richard, was an eminent minister among the Dissenters, in the beginning of the eighteenth century. The son also was a man of note. Where he received his education is not known, but his tutors had done their duty. He was a good classical scholar and an able divine. He took an active part in the theological disputes of the day, and left behind him several volumes of a doctrinal and controversial kind.

It was the remark of a Scotch divine, when expounding the words, "Moses's face shone, and he knew it not," "That it was a braw thing for a man's face to shine, and him not to ken it." Dr. Taylor possessed learning, and he knew it ; and this knowledge proved the source of much misery to its possessor.

In the character of tutor, he was well qualified as to literary acquirements, but his discipline approached to that which was exercised in the universities about a century before, when corporal correction was administered to offenders, of which, it is said, the immortal

Milton had his share. Imprudence in the management of his finances removed him from his important offices, and by consigning him to unserviceableness, penury, and dishonour, taught the importance of economy. He was ordained pastor of a congregation at Deptford, January 1st, 1731, and he continued there about ten years. Nearly all that time he was a tutor.

Dr. Taylor was succeeded by John Hubbard, who having been assistant to Mr. Mitchel, pastor of a church at Stepney, was, on his death, in 1721, chosen in his room, and fed his flock, for two-and-twenty years, with distinguished skill, fidelity, and diligence. From his sermons, at the "Berry-street lectures," it is evident that he was an able preacher, and knew well how to divide the word of truth. Had he studied composition more, they would have appeared to still greater advantage. On his appointment to the divinity chair, in 1740, he applied himself to the duties of his office with exemplary diligence; and the most pleasing hopes were entertained of many years of usefulness, but they were extinguished by his decease, in July 1743, in the fifty-first year of his age.

He was a very able divine, and so intimately acquainted with the Scriptures, that he never felt occasion to add a concordance to his library. In other branches of literature, connected with theology and his office, he was abundantly skilled; and he possessed what is infinitely better than knowledge or learning—eminent religion, which shone forth in the tenor of his life, and most conspicuously at the close of his days. Although the interval between health and death was

short, he enjoyed the blessedness of that servant whom the Lord, when he came, found watching. Amidst the most painful bodily affliction, he possessed his soul in patience. "It is fit," said he, "we should endure pain and trouble here, for we shall have none hereafter. There, the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick. These tabernacles were framed by God, every pin of them; and it is fit that he should have the taking of them down in his own way. I desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is best; yet content I am to stay, if God has any further work for me to do. I put my trust in thee, O Lord. Through Christ, we are more than conquerors. He is all my salvation, and all my desire*."

Mr. Hubbard's successor was Zephaniah Marryat, D.D., pastor of a church in Southwark. To good natural abilities, he added an energy of application which cannot be recommended as a pattern to others. "In the vigorous part of life, it was my custom, for some space, to sit up frequently whole nights, generally two, and sometimes three in a week, the year round." By such a mode of life, it excites no surprise to hear that he had read over the works of the Greek and Latin fathers, obtained a large acquaintance with the schoolmen, and perused the writings of the most renowned champions of the church of Rome, with the most elaborate answers of Protestant divines. He found leisure too for still more extensive reading; and so strongly was he attached to Grecian literature, that he told a friend, "There were very few, if any of the

* Funeral Sermon, by Dr. Guyse.

books written by the ancient Greeks, and handed down to our time, but what he had read in their own language.”

But there is an attainment of his which was still more remarkable. He employed his memory, which was retentive in an extraordinary degree, so as to commit to its keeping all the poetical and prophetic books of the Old Testament but one, and all the epistles of the New Testament, with the Apocalypse. In order to retain them with exactness, it was his custom to repeat them carefully every year. This practice he began in his youth, and for a very singular reason. Deeply convinced of his sinfulness and misery, he was afraid of falling into hell, and formed the resolution, that if that should be the case, he would treasure up in his mind as much of the word of God as he possibly could, and carry it with him to the place of torment. When faith in the Redeemer afterwards communicated to his soul the peace and consolations of the Gospel, he still continued the practice, that he might have a larger measure to carry to a better place. How well qualified such a man must have been for the office of a tutor, must be evident to every reader.

Living amidst the fire of the Arian controversy, his ardent mind engaged in the defence of evangelical truth. He was an affectionate and lively preacher. After labouring nearly fifty years in the work of the ministry, and eleven as a tutor, he died in September, 1754*. His latter end was peace and joy. To a friend who was entering his apartment, a little before his death, he cried out, “I am just going to glory.”

* Hall's Funeral Sermon for Dr. Marryat.

He was succeeded by John Conder, who continued his valuable labours into the next period.

Besides the theological tutor, there was, in this academy, another who taught languages and philosophy. The first was Samuel Parsons, who came from Basingstoke, and at whose house in Clerkenwell, the students lived. In 1735, he removed to Witham, in Essex, and was succeeded by Dr. John Walker, a man of very superior acquirements, who, in the knowledge of the oriental languages, had few superiors in the kingdom. Plaisterer's-hall was fitted up for him and the students, and it continued to be the seat of learning till the death of Dr. Marryat, when the academy was removed to Mile End. Dr. Walker happily survived the second period.

The academy under the care of Joseph Hallet, of Exeter, which had been raised towards the close of the former period, continued but a few years. The heresy of the tutor, and the new opinions adopted by some of the students, ruined its character; parents withheld or withdrew their sons from what they accounted a spiritual pesthouse, and its existence ceased.

The Bridgewater academy was formed by John Moore, son of a minister of the same name, who was ejected from a living in Dorsetshire, and who after many hardships, in 1676, settled in this town, and was pastor of a large and respectable congregation, till his death, in 1717.

Under his son, the pupils are said to have enjoyed great advantages from his superior attainments in science, and

his easy and agreeable method of conveying knowledge. When the *ario-mania* raged in the west, he too was seized, some of his students left him, and the character of his academy sustained a serious injury. It is seldom that, in advanced years, such a transition is made. By multitudes of students and young ministers it has been embraced; but Arianism is not usually an old man's refuge. Mr. Moore died in 1747, in the seventy-fourth year of his age.

There was another seminary under the care of a John Moor, who, after entering on the ministry at Wattisfield, in Suffolk, a little before the revolution, removed to Tiverton, in Devonshire. A pamphlet published by him in 1721, entitled "A Calm defence of the Deity of Jesus Christ, in Remarks on a Letter to a Dissenter at Exeter," though short, displays great zeal in defence of the orthodox doctrine. From the late Dr. Flexman's having received his education in this academy, Mr. Moor must have lived to the year 1740.

The academy at Colyton, in Devon, was, after Mr. Short's removal, continued by Matthew Towgood, a man of considerable learning, who was trained up for the ministry under his father of the same name, ejected from Semly, in Wiltshire. Early in this period, 1716, Mr. Towgood removed from Colyton to Shepton Mallet, and in 1729, from thence to Poole, in Dorsetshire.

Under Mr. Porter at Alcester, not ministers only, but private gentlemen and merchants too, received their education. After his death, the students were

removed to Stratford upon Avon, and entrusted to the tuition of John Alexander, the dissenting minister of that town, who continued his labours, till about the middle of this period. He was distinguished for his skill in oriental literature. At his removal into Ireland, the academy is supposed to have ceased. He died, about 1740*.

Dr. Charles Owen, minister at Warrington, brother of James Owen, the celebrated tutor of Shrewsbury, rendered important benefit to the dissenting churches by dedicating his talents to the labours of the seminary. His learning, piety, and amiable disposition, qualified him for the office. His academic sphere was not extensive. But to the man who from time to time sends forth a few faithful and successful labourers, what praise is due! Besides the pieces "On Ordination," which display his learning, a small treatise entitled "The Wonders of Redeeming Love," shows that he was a scribe well instructed into the kingdom of heaven. He died at an advanced age, in 1746.

At Bridgenorth, about 1726, Mr. Fleming, minister of that town, began to teach academical learning to a few candidates for the ministry. Like many other of the dissenting seminaries, it depended entirely on the tutor, and ceased with his life, or with his leisure.

At Bedworth, an academy was formed by Julius Saunders, a man of Christian nobility, for he was descended from Laurence Saunders who was burned in Coventry Park, in 1555, for his attachment to the Protestant faith.

* Biographia Britannica.

Many of his descendants were ministers of the Gospel, and eminently faithful to their charge. This was the character of Julius, who is said to have been a strenuous Independent. He was succeeded by John Kirkpatrick, who also discharged the duties both of pastor and tutor, and continued till near the close of this period.

The important labours of Mr. Samuel Jones, at Gloucester, and afterwards at Tewkesbury, were, unhappily for the church of Christ, suspended by his death, a few years after the commencement of this period. The academy was removed to Carmarthen, in South Wales. William Evans, minister of the dissenting congregation, had the charge of a theological institution in that place, early in the eighteenth century, and is said to have been the first dissenting tutor in the southern division of the principality. He was a man highly respected for his piety and learning. Death removed him from his labours, in 1720.

As his decease happened at no great distance of time from that of Mr. Jones, Thomas Perrot being appointed his successor both in the congregation and the academy, the Tewkesbury institution was transferred to him; and the public library, belonging to it, removed to Carmarthen, with the benevolent design of educating ministers for the churches in Wales. Mr. Perrot had been ordained at Knutsford, in 1706, and afterwards removed to Newmarket, in Flintshire. His character was that of an able minister and a learned divine; and under his tuition were trained up many, who in their generation proved eminently useful to the Cambrian churches.

After Mr. Perrot's death in 1733, the academy was

removed from Carmarthen, and committed to the care of Vavasor Griffiths, who had received his education under Mr. Jones. By him the academy was opened at Llwynllwyd, near the Hoy, Brecknockshire. He was an able tutor, and his deportment, both in the academy and the congregation, procured him very high respect. He continued his labours till his death, in 1741.

Evan Davies, the pastor of a church at Haverfordwest, educated under Dr. Ridgley and Mr. Eames, being appointed his successor, the academy was removed to that place. But in a few years, on the settlement of Mr. Davies with a congregation in the neighbourhood of Carmarthen, it was restored to its former station. Samuel Thomas, minister of Carmarthen, united in the labours of tuition. Towards the close of this period, Mr. Davies removing to a congregation in Essex, Mr. Thomas became divinity tutor, and Dr. Jenkin Jenkins, from Lanvillier, in Montgomeryshire, was appointed to assist him. Both these gentlemen survived the second period.

This academy, from the time of its removal from Tewkesbury, had received its support from the joint funds of the Presbyterians and Independents in the metropolis. But Mr. Thomas having embraced opinions different from those of his predecessors, the Independents withdrew their aid, and towards the conclusion of this period, formed a new academy at Abergavenny and entrusted it to the care of David Jardine, the minister of the place.

Thomas Hill, who was ejected for nonconformity from Shuttington, in the county of Warwick, left a son of the

same name, who employed considerable talents, and extensive knowledge, in the tuition of youth for the ministry, at Findern, in Derbyshire. His labours began before the commencement of this period, and continued to 1720, when death removed him from his field of usefulness.

His successor was Samuel Latham, M.D., a man highly celebrated for his attainments in polite literature, as well as in those branches of knowledge more immediately pertaining to his office. He carried on the business of the academy at Derby, with great reputation, till his death, in 1754. The institution, though among the most considerable in England for the number of its students, ceased with his life.

John and David Jennings, two celebrated tutors among the Dissenters in this period, were the sons of John Jennings, of Christchurch, Oxford, who was ejected from Hartley Waspil, in Hampshire. John, the eldest, succeeded his father in the pastoral office at Kibworth, in Leicestershire; and, in 1715, he engaged in the instruction of young men for the ministry. From Kibworth, he removed to Hinckley, in 1722; and, in the month of July, in the following year, he died in the prime of life. To every young tutor a lesson is given by the removal of Mr. Jennings, to labour with zeal and diligence in his work, and place no dependence on future years. The learning of this excellent man is said to have been considerable; but it must imply the consideration of his time of life; for profound learning cannot be the attainment of youth, it must be the result of patient and persevering exertions during a long suc-

cession of revolving years. Mr. Jennings was celebrated for his solicitude in the improvement of time. Two small treatises remain to attest his worth; one "on Preaching Christ," and the other, "on particular and experimental Preaching." Such is their excellence, that the tutor has not rendered full justice to his pupil, who has not put them into his hands, and recommended them to his most serious and repeated perusal.

For some years after Mr. Jennings's death, the academy suffered a temporary suspension, but was happily revived in 1729, by one of his pupils, Philip Doddridge, D.D., whose praise is in all the churches. His tutor, perceiving his extraordinary talents, had urged him to pursue his theological studies with a view to the future instruction of youth; and had also pointed him out to his friends as the fittest person to adopt and improve his mode of tuition. Dr. Doddridge's situation at Kibworth admitted of a large portion of time for study, and he improved it. Young ministers are sometimes afraid of a country village, and despise the small and rustic audience. But it is in such retirements, that some of the first characters were formed, who have afterwards appeared with distinguished honour in the most numerous and respectable congregations.

In 1729, Dr. Doddridge commenced tutor at Market Harborough. In the end of the same year, a call from a congregation at Northampton, seconded by the intreaties of his most judicious friends, constrained him to remove to that town. While Kidderminster derives more celebrity from Richard Baxter being its minister, than from its manufactories, and Bedford is oftener spoken of for the writings of John Bunyan, than for the

deeds of its dukes, Northampton has acquired no mean proportion of its fame from being the place of Dr. Doddridge's residence and labours.

During the twenty-two remaining years of life, he was unwearied in his attention to the duties both of the congregation and the seminary. He usually had between thirty and forty students under his care; the number was increasing with his fame, and by his talents and exertions, the Northampton academy stood first in character among the places of instruction for the dissenting ministry. There was always an assistant tutor, and sometimes more than one. Job Orton, and Samuel Clark, afterwards of Birmingham, were among his labourers in this station. About two hundred students, it is computed, enjoyed the benefit of his tuition, of whom a hundred and twenty entered on the pastoral office. His life will be more fully detailed in the biographical part of this history. Dr. Doddridge died at Lisbon, in 1751, and was succeeded in the academy by Dr. Caleb Ashworth, who removed it to Daventry, the place of his ministerial charge. He outlived the present period.

To remedy the loss sustained by the dissolution of so many academies, towards the close of this period several new ones were instituted. A less literary seminary, than any hitherto noticed, was formed under Samuel Pike, a minister in London, but it continued only for a few years. By the patronage of the independent fund board in London, John Lavington, minister of St. Mary Ottery, in Devon, was appointed tutor of a theological school, and began his labours there, in 1752. A seminary of a very different kind was insti-

tuted by the Presbyterians at Warrington, under the superintendence of Dr. Aikin, Dr. John Taylor, and Mr. Seddon. In 1760, the Exeter academy revived, under auspices nearly similar to those in which its former state of existence ceased. Of all these the third period will furnish an account.

The Baptists had as yet no academy of their own. Many of their ministers, especially of the particular or Calvinistic branch, had no academical education, nor would many of their churches have admitted such a man as their pastor. "They are (says the writer of a manuscript on the state of the London congregations) very fond of private meetings for exhortation and prayer. These are their academies from which the most able go forth into the ministry." Such of them as had a regular education were indebted to the Independents; while the Presbyterian seats of learning were chiefly resorted to by the candidates for the ministry among the general Baptists.

SECT. II.—*Method of Education in the Dissenting Academies.*

THE same branches of learning, which were taught in the former period, as necessary qualifications for the ministry, still retained their place. The veneration, however, which the first race of tutors felt for the method of education which they had received in the universities, began gradually to subside. The second generation thought it was possible to make improvements. New books in the several departments of

science displaced the older and more imperfect manuals of the preceding age; and some of the tutors drew up abstracts as text books for their own use. In theology, the systems composed by the most celebrated professors in foreign universities, were employed as a syllabus for their lectures. Turretine's compend was preferred by one, and Pictete's by another. Dr. Jennings's theological lectures were founded on "Marckii Medulla Theologiæ," and his course of Jewish antiquities, on "Godwin's Moses and Aaron." If we may judge of his commentary on the former by his elucidation of the latter, his instructions in divinity must have been peculiarly excellent. The whole abstract of Dr. Doddridge's course of lectures was of his own composition; and became afterwards the text book of several of the academies in the following period.

The method of conducting the education of the pupils in the dissenting seminaries of this period, may be judged of from the accounts handed down to us of the labours of three of the tutors, Mr. John Jennings, Dr. Doddridge, and Dr. David Jennings*.

* From the pen of Dr. Doddridge, we receive a full statement of John Jennings's system of education, from which the following is an extract.

"Our course was the employment of four years, and every half year we entered upon a new set of studies, or at least changed the time and order of our lectures.

"The first half year we read geometry or algebra thrice a week, Hebrew twice, geography once, French once, Latin prose authors once, classical exercises once. The second half year we ended geometry and algebra, which we read twice a week. We read logic twice, civil history once, French twice, Hebrew once, Latin poets once, exercises once, oratory once, exercises of reading and delivery once. For logic, we just skimmed over Burgersdicius, and then entered on a system composed by Mr. Jennings; a great deal of it was taken from Mr. Locke, and we had large references to him and other celebrated authors, almost under every head. This was the method Mr. Jennings used in almost all the

Of the method of education which Dr. Doddridge pursued in his own academy, his biographer, Mr. Orton,

lectures he drew up himself. He made the best writers his commentators.

“The third half year, we read mechanics, hydrostatics, and physics twice, Greek poets once, history of England once, anatomy once, astronomy, globes, and chronology once, miscellanies once, and had one logical disputation in a week. On some of these branches we had a system drawn up by the tutor, in others we made use of the most celebrated publications. The fourth half year we read pneumatology twice a week, the remainder of physics and miscellanies once. Jewish antiquities twice. Our pneumatology was drawn up by Mr. Jennings. This with our divinity, which was a continuation of it, was by far the most valuable part of our course. Mr. Jennings had bestowed a vast deal of thought upon them, and his discourses from them in the lecture-room were admirable. For Jewish antiquities, we read an abridgment of Mr. Jones's notes on Godwin, with some very curious and important additions.

“The fifth half year we read ethics twice a week, critics once, and had one pneumatological disputation. Our ethics were a part of pneumatology. Our critical lectures were an abridgment of Mr. Jones's. Our pneumatological and theological disputations were of very considerable service to us. The sixth half year we read divinity thrice a week, Christian antiquities once, miscellanies once, and had one homily of a Thursday night. For Christian antiquities, we read ‘Sir Peter King's Constitution of the primitive Church,’ with ‘The Original Draught’ in answer to it. We consulted ‘Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*’ for illustration, and had recourse sometimes to ‘*Suiceri Thesaurus*.’

“The seventh half year, we read divinity thrice a week, ecclesiastical history once, had one sermon, and one theological dissertation. The last half year we read divinity once a week, history of controversies once, miscellanies once, and had one theological disputation. For the history of controversies, we read ‘Spanheim's *Elenchus*.’ The miscellaneous, for this half year, contained a brief historical account of the ancient philosophy. On the art of preaching and pastoral care, Mr. Jennings gave us very excellent advice, and some valuable hints on the head of non-conformity. We preached this last half year, either at home or abroad, as occasion required, and towards the beginning of it were examined by a committee of neighbouring ministers, to whom that office was assigned at a preceding general meeting.

“Mr. Jennings never admitted any into his academy till he had examined them as to their improvement in school learning, and capacity for entering on the course of studies which he proposed. He likewise insisted on satisfaction as to their moral character, and the marks of a serious disposition.

“The first two years of our course, we read the Scriptures in the

has given a full statement in the sixth chapter of the memoirs of his life. The following are the outlines expressed in his own words.

“ The orders of the seminary were such as suited a society of students; in a due medium between the rigour of school discipline and an unlimited indulgence. It was an established law, that every student should rise at six o'clock in the summer, and seven in the winter. As soon as they were assembled, a prayer was offered up, and they retired to their closets, till the time of family worship. The doctor began that service with a short prayer for the divine presence and blessing; some of the students read a chapter of the Old Testament, from Hebrew into English, which he expounded critically, and drew practical inferences from it; a psalm was then sung, and he prayed. In the evening, the worship was conducted in the same method, only a chapter in the New Testament was read by the students, from Greek into English, which he expounded; and the senior students, in rotation, prayed. He recommended it to them to take hints of his illustrations and remarks, as what would be useful to them in future

family, from Hebrew, Greek, and French, into English. Every evening an account was taken of our private studies. We were obliged to talk Latin within some certain bounds of time and place. Every Lord's-day evening, Mr. Jennings used to send for some of us into the lecture-room, and discourse with each apart about inward religion. Mr. Jennings allowed us the free use of his library, which was divided into two parts. The first was common to all, the second was for the use of the seniors only, consisting principally of books of philosophy and polemical divinity, with which the juniors would have been confounded rather than edified. At our first entrance on each, we had a lecture, in which Mr. Jennings gave us the general character of each book, and some hints as to the time and manner of perusing it. We had a fortnight vacation at Christmas, and six weeks at Whitsuntide.”—Dr. Doddridge's Works, vol. v., p. 559—567.

life. He advised them to get the Old Testament and Wetstein's Greek Testament, interleaved, in quarto, in which to write the most considerable remarks for the illustration of the Scriptures, which occurred in his expositions, and in their own reading, conversation, and reflection.

“ Soon after breakfast, he took the several classes and lectured to each about an hour. His lectures were generally confined to the morning.

“ One of the first things he expected from his pupils was to learn Rich's Short-hand, which he wrote himself, and in which his lectures were written, that they might transcribe them, make extracts from the books they read and consulted, with ease and speed, and save themselves many hours in their future compositions. Care was taken, in the first year of their course, that they should retain and improve that knowledge of Greek and Latin which they had acquired at school, and gain such knowledge of Hebrew, if they had not learned it before, that they might be able to read the Old Testament in its original language. To this end, besides the course of lectures in a morning, classical lectures were read, every evening, generally by his assistant, but sometimes by himself.

“ Systems of logic, rhetoric, geography, and metaphysics, were read during the first year of their course, and they were referred to particular passages in other authors upon these subjects, which illustrated the points on which the lectures had turned. To these were added lectures on the principles of geometry and algebra. After these studies were finished, they were introduced to the knowledge of trigonometry, conic sections, and

celestial mechanics, consisting of a collection of important propositions, taken chiefly from Sir Isaac Newton, and demonstrated independently of the rest. A system of natural and experimental philosophy, comprehending mechanics, statics, hydrostatics, optics, pneumatics, and astronomy, was read to them, with references to the best authors on these subjects. This system was illustrated by a neat and pretty large philosophical apparatus. Some other articles were touched, especially history, natural and civil, as the students proceeded in their course. A distinct view of the anatomy of the human body was given. A large system of Jewish antiquities, which their tutor had drawn up, was read to them in the latter years of their course. In this branch of science, likewise, they were referred to the best writers on the subject. ‘Lampe’s Epitome of Ecclesiastical History’ was the groundwork of a series of lectures upon that subject; as was ‘Buddei Compendium Historiæ Philosophiæ’ of lectures on the doctrines of the ancient philosophers, in their various sects.

“But the chief object of their attention and study, during three years of their course, was his system of divinity, in the largest sense of the word; including what is most material in pneumatology and ethics. In this compendium were contained, in as few words as perspicuity would admit, the most material things which had occurred to the author’s observation, relating to the nature and properties of the human mind, the proof of the existence and attributes of God, the nature of moral virtue, its various branches, means, and sanctions; under which head, the natural evidence of the immor-

tality of the soul was largely examined. To this was added some survey of the state of virtue in the world, from whence the transition was easy to the need of a revelation, &c. The evidences were produced in favour of that revelation which the Scriptures contained. The genuineness, credibility, and inspiration of these sacred books were then cleared up at large, and vindicated from the objections of infidels. When this foundation was laid, the chief doctrines of Scripture were drawn out into a large detail: those relating to the Father, Son, and Spirit, to the original and fallen state of man, to the scheme of our redemption by Christ, and the offices of the Spirit as the great agent in the Redeemer's kingdom. The nature of the covenant of grace was particularly stated, and the several precepts and institutions of the Gospel, with the views which it gives us of the concluding scenes of our world, and of the eternal state beyond it. All was illustrated by a very large collection of references; containing, perhaps, one lecture with another, the substance of forty or fifty octavo pages, in which the sentiments and reasonings of the most considerable authors, on all these heads, might be seen in their own words. It was the business of the students to read and contract these references in the intervals between the lectures, of which only three were given in a week, and sometimes but two. This system his pupils transcribed.

“ Besides the expositions in the family, critical lectures on the New Testament were weekly delivered, which the students were permitted and encouraged to transcribe, to lead them to the better knowledge of the divine oracles. Polite literature he by no means neg-

lected. In the last year of the course, a set of lectures on preaching and the pastoral care was given: these have lately been published. While the students were pursuing these important studies, some lectures were given them on civil law, the hieroglyphics and mythology of the ancients, the English history, particularly the history of non-conformity, and the principles on which a separation from the Church of England is founded.

“ One day in every week was set apart for public exercises. At these times, the translations and orations of the junior students were read and examined. Those who entered on the study of pneumatology and ethics, produced, in their turns, a thesis on the several subjects assigned them, which were mutually opposed and defended. Those who had finished ethics, delivered homilies on the natural and moral perfections of God, and the nature of moral virtue; while the senior students brought analyses of Scripture, the schemes of sermons, and afterwards the sermons themselves, which they submitted to the examination and correction of their tutor. He sometimes gave his pupils lectures on the books in the library, going over the several shelves in order; informing them of the character of each book, and its author, if known; at what period of their course, and with what special views, particular books should be read, and which of them it was desirable they should be most familiarly acquainted and furnished with, when they settled in the world.

“ The doctor’s manner of lecturing was well adapted to engage the attention and love of his pupils, and to promote their diligent study of the lectures. When the

class was assembled, he examined them in the last lecture, whether they understood his reasoning; what the authors referred to said upon the subject; whether he had given them a just view of their sentiments, arguments, and objections, or omitted any that were important. He expected from them an account of the reasoning, demonstrations, Scriptures, or facts, contained in the lectures and references. He frequently inculcated on his students the necessity of preaching Christ, if they desired to save souls; of dwelling much on the peculiarities of the Gospel scheme, and the doctrines of Christ and the Spirit; of considering their own concern in them, and endeavouring to feel their energy on their own spirits, that they might appear to their hearers as giving vent to the feeling of their heart on its darling subjects."

The method of instruction adopted by Dr. David Jennings may be learned by the following brief quotation from the account of his life.

"The business of the lecture-room commenced, every morning at ten o'clock, with a short prayer, when a chapter was read from the Greek Testament into English by the students, each construing a verse. The doctor then read it, adding such expository notes and observations as suggested themselves at the time. The junior students, after this, withdrew into another room, to lecture on the classics, mathematics, or logic, as they respectively offered in the arrangement of the course under Dr. Savage. The elder classes attended on Dr. Jennings, who went with them through a course of lectures on Jewish antiquities and divinity. The former, at once a week, lasted four years; the latter,

being read twice a week, were completed in three. The text book, in the first, was Godwin's 'Moses and Aaron;' in the other, 'Marckii Medulla Theologiæ;' which, though a short system, hinted, the doctor thought, almost at every topic which came into theological discussion. His lectures on Godwin formed a valuable independent work, after that writer's method; but those on Marck consisted of notes to his Medulla, often very brief, but sometimes running into dissertations. Before the academical term, which was for five years, was finished, the doctor gave a series of lectures on preaching; and took an opportunity to intermix some on architecture, heraldry, and medals. On Wednesday morning, he gave an hour to the junior students in reading, and explaining his own treatise on the globes and orrery; and in receiving from them, and correcting a translation of 'Lampe's Compendium of Ecclesiastical History*.'"

From these specimens no unfavourable opinion will be formed either of the dissenting tutors, or of the system of education which they pursued; most of the alterations from the former period will be acknowledged to be improvements. As to the application of the academies to their various branches of learning, for vigour and perseverance they yielded the palm to no college in Christendom.

During this period, the funds for the support of dissenting seminaries could boast of some improvement. To Mr. Jones, of Tewkesbury, and afterwards to the

* Protestant Dissenters' Magazine, for 1798, p. 87.

academy of Carmarthen, the Presbyterians communicated pecuniary aid; and it is probable, that, in others, they assisted students who stood in need of support. But the greater part of the young men, who were trained up for the ministry among them, defrayed the expenses of their own education. Perhaps the Independents were more liberal in this branch of expenditure. For a time, they co-operated with the Presbyterians in the support of the Welch academy; and when, from a dislike of the sentiments of their tutor, they could do so no longer, they formed a new institution of their own. In London too, they contributed to the maintenance of the academies under Dr. Ridgley and Abraham Taylor, and though there were some whose friends defrayed the expenses of their tuition, the greater part were indebted to the generous exertions of the Independent fund board, and the King's Head society, which have both continued their truly benevolent exertions to the present day*.

To some individuals, who devoted a portion of their substance for this excellent purpose, great praise is also due. William Coward, a merchant in London, who died in 1738, holds the first place; and to the present day there has not appeared a man to whom the dissenting academies are under greater obligations. He was eminently pious, but eccentric in the highest degree: yet, when we find such a man rendering the most important service to the Christian cause, we are

* The former of these institutions consisted of a number of gentlemen of that denomination, who united for the purpose of educating young men for the ministry. The latter, which takes its name from the place where they held their meetings, consisted of Independents too, and had the same object in view.

more fastidious than wise, if we cannot overlook or bear with his eccentricities, and venerate his benevolence. He would have found a rival in Sir John Har-
topp, who left by will ten thousand pounds for the in-
struction of youth for the dissenting ministry: but his
heirs, taking advantage of a defect in the conveyance,
grasped the bequest to themselves. Conscience, how-
ever, stood the friend of the seminaries, and having
wrung the heart of one, constrained her to give up her
part; and almost one-half of the legacy of the worthy
baronet was rescued to the use for which it was origi-
nally designed. From these funds, the academies,
under Dr. Doddridge and Dr. Jemmings, received a
liberal support.

Notwithstanding these sources of maintenance, there
was still a deficiency of funds. A much greater
number of the students stood in need of support than
in the former period, and, therefore, though the finances
had increased, the academies decreased. It is to be
feared, that in some instances this was owing to a
decay of zeal for the ministry, but, in others, it arose
from a want of that support which opulent Christians,
among the Dissenters, could easily have given.

Opposition still lifted up her frowning face against
the dissenting seminaries. The most remarkable in-
stance of this was in the case of Dr. Doddridge, who
was scarcely settled in Northampton, when some
dignitaries of the church of England commenced a
prosecution against him, in the ecclesiastical court, for
teaching an academy; and though he had many friends
who wished to screen him from their enmity, they
could not be prevailed on to desist. The doctor was

exceedingly grieved at the apprehension of being compelled to lay down the office of tutor, and to bid adieu to those extensive plans of usefulness which he had formed. But the affair being represented to the king, by some persons of rank and influence, a stop was put to the prosecution by his express command: he thus confirmed the declaration which he made on ascending the throne, “ That, during his reign, there should be no persecution for conscience’ sake*.”

* Doddridge’s Life, pp. 213, 214.

CHAP. V.

OUTWARD STATE OF DISSENTERS DURING THIS PERIOD.

SECT. I.—*Number and Rank of the Dissenters.*

THE faithful and fervent preaching of multitudes of zealous ministers gradually collected a harvest of proselytes from the established church, and from a body of people in England almost as numerous—those who were not in the habit of attending any place of worship. The addition of numbers from this source, was greater than from the increase of population, but more unequal, as it depended entirely on the character and talents of the dissenting preacher.

The equity of government contributed also to augment the number of Dissenters. Under the house of Hanover, Dissenters were regarded as the firmest friends to the government of the country, and a multitude of people quitted the church for the conventicle.

During this period, too, the prejudices against Dissenters were gradually losing a considerable portion of their former virulence. While the events of the civil war, and its consequences, were fresh in the memory of the men of that and of the next generation, the hatred to Dissenters was keen and inveterate. The spirit of the succeeding reigns kept the flame of discord still alive. But, after the last of the Stuarts reposed in the

grave, the temper and measures of the new government no longer stirred the fire, and the prejudices of the people gradually cooled, and in some instances were entirely extinguished.

In consequence of these concurring causes, hundreds of dissenting congregations continued to increase. Many new ones also were formed, in the course of this period. A few members of a congregation, living at a distance of some miles from the place of worship, wished to have the ordinances of God brought to the vicinity of their dwellings. The occasional services of their pastor exciting the attention of their neighbours, a new society was formed, and settled under the care of another minister. Sometimes, a zealous Christian fixing his residence in a place where there was no dissenting meeting within his reach, exerted himself to introduce their worship, and, in a few years, by the success of his endeavours, enjoyed the pleasure of having the ordinances of religion constantly dispensed. Sometimes, the zeal of a minister led him to open a house for the service of God, in a place where he thought the Gospel was not preached in purity. In many parts, where means of increase so extensive were not afforded, by preaching in villages on Lord's-day evenings, and at other times, many were added to the Dissenters, and their congregations were increased. From the memoirs of Dr. Doddridge, it appears that this was the practice in his vicinity, and it was adopted in other parts of England.

Unfavourable circumstances must be thrown into the opposite scale. The operation of the Test Act is

mentioned in several writers of this period as unfavourable to nonconformity, by drawing off a portion of the richer families, by means of occasional conformity, on entering an office, to a constant attendance on the established worship. But its effect has been magnified beyond the truth. Persons of little religious principle, sighing for a more modish faith, and wishing to appear with a grace in the fashionable world, used the test as a stepping-stone from the meeting-house to the church; but if they had not found it lying just in their way, they would have made another, or, at any rate, have plunged through the mire to kneel in the hallowed fane. But to a truly religious society, all things considered, this is no loss.

The two hinderances to the increase of Dissenters were indolence and error. In many places, indolence diffused through their congregations its benumbing influence. It could not be said that the doctrine of the preacher was contrary to truth. But he did not breathe his soul into his sermons. His words appeared to freeze upon his lips. The people felt the chilling influence. Some yawned out the hour, and others slept. Those who slept, began to consider that sleeping at meeting was dearer than at church, and prudently removed to the parochial institution, where they could enjoy their nap at less expense. Others feeling no interest in the service gradually dropped off: or if the older people would not leave the place which they had attended from their earliest years, the children, feeling neither the same partiality nor the like restraints, bade the conventicle a final adieu. In this way, many congregations shrunk to the skeleton of what they were before.

But during this period, error was the destroying angel of dissenting congregations. Instances might be adduced in which a preacher of superior talents has attracted or retained a numerous congregation in the metropolis, or other populous cities, though his sentiments have been far from the orthodox creed. But in the ordinary course of things, in proportion as dissenting ministers have departed from those religious principles which were held by the men ejected from the establishment, they have reduced the number of their audience. Whenever they have departed from what is called Calvinism, the congregation has evidently felt the change; it has been arrested in its growth, and, after a time, visibly decayed.

In whatever communions Arminianism may have crowded places of worship, it never had this effect among Dissenters; but almost without an exception, was the first stage of the congregational decline. Arianism may be called the second stage of the disease, and where it filled the pulpit, invariably emptied the pews. This was the case, not only where a part of the congregation, alarmed by the sound of heresy, fled from the polluted house to a separate society; but where no opposition was made, and all remained without a murmur in the original place. In numerous instances, the preacher, full of the wisdom of the serpent, sought by hiding the monster from their view, to draw them over by stealth to the new theology, and unveiled his sentiments, only as the people were able to bear them without a frown. Though, at last, his wishes were crowned with success, yet the decay began, and gradually consumed the growth, the strength, and the life of the

society, till a large congregation was reduced to a handful. Where Socinianism found an entrance, its operations were quicker than those of the Arian creed, and more effectual; flourishing societies were reduced to a few families, which being animated with zeal for the new opinions, or indifferent about any, chose to continue to support the modes of worship to which, from education or use, they were attached. In many places, Socinianism was the abomination of desolation.

In 1730, Strickland Gough, a young dissenting minister, whose sentiments in religion were certainly far remote from Calvinism, published a pamphlet, entitled, "An Inquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest." "Though every one," says he, "is sensible it gradually declines, yet no one has endeavoured to recover it. I believe this is owing to our disagreement as to the causes of its decay; and unless the causes are found out, a remedy cannot possibly be applied, but it must continue consuming, till it is quite worn out and spent*."

Instead of that reformation among the Presbyterians, for which Mr. Gough so strenuously pleads, there is reason to conclude that their affairs proceeded in the same course; for, sixteen years afterwards, a second mourner appears, and with the same complaints. The decay of the dissenting congregations is as loudly bewailed by Nathaniel Neal, son of the respectable historian of the Puritans. His sentiments and connexions were of the new school. He perceived the congregations which had adopted his creed gradually declining; and in 1746, in the bitterness of his soul, he wrote "A

free and serious Remonstrance to Protestant Dissenting Ministers, on occasion of the decay of Religion; with some Observations on the Ordination of Youth for the Ministry." The state of things among them he describes in the following terms: "The little success you have met with of late, has been a subject of general complaint among us of the laity. For it cannot fail being a grievous and distressing consideration to every pious and thoughtful Christian who frequents our public assemblies, to observe how indifferently most of them are attended; how cold and formal the worship is of many, who dare not, or choose not, to be absent; and what little hope remains that the rising generation should fill the seats that their fathers have left, or are soon likely to leave vacant*." "And the point I would submit to your consideration is, whether the public prayers and instructions of our religious assemblies have been of late conducted in such a manner, as to have had no influence in abating, or their due influence in promoting the constancy and zeal wherewith they were wont to be attended†." Mr. Neal's counsels are good as far as they go, but he unhappily overlooks the chief source of the evil.

A third testimony to the same painful state of things, is borne by Job Orton, minister at Shrewsbury. Like the two former, his chief intercourse was among the Presbyterians, and those of them who were the friends of the new theology. In his "Letters to Dissenting Ministers," his complaints of the decay of their congregations are loud and frequent. Of the three, he alone appears to have understood the cause; and wherever

* Page 5.

† Page 7.

this decay is mentioned, he ascribes it to the departure of the ministers from the principles of the Gospel*. A testimony from such a man has tenfold weight. So sensible was Mr. Orton that the decrease of the dissenting interest was chiefly owing to the principles and preaching of men of the new opinions, that he expresses his astonishment at the decrease of an orthodox congregation in his neighbourhood, and mentions it as the only instance of the kind that he ever knew †.

* "When you have the opportunity of seeing and observing more of the state of religion in our congregations, you will find what I have long since found (and every year that I live increases my conviction of it), that when ministers entertain their people with lively and pretty things, confine themselves to general harangues, insist principally on moral duties, without enforcing them warmly and affectionately by evangelical motives; while they neglect the peculiars of the Gospel; never or seldom display the grace of God, and the love of Christ in our redemption; the necessity of regeneration and sanctification by a constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God for assistance and strength in the duties of the Christian life, their congregations are in a wretched state; some are dwindling to nothing, as is the case with several in this neighbourhood, where there are not now as many scores as there were hundreds in their meeting places fifty years ago. But where, by trade and manufactures new persons come to the place, and fill up the vacant seats, there is a fatal deadness spread over the congregation. They run in the 'course of this world,' follow every fashionable folly, and family and personal godliness seems in general to be lost among them. There is scarcely any appearance of life and zeal in the cause of religion, which demands and deserves the greatest.

"Whereas, on the contrary, I never knew an instance where a minister was a pious, and serious man, whose strain was evangelical and affectionate, but his congregation kept up, though death and removals had made many breaches in it. And in general, ministers of this latter sort have had more respect and affection from their people than the former." Orton's Letters, vol. i., pp. 100, 101.

"Mr. Cardale, of Evesham, died lately. He was minister there forty years. He wrote some things in favour of Socinianism. He had about forty people to hear him at last, having ruined a fine congregation by his very learned, critical, and dry discourses, and an extreme heaviness in the pulpit, and an almost total neglect of pastoral visits and private instruction."—Orton's Letters, vol. i. p. 154.

† "God has removed good Mr. Harrop, of Wem, to a better world. I wish the congregation may be supplied with a suitable minister; but

But a more unexceptionable judge in this cause is Dr. Doddridge, whom Mr. Gough's pamphlet brought into court, and who confirms the decision given by the three gentlemen who have been just named. In his "Free Thoughts on the most probable Means of Reviving the Dissenting Interest," he expresses his firm persuasion, that the preaching of evangelical doctrines in a plain, spiritual, experimental, and affectionate way, is the only thing which can preserve a congregation from decay, and revive it when it is decayed. So much did the existence of Dissenters in his view, depend on this one thing, that he expresses his sentiments in the following terms. "Such is the taste of the generality of the Dissenters; a taste which I apprehend they will still retain, whatever attempts may be made to alter it. And I just take the liberty to say, that I conceive this turn of thought in our people to be the great support of our interest, and not the little scruples which you hint at, nor even those rational and generous principles of liberty which you so clearly propose, and so strenuously assert. And I cannot but believe, if the established clergy and the dissenting ministers, in general, were mutually to exchange their strain of preaching, and their manner of living, but for one year, it would be the ruin of our cause, even though there should be no alteration in the constitution and discipline of the church of England. However you might fare at London, or in some very

they are reduced to a very low state by the incursions of the Methodists and other disorderly people. It is, I think, the only instance I have known of a serious, active, laborious, and truly evangelical preacher and pastor, who has seen his congregation sinking under him."—Orton's Letters, vol. ii., p. 27.

singular cases elsewhere, I can hardly imagine that there would be Dissenters enough left in some considerable counties, to fill one of our largest meeting places.” “ We have then advanced thus far, that he, who would be generally agreeable to Dissenters, must be an evangelical, an experimental, a plain, and an affectionate preacher *.”

In confirmation of the opinions of these men, it was observed that the decrease was in those parts of the country, where Arianism prevailed. Devonshire and its neighbourhood were deeply infected. Lancashire, Cheshire, and Warwickshire, drank large draughts of the intoxicating cup. The general effect was a stop to further increase. In some congregations the decay was immediate; in others, the society became like a building in which the mortar had lost its principle of cohesion, and mouldered away. For a time it was as large as before, but its strength was gone; gradually one stone fell off after another, and every succeeding winter levelled a portion of it with the ground. In this way, many flourishing societies were destroyed.

Between 1720 and 1730, the Dissenters sustained a loss in numbers from another quarter. A list is mentioned of nearly thirty of their ministers, who, in the space of a few years, forsook their communion, and took orders in the church of England †. Most of them

* Doddridge's Tracts, vol. ii., pp. 277, 278.

† Among the names are found the following: Mr. John Hardy of Nottingham, Mr. Biscoe of Newington Green, Messrs. Seagre, Hasset, Stander of Newbury, the two Jacombs, Bellamy, two Billios, Horsley, Johnson, Hay, Maddox, Naylor, Myonet, Quinsey, Benjamin Owen, Orre, Harrison, Richards, Winter, Inman.

were young men, and nearly all of the Presbyterian denomination. Several of them were sons of ministers. In the catalogue stands the name of the Rev. Strickland Gough, the writer of "The Inquiry into the Causes of the Decay of the Dissenting Interest." The first and great reason, and which occupies the greater part of his pamphlet, is their ignorance of their principles, which he states with considerable energy, and at the same time, exposes the enormous faults of the established church, whose terms of admission are so opposite to truth and liberty that they cannot be viewed but with abhorrence. But, within a year after he wrote his book, he subscribed with his hand to those forbidding terms which he had reprobated with so much severity.

By their former friends it was remarked, that most of these young ministers loudly complained of a spirit of imposition among the Dissenters, which had arisen from the Salter's-hall controversy, and inveighed bitterly against the spiritual tyranny exerted over the consciences of ministers, in requiring to know their faith in certain doctrines; and they heavily complained of it, as a great discouragement in the exercise of free inquiry. A fair specimen of this complaint may be seen in the latter part of Mr. Gough's pamphlet.

Persons ignorant of mankind would say, "These men are to be depended on as champions for the dissent, as long as they draw the breath of life." But an adept in the knowledge of human nature will feel no surprise at their tergiversation. They were high-spirited youths, of a warm imagination, of ardent passions, an abundant share of pride, and little principle.

When they had emptied their quiver of all the shafts of liberty and free inquiry, they coolly went over to the other side. It is an edifying sight. Those ministers who strained at the gnats of the Dissenters, swallowed the camels of the Church. Those who spurned at the idea of declaring their belief of one article of faith, and turned away with indignation from the antichristian requisition, subscribe thirty-nine articles, and profess their unfeigned assent and consent to the whole contents of the Book of Common prayer to boot.

During this period, the church was unhappily the receptacle of the refuse of the dissenting ministry. When any of them became lazy, or proud, or vicious, and thus forfeited the affections and support of their flock, if they had but a smattering of learning they found it not difficult to obtain a place among the clergy of the establishment. Some instances there are of dissenting ministers that conformed, who would have been an honour to any community; but if all the names were written down, they might be contained in a nutshell. The examples are rare, in which it may not truly be said, "that the loss of them is a gain to the Dissenters, and the gain of them a loss to the Church*."

* Dr. Calamy makes the following reflection on the conduct of these ministers. "It was much taken notice of, that most of those who conformed, about this time, complained bitterly of a spirit of imposition which was working among Dissenters, and inveighed against it with freedom as a hardship and discouragement, should throw themselves into a church and legal establishment that was strict for full subscription, and left no room for the least alteration and abatement to such as were scrupulous and tender-spirited. This was, by many, apprehended to have an odd aspect, and not to be very consistent."

The writer of the London manuscript speaks his sentiments with greater boldness and freedom. "As to those ministers who appeared against what they called imposition in the Salter's-hall controversy, that is, against declaring their faith as to one article of Christianity only

Instead of lamenting the departure of such men, the only subject of lamentation is, that they ever had a place in the dissenting ministry, or that they did not carry along with them fourscore or a hundred more of the same spirit and sentiments with themselves. It had been a glorious riddance, as it would have delivered the nonconformists' communion from men who, instead of being a blessing to a congregation, were a curse.

By the author of the London manuscript, a very particular account is given of the number and state of the dissenting congregations in the metropolis, in a comparative view of them, in 1695 and 1730. In 1695, the number of meeting-houses occupied by the Pres- (though never offered as a term of communion, or of exercising the ministerial office), and strenuously defended the right of private judgment; it might reasonably have been expected the cause of Nonconformity would have received from them considerable encouragement, especially that they themselves, by their own example and practice, would have kept steady to it; but it proved the reverse; for of those Non-subscribing gentlemen, and such as had imbibed their principles, there have at least twenty persons, who called themselves dissenting ministers, conformed to the church of England since 1718; and if the laity had travelled the same road in an equal proportion, that interest would have received a greater shock. And here it is worthy of remark, that those gentlemen, who could not digest an article of faith, are on a sudden so enlightened, as to be convinced that it is their duty to subscribe thirty-nine, while those ministers, that could honestly subscribe an article, have, to a man, kept steady to the dissenting interest, and have been instrumental in supporting it with honour. It is evidently manifest, that if ever the dissenting interest and with it the power of godliness is preserved, the old Protestant doctrines must be maintained, and steadily adhered to; for wherever the contrary are given into, so far they are both in the way to destruction."

An extract from one of Bishop Warburton's letters to Bishop Hurd, will form a proper close to this note, as it shows his opinion of many of those who came to him for ordination. "It goes against my stomach, not to say my conscience, to furnish our dear mother church with such a household as are always ready to obey her call. But we will have a public invitation, though you, like the steward in the Gospel, will be forced to search the bye lanes and highways for the lame and the blind to partake of the entertainment."—p. 378.

byterians and Independents was fifty-seven, and of congregations, sixty; because six congregations were accommodated in three meeting-houses. In 1730, the number of meeting-houses was fifty-eight. Of these, twenty-eight were in the same state as in 1695; and the rest were enlarged or rebuilt in a more spacious manner, so that they could contain four thousand hearers more than in 1695. As to the state of the congregations, fourteen had increased, fifteen had declined, and twenty had remained nearly in the same state. Twelve had been dissolved; and ten new ones had been formed. The final estimate is that the number of Dissenters was at least as great, if not greater, in 1730 than in 1695; but as he thinks that London, during that time, had increased one-sixth part in its inhabitants, there was a decrease in proportion to the sum of the whole population. Two reasons he assigns for this decrease. The first was the influence of the Test Act among the superior classes. The second and principal one was the growth of error, Arminianism having crept in, which, he says, leads to Arianism and Socinianism.

If, from the representation which has been given, it should be supposed that the cause of dissent was losing ground, the inference will not be just. In many parts of England, Arianism could not find an entrance. It was like the hurricane of southern regions, which runs in streaks, carrying desolation in a line, but leaves the greater part of the country uninjured. There was a great multitude of flourishing congregations in most

parts of the country, which were increasing with a steady progress. This was so remarkably the case in Northamptonshire and the neighbouring counties, that Dr. Doddridge, in his answer to Mr. Gough, describes the state of nonconformity there, in the following terms. “ I know that in many of the congregations the number of Dissenters is greatly increased within these twenty years ; and the interest continues so to flourish, that I am confident some of our honest people, who converse only in their own neighbourhood, will be surprised to hear of ‘ an Inquiry into the Causes of its Decay.’ ”

A list of the dissenting congregations, by Daniel Neal, in 1715 and 1716, enabled us to give a statement of their number at the death of Queen Anne. The most accurate account which can now be obtained of them at the accession of George the Third, is from a more particular catalogue drawn up by Josiah Thompson, a minister of the Baptist denomination, in 1772. Though it was made twelve years after the close of this period, on considering all the circumstances, it seems highly probable, that it contains nearly the number of the dissenting congregations in 1760. Mr. Thompson’s statement contains the name of every town and village where a congregation met ; but as it would occupy too much room to give it in detail, it must suffice to specify the result of his inquiries, by marking down the number in each county. The first column expresses the whole number, the second those of them which were Baptists :—

Bedfordshire . . .	19	17	Brought forward	569	214
Berkshire . . .	14	5	Lincolnshire . . .	23	16
Buckinghamshire . . .	25	14	Middlesex . . .	73	15
Cambridgeshire . . .	23	8	Norfolk . . .	21	9
Cheshire . . .	24	3	Northamptonshire . . .	39	20
Cornwall . . .	6	2	Northumberland . . .	40	3
Cumberland . . .	17	4	Nottinghamshire . . .	17	11
Derbyshire . . .	33	8	Oxfordshire . . .	11	5
Devonshire . . .	57	13	Rutlandshire . . .	5	3
Dorsetshire . . .	24	2	Shropshire . . .	11	3
Durham . . .	14	2	Somersetshire . . .	53	15
Essex . . .	49	15	Staffordshire . . .	14	
Gloucestershire . . .	46	24	Suffolk . . .	32	3
Hampshire . . .	29	9	Surrey . . .	12	2
Herefordshire . . .	9	3	Sussex . . .	20	13
Hertfordshire . . .	18	9	Warwickshire . . .	24	10
Huntingdonshire . . .	12	7	Westmoreland . . .	3	
Kent . . .	46	30	Wiltshire . . .	40	20
Lancashire . . .	66	17	Worcestershire . . .	18	8
Leicestershire . . .	38	22	Yorkshire . . .	67	20
Carried forward	569	214		1092	390

SOUTH WALES.

Brecknockshire . . .	13	4
Cardiganshire . . .	18	4
Carmarthenshire . . .	40	12
Glamorganshire . . .	24	6
Pembrokeshire . . .	16	10
Radnorshire . . .	9	4
Monmouthshire . . .	21	14
Carried forward	141	54

NORTH WALES.

Brought forward	141	54
Anglesey . . .	1	
Carnarvon . . .	1	
Denbighshire . . .	5	3
Flintshire . . .	1	
Merionethshire . . .	4	
Montgomeryshire . . .	7	2
	160	59

England 1092 390

Total 1252 449

During this period, the denominations were gradually changing places in the scale of numbers. Presbyterian superiority, which at the beginning was so greatly pre-eminent, existed now no more. Such was the effect of error and indifference, and of the manner of preaching and living which they introduced.

The increase of the Independents was considerable. They continued stedfastly attached to those doctrines of religion which were held by the fathers of nonconformity. Of an Independent church falling into Arianism, perhaps an instance cannot be found : if at any time, a minister, or a member swerved from the truth, he usually sought refuge in a Presbyterian society. In consequence of this, their congregations, undefiled by the errors of the times, felt nothing of their desolating influence, but in most places, kept up, or increased their numbers. The Salter's-hall controversy was favourable to their cause ; for many of the Presbyterians, disgusted with their own ministers for espousing the party of the nonsubscribers, and suspecting the soundness of their faith, forsook their communion, and joined the congregational churches.

In the progress of the period, a new source of increase was opened to this denomination. When the old race of good Presbyterian ministers was removed by death, in many places young men of different sentiments and spirit were appointed their successors. Those persons who relished the doctrine of their predecessors, separated and formed congregations of their own, which usually assumed the Independent forms. Though these congregations were small at first, they gradually increased by additions from the world, and from the original hive, till they at last became more numerous than those from whom they derived their existence.

During the course of this period, not a few of the Presbyterian congregations adopted the Independent discipline, and joined that body. Where the orthodox

doctrine retained its full hold of the hearts of the people, on the decease or removal of their minister, though Presbyterians, they had recourse to the academies of the Independents, being certain of finding their students sound in the faith. The introduction of a minister of that denomination was followed by the adoption of the Independent discipline.

As the two divisions of Baptists differed from each other in religious sentiments, they were dissimilar in their outward condition. Arminianism, among the dissenters has, in general, been a cold, dry, and lifeless system, and its effects upon the heart have been commonly weak and spiritless. With the general Baptists, who avowed it to be their creed, this was remarkably the effect, and their congregations did not increase. Besides, from facts too stubborn to be bent, and too numerous to be contradicted, Arminianism has been among them the common road to Arianism and Socinianism. Their ministers and congregations were the first who openly professed these opinions, and their societies felt the decay which these opinions have uniformly produced.

Among the particular Baptists we are presented with a very different aspect of affairs. They were all Calvinists, but from the want of an education for the ministry, many of them were not very judicious, and some of them abused the doctrine. On the whole, the orthodox doctrine prevailed among the particular Baptists, and its influence appeared in the increase of many of their congregations, and in the establishment of new ones in different parts of the country.

On the rank or station of those who composed the body of Dissenters, what was said under the former period may suffice. If a nobleman or two still worshipped with them, it was the utmost of which they could boast. A few baronets remained. Some of the gentry were not ashamed of patronising the cause. In the army and navy there were officers who lived in their communion. But the strength of their body was found among the active classes in society. They could name many of the first merchants in England among their stedfast friends. From a considerable number of the manufacturers, they received the most zealous support. Tradesmen, of every class, formed their principal strength in every part of England. In many counties, a large body of farmers were attached to their principles. Mechanics, of all descriptions, composed their congregations in towns, and labourers in husbandry in country villages. From this enumeration, it will be seen, that the Dissenters consisted chiefly of those classes of people which are the bones, and muscles, and sinews of civil society.

Of the increase of wealth in the country during this period, the Dissenters had their proportion, and, from their frugal habits, probably more. Perhaps the Baptists, whose congregations at first were generally of the poorer classes, rose in their circumstances more perceptibly than either the Presbyterians or Independents. The Quakers were increasing considerably in wealth. Of the poorer classes in the community, the societies of the Wesleyan Methodists were chiefly composed; and the mass of Mr. Whitfield's followers was of the same order. In both there were persons of property, but

perhaps more among the latter than the former: the Foundry could not boast of a peer or a peeress in the list of its devotees, but the Tabernacle could of both.

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

TWO services on the Lord's-day constituted the ordinary measure of public duty. But, as each service lasted two hours, at least, and singing did not occupy so much time as it does now, the labour of the minister was fully as great as in the three services of the present day. If credit is to be given to the testimony of judicious men, the prayers entered more particularly into the cases of their hearers, which the briefer supplications of their successors will not now allow them leisure to do. The sermons also were exceedingly edifying; for they gave a clear and comprehensive view of the doctrines of the Gospel, and confirmed everything by proofs from the sacred Scripture, which the more attentive hearers were accustomed to mark down, and afterwards to read and examine carefully at home.

The greater part of the ministers took great pains in the composition of their discourses, if not to attain elegance of style, at least to collect important thoughts. Too many of the Independents discovered a strong partiality for the phraseology which had been in vogue about fourscore years before. Some of them, however, appeared with respectability among contemporary writers. By the Presbyterians, in general, more attention was paid to purity and elegance of style. The well-educated Baptists were on a level with the Independents.

To the private duties of their office ministers continue to attend, with the same assiduity as before. Pastoral visits were frequently made. The afflicted were considered as a peculiar charge; and the catechising of youth was a general practice, which some attended to in the course of the week, while others performed it, in public, at the intervals of worship on the Lord's-day, and excited considerable attention in the older members of the congregation. In every branch of duty they had been favoured with such patterns in their predecessors, that it was only necessary to follow their steps, which they had been taught to do from their early years.

Among those who embraced the new sentiments, the change in the external circumstances of worship was gradual. From the force of habit, and a desire to conceal their creed, most of them, for a time, proceeded in the former mode. But the influence was felt both by the ministers and their congregations; their fervour in worship decayed, and the length of the service was gradually curtailed. The other duties of a minister fell, by little and little, into disuse. Individual instances of remarkable diligence might be found among them, but the strictness of pastoral inspection, which had prevailed before, was now too commonly relaxed.

Towards the close of this period, public worship began to occupy the evening of the Lord's-day. In the cities and great towns, some services of this kind had always existed. But evening lectures began now to be introduced by the more zealous ministers in the

country, and they continued to increase, till they have become almost universal throughout the kingdom. Multitudes of thoughtless people, who would not have entered a meeting-house at another time, were attracted by curiosity to hear the Gospel preached. From the influence of divine truth, a succession of converts was raised up, who have proved the strength and ornament of the dissenting churches.

Some have objected to evening lectures, as interfering with the order of families, and impeding the exercises of domestic religion. The advocates for the practice say, that prudent masters of families may so arrange domestic duties, that they may be performed in the intervals of public worship, and not clash with the evening service in the house of God. All will allow that one half, at least, of the congregation, which attends at a lecture, would not have spent the time so profitably at home, and that they have been to thousands an inconceivable blessing. The general adoption of evening lectures was, most probably, derived from the Methodists.

In the course of the second period, it became the fashion, among the dissenting ministers, to read their sermons. On the Continent, both among Catholics and Protestants, the practice was long unknown. It early found an entrance into England, and became the mode among those who wished to be distinguished from the Puritans. Brief outlines of the sermon were made use of by some of the Non-conformists, to assist the memory; a few had the whole placed before them, which they looked at occasionally; but the greater part

made themselves masters of their subject, and preached without notes. By degrees, reading slipped into general use, with those who wrote their discourses at full length, not only among the Presbyterians but the Independents too; and there were few of the London ministers, in either of these denominations, who did not pore very much over their notes. Towards the close of the period, the practice was at its height. Not to use notes was, at that time, accounted Methodistical, and, in the metropolis, reading was the evidence of dissenting regularity. But there was always a body of men in the country, and some in London, who cultivated a freer mode, and when they had made themselves masters of their subject, laid up the ideas in order in their mind, and formed the language at the moment of delivery.

From the sermons published by the ministers of this period, an idea may be formed of the taste in preaching among the Dissenters. The discourses of Grosvenor, Harris, and Wright, present a specimen of the more orthodox Presbyterians; those of Thomas Newman and Chandler, of such as were somewhat more remote from Puritanism. In the sermons of Watts, Doddridge, Hurrion, Guise, and Matthew Clark, we see both the doctrines, and the manner of stating them, which prevailed among the Independents. Foster and Gale have left examples of the manner of preaching among the general Baptists; while Gill, Brine, Joseph Stennet, and Wilson, have handed down to us the models which the particular Baptists preferred.

From these specimens it appears, that in simplicity

of method there was a great improvement, and, in many of them, the language was considerably more modern. For talents and literature, they could vie with nearly all who had entered the dissenting ministry after the revolution; but, in some of the most substantial excellencies of preaching, they must yield the palm to the more eminent Non-conformists.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, a peculiarity in the worship of the Baptists, of both denominations, who, in the first period of their existence, refused to sing the praises of God in their assemblies, entirely ceased. During the earlier part of their existence, psalmody was generally excluded, as a human ordinance. But some congregations having adopted it, about the beginning of the former period, a violent controversy was excited*. The assembly of the particular Baptists, which met in London, in 1692, took the subject into consideration, and, without determining anything authoritatively, recommended it earnestly to the controversialists on both sides, to call in their publications, and cease from their disputes. Happily, greater deference was paid to their judgment than is common in such cases; and their recommendation produced a cessation from strife. The congregations being thus left to their own calm reflections, gradually introduced psalmody into their worship †. For a long time, however, in

* Mr. Isaac, a minister, who published a treatise against singing, with an appendix, charges the practice with error, apostasy, human tradition, prelimited forms, mischievous error, carnal forms, carnal worship, &c.—Crosby, vol. iv., p. 300. Had Christianity not been a religion from God, the folly of its professors would long ago have plunged it into utter ruin.

† Crosby, vol. iv., p. 266—271.

many of them, the melody of psalms and hymns could not be endured; and it was not till about the middle of the last age, that the praises of God were sung in every Baptist church*.

As this period was advancing to a close, a change took place in the worship of some among the Presbyterians, which too plainly proved them to be men of a

* The method employed by Mr. Keach to introduce psalmody into his congregation is worthy of record, as it marks, in the strongest colours, the inveteracy of opposition in some of the flock, and the patience and moderation of their pastor. Being convinced that it was an ordinance of Christ, for the edification of his church, he published a treatise on the subject, and also took much pains to enlighten their minds by private conversation. The first step to success, was the permission of the church to sing a hymn at the conclusion of the service, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. After stopping here for six years, leave was obtained to extend the psalmody to days of thanksgiving. At last, after fourteen years' perseverance in this method, by a regular act of the church it was, in a solemn manner, agreed to sing the praises of God, in their ordinary worship, every Lord's-day; only five or six members expressed their dissent. "This," says the historian, "if I am not mistaken, was the first Baptist church which practised this holy ordinance."

Though the church consisted of some hundred members, so far were they and Mr. Keach from imposing on the few who were dissatisfied, that it was agreed to sing when the prayer after the sermon was concluded, that those who could not conscientiously join, might go away. They were also assured, that the church would not be offended at their departure, "because they did not look on singing the praises of God as an essential of communion, nor for the being but the comfort and well-being of the church."

So highly offended, however, were the opponents of psalmody, that they forsook his communion; and, having influenced some others to unite with them, they formed a church of their own, in the worship of which the singing of the praises of God did not compose a part. In this sour and dumb way they persevered, till, on the death of their pastor, Edward Wallin, Mr. Weston was chosen his successor, who would accept their invitation, only on condition of their permitting psalmody to be introduced into their public worship. Whether their attachment to him was more potent than their aversion to psalms and hymns, or whether they were now become sensible of the impropriety of neglecting a divine ordinance, from whatever cause it was, they assented to his proposal, and have ever since tuned their voices to songs of praise, like other Christian congregations.—Crosby, vol. iv., p. 298—301.

different spirit from the founders of the dissent: they grew weary of extemporary prayer, and sighed for a liturgy. To some of the Non-conformists a ritual appeared tolerable, by none desirable. These modern Israelites in the wilderness now long to return into Egypt, to the cucumbers and the onions. In Lancashire, especially, the subject was agitated with the greatest eagerness, while it had its individual adherents in other parts of the country. By the orthodox, it was generally, or rather universally, opposed; it appeared as needless a thing as, that the moon should be made to shine in the day-time, in order to aid the sun. Its warm advocates were the ministers and people who had embraced the Arian and Socinian systems, especially the younger men who filled the pulpits in the Presbyterian congregations. To that denomination alone all the glory of wishing for a liturgy was confined. It was the gift of Pierce and Hallet to those who embraced their creed.

After a season of anxious expectation, the reformed liturgy made its appearance at Liverpool, in 1752. Natural religion was the substance of the book; of revealed, but little appeared: and the love of Jesus, the Saviour of sinners, and the Mediator between God and man, was rarely mentioned, and could scarcely obtain an ascription of gratitude and praise*. By the authors

* As the testimony of Job Orton is usually regarded with veneration by those Dissenters who have renounced the Calvinistic creed, the reader is referred to the following passage of his letters to dissenting ministers, in confirmation of our remark. "The Liverpool liturgy is finished. My chief objections against it is, that it is scarcely a Christian liturgy. In the thanksgivings, mention is made of Christ as a preacher and an example, but nothing more. In the collects, his name is hardly introduced. A few conclude, 'through Jesus Christ,' but most omit it.

of this remarkable production, it was loudly proclaimed that one design of it was to reconcile the members of the Church of England to the dissenting worship. But the pious people of that communion, who derived edification and comfort from the evangelical and devotional strain of the Common Prayer, must have found themselves in Nova Zembla, when the Presbyterian teacher read the Liverpool liturgy, with his frozen lips, and must have fled with shivering and horror from the place.

When this new liturgy was ushered into the world, it was eagerly embraced by some, who rejoiced at the prospect of laying aside extemporary prayer, which was become irksome. Where such ministers had been successful in their attempts to mould their congregation to their own ideas, it was silently submitted to, and, by a few as zealous as their pastor for the new sentiments, cordially welcomed, as the messenger of heaven. In some societies, the more serious part vigorously opposed its introduction. One minister, who was determined to use it without the people's leave, lost his whole congregation; they went over to the Methodists, and left him to read his liturgy to the

His resurrection is only once mentioned; and his intercession not directly. Not a single text that speaks of his dying for sin, or acting as a Prophet, Priest, and King. The Spirit is quite banished from this liturgy. I question whether his name once occurs, or whether a person who was to judge of Christianity only by this liturgy would know that there was a Holy Ghost. The people are taught, by the minister's address, to expect forgiveness, upon confession, repentance, amendment, forgiveness of others, and confidence in the divine mercy, but not a word of Christ or faith in him; nor, as I remember, any act of the mind, of which Christ is the object, nor any motives or considerations taken from the Gospel. Grieved I am, and very much so, to see such an almost Deistical composition."—vol i., pp. 80, 81.

walls. Another, having tasted the sweetness of a form of prayer, soon afterwards conformed.

While the liturgy was disgraced by such effects, it met with a strenuous opposition from some ministers, who had lived in habits of friendship with its admirers and its authors. Mr. Orton, besides his severe censures on the spirit and sentiments of the liturgy, objected to the very principle of forms of prayer, and stated his objections, in a letter to Mr. Seddon, a Socinian Presbyterian minister of Manchester, who was, as may naturally be supposed, one of its most strenuous advocates. To Mr. Orton's opposition was added that of Dr. John Taylor, of Norwich, who expostulated with the Presbyterian liturgists, on their conduct, and reminded them of the holy fervour and devout affections with which their Heywoods, their Jollies, and their Newcomes, used to offer up their prayers to God, without the need or use of forms. But, alas! he forgot that the Lancashire ministers of his day had departed from the principles which were held by their venerable predecessors. Sampson's hair was now cut, and his strength was lost.

Those ministers who had entered on their office in a professed belief of the doctrines of Calvin, had learned to pray without book, and were able to continue the practice, after they had embraced a more fashionable system, and habit made some of them averse to a different mode. But the younger preachers, who had been arianised or socinianised from their early years, in general found extemporary prayer an irksome task, and were extremely eager to take refuge in forms. Since that time, Presbyterian ministers, trained up in

the Arian or Socinian schools, have, from whatever cause, lost that skill, and fluency, and ardour, in prayer which characterised their Calvinistic progenitors, and have generally discovered an eagerness to receive assistance from a liturgy.

The support of the dissenting ministers continued to be derived from the voluntary contributions of their congregations. These furnished a moderate salary, not calculated to gratify the cravings of avarice, ambition, or sensuality: but their habits were frugal, their expectations as to worldly things were small, and with strict economy they were enabled to provide food and raiment for their families. The friendship of their hearers, heightened by the view of their zealous and faithful labours, supplied deficiencies, and introduced their children into life with singular advantages; so that it was generally observed, that Providence watched with peculiar tenderness over the families of men who, contented with a very moderate share of temporal benefits, applied the whole strength of their minds to promote the glory of God and the salvation of the souls of men.

By the bequests of pious individuals, benefactions were, from time to time, made to some congregations for the more comfortable support of the minister. Where these did not amount to a sum large enough for a salary, it was of service, especially in small societies where the people were unable to raise a sufficiency among themselves. But, wherever the benefaction was large enough for the minister's support, it has been found, with but few exceptions, to be detri-

mental to the cause which it was designed to cherish. When the people are considered as cyphers, they act as cyphers; they appear to feel but little concern for the welfare of the society, and have never displayed the same zealous activity and lively interest, as when everything depended on themselves. So uniform has been the operation of this cause, that where ministers, possessed of opulence, would receive nothing from their hearers as a reward for their labours, it is but seldom that such congregations have been in a flourishing state. A listlessness, and want of public spirit have pervaded the whole mass: so dangerous is it to exclude Christians from the performance of a duty.

These benefactions have proved injurious, in another way. When such a fund has fallen into the possession of an unsuitable minister, who, by his sloth, pride, or error, has rendered himself disagreeable to his congregation, they have no means of procuring his removal; though the cause of religion is decaying, and his audience dwindling away before his eyes. Had the minister's support been derived from the people, necessity would soon have compelled him to depart, and make room for another much better than himself. The great founder of the Christian church legislated with more than human wisdom for the prosperity and happiness of religious societies, when he framed his constitution in such a manner that the pastor and the flock should mutually depend on each other. This plan he judged to be safest and best for all; and he knew the human heart. Men have thought they could mend the system, and they have rendered the minister independent of the congregation. This indepen-

dence has appeared delightful to the pride of man, but what has been the consequence? The clergy have acted as lords over God's heritage; and the people have become indifferent about religion.

In order to aid in supplying deficiencies, a fund was instituted, not liable to the same objections as the other. It was provided by the benevolence of the Dissenters in London, who, greatly to their honour, made an annual collection for the benefit of poor and small congregations in the country. Two thousand pounds were raised, every year, in this manner, by the Presbyterians; and nearly seventeen hundred pounds by the Independents*. These sums could be distributed so as to give aid to diligence and zeal; and could be withheld from the indolent and undeserving. By benevolent individuals, too, donations were frequently given, to be distributed among such ministers as were most deserving of assistance.

Similar exertions were made among the Baptists, for the support of their cause. In 1717, some of the most zealous in the particular denomination, feeling the importance of making some provision for the necessities of their ministers in the country, exerted themselves to establish a fund for that purpose †. The

* Such, according to the London manuscript, was the state of the funds in 1730. The largest collection, among the Presbyterians, was at Salter's-hall, and amounted to two hundred and eighty pounds. Mr. Bragg's congregation furnished the greatest sum among the Independents: three hundred pounds was the amount of their collection.

† The state of the particular Baptists at that time is described by them in the following words. "We have observed for some time, with great trouble, the little union and correspondence that there is between those of that denomination; the great decay of the interest in some

writer of the London manuscript says, that in 1730, it amounted annually to five hundred pounds. It was composed, partly of the interest of sums of money which were given or bequeathed, and partly of collections made every year in their most opulent congregations. A like plan was soon after formed by the general Baptists, only with this difference, that the benefit of it was extended to "all who agreed in the practice of baptism by immersion upon a profession of faith, and appeared to be sober, pious, and faithful in the discharge of their work*." The amplitude of their fund, however, did not correspond with the liberality in the manner of its disposal: though some gifts and legacies were poured into it, it was but small.

To the generosity of individuals, the Dissenters were indebted for an acceptable addition to these general funds. In 1724, a legacy of five thousand pounds was bequeathed to poor ministers by Sir John Gayer, to be distributed for their relief. The will of this gentleman, who died on his voyage home from India, expresses, "That he did not leave it to such ministers as were for domination, but for such as were for the pious and charitable principles of the late Rev. Richard Baxter." His lady, who was zealous for the parts of England, and the difficulty they have to keep up the public worship of God with any tolerable reputation in other parts; the great want of able and qualified persons to defend the truth, and to supply those churches which are in want of ministers; the poverty and distress some, employed in that sacred office, are exposed to, for want of competent maintenance to themselves and families, and the frequent applications which are made to some private persons on these occasions, who have neither ability to help all, nor opportunity to inquire into the circumstances of every particular case."—Crosby, vol. iv., pp. 199, 200.

* Crosby, vol. iv. p. 204.

establishment, wished it to be given to the clergy. But two of the executors, knowing that Sir John attended the worship of the Dissenters, and that when he went to the East Indies, in order to transact some business for the company, he took with him a dissenting minister in disguise, as a chaplain, conceived that they would not be executing the will of the deceased, unless the money was given to the Non-conformists. After surmounting various difficulties, the legacy was at last obtained, and distributed among the necessitous dissenting ministers.

Dr. Calamy records, as an event of the following year, another instance of sacred benevolence by Mr. Barnes, a man in a humbler station of life, but whose bequest was more substantial and extensive. He was a hatter in Fleet-street, and having no family, after some legacies to his relations, he bequeathed the residue of his estate to Mr. Tong, Dr. Calamy, Dr. Wright, and Mr. Bradbury, to be distributed, at their discretion, among dissenting ministers, whose necessitous circumstances called for assistance and relief. The sum amounted to twelve thousand pounds, and was disbursed according to the intentions of the testator. Such instances of pious solicitude for the comfort of men, who were zealously labouring to promote the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom, lay claim to an honourable place in the history of Dissenters.

But Divine Providence, on which the dissenting ministers rested for their support, displayed its care in procuring them supplies from a still higher source. King George I., sensible of their attachment to his

family and government, was pleased to give them substantial tokens of his affection and bounty by an annual donation. The motion originated with Mr. Daniel Burgess, secretary to the Princess of Wales. Having received his education among the Dissenters, gratitude influenced him to endeavour to serve their cause. With this view, he mentioned his wishes to Lord Townshend, who represented the business to Sir Robert Walpole; and these two laid it before his majesty, who was favourable to the measure, and ordered five hundred pounds to be given for the use of the indigent widows of dissenting ministers. The first payment was soon after 1720. In the course of a few years, the gift as well as the object was enlarged, and five hundred pounds were directed to be paid half yearly, for assisting ministers too who stood in need of relief, or to be applied to such uses as those entrusted with the distribution should think most conducive to the interests of the dissenting body*. The donation was afterwards increased to two thousand pounds, and continues to be received for the same purposes to the present time.

From these various sources of support, the dissenting cause maintained its ground during this period. In instances where it failed, it was less frequently for

* When Mr. Burgess received the money, he paid it to Mr. Tong, Mr. Smith, Mr. Merrill, Mr. Clarke, Dr. Evans, Dr. Harris, and Dr. Calamy. It was generally obtained, but sometimes it was forgotten and passed by; for what cause was not known. An equal dividend was made to each minister, and it was distributed as he thought proper; but they generally showed their accounts to each other, that the same person might not receive assistance from more than one. When any of the ministers died, the survivors named another in his place. A charge was given that secrecy should be observed, but the matter gradually became public.

want of funds, than for want of evangelical truth, to stimulate the people to exertions for the preservation of that which, to a zealous disciple of Christ, is dearer than life itself.

SECT. III.—*Public Services and Associations of Dissenters.*

THE ordination service of the Dissenters was nearly the same in this, as during the former period; but some shades of difference were introduced, which it will be proper to describe. The practice, which prevailed among the Presbyterians, of ordaining several candidates at one time, and at a distance from their charge, was gradually laid aside. The Presbyterians, though first in number and influence, submitted to receive a lesson from the two other denominations, and adopted the custom of ordaining the minister to his charge, in the face of his congregation.

Before the end of this period, there scarcely remained an independent church which entertained an idea of the old method of ordaining a pastor by the members of its own body. How such a practice could ever have been thought of, except in cases of absolute necessity, it is difficult to conceive. There appears a strange incongruity in persons who are to be taught, to give a charge to him who is to teach them, and to point out the way in which he is to instruct them*. In few of

* The example of a popular ordination in the independent church at Wellingborough, which we gave under the former period, was repeated in 1723, when Mr. Grant was set apart to the pastoral office: but, on his declining the charge in 1770, their old ideas had become extinct, and Mr. Carver, his successor, was ordained by the ministers of the neighbouring churches, in the usual way.

the independent churches, was there a plurality of pastors, or elders to perform the service. To the ministers, therefore, of the neighbouring congregations they had recourse, and by them the person whom the people elected was ordained, or set apart to the pastoral charge, by prayer, and counsels for the proper discharge of the duties of his office. The imposition of hands was observed by some, and objected to by others ; but it gradually came into general use.

The following is an account of the method of ordination, as it was conducted among the more moderate Independents, during this period. It was drawn up by the pen of Dr. Doddridge, and its insertion will fully explain the manner in which this important service was performed.

“ It very rarely happens, that a minister among us is admitted to the pastoral office, till he hath spent some years as a kind of candidate for it ; and so far as I can recollect, more undertake it after, than before their twenty-sixth year is completed. But as our theological students generally employ either four or five years in preparatory studies, after they have quitted the grammar schools, so they are examined by three or four elder ministers, before they begin to preach. A strict inquiry is made into their character, and into their furniture, both with respect to the learned languages, especially the sacred, and also as to the various parts of natural and moral philosophy, but, above all, into their acquaintance with divinity ; and some specimen of their abilities, for prayer and preaching, is generally expected.

“ When the society, which generally proceeds with

entire unanimity in this great affair, has received what it judges competent satisfaction, the several members of it join in giving him a solemn and express call to take upon him the pastoral inspection over them; and if he be disposed to accept it, he generally signifies that intention to neighbouring pastors, whose concurrence he desires in solemnly setting him apart to that office.

“ Previous to the assembly for this sacred purpose, his credentials and testimonials are produced, if it be required by any who are to be concerned; and satisfaction as to his principles is also given to those who are to carry on the public work, generally by his communicating to them the confession of his faith which he has drawn up, in which it is expected, that the great doctrines of Christianity should be touched upon in a proper order, and his persuasion of them plainly and seriously expressed, in such words as he judges most convenient. And we generally think this a proper and happy medium, between the indolence of acquiescing in a general declaration of believing the Christian religion, without declaring what it is apprehended to be, and the severity of demanding a subscription to any set of articles, where, if an honest man, who believes all the rest, scruples any one article, phrase, or word, he is as effectually excluded as if he rejected the whole.

“ The pastors who are to bear their part in the public work, having been thus in their consciences satisfied, that the person, offering himself to ordination, is duly qualified for the Christian ministry, and regularly called to the full exercise of it, they proceed, at the appointed time and place, to consecrate him to it,

and to recommend him to the grace and blessing of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ, by fasting and prayer, generally accompanied with the imposition of hands; and the public work of the day is usually, so far as I have been witness, carried on in the following order, or something very near it.

“ It commonly opens with a short prayer, and the reading some select portions of Scripture, which seem most proper to the occasion. Then a prayer is offered, of greater length and compass than the former, in which most of our common concerns as Christians are included; which is sometimes, though less frequently, succeeded, by another of the same kind. Then follows a sermon on some suitable subject, such as the institution, importance, difficulty, and excellency of the ministerial work, the character and conduct of the first ministers of the Gospel, or the like.

“ After this introduction of a more general nature, another minister (usually one of the eldest present, who is a kind of moderator for the day), gives the assembly a more particular account of the occasion of its being convened. The call of the church to the candidate is then recognised, either in word or writing, or by lifting up the hand; and his acceptance is also declared. He is then desired, for the satisfaction and edification of the assembly, to pronounce his confession of faith (which his brethren have already heard and approved), and pertinent questions are put to him, relating to the views and purposes with which he undertakes the solemn charge, that he may be brought under the most awful engagements to a suitable be-

haviour in it; and an express renunciation of the errors and superstitions of the Romish church, generally makes a part of these answers, as well as a declaration of his resolution, by divine grace, never to forsake the ministry, whatever inconveniences and sufferings it may draw after it.

“ This being despatched, the presiding minister comes down from the pulpit, and prays over the person to be set apart. There is no particular form of prayer on this occasion, or any other, among us; but I have observed, that the person who officiates is generally led, in such a circumstance, to adore the divine wisdom and grace, in the constitution and revelation of the Gospel, in the appointment of an evangelical ministry, and in supporting the succession of it throughout all ages of the Christian church, as well as in vindicating it from popish corruption and bondage. Some notice is often taken of what may have seemed most remarkable in providence, with regard to the particular circumstances of the society then to be settled, and the person to be set apart to the ministerial office in it, who is then solemnly offered to the service of God, and recommended to his blessing in all the several parts of his work, which are distinctly enumerated. And this prayer seldom concludes without fervent intercession with God, for the Christian church in general, and all its faithful ministers of every denomination. And as those rising up to succeed in the work are often mentioned here, so I have had the pleasure frequently to hear the universities of our island, as well as more private seminaries of learned and pious education, affectionately recommended to the divine

protection and favour on such occasions, with all the genuine appearances of a truly Christian and catholic spirit. When that part of this prayer begins, which immediately relates to the person then to be consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, it is usual for the speaker to lay his hand on his head, and the other pastors, conveniently within reach (frequently to the number of six, eight, or ten), lay on their hands also, at the same time; by which we do not pretend to convey any spiritual gifts, but only use it as a solemn and expedient, though not absolutely necessary, designation of the person then to be set apart.

“ When this prayer is over (which often engages a very profound attention, and seems to make a very deep impression both on ministers and people), the charge is given to the newly ordained pastor; who generally receives it standing (as much as may be) in the sight of the whole assembly; and an exhortation to the people is sometimes joined with the charge, or sometimes follows it as a distinct service, unless (which is frequently the case) it is superseded by the sermon, or some other previous address. Another prayer follows, and singing having been intermingled, so as properly to diversify a service necessarily so long, the whole is concluded with a solemn benediction.

“ I know no method of proceeding on such occasions, more rational, edifying, and scriptural than this; and I hope, few, who believe anything of Christianity, can be so ignorant, or abandoned, as to make light of such solemnities. But, however any of our fellow-servants may judge, I have a calm, steady, and joyful assurance that transactions like these are registered in heaven

with approbation, and receive the sanction and blessing of the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*.”

Among the Baptists, little alteration took place in the mode of ordaining their ministers, since the former period. An ordination, different from that of the establishment, had scarcely found an entrance, either among the Calvinistic, or Arminian Methodists.

Associations still continued among the different denominations, but not with the same uniform degree of vigour, as during the former period. The Exeter assembly kept up its accustomed meetings, but without its former unity and energy of principle, and with a gradual decline, as the period advanced. Between 1721 and 1730, about ninety ministers attended the assembly. In Lancashire, the pastors of the numerous congregations had regular associations, and for a long time, maintained the mildest semblance of Presbytery, but they gradually fell into decay. Cumberland and Westmoreland were united in one association. About the middle of the period, a meeting was formed among the congregational churches of Norfolk and Suffolk, which was, for some years, attended by considerable numbers; but the spirit of union decayed, so that, before 1760, it was in danger of being entirely dissolved †. In Northamptonshire, and the neighbouring parts, an association of ministers subsisted, with considerable energy and advantage. The zeal of Doddridge gave life to such meetings, and some of his fel-

* Doddridge's Tracts, vol. ii., p. 253—257.

† Remarks on the State of Congregational Churches in Norfolk and Suffolk, pp. 48, 49.

low-labourers were men of equal devotedness to their Master's service.

In many parts of England, it is to be lamented that associations were unknown, and ministers had little intercourse with each other, in acts of social worship, or consultation for the general good. This charge falls with peculiar weight on a considerable body of the Independents, who will now, instead of praise, scarcely find indulgence for the motive which they assigned for their insociability. "It was their earnest wish, they said, to maintain the independency of churches, and guard against every infringement of their rights, from the interference of persons in other congregations, whether ministers or private Christians." Poor casuists they were, who could not distinguish between an authoritative Presbytery claiming powers of domination, and a voluntary association of ministers and members of churches, assembling for the enjoyment of social worship, to strengthen each other's hands, to kindle each other's zeal, to advance the cause of the Redeemer in their respective circles, and to extend the ordinances of religion to places where the Gospel was not preached. All these benefits, with the happy consequences resulting from them, were lost by their excessive scrupulosity and unreasonable fears*.

* "Several churches, associating together to hold meetings of their elders and principal brethren, for the purpose of worshipping God together, form an assembly on earth, that bears perhaps the nearest resemblance, we can imagine, of the general assembly above. And meeting together for fraternal conversation afterwards, to propose their difficulties, in order to receive such counsels and other assistances as they may be able to give, must be allowed to be extremely expressive of that tender care for each other, which members of the same body ought to

Among the Baptists, associations were maintained perhaps with greater vigour, but certainly with greater regularity. But the greatest praise is due to the Quakers, whose public and private meetings, for conducting the affairs of the body, although they required the sacrifice of much labour, time, and expense, were attended by the friends with that regularity, perseverance, and interest, which must put every other denomination to the blush.

The Dissenters in London still continued to maintain the meetings of the different boards; and they united in all affairs of importance to their common interests. From time to time, they also maintained a respectful intercourse with the government, as they were incited by the calls of interest, gratitude, and duty.

On the accession of George I., among the friends of civil and religious liberty who offered their congratulations, none appeared with more unfeigned joy and cordial satisfaction, than the Dissenters of the metropolis. On the 28th of September, 1714, the whole body of ministers went to court, with Dr. Daniel Williams at their head, who, in their name, presented to his majesty the following address.

feel. They have accordingly been found by experience to be extremely beneficial, and, in some cases, of the utmost consequence." "Such an association would have been extremely encouraged by Dr. Owen, who, in his book 'Of the true Nature of a Gospel church,'—p. 25, says, 'Churches should be in express readiness to convene on all occasions of common concernment;' and p. 255, 'If churches would meet frequently in synods, &c.'"—Remarks on the State of Norfolk Churches, pp. 48, 50.

“ TO THE KING’S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

“ The Humble Address of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers, of the several denominations, in and about the city of London, &c.

“ May it please your Majesty.

“ With thankfulness and joy, equal to the great occasion, we congratulate your Majesty’s peaceable accession to the throne, and your own and the Prince’s safe arrival; the merciful return of many ardent prayers.

“ When we recollect your Majesty’s descent from the king and queen of Bohemia, those renowned patrons of the Protestant religion, we cannot but adore the divine Providence, which has now rewarded their sufferings for that cause, in their royal offspring, with a crown that renders your Majesty the head of the whole Protestant interest. But your Majesty’s zeal for the same religion, your known affection for the liberties of Europe, and the rights of mankind, with your other celebrated virtues, give us the surest prospect that the blessings of your reign will be as extensive as your power.

“ The parliamentary entail of the crown upon your illustrious house, we have ever esteemed one of the greatest blessings procured for us by our late deliverer King William, of immortal memory. To this happy settlement we have stedfastly adhered, against all temptations and dangers. Our zeal herein has been owned to be very conspicuous, by those noble patriots who now surround your throne.

“ We hold no principles but what do in conscience oblige us to acknowledge your Majesty for our only rightful and lawful sovereign, and do every thing in our

power to support your title and government, against all pretenders whatsoever.

“Your Majesty’s wise and gracious declaration, for which we render our unfeigned thanks, does sensibly relieve us under our present hardships, and gives us ground to hope, that as we are inseparably united in interest and safety with all that adhere to the succession and monarchy as by law established, so we shall share in that protection and favour, which will make us happy with the rest of your subjects.

“We shall constantly pray for the long life and prosperity of your Majesty, for their royal highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and all the branches of your august family. May that God by whom kings reign, so help you to employ your mighty power and interest, that it may be your Majesty’s glory to protect the Protestant religion, to suppress the profaneness of the age, to heal the divisions of your people, to assert the right of the injured abroad, and to preserve the balance of Europe.”

To which his Majesty returned this gracious answer.

“I am very well pleased with your expressions of duty to me, and you may depend upon having my protection.”

The declaration mentioned in this address, was that which his Majesty had made in council, September 22, being the first time of his sitting in it, wherein his Majesty expressed himself thus :

“I take this occasion also to express to you my firm purpose to do all, that is in my power, for supporting and maintaining the churches of England and Scotland,

as they are severally by law established, which, I am of opinion, may be effectually done without the least impairing the toleration allowed by law to Protestant Dissenters, so agreeable to Christian charity, and so necessary to the trade and riches of this kingdom."

In the riots and tumults, which were soon after raised in different parts of the country, by the high church and tory party, the Dissenters were among the greatest sufferers both by personal insults and injuries, and by the destruction of their places of worship. Addresses being presented on the occasion by parliament, and various bodies in the community, the three denominations in London conceived it to be their duty to assure his Majesty of their attachment to his person, and family, and loyal subjection to his government. They, therefore, on the 16th of August, 1715, went to court with the subjoined address, which was presented by Mr. Nathaniel Hodges.

" TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

" We, your Majesty's most loyal subjects, think ourselves obliged, in duty and gratitude, humbly to acknowledge that seasonable protection which your Majesty has been pleased to give to those of our persuasion, from the late rebellious tumults, and for your gracious answer to your faithful commons, wherein they desire, that a full compensation be made to those, whose sufferings they so justly impute to their zeal and firm adherence to your Majesty and to your government. We can assure your Majesty, that no just occasion has been given by us to our fellow-subjects for any such

treatment; nor can the principles, which oblige us to dissent from the church of England, be a reasonable provocation to any who have the least regard to the common rights of mankind, or the rules of the Christian religion.

“ We desire nothing more, than to enjoy our civil rights, with a just liberty to profess our own religious sentiments, which we take to be a privilege due to all men. We have been always ready to assist the church of England, in defence of the Protestant religion, when in real and imminent danger; being agreed with them, and all Protestant churches, in those principles that began the reformation, and which alone can justify and support it. When there has been a design to introduce popery and arbitrary power, the Protestant Dissenters have generally been first attacked. Nor know we any other reason, why we have now suffered the outrage of papists, nonjurors, and other disaffected persons, but that they were sure we were a body of men, fixed in our duty to your Majesty, and lay the most exposed to popular insults, against which your Majesty, and your two houses of parliament, in your great wisdom and goodness, have given us a seasonable, and, we hope, effectual security for the time to come.

“ Whilst your Majesty’s government is disturbed at home, and threatened with an invasion from abroad, we can answer for those of our persuasion, that there are not any of them, whose principles and inclinations will not influence them to assist and support your Majesty and the Protestant religion to the utmost of their power. We look upon ourselves bound, by the strongest ties of duty, gratitude, and interest, to acknowledge and main-

tain your Majesty's undoubted right and title to the imperial crown of these realms, and to declare our utmost abhorrence of all attempts, either at home or abroad, in favour of a Popish pretender. May that gracious Providence, which has so signally appeared in bringing your Majesty to the throne of these kingdoms, continue to protect and defend your royal person and family against all attempts of your open and secret enemies."

His Majesty returned this most gracious answer:—

"I am very much concerned at the unchristian and barbarous treatment, which those of your persuasion have met with in several parts of my kingdom, and care shall be taken, that a full compensation be made to them for their sufferings. I thank you for this address, and you may be assured of my protection."

After an end had been put to the internal disturbances, and to the rebellion in Scotland, and quiet had been restored, the Dissenters again, on the 4th of March, 1717, went to court, with Dr. Calamy at their head, who in their name presented the following address:—

"TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

"The Humble Address of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers, of the several denominations, in and about the cities of London and Westminster.

"May it please your Majesty,

"Though we are very ambitious of professing the allegiance and duty we owe to your Majesty on every occasion; yet we never make these professions with

greater readiness and alacrity, than when your Majesty's government is unhappily threatened with any disturbance at home, or from abroad: such occasions giving us the best opportunity to express that zeal and fidelity, by which we are always desirous to be distinguished. As we offered up constant prayers to Almighty God for the safety of your Majesty's person, while you was abroad, and have since sent up our humble thanks, for your Majesty's safe return to these your dominions; so we reckon it our great felicity, among the rest of your faithful subjects, that your Majesty is in this your kingdom, before a rebellion, concerted between a restless faction and some foreign ministers, was to break out.

“ We congratulate your Majesty, with all humility, on the success of your councils abroad, which tends to secure your person and government from the malicious designs of your enemies; and that, as your Majesty, upon visiting your hereditary countries, saw some branches of your royal family in health, so, upon your return from them, you found your kingdoms in peace and tranquillity, by the prudent administration of his royal highness the Prince of Wales, and her royal highness the Princess recovered from a danger which gave all your Majesty's good subjects the utmost anxiety and concern.

“ We take the liberty to return your Majesty our most dutiful thanks, for those privileges which we enjoy in common with the rest of your subjects under your government, by which the honour, commerce, and credit of this nation are so far retrieved and improved, and

its security so much advanced; and also for the steps which your Majesty has been pleased to take towards repairing the damages, which several of our persuasion suffered by the late rebellious tumults, pursuant to the address of the honourable House of Commons, and your Majesty's most gracious answer.

“ We, unfeignedly, wish your Majesty as entire a possession of the hearts of all those of your subjects, that have been so unjustly and violently set against you, as your Majesty has of the affections of all of our persuasion throughout your dominions. Among us, we know not that you have an open, a secret, or a suspected enemy; nor any who, notwithstanding what they have suffered from your Majesty's enemies, or the neglect they have hitherto met with from others (for whose sakes, and with whom they have been always content to suffer), can be brought to the least degree of indifference about anything that concerns your Majesty, your family, or your administration. We reckon it our peculiar glory, that during the late unnatural rebellion, there was not any of our principles who did not express the utmost zeal for the suppressing of it, in their several stations and capacities.

“ Your Majesty's penetration will, we doubt not, easily lead you to discern, that such a body of your faithful subjects deserve to be distinguished in another manner than by marks of infamy. Their consolation is, that they were put under some of them, for what was hoped, at that time, would have been for your service: had your Majesty and the nation found it so, we had been the more easy. We think it the particular

honour of the Protestant Dissenters, that their strict adherence to the interest of your illustrious family, before your Majesty's accession, and their loyalty to it since, have drawn upon them so much of the fury of some of their fellow-subjects. We are not conscious what else could render us obnoxious to them, our principles being, as we hope, the most friendly to mankind, and amounting to no more than those of a general toleration to all peaceable subjects, universal love and charity for all Christians, and to act always in matters of religion as God shall give us light into his will about them.

“ We do not so much as expect, or desire anything that ought to give any one the least disturbance ; we only wish, that under your Majesty, as the common father of all your loyal people, those of our persuasion might not want a capacity, as we hope your Majesty will find they never want an inclination, to promote the true interests of the Protestant religion, and of their country.

“ May the great God continue to multiply his blessings upon your Majesty and every branch of your royal family ; and after you have many years ruled faithfully for God on earth, may you reign gloriously with him for ever in heaven.”

His Majesty's answer was in the following words :—

“ I thank you for your dutiful and affectionate address. I am fully convinced of the loyalty and zeal of the Protestant Dissenters. I will give order for the speedy payment of the damages they have sustained in the late tumults ; and they and you shall always have my protection.”

While the death of George I. caused sincere regret in all the friends of both political and religious liberty, the exaltation of his son to the peaceable possession of the throne gave the highest satisfaction; and none felt more than the Dissenters, who had enjoyed so much tranquillity under the former reign, and expected a continuance of it under his son. On the 4th of July, 1727, about a hundred of the dissenting ministers, in and around London, attended Dr. John Evans to court, who, in the name of the three denominations, presented the following address.

“ ADDRESS OF DISSENTERS ON THE ACCESSION OF
GEORGE II.

“ May it please your Majesty,

“ Whilst your Majesty’s royal declaration so tenderly mentions the sudden and unexpected death of your dearest father, all loyal subjects, as becomes their different stations, are mourning the loss of one common father to his people. The Protestant dissenting ministers can never forget his paternal favours and condescensions; and we beg your Majesty will give us leave, on this great occasion, to speak our affecting sense of that awful Providence which has finished a reign so important and gracious as that of King George I. By this mighty stroke, the world is bereaved of one of the wisest and best of princes, and the reformed religion of its chief glory and defence. But the immediate and peaceful succession of George II. dries up our tears. A Protestant heir thus coming to the throne of his father is a new blessing to Britain. A prince who gave the world so early a proof of his spirit and

courage in the field, who hath shown so much goodness since his abode in this kingdom, and given us such agreeable presages of happiness, upon his wearing the imperial crown of these realms. This consideration, together with that of a queen-consort, entirely Protestant, and universally beloved, fills our hearts with joy, that greatly and justly exceeds all our sorrow. By this means, the reformed religion gains fresh support and glory; and all transactions, for the peace and settlement of Europe, proceed with renewed life and vigour. Thus, when it pleased Almighty God (by whom kings reign) to inspire your glorious predecessor, King William, to lay the foundation of the Protestant succession in the illustrious and numerous family of Brunswick, he provided both an effectual relief of our present sorrows, and a lasting guard against future dangers.

“ We rejoice in the wise conduct and those kind disposals of Providence, which have tied up the hands of the declared enemies to your august house, so that they have it not in their power at present, by any means, to disturb either your Majesty’s proceedings, or our joy. This is such a confirmation of the kingdoms in your Majesty’s illustrious family, as we trust will for ever extinguish their hopes who have hitherto vainly struggled for a popish pretender.

“ On our parts, we can assure your Majesty of hearts full of loyalty and affection to your person and government, and, so far as belongs to our stations and characters, we shall not fail both to teach the duties owing to crowned heads, and practise them ourselves upon every occasion. It is with pleasure, we can further assure

your Majesty, that the Protestant Dissenters, we believe to a man, are in the same loyal sentiments. And we doubt not our continued share in those liberties which your Majesty hath graciously declared are most dear to you.

“ We rely upon your princely wisdom and care to do everything that may strengthen and unite sincere Christians and Protestants, and heartily wish our suffering brethren abroad the same blessings with ourselves.

“ We shall not cease to offer up unfeigned and ardent prayers to Almighty God, that your Majesty may long live the defender of our religion, laws, and liberties, and the succourer of the distressed; that you may be prospered in perfecting the great work now depending beyond the seas, that decaying piety may revive throughout your own dominions, and an universal probity of manners may be promoted; that with your royal consort, you may reign in the hearts of all your subjects, and in your royal issue, may reign from one generation to another; and that all manner of blessings may be multiplied on the house, person, and administration of your sacred Majesty.”

To which address his Majesty was pleased to return the following most gracious answer:—

“ I thank you for this loyal and affectionate address. You may be assured of my protection, and of my care and attention to support the Protestant interest.”

They were all of them afterwards introduced to the queen, and, at the common request of the whole body;

Dr. Calamy made a speech to her Majesty in the following words:—

“ May it please your Majesty,

“ We cheerfully embrace the opportunity that presents of expressing our duty to your Majesty; encouraged by that conjunction of goodness with greatness, and that commanding air of life and sweetness, that animate all who have the honour to approach you.

“ We sincerely congratulate your ascending the throne, which we hope will prove easy, being adorned with those noble virtues, and particularly with that benevolence to mankind, which are so conspicuous in your Majesty. When a regard to religion could prevail with a princess of your high birth, even in the earliest part of life, to slight the prospect of a crown which had visible danger to conscience attending it, that kind heaven at length should reach you forth another, as remarkable for its safety as its glory, is such a return of divine Providence, as we cannot but admire with great thankfulness, though without the least surprise, since he, whose kingdom ruleth over all, has fixed it as a standing measure of his government, that such as honour him he will honour.

“ May your Majesty’s happiness be lasting, and your name always carry a delightful sound to every British ear. May both your Majesties have an early accession of new glories and comforts; may your royal offspring, educated with so much care, and from whom we have such raised expectations, prove eminent blessings to the reformed churches, both at home and abroad; and may an infinitely nobler crown than this

earth can afford, and that will never be laid down, be added hereafter by the same almighty hand, by which your Majesty has been so remarkably distinguished hitherto.

“ These, madam, are and will be the ardent prayers of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, who, having nothing more at heart than the continuance and advancement of piety, truth, and love, loyalty, liberty, and property, promise themselves your Majesty’s countenance and protection.”

To the Dissenters in Wales, during this period, superior praise is due, for that which is so honourable in the character of a Christian—zeal in propagating those principles which they conceived to be of importance to the happiness of man. They who display none, must think either that their principles are not necessary to human happiness, or that they have little distinguishing goodness to entitle them to pre-eminence. If they are both excellent and necessary, then it will scarcely be allowed that the lukewarm professors believe them to be true. From such an accusation, the zeal of the Welch Dissenters completely shelters them.

In the beginning of this period, there were only forty-three congregations in the whole principality; at its conclusion, they amounted to a hundred and fifty. To this increase, the ardent labours of their ministers, and the additional supplies furnished by the seminaries, contributed in an eminent degree among the Pædo-baptists, while the Baptists appear to have advanced with equal steps. Some of the zealous ministers,

in their attempts to diffuse the truth through every part of their country, suffered much persecution from the rugged inhabitants, especially of North Wales. Arianism penetrated among the Cambrian mountains, but meeting with a less cordial reception there than in England, except from a few, it less retarded the progress of that cause which was founded on evangelical principles, and which has prospered or decayed as these have been embraced or abandoned.

CHAP. VI.

STATE OF RELIGION AMONG THE DISSENTERS.

To the ecclesiastical historian few scenes will afford greater pleasure than a view of the spiritual condition of the first generation in the dissenting churches. We now descend from the fathers to the children, from those who were trained up amidst the alarms and bitterness of persecution, to those who spent all their days in tranquillity.

Seldom has the church of God seen two successive generations eminent for piety and zeal. For fifty years after the rise of Non-conformity, few Christian communities have been able to boast of a greater number of excellent ministers and exemplary disciples in private life. What the religious state of their successors was during the second period of this history, will now be seen. A general uniformity of sentiments had hitherto prevailed, but a diversity now began to appear. For the sake of precision, therefore, it becomes necessary to consider the state of each denomination separately, in order to ascertain its spiritual condition.

The Presbyterians differed widely among themselves. By some, the old Puritanical system was retained, and in their sermons they brought forward the doctrines of the Gospel in the most prominent manner. Others,

though professing the same creed, did not so frequently introduce them, nor so fully enter into them. When they preached on any evangelical topic, they did it with propriety, and showed that they were sound in faith. But the ordinary strain of their preaching was more on general principles of religion, and they spent much of their time in explaining and enforcing the precepts of Christianity. The habitual display of the vital truths of the Gospel, for which the nonconformists were distinguished, was thrown aside. The generous wine was so dashed with water as to render the beverage rapid, unpleasant, and not nutritive. A third division of the orthodox was remarkable for the unexampled coldness of their sermons, and dulness of their delivery.

Some of their ministers allowed that they receded a little from the original principles, and took to themselves the name of Baxterians. Among these were some excellent men, whose labours were very useful: but the greater part, instead of resembling Richard Baxter in his ideas and manner of preaching, were only remarkable for almost omitting the peculiarities of the Gospel. This was also the distinguishing feature of those who called themselves Arminians. The parts of Christianity which are most allied to natural religion, seemed to please them best, and it was but seldom that they were found entering with affection and zeal into those evangelical doctrines which they professed to believe*.

* Heresy did not spread at first so rapidly among the Presbyterian ministers in the metropolis as in the country. The writer of the London Manuscript specifies the sentiments of all the dissenting ministers in London, about the year 1730. The Presbyterians, he classes thus:—nineteen Calvinists, thirteen Arminians, and twelve Baxterians. All the

Arianism, which was gradually extending its circle, furnished two classes of preachers. The first concealed their sentiments under ambiguous expressions, which their orthodox hearers might turn to the support of their own system, and the Arian converts might interpret in their favour. Many wore this disguise all their days, and the most cautious carried the secret with them to the grave. Some, when they had slipt out of the world, certain that their bones would not like Wickliffe's be torn from the tomb, and treated with indignity, left behind them a discourse, or pamphlet, which contained their real sentiments. Others had revealed the mystery to the initiated few, who, after the death of the teacher, told the tale of his heresy to the world. To express with due severity the odiousness of this procedure is impossible.

Those of the second class, though less numerous, were more honest: they boldly preached the Arian doctrine to their congregations. Socinianism was the child of Arianism; and it was not till the mother was come to maturity, that the infant was brought into the world. Some Socinians appeared before this period closed, but they concealed their convictions: not above two or three were frank and upright men, who told the people all their little faith.

The transition from orthodoxy to these descending systems, is a phenomenon which has a claim to notice.

Independents, he says, were Calvinists; twenty-seven thoroughly, and one somewhat dubious; three inclined to Antinomianism, and two, who were disorderly, did not deserve any particular remark. Of the two seventh-day Baptist ministers, one was a Calvinist, the other an Arminian. Of the sixteen particular Baptists, seven were Calvinists, and nine inclined to the Antinomian strain. Five of the eight general Baptists were Arminians, and three Socinians.

Some of the ministers appear to have taken Alvarado's leap, and reached Arianism at once. The alteration of their sentiments as to the person of Christ, speedily produced a change in all the rest. But generally it was by slower and more numerous steps. The deficiency of evangelical principles in some, and the coldness with which they came from the lips of others, seem to have prepared the way for the relinquishment of them, and for the introduction, first of Arminianism, and then of Arianism. Exeter, that devoted city, unhappily furnishes an example of the mournful process. In 1749, Micaiah Towgood, an Arian, was chosen a minister of the united congregations. Mr. Stephen Towgood and Mr. Walrond, the surviving pastors, both reputed orthodox, and who preached orthodox doctrine, received him with cordiality; and in compliance with his wishes, ceased to require a declaration of faith in the divinity of Christ, which had, till that time, been demanded of all who were admitted to the Lord's supper. Harmony subsisted among them, and they continued to labour together in peace*. Another instance no less remarkable occurred in London. Dr. William Harris, an avowed Calvinist, and who always preached according to that system, was, during the last twenty years of his ministry, assisted by Dr. Lardner, a quiet Socinian, as afternoon preacher; and at his decease, the congregation, on Dr. Lardner's refusal, chose Dr. Benson, a Socinian too, as his successor in the pastoral office. What the strain of Dr. Harris's preaching was, that the people, or he, could bear with a Socinian preacher on the other service of the day; what the

* Manning's Life of M. Towgood.

hearts and minds of the congregation were composed of which could thus blend together Calvinism and Socinianism, and after forty years labours of a Calvinist, could welcome a Socinian pastor, are certainly questions of painful curiosity. Scores of Presbyterian congregations thus admitted heretical assistants to their orthodox pastors, and heretical successors too. Before the close of this period, in most of their principal congregations, it became the order of the day.

For so mournful a change various reasons may be assigned. The controversy in the former period respecting the works of Dr. Crisp, is said to have proved injurious to the Presbyterian interest. The evils of the Antinomian system, Dr. Williams, one of their body, had exposed with great clearness and force. His pieces were much read by the young ministers of that denomination, and inspired them with horror for everything which had the name of Antinomianism, and produced a determination to keep at as great a distance from it as possible. In their fear and flight they unwisely cast away a part of the truth. The doctrine of grace had been abused to licentiousness, and they kept it out of the people's sight ; the righteousness of Christ had been perverted to a contempt of sanctity in heart and life, and instead of glorying in the truth, and enlarging on it with all the ardour of the most cordial delight, they either omitted it altogether, or only introduced it to show how much it might be abused. Through the unhappy influence of such sentiments, they gradually receded from the truth, and many of the Presbyterian ministers departed from the evangelical doctrines into

high Arminianism, and Arianism, and some at last into Socinianism.

To the nature of the discipline which the Presbyterians adopted, a part of the evil may be ascribed. Episcopacy permits every one to kneel at the altar who can say his catechism, and has been confirmed. Presbytery requires a knowledge of the principles of religion and a regular life : beyond these it has never professed to go, and the whole decision was left to the minister. As the natural result of the system, the children followed their parents to the Lord's table. A Presbyterian congregation was a society wherein the rising generation took the place of the preceding, in a succession of the same families. Though the fathers and mothers were pious, it frequently happened that the children were not, yet they occupied their place ; and such as were in respectable situations had considerable influence in the choice of the minister. To a person who makes a profession of religion, but is destitute of its power, some kind of appearance is requisite. Controversy answers the purpose, and comes in opportunely to the person's aid. It was now carried on in all its ardour ; and as the new opinion had something to recommend it to such persons, it was readily received.

In the state of their seminaries may be found another cause of Presbyterian heresy. The fears of persecution having vanished, and the fierceness of high-church bigotry abated, the office of a minister was respectable in the eyes of Dissenters. Though not lucrative, it was coveted by many ; and good parents often wished to see a promising son a preacher of the Gospel. From

his father's house he went to the seminary a well-instructed and well-behaved young man; no decided religion appeared in him, and it was not required. In some of the seminaries, controversy was too much in vogue. Those who adopted the new opinions, were eager to make converts. Such students too readily imbibed the poison, and came forth into the ministry, either concealing the face of error under the veil of truth, or openly avowing the Arian or Socinian system. In the life of Dr. Priestley, such a seminary is described with his own pen. Towards the close of this period, he studied under Dr. Ashworth, the successor of Dr. Doddridge. The tutor was orthodox; his assistant, Mr. Clark, was an Arian; the students were almost equally ranged under these two heads; and one of their great employments consisted in agitating the controversy, and contending in favour of their different systems. To those who know the human heart, it will excite no surprise that many of the young men should embrace with zeal the Arian creed. Hence the Presbyterian churches were filled with erroneous ministers.

In connexion with the seminaries, the state of the Presbyterian churches was considerably injured, by what was in itself laudable—a spirit of free inquiry. The itch for novelty spread far and wide; so that, instead of the sober exercise of freedom of judgment in divine things, the object presented to the view of impartial observers was—religious liberty run mad.

The misapplication of the word candour was more injurious, in its effects on religious sentiments, than can now be well conceived. It was supposed to possess indescribable virtues. Candour was sounded

from many a pulpit; and, like charity, it was supposed to hide a multitude of sins. An orthodox minister who had candour, was to believe that an Arian or Socinian was a very good man; and that if he was sincere in his opinions, and not rigid in condemning others, he ought not to be condemned himself. The influence of this idea was exceedingly pernicious; for it led to an indifference with respect to truth and error, which depraved both their sentiments and dispositions, which relaxed the springs of Christian integrity and conduct, and gradually brought them to call good evil, and evil good, to put light for darkness, and darkness for light. This was another of the Arian idols. Dr. Doddridge, whose softness of temper led him to more intercourse with ministers of the new opinions than most of his brethren, was sensible of the blindness of this boasted candour, and frequently mentions, with considerable feeling, that its possessors could exercise it to all but those who were the ardent believers of evangelical doctrine*.

The cause of religion among the Presbyterians sustained an injury from the intercourse between the orthodox and erroneous, in acts of ministerial communion. At the beginning of this period, they were all so much united in sentiments, that they could with

* Dr. Jennings having reason to believe that two of his students were tainted with heresy, objected to their continuance in his academy, and they were obliged to leave it; but the doctor's conduct is severely reprobated on this account, and he is charged with being destitute of candour, and an enemy to free inquiry.—Protestant Dissenter's Magazine, vol. v. Is he not entitled to a high degree of praise for refusing to bid God-speed, or to countenance persons who, instead of carrying to a congregation the pure Christian doctrine, and feeding them with the bread of life, would have preached destructive errors, and poisoned their souls?

pleasure officiate for each other. But Arianism introduced a new state of things. Where it was avowed by a minister, a separation usually took place between his congregation and those which continued in their former sentiments. But as in most instances the new opinions were gradually imbibed, and cautiously concealed, the bonds of former friendship were not broken, and between such men and the orthodox intercourse in acts of worship remained. If it should be pleaded, that, by this means, the erroneous ministers were put upon their guard, and kept from an open avowal of heresy, and that their congregations had an opportunity of hearing evangelical ministers, it must be admitted, on the other hand, that it was an unnatural union, and that it tended to make Arians think more favourably of themselves and their system, when they were thus acknowledged to be ministers of Christ's Gospel. It was a temptation, too, to the orthodox, not to bring forward evangelical doctrines so fully, when they were preaching to congregations which in general did not approve them. This charge used to be adduced against Dr. Doddridge, when he was invited to preach in some of the less orthodox congregations, in London and the great country towns.

Such were the causes of the injurious change which took place in a large portion of the Presbyterian congregations: it remains briefly to specify the state of religion, under the variety of sentiments which prevailed among them. Where the doctrine of the Puritans was fully and faithfully preached, the people felt its influence; believers were edified, and sinners con-

verted to God. Where the preaching, though pure, was dull and cold, the effect was lessened; coldness seized the people's hearts. Where evangelical truth was scantily brought forward, and but thinly spread over the discourse, which unhappily was the case with too many who professed the orthodox doctrine, its effects were still feebler, and there was less power accompanying the word; and in proportion as they receded from the pure Gospel, all beneficial influence decayed.

In those congregations where Arianism was preached, whether in a negative or positive way, the effects were such as might naturally be expected to flow from so great an error. Those men who first embraced it, as well as their adherents, boldly demanded,—‘What evil can possibly arise from having different ideas about a mere speculative opinion?’ They were not aware that it changed the whole system, and insinuated its spirit, not only into the branches, but into the root. When the Saviour is reduced from an equality with God to the condition of a creature, he is infinitely less powerful and compassionate. Hence as man has not so glorious a Saviour, his case is not so deplorable as the orthodox represent it to be; his guilt is neither so aggravated, nor his depravity so great. An atonement made by a creature will suffice for his forgiveness; and the grace of a creature, for such the Holy Ghost is said to be, will render him all the assistance of which he stands in need. The mercy of God in redemption is not so transcendent as the Calvinists believe; nor the love of Christ, in his humiliation and death, so wonderful.

From the influence of these ideas, the soul of the Arian preacher undergoes an amazing change. He has lower views of the Gospel in all its parts; his heart does not now dwell on it with delight; he takes refuge in other subjects, and, like Mr. Pierce, preaches practical discourses. But these practical discourses are not, like the morals of the Gospel, founded on its doctrines, and forming a compact system which commences with the regeneration of the sinner, and derives all its life from the influences of the Holy Spirit. He resembles more a follower of Epictetus, and treats of duties in an abstract philosophical form. The same effects are produced in the people's minds: like their preacher, they lose a relish for the pure simplicity of the Gospel, and the effect of its principles is not felt.

Though, among those who maintained the doctrine of the Trinity, there were different ideas as to the personality of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, from men's wishing to be wise above what is written, it does not appear that these differences produced any material effect, as to the efficacy of their preaching. The divinity of the Saviour was a firm foundation for the Christian doctrine to rest upon. But whenever the divinity of Christ was denied, and he was reduced to the rank of a creature, its benumbing influence was immediately perceived, the doctrine lost its power, and the rest of the system felt the change.

At first there was more religion in the congregations where Arianism was negatively preached, than those who consider only that system would be led to expect; but it was owing to the influence of the orthodox doctrine to which the people had formerly

listened; and it was maintained by the private exercises of devotion, and by the perusal of the writings of the most eminent Non-conformist divines. Though starved in the public ordinances, by the meagre discourses of the Arian preachers, they were feasted in their closets, by the volumes of Baxter, Owen, Flavel, Charnock, and Howe. But these Christians were gradually removed by death; and then the influence of Arianism appeared. The religious principles of those who remained, being less powerful, had a weaker hold on their mind. The exercises of secret devotion which were the delight of their fathers, though not neglected by them, did not produce the same degree of pleasure. Those books which were considered as the classics of the Puritans in the closet, gave place to others less spiritual and evangelical, but more congenial to the new taste. These increased the languor, rendered the closet less agreeable, and their visits to it either shorter, or more infrequent. The stimulus to every duty, formerly communicated by the ardour of public worship, ceased to be felt. Family worship now began to be offered but once a day; by many it was afterwards confined to the Sabbath; and with some, it fell entirely into disuse. The former strictness in the observance of the Lord's-day was broken in upon, by many things which their fathers had taught them to be works neither of necessity nor mercy. The domestic regulations, which had formerly been regarded as the characteristics of a dissenting household, were gradually thrown aside. The younger people in respectable families, if not the parents, learned to play at cards when they visited in the houses of the rich and gay, who now became their companions,

because they moved in an equal station of society with themselves. When they were visited in their turn, they pleaded hard with the old people, and too often prevailed, to be allowed to entertain their guests in the same way. By these fashionable friends, they were introduced to assemblies and balls; and, to crown all, they at length entered the doors of the theatre, and learned to frequent dramatic entertainments, like other genteel people of the same rank.

While, under the influence of Arianism, some were thus running headlong into the ways of the world which lieth in wickedness, others were as unprofitably occupied in speculating about religion. Novelty was their study and delight. To turn aside a text from its natural meaning, in order to favour Arianism or Socinianism, was a mighty achievement. As this could not, in many instances, be done with a tolerably good grace; and as many passages in the apostolical writings resisted the efforts of their utmost ingenuity, they had the sagacity to discover that the epistles ought not to be considered as having the same degree of authority with the Gospels*. They scarcely, in the course of this period, arrived at the perfection in this art which has been since attained, to reject chapters, paragraphs,

* I never knew a man make a distinction between the gospels and epistles but the reason was apparent. He was a Socinian; and finding little about the sacrifice and atonement of Christ in the evangelists (as there could not be much before our Lord's death), and finding the doctrine run through every page of all the epistles, he was willing to sink the character of the epistles, and lessen men's ideas of them, in order to support his favourite notions. We are to take our ideas of Christianity not from one part of the New Testament, but the whole of it; every part has equal authority.—Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers, vol. i., pp. 136, 137.

or verses, when they threaten to destroy a favourite system. Others of this class directed their attention to forms of prayer, and bade adieu to the extemporary devotions of their fathers. Where a liturgy forms part of the institutions of an establishment, no inference can be drawn from the use of it, as to the state of religion in that church. But when those who have long displayed a preference for extemporary prayer, grow weary of it, and adopt forms, especially such as those of the Liverpool liturgy, the person who attributes this to a decay of vital piety, to indolence of mind and coldness of heart, will not have fixed his arrow far from the centre of the mark.

But it may be said, is no exception to be made in favour of congregations in which religion flourished? An Arian congregation, under an Arian minister, where religion was in a flourishing state, perhaps cannot be named in the whole of England, since the day that James Pierce preached that doctrine within the walls of his new meeting-house, at Exeter. Religion may be said to flourish where the members of the society display its influence in sanctity of life, in spirituality of conversation, and delight in the ordinances of worship; where the rising generation appears impressed with the importance of eternal things, and regards the happiness of heaven as the highest object of pursuit; and where the careless and profane, awakened by the preaching of the Gospel to a concern for the salvation of the soul, eagerly inquire, "What must I do to be saved?" In such a congregation, the true ends of its institution are answered; and among the evangelical Dissenters, hundreds of examples are

to be found. But can the Arians point out such a one in their connexion, or can memory record an instance, since the doctrine found admission into the pulpits of the Non-conformists? Arianism was the grave of the Presbyterian congregations.

Among the Independents, the state of religion was so much more favourable, that it may justly excite in every reader a desire to know whence the difference did proceed. Instead of the diversity of sentiments which prevailed among the Presbyterians, the religious principles of the Non-conformists were maintained by the Independents, in all their purity: it may be questioned whether an Arian, or even an Arminian, was to be found in the whole body. There was no denomination in England which could boast of so much unanimity as to doctrine*.

Of their orthodoxy, their system of church government may be justly assigned as one powerful cause. An Independent church is, in its very nature, a society of converts. Descent is out of the question. None are admitted into communion but such as can give satisfactory evidence that they have believed in Christ, and repented of their sins, and walk as becometh the

* I see no necessary connexion between Calvinistical sentiments and zealous useful labours, but I have long observed, with great surprise, that our orthodox brethren in the church, and among the Dissenters, are in general most serious and active in their ministry, and those of freer principles more indolent and languid. I have met with few exceptions in the compass of my acquaintance. I do deliberately think that the more persons enter into the peculiarities of the Gospel, and the more regard they pay to the sacrifice of Christ and the influences of the Spirit, the more their own piety will increase, and the more zealous they will be to do good to the souls of others: and I think it not difficult to account for this.—Orton's Letters to Dissenting Ministers, vol. i., p. 90.

Gospel. By the church, which is composed of such persons, all affairs are managed, and no new member can be admitted without its approbation. When a pastor is to be chosen, an act the most important of all towards the advancement of religion, the power resides in the church, and in the church alone. Plain John, Thomas, and Andrew, Sarah, Margaret, and Mary, have their vote equally with the highest and most opulent in the society. Much contempt has been thrown on this method of procedure; but to it the Independents owe the continuance of the Gospel among them, in its purity, from generation to generation. Whether, from the year in which Non-conformity began, an Episcopal or Presbyterian congregation can be found in England, in which there has been, to the present day, a constant succession of ministers who have preached the Gospel (and let the doctrinal articles of the Church of England be the standard), may be at least a matter of doubt; perhaps there is a certainty that it has not. But, in Independent churches, examples without number can be produced; nay, but few can be mentioned in which it has not been preached, in continued succession, from the beginning of the dissent to the present hour. With not a few, it has been common to make the Independent mode of church government the subject of ridicule, and to exult in its numerous inconveniences. While human beings have their imperfections, the influence of these will operate to its disadvantage; but a system, which has secured the highest benefits, and preserved the purity of the Gospel, where Episcopacy and Presbytery fail, is entitled to the esteem of the wise and the approbation of the good.

Another means of preserving purity of doctrine among the Independents was, the regulation of their seminaries. In whatever relates to the instruction of persons for the ministry, there is nothing of equal importance with the character of the person taught. But to this, how little attention has been paid! The universities unfolded their gates to every youth who had learning sufficient to serve as a foundation for future pursuits, and the highest offices and dignities of the church were open to him, provided he had influence to procure them. Decency of conduct, freedom from vices, and some appearances of seriousness, were necessary to obtain admission into the Presbyterian seminaries. But, in the course of this period, the principle was recognized and acted upon, that no persons should be admitted into the academical institution of the Independents, but such as displayed a decision of character, and gave satisfactory and credible evidence that they were born of the Spirit, and that Christ was formed in their hearts the hope of glory.

Some young men, chiefly the sons of ministers and eminent private Christians, after passing through a course of education for the ministry, being found not to preach the Gospel with that ability, fulness, and zeal which the people desired, complaint was made to Dr. Ridgley, the tutor. On an investigation of the subject, a few good men formed themselves into a society for encouraging the education of young persons for the ministry; and they laid it down, as a fundamental maxim, that none should be admitted but such as, to good natural abilities, added soundness in the faith, and the character of a decided Christian. Such was the origin

of the King's-head Society, composed of private Christians only, from the Independent churches, and such was their object. It is to be regretted that their names have not been handed down, that they might receive that ample tribute of homage which is justly due to worth so distinguished.

The man who first exhibits and brings forth into action a general principle of truth or goodness, is to be ranked among the benefactors of the human race; and every such occurrence deserves to be marked as an era in the chronological chart, recording successive discoveries for the advancement of wisdom and happiness in the world. Here the general principle was, "that a person ought to be a Christian before he was admitted to be a student in divinity." Its plainness may be supposed by some to detract from the merit of those who adopted and exhibited it: but all general principles, when exhibited, are plain, and carry their evidence with them. Plain, however, as this principle is, it will not be found, in the voluminous pages of ecclesiastical history, that it was ever acted upon in any age, or in any part of the Christian church, till the King's-head Society made it the ground-work of their plan. It was immediately adopted in that seminary, and the result has fully justified the wisdom of the measure; for it has sent forth a greater number of ministers, sound in the faith, exemplary in their conduct, and zealous and successful in their labours, than any other in England. The principle has now so fully approved itself to the judgment of wise and good men, that the same regulations are adopted by almost every seminary among the evangelical Dissenters; and the

churches are reaping extensive and durable benefits from them. It may be considered as the counterpart of their church government, in admitting none but converted persons into communion. No method has yet been discovered, which tends so effectually to secure and to perpetuate a holy, faithful, zealous, and successful ministry.

From the other evils which desolated the presbyterian congregations, the Independents were in a great measure free. The rage for free inquiry, which was supposed not to be exercised unless the person adopted new opinions, was happily unknown. Being beyond the charities of candour, and generally considered as a sect excluded from her embraces, she was an utter stranger to them, and they had no intercourse with her. In general, too, they refused to hold any ministerial or Christian communion with such as they suspected to have erred from the faith, and would not receive them as ministers and brethren in Christ, or by their countenance and approbation bid them God-speed.

The preaching of the Independents was purely evangelical. Owen, Goodwin, Charnock, and Flavel, were their favourite authors, whose writings they studied, and whose manner a considerable part of them endeavoured to adopt. In some of the sermons and treatises published by them during this period, we perceive a portion of the energy and unction of the Non-conformists. Others drank too deeply of the spirit of controversy; and, alarmed at the sight of the heresy of the Presbyterians, spent too much of that sacred time in the confutation of error, which ought to have been de-

voted to the confirmation and application of evangelical truth. What congregation can be edified by the habitual discussion of religious controversies? The end is far more effectually answered by the peaceful representation of the doctrines of the Gospel in their evidence and use. In some of the Independents, there was a dryness and coldness in exhibiting the principles of Christianity, of which the former age had given no example. Of this unsavoury mode, their more pious hearers made no complaint; and they received great edification from the excellent truths which were delivered by their pastors; but whatever might be their peculiar taste, this mode of preaching was certainly not calculated to produce a general impression on the audience, and especially on the younger part. The want of application, or rather a deficiency in the application, was a very common fault. Instead of the full address to the conscience and the heart, which formerly prevailed, after a long discourse on doctrinal points, and frequently blended with controversy, a few brief inferences or remarks contain all that was spoken to the heart.

Another fault may be found with the preaching of some of the Independents in this period: it was too little in a devotional and practical strain. Watts, and Doddridge, and hundreds more, were entirely free from the charge; but against many it may be too justly adduced. They seem to have imagined, that if the doctrines of the New Testament be fully exhibited to Christians, they will feel themselves constrained to perform all its duties, without exhortation or counsel from the preacher on the subject. But the minuteness

with which the Spirit of God delineates every relative duty, and the speciality of motives by which they are enforced, teach good ministers of Christ, if they will but learn, a very different lesson.

Nor is the deficiency of taste among the Independents, and inattention to the graces of composition, to be entirely overlooked as a particle of dust in the balance. In a congregation of rustic and illiterate people, the style of the preacher, provided it is perspicuous, may be of little consequence. But when an audience contains many families of good education, and especially young persons of some refinement, the rudeness of the speaker may prove an injury to the best of causes. Virtue, in a Hottentot's sheep-skin, which sends forth evil odours, will not be so readily received, nor so cordially embraced, as if she were arrayed in clean and neat attire.

A contracted spirit in too many of the ministers of this denomination, must be considered as a still greater blemish. Their regards were confined within the walls of their own conventicle. The concern that every faithful servant of Christ should feel for the general interests of mankind, prompting to exertions for extending the knowledge of religion, appears to have slipt out of their mind; and they seem to have thought that they had no charge of a single individual of the human race, but those who composed their flock. The unkind idea had its influence on their preaching, which was chiefly addressed to the saints: perishing sinners had but a small portion of their labours.

It is to be regretted, but not concealed, that during this period there was among the Independents a class of

ministers, who did a considerable injury to the cause of Christ, by undertaking an office which they were not qualified to fill, and by occupying the place of such as were. Of their piety there was no reason to doubt; but a man may reach heaven as a private Christian, who is not qualified to conduct others to it, as a minister of Christ. They were inert, inefficient, cold, and lifeless as the grave. Their doctrine was pure, and they performed all the duties of their office with attention; but they were torpid and dull, and they seemed in every exercise to be half asleep. The abilities of some of them were below the standard for the ministry. Others were not deficient in this respect; but their souls were never roused to energy, and they were strangers to that mental exertion and spiritual fervour, which constitute an essential characteristic of a good minister of Christ. Under such men, congregations declined in numbers and in piety.

But, after every imperfection has been named, and due abatement made on that account, there was still more true religion among the Independents than in any other denomination: so great a number of judicious Christians was nowhere else to be found. In the devotions of the closet and of the family, in the sanctification of the Sabbath, in the pious regulation of their household, they preserved all the spirit of the Dissenters of the former age. The sober manners, the assiduous industry, the economical habits, the abstinence from the vanities and amusements of the world, which marked the character of the Non-conformists, still remained. The lives of multitudes were eminent for sanctity, and their deaths for peace and joy. Of

a considerable number of the orthodox Presbyterians, the same character may be given, with perhaps this exception, that they did not exercise domestic authority with the same degree of vigour, but indulged their children in a greater degree of conformity to the ways of the world.

The religious sentiments of the two divisions of Baptists, bore a close resemblance to those of the Independents and Presbyterians. Those of the particular denomination were all Calvinists: and the remarks which have been made on the Independents are applicable to such of them as were men of education: but the greater part were still (what is called) lay preachers—persons who were not trained up in academies for the pastoral office.

In the course of this period, this denomination received injury from the writings of Dr. Gill. He was the oracle of the body; and his books were spread extensively among them. The lay preachers were tutored by him. The doctor's supralapsarianism is well known, and he carried his ideas as high as any of the name. His eyes were perpetually poring on the divine decrees. The execution of them, in the works of redemption and grace, does not seem to have given him half so much pleasure as prying into the purposes and counsels of heaven: this subject is prominent in all his works. A scholar and a divine may peruse them with considerable advantage; but to those who are rude in theological knowledge, the danger of receiving injury is not small. The unlettered preachers read them with eagerness and delight, carried the ideas

into the pulpit, were often expatiating on the divine decrees, when they should have been enlarging on the revelation of a Saviour, for the deliverance of perishing sinners. There are, indeed, few subjects on which minds untutored, and unaccustomed to mental disquisitions, are apt to go so far astray. Nor does Dr. Gill himself appear to have escaped without injury. Zealous for what he conceived the honour of the divine decrees, he seems afraid lest God should save more than the elect; and would not venture to call a sinner to repentance. His numerous disciples inherited his fears and followed his example. He had also imperfect ideas of moral obligation, and was peculiarly awkward at connecting the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel. From the influence of his reputation, no inconsiderable injury was sustained by many plain ministers and plain people in that communion, who learned to be almost afraid of the commands of God, and received but a defective copy of the duties of a Christian. When such persons confine themselves to the simplicity of the Gospel, they often perform wonders; but when they plunge into the depths of the most intricate controversies, they shew that they have principles which they are unable to manage, and present the appearance of an unskilful rider mounted on an unruly horse which runs away with full speed, and never stops till it has thrown the unhappy man into a hedge of thorns.

Though these and other blemishes appeared among the particular Baptists, the evangelical doctrine was preached in purity by the majority. The increase of the number of their congregations is an evidence of their zeal. Most probably, their piety was not inferior

to that of their predecessors under the former period ; and if they be placed next to the Independents, in respect to the measure of vital godliness which prevailed in their congregations, and was displayed in the deportment of individuals in private life, it appears to be the station which they are entitled to hold.

The smallest portion of religion, at this time, seems to have been with the general Baptists. They were among the earliest to forsake their principles, and to run into the Arian system, nor did they stop there. Dr. Foster and Mr. Burroughs were known to be Socinians, at a time when no Presbyterian minister would have dared to avow the Racovian creed ; and they were too rapidly followed into Arianism by the greater part of the original body. What has been said concerning the preaching and conduct of the Arian Presbyterians is applicable to the general Baptists, but in a still higher degree. Some continued in their first principles, but they appear to have declined in piety.

To acts of pious benevolence performed by the Dissenters during this period, it would be easy to adduce undeniable testimony ; for they who continued to adhere to their original principles were not inferior in its exercise to those of the preceding age. Among other instances, the institution of the " Society for promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor," deserves particularly to be recorded. In the beginning of the year 1750, two shocks of an earthquake, the second succeeding the first in the space of a few weeks, and superior in violence, roused the inhabitants of the

metropolis, and filled multitudes with the most serious alarms. Good men, anxious to take advantage of the event, sought, in different ways, to render the serious impressions, created by the judgments of God, lasting and salutary. A public institution of extensive utility was the result. It originated with Benjamin Forfitt, a member of the Presbyterian church in Eastcheap, who conceived the idea, that, by the distribution of the sacred Scriptures and books of piety, among the poor and ignorant, the most essential benefit would be conferred upon them. In order to accomplish the object, he called together a few of his friends, to solicit their co-operation*. They formed their plan, entered into a subscription, and, in the space of a few weeks, commenced their active services by sending a donation of bibles and catechisms to Dr. Doddridge. To the credit of the age, the society increased in the number of its members, and the power of its funds. It has continued in a respectable condition to the present time, and by the distribution of many thousands of Bibles and Testaments, and valuable treatises on religious subjects, has been the means of illuminating multitudes, in every part of the country, with the knowledge of divine truth. The original founders of the society were evangelical Dissenters composed of Presbyterians and Independents; but it soon recommended itself to Christians of every denomination, and has ever since been supported by their united patronage †.

* Samuel Taylor, Henry Grew, Henry Cockrell, William Adkins, and Samuel Sheaf, were the founders of this institution, and their names should be recorded among the benefactors of their country.

† See Dr. Rippon's Discourse on the Origin and Progress of the Society.

While the disciples of Christ in the metropolis were thus exerting themselves, those in the country had not been less attentive to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. In 1741, Dr. Doddridge, whose soul was ever burning for the cause of God, formed an extensive plan for the advancement of religion, in congregations in dark parts of the country, and abroad. This plan he submitted to the associated ministers of Norfolk and Suffolk: it also received the approbation of the most eminent of the London ministers of various denominations; and the same year, at a meeting of all his brethren in the neighbourhood at Northampton, it was proposed; and in another, afterwards at Kettering, was cordially adopted, and began to be immediately carried into execution. It would do honour to any age of the church; and it will be read with peculiar interest by the most active and zealous disciples of Christ, at the present time. Every one who reads it will be fully convinced that the most eminent of the London, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Northamptonshire ministers of 1741, and Dr. Doddridge especially, would have rejoiced to see the plans and labours of the men of this day, and would have cordially co-operated in every measure for the propagation of the Gospel at home and abroad*.

* The plan is inserted in the dedication of his sermon "On the Evil and Danger of neglecting the Souls of Men." The following are its outlines: "That each minister agree to preach, one Lord's day, on family religion, and, another, on secret prayer; that pastoral visiting be more solemnly attended to; that every head of a family, at least once a year, have a solemn charge to attend to the business of religion in his heart and house; that the work of catechising be set up, in one form or other, in every congregation; that pious persons, who do not receive the Lord's Supper, be introduced into communion; that such as give offence by their conduct be excluded; that people be advised to enter into little

During this period, the Quakers continued respectable for numbers, though perhaps they were not increasing. The manners of that day, more sober than those of the present, were favourable to their stability. But to estimate the state of religion among them, is more difficult than in most other sects. Abstinence from the fashionable follies of the world, forms a part of what may be called the civil code of the body, and does not so certainly mark the spirit of religion. All the diversity of sentiments which has been mentioned as prevailing in other denominations, was to be found among them: the spring of devout principles was of course more or less powerful; and perhaps there is no community in which there is a greater diversity of religious character. A high degree of praise is due to those devoted persons in this community who travel

societies, consisting of six or eight, for religious discourse and prayer, and meet once a week or fortnight; that a small number of persons most eminent for wisdom, piety, and zeal, act as a stated council for promoting religion in the congregation; that neighbouring ministers, in one part of the land and another, enter into associations to strengthen the hands of each other by united consultation and prayer."

The doctor also proposed to consideration, "That further measures be entered into for the admission of young persons into the ministry." He added the following branch of a plan which he was introducing among the members of his own congregation; "Whether something might not be done in most of our congregations for the propagation of the Gospel abroad, and spreading it in the darker parts of our own land. In order to this, that pious people unite as members of a society; that they daily offer up some earnest prayers for the propagation of the Gospel in the world, especially among heathen nations; that they attend four times a year for solemn prayer; that some time be then spent in reviewing the promises relating to the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom in the world; that any important information of the progress of the Gospel from foreign lands, be communicated at their quarterly meetings; that each member contribute something towards supporting the expense of sending missionaries abroad, printing Bibles and other useful books in foreign languages, establishing schools for the instruction of the ignorant, or the like."—*Doddridge's Tracts*, vol. ii., p. 236—246.

from town to town, and from country to country, to call sinners to repentance, and to stir up the professors of religion to the spirit of the Gospel. From the remarks made by such as are most extensively acquainted with the Friends, it should seem that they sustain great injury in the frame of their minds, from the rejection of the Lord's Supper. That ordinance fixes the thoughts and affections of Christians on the grand foundation of evangelical truth, and has the most salutary influence on the heart and life. From the love of Christ in the redemption of sinners, the Quakers have been observed too often to wander, and by no means to dwell on it with the frequency and fulness which its importance and usefulness demand. In every thing relative to a pacific behaviour, and to abstinence from strife, contention, and bloodshed, none have imbibed an equal portion of the Christian spirit; and they have our cordial wishes that they could number among the members of their society, all the kings of the earth, their ministers of state, and their numerous armies.

On the state of religion among the Methodists, it is not necessary that much addition should be made to what has been already specified in the account of their origin and tenets. The character of a Methodist was in many respects new; he had no prototype before in England. There was a publicity in his religion which no other, Dissenter, Puritan, Churchman, or Reformer, had ever displayed. Wherever he was, and in whatever company, in the house, the market, the inn, or the road, he conversed about religion. His conversation

had this peculiarity, that he told of his former sinful life, his conversion to God, the alteration in his heart and conduct; and he plainly said to all, it was absolutely necessary that the same change should take place in them. He sought to be a universal reformer; and if there was reason to blame him for want of prudence, his honesty and his zeal entitled him to praise.

There is in every new community a superior energy, a peculiar fervour in the early days of its existence, which is heightened by an opposition from the world, which harasses but does not crush. This energy was evident in the beginning of Christianity; it appeared again at the reformation from Popery; it was roused at the æra of nonconformity; and at the close of this period was in full force among the Methodists. It is pleasing and commendable, but it gives the appearance of more religion than really exists. Enthusiasm sometimes lurks under it; and either occupies the place of piety, or almost pushes it out of the heart. A striking instance of this occurred among the Arminian Methodists. Mr. Wesley had introduced from the mystics the doctrine of sinless perfection. Some of the greatest professors among his followers conceived they had attained it; and when they were going to receive the Lord's-supper, insisted that the confession should not be read, because, as they were free from sin, they had none to confess. Where opinions so absurd are entertained, there is reason to fear that the religion of such persons is more in the imagination, than in the heart. Indeed in every revival of religion, even where the pure truth is preached with the greatest wisdom and sobriety, it

has always been found, that in very numerous instances the passions were moved almost to extasy, when the soul has not been truly renewed.

Like almost every new sect, the Methodists were at first exceedingly censorious, and inveighed with asperity, not only against the wicked, but against other Christians, though as truly devoted to God as themselves. By their leaders they had unwisely been taught this unchristian lesson, which is exceedingly congenial to the depraved heart; for the Scripture saith not in vain, "the spirit which is in us lusteth to envy:" it lusteth also to contempt and to dislike. Scarcely could two classes of good people be more different than the evangelical Dissenters and the Methodists. The former were a disciplined army of veteran warriors, long inured to service, and to whom every part of service was familiar; the latter were soldiers of the revolution, not so expert, but full of enthusiasm, and eager for the battle. The difference was displeasing to the Methodists, who charged the Dissenters with coldness and deadness, many of whom, for sanctity of life, and faithful performance of relative duties, were superior to themselves. The Dissenters, displeased at the charge, and provoked at the irregularities and imprudence of the Methodists, were not backward to retaliate.

But whatever might be the weaknesses or the faults of the Methodists, the spirit of propagation of religion which their system enjoined, and the unwearied endeavours of almost every individual to convert his neighbour, confer on them distinguished honour. It may indeed be questioned, if from the days of the apostles, the principle "that it is the duty of every Christian to

endeavour to convert sinners from the evil of their ways," was ever so fully acted upon as by the English Methodists of both divisions.

For their discourses, too, the Methodists are entitled to singular praise. The talents of the leaders are known; and some of their helpers were men of ability, knowledge, and wisdom, as well as zeal. With respect to the greater part of them, as to method, propriety of language, and delivery, they were exceedingly defective. But in the choice of subjects, and in bearing upon the great design of their ministry, they have scarcely been equalled. To convert sinners was their business and their object, and they kept it in view, with a steadiness and perseverance of which there has perhaps not been an instance among any of the sects in the Christian church. In the edification of believers they did not excel; but in plain, earnest, forcible, and highly impassioned addresses to the impenitent, they are a pattern to all. Their practice has since been adopted by the evangelical preachers of every other denomination, and it is sanctioned by its success.

CHAP. VII.

LIVES OF EMINENT PERSONS AMONG THE
DISSENTERS.SECT. I.—*Eminent Ministers.*

JOHN SHOWER.

HE was the second son of a pious and benevolent merchant of Exeter. Born in the year 1657, at four years of age he lost his father, but was reared up to maturity under the care of an excellent mother, and enjoyed the benefit of many pious relatives, among whom were Mr. Trosse, the subject of a former memoir, Mr. Benjamin Hooper, a servant of Christ, whose death was most extatic, and Mr. Downe, an eminent dissenting minister in Exeter, who marked the opening genius of this his nephew with great delight. When quite a child, he was observed constantly to retire to his closet for devotion, and to return in such a frame of mind as indicated that he had been conversing with heaven. He removed from a school in Exeter, at fourteen years of age, to the academy of Mr. Warren, at Taunton. Some time after, his mother went to London, for the sake of her children's education, and placed this son under the care of Mr. Morton, a distinguished scholar, at Newington-green, where Mr. Shower drew up and signed, in his eighteenth year, a covenant with God, which displays

extraordinary ardour of devotion. He preached his first sermon, two years after, to the congregation of Mr. Thomas Vincent, in Bishopsgate-street, on the words of the psalmist, "I have chosen the way of truth," which he applied not only to his own individual sentiments, but to the theme of his ministry, and the connection which he was entering into with the Non-conformists. When his liberal behaviour, many years after, gave rise to the rumour that he had conformed to the establishment, he referred to this discourse, and declared that his sentiments concerning the establishment and dissent were unchanged. His seriousness, which well accorded with his treatise on eternity, and the ardour of his affections, poured forth in a happy flow of eloquence, soon rendered him popular in London, where, says Mr. Tong his biographer, "there were, at that time of restraint, more persons of the best rank who adhered to the Dissenters than afterwards were found, in times of liberty."

The alarm of the popish plot having induced the Dissenters to establish, in 1678, an evening lecture against popery, at a room in a coffee-house, in Exchange-alley, Mr. Shower, with three others, preached to a very numerous audience, among whom were the first merchants in the city. In the following year, he was privately ordained, and being chosen assistant to Mr. Vincent Alsop, he was introduced to the company of many persons in high life, among whom, his accomplished manners tended much to recommend the religion he was ever eager to diffuse.

After two or three years, he was importuned, by the patriotic Sir Samuel Barnardiston, to accompany his

nephew in his continental tour. Reflecting on the prospects which presented themselves to him at home, he consented, and, about the year 1683, he went, in company with his pupil, Mr. Cornish, and a son of Dr. Thomas Goodwin, to Paris, and from thence to Lyons and Geneva. Charmed with the former diocese of Calvin, he stayed there some time, esteemed by the pastors of the city and the celebrated Turretine, whom he found, at first, prejudiced by the representations of the hierarchy against the Non-conformists, but left reconciled to the cause, which they saw, from Mr. Shower's statement, was founded in truth and religion. At Geneva, he formed also a lasting friendship with Sir Richard Blackmore. From thence he went to Turin, Florence, and Leghorn, where they embarked, in an English vessel, for Naples, which, after a stay of fourteen days, they quitted for Rome. Here the popularity of Odechalchi, who was called the Protestant pope, could not tempt our countryman to kiss the papal slipper; but the courage of one of the company, in refusing to bow to the consecrated host, was so resented, that it became necessary for them to leave "the seat of the beast," sooner than they intended. They went, partly by sea, to Venice, and, after having crossed the Alps, they embarked on the Rhine, for Strasburg; and, being snatched from the most imminent danger of death on the Rhine, they arrived in Holland, where Mr. Shower continued two years.

On his return to England, he resumed his place in the lecture in Exchange-alley, and soon proved that he had not, like many, purchased his knowledge of mankind, at the price of a tender conscience and communion

with God ; “ for the more he knew of the world (says Mr. Tong), the more he seemed raised above it.” His last sermon, on leaving England, was on the words of David,—“ If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both his ark and his habitation. But if he say thus, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.” On his return, his first sermon at the lecture was on the aphorism of Solomon ;—“ All things are full of labour, man cannot utter it ; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing*.”

* He used to relate to his friends, that when he heard the most celebrated French catholic preachers, they attempted, by strange methods, to work up the passions of their hearers on the sufferings of Christ. In the midst of a florid harangue, they would take a small crucifix in their hands, and addressing themselves to it, as to the Saviour, with all the arts of eloquence and gesture, would inflame the passions of the people, till the whole assembly burst into tears, in which they were most forward who, at other times, were most profane. Mr. Shower justly observed, “ How much is it to be regretted, those who behold the Redeemer presented to view in the way which God has instituted, the glass of the Gospel, should not discover more of that genuine affection for him which he so well deserves !”

He also related a very different scene to which he was witness. As the King of France was evidently intending to revoke the edict of Nantz, the ministers of the church of Charenton kept many days of solemn fasting and prayer. On one of these occasions, when they had been engaged all day in exercises of devotion, an eminent minister ascended the pulpit, and, in a lively manner, set before the people the danger of the ark of God. His heart was so full, that he could not go on, and there were floods of tears through the assembly, and an universal outcry. After a considerable pause, he resumed the discourse, but was again interrupted by excess of sorrow, upon which he turned his discourse into prayer, and, with wonderful enlargement and fervour, wrestled with God for his mercy, acknowledged his justice in whatever he should bring upon them, and, by a very solemn resignation, laid themselves and all their privileges at his feet, begging, that if he saw it for his own honour, to suffer the carcasses of that generation to fall in the wilderness, he would revive his work in the next, to which the whole congregation gave their assent by a loud—amen.

But the measures which James II. now pursued, induced Mr. Shower, with Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, Mr. Howe, Sir Patience Ward, and Mr. Papillon, to retire to Holland. Mr. Shower went to Rotterdam, where he was chosen evening-lecturer to the English church, and married the niece of Mr. Papillon. Though highly valued in Holland, and pressed to take on him a pastoral charge there, he returned, in 1690, to labour with Mr. Howe in London. It was observed, that two such ministers as then preached together were too much for one people, and Mr. Shower soon judged it his duty to accept the invitation of a declining church, which his popular talents so increased, that they removed to a larger place in Jewin-street, and, after ten years, to a new meeting-house in the Old Jewry. He enjoyed, for some time, the assistance of Mr. Timothy Rogers, and afterwards of Mr. Joseph Bennet. The labours of Mr. Shower were more than popular; they were useful, especially to the young, who are the hopes of the church of God. But, in the midst of his honourable course, he was seized with a fever, in 1706, which, for three weeks, threatened his life. Restored to the prayers and affections of his flock, he enjoyed an interval of labour and success, till a scorbutic complaint debilitated his frame; and, in 1710, he was attacked with a paralytic stroke. After suffering under the apprehension of being laid aside, "as a broken vessel, in which the Lord had no pleasure," he met death, with much delight, June 28th, 1715, in the fifty-ninth year of his age.

His "Reflections on Time and Eternity" have the high praise of being honoured by remarkable useful-

ness. His other publications were sermons on particular occasions, a sacramental treatise, and the "Memoirs of Mr. Henry Gearing."

DANIEL WILLIAMS, D.D.

Wrexham, in North Wales, gave him birth, about the year 1644. He was able to say, "from five years old, I had no employment but my studies; and, by nineteen, I was regularly admitted a preacher." Faithful to the voice of conscience, he embarked with the Dissenters when they were tossed with all the fury of the storm, and found the Redeemer faithful to his promise of recompense for every sacrifice made to his cause; for, when sectarian bigotry drove him from England, he found, in Ireland, both a field of usefulness and a mine of wealth. He became chaplain to the Countess of Meath, and was pastor of a church in Wood-street, Dublin, for nearly twenty years. Having married a lady, who added to her honourable birth and large estate, the superior endowments of intellectual eminence and ardent piety, as his religion was not injured, his usefulness was increased. But when the last acts of James II. gave warning to Protestants, that Ireland was designed to be the citadel of popery, he retired to London, the year before the revolution.

He instantly acquired an ascendancy in his new sphere; for, at a meeting of the Dissenters, to consider of a vote of thanks to James, for dispensing with the laws, he powerfully contributed to determine them against the measure:—"I am persuaded (said he) that the severities inflicted on Dissenters were rather for their resistance to arbitrary power than for their reli-

gious dissent; so that it were better to be reduced to our former hardships than declare for measures destructive to the liberties of our country." To the praise of courage, patriotism, and self-denial, which this speech deserves, it is not so easy to add that of judgment and political acumen. For what is so essentially at war with the liberties of our country as those penal laws which restrict the exercise of our natural rights in religion? Or how could political freedom be more effectually served than by the unrestrained exercise of religious liberty, which, for the short time it was insidiously conceded, contributed to shake the throne both of popery and of James? As to the Presbyterians' scruples concerning the king's right to abolish the religious tests,—when laws are contrary to God and nature, they have no hold upon the conscience; and a stern moralist might assert, that any one had a right to abolish them, who was happy enough to possess the power.

The revolution, however, extricated the Presbyterians from their embarrassments, and introduced Mr. Williams to the new king, with whom he possessed a useful influence in Irish affairs. In the year 1688, he was chosen pastor of a numerous congregation in Hand-alley, Bishopsgate-street, and from his friendship with Richard Baxter, was chosen to succeed him in the lecture at Pinner's-hall. He afterwards removed to that at Salter's-hall, in consequence of his controversy concerning Dr. Crisp's works. Dr. Williams sustained that contest with great equanimity and courage; and as a committee, appointed to investigate the charges of his enemies against his moral character, declared

him blameless, his congregation adhered to him with unshaken fidelity and affection.

Principal Carstairs sent to him from Scotland, in 1709, a diploma of D.D. inclosed in a silver box. After having stung to inexorable rage the Earl of Oxford, by a faithful remonstrance against intolerance and the Pretender, Dr. Williams was happy enough to escape the premier's revenge by the death of the queen, and to present the congratulation of the Dissenters to King George, on his accession to the British throne. Till within seven years of his death, the doctor was not prevented from filling the pulpit more than five Sabbaths, and at last, a short illness terminated his labours, January 26, 1716, in the seventy-third year of his life.

Dr. Williams deserves the high praise of enduring with honour a test to which many persons of superior promise have proved unequal; for affluence neither diminished his relish for the pleasures, nor cooled his zeal for the interests of religion. It was not less to his honour, that the provocations of controversy never alienated his affections from the objects of his first attachment, or betrayed him into tempers contrary to the meekness and gentleness of Christ. The ardour with which he defended what appeared to him the cause of truth, secured him the admiration of his friends, while the strength of his polemical talents was felt by his opponents. With a style chaste and lucid, but neither elegant nor vigorous, his works place him equally above the third, and below the first class of divines. His generous employment of a large fortune, to relieve the distressed confessors for truth, to assist his poor brethren in the ministry, and encourage

young ministers in their entrance on the work, rendered his life a public blessing; and his last will, warm with the affections of a heart devoted to charity, to literature, to dissent, and to catholic Christianity, has not suffered his usefulness to be terminated by the hand of death.

Besides the settlement to his wife, and legacies to his relations, he left donations for the education of youth in Dublin, and the support of a preacher to the native Irish; to the poor of the congregations in which he had been minister, and of the parish in which he lived; to several ministers' widows; to different Presbyterian churches in the country; to the college of Glasgow; to several institutions for the diffusion of knowledge and the propagation of the Gospel. He ordered a convenient building to be purchased, or erected, for the reception of his own library, and the curious collection of Dr. Bates, which he purchased for that purpose, at the expense of upwards of fifteen hundred pounds. His works were collected and published in five volumes.

DR. JOHN GALE.

He was considered one of the ablest ministers of his time among the general Baptists. He was the son of a respectable citizen of London, who sent him to the university of Leyden, where he continued two years, and by his rapid improvement, the result of indefatigable application, he gained the esteem of the professors, and was honoured with the degree of master of arts and doctor in philosophy, before he was nineteen years of age. He went afterwards to Amsterdam, and spent some years among the Remonstrants, under the

tuition of Limborch and Le Clerc. On his return to England, he pursued his studies with redoubled ardour, but did not begin to preach stately till he was thirty-five years of age, an example by no means to be recommended to imitation.

“The congregation to which Dr. Gale preached, is said to have been numerous and respectable. His voice was clear and melodious, his style easy and strong, his method exact, his reasoning convincing, and his deportment in the pulpit solemn. The object of his greatest care was to fix deeply in their minds and his own, that principle of sincerity on which he conceived our happiness, or misery, in a future state will depend.” Dr. Gale, we hope, did not misplace sincerity so grossly as his biographer has done. Paul was as sincere when he persecuted as when he preached the faith. It should never be forgotten, that sincerity is not even a Christian virtue, but when it is connected with divine truth.

Dr. Gale was admitted to the friendship of several men of eminence, both in church and state, and was a distinguished member of the society which met at Whiston’s primitive library, to investigate the doctrines and practices of the Christian church in the three or four first centuries, and to examine them by the sacred Scriptures.

In the Salter’s-hall controversy he took a very active part, and in a pamphlet defended the conduct of the Non-subscribers. The publication which gave celebrity to his name, was his “Reflections on Dr. Wall’s History of Infant Baptism,” in which he is generally acknowledged to have displayed considerable ability,

and what is not so common in that controversy—mildness of temper. He was meditating many important works, a translation of the Septuagint; an exposition of the New Testament from the pulpit; and “A History of the Notion of Original Sin, with a view to trace the rise of this opinion, and to shew its repugnance to the justice and goodness of God, whom he conceives it represents as doing what a wise and good man would have abhorred.” To succeed in this, he must have been able to destroy the historical records of every country and every age, for they are records of the temper and conduct of depraved creatures. The execution of these plans was prevented by the attack of a fever, which put a period to his life in December, 1721, in the forty-second year of his age. His illness was of short duration, but “borne with that calmness and patience which became a mind firmly possessed with a belief in the superintendence of a wise and good God, to whose providence he always resigned himself and his affairs.” Four volumes of sermons, with his life prefixed, were published after his decease*.

SAMUEL POMFRET.

He was born at Coventry in 1650. The only trait recorded of his father's character is, that “he was noted for the great power he had with God in prayer.” After acquiring classical knowledge in the grammar-school in the town, which was then in high repute, he was placed under the tuition of Dr. Obadiah Grew. Sent to the university of Cambridge, “the tenderness of his conscience (says his biographer) would not allow

* Crosby. Life of Gale. Funeral Sermons by Kinch and Burroughs,

him to comply with the customs there practised." He removed to the academy of Ralph Button, B.D. at Islington, where he completed his preparatory studies for the ministry.

The grand qualification, true piety, he received when he was nineteen years of age. The death of his exemplary mother was employed by infinite wisdom to produce in him repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The remembrance of so large a portion of life spent in impenitence, ever afterwards deeply affected his heart; and he used often to repeat the words of Austin, *sero te amavi domine*,—I loved thee, Lord, too late.

When he left the academy, he went to officiate as chaplain in the family of Sir William Dyer, in Essex. Feeling a strong desire to see the world before he settled with a congregation, he went out as chaplain of a merchant vessel carrying a hundred men, which traded to the Mediterranean. On the voyage, as two Algerine corsairs approached in full sail, to the attack, Mr. Pomfret being desired by the captain to go below, replied, "They are the enemies of Christ and his religion; I will remain on deck and live and die by you." He afterwards fought nobler battles, employed more legitimate methods to overcome the enemies of the cross, and displayed his courage in a way more becoming the character of a minister of Christ.

On their arrival at Smyrna, the English consul having lost a son, desired Mr. Pomfret to officiate at his funeral, according to the usage of the church of England. As he could not conform to it in his own country, he said, "I must be excused abroad; but if

you will accept my services in my own way, I am ready at your call." The consul giving a reluctant acquiescence, Mr. Pomfret spoke over the grave of the young man in a manner so pertinent and affecting, and prayed with such fervency and feeling, that not only his friends and countrymen, but Greeks and Turks shed floods of tears. At the conclusion of the service, the consul, embracing him with gratitude, exclaimed, "If this is your way, I judge it preferable to my own."

Another trait of his character appears in the following circumstance. Having purchased fifty pounds worth of hats, to dispose of as a venture abroad, he may be thought by many mercantile men to have carried them to an unprofitable market, when they are told, that he gave them all away to the sailors, on this engagement, as the stipulated price, "that they should no more profane the name of God." It will not be thought strange, that such a man produced a great reformation in the ship; and some of the crew gave the most satisfactory evidence that it proceeded from a change of heart.

Returning to London, after an absence of two years, he established a lecture in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which was very useful. But being invited to the charge of a congregation at Sandwich, he accepted it, and laboured there, for seven years, with indefatigable diligence and distinguished success. The persecution which raged in the latter end of King Charles II.'s reign, drove him away, and he was constrained to take refuge in London.

Prevented from returning to his charge in the

country, he formed a new congregation, which gradually increased till it became one of the largest in London. They met first in Winchester-street, and afterwards in Gravel-lane, Houndsditch, where a meeting-house was built, which, though it would contain fifteen hundred people, was crowded, as long as he was able to exercise his ministry among them. He told a friend, that he had eight hundred members in his church, and the next Lord's-day, he was going to admit twenty more. To furnish such a harvest of converts, the labours of the preacher and their efficacy must have been uncommonly great. To both these, his biographer bears testimony, for he says, "that he exercised his ministry with great constancy and almost incredible pains, and through the blessing of God upon his labours, with such success, that some think the like has not been known in these latter times." He seemed indeed formed for extraordinary things: "he had a marvellous way of striking the consciences of sinners. Few could attend his ministry without strong convictions and awakenings; multitudes of young people were greatly affected by it. His heart was warm and tender, his zeal as flames of fire, a fluency of apt expressions, with a clear, agreeable, and powerful voice; and, frequently, carried away by the ardour of his soul, he spoke in such a strain as moved his hearers in an astonishing manner. Mr. Baxter, one of the most powerful preachers in England, when discoursing with a friend about Mr. Pomfret's zeal, and courage, and pains, delivered it as his opinion, 'that God would bless him, and such as he was, more than others who excelled them in reputation as judicious preachers.'"

Sensible of the importance of an accession of knowledge, in order to the acceptance of his public labours, he was no less assiduous as a student. When not employed in visiting the flock, to the afflicted part of which he paid peculiar attention, he was to be found in his library deeply engaged in reading and meditation, with his pen in his hand, writing down every useful thought which occurred to his mind, in the course of his studies. So tenacious was he of every valuable idea, that he determined to secure it on paper, and this was his practice, by night as well as by day, when travelling on the road, and in the houses of his friends.

His devotedness to his Master was uncommon: he lived but to glorify God, and save souls. But what gave life and energy to the whole, was an unusual measure of the spirit of prayer. Such was his delight in it, that he rose every night from his bed, to implore a blessing on his ministry. It was "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, which availeth much."

He wore out an iron constitution in incessant labours for the salvation of souls. Arrived at threescore years and ten, numerous infirmities crowded upon him, but he bore his sufferings with great submission to the divine will, "and a lively hope of the infinite mercy of God through Jesus Christ." To one that came to render him assistance, he said with great earnestness, "Come, see, see a dying man under exquisite pains, and yet not afraid to die. Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." He died on January 11, 1722, in the seventy-first year of his age. He published a small treatise, entitled "A Directory for Youth," and a few sermons.

England sustained a loss from his not spending a portion of his time as an itinerant. In several parts of the country where he happened occasionally to preach, congregations were immediately raised. Of all the men who have appeared in the capacity of itinerants, Mr. Pomfret, in every grand qualification for that office, would have been next to Mr. Whitfield, and in some things his equal*.

BENJAMIN BENNET.

He was born at Willsborough, near Market Bosworth, Leicestershire, in 1674. A dangerous illness, almost in childhood, was the means of fixing on his heart impressions of religion, which were never afterwards erased. He immediately sought to do good to others, and formed a society of boys who met to engage in the exercises of devotion. Arrived at an age for applying to business, he expressed an earnest desire to be trained up for the service of the sanctuary. After going through a course of theological studies, his first station as a preacher was at Temple-hall, in the vicinity of his native place, from which he was called to succeed Dr. Gilpin, at Newcastle upon Tyne, in a very extensive field of labour and usefulness.

Mr. Bennet possessed very superior talents, which were exerted to the utmost in the discharge of his office. His discourses were weighty and striking. He at once instructed and moved his hearers, whom he commonly delighted with something new. His delivery, which was grave, yet pleasing, possessed a dignity and solemnity that had a most powerful effect. He took

* Memoirs of the Life of S. Pomfret, by T. Reynolds.

great delight in his work, and the importance of embracing every opportunity was impressed on his heart by a circumstance which occurred to him during a visit to London. Being importuned to preach at a time when he wished to be excused, Timothy Rogers, who was for several years oppressed with melancholy, addressed him in the following words : “ Oh ! preach, by all means preach ; I would fain preach, but cannot. How do you know but you may do some good, which you may never hear of till the day of judgment ? ”

In dispensing the Lord’s supper, he displayed an uncommon measure of a devotional spirit. His heart was so powerfully affected with the love of Christ, and he expressed himself with so much pathos and unction, that he was thought in that exercise to excel himself. The fluency, the fervour, the pertinency, the holy rapture of his prayers melted the hearts of the audience ; and his brethren when present have acknowledged that they were at once greatly edified, and deeply humbled at their own inferiority.

When a minister excels in public services, it needs scarcely be told that he has laboured hard in private. Mr. Bennet was an indefatigable student, and amidst the various duties of his office in a large congregation, constantly devoted fifty and sometimes sixty hours in a week to hard study. By this means, he collected a very large treasure of divine and human knowledge.

But that which infused life into his preaching and his studies, was the eminent piety which reigned in his heart. The first hour in the morning was spent in reading the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer ; and another in the evening. Every month, it is said, he

kept a day of extraordinary devotion, and passed the greater part of it on his knees. He observed frequent fasts with some of the members of the church at his own house, and sometimes more public ones in the congregation. If, after this, it be mentioned that he was an eminently wise, prudent, peaceable, and spiritual minister, who lived wholly for the honour of Christ and the happiness of others, and that he was useful by his counsel and influence to all the churches in the northern parts of England, it is only what might be expected from such a man.

But, in his fifty-second year, he was seized with a fever, which put an end to his valuable life. He was not only willing, but desirous to die. "Death," said he, "is no more to me than it is for a weary traveller, after a hard day's journey, to undress and go to bed. Some considerations, I confess, might plead for my stay in the world a while, but they cannot prevail with me to desire to live. I only desire, that if Providence sees fit to continue me, I may submit." And, at another time,—“ I have not one uneasy thought about myself; death is no awful thing to me, but will be a happy remove to the church above, where I have long been desirous to be.” He died on September 1st, 1726.

His "Christian Oratory," which has gone through seven editions at least, is the Dissenters' "Whole Duty of Man;" but unspeakably superior to that work in evangelical sentiments. "A Memorial of the Reformation," and "a Defence of it," contain both entertainment and instruction. "Discourses on Popery" are excellent. His "Irenicum" is not much known. Like many other good men, he was not aware of the pernicious

eous effects of Arianism, and he entertained a more favourable opinion of some of the dissenting ministers than they deserved. The general principles of the book are good, but not suitably applied. A volume on the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures has been already noticed. It shows a master's hand in every part, in a pleasing union of learning and piety.

JEREMIAH SMITH.

Jeremiah Smith is one "whose record is on high," though it is now difficult to weave a continued narrative of his life. He must have been born about the year 1653; but the seminary in which he studied for the ministry is not known, though it is certain that he entered upon the work amidst the terrors of persecution. He was first pastor of a church at Andover, in Hampshire, and afterwards succeeded Mr. Spademan, as co-pastor with Mr. Rosewell, in Silver-street, where he was also one of the Friday-evening lecturers. As this was a superior station among the Dissenters, his talents and devotion honoured the discernment of those who called him to it; though, in the decline of life, the failure of his voice occasioned a decrease of his hearers, and obscured his eminent worth.

Amidst the theological contentions of the year 1719, he stood forward the champion of the Trinity; for, being one of the four who composed the work entitled "The Doctrine of the Trinity stated and defended," he wrote the part which shows the harmony of the reformed churches in regard to that doctrine. Though he subscribed, and his colleague ranked with the non-subscribers, their harmony continued undisturbed, for

“they equally believed the truth.” Matthew Clarke, in his funeral sermon, says, “he was warm: and was there not a cause, in a day when the most pernicious and destructive errors, so highly derogatory to the Redeemer’s glory, abound among us? Yet his zeal was of the right stamp, conducted with prudence and discretion, tempered with meekness and charity, without rancour and bitterness. His zeal, like our Lord’s, did eat up himself, not consume others. He was for no fire from heaven, but that of ‘the spirit of judgment, and burning,’ to enlighten men’s minds, to lead them into all truth, and purge them from the dross of errors and corruptions.” In this manner he continued to preach the faith which others were attempting to destroy, till near seventy years of age, when he was taken ill on a journey, and, after recovering so far as to have fixed the next day for his return home, was seized with a violent convulsion, which, in half an hour, terminated his life, on the 29th of August, 1723.

With uncommon pathos, his loss was bewailed by Matthew Clarke, who describes him as a most exemplary Christian, displaying the influence of religion in every relation of life. He watched over his flock like a good shepherd. “He did not offer that to the Lord or his people which cost him nothing, as was evident to all that heard him. His composures were somewhat elaborate, smelt of the lamp, which, as I have been told by his nearest relative, often burned till after midnight.” His style is, however, remarkably perspicuous. and his discourses prove that he was not thinking of himself, but aiming solely at the consciences of his hearers. Amidst a volume of sermons, preached

before the society for reformation of manners, by the most eminent men of that day, one of Mr. Smith's shines with peculiar lustre. The exposition of the Epistles to Titus and Philemon, in the continuation of Henry, was by his pen.

MATTHEW CLARKE.

He was the son of the Rev. Matthew Clarke, who was ejected from the living of Narborough, in Leicestershire. The venerable father contrived, amidst all that he suffered for conscience sake, and he drunk largely of the bitter cup, to take peculiar care of the education of his son, whom he early instructed in the learned languages, along with several young persons who were studying under him for the ministry. The parent's wish, to see his son a preacher of the same Gospel for which he was suffering, was honourable to himself; but it seems to have led him to devote the child to the work, without waiting to see whether God approved, which, but for the grace bestowed upon the youth, might have been a fatal injury to himself and thousands more. After revolving the question seriously in his mind, and reflecting on the sacrifices which the ministry would require, the son was at last animated to comply with his parent's wish, by the consideration, that "they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever." On examining his own personal religion, he said that he had endured much distress for want of that remarkable change which many had experienced: but he dreaded, above all things, a hypocritical profession, and though, at first, his abstinence from sin, as well as

his attention to secret prayer and other duties, might arise from fear of offending his parents, yet he trusted that at last they sprang from a principle of love to God.

After he had acquired, not only Latin and Greek, but several of the oriental languages, in which his father possessed uncommon skill, and had added to them a familiar acquaintance with Italian and French, he went to study for the ministry under Mr. Woodhouse, a celebrated tutor, in Shropshire. Having removed to London, and joined a church there, he returned to Leicestershire, where his father preached to a congregation of Dissenters, at Little Bowden, near Market Harborough, for above forty years. Here young Mr. Clarke began his ministry, amidst the storm which raged in the year 1684. He was so useful, that very large additions were made to his father's church, while he was with him. "When he was present," says Mr. Neal, "at the declaration which the new converts made, of the powerful impressions received under his ministry, O how he would humble and abase himself before God in prayer, and set the crown of his success upon the head of free grace?" In the first three years of his ministry, he also laid the foundation of several congregations in that country.

He was, in 1687, called to preach at Sandwich, in Kent; where he was detained by the importunities of those who derived benefit from his labours; but, after two years, was recalled by the equal solicitations of his father and the flock in Leicestershire. Though he then settled with them, they were compelled, by a sense of duty, to give him up again almost immediately; for,

or having preached an occasional sermon in London, he was invited to assist Mr. Ford, in Miles'-lane. The metropolis was, at this time, peculiarly in need of young ministers; for while many of the old confessors were removed by death, and the threatening aspect of the times had prevented a sufficient number from entering into their field of labour, the alarm for the safety of Protestants had produced a sudden turn in favour of Dissenters, so that the people flocked to the meeting-houses, and the harvest was great, though the labourers were few.

At first, Mr. Clarke found many difficulties, among which, it is mentioned to his honour, that the sum which the congregation could raise for his support was so small that they were ashamed to inform him of it. But when he knew it, he said he had cast himself upon the providence of God, which had always provided well for him; and, as he had no reason to question their doing for him according to their ability, he should be satisfied with the will of God, and be content to fare as God should bless them together. About this time he was ordained, and the private devotions which accompanied the public service, proved him solicitous to be found accepted of the chief Shepherd.

Mr. Ford, the elder minister at Miles'-lane, dying in 1694, Mr. Clarke succeeded him as pastor of the church, and, taking the whole of the service, was, in a short time, the means of changing a declining cause into the most prosperous congregation in London. Seven or eight members were added to the church each month, and the place was crowded with hearers. About

this time, Mr. Clarke was chosen one of the lecturers at Pinner's-hall.

The popularity of Mr. Clarke induced the churches to make frequent applications to him for occasional services, which his ardent zeal for the interests of religion would never suffer him to refuse; but the excessive labours of body and mind, which perpetual preaching produced, injured his constitution more than he was willing to perceive; till, in the spring of 1707, he was confined by an alarming fever. The disorder was so violent and extraordinary, that the physicians knew not how to prescribe, and, after many unusual applications, they pronounced his case hopeless. Mr. Clarke settled his temporal affairs, and having taken a solemn leave of his wife, requested to see Dr. Watts, who visited him, and after witnessing, with exquisite delight, "his holy calmness of mind, and firm reliance on the merits of Christ alone for salvation, commended him, as a dying man, to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." The afflicted church appointed seasons of public prayer and intercession for the life of their pastor, which were continued for nine days, and attended by most of the ministers of the city. "I must confess," says his biographer, Mr. Neal, "I never was present at any solemnity of this nature, where there were such strong crying and tears to him who was able to save from death." The physician, who attended to watch the progress of the disease, though without any hope of administering relief, prescribed, by way of experiment, the strongest cordial that could be prepared, to be taken in a very large

quantity. Within a quarter of an hour he lifted up his hands and said, "I am persuaded this medicine is from God," for the benefit was immediate, and from that time he rapidly recovered. His appearance in the pulpit, on a day of thanksgiving which the church appointed, was peculiarly affecting. Mr. Tong preached first, on the words of the apostle concerning Epaphroditus,—“For indeed he was sick, nigh unto death, but the Lord had mercy on him;” after which, Mr. Clarke returned thanks to God, and then to his flock, and the ministers who had so affectionately interceded for him, and in a most impressive discourse, declared the solid satisfaction he had enjoyed in the prospect of eternity, and his resolution to consecrate anew to God the life which he had so kindly prolonged. He returned to his labours under the influence of the apostolic precept, “Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.” His vigour of body was, indeed, never completely restored; but all his former zeal blazed forth, and was crowned with renewed success.

On the death of George, Prince of Denmark, Mr. Clarke was deputed, by the dissenting ministers of London, to present their address of condolence to Queen Anne, who received him in her closet. Seven years after, Mr. Clarke's usefulness was interrupted by a fall, which confined him many weeks with a broken leg. Yet, after this, he undertook additional labours, accepting the place of Thursday-morning lecturer in Hanover-street, till his congregation, observing his decline, chose, in 1720, Mr. Timothy Jollie as his assistant. Toward the close of life, he was much depressed by the divisions which the Arian controversy

had introduced into the dissenting body. "But," said he to Mr. Neal, "I shall shortly be out of the way, I am not far from the place where the weary are at rest." He gained this blissful haven, on the 27th of March, 1726, in the sixty-third year of his age.

His commanding person and piercing eye, increased the effect of a melodious voice. He added the manners of a gentleman to the erudition of a scholar, and rendered his various accomplishments lovely and effective, by the graces of a Christian who lived only for God and religion. "If he triumphed anywhere," says Mr. Neal, to whom we are indebted for an excellent memoir of him, "it was in the pulpit." His subjects were well chosen, and he brought down the most sublime truths to the level of his hearers; for though his language was too chaste and correct to offend the most learned, it was so simple and lucid that it must have been peculiarly instructive to the young, the poor, and illiterate. Free from all that could be called cant, he might have been understood by those who never before heard the language of any religious party; while he preached the doctrines of the Gospel so fully, that it was evident he loved them, and with such fervour, that it was manifest he deemed them essential to the eternal safety of his hearers. With the courage of a lion in the pulpit, he was gentle and inoffensive in the private intercourse of life; and indeed was considered, towards the close of his days, to be chargeable with excess of modesty and timidity as his chief fault. He stood at the most awful distance from covetousness, which he regarded with horror; and as his house was that of a bishop "given to hospitality," his heart was

that of an apostle, which could not be confined within the sphere of his own immediate charge, but embraced the whole church of Christ upon earth. He corresponded with his brethren in different parts of the kingdom, and by his powerful interest in the city, collected large sums for their relief. He was one of the first members of the society of congregational ministers and gentlemen for the support of the Gospel in the country, and as it lay near his heart in death, his last sermon to his own flock recommended it to their support. The popularity which he obtained, not by empirical pretences, or unfaithful accommodations to a depraved taste, but by solid excellencies, which the Redeemer crowned with distinguished usefulness, followed him to the last; and while he drew vast crowds to the different places where he frequently preached, he never appeared least loved where he was best known; but left his own charge the most numerous and flourishing congregation in the metropolis. With the inspiration of friendship, added to that of genius, Dr. Watts composed a Latin epitaph which is inscribed on the tomb in Bunhill-fields, and at the request of friends, he gave an English translation which would furnish an elegant and spirited memoir of the deceased.

WILLIAM TONG.

As it was said of Cæsar, that by erecting Pompey's statue, he established his own, it may be observed, that Mr. Tong, though a wise and good man, has chiefly perpetuated his own memory by becoming the biographer of Matthew Henry. It is, however, due to him, who recorded another's excellencies, that those

who have known him only by the memoirs of the eminent commentator, should value him for his own worth. He was born on Midsummer-day, 1662, of pious parents, who resided at Eccles, in Lancashire, but was, by the loss of his father, when quite young, left under the care of an excellent mother, for whom he often blessed God. Mr. Tong was at first educated for the profession of the law, and commenced his acquaintance with Matthew Henry, when he also was pursuing the same studies at Gray's Inn. How much reason have we to adore the providence of God, who called these excellent men to preach the gospel of his Son, by which their usefulness has been perpetuated beyond the duration of human laws! Mr. Tong himself gratefully esteemed his mother, for the influence she exerted in causing him to be educated a Dissenter and a minister, and used to say, "Had I a son, who promised to be serious and faithful, I should prefer training him to the ministerial profession, above any other calling, however lucrative."

He entered the seminary of the venerable Mr. Frankland, in 1681, and began to preach, about the time of the accession of James II. He risked the loss of all things, and frequently preached to the poor people in the country, when he knew not but he should be recompensed at night by a jail. He became early acquainted with Philip Henry, and the excellent connexions of that apostolic man, who easily perceived Mr. Tong's worth, and welcomed his labours among them. But, being threatened with a prosecution in the spiritual court, he was obliged to desist from preaching in those parts, which probably increased his

attachment to the principles that had induced him to withstand some very pressing solicitations to enter the establishment.

Before Matthew Henry could settle at Chester, his biographer was preparing the way for him. Mr. Tong's usefulness was threatened with a sudden termination, by what were deemed symptoms of a consumption, but he was shortly restored to the flock, and on Mr. Henry's arrival at Chester, resigned to him the pastoral care.

He planted a church at Knutsford, in Cheshire, which he soon after left to be watered by others. The friends of religion, in this town, had long enjoyed the labours of Mr. Turner, the established clergyman, from whom those who were Dissenters in principle never chose to separate. But when they who had been accustomed to choose their own minister, found another chosen for them, who rigidly enforced conformity, many of them withdrew, and formed a dissenting church, of which Mr. Tong, by the advice of the two Mr. Henrys, and many other valuable friends, consented to become pastor. The success of his labours in this infant society was beyond his expectations, and the difficulties he dreaded, from the rancour and opposition excited by recent circumstances, were prevented by his prudent, pacific, catholic spirit.

After two years, he was again removed to succeed the celebrated Dr. Grew, at Coventry. His zeal and diligence advanced with the extension of his sphere; for beyond the city of his residence, he published the Gospel, preaching in many towns and villages, with

so much success that many new churches were formed. This itinerant spirit deserves the higher praise, as he was at the same time engaged in educating several young gentlemen of rank, and some ministers who afterwards were distinguished in the church of Christ.

On the death of Mr. Nathaniel Taylor, the congregation at Salter's-hall invited Mr. Tong to succeed him. He entered on this important station, in 1704, and was chosen one of the Tuesday lecturers. His reputation and his usefulness increased; he had one of the largest and richest congregations in London, which he improved to the best of purposes; for they were induced by his exhortations to make the greatest contributions to aid the poor churches in the country. His influence was also powerful among the higher classes, and many who were not Dissenters, deemed themselves honoured by his friendship, which he ever considered a talent entrusted to him for the Redeemer's service. In the disputes at Salter's-hall, he divided with those who approved of subscribing to the doctrine of the Trinity, and before this, had drawn up an introduction to the work written by Mr. Robinson, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Reynolds, entitled "The Doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity stated and defended." He was dismissed, by an easy death, to rest from his labours, March 21, 1727, at the age of sixty-five. When in his vigour, he was pronounced the prince of preachers; for his was the eloquence, which steals silently into the heart, like flakes of falling snow. His reformation sermon is, in point of composition, much superior to his biography of Shower, or Matthew Henry, though

the latter is highly valuable for laying open to us the soul of Henry himself, to the completion of whose commentary he contributed by an exposition of the epistle to the Hebrews.

THOMAS REYNOLDS.

He was the son of a pious citizen of London, who enjoyed the inestimable advantage of being a member of the church over which Mr. Howe watched. Designed for the law, Mr. Reynolds was sent to Oxford, where he found his tutor so disagreeable, that he prevailed with his father to remove him. On his return to London, persecution compelled him to resort to the establishment, where he derived so much benefit from the ministry of one good man, that his whole character was changed. He now wished above all things to become a preacher of the Gospel, among the Non-conformists; and when his father reminded him of what he must endure, he declared "that he had counted the cost, and if he might be successful in bringing one soul to Jesus Christ, it would yield him more satisfaction than thousands of gold and silver." Delightfully vanquished by such a reply, the father placed him at the academy of the learned Mr. Morton, at Newington-green, before he was sixteen.

The threatening aspect of affairs induced several young men to retire to Geneva, to which retreat they were accompanied by Mr. Reynolds. Here they attended the valuable lectures of Turretine, but Mr. Reynolds was distressed with the deepest despondency with regard to his own salvation, which would have incapacitated him for study, had he not been effectually

relieved by the conversation of an excellent Christian, who happened then to be at Geneva. He removed from thence to the university of Utrecht, to enjoy the instructions of the celebrated De Uries, professor of philosophy, and of Witsius, who then filled the divinity chair with deserved reputation.

On his return to London, Mr. Reynolds was immediately announced as a superior preacher, so that he was chosen to assist Mr. Howe, his former pastor. He was one of those who were set apart at the first ordination among the Dissenters. But while highly valued by Mr. Howe and his respectable congregation, he deemed it his duty to accept the invitation of a very small church in Cannon-street, which had been recently deprived of a pastor by the death of Mr. Thomas Kentish, an ejected minister. His reward soon followed him; for his congregation so rapidly increased, that in two years they removed to a new place of worship, which they had obtained leave to build over the King's Weigh-house, in Eastcheap. This must have been at that time a mighty undertaking, and that it should have been accomplished by a society which so lately consisted of but seventeen men, is a striking proof of Mr. Reynolds' success in his new sphere. He was chosen one of the Friday-evening lecturers at the Weigh-house, and was associated with those who preached the merchants' lecture, on Tuesday mornings.

The Salters'-hall synod, however, involved Mr. Reynolds, as well as many others, in trouble. Mr. James Read, his assistant, being opposed to subscription, which his colleague approved, the difference between them was heightened by some suspicions of Mr. Read's

orthodoxy, which occasioned his dismissal from the Weigh-house, July 20, 1720. This produced a pamphlet war, vexatious to Mr. Reynolds, who wished to devote the ardour of his character to nobler purposes than contention among brethren, and who was so much affected by the trouble of his mind, that he became dangerously ill. The absence of the shepherd was ungenerously improved by some, to entice away the flock, who, however, were so faithfully attached to him, that not more than a dozen followed Mr. Read, out of three hundred members who composed the church.

He returned to his work with fresh vigour and success, which continued to the end of his days; for as he had often prayed, with peculiar earnestness, that he might not survive his usefulness, the last time he appeared in public he administered the Lord's-supper, with as much animation and fervour as he had ever displayed. The reflections which had been thrown out against him, for the part he took in the Arian controversy, accompanied with insinuations that he repented of his zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity, induced him to pray that he might not die under a cloud, and thus bring a dishonour upon Christ, or cast a stumbling-block in the way of his people. Mr. Wood, his assistant, who attended him in his last moments, records the manner in which God answered his prayers. "I have been more than once with dying ministers, but never saw more of God's gracious presence, or so much of the light of his countenance. He exclaimed, 'O the joys I feel! My heavenly Father is carrying me to heaven. I am going thither on a bed of roses.'" "

He came to his happy end, August 25, 1727, aged sixty.

In his will, made a few years before his death, he says, " If Mr. Wood shall consent to preach a sermon, and shall think fit to say anything of me, let it be no more than this,—That not being able to do more good was the greatest burden which attended me through life; and the incomprehensible infinite mercy of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, is my only refuge, my chief support in the prospect of death."

DR. EVANS.

Dr. John Evans was born, about the year 1680, at Wrexham, in Denbighshire. He was descended from ministers for four generations, and only one link was wanting in the chain, up to the era of the reformation. His father was minister at Wrexham, but was residing at Oswestry, when the Act of Uniformity compelled him to relinquish the office of master of the free school in that town. His mother, who was daughter of Col. Gerrard, governor of Chester Castle, was one of those superior women who adorned the church of Christ at that period. From under the care of Mr. Thomas Rowe, he went to the seminary of Mr. Timothy Jollie. After leaving the academy, he resided at the seat of Rowland Hunt, Esq., in Shropshire, whose hospitable mansion was the resort of many of the excellent of the earth. In this delightful retirement, he performed the herculean task of reading through the five ponderous folios of Poole's *Synopsis Criticorum*. He afterwards accepted an invitation to settle at Wrexham, where he

was ordained, August 18, 1702, Matthew Henry assisting in the service.

Dr. Williams, hearing that Mr. Evans was invited to Dublin, sent for him to London, where he first assisted the doctor, afterwards became co-pastor, and at length succeeded him. Though differing in some points, which they amicably debated, their union was maintained with uninterrupted cordiality. Previously to entering on his new charge, Dr. Evans spent a whole week in devotional retirement. The time was not lost, for the eminence of his religious and pastoral character was exceedingly great, and his usefulness, in many instances, extraordinary. He was several years engaged in the Lord's-day-evening lecture at Salters'-hall, and afterwards in the merchants' lecture there. His congregation having much increased, they built a larger meeting-house in New Broad-street, Petty France, which was opened on the 14th of December, 1729. In the Arian controversy, he refused to subscribe to any articles, but maintained the orthodox sentiments. He was at this time engaged in a dispute with Dr. John Cumming, minister of the Scotch church, London Wall, on the importance of Scripture consequences, in which he acquired considerable reputation. The two universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen sent him, in a very honourable manner, the unsolicited diploma of doctor of divinity.

In the public services of the Dissenters he was often called to preside, and was appointed to assist in completing Matthew Henry's commentary, of which he supplied the notes on the epistle to the Romans so well, that Dr. Doddridge says, "the exposition of the Ro-

mans, begun by Henry, and finished by Dr. Evans, is the best I ever saw." He was for some years preparing to write a history of nonconformity, from the reformation to the civil wars, but by his death the work devolved on Mr. Neal. A complication of disorders terminated in his death, May 16, 1730, when he was in his fifty-first year. In his last illness, he said, "Though I cannot affirm, as a late venerable minister among us (Mr. W. Lorimer) a little before his death, that I have no more doubt of my acceptance with God than I have of my own existence; yet I have a good hope through grace, and such as I am persuaded will never make me ashamed. This corruptible shall put on incorruption. O glorious hope!" His discourses on the Christian temper form one of the best practical treatises in the English language. Of his sermons to young people, Dr. Doddridge speaks highly; and he who renders religion intelligible and lovely to the young, performs a valuable service to the church of God.

DR. EDMUND CALAMY.

This eminent writer on the subject of dissent was born in London, April 5, 1671, and descended from a father and grandfather of the same name, the former of whom was ejected from the parish of Moreton, in Essex, and the latter from the living of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, London. He was placed at Merchant Tailors' School, and obtained peculiar esteem from Mr. Hartcliffe, the master. He afterwards went to the academy of Mr. Samuel Cradock, at Wickham Brook, in Suffolk, where he procured, by his talents and worth, the esteem of several who afterwards rose to the highest posts in

the establishment. At seventeen years of age, he removed to the university of Utrecht, and studied under the celebrated professors De Uries and Grævius. His application to learning was so eager, that he made it a rule to spend a whole night every week in his study. When Principal Carstairs was sent into Holland, in quest of a person to fill a professor's chair in the university of Edinburgh, the reputation of Dr. Calamy procured him the offer which he declined. He returned to England with recommendatory letters from Grævius to Dr. Pocock, professor of Hebrew, and Dr. Bernard, Savilian professor of astronomy, by whose means he obtained leave to pursue his studies in the Bodleian library.

After studying the controversy, he determined to enter on the ministry among the Dissenters, and frequently preached in the meeting-house at Oxford, and in the villages around that city. In the year 1672, he was invited to assist Mr. Matthew Sylvester, minister of a Presbyterian congregation in Blackfriars, London; and two years after was ordained, with several others, at Little St. Helens. He was chosen to assist Dr. Williams, and elected one of the Tuesday lecturers at Salter's-hall. Mr. Vincent Alsop being removed by death from the congregation in Westminster, Dr. Calamy was, in 1703, called to succeed him. Here he saw among his hearers, persons of high rank, to whom he delivered the truths of the Gospel with much ardour and fidelity. The success of his labours rendered it necessary to build a larger place of worship.

His reputation as a preacher called him forth on many public occasions, and his publications induced

several distinguished persons in Scotland to invite him to that country, which he visited in 1709. He was received with the highest marks of respect and esteem, and was honoured by the universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh, and Glasgow, with the degree of doctor in divinity. But the zeal and ability which endeared him to the Dissenters, whose cause he pleaded, was accompanied with so much kindness and Catholicism, that he was held in high esteem by many who were admirers of the episcopal establishment. For this, indeed, the writer of the London Manuscript seems to blame him, observing, "that he warmly opposes those whom he terms narrow souls; and wherever his diocese reaches, encourages persons of great latitude." Many eminent men in different communions bewailed his death, which happened on June 3, 1732, in the sixty-first year of his age. His character may, in a great measure, be learned from his works, which were numerous, and are well known.

He published, in 1702, "An Abridgment of Baxter's History of his Life and Times," with some additions, and "An Apology for the Nonconformists." Shortly after, he answered Dr. Hoadley in a work, entitled, "A Defence of Moderate Nonconformity;" of which, in a little time, he published a second part, which was, by so good a judge as Locke, pronounced unanswerable. His "Nonconformist Memorial," containing notices of the two thousand ejected ministers, has been, of course, attacked by zealous conformists, but only to prove that it possesses more accuracy than could reasonably have been expected. Rich in agreeable and improving information, it possesses, beyond almost any

other uninspired volume, a tendency to produce the heroic disposition of Moses to choose sufferings with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

His pen was not devoted solely to the cause of Non-conformity, but was often employed to recommend the doctrines or duties of religion. He published, in 1722, thirteen sermons on the Trinity, which were dedicated to the king, who received them very favourably, and ordered the author to be presented with a donation of fifty pounds. The life of Mr. Howe, prefixed to the folio edition of his works, was written by Dr. Calamy. The numerous single sermons which he printed, evinced his solicitude for the interests of religion, unconnected with the peculiar tenets of any denomination. He left behind him a manuscript, consisting of three volumes, folio, entitled "A Historical Account of my own Life, with some Reflections on the Times I have lived in."

SIMON BROWN.

Distinguished for his talents, he was even still more interesting by the singularity of his afflictions. He was born in 1680, at Shepton Mallet, in Somersetshire. He early became an accomplished scholar, and began to preach before he was twenty years of age. His first pastoral charge was at Portsmouth, where, at that time, a numerous congregation of Dissenters maintained the doctrines of the cross; but he removed to London in 1716, and became pastor of the church in the Old Jewry, which highly esteemed his character, and flourished under his care.

The death of his wife and only son, in 1722, gave

such a shock to his exquisite sensibility, that it has been considered as the cause of his severe visitation, for which, however, a different reason has been assigned. A complete mental derangement, at first, discovered all the violent symptoms of distraction, but afterwards settled down into a most peculiar species of melancholy. He not only abandoned for ever the labours of the ministry, but obstinately refused, even when he appeared rational, to join in any exercise of devotion, whether public or private. After his afflicted friends had long urged him to tell the reason of a conduct so contrary to his former dispositions, he reluctantly informed them that he had fallen under the peculiar displeasure of God, who had caused his rational soul gradually to perish, and left him only an animal life, like that of the brutes; that though he retained the human shape, and a faculty of speaking in a manner which appeared to others rational, yet he had, all the while, no more notion of what he said than a parrot; that it would, therefore, be profane in him to pray, and incongruous to be present at the prayers of others. Viewing himself as divested of a human soul, he conceived that he was no longer a moral agent, the proper subject of either reward or punishment, and persisted in this strain of thought and conversation till death dispelled the illusion.

The congregation at the Old Jewry, having lost all hopes of his recovery, chose Mr. Samuel Chandler to his vacant charge. But they contributed three hundred pounds to aid the fortune with which Mr. Brown retired to Shepton Mallet. Here he lived seven years, clinging to his melancholy persuasion of being

a mere brute in human form, while he displayed not merely a rational soul, but one of a superior order, by various works of taste, learning, and argument. For his own amusement, he translated the Greek and Latin poets into English verse, in which he has been followed by Cowper, a brother in affliction, but a far greater poet. He wrote also books for the education of children, and collected the *themata* of the Greek and Latin tongues to facilitate the knowledge of the classics.

But he chastised the abuse of reason in others, as well as proved its vigorous existence in himself, by two works in defence of Christianity against the Deists. The year before he died, he answered "Woolston's fifth Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour," in a work, entitled "A Fit Rebuke for a Ludicrous Infidel, with a preface concerning the prosecution of such writers by the civil power." This answer is deemed equal to any which Woolston received, and a fine exemplification of the inspired precept, "answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." The preface forms an excellent apology for the freedom of the press. His life was to the last as useful as it was melancholy; for in the year in which he died, he produced his books against Tindal, entitled "A Defence of the Religion of Nature and the Christian Revelation, against the defective Account of the one and the Exceptions against the other," in a book entitled, "Christianity as old as the Creation." The Deistical controversy is said to have produced nothing superior to this volume, which was dedicated to Queen Caroline, in such an address as his friends deemed it necessary to suppress, lest it should prevent the suc-

cess of the work. But Dr. William Harris, who edited these two last works, recommended in an advertisement the case of the author, under a deep and peculiar melancholy, to the compassion and prayers of every serious Christian.

Disliking to be seen, he obstinately refused to take air or exercise, till he sunk under the influence of his sedentary habits, at the close of the year 1753, when he was about fifty-two years of age. He left several daughters who were consoled by observing that, at the close of life, he not only consented to allow, but even requested prayers to be offered up for him. Might not the useful and religious employment of his disordered powers, in his last works against the Deists, have contributed to this happy change? And is it not to be regretted, that Brown and Cowper, while under such a cloud, each of them trembling at the rebukes of the Almighty, should have spent the remnants of their intellects on such pages as those of Homer? Before his illness, Mr. Brown published a volume of occasional sermons, and another of hymns and spiritual songs, with a very sensible preface, in which he prudently disavows all intention of rivalling the sacred muse of Dr. Watts.

DR. HARRIS.

William Harris appears to have been born in London, about the year 1675. In youth, he was a member, together with Dr. Grosvenor, of a society of young men, who met once a week for prayer and religious conversation. It is conjectured that he studied under Mr. Timothy Jollie, at Attercliffe, but it is certain that he was well taught in the learned languages, theology,

and philosophy. Though extremely diffident, he entered the pulpit when very young, and was soon invited to succeed Mr. Timothy Cruso, at Crutched Friars. His friends were happy in being able to conquer his reluctance to undertake this charge. Before his ordination, he locked himself into the place where he was to preach, and spent there a whole day, in fasting and prayer, for the Divine blessing on his future labours. The same modesty and seriousness, which he displayed in entering on the work, induced him to prepare with conscientious diligence for the pulpit, in which he always appeared as "a scribe well instructed, rightly dividing the word of truth." He was one of those who preached the lecture on Friday evenings, at the Weigh-house, to encourage psalmody; and on the death of Mr. Tong, Dr. Harris was chosen to be lecturer at Salter's-hall. The alarm of popery having induced the dissenting ministers to preach against the principal doctrines of the church of Rome, he delivered a discourse against transubstantiation.

He laboured as a faithful pastor for forty-two years, at the end of which period, an illness of a few days removed him to the abode of the blessed, May 25, 1740, when he was sixty-five years of age. Dr. Grosvenor preached his funeral sermon, with all the ardour of friendship. He ranks him among those who have embellished our language, of which he was deemed the greatest master among the Dissenters. We should rather say with Doddridge, "That his style is plain and easy, his thoughts substantial, but seldom striking or uncommon; nothing to blame, nor very much to admire." His volume of "Practical Discourses on the principal Re-

presentations of the Messiah, throughout the Old Testament," has been praised by Dr. Watts and many competent judges. The works which he published amount to nearly forty, but chiefly consist of sermons, except the notes on the epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, which pass under the name of Matthew Henry, being written to complete his commentary; "A practical Illustration of the Books of Esther;" and the prefaces of some works of Nathaniel Taylor, Dr. Manton, and Mr. Howe, which he edited. He set a high price upon biblical criticism, and made a valuable collection of such authors as wrote on the sacred Scriptures, which he bequeathed by will to Dr. Williams's library. His private life was as exemplary as his personal devotion would lead us to expect; for he was scarcely ever seen angry, or heard to speak to any one's disadvantage.

DANIEL NEAL,

The first historian of those who dissented from the establishment of our country, deserves honourable mention in this history. Born in London, December 14, 1678, he was, in that stormy period, left, while very young, an orphan, under the care of his maternal uncle, who supplied a parent's place. At the age of eight years, he studied at Merchant-Taylors' school, where he refused the proffered exhibition to a college, in order to take his lot among the Dissenters. He was nearly twenty when he removed to the academy of Mr. Thomas Rowe, and after three years, went to the Continent to study at the universities of Utrecht and Leyden. Returning to England, in 1703, in company with the celebrated Lardner, he was soon chosen assistant

to Dr. John Singleton, pastor of a church in Aldersgate-street, London, whom he succeeded. For thirty-six years, he laboured, not only in the pulpit, but in the parlour and the study, for the welfare of this flock, which so increased under his care, that they were obliged to remove to a larger edifice in Jewin-street.

Of the many hours spent in his study, some were devoted to history, connected with the subject of dissent, of which he was an ardent patron. This produced, in 1720, "The History of New England; being an Impartial Account of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Affairs of the Country," in two volumes, octavo. America rewarded him with the degree of A.M., the highest which her colleges could confer. During the same year, he defended the Dissenters from the reflections cast on them by Dr. Hare, Dean of Worcester, in his visitation sermon, entitled "Church Authority vindicated."

He next stepped forward to recommend to the world the practice of inoculation for the small-pox, which, being a novelty, was opposed by hosts of prejudices, but by none so formidable as that which represented it as contrary to religion, and suggested that the devil inoculated Job with this disease. Mr. Neal published a narrative of the method and success of inoculating for the small-pox in New England, which introduced him to Caroline, Princess of Wales, whom he found in her closet, reading "Fox's Martyrology." After discussing the merits of the new discovery, so interesting to a mother, they conversed on the state of the Dissenters, both in Britain and New England. On the entrance of the Prince, who joined their conversation,

he was admitted to the honour of kissing hands. The children of the royal family soon after received inoculation, which was adopted by the nobility, and from England was introduced into Germany.

Mr. Neal published, in 1732, the first volume of his "History of the Puritans." Dr. John Evans had laboured in preparing for the work, which he was to have brought down to the year 1640, but at his death the whole devolved on our historian. The praises of Dissenters were not his only reward. The censures of Dr. Maddox, Bishop of St. Asaph, afforded him an opportunity of establishing his credit for temper in controversy, as well as veracity in history.

In two popular lectures among the Dissenters, one at Berry-street, on the principal doctrines and duties of Christianity, and the other at Salter's-hall, against popery, Mr. Neal took a part. But at length he fell, like many other studious men, a martyr to excessive confinement and mental exertion; for, after much indisposition, attended with severe pains in his head, and depression of spirits, repeated strokes of palsy removed him to a world where "there shall be no pain," April 4th, 1743, in the sixty-fifth year of his age.

In his own family, his benevolent and devotional spirit has rendered his memory grateful and salutary to children's children. To his congregation he was dear, as a faithful instructor, who, after forty years' labours among them, was far from lingering upon a field which he could no longer cultivate, but sought to perpetuate his usefulness by providing a suitable successor. The dissenting churches valued him, not only as their historian, but for his able and manly

assertion of their religious rights and privileges. His usefulness among them is said to have been impeded by withdrawing from those who subscribed to the doctrine of the Trinity* ; but, to every one who asked him, he gave the most satisfactory assurances of his agreement with the subscribers in that important truth. He was, however, too deeply diseased with the epidemic of that generation which succeeded the last of the Non-conformist ministers, a want of that vigorous tension of mind and heart, which should give striking evangelical precision to pastoral instruction, and rouse the languid feelings of men to a due solicitude for their eternal interests. The basis of Mr. Neal's celebrity is the "History of the Puritans." He published several minor works, chiefly sermons.

DR. SAMUEL WRIGHT.

Dr. Wright, who was born January 3, 1683, was the eldest son of the Rev. James Wright, of Retford, in Nottinghamshire ; but, losing both his parents when very young, he was educated under the care of his grandmother and maternal uncle. He studied for the ministry under Mr. Jollie, where the religious impressions which he had received very early were revived, and happily terminated in an effectual change of heart. Having finished his studies, he became chaplain in several distinguished families. Invited to assist Dr. Grosvenor, he resigned his other employments. The great pains which he took in preparing for the pulpit attracted many hearers, and soon opened to him a more important sphere of usefulness ; for on the death of

* MS. Penes nos.

Mr. Matthew Silvester, he was, in 1707, chosen pastor of the vacant church in Blackfriars. The society, which he found very small, so increased under his ministry, that they were obliged more than once to enlarge their place of worship, and at last were enabled to erect a very superior building in Carter-lane. For thirty-eight years, he preached here to a numerous, serious, and affectionate audience; while, from among the crowds who were attracted by his eloquence, considerable additions were constantly made to the church. Shortly after his settlement at Blackfriars, he married the widow of his predecessor, who was grand-daughter of Mr. George Hughes, of Plymouth, by whom he had one daughter. He was chosen one of the lecturers at Salter's-hall and at Little St. Helens.

In the Arian controversy, he refused to subscribe to any declaration of faith; for he was an impassioned friend of liberty, which induced him to take a part in the periodical work entitled "The Occasional Paper." His abhorrence of high-church and tory principles was perhaps inflamed by the injury which he received from Sacheverel's mob, who, in 1709, gutted, according to their favourite phrase and practice, his meeting-house in Blackfriars. As a testimony of the esteem entertained for his learning and abilities, he received from Scotland the diploma of D.D. The London manuscript observes, that "the doctor's assistant, Mr. Newman, being far gone in Arminianism, and he a zealous Calvinist, the sermon in the afternoon contradicts that in the morning."

In the midst of health, he used often to say, he could with as much composure die, at the command of God,

as he could lie down at night ; and in his last illness he often exclaimed, “ O that thou wouldest give thy servant leave to die ! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” He obtained his wish, April 3, 1746, aged sixty-four. He was so much admired as a preacher, that it is said, Dr. Herring, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, frequently went to hear him, to learn from him a just elocution. He also excelled, to a high degree, in prayer. He was censured for being haughty, but was exceedingly liberal to the poor*, and a flame of fire in the cause of religion. He printed thirty-seven single sermons, at the importunate request of those who had heard them preached. His practical works are in the highest degree important and useful, fully answering the noble ambition which he expressed in the preface to his “ Treatise on the Deceitfulness of Sin.” “ I had rather be the author of the small book that shall be instrumental to save a soul from sin and death, than of the finest piece of science and literature, that tends only to accomplish men for the present state of being.” Dr. Doddridge says “ his treatise on being born again, is one of the most useful published in that age.” “ His book, entitled ‘ Self Possession,’ is one of the best pieces of Christian philosophy that ever was printed, and his ‘ Great Concern’ is much preferable to ‘ The Whole Duty of Man.’ ”

* His charity was conducted upon rule ; for which purpose he kept a purse in which was found this remarkable memorandum. “ Something from all the money I receive to be put into this purse for charitable uses. —From my salary as minister, which is uncertain, a tenth part—from occasional and extraordinary gifts, which are more uncertain, a twentieth part—from copy money of things I print, and interest of my estate, a seventh part.”—Wilson’s History of Dissenting Churches in London.

ISAAC WATTS, D. D.

The eminent divines, hitherto recorded, owed their celebrity to their theological productions; but Watts is a name familiar to the literary world, as a poet, metaphysician, teacher of logic, and cultivator of elegant literature. He was born July 17, 1674, at Southampton, where his father kept an academy. As Mr. Watts was deacon of the dissenting church, it is probable, that his attachment to the principles of Non-conformity drew upon him the fury of the storm which then raged, for he was immured in prison. The mother of the celebrated divine, who inherited the heroism of many of the female Puritans, evinced her attachment to her injured partner, by sitting on a stone near the prison door, suckling her son. In him heaven repaid their sufferings on account of the Gospel; for his father, who died in 1736, in a good old age, "enjoyed the happiness indulged to few, of living to see his son eminent for literature, and venerable for piety." His mother, who was accustomed to excite the poetic exertions of her husband's scholars, after school hours, by the promise of a farthing, received the first indication of her son's genius in the following couplet:—

"I write not for a farthing, but to try
How I your farthing writers can outvie."

At four years of age, he began to learn Latin, and at seven, he composed hymns. He was early placed with Mr. Pinhorne, a clergyman, who was master of the Free-school at Southampton, under whom he studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, with so much success, that

he became the idol of the tutor, whose praises he has handed down to posterity in an elegant Latin ode. It is not surprising that Dr. Speed, a physician, and other friends at Southampton, should offer to support at the university this child of genius; but that a youth so flattered should resist the temptation, and declare his resolution to take his lot among the persecuted Non-conformists, was a triumph of principle, which demands the admiration of those who may differ from him in judgment. "Such he was," says Dr. Johnson, "as every Christian church would rejoice to have adopted."

At the age of sixteen, he went to the seminary of Mr. Rowe. Here he was, for his exemplary conduct, proposed to the students as an object of pious imitation, and his successful diligence in theological and scientific pursuits, as well as in sacred poetry, furnished a stimulus to the companions of his studies, among whom he reckoned Hughes the poet, and Dr. Hort, archbishop of Tuam. The pure and humble spirit of religion, which too many have lost in the ardour of study, he retained undiminished, and at the age of nineteen, entered into the communion of the church of which Mr. Rowe was pastor. He soon after retired, for two years, to his father's house at Southampton, where, on complaining of the psalms sung by the Dissenters, his father desired him to try if he could compose better. The success of his first attempt produced a request for more, till, before he was two and twenty, he had composed a volume, which has furnished thousands of private Christians with exquisite pleasure and improvement, and rendered this part of worship among Dissenters superior to any thing before known in the Christian church.

From the paternal roof he removed to Stoke Newington, near London, to reside with Sir John Hartopp, as tutor to his son. During his residence here, he preached his first sermon, on his birth-day, when he completed his twenty-fourth year. This first entrance into the pulpit was immediately followed by his election to the office of assistant to Dr. Chauncey, pastor of the Independent church which then met in Mark-lane, but afterwards in Berry-street, whom he succeeded in the pastoral office, on the same day in which King William died. His infirm health soon called for the assistant labours of Mr. Samuel Price; and when the increase of his disorder laid him aside from public labours, for four years, Sir Thomas Abney invited him to his house, where he was soothed by the kindest attentions, for six and thirty years. He was frequently obliged to retire to bed in a dark room, after preaching, and often unable to preach at all; but he endeavoured to benefit his flock by publishing sermons for their use. By this means his literary reputation soon spread beyond his own country, and produced him the acquaintance of learned foreigners, as well as the diploma of D. D. from the universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. As he advanced in years, his increasing infirmities more entirely incapacitated him for the duties of the pastoral office, which he would, with its emoluments, have resigned, but his flock refused, in a delicate and generous manner, to accept his resignation.

He was, indeed, such a pastor, as a Christian church should highly prize. His zeal for the Redeemer's glory preferred the office of a minister of the Gospel, to every other under heaven, and preserved him from the

sin of many who, without his literary eminence, suffering their hearts to be divided between Zion and Heli-con, the reveries of Plato and the oracles of God, fall far below the usefulness of the rude, unlettered preacher, whose whole soul is in the work. Watts brought into the sanctuary a taste undebauched by the blandishments of profane literature, and could say to his charge, "there is no place, no company, nor employment under heaven, that can give me such delight, as when I stand ministering holy things in the midst of you." In the same spirit he used to declare, "I would rather have been the author of Baxter's Call to the Unconverted, than of the Paradise Lost." The catechisms he composed for children, the attention he paid to private pastoral duties, and the fidelity with which he declared the whole counsel of God, gave him an indisputable claim to the character of a good steward of the mysteries of God.

The disorder on his nerves, which impeded the labours of his life, was peculiarly trying to his ardent mind, and dictated many a pathetic verse, in which he expostulates with his soul under the pressure of his disease, and the dread of unprofitableness. This melancholy state of debility, which he attributes in great measure to midnight studies, has been said to have produced effects bordering on insanity; but the story, however current, is contradicted by the decided testimony of his biographer, to which are added that of Dr. Watts' amanuensis, and the declarations of Sir Thomas Abney's family. He escaped from his accumulated infirmities by a peaceful death November 25, 1748, in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

The estimate of his character, as a Christian, a divine, and a poet, might claim more space than this work could afford. The personal religion which breathes in his psalms and hymns has produced, in many an eminent Christian, the blush of conscious inferiority; while the ascendancy of the devotional spirit, amidst the abstractions of metaphysics, the cold discussions of logic, or the reveries of poetry, has given to everything he touched a tinge of piety, and induced Dr. Johnson to say, "he converted philosophy into a handmaid of religion." He was not, however, without imperfections. Among these, it will scarcely be our duty to mention his natural propensity to anger, since religion so completely triumphed over it, as to render him habitually meek and forgiving. But it was his unhappiness to be enamoured of his own discoveries, so that he cherished, with vanity unperceived by himself, certain theological tenets, not because they were true, but because they were novel, and his own. The tale which has been industriously circulated, of his abandoning the orthodox creed, at the close of life, may be confuted by the best testimonies. In a letter, written when he was advanced beyond his seventieth year, he praises Doddridge's "Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," pronounces the highest eulogiums on the author, as "a hearty believer of the great doctrines of the reformed church" (which, being addressed to a clergyman on the Continent, must mean the Calvinistic church), and closes by declaring, "if Providence would permit me to commit a second part of my life and usefulness to any man, Dr. Doddridge should be the man." A few months before his death, he said to a friend,

“ I remember an aged minister used to observe, that the most learned and knowing Christians, when they come to die, have only the same plain promises of the Gospel for their support as the unlearned, and so I find it.” From the sentiments of the persons who were around him to the last, and the testimony they have given to the continuance of the same state of mind in which they had ever known him, it is evident that no change had taken place in his views with regard to the great foundation of his eternal hopes.

As a divine, Dr. Watts appears to most advantage in his sermons. He was prevented from attaining the highest excellence, in any one department, by dividing his powers in many different pursuits. On some theological questions, he seems disposed to talk where he has but little to say, and to grapple with difficulties, of which he has no solution to offer. The subject of liberty and necessity, he meets like a general unable to fight, and unwilling to retreat; so that, adopting a middle course, he encounters the difficulties of both the opposing systems, without the advantages of either; maintaining, that, where the understanding is able to decide, it guides the will, which, in all other cases, and these are supposed to be numerous, is left to determine itself.

In his “ Ruin and Recovery of Mankind,” Watts has indeed formed a rare union of prudence and boldness, and given the outlines of a scheme which, in all its essential parts, harmonizes with the sacred Scriptures, and is armed at every point against the attacks of infidelity. His writings on the Trinity establish that important doctrine on its true basis—divine revelation;

though they betray a propensity to speculate upon the *modus* of the Trinity, against which he had himself wisely protested. This tendency to philosophise upon matters of pure revelation, forms, indeed, the chief fault in the doctor's writings, and may be traced to his connexion with the philosophers and literati of the day, whose suffrage to his sentiments he was desirous to gain. Like a true poet, he shines most in works of imagination, as his discourses on the future state will testify; but as an eminent Christian, all his works show that his imagination was his servant, and not his master. That he should have excelled in the opposite department of logic is no common praise; nor should we omit to mention, that his treatise on that subject was employed as the text-book at the universities. The style of Watts is praised by Dr. Johnson, at the expense of all his predecessors among the Dissenters; but that eminent critic was not aware that Howe and Bates had long before furnished the Dissenters with more elegant sentences than are to be found in the works of the poet; and that Grosvenor, the contemporary of Watts, surpassed him in the charms of pulpit eloquence.

It is, however, as a poet that Dr. Watts is most generally known and admired; for he unquestionably was the Coryphæus, who led the way to the modern excellence of sacred poetry. If the imitation, to which he furnished the incitement, may have produced single pieces superior to any of his own, his psalms and hymns, as a whole, are still without an equal, or a second. Many of his psalms, however, are beneath him, and induce the reader of the English prose ver-

sion, much more the admirer of the Hebrew poetry, to long for something less inferior to the sweet singer of Israel. Yet, in other psalms, Watts has scarcely left us anything further to desire; for his versions of the fifty-first are the language of repentance incarnate. His lyric poems show what he could have done, had he, like Pope, lived only for poetry and fame; and his hymns for children, which have a more extensive sale than any other work in the English language, have brought down the sublime truths of religion to millions of infant minds, and inspired them with the earliest attachment to the best of beings*.

DR. DODDRIDGE.

Philip Doddridge has a double claim upon our notice, as an eminent minister of the Gospel, and as a distinguished tutor, the guide of the studies of many who afterwards adorned the ministry of the Gospel, or ranked among the literati of their day. He was born in London, June 26, 1702, of parents who could trace up their pedigree to the great, but preferred the honour of descent from the confessors for Christ. This son was, at his birth, laid out for dead, but one of the attendants, thinking she perceived some motion, cherished the vital flame, which was destined to be a burning and shining light. His parents, who had not degenerated from the piety of their forefathers, were anxious to transmit the inestimable inheritance to their child, who soon learned the Scripture history from his mother's lectures on the Dutch tiles in the fire-place, and received from her lips indelible impressions of religion. Deprived of them

* Dr. Gibbon's Life of Watts.

both, at a time when the loss was most severe, he was placed at a school which his maternal grandfather had formerly taught, and in 1715, was under the tuition of Mr. Nathaniel Wood, at St. Albans, where Dr. Samuel Clark, the dissenting minister, hearing that the person to whom the patrimony of young Doddridge was entrusted, had dissipated his own property and that of his ward, generously undertook to support him during his education.

Into the communion of the church under the pastoral care of his patron and friend he was admitted, February 1, 1718, on which he made in his diary some very serious reflections. The same year, he retired to the house of his sister, to consider of his future course in life. The Duchess of Bedford, having, by means of some family connexions, become acquainted with his character and circumstances, kindly offered to support him at the university, if he chose to be educated for the church; but as the voice of conscience forbade him to avail himself of her benevolence, he waited on Dr. Edmund Calamy, to beg his advice and assistance, in entering on the ministry among Dissenters, in which, however, he received from him no encouragement. He made the best improvement of the disappointment, and having, shortly after, received an advantageous offer of an introduction into the profession of the law, he devoted one morning to ask counsel of heaven, when, in the midst of his prayers, the postman brought a letter from Dr. Clark, offering to assist him in entering into the ministry among Dissenters. "This I looked upon," he says, "almost as an answer from heaven."

After a short, but instructive residence with his patron, he went to the academy of Mr. John Jennings. He entered on his public labours July 22, 1722, when he was just twenty years of age, and preached his first sermon at Hinckley, from the apostolic sentence, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." He was afterwards much encouraged and affected, on learning that this first essay was rendered the means of conversion to two persons. Though invited to a superior situation, at Coventry, he modestly preferred to settle at Kibworth, a village where he might at once teach and learn. "His favourite authors (says Orton) were Tillotson, Baxter, and Howe." To some of these we may trace the excellencies of Doddridge as a preacher, to others his faults as a divine. There were, indeed, at this period, several things in his religion to which, in a more detailed review, we should think it our duty to object; while his diary discloses such an inspection of his own heart, his studies and his labours in the ministry, as would lead a candid censor to augur the final excellence of his character, both as a Christian and a minister.

In October, 1725, to enjoy the company of the invaluable Mr. David Some, minister of Market Harborough, he removed to that town, but continued to preach at Kibworth, till 1729, when he became assistant to Mr. Some, and preached alternately at both places. This was a change highly advantageous to Doddridge; for he found in his colleague "all the goodness he could have expected from a father, and received from him greater assistance than from any person, except Dr. Clark, in the affair of his education;

for Mr. Some was one of the brightest ornaments of the Gospel and the ministry which the age produced."

While in this retired situation, the report of his eminent worth brought him several invitations to settle in London, Nottingham, and other places of superior importance; but he resisted them all, and was not induced to extend the sphere of his labours, till he was advised to enter upon the work of tutor to a seminary for the ministry. To this, Mr. Jennings had led the way; for he had often urged him to keep in view the improvement of his academical lectures, and to study in such a manner as to enrich them. Doddridge did not then suspect, what he afterwards learned, that Mr. Jennings pronounced him the most likely person to perfect the schemes which eight years employed in the work of tutor had allowed him only to commence. Perhaps it was under the same secret influence, that Doddridge had been induced to draw up a plan of education for the ministry which, when shown to Dr. Watts, induced him and other friends to solicit the author to put it into execution. He commenced the labours of this important office at Harborough, in the summer of the year 1729, with only two or three students, as his diffidence would not admit of more.

In the following year, he was induced to accede to the repeated invitations of the church at Northampton, to become their pastor, and was ordained March 19. His secret devotions on this, as on every other important occasion, Orton has transcribed from his diary, and thus at once placed Doddridge high in the esteem of every friend to the devotion of the heart, and ren-

dered his memoirs one of the most edifying books in the English language.

His reputation as a tutor drew considerable numbers to his seminary. His assistants were respectable scholars, and some of them eminent in the literary world; as the names of Job Orton, Dr. Aikin, and Robertson, professor of oriental literature in the university of Edinburgh, will sufficiently evince. Some of our readers may learn with surprise, that not much more than half the number of his students became ministers; but several who were designed for the ministry died while in their studies, and some gentlemen's sons went to prepare themselves, as in a college, for any situation to which they might be called. Orton attributes to this latter circumstance some evils in the academy, which he says Doddridge himself lamented and wished to rectify; but Kippis is of a different opinion. The true source of the evils, indeed, was not the intermixture of persons intended for different professions, but the admission of young men who were destitute of the grace of God; for though there is no infection in laymen, there is in unregenerate sinners, and when these become ministers, there is no pest so deadly.

This inattention to the genuine religion of the youths, which we should call the original sin of the institution, poisoned Doddridge's lectures; for they seem to proceed too much on the idea that the mind of the student was a perfect *tabula rasa*, destitute of sentiments or prepossessions. Had this been the case, we could not approve of the tutors furnishing them with the wrong, as well as the right, in theology, error as well as truth, and then calling them to make their

election. If such conduct be defended under the name of liberality, would it not be still more liberal to admit persons who were yet speculating whether Christianity, Deism, or Atheism were most consistent with truth? But, if the advocates for the spurious liberality which perverted the seminary at Northampton, deem it proper to require that a candidate for the Christian ministry should himself be a Christian, the question then recurs, what constitutes a Christian, and each one is justified in requiring that which he deems essential to real Christianity. In fact, if there is no essential difference in sentiments, truth is not important, and free inquiry is worthless. But if truth be regarded as essential to religion, error must be viewed as impious and fatal, which leaves no other way to combine the interests of liberality and piety, but that each communion should form ministers of their own sentiments, and leave to those who differ from them the same liberty. The plan which Dr. Kippis applauds, as forming the glory of Doddridge's seminary, to receive young men without sentiments, to give opposite doctrines an equal chance, and then send forth some to preach Calvinism and others Socinianism, is liberality in a state of derangement.

Six years after his marriage and settlement at Northampton, he received, from the Marischal college, Aberdeen, the diploma of D.D. His diligence is sufficiently attested by his various duties, and his numerous publications; but at length his honourable course was arrested, when his friends hoped that he was yet in the midst of his race. He went, in 1750, to St. Albans, to preach a funeral sermon for his friend and father, Dr. Clark, when he caught a cold which brought him

to the grave. Though his physicians and friends advised him to desist from preaching, for the recovery of his health, they observed that his increasing ardour rendered him indifferent to the alarms of disease, and gave indications of approaching glory. "He seemed to be above the world," says Orton, "and was daily breathing after immortality." To his friends he wrote, "I bless God, earth is less and less to me, and I shall be very glad to have done with it, as soon as my Master shall give me leave." His last services in the church of Northampton were like the words of a herald of mercy returning to Him that sent him. While he was spending a few weeks at Shrewsbury, he received a letter from some friends in London, filled with so eloquent expressions of affectionate esteem for his character, and sorrow in the prospect of his departure, that it was apprehended he would have sunken under the impressions it produced.

Having tried in vain the Hot Wells, near Bristol, he was prevailed on to undertake a voyage to Lisbon. He at first hesitated, on account of the expense, which his disinterested course of life had left him unable to bear; but the God whom he had served, to the neglect of all mercenary pursuits, kindly appeared for him, by raising up friends in the time of need. On the voyage, he said to Mrs. Doddridge, "I cannot express to you what a morning I have had. Such delightful and transporting views of the heavenly world is my Father now indulging me with, as no words can express." At his first arrival, the air of Lisbon produced a transient gleam of hope, which again vanished, and on the

21st of October, 1751, he reached the haven for which he sighed, in the fiftieth year of his age.

That a man who lived no longer, should have done so much, is a sufficient proof of that diligent improvement of his talents, which was his characteristic excellence. This has been said to be shaded by a propensity to tell of the bustle in which he lived. Yet we are disposed to attribute the fault to a more amiable cause than vanity; for the benevolence of his heart refused to avail itself of the privileges of a great man, by openly resisting the demands which were often made upon his time; so that he had no other resource than frequently to display the multiplicity of his engagements. He cannot be said to have been endued with genius in the highest sense, nor was his learning very profound, though it was extensive, rendering him respectable rather than eminent. He may be pronounced one of those who have made the most of themselves, in the best sense, raising their talents by faithful improvement to the first rank of usefulness. As a Christian, he held such intercourse with God, as is not only incompatible with unfaithfulness in the minister, but rendered the preacher the delight of the zealous, and exposed him to the censure of the lukewarm. He was the soul of every association for religious purposes, in the country where he resided; for his heart was too large to be confined to Northampton. He was not equally excellent as a divine; for a mistaken candour often destroyed precision of sentiment, and energy of expression. The bias of his own soul, however, was decidedly towards evangelical truth, and though Dr.

Kippis praises his early sermons, as less Calvinistic than his latter productions, Doddridge himself said, if ever he had been supposed to lean towards heterodox sentiments, it was between the years 1723 and 1730. It affords pleasure to reflect that he was more evangelical and Calvinistic as he advanced in years; and the regret which some have expressed at his orthodoxy, will serve to reconcile others to what they had blamed as not sufficiently decided.

His publications are deficient in vigour, nor can they be said to evince that exuberance of original thought which forces on the reader the profitable labour of thinking. Yet they are always serious, respectable, and useful. The "Exposition of the New Testament," which is his principal performance, must have cost him much; for he has interwoven a new translation into his paraphrase, and been unsparing of the labour which the harmony of the evangelists requires. The improvements are not ingenious, but devotional, and sometimes dull, sometimes ardent; while his notes frequently furnish valuable criticisms. The first excellence of an expositor, a clear perception of the mind of the Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, presented in language which renders it impossible to be misapprehended or overlooked, must not be ascribed to Doddridge. He often attempts to include so many senses, that he virtually gives none. His sermons are judicious, calculated to edify, rather than produce Christians, but always aiming at the benefit of the audience, not the display of the preacher. "The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul," is a book of such excellencies and defects, as render it equally hazardous to praise

or blame. The author has worked well upon a bad plan, and though the man who did not understand the religion of the Gospel, would be in some danger of forming a false notion of it from this book, one who already understands it, must be eminent indeed if he find not the perusal greatly to his advantage. Dr. Doddridge claims a place, if not the highest, among sacred poets. Some of his hymns are superlatively excellent, and his epigram on the motto of his family arms, is pronounced, by Dr. Johnson, the best in the English language.

MOSES LOWMAN.

His father was educated at Cambridge for the ministry, but afterwards betook himself to a secular employment. This son, who was born in 1680, was designed for the bar, but left the inns of court to study theology for the Dissenting ministry. With this view, he went over to Holland, in 1699, and spent some years under the tuition of De Uries and Witsius, the one eminent as a metaphysician, the other as a divine. On his return to England, he was, in 1710, chosen assistant to Mr. Grace, minister of a Presbyterian congregation at Clapham. Being ordained pastor of the flock, he continued in this situation, till within a few weeks of his death, which took place, in 1752, in the seventy-third year of his age. Dr. Chandler, who preached his funeral sermon, says, "His morals and integrity were unblameable. Here neither calumny could defame, and suspicion herself had nothing to suggest. He lived honoured, useful, and beloved. He met his dissolution with a well-grounded comfort and hope."

Mr. Lowman was a man of considerable abilities,

who by incessant study amassed an ample treasure both of divine and human literature. He appeared as an advocate for Christianity against Collins, the Deist, in a small treatise, entitled "The Argument from Prophecy in proof that Jesus is the Messiah vindicated," in which he stated with great ability the evidence from prophecy in favour of the Gospel of Christ. His "Dissertation on the Civil Government of the Hebrews," which he composed in answer to the objections of Morgan against the Jewish dispensation, is a very valuable work. The same character is justly due to his "Rationale of the Ritual of the Hebrew Worship." He gained also a large portion of well-earned fame, by his "Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation of St. John." A few single sermons appeared from his pen. Great praise is given to a small piece published without his name, entitled "An Argument to prove the Unity and Perfection of God *a priori*." A volume containing three tracts was published by his friends after his death.

While Mr. Lowman claims a high degree of commendation as a writer, there is none due to him as a preacher. An intelligent man, who was his constant hearer, declared that he could never understand him. In the few sermons which he published, there is something remarkably awkward, rugged, and clumsy, and very little calculated to attract the attention of an audience. It is painful to be obliged to find fault with a man who is an able writer, because he is a bad preacher, but for such a fault severe reprehension is due. If the strength of the person's mind is given to his writings; and his discourses for the pulpit are

prepared in a hurried and slovenly manner, can it be said that he watches for souls as one that must give an account?

DR. FOSTER.

This divine, whose name is familiar to all who are acquainted with the history of pulpit oratory, was a native of Exeter. His grandfather was a clergyman, at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, but his father, who was a fuller, became a Dissenter, by means of an uncle. This son was born, September 16, 1697, and sent, at five years of age, to the free school in Exeter, of which he became the ornament and glory. He removed to the academy of the elder Mr. Hallet, and began to preach, with great applause, in the year 1718. In the controversy which then unhappily raged, he adopted the Arian creed, though he at last settled in what may be denominated low Socinianism. According to the strange practice of those days, he was invited by an orthodox congregation at Milborne Port, in Somersetshire, to be their pastor; but his sentiments soon proved so disagreeable to them, that he withdrew to an obscure retreat under the Mendip Hills. While here, he preached to two poor congregations, of which the united salaries were only fifteen pounds per annum.

He published, as the fruit of his retirement, in 1720, "An Essay on Fundamentals, with a particular Regard to the Doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity," designed to prove that the belief of this truth is not essential to salvation. He came forth from his obscure retreat, to preach at Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, though here his congregation did not consist of more than twenty or thirty persons. The change, which now

took place in his sentiments, by his becoming a Baptist, created no difference between him and his little flock; but as the support which they were able to afford him was quite inadequate to his wants, he entertained some thoughts of quitting the ministry, and is said to have actually deliberated on learning of the person with whom he boarded the trade of a glover. From this he was diverted by the friendship of Robert Houlton, Esq., who took him into his house as his chaplain. A pamphlet, supposed to be written by a clergyman, attacked his essay, and pronounced a curse on his patron for receiving him into his house, and bidding him God speed.

Mr. Foster removed to London, in 1724, to succeed Dr. Gale, as co-pastor with Mr. Joseph Burroughs, in the general Baptist congregation, Barbican. This office he held for more than twenty years, and at the same time carried on an evening lecture, on the Lord's-day, at the Old Jewry, with such popularity as was before unparalleled among Dissenters. "Here was a confluence of persons of every rank, station, and quality. Wits, free-thinkers, numbers of clergy, who, while they gratified their curiosity, had their prepossessions shaken, and their prejudices loosened*."

In the year 1731, he published a reply to the Deistical

* As Pope has celebrated him in the following couplet of the epilogue to his satires—

" Let modest Foster, if he will, excel,
Ten metropolitans in preaching well,"

it has been concluded that curiosity drew the poet to hear the orator. His sudden and unusual popularity is said to have been occasioned, as popularity often is, by an accidental circumstance. An eminent physician, happening to go into his meeting-house, for shelter from a shower of rain, was so fascinated, that he stood the whole of the time, and ever afterwards spoke of him in all companies as an incomparable preacher.

pamphlet, entitled "Christianity as Old as the Creation," of which answer, even Tindal, his antagonist, spoke with great respect. He afterwards printed four volumes of sermons, one of which engaged him in a controversy concerning heresy, with Dr. Henry Stebbing, one of the king's chaplains, and preacher to the society in Gray's Inn*.

At the end of the year 1744, he succeeded Dr. Jeremiah Hunt, as pastor of the Independent congregation at Pinner's hall, and, two years after, was called to the melancholy task of attending the Earl of Kilmarnock, when that nobleman was in the Tower, under sentence of death for high treason †.

The Marischal College, Aberdeen, in 1748, conferred on Mr. Foster the degree of D.D. But his spirits were now declining, and he was removed by a palsy, November 5, 1753, in his fifty-seventh year ‡.

His integrity was unimpeached, and the force of his attachment to Non-conformity is set beyond suspicion

* The wits of the day, who loved to say smart things on subjects which they did not care to understand, diverted themselves with the charge of heresy, by saying, "Stebbing was a heretic to God, and Foster to the church."

† After accompanying him to the scaffold, he published "An Account of the Behaviour of the late Earl of Kilmarnock after his Sentence, and on the day of his Execution." To this Mr. Malachi Blake, a dissenting minister, at Blandford, in Dorsetshire, published an answer, entitled "Kilmarnock's Ghost;" in which he contended that the unfortunate earl had not been faithfully instructed and warned. Nor could it be expected that one who rejected the divinity, atonement, and imputed righteousness of Christ, as well as the influences of the Holy Spirit, would give such advice as those who deemed these truths essential to a sinner's eternal hopes would think suited to the awful circumstances in which the earl and his last adviser were placed.

‡ It has been said that, at his funeral, one of his admirers exclaimed, "There is a good man gone to glory!" To which a grave old lady, who stood by, replied, "But he has taken away my Lord, and I know not where he has laid him."

by the design he had formed of entering on a course of manual labour for his subsistence, rather than conform to the establishment, into which he had been invited by those who could have procured him preferment. His popularity as a preacher is said to have been well supported by a fine commanding voice, accompanied with an intrepidity in avowing his sentiments, which all ought to imitate. Error is never more dangerous than when it walks in disguise. Though he was charged with Deism by some who could not distinguish between his negative creed, and complete infidelity, he ever protested that he was a firm believer in Revelation, and despised the meanness of professing Christianity without conviction.

THOMAS BRADBURY.

Mr. Bradbury was one of those men of ardent temperament, who will always procure distinction among their contemporaries, and when born for eventful times will seldom fail to acquire for themselves a posthumous celebrity. He entered on the stage of life in 1677, at Wakefield, in Yorkshire. His father was a member of the church at Alverthorp, near that town, of which Mr. Peter Naylor, an ejected minister, was pastor. Under his care, and at the free-school at Leeds, Thomas Bradbury received the first rudiments of learning. His memory was so tenacious, that Mr. Naylor and his father used to send him to a public-house in Wakefield (where one newspaper was read aloud for the public), to hear and report to them, before he himself understood that a man-of-war meant a ship. His *alma mater* was the academy of Mr. Jollie, at Attercliffe,

where some of the first dignitaries of the church of England received their education for the ministry. Several anecdotes of Mr. Bradbury, while a student, are yet retained in the social circle.

He began to preach at the early age of eighteen, about the year 1696, when his juvenile appearance induced one of the country congregation which he was about to address, to say to him, "Pray, master, do you know who is going to preach to-day?" On finding that he was to be the preacher, the person expressed, at least by his countenance, so much dissatisfaction, that it extremely discomposed this young Timothy, who ascended the pulpit for the first time, with extreme timidity, perceiving that the apostolic injunction had not prevented men from "despising his youth." He soon, however, rose above his fears, and convinced his hearers that he was a boy in appearance only. He used afterwards to relate this anecdote, with the remark, "I bless God, from that hour, I have never known the fear of man." He soon after left the academy, and was taken into the family of Mr. Whitaker, an eminent minister at Leeds.

In 1697, he went to Beverley, though not as a candidate, and two years after became assistant to Dr. Gilpin, at Newcastle upon Tyne, where he continued three years, with almost unbounded popularity. He then removed to Stepney, near London. Here Mr. Tong became his kind director, and prudent, faithful friend. He always, though not in an unscriptural sense, called him his master. But such was his regard for Mr. Whitaker, that as long as he lived, Mr. Bradbury annually went to Leeds to preach for him, and

hear him. In his progress, he always preached at Sheffield, where, as well as at Leeds, he was heard with delight. He was chosen in 1707, to succeed Mr. Benoni Rowe in Fetter-lane. Here he soon enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the place filled, and the church increase; for his talents were admirably adapted to the meridian of the metropolis. But after nearly twenty years of prosperity, an unhappy altercation disturbed the harmony, and at length dissolved the union between Mr. Bradbury and his flock.

The neighbouring church at New-court, Carey-street, over which Daniel Burgess had presided, being at this time destitute, immediately invited Mr. Bradbury to take the charge of them, to which he readily consented; so that but one Sabbath intervened between the close of his labours at Fetter-lane, and the commencement of them at Carey-street. Those among his former flock who espoused his cause followed him, and on the 27th of November, 1728, a solemn union was formed between the church at New-court, and the numerous secession from Fetter-lane, under the pastoral care of Thomas Bradbury, and the assistant ministry of his brother Peter Bradbury. While the popular talents of the pastor increased the flock, his interest, together with that of his brother, among the opulent citizens, enabled the society to discharge the debt for building, which had long been a heavy burden.

This pulpit, a second time presented a phenomenon as rare as it is beneficial,—wit consecrated to the service of serious and eternal truth. The talent of Bradbury, indeed, was more cutting, that of Burgess more facetious; the latter aimed to recommend grave sub-

jects by smiling pleasantries, the former loved to shame noxious errors by stinging sarcasm. Many anecdotes are related of the manner in which Bradbury employed his peculiar talent to promote the cause in which he had embarked*. The courage and animation which wit demands, diffused an interesting vivacity through his public services; and his perfect command of scriptural language served to keep up the high tone of sanctity, which had otherwise been debased by satirical witticism.

After presiding over the church in New-court, Carey-street, two-and-thirty years, he died, September 9, 1759, aged eighty-two. He left two daughters, one of whom was married, in 1744, to John Winter, Esq., whose brother, the Rev. Richard Winter, succeeded Mr. Bradbury, and who was again succeeded, after a short interval, by his nephew, Dr. Robert Winter, grandson to Mr. Thomas Bradbury. The other daughter was married, in 1768, to George Welch, Esq., banker, in London. The talents and consideration of Mr. Bradbury, among Dissenters, brought him forward, on public occasions, to present addresses to the throne; and "Mr. Grainger saw a friendly letter from Archbishop Wake to him, which was part of a correspondence between the metropolitan of all England and him whom the con-

* His repartee at court has been already noticed, but his religious, as well as his political ardour often called in the aid of his wit. During the Arian controversy, at a general meeting of the ministers of London, at Salter's-hall, he had been contending that those who really believed the doctrine of Christ's divinity should openly avow it, when, to bring it to the test, he said, "You, who are not ashamed to own the deity of our Lord, follow me into the gallery." He had scarcely mounted two or three steps, before the opposite party hissed him, when, turning round, he said, "I have been pleading for him who bruised the serpent's head, no wonder the seed of the serpent should hiss."

tinuator of Grainger calls, improperly, the patriarch of the Dissenters*." The same writer has, in his tissue of inaccuracies concerning Mr. Bradbury, greatly exaggerated his fortune, which, whatever it was, came by the lady whom he married, whose name was Richmond.

His character has been given to posterity with various degrees of light and shade. "In private," says Noble, "he was the social pleasant companion, and more famed for his mirth than long harangues." The manuscript account of the London ministers says, "had he as much judgment as quickness of wit, and as much temper as zeal, he would have been a man of much greater consideration. His usefulness has been much abated since the Salter's-hall synod; for though he has been warm on the orthodox side, his ill-conducted zeal has done mischief. He made it his business, not only from his own pulpit, but at the Pinner's-hall lecture, to lampoon and satirize the performances of Dr. Watts; and, amongst others, his hymns and psalms, for which many Christians and churches have reason to bless God." Thomas Bradbury, however, was not the only friend of the Gospel who was prejudiced against the doctor's devotional poetry, and alarmed at the supposed consequences of introducing it into the dissenting worship. As to the spirit with which he levelled the shafts of his wit, it should be remembered that, far from despising the decencies of life, in which he was truly accomplished, he could well bear with those who honestly avowed their dissent from his opinion, but emptied all his formidable quiver on those whom he termed trimmers and shufflers. He was, indeed,

* Continuation of Grainger, vol. iii., p. 159.

according to the opinion of the celebrated Roman, a well-educated man, for he knew how to say NO ; and it will be to his everlasting honour, that he was perfectly free from the sins of the times, disingenuousness in the concealment of error, or treacherous shrinking from the defence of truth. He was himself aware that his honest zeal should have been accompanied with more suavity of manner*.

Five sermons on the Christian's joy, in finishing his course, are said to be his best work. "Christus in Cœlo, or Discourses on the Work of a glorified Saviour," is mentioned as his first publication. His "Sermons on the Mystery of Godliness" are well known.

The larger memoirs, given of those ministers who have occupied this section, were due to their distinguished worth or eminent station, but should by no means exclude from notice, or esteem, many to whom we can afford no more space than is occupied by their names. Among the churches in London, the first rank of respectability was assigned to Benjamin Grosvenor,

* An anecdote, communicated by his grandson, Dr. Robert Winter, will interest our readers. His ardent zeal exposed Mr. Bradbury to the hatred of Papists, as well as tories. The former employed a person to take away his life. To make himself fully acquainted with Bradbury's person, the man frequently attended at places of worship where he preached, placing himself in the front of the gallery, with his countenance steadily fixed on the preacher. It was scarcely possible, in such circumstances, wholly to avoid listening to what was said. Mr. Bradbury's forcible manner of presenting divine truth to view, awakened the man's attention, the word his understanding, and became the means of changing his heart. He came to the preacher, with trembling and confusion, told his affecting tale, gave evidence of his conversion, became a member of the church, and was, to the hour of his death, an ornament to the Gospel which he professed.

Robert Trail, John Nesbitt, John Hurrion, Robert Bragg, John and Thomas Newman, Joshua Bayes, Dr. Hughes, John Sladen, Joseph Stennett, Richard Rawlin, Samuel Price, Timothy Jollie, John Astie, Martin Tomkins, John Hill, Richard Lardner, Thomas Cotton, Robert Fleming, John Cunning, and Timothy Rogers. In the country, the most eminent ministers were, Risdon Darracott, of Wellington; David Some, of Market Harborough; Thomas Saunders, of Kettering; John Spilsbury, of Kidderminster; John Sloss, of Nottingham; William Nolent, of Ipswich; John Bert, of St. Edmund's Bury; John Norman, of Portsmouth; Mr. Kentish, Mr. Perry, and Bernard Foskett, of Bristol; William Moth, of Basingstoke; to whom may be added, a zealous defender of dissenting principles, Samuel Bourn, of Birmingham. With a mixture of pleasure and regret, we apologize for a mere catalogue of names, by observing, that the eminent ministers of this period were too numerous to admit them all to a distinct memoir.

SECT. II.—*Lives of Eminent Members of Dissenting Churches.*

SIR JOHN HARTOPP.

THIS celebrated baronet, whose father was one of the first English gentlemen honoured with that title, was born about the year 1637. He married the daughter of Charles Fleetwood, Esq. 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." He frequently instructed his family by reading to them the discourses he had taken 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 to represent Leicestershire in parliament, he became a strenuous advocate for the Bill of Exclusion. The whole weight of the court was employed to prevent his re-election, 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 died, in 1722, at the advanced age of eighty-five.

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." "When I name Sir John Hartopp," says the preacher, "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; 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 know-

ledge of the Greek. He took pleasure in the doctrines 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 for himself only, 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. 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 from popish persecution, England under the liberal reign of George, and her churches blessed with such pastors as Watts and many of his contemporaries! 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 Derbyshire, 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. 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. Sir Thomas married the daughter of the celebrated Caryl ; and, on her death, 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 has been handed down to posterity by means of its connexion with that of Watts, who found, in the house of Sir Thomas and his descendants, an asylum, for thirty-six years.

Though 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, some years before the usual term, was 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, 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 Land's 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 that comes from above, is evident; for on the evening of the day on which he entered on 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. This ornament of

the metropolis, the senate, and the church of God, lived to the age of eighty-three, and departed to higher honours, February 6, 1722.

SIR RICHARD ELLYS.

This baronet, whose opulence and title were the least part of his honours, sat, during several parliaments, in the House of Commons.

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. The doctrines of the old Puritans formed his creed, and sanctified his soul. Having been under the influence of a different system, he received the knowledge of the truth from one inferior to himself in everything, but an acquaintance with the Gospel; and the bigotted Arminian was constrained, by the conversation of an aged Christian woman, to throw away his lofty 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 “*Four-fold State* *.”

Sir Richard appears to have been first a member of Dr. Calamy’s congregation; but 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

* See the account of this change more fully given by himself, in Boston’s Memoirs, Appendix, p. 22.

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. 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 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; while, from a lively faith in the promises, flowed the animating hope of eternal bliss.

The salvation of his children lay near his heart; and to train them up in the knowledge and practice of religion was his constant care. 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 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.

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 number of good books was distributed by his hands. A lover of the house of God, and feeling the pleasure and benefit of public worship, besides contributing liberally to the building of meeting-houses, he erected two at his own expense, one at Doncaster and the other at Rotherham, 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. 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

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

books, he was exceedingly careful, and would often say, that the little leisure he could command made this absolutely necessary for him.

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 America. By his donations to this institution, he displayed, not only the benevolence of his heart, but the soundness of his judgment; for what can so extensively promote the happiness of mankind as piety and learning united in the breasts of public teachers? Still higher praise is due to Mr. Hollis for the principle which gave a preference to that school; it was because it did not, like some other colleges, confine its benefits to a privileged sect; but opened its doors to all, 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*.

John Hollis, his brother, was, from his youth, equally eminent 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 his funeral sermon was preached by Dr. Hunt. Three such men confer a glory on a Christian society. If any of the posterity of Thomas Hollis the elder still remain,

* See his funeral sermon by Dr. Hunt, and Crosby's History of Baptists, vol. iv. p. 229.

under what obligations do they lie to be followers of their excellent progenitors!

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. 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 to satisfy the demands of his creditors, he was acknowledged to have acted honourably. 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 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. 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 his publications have been beneficial to the world, for he was on the side 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 pious practices of

the old Dissenters. He was, indeed, a stedfast 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 the layman maintained his ground against the minister.

Mr. Defoe wrote a multitude of political pamphlets, from 1683, till after the accession of George. 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. His *Robinson Crusoe* was first published in 1719; but who could tell the number of editions through which it has passed? Unfair attempts have been made to rob him of his character or his fame with regard to this extraordinary performance. 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 and thirty editions of his "*True-born Englishman*." By such marks has the public testified its value for his works*.

JOSEPH WILLIAMS.

He was born about the year 1691, and was the son of a pious clothier, at Kidderminster. When he was but seven years old his religious impressions were increased, by his father's remarks on the death of his sister.

* *Biographia Britannica*, art. Defoe.—Walter Wilson's *Memoirs of Defoe*.

After his marriage, he went on very prosperously in business, till the year 1725, when he lost almost the whole of his capital, which became the means of enriching him with a more spiritual state of mind and stronger assurance of his salvation.

On the return of prosperity, he was agitated with solicitude lest he should be lifted up with pride and self-importance, 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."

His solicitude for the salvation of his children, manifested 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." 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 induced him to address a young clergyman with such effect, that the young man became a

faithful preacher of the gospel, and Mr. Williams 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 the language of heaven, an hour before the writer himself was brought home. His complaints terminated in a lethargy, in which he died, December 21, 1755, in the sixty-third year of his age.

His memory has been cherished with pious affection, 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, 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*.

JOHN TAYLER.

He was a member of the Baptist church in Wildstreet; exemplary in his deportment as a Christian; and eminent in zeal for the salvation of the souls of men. Many good books he distributed 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 †.

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

* Extracts from the Diary, Meditations, and Letters of Mr. Joseph Williams, of Kidderminster, by the Rev. Benjamin Fawcett, of Kidderminster, of which a new and enlarged edition has been lately published by Mr. B. Hanbury, a descendant from Mr. Williams.

† Crosby.

example of the female character so unique as to claim and reward the study of her species.

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; but 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, and hated 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 such devotion as could not fail to be branded for 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, and when some of the counsellors objected 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 countenance, 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 a small income, 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 style, 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 outshine her in splendour of appearance."

Her 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 she judged it their duty to give. If she found the sick 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 Non-conformists, 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 all her excellence, 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, 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 one's debt; and as the fact justified the assertion, should we not ascribe it to her attention to equity, rather than to accidental coincidence? Her imagination was so lively, that she mixed up her own conceptions with every narrative she heard, and then repeated the whole, under the persuasion that it was all true; so that, though nothing could have induced her to tell a wilful lie, it was never safe to speak after her.

That her religious principles, engrafted on a temperament so ardent, 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 a determination, on 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, never, even in those more sober days, 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 died in the year 1729, at the age of eighty.

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 soul*.

This lady's mental physiognomy must always distinguish her from the crowd, 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 that 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, or not to think

* 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.

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, that 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 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 numberless vexations, 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 talents, and in the church for piety. She was the daughter of Walter Singer, a gentleman who was imprisoned for nonconformity, in Ilchester jail, where 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

* Anecdotes of Mrs. Bendish, by the Rev. Samuel Say, Dr. Brookes, and Mr. Hewling; Luson.—See Noble's Memoirs of the Protectorate-house of Cromwell.

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 the conversion of a sinner, and conduct my soul to the skies. But thy time, Lord, not mine, is best."

The subject of this memoir, who was his eldest daughter, was born at Ilchester, the place of her father's imprisonment, September 11, 1674. 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 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 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 this accomplished lady. 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 favoured man. This match of intellect is said to have been happy, beyond the common lot of human life; though some would have foreboded that two geniuses would be rendered irksome to each other by mutual claims of ascendancy, or reciprocal neglects of the inferior attentions 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, may'st 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 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 soul's immortality, without which all virtue and religion must fall to the ground. In 1736, she published the *History of Joseph*, a poem, written in her youth. She employed herself much in devout meditation and in contemplation on death; though, till about half a year before her decease, she scarcely ever knew what illness was. On the commencement of her fatal disorder, 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!

The love of money 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. 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." Dr. Watts published her "Devout Exercises of the Heart," which we had rather feel than criticise.

THIRD PERIOD.

FROM THE ACCESSION OF GEORGE III. TO THE YEAR 1808.

CHAP. I.

AN ACCOUNT OF NEW SECTS.

IF the increasing of sects renders it necessary to devote a chapter to their rise in every division of this history, it affords some consolation to reflect that we have now to notice but two, the Sandemanians and Swedenborgians.

SECT. I.—*The 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.

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 so subtle 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 place 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, new churches, not only distinct, but alien from all others, were founded by the Sandemanians in England, 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 acknowledgment, 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. Maintaining these sentiments of the first congregational churches with peculiar ardour, and condemning with 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.

Upon their system of discipline they engrafted some

doctrinal peculiarities. 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 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 his death, and proved by his resurrection to be all-sufficient to justify the guilty: the whole benefit of this event is conveyed to men, only by the apostolic report concerning it: every one who understands this report to be true, or is persuaded that the event actually happened as testified by the apostles, is justified."

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, 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 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 we had before, 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 love 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 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.

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 cultivated with persons who never made a profession of religion. A plurality of pastors, or

elders, is held to be essential to the perfect order of a church. The officers, who are chosen from among themselves, and are usually engaged in trade, are set apart 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, elected from among the aged widows. 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; 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.

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, Glas 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 abstain from blood and from things strangled, to be still in force, they consider it unlawful to eat anything that has been killed by wringing the neck. Indeed, the distinguishing tenet of the Sandemans 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, Sandemans 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, condemn their spirit. Sandeman blew away, with his northern blast, some mists which obscured 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, 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 tiger. 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."

The accusations 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 as 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, not to be seen 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. In his doctrinal discussions, he is usually open to censure, when he attempts to furnish a substitute for what he calls popular errors. The architect of ruin,

skilful and mighty to destroy, he no sooner attempts to erect his own system, than he shows how much easier it is 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 the divine 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 against assurance of salvation, and

* 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, affiancement, 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 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;

inculcates so anxious a state of mind, as would excite suspicion that his principles afforded 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 perishing multitude, while occupied with cavils at those who are more devoted to God than themselves.

That it is much easier to our depraved nature to make new discoveries in abstract truth than to reduce to holy practice principles long admitted, seems not to have occurred to the Sandemanians. 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 Sandemanians in their domestic walk say, that there is little or no appearance of family religion among them; and those who judge by their public conduct, complain that they do nothing for the good of mankind.

This communion has frequently been accused of hostility to the influences of the Holy Spirit, and to the 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. 438.

doctrine of sanctification ; a charge never met with any adequate defence. It would 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 to 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 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 that swell the annals of a church. John Glas, the first founder of this sect, began, in 1727, to publish his opinions in Scotland. The person who may be denominated its second founder, 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. These letters, either by means of the popular work on which they fastened, or by the talents which they display, or by 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 on his principles. They met first at Glover's-hall, then, for several years, in the Quaker's meeting-house in Bull and Mouth-street, and at last in Paul's-alley, Barbican. They were joined by several Independent ministers, among whom were Mr. Chater, Mr. Prentice, and Mr. Boosey. But the proselyte who procured them most celebrity was the Rev. Mr. Pike, who had entered into an amicable controversy with Mr. Sandeman. To expostulations concerning the bitter spirit of Sandeman, Mr. Pike 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.

Mr. Pike published two sermons preached at Pinner's-Hall lecture, under the title of "Free Grace, saving Grace." 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, designed to shew the dangerous tendency of Sandemanianism, and to warn the church against following Mr. Pike, he wrote an answer, 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, on account of his trade and his learning, was called the Hebrew tailor.

These disputes were terminated by Mr. Pike's retaining, through his own casting vote, the place of worship. Those who adhered to the original principles of the society, removed to a meeting-house in Little St. Helens, where they chose Mr. Barber, of Basingstoke, to the pastoral office. Mr. Pike, however, becoming at length more than a doctrinal Sandemanian, joined the church at Bull and Mouth-street. 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, he was sent to a society of the same sentiments at Trowbridge, in Wiltshire, where he died, in the spring of 1773, at the age of fifty-six.

This denomination of Dissenters has not become numerous in England. Besides the church in London, they formed societies at Nottingham, Liverpool, Whitehaven, and Newcastle. These churches, however, are not large, and are tending to decay rather than to increase. Scotland and Ireland have proved more favourable to this communion. 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."

SECT. II.—*The Swedenborgians.*

THIS sect, like the preceding, derives its name from its founder, who was Emanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish baron. His followers, however, wish to be distinguished from other Christians by the title of "The New Jerusalem Church*."

* 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."

Were we to commence with what 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 Swedenborg these are minor objects, which many of them sacrifice, continuing to join the worship of other Christians, and satisfying themselves with their faith in the doctrines of the new church. The principal of these is, that Baron Swedenborg was honoured with a divine mission to men; not, indeed, to make an entirely 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 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. 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*.”

This doctrine of correspondence between everything in the natural world, and its counterpart in the spiritual, as also between the parts of the human body and the faculties of the soul, is continually referred to, in all the writings of this mystagogue. Thus expounded, the 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.”

In the theology of this sect, the unity of God is inculcated, together with a divine Trinity; but Swedenborg 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. 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. They say, that Jesus Christ is Jehovah manifested in the flesh; that he came into the world to

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

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.

To these notions of the Trinity and person of Christ, they add sentiments as peculiar concerning redemption, which they believe to consist, not in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Redeemer, as an atonement to justice; 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 doctrine of a divine influx holds a principal 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,

* True Christian Religion, p. 140.

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 exagge-

rated, 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; besides "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?

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. 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 the mind, 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 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 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 language that 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 abhorrence*.

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 he was, says Swedenborg, unconscious. Luther, indeed, was admitted into heaven, but only in 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 sketched was a faithful portrait. How much then must we pity the man who, starting with horror at the 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,

* True Christian Religion.

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.

A sort of Mahomedan heaven is presented in Swedenborgian's visions to the tastes of those who are offended with the pure spirituality of the scriptural representation of future bliss. To become so familiar with future happiness, 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.

The history of this sect is very little more than that of its founder. Emanuel Swedenborg was born at Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, January 29, 1689. 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 XII. Queen Ulrica Eleonora having ennobled him, 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 among 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 is cultivated in some 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, 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, or 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 expense. 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. He died, March 29, 1772; and, after lying in state, his remains were deposited in a vault in the Swedish church, near Ratcliff Highway.

It is admitted by the translator of his "True Christian Theology," that "he was seized with a fever, attended with 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, nay 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 greatest when in ruins.

The theological writings of Swedenborg were not much noticed during his life, but have, since his death, been translated into German, English, and French. The first translation into our language was by Mr. Hartley, a clergyman, which attracted so much atten-

tion, 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.

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. After ingeniously repelling the doctor's arguments, Hindmarsh asserts, that Socinians are not Christians; and that their grand peculiarity, the denial of the deity of Jesus Christ, is the unpardonable sin. Were it not that the subject is too serious, as it involves 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.

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 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 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.

CHAP. II.

STATE OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

BESIDES that mighty convulsion in the political world, the American revolution, 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 arose 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 the articles of the church. In their petition they thus express their sentiments. "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 rela-

tive 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, on reading this, does not exclaim, "Is Saul also among the prophets?"

So novel an application may naturally be supposed to have roused many enemies in the British legislature. The more liberal 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. They further informed the petitioners, that if they had changed their sentiments, it was always in their power to alter their profession and bid adieu to the established priesthood.

But what said the high church party? In their eyes the petition appeared to threaten the destruction of the church. If the articles, said they, 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 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. 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.

In the debates on the petition of the dissatisfied clergy, when the case of the Dissenters in respect to subscription was mentioned, some who strenuously opposed the petition declared themselves willing to relieve Dissenters 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 prescribed; 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, 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 Non-conformists, 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 to apply to parliament for relief from the present subscription, and to substitute a declaration of their belief of the sacred Scriptures as the rule of 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

* 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.

given to bring in a bill to that effect. It was ushered into the house with the most flattering expressions of approbation. But that *mania* which seizes a high church tory, whenever he hears of any privilege or indulgence to be granted to a Dissenter, exerted its influence on the present occasion, and roused many to speak against the bill with all their might.

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; but those who now came forward with their complaints, must be persons of a different character, and therefore not entitled to its privileges.

The reasoning of the friends of the bill easily dispelled the airy sophisms of their opponents; and 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 concurrence, 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, tremblingly alive to all its concerns, thought that they descried danger in the bill, and summoning up their eloquence, gave it the most decided opposition. The bill was thrown out, by a hundred and two, against twenty-nine.

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, 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 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 appeared 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 more heat than light.

Those dissenting ministers, whose sentiments were hostile to the doctrine of the articles, were the first in the field. 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 Dissenters, they spoke disrespectfully of the ancient Non-conformists, as men groping in the dark, while they extolled themselves as unspeakably superior. But had they not asserted this, 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 is due to that more numerous body among the ministers who had no quarrel with the doctrine of 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, they were desirous of lending their aid to free the men who had embraced these errors from human penalties. Some, however, 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 it was thought improper to encourage. Whatever praise may be due to the good intentions of such men; on the ground of general liberty and the rights of conscience, we would not undertake their defence.

More may be said for another class of dissenting ministers, who told the Arian 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 reli-

gious principles dangerous to the souls of men." Such was the reasoning of Mr. Hitchin's pamphlet. In the various writings published on this subject, the orthodox display a great superiority of temper 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 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 been so peremptorily refused. 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, now all vanished; and the Dissenters 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 Hoadley, 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. No terms can describe the injustice and cruelty of the English government to that body of people, from the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne. We have our Book of Martyrs, in which the sufferings of those who were put to death by Roman Catholics are affectingly detailed; but few are informed that Roman Catholics have their Book of Martyrs too, and almost as long and as bloody, and that English Protestants were the executioners.

To the present generation was reserved the honour

of decreeing that the persecuting statutes against the members of the Church of Rome, which would have disgraced the code of Nero, and which had so long been allowed to form a part of ours, were a national injustice, and an infamy no longer to be borne. 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. 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. 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 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. 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 countenance given 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 numerous Protestant association was formed in London, with a view to procure the repeal of the recent act, and to subject Papists again to the unrighteous laws. Zeal against an obnoxious sect is easily kindled, continued, and diffused. It requires the mortification of no evil disposition, and allows the most hateful passions of the heart to exert all their fury. No wonder that the association soon grew to an enormous size. A petition to parliament was prepared, and signed by the names and marks, it is said, of a 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, 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 the house, 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, the same evening, to the demolition of two of the most celebrated Catholic chapels.

For a week, the metropolis was the scene of tumult and devastation, chapels were destroyed, and the dwellings of many Catholics injured and stripped. The prison of Newgate, in which some of the rioters were confined, was attacked and burned, and several other jails shared the same fate. The houses of Lord Mansfield and Sir George Saville were demolished; and a

furious mob was extending its ravages, when, to supply the defects of exertion by the civil magistrate, the entrance of a military body restored tranquillity to the terrified inhabitants of London. 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, acted the last scene of the tragedy. Of whom the Protestant association was formed, it is natural to inquire. They were collected from different religious denominations; the church furnished its full share; many were of the two tribes of Methodists, who still clung to the church; the Scotch furnished a numerous band; of regular Dissenters there was the smallest number. No dissenting minister, or layman of note, was to be found among them; for the doctrine of religious liberty was better understood among Dissenters than in any other body of Christians. Being interrupted in their debates by the noise and violence of the mob, the House of Commons adjourned, and the subject not being resumed, 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 further relief. 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. Mr. Pitt argued for the limitation; and his voice prevailed. Many of the Catholics, unable to assent to the declaration, 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. 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 undergoing a gradual improvement; and the day was arrived when the fetters, which, for more than a century, had not only confined, but degraded them, would be broken. 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 further 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 these prospects, the Dissenters, in 1787, applied to parliament for relief from the operation of the Corporation and Test Acts. 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, he urged the claims of the Dissenters. But Lord North 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 a 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. 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 still 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. 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 defeat seemed to the Dissenters to be half a victory, and inspired them with still livelier hopes of success on a future application*.

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 mere spectators; and it would have been well, if they had continued in that state to the end, for their interference proved a serious injury. 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

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

that the Dissenters in the country did not interest themselves with the matter. 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 published. Some of these were intemperate; but this accusation could not be brought against the general mass. 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 the same observations are applicable as to the resolutions*.

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. But counter meetings and resolutions and pamphlets, many of them most acrimonious, proved that the old spirit of bigotry and intolerance was not dead, as was supposed, but had only slept.

Other events rendered the prospects of success far less favourable than before. But, after making such preparations, the Dissenters conceived themselves bound to perseverance. Confiding in the goodness of their cause, they, in 1790, brought their business a third time before the House of Commons. Mr. Fox

* 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.

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 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. William 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. 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: 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-four*. For the whole

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

power of the ministry was employed against the Dissenters, and the clergy were roused to defend the church, which was asserted to be in imminent danger.

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 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 code from this disgrace, 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. 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, 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 the assertions 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. 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 is unnecessary to add, that Lord Stanhope's motion failed.

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 now the fire should consume, not heretics, but persecuting statutes.

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.

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. 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. 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. Multitudes of the Dissenters entered, with peculiar ardour, into the French revolution, as an event 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 uncontrolled 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.

Those who are acquainted with the Dissenters 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. Hence arose that lively interest which the Dissenters in general, and many dissenting ministers, felt in the French revolution. 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 banish the ignorance and superstition which had so long enveloped Europe in 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.

Early in 1791, a publication of long promise issued from the press, Burke's "Reflections on the French Revolution," which proved the source of discord, and spread strife and contention among the people of Great Britain. From the date of the publication of his book, a melancholy change took place in the public temper. The demon of discord stalked through the land, scattering firebrands. 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 stood up in its defence; charging them with being advocates of the blackest crimes. 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. 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 superior 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 they could. 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 osten-

sibly employed, or at least patronised by them, served to fill up the cup of discord to the brim.

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, because they were separatists from the church. In the riots at Birmingham, their enemies demolished two places of worship, and destroyed the houses of some respectable Dissenters. 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.

During this tempestuous season, in which party spirit raged with uncommon fury, the Dissenters enjoyed protection. To the honour of the British government it must be mentioned, that religious liberty continued unimpaired. When it is considered that, during this time of strife, the preaching of the Dissenters was extended to many places where they had not made an attempt before, the merit of our rulers is greatly heightened. In consequence of the institution of the Missionary society, in 1795, 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; and, in hundreds of small towns and villages, houses were opened for the dissenting mode of worship. That men of the world should suspect some deep political design under this cloak of zeal for religion, was natural; and the ministry had many a warning of the impending peril. But the peculiar excellence of the grand prin-

ciples 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 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 end.

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 was now too late ; and had it been carried into execution, the only effect would have been 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. 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, in what light would the legislature be regarded by the British public?

CHAP. III.

CONTROVERSIES IN WHICH DISSENTERS WERE
ENGAGED.SECT. I.—*Controversy concerning Dissent.*

THE followers of Socinus now attacked the establishment, to produce new secessions from her pale. To these attacks Dr. Priestley led the way. His remarks on Dr. Balguy's "Sermon on Church Authority" provoked no reply; but when he censured 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, "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*."

The attempt to obtain relief from subscription 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

* Memoirs of Dr. Priestley, p. 59.

Lindsey, having in consequence of his adoption of heterodox sentiments, resigned the vicarage of Catterick, in Yorkshire, 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*, whose memoirs were designed to answer the same purpose as Lindsey's Apology. The spirit with which these new Dissenters attacked the church, may be learned from Mr. Wakefield's reflections on the immoral conduct of a clergyman of Liverpool, who had been a dissenting minister. "My inference is as follows: it is scarcely possible that any man who has been educated in the true principles of dissent from the establishment, can afterwards conform with a good conscience. 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."

"An Apology for the Liturgy and Clergy of the Church of England," was 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 species of Dissenters.

While many were pointing out the faults of the

* Gilbert Wakefield's *Memoirs of his own Life*, vol. i. p. 184. Second edition.

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; 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." After a comprehensive survey, he announces the conclusion, that this long-established connexion 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 permanent tone was given to the controversy with the establishment.

The zealous efforts of Dissenters having become the theme of bishops in their charges, and of the clergy in their visitation sermons, Oxford was 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 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, "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 had been disappointed, he hesitated not to retort upon many of the clergy, the accusations of ignorance, which Dr. Tatham had so liberally heaped upon the Methodists.

Another attack was made, in 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 consistèd, 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 Cradeley, 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 had by no means universally fallen into Socinianism.

Dr. Mant, rector of All Saints, Southampton, in a sermon preached at the consecration of his parochial edifice, attacked the Dissenters, for offering up their public prayers without a liturgy, preferring "to pour out 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 show that it was no virulent attack, and called for no serious defence. In answer to the charge of Dr. Douglas, Bishop of Sarum, Mr. Kingsbury published "An Apology for Village Preachers."

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 this arena 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 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." The bishop then proceeds to warn the clergy and the public, that a

similar conspiracy was formed 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. 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 connexion with these conventicles, and there is much reason to fear that the expenses of these schools and conventicles are defrayed by associations.”

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? It is said, the pastor of the newly-formed village congregations ‘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."

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." 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 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 civil intercourse, 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 predicted 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 forehead*." 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.

"A Guide to the Church," by the Rev. Charles Daubeny, placed all the Dissenters under the ban of the Redeemer's empire. Mr. Wilberforce's "Practical View of Christianity" had 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 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

* Rev. xiii. 16, 17.

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.

A member of the more sane part of the Church of England, Sir Richard Hill, published "An 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 afforded 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 by clergymen episcopally ordained: yet two metropolitans, Tillotson and Secker, and four heads of the church, James I., William III., and the first two Georges, were not episcopally baptized.

Against the repeated accusations of schism, the Dissenters republished two tracts, one by Matthew Henry on schism, and the other by Dr. Gill, on the true grounds of dissent. A few episcopal charges attracted

notice, though the 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 on 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 goodwill which they seem disposed to show 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," in 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, to dispute with their numerous accusers.

SECT. II.—*The Arminian Controversy.*

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*."

The restoration of royalty brought back 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 Hobbes and the Stoics, the Stoics were the best among the Heathens, for whose salvation Arminians are accustomed to contend, and that the worst tenet 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, Whitfield 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 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 what-

ever blame attaches to the rupture ; for it is as decided a declaration of war as was ever made by a herald. Whitfield 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. By the style of the sermon it seems intended for popular effect, to render his adversary’s system odious. But as Mr. 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.” “ 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 convert to Arminianism. The same writer reprinted “ Extracts from a late Author, entitled serious Considerations concerning the Doctrines of election, 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 “ Predesti-

nation calmly considered;" this, his most laboured piece, indicates anything rather than calmness or consideration. He wrote, against Mr. Toplady, a tract entitled "The Consequence proved," and then, leaving that gentleman to be answered by Thomas Olivers, Mr. Wesley abandoned the controversy.

Whitfield, 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 of Rotherham, 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 everything but the abstract question, which he pursued to such lengths, that not many could follow him.

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 as 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 not every kind of necessity is incompatible with that freedom of the will which is essential to moral agency, praise and blame; because God is necessarily holy, and devils are necessarily or irreclaimably evil: yet neither the best nor the worst beings act by compulsion; but 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." "The Scheme of Christian and Philosophical Necessity Asserted," by the same author, was in opposition to Mr. Wesley's tract on that subject.

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, 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, the 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 was reviewed 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 that 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 anything 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 he affords.

On looking back to the heat of the controversy, it is painful to reflect that scarcely ever was a subject so important so badly discussed. 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 anything 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 judgment 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 blasphemous, 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 coruscations of passion and ephemeral wit should go down to posterity, it will pronounce him too loquacious for a deep reasoner, and too empassioned to investigate duly the most profound and awful themes which can occupy the human mind.

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 de-

cided 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 Whitfield appeared reconciled, they were either not very hearty, or their influence was greater to inflame 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; while 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 like 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."

SECT. III.—*The Socinian Controversy.*

MR. CARDALE, a dissenting minister of Evesham, in Worcestershire, originated this controversy by publish-

ing "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. Dr. Lardner gave a 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 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, in a convincing statement of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, and by 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 as the champion of Socinianism. He published "An Appeal to the serious and candid Professors of Christianity;" "A Familiar Illustration of certain Passages of Scripture;" and "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 on what the light of nature might teach, which the doctor 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 an historical defence of Socinianism, or rather as a death-stroke to the deity

and atonement of Christ, announced, with some parade, it must strike every intelligent reader as the ridiculous birth of a parturient mountain. One short section of a work, that extends through two thick volumes, contains all the polemical history to prove the earliest Christians Socinians; but which 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 doctor believes.

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. David's, was one of the ablest antagonists of the Socinians. 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 contest his passions and his pride, to the disgrace of his learning, and the injury of his cause. 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. It has, indeed, been observed, that Priestley followed up the reviewers with so much prowess and policy, that, "finding their country was nourished by the king's, they desired peace, and have ever since paid the Socinians faithful service." "A History of Early Opi-

nions 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 undergraduate 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 "An Historical Argument to prove that some Hundreds of Pastors in the First 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 originally have excited none?

Mr. Lindsey, a respectable clergyman, having resigned the vicarage of Catterick, in consequence of his objections to the Trinitarianism of the Church of England, published an apology for that step, and a sequel

to the apology; both which are efforts to overthrow the doctrines of the Trinity and deity of Christ. His attempt to explain away texts is exceedingly futile; and his quotations from the fathers seemed designed to prove that they decide nothing, or that they were believers in Christ's divinity. Mr. Lindsey's "Catechist," "Historical View of the Unitarian Doctrine," "Addresses to the Students of Oxford and Cambridge," "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 first three Centuries," by William Burgh, Esq., and Dr. Hawker's "Sermons on the Divinity of Christ."

Mr. Fletcher, who figured in the Arminian controversy, wrote a very spirited piece, entitled "Socinianism unscriptural." The Swedenborgians and the Jews, who had been drawn into the controversy by Dr. Priestley, retorted upon the Socinians with great spirit, maintaining that they who denied Christ's divinity could not, with any propriety, be called Christians.

Gilbert Wakefield, another clergyman who had abandoned the establishment, on account of his 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, 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 half-way-house to Deism, was attacked by Mr. Belsham. 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 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 mild temper of Dr. Priestley neutralised the polemical gall, but his hatred to Calvinism sometimes burst forth in bitter words. His style, lucid and dispassionate, was calculated to make an impression on his admirers rather 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, Priestley should have attempted to confute such works as Edwards's "Dissertation on the Nature of Virtue,"

and "On God's Last End in the Creation of the World."

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 everything 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 the Racovian creed.

CHAP. IV.

SEMINARIES FOR THE MINISTRY AMONG THE
DISSENTERS.

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

The most ancient of the dissenting colleges is that of Homerton, near London. It was removed from Mile End, in the year 1772. At the commencement of the reign of George III., Drs. Walker, Conder, and Gibbons were the tutors. 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. 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 the able discharge of 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 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, in 1785, he was succeeded by Dr. Henry Mayo, a more able man, pastor of a church in Nightingale-lane. 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. Unpopular as a preacher, he was invited to no pastoral charge, and, in the decline of life, he relinquished his academical duties, and retired to privacy, 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 occasionally discharged the duties of the ministry. He was followed 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 teach Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, at Homerton. He sunk under the trials of his office, September 6, 1797.

Mr. Berry, of West Bromwich, followed, but resigned the chair, in about four years. 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. 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, the classical tutor who had received a diploma of D.D. 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.

The other dissenting academy, in the neighbourhood of London, 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 at his house in Wellclose-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.

Several friends of evangelical truth, lamenting the heterodoxy or coldness of the former seminary, associated to provide for the churches pastors of a different spirit. They engaged some ministers of established

reputation to give lectures at their own houses. But this mode 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. He had scarcely commenced the duties of his new office, before he was attacked by a severe indisposition which laid him aside, for some time. He recovered, but 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, he continued to labour there, under the pressure of infirmities; but in February, 1796, he was called away by death, in his sixty-seventh year. He was an amiable man, of correct deportment, ardent piety, and great zeal for usefulness; but as a preacher, he was more esteemed than admired, for his elocution was defective, 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.

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. Mr. Collison, Mr. Atkinson, Mr. Hooper, and Mr. Henry Foster Burder, have been tutors here. From its treasurer, Thomas Wilson, Esq., this institution has received the most active and generous services.

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, the New College. Dr. Kippis, who has already been noticed, Thomas Belsham, and Gilbert Wakefield, formerly fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, were called to be the tutors. As the institution expired, within ten years after its establishment, but little can be said of its character. Andrew Kippis, D.D., F.R.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 Prince's-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, and energy of elocution, must have rendered him fascinating to those who approved his sentiments. But his labours as an author

* Memoirs, vol. i. p. 338.

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. As an editor of *Dr. Doddridge's Lectures*, he has shewn his reading and his candour; but the new edition of the "*Biographia Britannica*" will deliver his name to posterity among the first writers of our language.

A more recent establishment at Hackney seems designed to give a short and economical course of instruction, to prepare itinerants to preach Christ to the poor. Its founder was *John Eyre, A.M.*, minister of an Episcopal chapel at Homerton, where he laboured with distinguished zeal and success. As the necessities of the churches left the regular academies no opportunity to furnish itinerants, the plan was formed 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 labours have introduced the Gospel, and formed churches, in many dark places.

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 18th 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, combined with consummate prudence, and unaffected modesty, were devoted, with unremitting 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.

Thomas Robins succeeded Dr. Ashworth. He was born in the vicinity of Bedford, and after finishing the studies which were interrupted by Dr. Doddridge's death, under his successor, and preaching at Stretton, in Warwickshire, he removed to West Bromwich, near Birmingham. Yielding to the solicitations of Mr. Coward's trustees, he took the care of the academy at Daventry, where he was chosen to the charge of Dr. Ashworth's congregation. The loss of his voice, in 1781, obliged him to withdraw from duties which he had ably fulfilled.

The assistant tutor at Daventry, Thomas Belsham, A.M., succeeded to the theological chair. This gentle-

man was educated in calvinistic 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 became 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 honourably relinquished the theological chair.

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 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 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. Mr. Henry Foster Burder was, for a short time, assistant tutor with Mr. Parry. The seminary is supported by ample funds, and the library, increased by the removal of the books belonging to Dr.

Savage's academy, at Hoxton, 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, into which was removed the library of the Taunton academy, enriched by a bequest of the books of Dr. Hodge of London. 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. Mr. Towgood died, in 1792, in his ninety-second year, ten years after the infirmities of age had compelled him to relinquish his public labours.

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 mathematics 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 removed from Sidmouth, to preach at the Mint meeting in Exeter. He abandoned the pulpit, on becoming a partner in a banking-house. The academy, after existing thirty years, 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, in August, 1804, in his forty-sixth year.

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, having determined to establish a seminary on orthodox principles, in the west of England, 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 of the seminary 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, in 1764, removed by death, in

consequence of a mortification which followed the operation of bleeding. "He was," says his successor, "a man of excellent natural temper, extensive learning, distinguished piety, and great prudence." From the pulpit, Micaiah Towgood lamented his death in the following eulogium: "he was more pious, more learned, and more useful than us all*."

James Rooker, of Bridport, succeeded 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 and ardent attachment to evangelical truth. 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. 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 ardently attached to the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, which afforded him peculiar satisfaction in his last moments. Mr. Reader was the son of eminently devout parents, who lived at Bedworth, in Warwickshire. He first settled at Weymouth,

* 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.

whence he removed to Newbury, and at last preached 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."

Mr. Reader was followed by Mr. James Small, minister of Axminster. Under the patronage of the London board, he commenced his labours in 1796, and the Devonshire association secured the continuance of the institution by subscriptions in the county. The Fund Board, the King's-head Society, and subscribers in the west of England, were the supporters of this seminary.

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 formerly under Mr. Jollie may be said to be succeeded by that which is established at Rotherham, near Sheffield. A few ministers and public-spirited Christians in London having consulted on "the means of dispelling the cloud of Socinian darkness, then spreading over the northern counties of England," formed a society for educating young men for the work of the ministry in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and, in May, 1756, chose James Scott, minister of Heckmondwicke, to superintend the studies of the young men. The labours of Mr. Scott repaid the devout solicitude of the founders, but death deprived the church of his services, in January, 1783. He was a native of Scotland, and had studied in one of the universities of that country. Under him were educated about sixty ministers, who

laboured in the northern counties with great fidelity and success.

His successor was Samuel Walker; but it soon appeared that the important post was not filled 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, dissatisfaction with its state had induced many of the subscribers to withdraw; and William Fuller, Esq. banker, of London, the munificent patron, 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 the Rev. Mr. Vint, of Idle. Dr. Williams, then pastor of a congregation in Birmingham, accepted 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 site 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, rendered it the most distinguished services. Premises were erected, the library of the former academy was purchased and much increased, and a philosophical apparatus was procured.

But many of the churches in the West Riding of Yorkshire felt serious inconveniencies from the distance to which the seminary was now removed; and Edward

Hanson, Esq., then resident in London, offered sixty pounds annually, for the education of two students, near the former site of the academy. Mr. Vint was chosen the tutor; and 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.

There were several smaller seminaries established during this period. William Bull, the venerable minister of Newport Pagnel, superintended one, of which the history is rather singular. John Newton, a justly celebrated minister of the church of England, formed a scheme for the establishment of an academy, of which the students were 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. Four years after, John Thornton, Esq. of Clapham, took the expense upon himself, and at his death bequeathed two hundred pounds a year, for the support of the institution, during Mr. Bull's life. Mr. Bull's son still labours usefully in that office, as well as in the ministry of the Gospel, at Newport Pagnel.

George Welch, Esq., banker, of London, merits grateful remembrance, for his liberality and zeal in

supporting seminaries for the ministry. By him Cornelius Winter, a venerable minister of the Gospel, at Painswick, in Gloucestershire, was enabled to employ his excellent talents in the useful work of tuition. Mr. Thornton contributed to the expenses of this seminary also, and enabled Mr. Winter to educate one in whose usefulness he enjoyed peculiar pleasure, and whose memoir of Mr. Cornelius Winter is so well known, as to leave us little occasion to attempt any addition to his praise*. He died in January, 1808.

Mr. Welch founded an academy for the south of England also, by placing students under David Bogue, A. M. at Gosport. This seminary was opened in 1789. The course of studies occupied 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, 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 students to the original number for three years. The Hampshire Association, aided by friends in other parts of England, afterwards supported the academy. The Missionary Society having, in 1800, resolved to prepare their missionaries by a course of instruction, placed them under Mr. Bogue, who gave 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, attended principally to theology.

Warrington, in Lancashire, is well known as the

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

former seat of an academy, 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, and Job Orton. But the first tutors of the academy were Dr. Taylor, of Norwich, Dr. Aikin, of Kibworth, and John Hiot, of Lancaster. This was a mighty triumvirate, but some differences kindled a flame which endangered the existence of the academy, at its very commencement. Dr. Taylor 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. His publications in defence of the Racovian theology were opposed by Dr. Watts and Dr. Jennings, but most powerfully by President Edwards, in whose hands Dr. Taylor looks little and feeble, almost to contempt. 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 doctrines of the first Dissenters. 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 in prose.

Dr. Joseph Priestley was invited, in 1761, to succeed Dr. Aikin as classical tutor. 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, November 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. He was a very superior scholar; and is well known as the author of the "Speaker," and the "Abridgment of Brucker's History of Philosophy."

As those Dissenters who had departed from the ancient faith of the Non-conformists 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 Man-

chester, 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 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 the Rev. Mr. Loyd, till the year 1792. 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 chemical science. 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 college

was removed from Manchester, and placed under the care of the 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 1803, 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., was chosen to teach the classics and the belles lettres. Since the removal of the institution to York, the number of students has never exceeded twenty.

The academical institution which we have traced from Gloucestershire 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, withdrew their aid. Mr. Gentleman, soon after, removed from Carmarthen, to take the charge of a congregation at Kidderminster, formed by a separation from Mr. Baxter's former flock. The Independents founded another academy at Abergavenny, in Monmouthshire, of which Dr. Benjamin Davies was appointed tutor.

During the reign of George III., the Baptists paid increased attention to the education of their ministers. The General Association recommended the raising of funds for instructing young men, with a view to the ministry. Edward Terril and Caleb Jope were employed in this useful service at Bristol. But an academy for theological and philosophical studies for

the ministry did not exist in England, till the reign of George II. Mr. Foskett, under whom it began, was born near Woburn, in Bedfordshire, March 10, 1685. After receiving a liberal education, he studied medicine, but soon quitted that profession for the ministry of the Gospel. He laboured nearly forty years at Bristol, and died 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 formed by him for this important station. 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. He was an able, eloquent preacher; and his students enjoyed his friendship, as well as instruction. On 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. With him originated the Bristol Education Society, formed "for the more effectual

supply of ministers to the churches at home, and for the education of missionaries.”

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. He was called away from earth, April 8, 1780, in the fifty-seventh year of his age. Dr. Evans followed him to the place of rest, in August, 1791, in 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. The grace and energy of his elocution 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.”

After looking around, for some time, in quest of a successor, the society happily fixed upon Dr. John Ryland. 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, and were followed by the Rev. Henry Page and Mr. Isaac James. In addition to the pastors

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 number of the students, an extensive edifice was erected, with a hall for the reception of the museum, which was bequeathed by Dr. Gifford, and has been since increased by valuable curiosities sent by the Baptist missionaries in India.

A similar institution has been recently formed for the education of Baptist ministers in Yorkshire, supported by 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. 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 collections in the churches, enable the society to educate sixteen young men. The academy was opened in October, 1805, at Little Horton, near Bradford; and the choice of William Steadman, minister of the latter place, to be the tutor, inspired the most confident hopes of its subserviency to the Redeemer's glory, and the dearest interests of mankind.

The Rev. Mr. Sutcliff, minister at Olney, Buckinghamshire, prepared young men for the ministry of the Gospel among the Baptists; and an academy on a small scale was established, about four years ago, at Abergavenny, in Monmouthshire. A seminary at

Stepney, near London, under the care of Dr. Newman, of Bow, and Dr. Cox of Hackney, supplied the wants of this part of the kingdom.

William Clark, 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. Whitfield. 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 Tooley-street, where he laboured successfully for twenty years. 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 ardently devoted to the Redeemer's glory, while his purity of life and catholic 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. The whole deno-

mination formerly contented itself, either with self-taught ministers, or with educating its students at the academies established by other bodies of Dissenters; and 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. The Rev. John Evans, of London, was chosen tutor of the academy, which was held at his residence in Islington. It was 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, a subscription was opened, and a letter, written by Dan Taylor, a venerable minister of London, was addressed to the General Baptist churches. In the following year, 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. Advanced beyond threescore years and ten, the tutor proposed to resign his office, and, in a judicious discourse, delivered at Loughborough, before the governors of the academy, in 1807, he sketched the character to be required in his successor; but no such person having been procured, he continued to labour to form others for the work in which he spent his days.

The Countess of Huntingdon established a college,

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

in 1768, at Trevecka, in South Wales. Here, Mr. Fletcher, 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 the 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 was succeeded by Mr. Horne, Dr. Draper, Mr. Richards, and Mr. James.

This section will close with an account of seminaries in Wales. The institution, that was removed 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. 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 the assistant tutor,

Thomas Loyd, one of the students, David Peter, took his office, but afterwards resigned it, to settle at Carmarthen. John Jones succeeded him; but some differences arising in the academy, it was dissolved. In the following year, 1795, it was re-established at Carmarthen, where Mr. Peter, minister of the place, and Mr. Davis, of Lanybre, were appointed tutors.

When the Independents withdrew their aid from the former seminary, they placed a new one under Mr. Jardine, at Abergavenny. Dr. Davies, 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. On the removal of this valuable minister to London, in 1782, the seminary was transferred to Oswestry, where it enjoyed the tuition of Dr. Williams, afterwards tutor at Rotherham. When he resigned the chair, in 1795, the institution was fixed at Wrexham, where it was placed under the care of Jenkin Lewis. The Congregational Fund Board here supported nine students, who, being usually natives of Wales, employ a part of their four years of study in the acquisition of the English language. This institution has been a great blessing to the surrounding country, and has deserved more support than it has received.

CHAP. VI.

OUTWARD STATE OF DISSENTERS.

SECT. I.—*Number and Rank of Dissenters.*

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.

	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
Cornwall	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
Carried forward	196	508	366	1070

	Brought forward	Presbyterians.	Independents.	Baptists.	Total.
		196	508	366	1070
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
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
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		252	799	532	1583
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
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
		18	225	176	419
England		252	799	532	1583
		<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	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 nondescript character, which, not coming 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 III., the Dissenters have not been idle. The increase is the more pleasing, as the great object has been to make Christians. 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, confirmed the more inquisitive 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 endowment, bequeathed by some pious Calvinist, scores more of them must have been shut up, and the Arian and Socinian preacher fairly starved out*. If a 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

* The Presbyterian congregations in the four northern counties are not comprehended in this description: many of them, connected with the Scotch, have been preserved from those errors into which their southern brethren fell.

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 he were to say, "What is the cause?"—Arianism and Socinianism must be the reply.

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. 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 no denomination can boast of so great a number of ministers who preach the gospel in purity. As a body, none are more judicious. 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 knowledge.

Those who agree in baptizing none but adults, and *that* by immersion, differ widely in their theological creed. The old General Baptists have continued, progressively, to decline. Four of their congregations in London were some years ago united in one. Their numbers are now exceedingly small; for Socinianism in voluntary societies is uniform in its effects. Towards the beginning of this period, a body of General Baptists arose, chiefly in the midland counties, which reverted to the religious principles originally espoused by the sect. These, as they are more orthodox than the others, are more zealous, more numerous, and more flourishing. Their congregations amount to about sixty. They are quite distinct from the old General Baptists, and are known by the name of the New Connexion.

The particular Baptists continue to maintain the same theological sentiments as in the former period. Supralapsarianism has been more common among them than in any other denomination. Dr. Gill's high sentiments have not ceased to operate, and, in some places, both preachers and hearers have gone far towards doctrinal Antinomianism, however remote they may have been from the system in their practice. To the ignorance of some, who were chosen teachers before they had attained that accurate knowledge of the doctrines of the gospel which a teacher of Christianity should possess, much of this evil is to be ascribed. To remedy it, very able men, of their own body (and no denomina-

tion possesses abler), have exerted themselves to the utmost, by means of their judicious writings; and the increase of their seminaries is likely to insure success. The augmentation of their congregations, both in number and size, has been very considerable; but many of them are still small. Formerly, where there were but a few Baptists, they were content to worship with the independents; but of late they separate, and form a congregation of their own. This is the more easily accomplished, as what is called lay-preaching is common among them.

To the Quakers, the manners of the age have, during this period, been exceedingly perilous. That seclusion which their system demands, 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. This has occasioned a decrease in numbers, which has not been balanced by the converts who have been brought out of the world. 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 embrace, and the honours of the world are deemed lawful objects of pursuit. By these means, a greater variety of passions is 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. Whitfield 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 Independent principle of purity of communion, and consider regeneration 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 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 refused to be called; some have adopted 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 Episcopalians, 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 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 Moravians have not eagerly sought to augment

their numbers. 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. 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 dispensing 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; call themselves members of the established church? This sect was happy in a leader, who possessed skill for 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. 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 were, by the computation of the last conference, 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 this third period, 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 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 labours of the old dissenting denominations, much has been done for the advancement of religion in Wales by the "Welsh Calvinistic Methodists." Thomas Charles, of Bala, in Merionethshire, an unbeneficed clergyman, of ardent 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 of awakening multitudes to a concern for their eternal happiness, and of stirring up many faithful men to assist 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 connexion. In their different

societies, there are upwards of thirty thousand members*.

Labouring on the itinerant plan, their discipline partakes of the Presbyterian form. Till of late, the Lord's-supper was dispensed in their chapels, only by the clergymen in the connexion, 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. The exertions of Mr. Charles, 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. Few have been more laborious, or more successful, in advancing the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SECT. 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 activity of the zealous would have stimulated their successors to emulate their pious assiduity, and, if possible, to excel them. But

* 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 writer of the history of his own age has everything 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 communion and age, will afford entertainment and instruction to those who move in different circles, and will be useful to succeeding generations.

As to the quantity of labour performed by dissenting ministers of evangelical principles, 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 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 on one of the working-days, so that the minister has to preach four times a week. Some would ask, how can this be performed with any tolerable degree of propriety? That some have preached in a slovenly manner, must be allowed. But let it be remembered, that those who are accustomed to mental labour can do four times as much as they who are not; and that the extensive study of theology, at the seminary, enlarged by constant application, gives a fulness of ideas, 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.

The Calvinistic Methodists differ 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 might more favour-

ably attract the attention of the people. Some Independent congregations have imitated this practice; but it is devoutly to be wished that it may not gain ground. The attendance shows that, 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. Should there be no worship at that season, many must be deprived of the only opportunity of instruction which they could enjoy. 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.

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. In the mode of preaching, there has been an amalgamation of methodism with dissent. 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 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 their first ministers; nor would Dissenters endure the colder compositions and the slavish reading of sermons, which once prevailed among them.

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 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 during the whole existence of Christianity on 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.

Of theological publications by 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 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, of Stafford, Lavington, Lambert, Lowell, and Jay. Dr. Stennett, Messrs. 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. Whitfield and Cennick will furnish specimens of preaching among the Calvinistic Methodists; while Wesley's numerous sermons are 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 Non-conformists ; nor can they boast of a Watts or a Doddridge, who were the glory of the second period. But with these exceptions, 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 formerly 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 mi-

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, they will, in addition to other consequences resulting from the neglect, 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, who excluded others. 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, 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 Dis-

senters and the establishment. 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. The reader of the liturgy is sometimes a clergyman, sometimes a layman who loves the book of common prayer, and has learned to read it well; and sometimes the minister of the place. In some chapels they have no fixed preacher, but depend entirely on one of those occasional labourers who succeed each other, at intervals of 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 time 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 the 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.

A system so novel naturally excites observation, and some will praise and others blame. The introduction of the liturgy into unconsecrated places, rigid churchmen consider as a degradation of their ritual; while to 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, we may not find the evil consequences which some dread.

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 socialism, a liturgy became a desirable help to the people, or at least to their minister; for socialism and extemporary prayer do not well accord.

For their temporal support, the dissenting ministers still depended on the contributions of the congregation, furnished under the influence 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 field; but, with all its disadvantages, nothing has yet appeared to alter the opinion, that as it was the first, so it is the best—best for the minister, best for the people, and best for the cause of religion. Experience has proved, that where endowments are large, they are, in nine instances out of ten, 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 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; that 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."

The societies established in the former period, by the Dissenters of the three denominations in London, still continue, and furnish very seasonable relief to many poor congregations in the country. Their contributions were gradually aided by legacies, which created a durable capital.

In the course of this period many benefactors, though not of considerable note for the amount of their gifts, afforded assistance to ministers of poor congregations, and to their widows. The most eminent was William Fuller, Esq., a banker in London. Frugality was necessary to him in youth, and the habit followed him when affluence seemed to demand a more liberal mode of living. His peculiarities brought reproach on his character, but they were beneficial to others. He would take pains to save a sixpence, but he had always his guineas or his hundreds ready for every application in behalf of the interests of religion. With all his eccentricities, he was a pious, sensible man, well informed on religious subjects, and zealous for the doctrines of the Gospel. His patronage of the Heckmondwicke academy was a blessing to Yorkshire, which enjoys 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 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 than William Fuller.

With all these aids to the contributions of the people, the salaries of the dissenting ministers are exceedingly moderate. The rise in the price of every article of living they have felt, and 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 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 salaries so moderate.

* Whether blame be due to any on this account, it may be proper to inquire. The labouring class deserves no censure; they in general give according to their means. In many places the middle rank 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.

SECT. III.—*Public Services and Associations of Dissenters.*

AMONG public services, ordination first occurs. An ordination among evangelical Dissenters is the most edifying service of the kind which has ever been in any age of the Christian church. 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 a modern addition, and a 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 to the church now commonly succeeds the charge to the minister, 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. Where voluntary societies are guided 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 the associated churches unite in receiving a token of their love to their Saviour, and affection to each other.

One part of the business of the association is to form and execute plans for the advancement of religion in the county, by the more extensive preaching of the Gospel. 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. 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.

In this period, the Dissenters continued to approach the sovereign, on every proper occasion. The addresses which follow will serve as a specimen of their sentiments and language. The former was presented in November, 1760, by the London ministers on the accession of George III. 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 expenses 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 immovable 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, the Dissenters 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 pre-

sence 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."

CHAP. VI.

INWARD STATE OF RELIGION AMONG DISSENTERS.

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 not yet positively heretical, and urbanity of manners often charmed the families which rejected the new creed. Christians were thus kept from hearing in the church, what should nourish their faith, and from conversing in the parlour on the themes that would inflame their devotion. That heresy stole upon the church by means of the serious garb derived from truth, we know from the testimony of Dr. Priestley, whose memoirs deserve the more attention as they were written by himself. While his admirers applaud his honesty, his candour, his extensive information, and philosophical mind; those who oppose his system, may find its antidote in his autobiography.

It was manifest, however, that, if the external form of piety was generally preserved, 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, 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: yet 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 excluded on the Lord's day, it was often, not because the Dissenters, like their forefathers, were occupied with more sacred employment; but because they had not yet cast off the ancient reverence for the day, which still embittered the pleasures of the world, though it imparted no sweetness to the exercises of religion. The public assemblies of the Presbyterians often presented a melancholy contrast to the first dissenting churches.

In the academies, a great proportion of the students were most lamentably destitute of the apostolic spirit of the Puritans and Non-conformists. Instead of aspiring to resemble the father of believers, who was "strong in faith, giving glory to God," they seemed ambitious of proving how cordially they adopted Voltaire's maxim, that "incredulity is the foundation of all wisdom." These destined preachers of the Christian faith entered the seminaries, only to determine whether they should believe anything 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 in what they called free inquiry, converting the academy into a gymnasium to try the strength of their speculative powers. The complaints of the more serious Dissenters were often levelled, not only against the principles of the young men, but also against their conduct, which loudly proclaimed that those who were preparing to teach religion to others, had yet to learn it themselves.

False candour was the crying sin of Presbyterian Dissenters, in the early part of George III.'s reign, and it polluted their churches by sending forth Arians and Socinians, to preach in the pulpits of the Non-conformists, at a time when Racovian theology had no academy of its own. Such indifference was dishonourable to those 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 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 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, 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 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 anything they ever witnessed in early life; but still they look back with delight to the labours of those whom they first heard.

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 memory of veteran Christians. 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. Some volumes of sermons by Mr. Lavington, of Bideford, furnish a specimen of the kind of preaching which many dissenting churches enjoyed, and those who have watched the effects of sentiments, will acknowledge that the hearers of such sermons were likely to prove worthy successors to the Puritans.

The closets of the former Dissenters 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, 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 is 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. A dread of Methodism was the hydrophobia of many excellent men, whose usefulness it considerably impeded.

At the commencement of the reign of George III., 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. Many ministers,

who left Lady Huntingdon's connexion, 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 an aged frame. Among them were bred several of the more useful Dissenters of the present day, who rose up with growing attachment to dissenting principles, and zeal for the interests of religion in the communion to which they belonged. This class deserves high praise for having warmly patronized the modern schemes for the diffusion of divine truth.

The first half of the reign of George III. presents a checquered 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, whose strings 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 rise of that 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 did more mischief than any form of warfare, was about the middle of the present reign broken. To Dr. Priestley must be attributed, in a great degree, the violation of the unholy league; for, if the orthodox owe him no thanks for intentional services, many of them learned from him that decisive declaration of sentiments, and that solicitude for their diffusion, which they ought to have learned from a better teacher. With a just attachment to liberty of opinion, unfettered by the civil power, he displayed 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 her hostility to almost all that was dear to thousands, they startled at the horrors of her visage, and fled far from her domains. Arians, holding the pre-existence of Christ, and ascribing to him a sort of divinity, had 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 infallibility and impeccability, shocked and alarmed

all who had sincerely exclaimed with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

The state of religion, among the Independents, in the latter part of this period, was more prosperous. Zeal for truth, 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 the orthodox, not merely to gain 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 to direct the attention of the reader to this event, which has created a new era in the religious world.

An Independent minister first called the attention of the churches to the object, by an address 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 some evangelical clergymen. It was agreed to waive 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 was afterwards established at Gosport.

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, expanded the mind, invigorated the character, and warmed the heart. A spirit of prayer, 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. To the other good effects produced by zeal in the cause of missions, must be added the spirit of liberality excited. 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 new efforts for the conversion of the heathen gave tenfold force to liberality. It was manifestly impossible to establish missions in the most distant parts of the world, and send 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 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 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, but they furnish the criterion of the state of religion in their churches. The institution of the Religious 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.

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, and now feel that we are ‘ debtors both to the Greeks and to the barbarians.’ ” Thus the breath of lukewarmness blew up the flames of zeal. Sunday-schools, also, 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.

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 that 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 that breathes in the pulpit, leads to the 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.

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

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; and the solicitude for the supply of suitable pastors which has multiplied their seminaries, 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, with uneducated ministers, and the hasty admission of members into this communion, produced so much Antinomianism, that the churches in various places are suffering severely by this noisome pestilence.

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 honour 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 the majority have protested against it; and, it is said, that religion has increased among the friends.

Of the Methodists, the Calvinistic part first claims attention. If we judge from the distinguished share they have taken in the exertions for the best interests of mankind, they are, in point of religion, prosperous. The additional seminary, established by one section, sprang from two pleasing causes, an increase of

congregations, and a solicitude to supply them with well-informed preachers. Like the Baptists, they have suffered severely from the inroads of Antinomianism; but the increasing taste for good preaching is counteracting this evil.

The Wesleyan Methodists have not been injured 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 recompense in a number of pious people, who are the salt of the communion.

Antinomianism has made, during the latter part of this period, so much progress in many dissenting congregations, as to demand some attention. The Hypercalvinism, which long had lurked, as a cocatrice-egg in the sand, broke out, during this period, into the fiery flying serpent of Antinomianism.

This 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. In too many who are possessed of this unclean spirit, open profaneness has published their shame to the world; though they have been so completely besotted, as to suppose that drunkenness was consistent with seriousness, and lewdness with spirituality. During a great part of the reign of George III., this was the most prevailing evil of the day. The erection of Antinomian chapels frequently proclaimed its triumph. The essential rectitude of the divine nature, government, and law, which rendered the redemption of Christ necessary to our salva-

tion, is here blasphemed, by prostituting the gospel to the purpose of abrogating the law and giving license to sin. Such a perversion of the system has hardened both Socinians and Arminians in their hatred of Calvinism, and furnished them with arms to maintain their warfare. This poison has been swallowed, and administered as largely by evangelical churchmen, as by those in the ranks of dissent.

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 into great 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 public taste. 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 very different members! Without, however, pretending to anything 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 before composed those societies. If many congregations have been annihilated by error, their deserted places are now reopening, 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. Still, however, 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 advanced; 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.

CHAP. 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 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.

He was born, in 1699, of parents who lived at Great Salkeld, in Cumberland, and being eminently pious, had the pleasure to see several of their children walk in their steps. This son, discovering early a serious spirit and a love of learning, was designed for the ministry. After attending the grammar-school, he went, in 1716, 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 Presby-

terians there, he began to preach in that communion. Dr. Calamy, in whose house he resided for a time, recommended him to a congregation at Abingdon. Here he began to swerve from the orthodox doctrine; and, being on this account less agreeable to the people, he accepted, in 1729, a call to a society in St. John's-court, Southwark. In 1740, he succeeded Dr. Harris, and became colleague to Dr. Lardner. The infirmities of age having compelled Dr. Lardner to relinquish his office, the whole of the service devolved on Dr. Benson, who continued to officiate till his enfeebled constitution obliged him to retire. He was removed by death, April 6, 1762, in the sixty-third year of his age.

In study, Dr. Benson was indefatigable, and, conceiving 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. 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, and these, as polite men, returned civil notes of commendation.

JOHN MASON, A.M.

This useful writer, who is extensively known by his

treatise on self-knowledge, was descended from a minister. His grandfather also 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. Jemmings, at Kibworth, became chaplain and private tutor in the family of Governor Feaks, at his seat near Hatfield. He was soon called to take the pastoral charge of a congregation at Dorking, in Surrey. 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 more than 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 II.'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 very superior sense, and knowledge of his subject*.

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. Henry Chandler, his father, a dissent-

* 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 Taunton. From this gentleman, by his first wife, the daughter of Mr. Mason, descended Dr. John Mason Good, a distinguished writer and physician.

ing minister at Hungerford, afterwards at Bath, was deservedly held in high estimation by the body. 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. Like many others, hastening to be rich, he engaged in the South Sea scheme, and lost the fortune which 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. Leavesley, their pastor, Dr. Chandler, was appointed his successor. In this situation, he continued, 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 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 entirely

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 that direful scourge of studious men the stone, robbed him of his ease and rest, and warned him of his approaching end. He finished his course, on the 8th of May, 1766, in the seventy-third year of his age.

He is entitled 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 simplicity and elegance; and, in his delivery, he displayed much energy, but was deficient in grace. As a writer, his works are both numerous and diversified. He wrote on the deistical controversy; as also on miracles; on the History of Joseph; on the prophecies of Daniel; on the life of David, in two volumes, and on several other subjects. 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 give 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.

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 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*.

NATHANIEL LARDNER, D.D.

This eminent writer was born, June 6, 1684, at Hawkhurst, in Kent. His father, Richard Lardner, a valuable Non-conformist minister, sent him first to a grammar-school, and then to Mr. Oldfield, at Hoxton, near London. At the end of 1699, when he was in his sixteenth year, he went to the university of Utrecht, and from thence to Leyden. He returned to England, in 1703, but waited till he was five-and-twenty, before he preached, at Stoke Newington, his first sermon, on Rom. i. 16. 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

* 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 preaches when he is in full health.

the death of Lady Treby, in 1721, he writes, " I am yet at a loss to dispose 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 animation and vigour. 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. Excessive modesty made him long refuse 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, 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 deserved and obtained the praise of the learned in all denominations of Christians, were, to the disgrace of the public discernment, 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 he is said to have been, at the latter part of his life, the only English Presbyterian minister in London, who retained the faith of the Non-conformists. He was born near Battle, in Sussex, September 29, 1704, and had the honour to be de-

scended 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 the ministry.

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, 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 to the pastoral office, which he accepted. 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 1766, Aberdeen conferred on Dr. Langford the title of D.D., and he brought no stain on their discernment.

As he approached the close of life, he seemed to breathe the air of heaven. In his seventy-first year, 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 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, April 22. 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 Christ's glorious body.

In this man, who, like Abdiel, stood alone in adherence to the truth, may be seen the happy effects of soundness in the faith. While many of the congregations of the Arian and Socinian Presbyterians have been reduced to mere skeletons, 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 retained the ancient faith of the Non-conformists, and was one of the most flourishing in London.

PHILIP FURNEAUX, D. D.

He was born at Totness, in Devon, and after spending his early years in his native place, he came to London, and entered on a course of theological studies, under Dr. Jennings. He became assistant to Mr. Henry Read, at St. Thomas', Southwark; and afterwards was chosen successor to Mr. Lowman, at Clapham. For many years he preached a Sunday evening's lecture, at Salter's-hall, alternately with Dr. Prior.

Dr. Furneaux's character among the Presbyterians stood very high. From those of his sermons which were published, he must be acknowledged to be a man of superior talents. His composition was elegant, but his delivery was, by poring over his notes, and by a whine which would have disgraced a Scotch seceder, 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. His letters to judge Blackstone, on his exposition of the Act of Toleration, and some positions relative to religious liberty, in the 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 is to a minister a great blessing, while to associate with such as are erroneous, has proved a curse to thousands.

After thirty years, 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. One of the biographers of 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 lessons. Dr. Furneaux did not suffer in vain, if every minister who reads his mournful history, be influenced to lift up his heart with lively gratitude to God for the exercise of reason, to feel a deeper sense of dependence for this and every blessing, and of obligation to improve it to the utmost, 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*. At the free grammar-school in his native town, he acquired a considerable portion of classical learning. In his sixteenth year, he was put under the tuition of Dr. Charles Owen, of Warrington. The year following, he was sent to Dr. Doddridge's academy at Northampton, and was appointed assistant to the doctor in his academical labours. In 1741, he was drawn 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, Mr. Orton was

* 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."

pressed to succeed him in the academy and congregation; but this, as well as a call to succeed Dr. Hughes, in London, (a place which Orton 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*. Few men were more diligent than Mr. Orton, or more conscientious in performing the various duties of his office. Before old age arrived, the nervous complaints with which he was frequently troubled, made him conceive himself unable to continue longer in the pastoral office; and in his forty-eighth year he resigned. 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.

An independent fortune has seldom been beneficial to a minister of Christ. 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.

To the character of a devout and laborious minister, Mr. Orton is well entitled. He possessed a more than

* Mr. Fownes published a volume on toleration, which procured him a considerable name for acute and masterly reasoning.

common seriousness of mind, and assiduously cherished it, by reading, meditation, and prayer*. 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 he was 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 he had ceased to preach, conversation, letters, plans of sermons were sent to his friends, and every private method adopted. 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†.

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

* 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 views of evangelical truth.

† 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.

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 displays*. So that, however serious he was, and however desirous to do good, his weapons wanted the due temper, edge and weight. Job Orton attempted to cut down the oak of the forest with his penknife. Not a few of his hearers were verging nearer and nearer to Socinianism; and though his gift in prayer was uncommon, for suitableness, 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 Bridgend, in Glamorganshire, and was born the 22d of February, 1723. After acquiring a classical education, he was sent to the academy of Mr. Griffiths, at Talgarth, in Brecknockshire. On the death of his parents, he went to London, to his uncle, a very excellent man, who was co-pastor with Dr. Watts, for more than forty years. After pursuing his theological studies for four years, under the tuition of the celebrated Mr. Eames, he

* 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 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?"

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 preached in the morning, and at Newington-green, in the afternoon. These two stations he continued to fill, till February, 1791, when 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. 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, 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 reception his publications on this subject found from his countrymen, we need not say.

With Dr. Price, the mathematician and political writer, we have little concern; he has a place in this list as a minister and a divine. Early in life he imbibed the Arian opinions. His father was of the faith of the Non-conformists — a Calvinist; but his son did not relish his father's creed, having 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 contri-

buted 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, at least, an equal degree of energy and zeal?

The doctor is highly commended for his amiable deportment in private life. There was a simplicity 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. Literary honours he enjoyed in 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, conferred on him, in 1769, the degree of doctor of divinity; and in 1783, from Yale College, in Ame-

rica, he received the title of doctor of laws. His correspondents included many of the most eminent characters, in England, America, and France.

JAMES FORDYCE, D.D.

His father was a respectable merchant 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. But by his able and affectionate manner in the performance of public service, and by his kind condescension, seriousness, and punctuality in the private duties of his office, he overcame every prejudice. 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 a unanimous invitation from Dr. Lawrence's congregation in Monkwell-street, to be co-pastor with their aged minister, and afterwards his successor. This invitation he

accepted, and spent the remainder of his public life in the metropolis of the British empire. Dr. Lawrence did not long survive, and the whole of the pastoral care devolved on Dr. Fordyce. The congregation very rapidly increased, and 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. He 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 seemed to look as if they had some portion of goodness which needed only to be cherished and improved.

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: there was too much 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 bade 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 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 like himself had bidden adieu to the busy world, and to whose valuable library Dr. Fordyce had free access. Here he published his "Addresses to the Deity." The doctor afterwards removed to Bath, and died there suddenly, on the 1st 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, LL.D., F.R.S.

This celebrated philosopher and polemical divine, who has instructed the world by his scientific discoveries, as much as he has agitated the church by controversy, was born at Fieldhead, near Heckmondwicke, March 13, 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 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 Arian *.”

He first settled at Needham Market, in Suffolk; but as he betrayed his Arian sentiments, his “hearers fell off apace †.” Here, 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

* Memoirs of his own Life.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

academy, established under the auspices of the heterodox Dissenters. Here, having married, he 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 LL.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." He now 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. He travelled with his noble patron on the continent of Europe; but some difference arising between them, he withdrew, 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 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 to burn his meeting-house and dwelling, where they demolished his library, philosophical apparatus, and everything belonging to him on which they could lay their 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 embarked for America, where he received kind treatment and protection. 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. For the two or three first years, he 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 sus-

* Memoirs, p. 191.

pected to be a stoppage of the œsophagus. He was, at one time, incapable of swallowing anything, 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 different degrees of discipline suited to our different tempers, to prepare us for our final happiness*.'" To his grandchildren, 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 6th, 1804, in the close of his seventy-first year.

His character as a chemist and natural philosopher, the only firm basis of his fame, is foreign to this history. But while the mildness of his disposition, the urbanity of his manners, and the uniform integrity of his conduct deserved respect, his peaceable demeanour, and valuable discoveries, claimed treatment far other than that which he received from his country. 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

* *Memoirs*, p. 217.

† *Ibid.* p. 218.

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, a Unitarian; but approving of king, lords, and commons, he was a Trinitarian in politics. Whatever 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 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 that 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 to be honest. The reflections he poured on 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 Horsley, 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 force of 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 our disappointment? Induced by the love of books to enter the ministry, the consequences to himself and the church were just such as every discerning Christian would have anticipated. To rid himself of the dread he 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. Hence, also, the mere man everywhere shows 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, we find, on a closer inspection, that it was only his shade.

His diary seems to have been preserved to convince the world, that though true religion is 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 finest 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

or his Christ, 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 everything. But we ask what has become of the Deity? Where is the pure 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

* Memoirs.

physical science, and that nothing further was necessary for the attainment of truth than sceptical indifference, 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 systematizer; so he was regarded by profound divines as obstinately adhering, in spite of evidence, to doctrines 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 Priestley 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 sleep-

* 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."

ing 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, 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 pronounced the doom 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 1680. 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. From his 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 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 entreaties could prevail. 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, boldly stood forward in defence of the truth. 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. In 1727, he listened to a call from London by a part of Matthew Clarke's congregation, which had separated from his successor; and Mr. Guyse became their

minister, at a meeting-house in New Broad-street*. 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 due weight and influence. In 1732, the university of Aberdeen conferred on him the degree of D.D. 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. But he still preached; and an old lady of his congregation, it is said, 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, the composition more stiff, the delivery more formal, and the tone more monotonous and cold. But when, after his blindness, his well-furnished mind framed his discourses, everything was more suited to a popular audience; the language was that of conversa-

* 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."

tion, more free and perspicuous; the illustrations were by a man preaching in the pulpit, not studying in his library; there was greater simplicity and force 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 consider him as an ordinary man in his day: he was undoubtedly one of the chief of the Independent ministers, and became so by legitimate 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, and all the cant of the wide Dissenters of that day. 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 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 his character, as well as his 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: all judicious, weighty, serious, evangelical, and instructive. 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.

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, November 22, 1761, in the eighty-first year of his age.

SAMUEL WILTON, D. D.

He was born in 1744, and his mother was a descendant of Timothy Cruso. 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*. He enjoyed the classical advantages of the grammar-school of Christ-

* Her name was Elizabeth Wilton, who, in conjunction with Mrs. Rachel King, sister of Dr. King, minister at Hare-court, for many years kept a boarding-school for 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.

church hospital, in the vicinity of which was his father's house. He began his academical studies for the ministry under Dr. Jennings, and, having completed them under Dr. Savage and Dr. Rees, he entered the ministry at Tooting, in Surrey, 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; nor will this appear strange, if we consider the means which he employed. To the ordinary services of the Lord's-day, he added an evening lecture in the week; he catechised the children, visited the flock, conversed with the poor, and was peculiarly attentive to the afflicted. He exerted himself to establish, in connexion with his brethren, evening lectures in the neighbouring towns and villages, that the knowledge of the Gospel might be more extensively spread abroad.

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.

He was chosen, on the death of Dr. Langford, his successor. The congregation at the Weighhouse was then small; but under Dr. Wilton it gradually in-

creased. 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, March 29, 1778, from Psalm cxix. 125. Having to preach, on the following Lord's-day, a funeral discourse, he 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, April, 3, 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, and great 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.

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. Many worthy men 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.

THOMAS STRANGE.

His father was a 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 ministry. But by a step-father, Thomas Strange was some time afterwards called to agricultural labours. 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 family to some distance, he had an opportunity of hearing Mr. Hayward, of Potterspury, a man highly celebrated in the neighbourhood for his popular preaching and his zeal. Charmed with his gifts, young Strange, in company with another youth of similar dispositions, used to walk ten miles, every Lord's-day, to attend on the ministry of Mr. Hayward, whose church he afterwards joined.

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, who had work for him to do, gave him the desire of his heart. Mrs. Strange having mentioned the wish of her son and his companion to Mr. Hayward, he represented the case to Dr. Doddridge, who invited the young men to Northampton.

At the close of his academical course, he was called

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. 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. 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 everything with discontent; his heart is taken off from his people, and he is unconcerned about their welfare. 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 indispensably 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 built; and in a third, a cottage was purchased and fitted up for worship.

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 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 sermons till the preceding evening, or the morning of the day itself!

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 became by the labour of his hands a delightful garden, 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, and afterwards his daughters, 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 show, but free from want, contented and grateful.

Many in a similar situation, 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. Mr. Strange pursued a nobler course. He lessened his wants, he diminished his expenditure, he increased his exertions, he saved what the others would waste. 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.

Let it not be supposed that this was the fruit of niggardly penury. Mr. Strange 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 in-

creased 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.

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 but their own, felt the strongest aversion to a Non-conformist, 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 don't 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 acci-

dentally 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 everything 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 his spirit, September 5, 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 an easier task to find a suitable successor to the see of Canterbury, than to the village of Kilsby.

SAMUEL BREWER, B.D.

This excellent man, born at Rendham, in Suffolk, was educated for the ministry 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 Matthew Mead had exercised the office of the ministry, for more than fifty years.

Mr. Brewer's predecessor, though a very able and very pious man, was not "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 he was not *Moulin raisonnant*, a reasoning mill, as Voltaire calls Dr. Clarke, but with a holy fervour, addressed the hearts and affections of his hearers.

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. He gave force to his preaching, by the sanctity of his life, 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 anything is more mortifying to a person who has enjoyed it, than to see that he has lost it. Self-love may come to his aid, and throw the blame on the fickleness of the people; but the minister who makes the study of the Scriptures his daily employment, who prepares with diligence and with prayer, who endeavours to render truth so plain that none can misapprehend it, and kindles it into a flame by pouring it forth from a soul burning with love, will not disperse 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 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. 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, they learned from his prayers all the religious news of the neighbourhood. In his own congregation, he 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. The skill of some in mentioning the particular cases of persons is singularly felicitous; but it is also interesting, and is calculated to impress the mind.

Few men preserved through life a more uniform display of piety, prudence, and peaceableness. He declined an offer of great pecuniary advantage to himself and his family, 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, June 11, 1796, in the seventy-third year of his age.

ISAAC TOMS.

He was born in London, August 22, 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, received deep and lasting impressions of religion. 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 at Hackney, in the family of Sir Daniel Dolins,

whose son's sight was so defective, that he 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 metropolis and its vicinity. 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 were 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 they were in future 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 pastors of dissenting congregations, who, if they would be faithful and successful, must mingle chiefly with the 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. Mr. Toms, however, 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. He was now, in 1743, 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, he established lectures in the neighbouring villages, and schools in which the children of the poor were taught to read. 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.

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 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. 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. 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, November 2, 1800, to take his farewell of public worship; and, from that time, he was confined to his house. Obligated at last to keep himself in his chamber, 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, January 2, 1801, in the ninety-first year of his age.

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, and when young resorted so frequently to a bookseller's for the purpose of reading, that it became proverbial that a thing was as certain as that John Gill was in the bookseller's shop. 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 by some explanation, which made it appear more justifiable than in its present detached state.

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. 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 rabbis, he read 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, 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."

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 catches 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 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.

* Body of Divinity, book ii. chap. ii. p. 303.

ROBERT ROBINSON.

On January 8, 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 of 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,—that of an 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 he esteemed above them all. He began a diary, in the manner of that celebrated man; and before Mr. Robinson had completed his nineteenth year, he seems to have conceived the idea of becoming a preacher. Previously to the termination of his apprenticeship, his master, perceiving his attention to the reading of religious books, and the hearing of sermons from popular ministers, gave up his indentures, and left him to follow his own plans*.

* A person, zealous for the dignity of the dissenting ministry, 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 apprenticed 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.

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, baptizing infants and performing all the other offices of an Independent minister. In a short time, he became a Baptist; and, in 1759, when he was only twenty-four years of age, he was invited to the charge of the Baptist church at Cambridge; of which, after a trial of two years, he became pastor. 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 was little more than three pounds. It, however, gradually increased; for, 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

Andrew's, who had been a staymaker; 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 that 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.*

(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, removing from an obscure village in the neighbourhood, where he had hitherto lived, to Chesterton, with a family of nine children, commenced farmer; and, some years afterwards, coal-merchant. Some of his brethren strongly expressed their fears that his engagements in business would injure his spirit as a minister: "Godly boobies," he exclaimed, "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 his early changes from one denomination to another was unhappily followed by a versatility, in maturer years, with 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 connexions. 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 Ge-

neral 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 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 5th 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 was, that Mr. Robinson was of the Unitarian faith, and had received considerable light from Priestley's theological writings." On the Tuesday evening following, he retired in good health, and, on the Wednesday morning, was found dead in his bed.

Mr. Robinson's works were numerous, and many of them show the author to have been a man of uncommon talents. He published "A Plea for the Divinity of Christ," and a translation of Claude's "Essay on the Composition of a Sermon," with a curious farrago of

notes. His translations of Saurin's Sermons have been much read: but Saurin and Robinson were cast in very different moulds; so that the bold, nervous spirit of the latter was not the most proper organ for conveying the elegancies of the former. If the volume of "Village Sermons" had been written when evangelical sentiments had a stronger hold of his mind, they would have been almost unequalled. Had the patience of investigation, the calmness of research, and impartiality in narrating the result, which Lardner so eminently displayed, been possessed by Robinson, 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 eat only 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, or of Howe? 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 no spark of genius was ever elicited.

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. His influence over a multitude of well-educated and well-principled youth among the Dissenters was powerful, extensive, and pernicious. That he quitted the camp of the orthodox will not excite surprise in those who have observed his spirit. 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 COLLETT RYLAND, A.M.

This remarkable man was born in 1723, and before he became solicitous for his eternal welfare, showed the characteristic ardour of his mind in the eager pursuit of worldly follies. But in the spring of 1741, he was, with forty other persons, 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*.

His first pastoral charge was at Warwick, where he was ordained over the Baptist church, in 1750: he removed, after nine years, to Northampton. Here his

* 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."

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 occasioned his removal, in the year 1786, to Enfield, where he had a flourishing school, and preached 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*, 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 with God, whose word he studied early every morning, and in the

* 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 churchyard, which was near the parsonage-house where Mr. Ryland then lived. Having recovered, he became the instrument of that man's conversion; for he courted a young woman of the Baptist congregation, 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 near the meeting-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, he found it difficult to make his retreat. He was compelled, therefore, to stay and hear the sermon, which pierced him to the heart.

pulpit he was always lively, generally striking, frequently eccentric, and sometimes sublime and impressive beyond description.

SAMUEL STENNETT, D.D.

He was born at Exeter, where his father, Dr. Joseph Stennett, officiated, for many years, as pastor of the Baptist church. Samuel, his youngest son, having early discovered a pious disposition, was admitted a member of his father's church, and received an academical education under Mr. Hubbard, at Stepney; for 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, 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, dispensing the ordinances of religion with great acceptance, with success, and with an eminent degree of mutual affection. In 1763, he received the degree of D.D. from Aberdeen.

Dr. Stennett's talents were improved by assiduous and extensive study. Possessing a respectable portion of classical knowledge, 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 attention and inspire pleasure. In elocution, he was superior to most of his denomination. 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 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, exemplary. As a minister, a Christian, and a man, Dr. Stennett was very highly esteemed, and the pleasing lustre which politeness gave to his excellence procured an additional degree of respect and affection.

He published a volume on the Baptist controversy; and on a subject where it was difficult to say anything new, he has the praise of saying what he had to say, with good temper. His two volumes "on Personal Religion" were well received by the public. His sermons on relative duties are very valuable, and his book on the Scriptures may be read with much profit. Without much originality of thought, or depth of reasoning, his style is very pleasing, and if some will not allow it the praise of elegance, they must acknowledge that it is exceedingly neat.

When near death, 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." Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, he died, August 24, 1795, in the sixty-eighth year of his age.

SAMUEL PEARCE, M.A.

The excellencies of this young minister, who was little more than shown to the church, have been honourably recorded by a living writer. If this short memoir 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 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 the eminent and ardent religion of Mr. Pearce it soon appeared desirable to devote his life to the service of Christ. He studied for the ministry, under Dr. Ryland, at Bristol ; and from the academy he removed to take charge of a Baptist church at Birmingham. Here, his judicious, fervent, and incessant labours rapidly increased the congregation, 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, 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 journeys, which exposed him to colds ; 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 had 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 should be consecrated to the Saviour of men.

Among those who are termed the laity, though many performed valuable services to the dissenting cause,

during the commencement and the middle of the reign of George III., few demand special notice; for the titled and the wealthy had fallen off to the establishment, and those who, by piety, were, like Christ's forerunner, "great in the sight of the Lord," were like him hidden, in a great measure, from the view of men. The same causes prevent us from giving the biography of any of those pious females who have, in great numbers, benefited our churches, but of whom no one has stood forth in such prominence as to demand a distinct memoir. With one distinguished philanthropist, however, we must close our biographical records.

JOHN HOWARD, Esq., F.R.S.

The reward due to him that invents a new mode of doing good might justly have been claimed by this celebrated man. He was born, in 1727, at Clapton, near London. His father had acquired a fortune, as an upholsterer, in Long-lane; and having destined his son to trade, placed him, as an apprentice, with the grandfather of the late Alderman Newman, a wholesale grocer in Watling-street. But the father dying, and leaving him a handsome fortune, young Howard quitted business, and travelled on the Continent. Having purchased some works of taste in Italy, he decorated with them his elegant seat at Cardington, near Bedford, where he had been nursed in his infancy. But, on his return from his travels, he resided at Stoke Newington; and, being an Independent and a Calvinist, he joined the church under the care of the Rev. Meredith Townsend. Here he caused a house to be provided for the minister, and distributed large sums in charity.

Having received kind attentions during illness from

a widow of the name of Loidaire, he married her, though more than twice his own age. She died three years after, and Mr. Howard, then, determining to leave England, gave away his furniture to his poor neighbours. The vessel in which he embarked for Portugal was captured by a French privateer, and Mr. Howard endured incredible hardships in prison, which afterwards directed his attention to sufferers in jails. Having been enabled, by the benevolence of a stranger, to return to England, he resided for some time at Cardington, was admitted a Fellow of the Royal Society, and married Miss Henrietta Leeds, a lady of great worth, by whom he had one son. But the mother being snatched away by death, the child was corrupted by a vicious servant, and, after running into vice, was consigned to a mad-house, where he died young.

In 1769, Mr. Howard visited France, on one of those tours of benevolence which have conferred on him the most enviable fame. Having returned to his favourite seat, he became a blessing to the place of his residence; and being made high-sheriff of the county of Bedford, he not only paid the most unwearied attention to its jails, but also to those of all the adjoining counties. Being examined before the House of Commons, on the state of the prisons, he received the thanks of the House for his attention to them. After inspecting and improving those of England, Scotland, and Ireland, he set out, in 1775, on a tour through France, Flanders, Holland, and Germany. In one year he travelled eight thousand one hundred and sixty-five miles in his own country; afterwards went on the Continent, to visit the dungeons of wretchedness, where his own life was risked to save that of others.

In 1781, he published a complete edition of his work on Prisons, and found that he had travelled, in his attempts to improve their condition, about forty-three thousand miles. In one of these unparalleled expeditions of mercy, he expired, having caught a fever in his medical attendance on a lady, near Cherson in Tartary, January 20, 1790.

All Europe joined his own countrymen in bewailing the loss of the man who had expended thirty thousand pounds, and travelled almost sixty thousand miles, to visit scenes from which others turned away in disgust—to find out the neglected, and to bring consolation to those who seemed abandoned to despair. Mr. Howard was endued with fine talents, which he incessantly employed, under the influence of the most exalted benevolence, to benefit first his own country and then the world*. His monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, which presents not a very faithful representation of his fine countenance, was erected by the public, after death, as he remonstrated against that honour during life. The following was the inscription which he wrote for his tomb:—

“ JOHN HOWARD, died ———, aged ———.
My hope is in Christ.”

The consent of almost the whole civilized world has given him the first of all titles,—The Philanthropist.

* See Memoirs of Howard, by James Baldwin Browne, Esq., L.L.D.

END OF VOL. II.

BW5043 .B67 v.2
The-history of dissenters, from the

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 00035 8186