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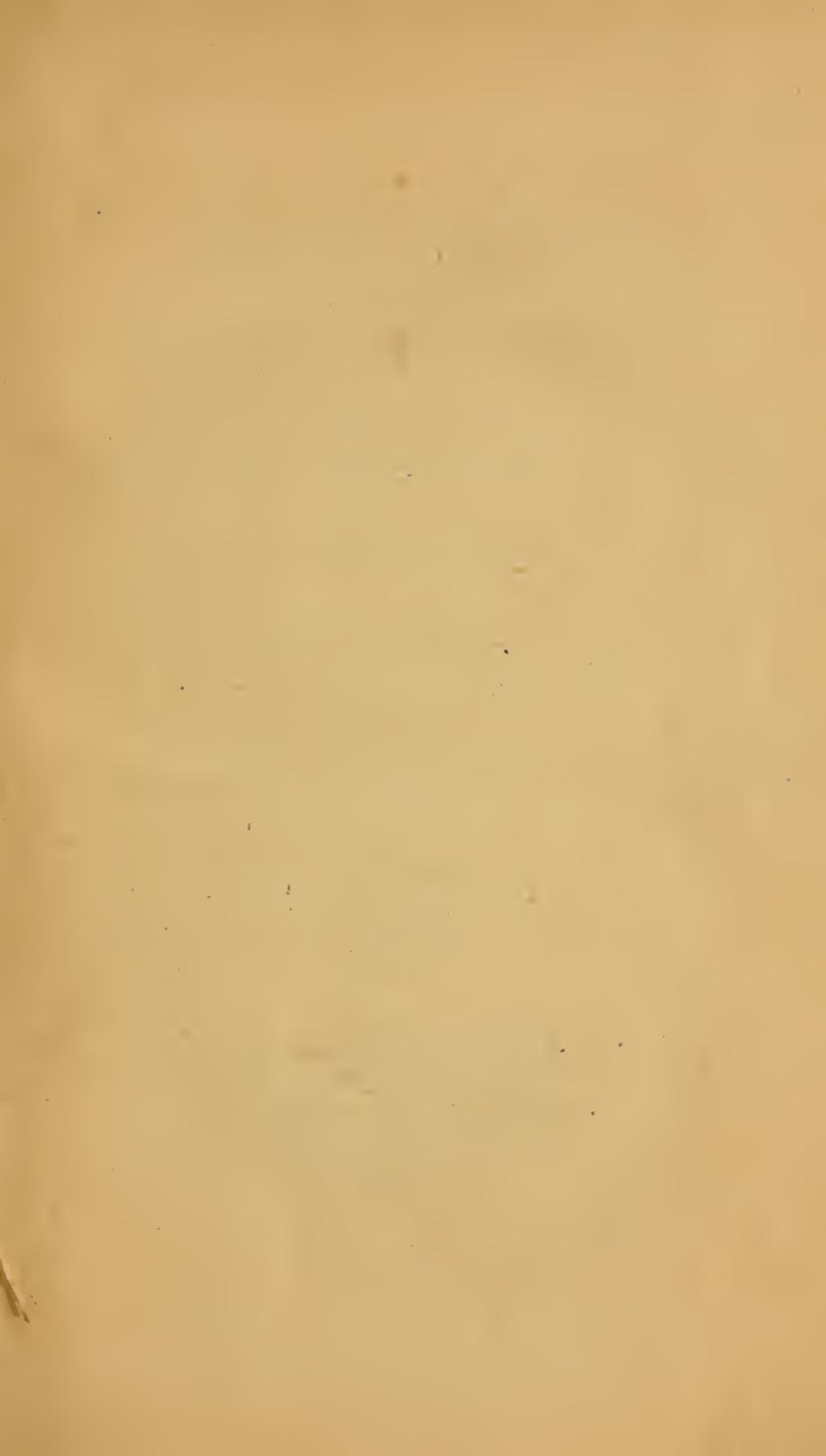
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Letter.....

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March 15th 1855

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A secular essay





Stephen Elliot
1834

A
SECULAR ESSAY:
CONTAINING A
RETROSPECTIVE VIEW OF EVENTS,
CONNECTED WITH THE
ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY OF ENGLAND,
DURING
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY;
WITH
REFLECTIONS
ON THE
STATE OF PRACTICAL RELIGION
IN THAT PERIOD.

BY JOHN BREWSTER, A. M.
VICAR OF STOCKTON UPON TEES, AND OF GREATHAM, IN THE
COUNTY OF DURHAM.

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TO
THE REVEREND HUGH MOISES, M. A.,
LATE MASTER OF
THE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL
IN NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE,
AND
CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
JOHN LORD ELDON,
LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF GREAT BRITAIN;
WHOSE LIFE HAS BEEN PROLONGED,
FOR VALUABLE PURPOSES,
THROUGH SO LARGE A PORTION OF
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY:
THE FOLLOWING ESSAY
IS GRATEFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED,
BY HIS
FORMER PUPIL, FRIEND, AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE reader will be aware, that in recording the events of any particular period of time, on any given subject, such will necessarily be selected, as appear most important in the writer's judgement. Men, differing in their opinions of politics and religion, will probably make different selections. The Author thinks it necessary to say, that he has not willingly omitted any leading event, in the period, and on the subject, he has chosen; but as such an omission may have taken place in a series yet unarranged in the page of history, he hopes for the reader's indulgence.

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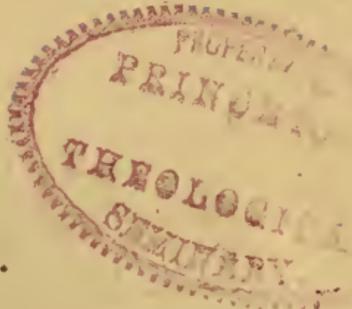
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105, 7, — except ——— expect
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157, 2, *for* sleights *read* slights
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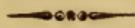
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A

SECULAR ESSAY.



PART I.

*Containing Reflections, &c. on the Reign of
Queen Anne.*

A. D. 1701—1714.



THE commencement of a new century A. D.
impresses upon the mind an awful sense of 1701—
the revolution of time, and inclines the se- 1714.
rious and the contemplative to take a dis-
passionate review of those events which have
scarce vanished from their sight; to ex-
amine the effect which they have had on
their own conduct, and to note the impres-
sion they have made on the morals and
manners of the world. This is indeed the
proper use of history, and with this inten-
tion we look back upon ages that are past.

B

It

A. D. 1701—
1714. It will be acknowledged, however, that an important truth is less powerful in proportion to its distance from us. Whilst every one will allow the strength of that ray which strikes his own eye, or is reflected from the faithful narrative of his immediate progenitors.

The lapse of years produces melancholy chasms in domestic friendships. The child weeps over the remains of his departed parent; and happy is the parent who is not called upon to drop a tear over a beloved and a lamented child. The lapse of centuries does more: it sweeps whole generations before it. The great and the good, the learned and the unlearned alike fall sacrifices to the ravages of time: it is this general retrospect on mortality that produces the most awful and interesting reflections; when we consider the immense sum of human wisdom which lies buried thus before us. While we stand over the tomb of a NEWTON, a certain divine energy possesses our souls. While we contemplate
the

the last remains of a WILSON, a SECKER, A. D.
 or a LOUTH, we exclaim with exultation, 1701—
 “ O grave! where is *now* thy victory?”— 1714.

So certain is the declaration of St. John,
 “ The world passeth away, and the lust
 thereof, but he that doth the will of God
 abideth for ever.”

For the detail of events which have distinguished the preceding century we must apply to the page of history. The important æra which has just passed over our heads will be long remembered and deeply felt. Its influence will not be that of a day : —may the lesson it brings with it, operate with increasing advantages to our souls ! It would require the pen of an acute politician to delineate the external changes which have taken place during the last century : and even he perhaps would find it difficult to investigate the motives which have produced them. A patient inquirer into truth, however, will penetrate a little below the surface, and will discover several secret springs and connections by which

A. D. every event is more or less linked to that
 1701— which preceded it. Carefully to examine
 1714. these springs and connections will fall to
 the lot of the future *historian*. It is sufficient for the *Observer* of the present day to mark their moral powers, to eradicate the errors, and to reanimate the virtues of ancient times.

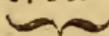
The baneful policy, which, even in spite of good intention, will continue to prevail so long as human passions ebb and flow, will in every age shed a gloomy influence over the manners of mankind. It is melancholy to observe the confusion which false principles occasion in the best regulated states. In civil governments, they are the seeds of sedition; in religious establishments, of heresy and schism. The fair face of order is changed into deformity; and the beauty and symmetry so universally admired, are disfigured and destroyed. If experience can guard succeeding generations from a catastrophe so fatal, let them turn their eyes on very recent times, and
 on

on no very distant countries, and learn
instruction.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

But let not the prevailing topic of the day draw my attention from the peculiar object of this essay, which is to take a cursory view of Ecclesiastical events, and of the profession of practical religion during the last century. The pen of the Laureat has drawn an elegant picture of the passing scene*. The historic Muse ennobles her song by rehearsing the glorious deeds performed by Heroes worthy of any age. But while we admire the patriotism, we cannot but lament the necessity which calls forth thousands to the field.—Peace is, and ought to be, the peculiar delight of the minister of Christ's religion; and therefore I shall be excused if I leave to abler hands to record the illustrious actions of my countrymen, and confine myself to such observations as my professional studies more particularly suggest.

* See the Secular Ode by Mr. Pye.

A. D. 1701—
1714.  An inquiry has often been made by Moralists, whether, or in what respects, one age differs from another in the practice of wickedness? There have been indeed some periods when the moral sense seemed almost extinguished; when natural reason was unable to check the overflowings of ungodliness. Such was the period judged most proper for the appearance of the Messiah. But the introduction of Christianity has produced the most beneficial influence on the minds of men. Bad as we are apt, from observation of particular instances of depravity to pronounce the world, we shall not find such public cruelty and barbarity; so many dying gladiators, so many human sacrifices under various denominations, such unfeeling prostitution, such deluges of wickedness, as overflowed the face of the earth under the dark ages of Heathenism. And what is the result of modern discoveries on this subject? The obscure islander of the South Sea is far from being the child of virtue: it would be painful to delineate
uncultivated

uncultivated nature in her true colours: A. D. 1701—
 but it is necessary to check the wild fancy 1714.
 of modern philosophy, and expose the false-
 ness of her principles by reducing them to
 that line of truth which is only to be found
 in the revelation of the gospel. It is in
 vain to flatter ourselves with deceitful pic-
 tures of the times. The *innocent* savage
 exists only in the mind of the visionary.
 Neither does civilized life afford a much
 more agreeable prospect. Sin and wicked-
 ness, alas! are too prevalent in every quar-
 ter of the globe, and they have been so
 in every age. The religion of the gospel
 (*and that alone*) accounts satisfactorily for
 this appearance. “The scripture hath con-
 cluded all under sin, that the promise
 by faith of Jesus Christ might be given
 to them that believe*.”

It does not appear from fact, that the
 preceding century, taken under one point
 of view, has exceeded in wickedness the

* Gal. iii. 22.

A. D. same period in any age since the com-
 1701—mencement of the christian æra. The pre-
 1714. valence of infidelity and irreligion indeed
 which we have lately witnessed, and the
 fatal effects which they have produced,
 will render us cautious in adopting the
 observation in its fullest latitude. But, I
 trust, it will be manifest after the minutest
 investigation, that, in this nation at least,
 which is my principal object in this essay,
 true religion has found a refuge; and how-
 ever she may be disturbed by the passing
 storm, her reign will be long and glorious,
 and her subjects *permanent* and happy. At
 all events it will be allowed that, if ca-
 lamities have arisen, if great crimes have
 been committed, if private vices have mul-
 tiplied in any particular instances, they
 may all be traced to a greater or less de-
 viation from the revealed will of God. He
 is a daring character indeed who will ven-
 ture to act in opposition to his religion
 on any great occasion, before he has denied
 its power. Delusion in some cases may
 persuade

persuade him that he is acting right, when he is transgressing every law of humanity, but, to be consistent in his conduct, he must *forsake the covenant of his God*, like the idolatrous Israelites, before he *throws down his altars and slays his prophets with the sword**.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

In gliding along the stream of time, many errors and vices, many crimes and enormities sink in their passage and are lost at the bottom of the channel. Some only are brought down to us. This perhaps is the reason why we are apt to extol former ages at the expence of our own. We see and feel the inconveniencies which surround us, without considering that they have been seen and felt before. Let this consideration produce in us a proper submission to the times, however melancholy, and to our fortune, however severe. A new world cannot be created for us. The same trials remain for the inhabitants of every

* 1 Kings xix. 13.

A. D. age; let us only remember that they are
 1701— to be conquered by the same *faith*. “ Say
 1714. “ not thou, what is the cause that the
 “ former days were better than these? for
 “ thou dost not inquire wisely concerning
 “ this*.”

If the aspect of public affairs were not at this moment obscured by an almost impenetrable cloud; what pleasure would not arise in the human breast by a reflection on the wonderful improvements which have taken place in every art and science during the course of the last century? To trace the progress of these, is as much beyond my purpose, as it is above my abilities. But there is an observation consistent with my plan, which raises the name of Briton to no inferior scale on the column of humanity. Perhaps no period or country since the birth of Christ has produced so many noble, so many beneficial instances of public charity, as the present. To enu-

* Ecclesiastes vii. 10.

merate those only which adorn the metro-
 polis would be to add a new wreath to that
 mistress of the world. But it is not the
 mere application of wealth which we have
 to commemorate. The appropriation of su-
 perfluous riches is not perfect charity; such
 bounty is little superior to the legacy of the
 avaricious; but when we find the mind
 worthily employed in planning, when we
 see the hand industrious in executing these
 great *works and labours of love*; when we
 are assured of the pure motives from whence
 they spring, and, I may add, the reward to
 which they aspire, we may then say of them
 as the son of Syrach does of the remem-
 brance of the good Josiah, “they are sweet
 “ as honey in all mouths, and as music at
 “ a banquet of wine †.”

I am aware that the *philanthropy of the
 age* has been a snare into which thousands
 have fallen. Certain philosophers *of the
 wiser sort*, according to the wisdom of this

† Ecclesiasticus xlix. 1.

world,

A. D. world, have used this divine principle as an
 1701— Engine to effect the most pernicious pur-
 1714. poses. Under the pretence of erecting the
 temple of *universal charity*, they have re-
 moved the foundation-stones of every ve-
 nerable establishment. Because our hea-
 venly teacher has commanded us to love
all mankind, they have with insidious ar-
 guments endeavoured to withdraw the amia-
 ble attachments of men from their parti-
 cular communities. Patriotism, in the true
 sense of the word, and public virtue, fall
 dreadful sacrifices before this shrine. They
 resign that principle which is the life of so-
 ciety—and for what? for the participation
 of monstrous crimes, the fore-runners of
 universal confusion.

Far be it from me to contract the limits
 of true charity; it is an emanation of the
 divinity: the characteristic mark of pure
 christianity. It infuses that vital breath
 which we draw from our benevolent Re-
 deemer; it composes the last sigh which
 we heave for our fellow creatures. But let

us not encourage an imitation of it which may be fatal to our peace. “Satan himself has been transformed into an angel of light.” Let us then touch him with Ithuriel’s spear, and restore him to his proper image.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

As charity is the leading doctrine of the gospel, charity has always been the praise and glory of the church of England. I am not so blind a friend as to see no errors in the breast of friendship. Human failings pervade the most valuable associations; and if we have fewer in our excellent church-establishment than in others of a like nature, we ought to be thankful for the blessing we possess. At the same time let us carefully distinguish between the profession and the professors. The former is the result of united wisdom, sanctioned, I doubt not, by the good spirit of God: the latter are men, excellent, I trust, in a thousand particulars, but subject, like the rest of mankind, to the influence of passions and the perversion of error. This distinction it will
be

A. D. 1701—1714. be necessary to remember as I pass through the leading church-events of this century.

On another account I ought not to forget it, as it may conciliate favour for me in discussing those public questions which, at different periods, have interested and agitated the breasts of many.

At the opening of the century the church of England was just recovering from the blow which had levelled with the ground the public profession of those doctrines and that discipline so happily established at the reformation. In some respects she had gained by the severe infliction; she had been taught wisdom by experience. It is a known, and an acknowledged truth that, *the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church*: and it is equally true of public bodies as of individuals, that adversity is the season of improvement.

Religion, excellent as it is, has in all ages been made subservient to the wily arts of political innovators. Every good man's heart is interested in the profession of his religion.

religion. For this reason, he is more easily led away by the imposing arguments of those who seize upon this fortress as the foundation of their own pre-eminence. Here Cromwell stood when he overturned that system of government which had been the work of ages. Here the second James would have stood when he endeavoured to re-establish the long abrogated supremacy of Rome. A good providence in both cases preserved our religious liberties and rights: and was pleased to confirm both in that temperate REVOLUTION which was effected by the united wisdom of these kingdoms.

I mention these circumstances to introduce an observation on the state of our established church at the beginning of the century.

We cannot read the history of the Great Rebellion, without seeing, I had almost said, without feeling the force of fanaticism. The public profession of religion after the suppression of our church-establishment, branched out into the most fanciful appearances:

A. D. 1701—
1714. } ances: every man preached that which was
right in his own eyes. So general was the
influence of these variegated modes of
worship, that people of all ranks were mem-
bers of one or other of these religious asso-
ciations. Numbers, I trust, were sincere
in their profession, but it is always a me-
lancholy prospect to see that made the dupe
of politicks which has no natural connec-
tion with them. After the restoration there
was a great revulsion of the wave. The
friends of government thought that they
could not remove themselves too far from
the friends of the dismembered common-
wealth. With the precise dress and habit,
they threw aside the principles, whether
true or false, which distinguished the sim-
plicity or formality of their behaviour. The
monarch on the throne, and the people who
obeyed him, were alike the children of licen-
tiousness. The picture which is drawn of
that age affords no pleasing likeness. Nor
should it have been recalled to our remem-
brance, if it had not been too descriptive
of

of the public manners at the opening of the eighteenth century. A. D.
1701—
1714.

With all the undiffembled vice which those times professed, so much of former habits, (in many instances I should hope of former virtues,) prevailed, as to fill the established churches with votaries. Yet at the same time, so perverted were their principles, that if we read the comedies and popular publications of that age, we shall find that, under the pretence of religion, places of public worship were frequently used for the purposes of idle dissipation*. So *unequally yoked* were members of the same communion: for “ what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial †?”

From theatrical representations we may fairly judge of the morals and taste of an age. More need not be added in judging of that of which I write, than that the chaste and pure sentiments of Shakespeare

* Tatler, No. 166.

† 2 Cor. vi. 14.

A. D. 1701—
 1714. were in a great measure rejected for the licentious verses of Dryden, and other wits of no common celebrity: Dryden indeed frequently apologizes for the language *he is obliged* to use*.—What stronger reproof could he bestow on his admiring and approving audience?

The censure of the stage at this period was the just censure of public manners. A devout clergyman †, in his professional character, made the first stand against this torrent of profaneness: and it will be allowed that, the man who dared to oppose and endeavoured to resist so formidable an host, deserved well of his country.

“ It must be said,” Collier observes, “ of the writers for the stage, that they have made their attack with great courage, and gained no considerable advantage. But it seems, lewdness without atheism, is but half their business. Conscience might possibly reco-

* Malone’s Life of Dryden.

† Collier’s Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, 1698.

ver, and *revenge* be thought on; and therefore, like foot-pads, they must not only *rob* but *murther*. To do them right, their measures are *politically* taken; to make sure work on it there is nothing like *destroying of principles*; *practice* must *follow of course*. For to have no *good principles*, is to have *no reason to be good*.”

A. D.
1701—
1714.

Success ultimately rewarded the attempt of this judicious censor of the stage. The flagrant abuse was corrected within a few years by reflection, and by the cluster of eminent authors which adorned the Augustan age of Queen Anne. “Sir Richard Steele’s compositions,” says a contemporary in a sketch of his character, “have done eminent service to mankind. To him we owe that swearing is unfashionable, and that a regard to religion is become a part of good breeding*.” The immortal writings of Addison and of his associates recalled departed virtue; and the mind dwells with complacency

* Dr. Rundle. See Butler’s Life of Bp. Hildesley, p. 184.

A. D. 1701—
1714. and delight on that æra which was distinguished by so amiable an assemblage of wisdom and of talents.

As the century advanced, the public eye was in general less disgusted by the transgression of public decency. If the wit of the age was not always as brilliant as that which preceded it, its morality, on the stage at least, was less reprehensible.

I shall have occasion to recur to this subject when the licentiousness of theatrical representations required the interference of the legislature of the country. But I cannot omit the present opportunity to remark, that at this moment, the stage is too frequently made use of to stain the channels of public opinion. I say nothing of *taste*, for that forms no part of a moral essay: but I may be allowed to assert that, translations and imitations of the German Drama, as they are at present introduced to public notice, require more than the pen of the moralist to check their course. Let us look to such of our native bards for instruction

as

as shew a value for the morals of their countrymen, and let us despise the corrupting and corrupt publications of our neighbours.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

The beginning of the century was distinguished by considerable improvements in the language of *Sermons*; a species of composition which has been rising gradually towards perfection since the æra of the reformation. I do not pretend to say that the plain and honest language of a Latimer made a less impression on an attentive audience than the polished and energetic periods of a Porteus, or the eloquent and excellent charges and discourses which have so eminently distinguished many others of the present prelates of our church. But every age demands a correspondent supply of all its wants; and what wants are more pressing than those which require food for a famished and an hungry soul? The mystical harangues of the preachers during the usurpation, were succeeded in the pulpits, by those flashes of humour and play upon words, so universally practised and admired

A. D. in the facetious reign of Charles the second ;
1701— a mode of preaching which continued in use
1714. till the grave and classical reign of Queen
Anne. At this period we find that a great
change had taken place in these popular
discourses. Tillotson had gained the public
attention, and the nervous and pious lan-
guage of Archbishop Sharp led the way to
the more eloquent and refined periods of
Atterbury. That luminous æra was indeed
as resplendent in the church as in the state.
Men of letters were the ornament of go-
vernment ; and I may add, that in numerous
instances, government did not neglect men
of letters. It may be presumed from these
causes, that public morals were in some
measure redeemed from the universal pro-
fligacy of the preceding age. The popular
publications which were circulated under the
name of moral and religious essays, through
every rank and order of society, gave such
a turn to public thought that the effects are
visible to this hour.

It were well, if the opening of this century did not present to our view, a violence of disputation among churchmen, (men in other respects of the most amiable dispositions and respectable talents) which might be traced to those political parties which arose in the state during the period of an unsettled succession. It is unnecessary to enter into a detail of the discussions of that day, or recall to our view the animosities which they occasioned. Whigs and Tories in the state, High Churchmen and Low Churchmen in the ecclesiastical establishment, were terms of reproach as well as of commendation. If we would wish at any time to preserve ourselves in the bond of peace and charity, let us avoid the adoption of *peculiar marks* or *names*. The distinction even of a ribbon or an epithet, in various instances, teems with danger. But there is much greater reason for apprehension, when these visible signs of party are the distinguishing characteristics of pernicious principles. It is true when conten-

A. D.
170 —
1714.

A. D. 1701—
 1714. } tions do arise on any popular opinion, truth
 can but be found on one side. But never
 let it be forgotten, that truth be pursued
 with candour. Of all mankind the pro-
 fessors of Christianity should never lose
 sight of benevolence. When an ensnaring
 question was put to the Saviour of the
 world, he answered with dignity, “we
 ought to obey God rather than man.” And
 when those who are peculiarly dedicated to
 the profession of religion, are so unfortu-
 nate as to be involved in disputes, let them
 begin the contention, if so it must be, with
 hesitation, let them continue it with pru-
 dence, and end it with charity.

In perusing the history of those times, it
 is impossible not to be struck with the pe-
 culiar degree of heat, with which both par-
 ties were agitated. Hardly escaped from
 the re-establishment of popery on the one
 side, and assailed by a strong dissenting in-
 terest on the other, the members of the
 church of England were doubtless in a cri-
 tical situation. Attached from principle to
 the

the pure doctrines of the reformation, it is to be regretted that any of so venerable a body should contend for a divine right of government distinct from that of their religion. And looking to the other side of the question, do we not wonder that any society of Christians, enjoying under a well-regulated administration, every advantage compatible with the security of the state, tolerated in their religious, and confirmed in their civil rights—do we not wonder that they should adopt all the violence of a party spirit, and wish for changes in that government, the consequences of which even they themselves must know to be uncertain? The exaggerated recriminations of party should at all times, and in all ages, be suppressed. Why attribute to any set of men the worst construction that can be put upon their words? Why are the advocates of a regal form of government to be thought the friends of absolute, unlimited monarchy? Why are those of opposite principles to be always considered wholly Republicans? The extremes

A. D.

1701—

1714.

A. D. extremes of both opinions are dangerous.
 1701— Let candour then direct in both cases to
 1714. judge mildly of each other. So shall we
 fulfil the apostolic injunction, without which
 we cannot be good subjects under any de-
 scription of government, “Be ye kindly
 affectioned one to another with brotherly
 love: in honour preferring one another*.”

These observations will not be thought
 irrelevant by any one who considers the
 serious debates in parliament in 1705, on
 the question, *whether the church was in
 danger?*—a question which was negatived
 by a great majority. The Bishop of Lon-
 don too truly observed on that occasion,
 that the church *was* in danger from pro-
 faneness and irreligion and the licentious-
 ness of the press. Another Prelate very
 justly remarked the invidious distinction of
 High Church and Low Church, which tend-
 ed, as he observed, to set them at enmity:
 that “by High Church, people were made

* Rom. ii. 10.

to believe a man inclined to popery, or at least one that endeavoured to carry church power beyond our constitution, which, he thought, was great injustice to the gentlemen who bore that character, who meant nothing more than to keep up the just dignity and discipline of the church: neither did he believe that the other, called the Low Church, had any designs of lowering it or levelling it with presbytery, as was, on the other hand, maliciously suggested*.”—In short, we see party in all ages has been the same; and it is the serious regret of moderate men, that ideas inimical to public peace should be transmitted to future times, altered and disguised as they frequently are, by new and unsuspected appellations.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

That party was in a great measure the origin of these terrors, and that these terrors were intended to incite insurrection for political purposes, is evident from the description Bishop Burnet gives of the real

* Tindal.

temper

A. D. 1701—
 1714. temper of these times in his speech on the same occasion. “A spirit of zeal and piety,” he said, “appeared in our churches and at sacrament, beyond the example of former times. In one respect,” he added, “it was acknowledged the church was in danger; there was an evil spirit and virulent temper spread among the clergy; there were many indecent sermons preached on public occasions, &c.” It must be owned, that the Bishop was no unbiassed witness, as he was strongly attached to the principles of the revolution in their highest latitude. The charge, however, which he brings against those *hot clergymen*, as he calls them, who created the danger which they reprobated, may not perhaps have been without some foundation when we consider the extraordinary degree of agitation which was excited in the nation not long after (1709) by the celebrated sermons of Dr. Sacheverel. It is with sorrow, I had almost said, with indignation, we look back upon the tumult of that day. Can we suppose the spirit of
 party

party to be carried to a higher pitch? A private clergyman, a man of narrow intellects and of an overheated imagination, as he has been described by one party, and not altogether disproved by another, whose popularity was occasioned by the intemperance of his language in favour of divine right and non-resistance, is arraigned at the bar of the upper house of parliament in Westminster-hall. “The eyes of the whole kingdom were turned upon this extraordinary trial. It lasted three weeks, during which *all other business was suspended*; and the Queen herself was said to have been every day present; though in quality of a private person.” I will not dwell on this degrading scene. Perhaps at this distance of time we may not be proper judges of the subject; but this instruction we ought certainly to derive from it, that “the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*.”

* “To bring Sacheverel to a trial, and to distinguish

Let

A. D. 1701—
 1714. } Let me here observe, that the true use of discourses from the pulpit, is to expound the written law of God, to teach men what they must do, to be saved. How greatly then do they deviate from the original intention of their institution, when they are made the vehicles of political discussions? Whenever the circumstances of the times require the preacher's voice, let it be delivered with mildness and complacency, with peace and moderation. Instead of dwelling on those public topics which are apt to produce rancour and animosity, let him select such observations as are best suited to the temper of his benevolent religion. I do not say that, on such occasions, he

him with an impeachment, managed in the most solemn manner, for a miserable performance, which, without such notice, would have speedily sunk into oblivion, was an inexcusable degradation of the dignity of the house of commons, and affords a striking instance of the height of folly and infatuation to which the spirit of party will carry even the wisest men."

Cox's Life of Sir Rob. Walpole. 8vo. p. 39. v. i.

is totally to reject all allusions to matters of government, or even sometimes of foreign administration. But he should be temperate and cautious in the use of this liberty: he should consider it as his duty, from general arguments, to deduce particular instruction: he should seize the prominent feature of the times, and make a religious or moral application suitable to the capacities of his audience.

In the controversies which arose in the beginning of the century, many divines were engaged, whose names and whose writings have descended to us with a superior degree of reputation and applause. Their controversial works rest calmly together on the dusty shelf, whilst their practical and pious discourses have continued to edify successive generations. Good men occupied the ground on both sides of the arena. We have only to lament that the patience of the man, or the piety of the christian, should, on any occasion, be sacrificed to an unbecoming warmth of opinion.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

A. D. 1701—
1714. nion. I do not recommend an uninterest-
ing tameness when subjects of importance
are discussed. No. The duty of *contending
for the faith* is an active and an animating
principle. But he who would be guided by
the precept and example of his blessed mas-
ter, must support his argument with calm-
ness as well as fortitude, and temper his
zeal with charity.

The names of ATTERBURY and HOADLEY
with many other eminent, and, I may add,
excellent controversialists, will long be held
in veneration; and if the celebrated Bishop
of Winchester, in the preface to his Sermons
published at the end of half a century, had
occasion to remark that, “near fifty years
ago, a torrent of angry zeal began to pour
out itself upon him, and that *fury* was let
loose and distinguished him particularly;”
we have to lament that merit and talents
on either side, could not disperse the heavy
ill-boding clouds of literary, of political, of
religious contention. So strong and uncon-
trollable indeed was the spirit of party that
at

at the same time that articles of impeachment were drawn up by the house of commons against Dr. Sacheverel, they resolved that “the reverend Mr. Benjamin Hoadley, Rector of St. Peter’s Poor, London, for having often justified the principles on which her Majesty and the nation proceeded in the late happy revolution, had justly merited the favour and recommendation of that house: and that an humble address be presented to her Majesty, that she would be graciously pleased to bestow some dignity in the church on Mr. Hoadley for his eminent services both to the church and to the state.” A request with which her Majesty never complied.

A. D.
1701—
1714.

To delineate the political, and polemical discussions, of this period, would require a perspicuous mind, and an accurate pen. The subjects were undoubtedly of importance, and involved civil as well as religious rights. Time and the direction of a good Providence have now changed their current. The Head of our church on earth is
D its

A. D. 1701—
 1714. its pious and zealous Defender; and if we
 continue true to those principles which
 have established and supported it, we have
 every reason to suppose that it is not only
not in danger, but that it will be trans-
 mitted down, secure and unsullied, to the
 latest generations.

Indeed whoever considers the foundation on which the Church of England was built, whoever considers the primitive model from which she was formed, will have great reason to use David's words, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes*." That important period which was justly distinguished by the reformation of our religion, is not to be considered as the period when that profession of Christianity first made its appearance. Long, very long, had purity of doctrine and discipline slept beneath the over-loaded ornaments and corruptions of the Church of Rome. But in principle and in practice it had existed from

* Psalm cxviii. 23.

the times of the apostles. This is the answer to those who have enquired, Where was your religion before Luther? There was a time when the church of Rome might have boasted of her primitive excellence, and freedom from error with other churches of Christ, as far as that expression is compatible with human infirmities. The British church which was early planted, long resisted her innovations; but the Bishop of Rome adding temporal to his spiritual power, unhappily subjugated the minds as well as the bodies of every civilized country in Europe. The reformation of religion in some measure brought us back to the primitive standard. Such doctrines only were rejected as were not to be found in the revealed will of God; and such discipline as was not regularly derived from the authority of the apostles. I speak not of the turn which the reformation took in other countries; it accommodated itself to existing governments. In our own that Episcopacy was established, and those orders

A. D.
1701—
1714.

A. D. in the church continued which had been
1701— the earliest institutions of Christianity. By
1714. revolutions in the state, and those changes
which are produced by time and external
circumstances, the best regulations are sub-
ject to decay. This had been remarkably
the case in this nation during the seven-
teenth century: and this was one of the
true causes which occasioned so many vio-
lent discussions in the church during the
reign of Queen Anne. The objects which
those who were called High Churchmen
had in view, are thus enumerated by At-
terbury, a man of great learning and virtue,
but whose temper and principles perhaps
were not of the least violent nature.—“ We
doubt not,” he says, addressing himself to
sir Jonathan Trelawney, Bishop of Win-
chester, “ but to see all proper steps taken
towards reviving decayed discipline; and
restoring church censures to their due force
and credit; towards detecting and defeat-
ing clandestine simoniacal contracts; to-
wards securing the rights and revenues of
the

the clergy from encroachments, rescuing A. D.
1701 †
1714: |
 their persons and sacred function from con-
 tempt, and freeing religion itself from the
 insults now made upon it by blasphemous
 tongues and pens, with equal boldness and
 iniquity*.”

Had these objects been proposed with
 mildness, or had not party lifted up her
 flaming torch in opposition, perhaps some
 salutary regulations in the church might
 have taken place at this period. But it hap-
 pened at this time, as it has happened upon
 many other occasions, “the good which
 men would, they do not; whilst the evil
 which they would not, that they do †.”

The contentions in the Houses of Convo-
 cation during this reign were of the same
 tendency with those I have recited. A con-
 tinuance of these warm debates, and the
 influence which they had in all political
 discussions, prevented those beneficial ends
 which they were so well intended to produce.

* Preface to Atterbury's Sermons.

† Rom. vii. 19.

A. D' I shall resume this subject in the second
 1701—part of this essay: and conclude the pre-
 1714. sent with no unpleasing picture of the public
 disposition towards the worship of the church
 in the words of a divine at the æra of which
 I am writing—"The church with its priest-
 hood was never more generally beloved, its
 worship never more frequented, its altars
 never more crouded, than at this day. And
 no wonder; for to all the middle ranks of
 mankind it is the chief delight, and to the
 poorer sort, it is the only comfort they have
 in this world: the only refreshment they
 have after their weekly labours is "to be-
 hold the fair beauty of the Lord and to visit
 his temple." He adds, and I beg to add
 with him, "I believe and am persuaded
 that the church of England is the best
 church now in the whole world: that her
 worship is the nearest to the primitive form,
 in as great purity and *beauty of holiness*, as
 she is well capable of in this state of imper-
 fection. I firmly believe that the govern-
 ment of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons esta-
 blished

blished in her, in which other protestant A. D.
 churches are deficient, I believe that this 1701—
 government was appointed by Christ, and 1714.
 every where planted by his apostles. And, 
 I trust, every true member, much more
 every true minister of this church, is ready
 and willing to join with me also in this
 profession with regard to our established
 church: that by God's assistance (for with-
 out that all our professions are but presump-
 tions) by God's assistance, "if I should die
 with her, I would not deny her in any
 wise*."

* Bisse's Beauty of Holiness in the Common Prayer.
 P. 172.

END OF PART THE FIRST.

PART II.

*Containing Reflections, &c. on the Reign of
George I. from 1714—1727.*

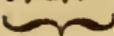
A. D. 1714—
1727. **IT** is a distress to the human mind to remark, that all human institutions are subject to infirmity. In our ordinary transactions we are sensible of this truth, Let our plans be laid with ever so much judgement, let our minds be strengthened with previous reflection, with fortitude, and even with religion, still we shall find that “it is not in man that walketh to direct his own ways*.” But it may be imagined that the history of the Church will afford us a different prospect. United, as it may be supposed, by one faith, a communion of holy men may be expected as the happy fruits. Alas!

* Jer. x. 23.

even here human nature betrays its frailties. Temporal expectations, and temporal advantages are so mixed with spiritual, that the most heavenly-minded are allured from their kindred sky, and immersed in all the feculence of a terrestrial habitation.

The church on earth then is well denominated in our liturgy by a *church militant*. The true faith in Christ meets with so much opposition, even from those who profess to be the servants of Christ; so careless are they in their master's service, so easy to be led astray by temptation, so indifferent even in the act of penitence itself, that the sincere believer cannot but feel all the sorrow and anxiety of the Psalmist when he said, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes because men keep not thy law *." It is to the *church triumphant* that we must look for comfort. There a union of saints must compensate for the many ages of division which have passed over our heads. There

* Psalm cxix. 136.

A. D. 1714—
 1727.  one holy principle can only reign, and there the voice of vast multitudes, as the voice of many waters, shall join in the same halleluiah before the throne of the Lamb.

Let not the good man then be discouraged, when he sees that the efforts of the best established church are ineffectual to heal all the spiritual diseases of a nation. Let him reflect that, if the united abilities of the virtuous and the wise are not able to produce harmony, and controul the exuberance of fancy even on sacred and venerable subjects, what would be the case if every man were left to be the arbiter of his own opinions? I would not here insinuate that force should ever supersede persuasion. God has given man reason; and where reason fails, as we cannot but feel it does upon a thousand occasions, he has offered him an explicit revelation. With these helps he cannot greatly err, if he seek for knowledge by the only proper means of acquiring it, the medium of prayer. “ If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God, who giveth to all

all men liberally : but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*.”

A. D.
1714—
1727.

If the history of the church be often turbulent in consequence of the unrestrained passions of mankind, we have a pleasure in reflecting that the minds of many excellent men, who have been more or less concerned even in these contentions, were the residences of harmony and peace. The profession of religion being of greater importance to a good man than every other consideration, it is no wonder that we often see him warmed with the subject, it is no wonder that he wishes others to partake of that happiness which he himself enjoys. I fear that in some cases a natural violence of temper hath heightened this *wish* into all the severities of compulsion. In other cases, a bigotted system of religion has produced the same deplorable effects. But I leave the Bonners and the Gardiners of former days to answer for their own offences. I speak

* James i. 5.

A. D. 1714—
1727. only at this time of that vehemence on ecclesiastical subjects which agitated the Houses of Convocation during the last reign, and in that which is at present the object of our consideration.

Near the latter end of the reign of Queen Anne the attention of the Houses of Convocation was directed by a royal licence to investigate the excessive growth of infidelity and heresy, as well as of other abuses, that necessary measures might be taken for a reformation. The prolocutor of the lower-house, Dr. Atterbury, undertook to draw up the account to be delivered to the Queen, which he did with severe reflections on the administration. The Bishops ordered another representation to be drawn in more general and modest terms. But neither one nor the other met with the approbation of both parties. Had not the politics of the times interfered, some steps of a general nature might have been taken, serviceable, it is probable, to the great interests of religion. The revival of Arian tenets was attempted by Mr. Whiston,
for

for which he was expelled the University A. D.
of Cambridge. His vindication he dedi- 1714—
cated to the convocation itself. A censure 1727.
was passed, but remained unnoticed by the
Queen.

It will not be expected that I should enter into the several controversies which have distracted the profession of true Christianity. My object in this essay, is only to remark the effects which they have produced on the morals and manners of the world. With respect to general belief they have confirmed thousands in points which they had not considered. The objections that have been made, have called forth the acutest abilities, and there is hardly one cavelling reflection on the subject of religion that has not met with an apposite and satisfactory answer. That new opponents arise will not be wondered at; but if we examine their writings, we shall find them to consist of worn-out arguments, and long-answered observations. They renew the attack, not in expectation of finding out some undefended turret of the fortress,
but

A. D. but in hopes that their numbers will make
 1714— up for the deficiency of their artillery.

1727.

About this period several sceptical writers began to insinuate their pernicious opinions. The licentiousness of Charles the second's reign had both prepared the soil, and sown the seeds of infidelity. But happily for the nation at large, the opinions of infidels were *as yet* confined to the closet, or circulated only in the society of wits. A Shaftesbury or a Bolingbroke might find their way to the studious, a Rochester or a Buckingham might amuse and ensnare the votaries of unsuspecting dissipation. But the lower ranks of men, though more ignorant, were undoubtedly more virtuous. Some profession of religion most of them maintained, and however erroneous that profession might be, it is surely better to obey the dictates even of a misguided conscience, than to throw aside all allegiance to the Almighty Sovereign of the world, all obedience to those who rule by his direction. The time was not then come, when the poison of infidelity

delity should be indiscriminately diffused. A. D.
 Some shame remained on the brow of the 1714—
 sceptic; some indignant repulse he still met 1727.
 with from the public voice.

It was a serious misfortune at this time that, while infidelity was making dreadful encroachments among the learned or the dissipated, any deviation from the long-established and well-grounded doctrines of the Bible, should be found within the pale of the church itself. I refer to the proceedings in convocation concerning Dr. Samuel Clarke's book, entituled "The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity." From the unsettled state of men's minds, every thing became controversy, and that in its warmest manner. This mysterious, but appropriate and important doctrine of Christianity, by means of this introduction, afforded matter for public discussion. The revelation of the Gospel was deserted in its interpretation, for the wild fancies of the most ignorant: and that doctrine which could be known only from the word of God itself, and which

A. D. is indispensable in the awful circumstance
 1714— of man's redemption, became so misrepre-
 1727. sented as to be sometimes reviled, and often
 rejected, by those whose prejudices were
 stronger than their belief. What passed
 upon this occasion becomes the subject of
 the ecclesiastical historian. The last public
 notice of this controversy * consists of seven
 articles of direction, delivered to the Arch-
 bishops and Bishops, "for the preserving
 unity in the church, and the purity of the
 christian faith concerning the Holy Trinity;
 and also for preserving the peace and quiet
 of the state." The bitterness of controversy,
 and the danger which it occasioned to the
 christian cause, may easily be imagined from
 the nature of these articles. The first re-
 stricts the preacher from delivering any
 other doctrine than what is contained in the
 holy scriptures, the three creeds, and the
 thirty-nine articles. The second, that they
 should avoid all new terms in its explication.

* Dec. 11, 1714.

The third requires them to observe the fifty-
 third canon, which forbids public opposi-
 tion between preachers, because, as that
 canon expresses it, there groweth thereby
 much offence and disquietness unto the
 people, and that above all things they
 abstain from bitter invectives and scurri-
 lous language against all persons whatso-
 ever. The fourth directs them in sermons
 and lectures not to intermeddle with affairs
 of state or government, save only on spe-
 cial feasts, and fasts, as are, or shall be,
 appointed by public authority. The fifth
 regards those who write any thing on those
 subjects. The sixth enjoins the use of the
 canonical prayer before sermons. And the
 seventh applies to other persons besides the
 clergy, who should write, harangue, or dis-
 pute on the same subjects, and by these
 means give occasion of scandal, discord, and
 disturbance in the church and kingdom*.

It must be observed that these were *di-*

* Tindal's Continuation of Rapin's History of England.

A. D. *rections and not laws*; only so far as an
 1714—offence was contrary to the canonical in-
 1727. stitutions. In discussing subjects of this
 nature, argument is our best weapon; and
 if we wield this with moderation and dis-
 cretion, with a due regard to peace and
 the establishment of truth, we shall be most
 likely to overcome our adversary. In these
 articles there is much good sense as well
 as policy; and the clergy of every age
 will be the better for observing them. In
 giving this opinion I would not be thought
 to infer that the agitators of controversial
 subjects should be silenced by authority.
 No. Let truth be investigated with fairness
 and freedom: depend upon it, it will not
 suffer by the trial.

This observation does not attach itself,
 neither ought it, to publications professedly
 disseminated for the purpose of overturn-
 ing the pillars of the christian faith, and
 introducing anarchy and confusion into so-
 ciety. Too many fatal instances of which
 hath this age beheld. Excellent and amia-

ble as *Toleration* is, it would degenerate into weakness, into madness, calmly to see the poisoned cup offered to a peaceful and an unsuspecting people, without dashing it from the hand of the presenter. But a fair discussion of doubtful or controverted points, requires a different treatment. No man would wish to profess a faith which could not openly be defended. Let gloomy superstition erect her inquisitions, let her prepare her dungeons and her racks, but let true religion meet her adversary in the open field. In that important moment when our Lord was conversing with his disciples previously to his apprehension, he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted strengthen thy brethren *."—Peter, though assailed by Satan, through the support of his dying master, rose superior to his own infirmity.

A. D.
1714—
1727.

* Luke xxii. 31.

A. D. 1714—
 1727. If we consider Peter as an emblem of the church (though no disciples of his once falsely reputed *infallible*, representative) we shall find with what weapons he is to be defended—*I have prayed that thy faith fail not*: and he who uses any other on such occasions than “the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God*,” errs against that divine authority by which he pretends to be directed.

At the accession of George I. there was a transfer, or change of power, but by no means a melioration of party-spirit. Those who were distinguished as High Churchmen were displaced, and their opponents came into office. Had these changes been confined to state-affairs, they had not claimed my present attention, but at that time religion was mingled with every political dispute. The watch-word of one party, *the danger of the church*, was revived with violence: the watch-word of the other par-

* Eph. vi. 17.

ty, *the danger of the protestant succession*, A. D. 1714—
 was echoed back with no loss of fervour. 1727.
 If any real danger had attached itself to
 either side, it must equally have affected
 both. And in fact, there *was* great danger,
 lest true religion should suffer in the con-
 flict.

It often pleases God by the introduction of second causes to effect the wise purposes of his providence, to correct in mercy and to punish that he may save. A nation is chastised by war, a church by persecution. In the midst of these contentions a rebellion broke out, which for a time at least, united, or ought to have united, all parties. The Church of England undoubtedly was in some danger, though assaulted by a feeble arm. If we look back upon the history of the preceding century, and particularly on the reigns of Charles the second and James the second, we shall be able to judge, what reasonable, as well as unreasonable fears, were entertained of the return of popery. The education of these monarchs in

A. D. 1714—
 1727. foreign countries, under the superintendance of a mother professedly devoted to the Church of Rome, it was likely would make a powerful impression on their minds. The religion of the former indeed was of a doubtful nature, but the bigotry of the latter was unequivocal. Happily for our national church she passed in safety through these troubles. Corrected, it may be, by a trial of affliction, she stood firm to her original engagements; and though the members of her communion might in some instances overstep that moderation so difficult to be maintained in times of public tumult, yet were they always sensible of the caution given to the church of Laodicea, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous, therefore, and repent*.”

The rebellion of the year 1715 may be looked upon in a religious light, as a check to the exclamation, “*the church is in danger!*”—so often *politically* repeated when

* Rev. iii. 19.

no real danger was near. There are times ^{A. D.} when the voice of heaven is heard, and that ^{1714—} voice cannot be disregarded. But let us ^{1727.} not tempt the goodness of Providence by an irreverent use either of his encouragements or his terrors, his mercies or his judgments. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord*.” To make use of the name of God, or to profane his holy name for the promotion of party interests, is a derogation from that honour which we owe him, from that unpolluted worship which is his sole prerogative. No wonder that “he answers us out of the whirlwind †,” when we abuse his power, that he speaks to us in judgements when we mock his counsel. As a church, we have often experienced his goodness when we feared his anger, and have tasted his blessings when we deserved his correction. “I will cause you,” he has said, “to pass under the

* Is. lv. 8.

† Job xxxviii. 1.

A. D. 1714—
 1727.  rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant. And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me—and ye shall know that I am the Lord*.”

Soon after the termination of this rebellion, a very violent literary contention broke out, which has been distinguished by the name of the Bangorian controversy, as it originated from a pamphlet and a sermon by Dr. Hoadley, lately advanced to the Bishopric of Bangor. The merits of the contest it is not necessary at present to discuss: nor if it were, could I reasonably expect to be followed through a labyrinth of *seventy* tracts said to have been published on this occasion †. The principles endeavoured to be established, or opposed, were the same which had for many years divided the nation. The profession of religion, we lament to say, was again made a party in political disputes. The conse-

* Ezekiel xx. 37.

† Tindal.

quence,

quence, I fear, has been no ways favourable to the morals and manners of the common people. We must not, however, suffer ourselves to be so far led aside by neutrality of opinion as to imagine the subject of the controversy altogether unconnected with the profession of religion. St. Paul himself assures us, that “it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing*.” When we are certain of our ground, and have endeavoured by every possible means to be made well acquainted with the point in consideration; when we have sifted the grains of truth with all the calmness of reason, and have piously implored the direction of that hand which “turns the minds of men as the rivers of water,” we may then attempt to support the argument with our best abilities. But still let it be with caution. Man may err; and therefore on every such occasion, let him “be clothed with humility.”

A. D.
1714.—
1727.

* Gal. iv. 18.

A. D. 1714—
 1727.  It was surely of importance to the church of England, as it still is, to guard her interests with a steady, I had almost said, with a jealous eye. Revolutions had so frequently shaken her foundations, that something must be allowed to those times when an *abdicated Monarch* might have returned with popery in his train, or an *independent Cromwell* have again broken down her barriers, and usurped her rights. Under the impression of these sentiments, moderate men were perplexed, when High Churchmen bent, as it might be thought, too strongly to one side, and Low Churchmen drew too violently to the other. SHERLOCK and HOADLEY are names that will be long revered. Yet these were the leading controversialists in this great question.

The Bishop of Bangor published a pamphlet entitled “A preservative against the principles and practices of the Non-jurors;” and soon after preached a sermon before the King, which was printed under the title of

“The

“The nature of the kingdom of Christ*.” A. D. 1714—
 Dr. Snape, Master of Eton-College, replied 1727.
 to the sermon, and the convocation appointed a committee to examine the Bishop’s two performances. The representation of the committee conveyed a severe censure on the opinions of Dr. Hoadley, and, as before, the disputes in convocation became very violent. Government soon stopped the proceedings by a prorogation, which, however, did not put an end to the controversy. Dr. Snape and Dr. Sherlock were removed from the office of King’s chaplains, and the convocation has not been permitted to sit and do business since that period †.

It is always to be lamented when private animosities obstruct the discharge of public duties; the flock cannot prosper while the shepherds are at variance. It is not for an individual to express his opinion on so delicate a subject as the revival of the

* Hoadley’s Serm. v. 1. s. 14. † 1717.

A. D. powers of the convocation: but he must
 1714— ever look up with veneration to that as-
 1727. ssembly, whose deliberations, under God,
 rescued us from many dangerous errors,
 and settled on so sure a foundation the ec-
 clesiastical establishment of this country.

Bishop Hoadley's pamphlet, though I take no part in the controversy, leads me to make a few observations on a body of men, then numerous but not powerful, now totally extinct, or mingled with other conscientious members of our church: I mean those who were distinguished by the name of Non-jurors, or Non-jurants, and have often occasion to be mentioned in the History of the early part of this century. It is well known, that the persons intended by this description originally separated from the communion of the church of England in consequence of the oath of allegiance required of them at the accession of King William. Whether some test might not have been offered them sufficient to have secured the established government against any

any attempts of such as were disaffected, and thus have prevented this breach in the unity of the church, is not for me to determine. Many of them, there is no doubt, were able and conscientious ministers, and amongst them prelates of no inferior character. It must be owned also that many of them were actuated by the violence of party spirit, and to the last retained a chimerical attachment to the House of Stuart, which was not removed till the completion of a full century [1788] on the demise of the last pretender to sovereignty of that unfortunate race*. Many of the non-juring clergy

A. D.
1714—
1727.

* The following circular letter to the episcopal clergy of the church of Scotland (which I believe to be authentic) establishes the observation which I have made above.

“ Intimation to the Clergy and Laity of the Episcopal Church of Scotland.

“ The protestant Bishops in Scotland having met at Aberdeen on the 24th of April, 1788, to take into their serious consideration the state of the church under their inspection, did upon mature deliberation, with their

A. D. 1714—
 1727. } clergy of that day were men of the first
 abilities and most exemplary piety : and to
 their writings, as well as examples, we have
 to look for the preservation, and increase, of
 much

their clergy, unanimously agree to comply with and to submit to the present government of this kingdom, as vested in the person of his Majesty King George the Third. They also resolved to testify this compliance by uniformly praying for him by name in their public worship, in hopes of removing all suspicion of disaffection, and of obtaining relief from those penal laws under which this church has so long suffered. At the same time they think it their duty to declare, that this resolution proceeds from principles purely ecclesiastical ; and that they are moved to it by the justest and most satisfying reasons, in discharge of that high trust devolved upon them in their episcopal characters ; and to promote as far as they can, the peace and prosperity of that portion of the christian church committed to their charge.

“ For obtaining of this desirable end, they therefore appoint their clergy to make public notification to their congregations upon the 18th day of May next, that, upon the following Lord’s day, nominal prayers for the King are to be authoritatively introduced, and afterwards to continue in the religious assemblies of this
 episcopal

much religious knowledge. It has pleased A. D.
 God that this age has seen the extinction 1714—
 of this schism; and what is more extraor- 1727.
 dinary, our present excellent and benevolent }
 monarch, is the munificent benefactor, I
 episcopal church: and they beg leave to recommend, as
 to their clergy whose obedience they expect, so likewise
 to all good christian people under their episcopal care,
 and do earnestly intreat and exhort them in the bowels
 of Jesus Christ, that they will all cordially receive this
 determination of their spiritual fathers.

“ If any of them wish for farther information on this
 subject, the Bishops hereby direct them to apply to
 their respective pastors; and conclude this address with
 their hearty prayers to, and stedfast dependence upon,
 their gracious HEAD and MASTER in heaven, that he
 would be pleased to bless, sanctify, and prosper the
 pious resolutions and endeavours of his servants upon
 earth, to the advancement of his glory, the edification
 of his church, and the quiet and welfare of the state in
 all godliness and honesty.

Robert Kilgour, Bishop and Primus.

John Skinner, Bishop of Aberdeen.

Andrew M'Farlane, Bishop of Ross and Moray.

William Abernethy Drummond, Bp. of Edinburgh.

John Strachan, Bishop of Brechin.”

Gent. Mag. 1788.

believe

A. D. believe I may add, the sole supporter of the
1714— last male descendant of the family*.

1727.

If I were to notice Dr. Hoadley's celebrated sermon, it would lead me into a discussion foreign from the intention of this essay. The whole stream of ecclesiastical history, from the days of the apostles to the present hour, presents to our view, a visible, as well as an invisible, church. An eminent divine [Dr. Rogers] considered the subject, during this contest, in this light; and indeed if we take away this argument, we must remove at the first onset, that venerable council which assembled at Jerusalem on the great question of circumcision, as well as that body of christians to whom the decree was directed. The nature of Christ's kingdom, no doubt, is spiritual, but as he has commanded a communion of saints, an union of men whose sole object is, or ought to be, the promotion of their own, and other's salvation according to the doctrines

* The Cardinal of York, who, by the revolution at Rome, was deprived of his fortune and preferments,

of the gospel, we must acknowledge that *under Him* a directing power must reside somewhere. He has given us no reason to suppose that power infallible. Where then can we look for it, but in an assembly of good men, united under his authority, and administering, according to the measure of grace which he has given them, that church which he has planted upon earth? I speak not here of any *particular church* in contradistinction to others, but of the *catholic* or *universal church* of Christ, of “the *general assembly* and ‘church of the first-born,’ whose names are written in heaven*.”

A. D.
1714—
1727.

As a branch of this universal church of Christ, which has subsisted in various circumstances of prosperity and adversity since the times of the apostles, I trust it will be allowed me to consider the established church of this nation, as near the primitive model as may be expected in our present state of

* Hebrews xii. 23.

A. D. 1714—
 1727. imperfection ; for in all cases it is consistent
 with just argument to make a distinction
 between the doctrines, and the profession,
 of believers. This being allowed, it can be
 no infringement of that toleration which is
 the glory, as well as praise, of the present
 age, to secure her doctrines and her disci-
 pline, against the intrusion of those, who
 would corrupt the one, and destroy the
 other. On this great point were many of
 the Bangorian pamphlets written. In a
 popular government like ours, it will not be
 wondered at, that this subject should be
 frequently, and warmly, discussed. This
 advantage has attended the discussion, both
 in and out of parliament, that the majority
 remains of the same opinion which pre-
 vailed when the test-act was originally
 passed. Though I subscribe unequivocally
 to this determination, I should be rejoiced
 to behold the breaches of church-unity hap-
 pily healed. Benevolence is the leading
 characteristic of the religion of Christ.

“Sirs!

“Sirs! ye are brethren. Why do ye wrong one to another *?”

A. D.
1714—
1727.

As it has been seen that on many occasions controversy, even religious controversy, has been carried on with rancour and animosity, and indeed that this very contention is not exempt from this censure, I shall conclude my observations upon it with extracts from the lives and characters of two of the principal disputants. This I do, not so much for their own sakes (for to their own master they stand or fall) but to shew that a good man may interest himself in worldly matters without being defiled by them; that even a partaker of religious controversy may freely support his opinion without polluting his mind with narrow views, or malicious insinuations.—Of Dr. Hoadley it is said, “This is allowed by all to be his distinguishing characteristic—that in all the controversies which he held with his brethren (and no one surely held more) he

* Acts. vii. 25.

A. D. ever preserved an equanimity of temper—
 1714— the meek and candid christian was never
 1727. lost in the disputer of this world—cool,
 calm and composed, he forgets the man
 whilst he is animadverting on the writer;
 never betrayed into any asperity of expres-
 sion, any railing accusations, any personal
 reflections, any misbecoming flights, or
 those sallies of passion, which, as they give
 no strength to a bad argument, never add
 grace or advantage to a good one*.” Of
 that great and good prelate, Dr. Sherlock, it
 is said by Dr. Nicolls, Master of the Temple,
 and preacher of his funeral discourse—
 “ He too had his controversies, and those
 carried on with warmth and spirit; but
 without any injury to his temper, or any
 interruption to his thoughts and mind †.”

Contentions, however, of any kind, cannot arise without some injury. “ The beginning of strife,” it has been well observed, “ is like as when one letteth out water.”

* Dodsley’s Ann. Register, 1762, p. 7.

† Ibid. p. 9.

The opening of a sluice, in numerous instances, only precedes an inundation. During this reign more than one secluded philosopher were fostering in private the seeds of infidelity. They did not indeed always openly attack the venerable records of our faith; that was left for more modern antagonists: but the worm was placed at the root of the plant, and they secretly rejoiced at its unheeded progress, as they hoped, towards destruction. This period, and that which followed it in the beginning of the next reign, it pleased God to render very fruitful of eminent divines, and learned laymen, whose labours averted the approaching mischief, and in many cases, doubtless, convinced the gainsayer. Amongst the latter Sir Isaac Newton, Lord Lyttelton and Mr. West, demand the remembrance and applause of the good.

About three years after the controversy above mentioned came out Mr. Collins's discourse of "Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion;" wherein he endeavours

A. D. to fix the evidence of it chiefly, if not
 1714—solely, upon the prophecies of the Old Tes-
 1727. tament, and then explains those prophecies
 in such a manner, as that they seem to
 have no better foundation than the divina-
 tions among the heathens, “who learned,”
 says he, “that art in schools, or under
 discipline, as the Jews did prophecy in
 schools and colleges of the prophets.” This
 was the origin of several tracts on the sub-
 ject of prophecy; and amongst the rest
 Bishop Sherlock took an opportunity of de-
 livering his sentiments, though he did not
 directly enter into the controversy, in six
 Discourses delivered at the Temple church,
 and printed the following year [1725] under
 this title, “The Use and Intent of Prophecy
 in the several Ages of the World*.”

But this period of time did not confine
 itself to written controversy, or irreligious
 insinuations. It was distinguished, from a
 very particular cause, for the loosest man-

* Life of Bishop Sherlock.

ners and most infamous immoralities. The ^{A. D.} very sudden and extraordinary influx of ^{1714—} riches, real or imaginary, occasioned by the ^{1727.} long celebrated and justly execrated South-Sea-Scheme [1719] produced the most dreadful consequences amongst every rank and order of society. The history of this scheme belongs not to this essay. But if we wish for an example of the ill effects of avarice, the devastations of wealth, the rapacity of those who grasp at gold, or the misery of those who possess it, we need not proceed further than the plain representation of this singular occurrence. The language of the historians affords too striking a picture of this melancholy scene. “ During the infatuation produced by this infamous scheme,” says one of them in the plain truth of history, “ luxury, vice and profligacy increased to a shocking degree of extravagance. The adventurers, intoxicated by their imaginary wealth, pampered themselves with the rarest dainties, and the most expensive wines that could be imported:

A. D. 1714—
1727. they purchased the most sumptuous furniture, equipage and apparel, though without taste or discernment: they indulged their criminal passions to the most scandalous excess: their discourses was the language of pride, insolence, and the most ridiculous ostentation: they affected to scoff at religion and morality, and even to set heaven at defiance*.” Merciful God! what shall we think of a people, or a period, of which such things are said? How shall we look back but a few years, and know that these men were Englishmen, *were Christians?* But while we blame them, let us be cautious lest we condemn ourselves. Are there no other periods of our history when a sudden influx of riches has made us proud, insolent, luxurious? Have we never felt the danger of a prosperous trade and a flourishing commerce? Have we never forgot ourselves when our Flag has been flying in the four quarters of the world, when the breezes of

* Smollet.

the two Indies have met within our ports?— A. D.
 Let this consideration be a warning to us 1714—
 all, but particularly to “ the crowning city, 1727. 
 whose merchants are princes, whose traf-
 fickers are the honourable of the earth*.”
 To us it may often be said, as it was once
 to those of Tyre—“ with thy wisdom and
 thy understanding thou hast gotten thee
 riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into
 thy treasures ; by thy great wisdom and by
 thy traffic thou hast increased thy riches,
 and—*thy heart is lifted up because of thy
 riches †.*”

Too truly may the application of these
 passages be made to the particular epoch of
 our history, which records the transaction
 to which I allude. “ It was like an infec-
 tious distemper,” says another writer †,
 “ which spread itself in an astonishing
 manner. Every evening produced new pro-
 jects which were justly called *bubbles*, and
 new companies appeared every day. Even

* Isaiah xxiii. 8.

† Ezekiel xxviii. 5, 6.

‡ Tindal.

A. D. the first nobility were implicated in this
 1714— charge, and, to use the language of the
 1727. same author, *the whole nation was become
 Stock Jobbers* *.”

It is no pleasing task to investigate the immoralities of former days, or to call to our recollection what every good man would wish for ever buried in oblivion. But as *offences will come*, and from the depravity of our nature we have reason to expect them in every age of the world, it becomes

“ * How great the general infatuation or thirst of gain was, appears from the following instance: A proposal was offered, ‘ For carrying on an undertaking of great advantage, but nobody to know what it is.’ The projector formed a scheme for half a million, by which every subscriber paying down two guineas for subscribing, was to have 100l. a year for every 100l. so subscribed. But how this was to be done, did not appear in the proposals; where it was also said, that in a month the particulars of the project should be laid open, and the money subscribed was then to be paid in. As extravagant as this scheme was, the projector *in a forenoon* received 1000 subscriptions, with which, amounting to 2000 guineas, he went off in the afternoon.”

the duty of every sincere promoter of piety and holiness to light up that beacon which points out the dangerous rock. This must be my apology for mentioning a club or society which was at this time held in London, under an appellation too shocking to be named*. Many men of distinction were members of this club, some of them celebrated for the brilliancy of their parts. This wanton outrage against public decency, as well as against the more important duties of religion, could not pass without the animadversion of the supreme magistrate. And accordingly the King declared his displeasure by a proclamation [A. D. 1721,] against any who lay under the suspicion of such destructive practices ; and gave orders to the officers of his household to make strict inquiry whether any of his servants were guilty of such horrid impieties.

This was immediately followed by a complaint in the House of Lords of the growth

* " The H—ll—f—re Club."

A. D. of atheism, profaneness, and immorality ;
 1714— and a bill was brought in for the suppression
 1727. of blasphemy and profaneness. Unfortu-
 nately this bill was not solely confined to
 the objects which it was expected to have
 principally in view, but was calculated to
 restrain the liberties granted to non-con-
 formists by the laws of the last sessions.
 Thus politics insinuating themselves into
 what ought to have been a clear and dis-
 tinct question of religion, the utility of this
 measure was lost. Some of the clauses of
 the bill being of a penal nature, I do not
 know how far they would have been effi-
 cacious in correcting the abuse. Two Lords
 of great profligacy of character used very
 extraordinary language on this occasion.
 One of them on whom the strongest sus-
 picion fell of being a member of the club,
 justified his character, declaring he was far
 from being a patron of blasphemy or an
 enemy to religion, and to *prove his assertion*
 drew out of his pocket an old family bible,
 and read several passages from St. Peter's
 and

and St. Paul's epistles. The other observed, A. D.
 " though he was for a parliamentary King, 1714—
 yet he did not desire to have a parliamentary 1727.
 God, or a parliamentary religion: and if
 the House were for such a one, he would go
 to Rome and endeavour to be chosen a car-
 dinal; for he had rather sit in a conclave,
 than with their Lordships on those terms."
 One of the Lords having said that, he
 " verily believed the present calamity occa-
 sioned by the South Sea project was a judge-
 ment of God on the blasphemy and pro-
 faneness of the nation;"—another replied,
 " that noble peer then must be a great sin-
 ner, for he had lost considerably by the
 South-sea scheme."

Thus with wit and profligacy was this great question discussed; a shameful testi-
 mony of the levity and degeneracy of the times!

The next event which requires notice in this essay is the passing of a bill in parlia-
 ment, for taking out of the solemn affirma-
 tion of the Quakers the words " In the
 presence

A. D. 1714—
 1727. presence of Almighty God.”—Much indulgence has at various times been given by the legislature to this peaceful people, in return for those meek qualities which they appear to possess. Why they refuse to acknowledge themselves on legal occasions *as in the presence of Almighty God*, it is not easy to conjecture. The believer in revelation can have no well-founded objection to acknowledge the omnipresence of the Deity. What sublimity and conviction is displayed in this passage!—“ Can any hide himself in secret places that I cannot see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord*?” And may it not be proved from the language of Scripture, as well as from the practice of holy men, even of our blessed Saviour Himself when brought before the High Priest, that “ an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife †?” “ I adjure thee,” said Caiaphas to Christ, “ by the living God,

* Jer. xxiii. 24.

† Heb. vi. 16.

that

that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said*.”—If language has any force, if example or argument have any efficacy, when opposed to the strong prejudices of mankind, surely this passage of scripture ought to produce conviction. A petition was presented by the London Clergy against this bill, but without effect. In the spirit of charity let us judge of the weakness of our brethren; nor pronounce, in the harsh language used upon this occasion by Atterbury, that “the Quakers were hardly christians;” but let us pray for those that we may imagine to be in error, that their eyes may be illuminated by the “*true light* which lighteth every man that cometh into the world †.”

In the same year [1722] the Roman Catholics, justly considered as favourable to the interests of a popish pretender, were selected as objects on which to raise a part

* Matt. xxvi. 63.

† John i. 9.

A. D. of the public supplies. This, as it might
 1714— be imagined, was considered as a species of
 1727.  persecution by the party in opposition, and
 condemned as inconsistent with the temper
 and principles of the protestant religion.
 Government, however, at this time had
 great reason for circumspection, though
 the liberal principles of the present day will
 not approve of a partial, any more than of
 an oppressive, taxation. “Whatever opi-
 nions may be formed of this measure,” says
 Mr. Coxe, in his Life of the Minister, “ac-
 cording to the strict rules of theoretical
 justice, the policy was unquestionable. This
 instance of rigour effectually discouraged
 the papists from continuing their attempts
 against the government, and operated as a
 constant check on the turbulent spirit of
 the Non-jurors.” I can only lament, on
 this occasion, that policy and justice should
 ever be at variance with each other. A
 plot had been discovered, in which Dr.
 Atterbury, now Bishop of Rochester, who
 had been long a strenuous and a warm

defender of High Church principles, was supposed to be concerned, and to which he fell a sacrifice. As the crime alledged against him did not appear to be clearly ascertained, a Bill of pains and penalties was brought into parliament, and passed, by which he was deprived of his office and benefice, and banished the kingdom for ever. As long as elegant language, accompanied with sound argument and piety, remains, so long will Atterbury be remembered. It is to be regretted that his' brilliant abilities should be at all sullied by the violence of his temper and principles; and that he should consider his attachment to a church which he could not but love, consistent with the introduction of a governour whom, for his religion, at least, he could not but condemn. The opinions of opposite parties, as usual, ran high on this occasion. The punishment of the Bishop did not meet with universal approbation, particularly from those who attributed his removal to the constant opposition which

G

he

A. D. he had given to the measures of the minister.
 1714— Under pretence of his being afflicted with
 1727. the gout, he was publicly prayed for during
 his confinement in the Tower, in almost
 all the churches and chapels of London and
 Westminster*.

“Aspiring and ambitious, and attached from principle to the family of the Pretender, one fact,” says Coxe, “highly favourable to Atterbury, ought not to be omitted; he remained at all times, during his exile, true to the protestant religion, and regular in the performance of its duties. He reprobated with warmth the conduct of those of his party who had sacrificed their religion with a view to obtain the Pretender’s favour; and even quarrelled with the Duke of Berwick who proposed giving a catholic preceptor to the young duke of Buckingham, and used his utmost influence over the Duchess to place none but protestants about the person of her son.”

* Coxe’s Life of Sir Robert Walpole.

During

During this reign, when religious disputes ran high, the learned and pious Dr. William Wake presided in the See of Canterbury. In this interval, and particularly in 1717, and in 1718, a correspondence of a private nature was carried on between him and some Doctors of the Sarbonne, relative to an union between the English and Gallican churches. The whole correspondence is before the public and will answer for itself, as well as reply to the Author of the Confessional, who has aspersed the reverend prelate as betraying the interests of the Church of England. If, as Mosheim had represented, "each of the two communities had been allowed to retain the greatest part of their *respective and peculiar doctrines*," every true protestant would have revolted at the idea of such an union. "But if the Archbishop entered into the correspondence, as Maclean, his translator and commentator*, observes, with

A. D.
1714—
1727.

* Mosheim, Vol. 5. Append. 3.

A. D. 1714—
1727. a view to improve one of the most favourable opportunities that could be offered, of withdrawing the church of *France*, from the jurisdiction of the *Pope*, a circumstance which must have immediately weakened the power of the court of Rome, and, in its consequences, offered a fair prospect of a farther reformation in *doctrine* and *worship*, as the case happened in the *Church of England*, when it happily threw off the papal yoke"—then, though many might be inclined to think the scheme impracticable under any arrangement, yet the good prelate's intention would have been unimpeached. The Church of Rome and the Church of England, under *then*, and *present*, circumstances, never could, or can, coalesce. But he who endeavours to ameliorate opposite interests, without betraying that cause which is dearer to him than life itself, deserves well of his fellow-creatures.

Archbishop Wake has been censured for opposing the repeal of the schism-bill at one period, which he had represented at another

another, as an hardship upon the dissenters. A. D.
 In answer to this, it is said, that the spirit ^{1714—}
 of the times had changed. During the mi- ^{1727.}
 nistry of Bolingbroke, in the reign of
 Queen Anne, the dissenters were in a state
 of oppression, and were objects of com-
 passion. In the reign of George I. the
 contrary was the case; and the dissenters
 became violent to a great degree, which
 rendered them formidable to those who were
 jealous of the power, privileges, and autho-
 rity of the established church*.

The names of many eminent and excel-
 lent men grace the annals of these times;
 and in arts and sciences the kingdom was
 advancing rapidly towards celebrity. I wish
 I could add, that practical religion had been
 in an equal state of progressive improve-
 ment.

* Maclean.

END OF PART THE SECOND.

PART III.

SECTION I.

*Containing Reflections, &c. on the former
Part of the Reign of George II. from*

A. D. 1727—

A. D. 1727—
 THE history of a church, as of a nation, in prosperity, may be comprised within a very narrow compass. Few are the words which tranquillity requires, as it is more an object of feeling than of description. However desirable such a situation may be supposed, either in private or in public life, experience too surely proves that it is attended with danger. In the hour of sickness or calamity, the mind rests not on its own powers; it looks for help, and receives it from *him* “who never leaves us nor forsakes us.” But when we are fanned by the gentle

gentle gales of prosperous fortune—what is our conduct then? Elated by present success, and careless of every future event, we glide before the wind, and never reflect on the necessity of circumspection, till the sunken rock in calm water, or the sudden storm in the open ocean, brings us to a proper sense of our danger.

Almost every period in the history of the christian church presents us with an example of this truth. In the earliest ages of christianity, before it received the protection of temporal power, how pure were its doctrines, how exemplary was the conduct of its votaries! Persecution in her most formidable shape brought to them no real terrors. The martyr and the confessor, like St. Paul, “approved themselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments”—nay, in death itself. During the early period of a suffering church, how often were such scenes beheld? It might reasonably have been expected

A. D. 1727—pected that when an Emperor became its *nursing father*, no more apprehensions could be entertained for its prosperity. The prospect indeed is pleasing which a contemporary describes, “The people of all ages and either sex concurred joyfully and religiously in the discharge of their duties, preserving an entire unity among themselves in the bond of peace and love, and in righteousness of life: which prosperous and indeed triumphant state of the church militant was every day confirmed and improved by the many laws and rescripts that were published in our favour*.”—But what says another Father of our church of the same prosperous period? “Thus favoured and fortified, the church might long have enjoyed, not only peace and security, but very profitable and magnificent privileges, had not her own bowels bred such a flame in her, that in comparison of it, the worst persecution had been a very

* Eusebius. Parker's Trans. p. 153.

great

great blessing*.” The Arian heresy soon A. D.
 distracted the tranquillity of the church; 1727—
 and, as the same Author observes, “from }
 an ember was soon kindled a general con-
 flagration.”

These observations apply themselves with some force to the period of the century at which I am now arrived. The church of England might be said to enjoy a state of greater tranquillity at the opening of the reign of George the second than for many preceding years. An attempt to re-establish popery had been repelled not long before, and government, under the happy auspices of the Brunswick line, was too strong to excite any emotions. Many prelates of great piety and abilities presided in the church. Ecclesiastical controversies lessened in number and in virulence. The characteristic terms of *High Church* and *Low Church* became imperceptibly changed into *Court* and *Country-party*: and though

* Socrates. P. 187.

Whig

A. D] *Whig* and *Tory* were still considered as, po-
 1727— litical distinctions ; and parliamentary lead-
 ~~~~~ ers were no less violent in support of what  
 each imagined to be the *good of the nation*,  
 it does not appear to me that the church of  
 England had any formidable enemies, but  
 such as were at the same time enemies of  
 the state. Yet with all these advantages,  
 we are sorry to confess, that the practice  
 of true religion had undergone a melan-  
 choly change. The dangers, or at least  
 the storms, to which the church had been  
 exposed in the beginning of the century,  
 and for some time afterward, had restrained  
 the encroachments of vice in her professors,  
 and been essential preservatives of her vir-  
 tue. But now that watchings had ceased,  
 and carefulness become less necessary, we  
 find the great body of the people relaxing  
 in their moral and religious conduct, and  
*the overflowings of ungodliness* were become  
 too familiar to *make them afraid*.

For a proof of the observation I refer to  
 the historians of the day. A contemporary  
 remarks,

remarks, though I hope with some colour-  
 ing of imagination, that “thieves and rob-  
 bers were now [1730] become more des-  
 perate and savage than ever they had ap-  
 peared *since mankind were civilized*. In the  
 exercise of their rapine they wounded,  
 maimed, and even murdered the unhappy  
 sufferers through a wantonness of barba-  
 rity.” But we will not consider this as the  
 only proof of the observation. A few years  
 after this [1742, 3] a celebrated debate took  
 place in the House of Lords, in conse-  
 quence of a motion for altering the duties  
 on spirituous liquors, and permitting them  
 again to be sold with less restraint; in  
 which a retrospect is given by some of the  
 noble speakers, of the gradual progress of  
 the people towards greater degrees of dis-  
 sipation. The instances adduced are spe-  
 cific: and the time of this degeneracy par-  
 ticularly marked. “It is well known,” said  
 Lord Bathurst, “that the farmers have  
 been hitherto distinguished by the virtues  
 of frugality, temperance, and industry;  
 that

A. D.  
 1727—

A. D. 1727— that they laboured hard, and spent little; and were therefore justly considered as an innocent and useful part of the community, whose employment and parsimony preserved them, in a great measure, from the general infection of vice which spread its influence among the traders and men of estates. But even this abstemious class of men have of late relaxed in their frugality, and suffered themselves to be tempted by this infatuating liquor; nor is any thing now more common than to find it in those houses in which ale, a few years ago, was the highest pitch of luxury to which they aspired; and to see those hours wasted in intoxicating entertainments, which were dedicated formerly to the care of their farms, and the improvement of their fortunes \*†.” “The amazing

\* Johnson's Debates.

† The continuance of the century has not only removed from this description of men this fatal propensity, but has added a new luxury, by the accidental, though perhaps, not general, use of wine. I speak not of

amazing increase (said Lord Carteret) of the consumption of spirits for the last <sup>A. D.</sup> *ten* <sup>1727—</sup> years, is a proof too evident of the prevalence of this destructive species of drunkenness. It is well known that these liquors have *not been long in use among the common people.*” It was discovered that spirituous liquors could be distilled from grain and other products of our own soil; instead therefore of importing them from abroad at an expence too great for the lower ranks of men, the discovery gave rise to the *new trade* of distilling. Thus a new temptation was introduced into this country, and tended, among other causes, to the deterioration

of the lower order of farmers, for their prosperity has not kept pace with the times, but of those opulent occupiers of large farms, or cultivators of their own estates, formerly known by the name of Yeomen. In the early part of the century, home-brewed ale was the common beverage both of the Gentleman and the Husbandman, the latter never using wine, and the former only to cheer the festivity of Christmas.

of

A. D. of public morals\*. These circumstances  
 1727—  
 being ascertained, the representation of the  
 historian will appear more credible, that at  
 this time the retailers of this pernicious  
 liquor “provided cellars and places strewed  
 with straw, to which they conveyed those  
 wretches who were overwhelmed with in-  
 toxication †.” In these dismal caverns they  
 lay until they recovered some use of their  
 faculties, and then they had recourse to  
 the same mischievous potion; thus con-  
 suming their health, and ruining their fa-  
 milies in hideous receptacles of the most  
 filthy vice, resounding with riot, execra-  
 tion, and blasphemy.”

About this time the venerable Dr. Ste-  
 phen Hales, of Teddington, published the se-

\* In the year 1733 the number of gallons distilled  
 was 3,900,000, which in 1735 was increased to  
 5,300,000. Every year added another million of gal-  
 lons to the quantity distilled, till in the year 1742  
 they arose to 7,100,000, and in the following year  
 12,000,000 gallons were consumed.

† Smollet.

cond

cond edition of a Tract, intitl'd "Distilled A. D.  
 spirituôus liquors the bane of the nation," 1727—  
 8vo. A new edition some time afterwards  
 appeared with additions, and an appendix ;  
 which was call'd "Friendly Admonition to  
 the Drinkers of Gin, Brandy, and other Spi-  
 rituous Liquors, which are so destructive to  
 the industry, morals, health, and lives of  
 the people." In a posthumous treatise by  
 the same Author, speaking of distilled spi-  
 rituous liquors, he says, "How much there-  
 fore does it behove all, who have any con-  
 cern for the honour and dignity of their  
 own *kindred* species, any indignation at its  
 being thus debas'd and degrad'd, any  
 bowels of pity for the vast multitudes—  
 not less perhaps than A MILLION ! that are  
 yearly destroy'd all over the world, by the  
*moral*, as well as *natural*, and therefore the  
*worst* of all evils that ever befel unhappy  
 man : to use their utmost endeavours to  
 deliver mankind from THE PEST \*!"

Dreadful

\* The following paragraph from a public News-  
 paper

A. D. 1727— Dreadful as these excesses were, dissipation and want of principle were not confined to the lower orders of the people. During the Session of 1731, *five* members of parliament were expelled the house for the most sordid acts of knavery: a sure sign, adds the same historian, of national degeneracy and dishonour.—Notwithstanding the unhappy circumstances of recent times,

paper [Nov. 1801.], founded, I have no doubt, on fact, will confirm the above statement of the melancholy destruction of the human race by the intemperate use of spiritibus liquors. “The Lords Provosts, Magistrates, and Councils, of Edinburgh and Glasgow, have sent memorials to the Lords of the treasury, praying, that the prohibition against distilling from corn and malt may be continued. The high price of spirits has almost weaned thousands of the labouring class, from the vile and pernicious habit of drinking them; and it is a fact that cannot be disputed, that, owing to this circumstance, the health of the people has been improved, in spite of the scanty supply of provisions with which they were obliged to be satisfied.”—Can the augmentation of the revenue by *these means*, be any consideration when weighed in this balance?

with

with virtuous exultation we look back upon these days of relaxation; and though we do not *commend ourselves*, yet may we be allowed to assume praise to the public morals of our nation, when delinquents of this distinguished rank are almost, if not altogether, unknown.

To the popular publications of the day must we look for the delineation of popular manners. The *hasty pamphlet*; or the *fugitive essay*, will frequently afford important materials for the historian. Indeed at the distance of only half a century, or a very little more, our father's or our own recollection will amount in many cases to actual demonstration. These sources will confirm the observations I have extracted concerning the deterioration of public morals at this period. We have seen, that both the higher and lower ranks were involved in the same charges. Two authors of no common celebrity will acquaint us, that an increased luxury and a fatal dissipation were equally prevalent in the middle order of society.

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The

A. D. 1727—  
 The author of the Rambler, (no unworthy successor of Addison and Steele, whose valuable moral essays appeared about the middle of the century,) among the few papers which he owed to his friends, introduces one written by an author “from whom,” he says, “the age has received greater favours, who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue.” This author was Richardson; who by his excellent performances of *Clarissa*, *Sir Charles Grandison*, &c. endeavoured to correct the vitiated taste, as well as the vitiated morals, of the times. The observation of Richardson in this paper \* forms an important link in the chain which connects the days of Addison with our own. “When the *SPECTATOR*,” he says, “was first published in single papers, it gave me so much pleasure, that it is one of the favourite amusements of my age to recollect it; and when I re-

\* Rambler, No. 97.

flect on *the foibles* of those times, as described in that useful work, and compare them with *the vices* now reigning among us, I cannot but wish that you would oftener take cognizance of the manners of the better half of the human species, that if your precepts and observations be carried down to posterity, the SPECTATORS may shew to the rising generation, what were the fashionable follies of their grandmothers, the RAMBLER of their mothers, and that from both they may draw instruction and warning." "The churches," he adds, "were almost the only places where single women were to be seen by strangers. Men went thither expecting to see them, and perhaps too much for that purpose only. But some good often resulted, however improper might be the motives. Both sexes were in the way of their duty. The man must be abandoned indeed who loves not goodness in another." These observations we shall find corresponding with those in this essay which describe public manners at the opening of

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the

A. D.  
1727—

A. D. 1727— the century. The change, no doubt, was striking to the moralist, even more so than to us, whose eyes, I fear, witness no diminished ardour for dissipation. “The ladies are engrossed by places of open resort and general entertainment, which fill ever quarter of the metropolis.” He describes the different places of amusement and dissipation which the general dissoluteness of manners had contributed to make very frequent; routs, drums, concerts, balls, &c. for the evening, *and even for all night*. And in the summer there were assemblies in every country-town. “By the natural infection of example,” he says, “the lowest people have places of six-penny resort, and gaming-tables for pence. Thus servants are now induced, by fraud and dishonesty, to support extravagance and supply their losses.”

About this period “the immorality of the drama had increased, and the most indecent, seditious, and blasphemous pieces were performed, and resorted to with incredible eagerness.

eagerness. Among those who principally supported this low ribaldry was the celebrated Henry Fielding, who, in one of his pieces, called *Pasquin*, ridiculed in the grossest terms, the three professions of Divinity, Law, and Physic, and gave general offence to persons of morality\*." The legislature could not be indifferent spectators of the abuse of so rational an entertainment, and therefore [1735] passed a bill to re-instate the Lord Chamberlain, in his authority of censor of the stage, and check the profaneness, blasphemy, and sedition which thus openly corrupted the public ear. The only speech upon record, in opposition, was delivered by the Earl of Chesterfield. "The fatal evils," says Coxe, "which were predicted as the certain consequences of this bill, perpetual slavery, and the introduction of absolute authority, have not followed; the good effects, which were expected from it, have been confirmed by never-failing

A. D.  
1727—  


\* Coxe's *Life of Walpole*, vol. ii. p. 441.

A. D. 1727— experience. While it suppressed the licentiousness, it has not destroyed the spirit, of the drama: wit has not appeared less lovely and attracting in promoting virtue and curbing vice with decency, than in recommending treason and obscenity; nor are the shafts of ridicule rendered useless, because while they have the power to do good, they are divested of the power to do mischief\*.”

I sincerely wish that this observation, though certainly just as to many dramatic pieces which appeared soon after the play-house bill began to take effect, were equally so at present. The spirit of the drama *has* evaporated, and left behind it dregs of the most pernicious tendency. The objections of Collier, which reformed the stage at one period, the act of parliament, which checked its licentiousness at another, loudly demand at this moment the assistance of our civil and religious governors, to controul

\* Coxe's Life of Walpole, vol. ii. p. 441.

the growing immorality and infidelity of <sup>A. D.</sup> modern dramatic representations. If the <sup>1727—</sup> state judge it proper to permit, and, indeed, to countenance, such places of public amusement, it ought to watch over them with a jealous eye; it ought to regulate with severity the language and the morals, which are presented with every fascinating charm, to the notice of ingenuous youth. I add no more on the licentiousness of the times, but sincerely lament that, in many respects, the observation of moral writers in the middle of the century may be considered as a prophecy of public manners at its end.

*Ætas parentum, pejor avis tulit*

*Nos nequiores.—*

HOR.

When we have seriously considered this picture of general depravity, do we not feel ourselves impressed with an awful sense of divine indignation? And do not these words of a retributive Providence make us tremble for an approaching punishment? “ Shall I

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not

A. D. 1727— not visit for these things, saith the Lord? and shall not my soul be avenged of such a nation as this?" Various are the ways by which retribution is inflicted; unknown, and frequently unexpected, are the means used; sudden and unperceived does it make its approach. War, pestilence, and famine are not the sole indications of the displeasure of God. A thoughtless and a dissipated people are in the condition of those to whom God *sends a delusion that they should believe a lye.* How wonderfully was this the case at this period of our public history? A great defection in the cause of religion, and an uncommon impulse of every vicious propensity, prepared the way for a disbelief of those everlasting truths, which, though the sceptic may despise, no effort of man or devils can disprove. Thus does infidelity become its own punishment, inasmuch as it removes the blessings of public virtue, by encouraging the introduction of those vile principles which corrode that heart, originally created for the reception of happiness.

Alas!

Alas ! my brethren, why will you wrest from A. D.  
*us*, why will you deprive *yourselves* of that 1727—  
 blessed hope of everlasting life, which is the  
 cordial drop of our existence? Though you  
 should possess so much of the character of  
 philosophers, in the modern acceptation of  
 the word, as to except annihilation without  
 trembling, why will you cut away from the  
 hand of the devout christian, the *apples of*  
*gold* which a greater than Solomon offers to  
 your view? If you feel your heart cold to-  
 wards this, as *you* would call him, *imaginary*  
*benefactor* of mankind, do not interfere with  
 your neighbour's faith, which can do *you* no  
 injury, but if you take it from him, you  
 make *him poor indeed*.

It would be difficult to arrange the several publications which at this period made their appearance, on the subject of infidelity. I would not wish myself, neither would I persuade others, to toil through the many crude discourses of such writers, which have long since descended to the regions of oblivion. But as there are many  
 shades

A. D. 1727— shades of infidelity, some of which may be thought pleasing by a vitiated taste, I would gladly recommend to the modern students of those dreadful doctrines, the excellent answers which appeared, almost in the same instant, to counteract their baneful consequences. But, alas! how may this be expected? Who is it that desires to overthrow the bulwarks of christianity, but he who does not chuse to place himself under her direction?

In order to understand by what steps these dangerous opinions had arisen to the height which they occupied at the beginning of this reign, an author of this period [1733] informs us of its progress, and, for the credit of the English name, he tells us, that “Infidelity is not properly the *natural* product of our country, but an *exotic* weed, which, (however it may thrive beyond the Alps) had no fixed rooting in this cold climate, till the heat of our *civil distractions* gave room for the LEVIATHAN to bring it in, and, in process of time, for the ORACLES

of REASON to make it grow\*." This para-  
 graph suggests an argument of caution. A. D.  
1727—  
 Civil discord is the parent even of religious  
 strife. When violence of opinion agitates  
 the breast, it wishes to separate itself as far  
 as possible from the object of its enmity.  
 Not content, (as was the case in the last  
 century,) with overthrowing the legitimate  
 government of a nation, it proceeds to a  
 total alteration of the mode of worship,—  
 “ come out from among them,” it says,  
 “ and be ye separate,”—and, if that be not  
 sufficient, civil discord goes one step fur-  
 ther; she sets up her *Leviathan* or her *Oracles*  
*of Reason*, and tramples underfoot all the  
 blessings of revelation. From these two  
 fountains or repositories, the same author  
 acquaints us, the writers which followed in  
 this pernicious track, drew their arguments  
 and materials.

About the beginning of the century, a  
 club, as it was supposed, or combination of

\* Stackhouse's Defence of Religion. Pref.

men,

A. D. 1727— men, published a work under the title of “The Rights of the Christian Church asserted,” under the pretence of opposing the encroachments of popery, which was then the popular topic, and of course found an easy passage to the prejudices of the unwary protestant, in which they laboured at once to set aside all christian ordinances, and the very being of a christian ministry, and a christian church\*.” “A Discourse of Free-thinking,” from the same quarter, pretending to correct abuses in the doctrines of the church, and calumniating her ministers, not long after made its appearance in the world. The usual arts of insinuation were employed on both these occasions. The one was adapted to affect the *serious*, the other, the more *light* and *thoughtless* part of mankind. But these were no more than the first essays of infidelity, and weak attacks upon what, in comparison, we may call the *outworks* of

\* See Bishop Gibson's first Pastoral Letter.

christianity. For, though its ministers were vilified, and its mysteries ridiculed, yet the *great proofs* of its divine truth and authority remained as yet untouched; till in the year 1724, there was published “A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion.” As Collins had endeavoured in this work, under colour of great zeal for the Jewish dispensation, and the literal meaning of the scripture, to destroy the evidence of prophecy: so Woolston, in 1727, made an attack upon our Saviour’s miracles, and by pretending to raise the actions and miracles of Jesus Christ to a more exalted and spiritual meaning, has laboured to take away the reality of them, and thus deprive us of one of the principal evidences of christianity. The external evidences of our faith being thus removed, it remained only for infidels to remove also its *internal* evidence. This Tindal attempted, in a book entitled “Christianity as old as the Creation; or, The Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature:”

A. D.

1727—

A. D. 1727— Nature :” in which he represents the power of reason as a *perfect guide* in matters of religion, and exalts natural religion in opposition to revealed, with no other view than to get rid of the restraints of the latter, and to make way for the unbounded indulgence of corrupt appetites, and vicious inclinations\*.

These were the writers who pretended to release men from their ancient prejudices, as they called them : these were the doctrines by which this great reformation was intended to have been produced. But what were the fatal consequences? In removing the motives of religion, they took away the restraints of virtue. Vice became so predominant, that the venerable Prelate who at that time presided over the metropolis of the kingdom, thought the checking and suppressing of these pernicious principles should be considered as a *national concern*. In the first of his three admirable Pastoral

\* Gibson and Stackhouse.

Letters written in answer to the free-thinkers A. D.  
of those times, [published in 1729, 1730, 1727—  
and 1731] he bears witness to the general depravity of the nation. I quote his words as corroborating the sentiments I have before advanced upon this subject. “ They who live in these great cities (says the good Bishop,) or have had frequent recourse to them, and have any concern for religion, must have observed, to their great grief, that prophaneness and impiety are grown bold and open; that a new sort of vice of a very horrible nature, and almost unknown before in these parts of the world, was springing up and gaining ground among us, if it had not been checked by the seasonable care of the civil administration; that in some late writings, *public stews* have been openly vindicated, and *public vices* recommended to the protection of the government, as public benefits\*; and that great pains have been taken to make men easy in their vices, and

\* Mandeville's Fable of the Bees.

A. D. 1727— to deliver them from the restraints of conscience, by undermining all religion, and promoting atheism and infidelity.”

It is not without an inexpressible anguish of mind that we peruse such descriptions of the depravity of the times, that we see vices, so detestable in their nature, so dreadful in their consequences, brought forward, as it were, on the waves of a tempestuous ocean, and placed before our eyes in all their native deformity. At the same time the religious contemplatist will console himself with reflecting, that many a pious disciple of his Saviour was secretly devoting himself to the service of religion, that he was preparing himself in private to contend openly for the faith. This age, so abundant in pernicious fruits, was abundant also in beneficial antidotes. It is impossible to enumerate the faithful band who now stood forward in the gap. Every rank and order of men united in this sacred cause. It may be expected, that those who serve at the Altar should, on an emergency, *bring forth*  
*their*

*their strong reasons*, (and they are faithless stewards of the mysteries of God, if they do not :) but the church, at this, as well as other periods, hath supplied champions of another sort, who held no interest in the contest, but that common interest, which renders the revelation of the gospel the great and universal concern of *all mankind*.

For this reason, upon this occasion we meet with the names of sectarists of no common celebrity, mixed with those of prelates and pious ministers of the church of England. May this always be the case! may we consider the general cause of religion as superior to any particular profession of it. It will always happen, that the various understandings of men will produce various modes of thinking and acting, though surely not all of equal excellence, purity or authority. When all the serious, therefore, of every denomination of christians concur in one great work, in rescuing the venerable form of religion from the hands of unbelievers, let us *bless the end*, however we may

I

differ

A. D.  
1727—

A. D. 1727— differ in the means. The names of BUTLER, of CHANDLER, of SHERLOCK, and of GIBSON, were eminently distinguished: they were of themselves an host, and maintained with truth and dignity the controversies of the day. Many private clergymen of our church, not only from the seats of learning, but from their rural retreats, stepped forth to combat the common enemy. Among the dissenting clergy, many of the same description appeared. Leland's "View of the Deistical Writers," stands high in the estimation of the believing christian; and if Lardner's faith in Christ had been as sound as his evidences of christianity, we might have united the names of these two eminent non-conforming divines in equal praises with that of the truly amiable and pious Doddridge.

Numerous answers, as it might be supposed, of different value and estimation, were made to the writings of the deists. After Tindal's book appeared, it met with many opponents. "A Defence of the Religion

ligion of Nature and the Christian Religion against the defective account of the one, and the exceptions of the other, in a book entitled Christianity as old as the Creation, by Simon Browne," was published in 1732, by Mr. Harris, who says in the preface, " Mr. Forster first appeared upon this occasion, and has argued with great beauty and strength. Mr. Browne has taken a greater compass, and reduced the whole book to the natural order of things, and made his work a proper system of the whole controversy with the deists\*."

A. D.  
1727—  


Among other writers, Tindal's book was replied to by Dr. Daniel Waterland, who had been celebrated by his tracts and discourses on the Trinity, in a controversy with Dr. Samuel Clarke, during the late reign. He now published a " Vindication of Scripture, &c." but this not meet-

\* The reader of this controversy should be referred to Dr. Wall's Caveat against Infidelity, 1729—Campbell proving the Apostles no Enthusiasts—Broughton and Dr. T. Burnett against Tindal—Dr. Conybeare's Defence of revealed Religion, &c.

A. D. 1727—  
 ing with the approbation of Dr. Conyers Middleton, the orthodoxy of whose faith was justly suspected; he answered it in a letter, containing some remarks upon it, together with a sketch of *another answer* to Tindal's book. This brought into the field a defender of Waterland, Dr. Pearce, late Bishop of Rochester, who treated Middleton as an infidel, or enemy to christianity in disguise, who under the pretext of defending it in a better manner, meant all the while to subvert it\*. In every department of life, what enemy is so dangerous as a pretended friend?

At this period the "Tryal of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus," by Dr. Sherlock, was universally read and admired. A cloud of answerers, like an army of locusts, immediately appeared to destroy the sweet herb, and lay waste the verdant pastures of the christian faith. So well prepared were the minds of men at this time

\* Life of Middleton. Biog. Dict.

for such destructive principles, that *three* A. D.  
*editions* of a deistical answer, by Peter Annet, 1727—  
 were soon disposed of, besides two other  
 pamphlets written by him, viz. “ The Re-  
 surrection re-considered,” and “ The Re-  
 surrection Defenders stripped of all Pre-  
 tences.” It may be proper to remark, that  
 Peter Annet was one of the few infidels in this  
 century who, as such, have felt the force of  
 the secular arm. After a long life spent in  
 the same pursuits, he was sentenced by the  
 court of King’s Bench [Nov. 29, 1762] to  
 imprisonment and the pillory ; and has been  
 considered by his associates as a martyr to  
 the cause which he espoused. That the  
 principles, and not the man, were the chief  
 object of punishment, we are told, that  
 Archbishop Secker, during Annet’s imprison-  
 ment in Newgate, sent to make enquiry into  
 his pecuniary affairs, and offered considera-  
 ble assistance, which Annet, far advanced in  
 years, did not live to enjoy\*. So tolerant

\* Reid, on the Rise and Dissolution of the *infidel*  
 Societies.

A. D. was the church, and so amiable was the  
 1727— Primate of all England, that we are in-  
 formed by the present Bishop of London, in  
 his Review of the Life of Archbishop Secker,  
 that “whenever any publications came to his  
 knowledge that were manifestly calculated  
 to corrupt good morals, or subvert the founda-  
 tions of christianity, he did his utmost  
 to stop the circulation of them: yet the  
 wretched authors themselves, he was so far  
 from wishing to treat with any undue ri-  
 gour, that he has more than once extended  
 his bounty to them in distress.”

It is with true comfort and consolation of  
 heart, that I am enabled at this period to  
 introduce the names of two strenuous and  
 successful defenders of the faith of Christ,  
 whose arguments will be considered as the  
 more powerful, in consequence of having  
 wrought the fullest conviction in their own  
 breasts. West and Lyttelton, laymen, and  
 one of them not more illustrious by his no-  
 bility than by his talents and integrity, to  
 use a modern phrase, deserved well of their  
 6 country.

country. “The Tryal of the Witnesses” <sup>A. D.</sup> had been attacked in a publication, entitled <sup>1727—</sup> “The Resurrection of Jesus considered in Answer to the Tryal of the Witnesses, by a moral Philosopher,” (the *philosopher*, I presume, mentioned a little above) which endeavoured to overturn the testimony of the Evangelists, by attempting to shew, that they contradicted each other in the account they have given of this fact. The replies to this pamphlet not meeting with the entire approbation of Mr. West, in 1747 he published his “Observations on the History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ\*,” a work replete with conviction, and the more estimable as proceeding from the pen of one, to whom, in Dr. Johnson’s language, “the grave might be without its terrors.” His apology for making

\* Suffer me to recommend as a companion to this excellent book, “A Discourse on the Evangelical History, from the Interment to the Ascension of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” by the late Rev. Thomas Townson, D. D. Oxford, 1793.

A. D. 1727— his observations public, includes an argument of weight, when addressed to unbelievers. “How absolutely groundless,” he says, “the opinions [of infidels] are, will easily appear to any one who will take the pains to examine fairly and impartially the *proofs* and *doctrines* of the christian religion; *proofs* established upon *facts*, the surest foundations of evidence; and *doctrines* derived by *inspiration*, from the great author of reason and Father of *all* mankind. Whoever hath either neglected, or doth refuse to make this examination, can have no right to pass his judgment upon christianity, and should methinks, for the same reason, be somewhat cautious of censuring those, who acknowledge it to be of divine institution; especially as he will find in the list of christians, the great and venerable names of BACON, MILTON, BOYLE, LOCKE and NEWTON\* ; names to whose authority every thing

\* To this list many illustrious laymen of our own age might be added—Dr. Sam. Johnson, Jacob Bryant, Esq.

thing should submit but truth, to whom they themselves thought it not beneath their superior talents to submit, though she required them to *believe in Christ.*"

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1727—

Mr. West, as well as his friend lord Lyttelton, as I have intimated, had "listened to the blandishments of infidelity." Happily for both, they were soon made sensible of their error. It was from West's studies and conversation, that Lyttelton received that conviction which produced his celebrated dissertation. Let this intance of success, add new melodies to the voice of friendship: let us consider ourselves as performing the highest offices of love, when we use the precious moments of domestic affection or amicable converse, in pouring into the faithful breast of a husband or a wife, a beloved child, or a dear friend, those truths which add new charms even to terrestrial enjoyments, by extending their

Esq. Wm. Wilberforce, Esq. Mr. Cowper the Poet,  
&c.

influence

A. D. influence far beyond the narrow span of  
 1727— human existence.

Lord Lyttelton, says his excellent biographer, had, in the pride of juvenile confidence, with the help of corrupt conversation, entertained doubts of the truth of christianity: but he thought the time now come when it was no longer fit to doubt or believe by chance, and applied himself seriously to the great question. His studies being honest ended in conviction. He found that religion was true, and what he had learned he endeavoured to teach [1747] by “Observations upon the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, in a Letter to Gilbert West, ‘esq. ;” a treatise to which infidelity has never been able to fabricate a specious answer. I cannot dismiss this amiable character, without relating from the same eloquent author, a part of his last interesting and affecting conversation with his physician. “ Doctor,” said he, “ you shall be my confessor: when I first “ set out in the world, I had friends who “ endeavoured

“ endeavoured to shake my belief in the  
 “ christian religion. I saw difficulties which  
 “ staggered ; but I kept my mind open to  
 “ conviction. The evidences and doctrines  
 “ of christianity, studied with attention,  
 “ made me a most firm and persuaded be-  
 “ liever of the christian religion. I have  
 “ made it the rule of my life, and it is the  
 “ ground of my future hopes.”

A. D.

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When we have seriously and attentively  
 perused this narrative, we may say to the  
 unbeliever, as Addison on his death-bed  
 said to his son-in-law, the young Earl of  
 Warwick—“ See ! how a christian can die.”

A few years before this period [1738] a  
 celebrated work was published, the tenden-  
 cy of which was to support the authority  
 of revelation in opposition to the prevail-  
 ing system of unbelievers. The different  
 volumes of this work appeared at intervals  
 of several years, and, as they were deli-  
 vered to the public, occasioned warm and  
 frequent discussions. This was Dr. Warbur-  
 ton's “ Divine Legation of Moses demon-  
 strated

A. D. 1727—strated on the Principles of a religious Deist, from the Omission of the Doctrine of a future State of Rewards and Punishments in the Jewish Dispensation." Antagonists rose up in abundance, for there will always be a diversity of opinions even in the defence of sacred truths. The author, however, "defended himself," says his biographer, "in a manner, which if it did not prove him to be possessed of much humility or diffidence, at least demonstrated that he knew how to wield the weapon of controversy with the hand of a master\*." The history of theology at this period of the century, and for several succeeding years, will often have recourse to the name of Warburton. His understanding was too strong to be without importance, and the natural exertion of his mind too powerful to be neglected. "He was a man," says Dr. Johnson, in his life of Pope, "of vigorous faculties, a mind fervid and vehement, sup-

\* Biograph. Dictionary.

plied by incessant and unlimited enquiry, with wonderful extent and variety of knowledge, which yet had not oppressed his imagination, nor clouded his perspicacity. To every work he brought a memory full fraught, together with a fancy fertile of combinations, and at once exerted the powers of the scholar, the reasoner, and the wit." A. D.  
1727—

In 1748, Dr. Warburton's pen was well employed in making a reply to Dr. Middleton's "Free Enquiry into the miraculous Powers which are supposed to have subsisted in the Christian Church from the earliest Ages, through several successive Centuries."

This work was the foundation of long discussions. It justly alarmed every friend of religious revelation, since the argument could not be maintained without injuring, if not destroying, the long established reputation of the early fathers of the church. It is very inimical to the interests of truth, that at the time when open enemies are directing all their artillery against ancient bulwarks, a pretended friend, a child, as  
we

A. D. we may say, should arise out of her own  
 1727—bosom, and set up a weak defence for the  
 purpose of betraying the cause which it was  
 his duty to support. In opposition to these  
 sentiments of Dr. Middleton, Dodwell and  
 Church distinguished themselves with much  
 zeal and ability. To the latter, upon this  
 occasion, the Bishop of London informs us,  
 the amiable and learned Archbishop SECKER  
 gave considerable assistance.

These theological controversies continued  
 for some time to agitate the public mind.  
 Many, I doubt not, received from the in-  
 genious answers the information and con-  
 viction which they sought: but it is always  
 to be lamented that cause should be given  
 for such disputations, or when it is given,  
 that the important subject should not be  
 discussed with calmness and candour. Too  
 ready are the disaffected either in church or  
 state, to take improper advantages of po-  
 litical or religious dissensions. It is true,  
 in more senses than one—"delirant reges,  
 plectuntur Achivi." How often might we  
 observe

observe with an ingenuous controversialist of the era which I am now considering—  
 “ I wrote,” says he, “ *such and such works*—these were favourably received by the public ; yet when the heat of controversy was over, I *could not look into them myself without disgust and pain.* The spleen of Middleton, and the petulancy of Warburton, (as he chose to call it) who were then the writers in vogue, had too much infected me, as they had other young scribblers\*.”

A. D.  
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But the danger to which christianity was exposed, was much heightened by the publication of the works of Hume, a subtile and a penetrating philosopher, who was watching the moment to introduce with most effect, the pernicious poison of his principles. We need go no farther than the narrative which he entitles “ *My own Life,*” to behold the malicious satisfaction

\* Dr. Heathcote’s Life written by himself, in Nichols’s History of Leicestershire.

Brit. Critic. Nov. 1800.

which

A. D. 1727— which he takes in his supposed success. I would to God that I could not add, that among *philosophers* of his own rank and character, not merely of the thoughtless, but of the *thoughtful* part of mankind, too many had not tasted of the *insane root*, which produces in the moral as well as religious system, the bitterness even of death itself. His first publication which appeared in 1738, viz. “A Treatise of Human Nature,” he says, “*fell dead-born from the press*, without reaching such distinction as even to excite a murmur *among the zealots*.” This circumstance he does not relate out of modesty, but to contrast it with the rapid and large circulation of his subsequent publications, and to shew the gradual impression which they made upon the world. In 1742, the first part of his Essays was more favourably received. Soon after he re-cast his treatise, which now appeared as an “Enquiry concerning Human Understanding,” but with no better fortune than before; for, as he observes, he had  
the

the mortification to find all England in a ferment on account of Dr. Middleton's "Free Enquiry," while his performance was entirely overlooked and neglected: still, however, he persevered, and by new provocations obtained the opposition he desired. "Answers," he says, "by reverends and right reverends came out two and three in a year, and I found, by Dr. Warburton's railing, that the books were beginning to be esteemed in good company." It is not likely, that he, who would destroy the beautiful fabric of morals, founded upon the pure doctrines of religion, who would cast a shade, a deadly shade, over that prospect which presents to our eyes objects full of glory and full of comfort, by introducing an universal scepticism, should be suffered to enjoy his laurels with impunity. Many writers appeared to controvert his positions, but none more happily than Dr. Beattie in his "Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism." In this

A. D.  
1727—  
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admirable

A. D. 1727— admirable work a laudable zeal for the best interests of man, is delivered in language which the purest simplicity of youth may understand.

It became fashionable, about this period, to revive the philosophy of Shaftesbury, and his works, in polite circles, were universally read and admired; a woeful proof of the turn of mind which then generally prevailed. His principles, however, were discussed and well refuted in Dr. Brown's elegant "Essay on the Characteristics."

In 1754 the posthumous works of Bolingbroke, another nobleman of equal celebrity as an infidel and a sceptic, were published by Mallet. "The wild and pernicious ravings, under the name of philosophy, which were thus ushered into the world, gave great offence to well-principled men;" and gave occasion to Dr. Johnson to remark, as his biographer observes, that the author thus evinced both his want of principle and his cowardice; his want of principle, in charging a blunderbuss against religion

ligion and morality ; and cowardice, because <sup>A. D.</sup> he had not resolution to fire it off himself, <sup>1727—</sup> but left it to another to draw the trigger after his death \*. The contents, however, of this weapon were not so destructive as their author intended, or the public expected.

“ Bolingbroke possessed great animation of countenance, elegance of manners, and dignity of deportment. He was fascinating in conversation, of commanding eloquence, abounding in wit and fancy, master of polite learning, which he knew how to draw forth on all occasions. In his private character he was without morals, and without principles, not only not concealing, but rather proud of his profligacy †.”

“ The known abilities and infidelity of this nobleman had created apprehensions in the minds of many persons, of the pernicious effects of his doctrines ; and nothing

\* Boswell's Life of Johnson, Vol. 1. p. 240.

† Coxe's Life of Sir Robert Walpole.

A. D. 1727— but the appearance of his whole force could have convinced his friends how little there was to be dreaded from arguments against religion so weakly supported\*.” This observation may be applied without distinction to almost every writer on the side of infidelity. Why then, it may be said, are we so ready to repel their attacks?—Because the careless and unthinking are so liable to fall into their snares: they flatter the passions; they present false colours to the imagination; they seduce, and finally destroy, the firm faculties of the mind. These circumstances call forth the pens of the learned, and the intreaties of the pious. Every man, according to his ability, puts on the armour which best suits his condition, and stands forward as the defender of his dearest rights. At this period were not wanting the champions of truth. Dr. Warburton’s course of sermons, preached at Lincoln’s Inn the year before, intituled,

\* Biog. Dict. Art. Warburton.

“The Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion occasionally opened and explained,” <sup>A. D.</sup> 1727—  
 were published to counteract the effect of Bolingbroke’s philosophy, which took away from the Supreme Being every moral attribute, and left only that which considers him as the great first cause, and original maker of all things. Among many other annotators on the works of Bolingbroke, Archbishop Secker again lent his assistance to Dr. Church\*.

That I might not interrupt the narrative of publications on the subject of infidelity during this period, I have advanced beyond several circumstances which must be considered in the subsequent part of this essay. Indeed from the nature of things, several events must of consequence be collateral, and require separate discussion. An account of the religious societies which sprang up about this time, some of them evidently with an intention of opposing the pernicious

\* Bishop Porteus’s Life of Archbishop Secker.

A. D. 1727— cious tenets which then universally prevailed, will follow with greater propriety the foregoing observations. However erroneous some of the methods adopted for this purpose may have been, or however inadequate in some instances to the great cause which they intended to support, certainly their pious endeavours are entitled to commendation.

The effects of infidelity are but too visible in the world. An unbeliever in the sacred truths of christianity deservedly exposes himself to reproof, both in a moral and a religious light. He who depends only on the rectitude of nature as a principle of action, depends upon a broken reed. This truth would become still more obvious, if we were to scrutinize the lives and conduct of the unbelieving fraternity. But it is not for erring man to judge his brother. To his own master every man standeth or falleth. While we argue in favour of christianity, let us not forget that we are christians. *By their fruits ye shall know them—*

is true of every class of opinions, of every profession of religion. The church of England is amongst the first in the benevolence of her prayers: let us adopt her words, and let the fount of true devotion enrich every faithful heart with the purity of her streams—  
 “ Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks; and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ, our Lord\*.”

\* Collect for Good Friday.

END OF PART III. SECT. I.

## PART III.

## SECTION II.

*Containing Reflections on Part of the Reign  
of George II.*

A. D. 1727, &c.

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A. D. 1727—  
**O**F all the miseries to which mankind are subject, the greatest, and most fatal, undoubtedly is, to be without a true sense of religion; the next, to be unsettled in the profession of it. The case of the former resembles that of him who is sinking in the midst of many waters, without one friendly hand to rescue him from destruction: the case of the latter, is like that of him who, in the same situation, has a plank indeed thrown to him for his assistance, but finds the security too slender, and the billows too high, to afford him any reasonable prospect  
of

of deliverance. It becomes a duty then, <sup>A. D.</sup> which cannot be too highly valued, early <sup>1727—</sup> and sincerely to *search the scriptures*, that we may be professors of religion, not through custom or education, but with full confidence in its truth, and full hope of our calling. “ Prove all things : hold fast that which is good \*.”—“ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith ; prove your own selves †.” The apostle, we are sure, does not urge this examination to make all men polemics, in the worldly acceptation of the word, but to induce them to *try the spirits whether they be of God*, to be satisfied of those truths, without which they cannot be saved. It is not an indifferent thing to any man, whether he take his religion upon the trust of others, or have no profession of religion at all. Truth will always be the same, whether he believe it or not. But if, through negligence or wilful ignorance, he despises that important truth, or does not

† 1 Thess. v. 21.

† 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

A. D. 1727— use every endeavour to attain it, the loss will be his own, and great will that loss be.

The progress of infidelity, described in the preceding part of this essay, justly alarmed the feelings of every sincere member of the Christian Church. The mine, which had been laid deep by the designing infidel, began to be visible in its effects. "The whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint\*." Lukewarmness in principle succeeded zeal in devotion; and, in such cases, it will not be expected, that he who is remiss in the execution of his work, should ever bring it to perfection. The consequence was, that false opinions spread rapidly among all ranks of men. Vice was flattered by her courteous reception in the world, and had every reason to congratulate herself on her increasing proselytes.

We have seen the stream of infidelity springing from the æra of the Great Rebel-

\* Isaiah i. 5.

lion, and diffusing its current through many succeeding years. It will be some consolation to behold another current, during the same period, bursting forth upon the world, maintaining a steady undeviating course, and fertilizing the vallies through which it flowed, with its purifying waters. Above a century ago, a society was established in London, which branched out into various parts of the country, for promoting the benefits of religion among its members, as well as for encouraging a general reformation of manners. This society continued to meet for many years, and, I believe, was not extinguished at the conclusion of the reign of George the second. It became their pious resolution, that they should “meet together once a week, and apply themselves to good discourse, and things wherein they might edify one another. And for the better regulation of their meetings, such rules and orders were prescribed, as seemed most proper to effect the end proposed. At every meeting, they turned their attention

A. D.

1727—

A. D. 1727—  
tion to the wants of the poor, which in process of time amounted to such considerable sums, that thereby many poor families were relieved, some poor people put into a way of trade suitable to their capacities, sundry prisoners set at liberty, some poor scholars furthered in their subsistence at the university, several orphans maintained, with many other good works \*." But the great object they had in view, as the source from whence these fruits of the Spirit were expected to spring, was the attainment of religious knowledge, which they well knew would be attended with suitable practice. They did not, therefore, separate themselves from the church which they found existing among them, as insufficient for the great purposes of reformation; but strengthened her interests with renewed endeavours, to make themselves, and others, more worthy of so excellent, and evangelical an establishment. They promoted public prayers

\* Woodward's Account of the Rise and Progress of the religious Societies.

in several of the churches; some of which, Dr. Woodward says, never wanted a full and affectionate congregation. They instituted Sermons and Lectures, which were greatly frequented, and by which many were confirmed, both in the profession and practice of the true principles of primitive religion. The encouragement which, at the period of their first association, was given to Popery, animated their zeal, and produced the most salutary effects. In process of time, vices of various forms, and errors of different descriptions, made their appearance, but we have reason to suppose that they were always vigorously opposed, and frequently vanquished by the members of these religious societies. It does not appear that they ever mis-used the authority which their united efforts gave them. They adopted, indeed, the zeal of Phineas in re-proving vice, prophaneness, and immorality, but they were indebted to christian principles, for their meekness and moderation.

A. D.  
1727—  


To

A. D. 1727— To these societies, during the reigns of King William, and of Queen Anne, may be attributed many excellent charitable institutions, some of which were incorporated by royal charter, viz. ‘ The Society for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts,’ and ‘ The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.’ Of the utility of these, all the world are witnesses. The institution of charity-schools, throughout the kingdom, originated from the same quarter; and the contagion of benevolence, in populous towns, rendered them almost universal. Such are the good effects of well-directed, and well-principled endeavours! If it pleases God that this nation shall be saved in the present day of her trial, it must be by such efforts as these. The progress of *divine* knowledge must supersede that which is *earthly*, and the warmth of christian principles must extirpate the maxims of a *cold philosophy*.

I may be allowed to remark, that the peculiar advantage of these societies was, that they

they pursued the great object of their atten-  
 tion, in *conjunction* with the profession of  
 the established church; an advantage more  
 worthy of observation, as some societies of  
 later institution, actuated, no doubt, by  
 pure and sincere motives, but not adhering  
 to those wholesome regulations adopted by  
 those excellent men, the first reformers,  
 have deviated, in many instances, into a  
 dangerous enthusiasm. Many of them pro-  
 fess, indeed, a belief of the doctrines de-  
 tailed in the 39 Articles of Religion, and  
 some comply with the injunction of their  
 founders, by attending, occasionally at least,  
 the services of the Church of England: but  
 the peculiarity of a *sect* has by degrees  
 taken place amongst them, and, in many  
 respects, both in doctrine and discipline,  
 they are essentially different from that church  
 with which they are nominally united.

In the century of which I write, not  
 many *new* denominations of christians have  
 appeared in England. Happy would it have  
 been for the world, in every age of chris-  
 tianity,

A. D. 1727—  
 tianity, had the followers of our blessed Saviour, in obedience to the apostolical exhortation, “endeavoured to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace\*.” But if, in this state of human existence, this should not happen to be the case: if difference of opinions should unavoidably arise, happy still would it be for them, upon such occasions, to reflect on the present imperfection of their nature. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one *in the spirit of meekness*; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted †.”

About the commencement of the reign of George II. the society of METHODISTS began to be established in this country. No society of more importance has, in this age, arisen among us, nor any, whose merits, in many respects, are more difficult to be appreciated. The prejudice which generally attends the appearance of a new sect, ren-

\* Eph. iv. 3.

† Gal. vi. 1.

ders the world at large unable, and perhaps A. D. unwilling, to judge of its true character. 1727—  
 But prejudice must be removed; the mind must be cleared of its obscurities; and then many of the difficulties attending the discussion will vanish.

In consequence of the effects which the writings of the Deists, mentioned in the last section, appear to have produced in the University of Oxford, the Vice-chancellor and Heads of Colléges, in the year 1729, issued an edict\*, to check the increasing influ-

“ \* Whereas there is too much reason to believe, that some members of the University have of late been in danger of being corrupted by ill-designing persons, who have not only entertained wicked and blasphemous notions, contrary to the truth of the christian religion; but have endeavoured to infill the same ill principles into others: and the more effectually to propagate their infidelity, have applied their poison to the unguarded inexperience of less informed minds, where they thought it might operate with better success; carefully concealing their impious tenets from those, whose riper judgement, and more wary conduct, might discover their

A. D. influence of their pernicious principles; an  
 1727— edict, which, there is every reason to sup-  
 pose, was attended with beneficial conse-  
 quences. In one respect, its consequences  
 were

false reasoning, and disappoint the intended progress of their infidelity. And whereas, therefore, it is more especially necessary at this time, to guard the youth of this place against these wicked advocates for pretended human reason against divine revelation, and to enable them the better to defend their religion, and to expose the pride and impiety of those who endeavour to undermine it; Mr. Vice-chancellor, with the consent of the Heads of Houses, and Proctors, has thought fit to recommend it, as a matter of the utmost consequence, to the several tutors of each college and hall in the University, that they discharge their duty, by a double diligence, in informing their respective pupils in their Christian duty, as also in explaining to them the articles of religion, which they profess, and are often called upon to subscribe, and in recommending to them the frequent and careful reading of the scriptures, and such other books, as may serve more effectually to promote christianity, sound principles, and orthodox faith. And, further, Mr. Vice-chancellor, with the same consent, does hereby forbid the said youth the reading of such books as may tend to the weakening of their faith, the  
 subverting

were probably of more importance than <sup>A. D.</sup> could possibly have been foreseen; as it <sup>1727—</sup> tended to associate together some pious persons, whose exertions laid the foundation of a society, which is now disseminated in various climates, and over various countries. Mr. Charles Wesley, student of Christchurch, was the first person to whom the name of *Methodist* was attributed, in consequence of the exact *method* which he observed in spending his time, regulating his conduct, and attending on the public duties of religion \*. In a short time, John Wesley, an elder

subverting of the authority of the scripture, and the introducing deism, profaneness, and irreligion in their stead." Whitehead's Life of Charles Wesley, vol. i. p. 101.

\* This is Charles Wesley's account. But John Wesley says, "The regularity of their lives, as well as studies, occasioned a young gentleman of Christchurch to say, 'Here is a new set of *Methodists* sprung up;' alluding to some ancient physicians, who were so called, because they pretended to have found out a more

A. D. 1727— elder brother of Charles, and fellow of Lincoln-college, and some other students of the university, met together for mutual edification. This religious association began to extend its influence, by visiting the prisoners in the castle, and sick persons in the city. The society was soon increased by Mr. Hervey, who never became an itinerant preacher, and Mr. George Whitefield, who was afterwards reckoned amongst the most eminent of them. Actuated by the zeal, which originally produced this connection, in 1735, the Wesleys undertook a voyage to America, for the express purpose of propagating the gospel: but no regular settlement of an established society was, at that time, formed. In 1737, the celebrated Count Zinzendorf arrived in England, to endeavour to procure an union between the church he had founded under the name of

easy method of practising physic. The founder of the sect was Thernison, who flourished thirty or forty years before the christian æra." Whitehead.

*The*

*The Moravian Brethren*, and the church of England, in Georgia. A connection soon took place between him and the Wesleys; but that which gave an important turn to Mr. John Wesley's future proceeding, arose from an acquaintance formed the following year with Peter Bohler, a young Moravian teacher. In consequence of this interview, Mr. Wesley says, "that after ten years of painful labour, his experience convinced him that his notions were not evangelical; that he had considered as causes, things that were only placed as fruits of the faith in the gospel economy; and, therefore, that he neither possessed saving faith, nor had a right notion of it." By the instructions of Bohler, his notions of faith were changed; and he, as he says, was clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith, whereby alone we are saved: it immediately occurred to his mind, "Leave off preaching; how can you preach to others, who have not faith yourself?" He consulted his friend Bohler; who said, "By no

A. D. means : preach faith *till* you have it, and  
 1727— then *because* you have it, you will preach  
 faith \*.”

Mr. Wesley's first regular society was holden in Fetter-lane, London, in conjunction with the Moravian Brethren. About two years after [1740] he separated from his associates by whom he had been instructed in the Gospel-method of attaining present salvation, in consequence of some alterations he perceived in their creed. In 1741, another division took place; and Mr. Whitefield, who had hitherto been employed in the same cause, formed a separate society, from a difference in their religious opinions also. Mr. Wesley had adopted the Arminian doctrine of the free agency of man, and was attached to the established doctrines of the Church of England. Mr. Whitefield's principles were strictly Calvinistic. The followers of each, to this day, hold the same distinction. Both

\* Whitehead.

are denominated *Methodists*, but nothing is common to the two societies, except the order of worship in their meeting-houses, which has been adopted from the Dissenting model. A. D.  
1727—

The leaders amongst the Methodists, having been refused the use of many parish churches, began to preach in the fields and streets: and ministers of the establishment not being always found, lay preachers were received into their congregations. But notwithstanding these innovations, the Wesleys, with the majority of the Societies under their direction, still continued to hold communion with the Church of England. Indeed many warm altercations among the lay-preachers arose upon this subject, but the original leaders, *to the last*, decidedly opposed a separation\*.

In

\* “1786, Aug. 26. I went to Brentford, but had little comfort here. The society is almost dwindled to nothing. What have we gained by separating from the Church here? Is not this a good lesson for others?”

L. 4

“—1787,

A. D. 1727— In 1743 general rules were circulated for the direction of the united Societies, in which the nature and design of a Methodist meeting is stated to be “a Company of men, having the form, and seeking the power of Godliness; united, in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, and that they may help each other to work out their Salvation.” From these rules it appears that each society is divided into smaller companies, called *Classes*,

“—1787, Jan. 2. I went over to Deptford; but it seemed I was got into a den of lions. Most of the leading men of the Society were mad for separating from the Church. I endeavoured to reason with them, but in vain, they had neither sense, nor good manners left: at length, after meeting the whole society, I told them, ‘If you are resolved, you may have your service in church hours, but remember, from that time you will see my face no more.’”—“1787, Nov. 4, London. The congregation was, as usual, large, and serious. But there is no increase in the society. So that we have profited nothing by having our service in church hours.”

Wesley's Last Journal. Whitehead.

which

which consist of about 12 persons each, one of whom is styled a *leader*, whose business it is to advise, reprove, comfort, and exhort, his class as he finds occasion. Besides these, there are others, who *being justified by faith, and having peace with God*, are subdivided into *bands*, who receive at every quarterly visitation a ticket marked B, which will admit the holder into these select meetings. They observe a love-feast once a month, and occasionally have a custom of praying together by night, which they call a watch-night. Annual conferences are held by the preachers in some central situation of the kingdom, when the affairs of the society are discussed, different circuits allotted to different preachers, and the principal business of the connection arranged.

It will not be expected that I should pursue every change which has occurred in the history of Methodism. The death of the founders, though it has in some measure altered the government of the society,  
and

A. D.  
1727—  
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A. D. 1727— and in some of its branches introduced innovations which *they* would not have introduced; has not tended to diminish the numbers; which, in England, at this time are supposed to amount to 100,000*.

Soon after the death of Mr. John Wesley, the governors of the society in his connection, found themselves entangled in a question, which, doubtless, they would gladly have avoided; as it tended in its consequences to separate those who adopted the practice, still further, if not altogether, from the communion of the Church of England. The decision of the leaders is made known by an address to the members of the Methodist Societies throughout England, from the conference assembled at Leeds, August 6, 1793.—“ Our venerable

* From the minutes of the conferences, Dr. Whitehead gives the increasing numbers as follows—

1767—25,911	1785—52,433
1770—29,046	1790—71,568
1775—38,150	1795—83,368
1780—43,830	

father,”

father," says the address, "who is gone to his great reward, lived and died a member and friend of the Church of England. His attachment to it was so strong and unshaken, that nothing but irresistible necessity induced him to deviate from it in any degree. In many instances God himself obliged him to do this; he powerfully called him forth into the streets and open fields, and afterwards raised to his assistance hundreds of men who never passed through the usual forms of ordination. To all these evident providences of God, Mr. Wesley submitted, though at first with great reluctance. In consequence, he found himself obliged to erect chapels which were neither consecrated according to the usual method of the Church of England, nor subject to the direction of the national episcopacy.—A dilemma, or difficulty, of a similar kind has been experienced by us since the death of Mr. Wesley. A few of our societies have repeatedly importuned us to grant them the liberty of receiving

the

A. D.

1727—

A. D. the Lord's Supper from their own preachers.
 1727— But, desirous of adhering most strictly to the plan which Mr. Wesley laid down, we again and again denied their request. The subject, however, is now come to its crisis. We find that we have no alternative, but to comply with their requisition, or entirely to lose them!—We therefore weighed this delicate subject with great seriousness and deliberation, feeling the greatest pity for those of our brethren who thought themselves aggrieved; and came finally to the following resolution:—“that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper shall not be administered by the preachers in any part of our connection, except where the whole society is unanimous for it, *and will not be contented without it*; and even in those few exempt societies, it shall be administered as far as practicable, in the evening only, and according to the form of the Church of England.”—

I make no reflection on this important resolution, which removes *those few exempt societies*

societies to the greatest possible distance from the established church; which sleights the offices of a ministry appointed by apostolic authority, and occasions an innovation in the administration of one of the most solemn ordinances of our religion. A. D.
1727—

Notwithstanding the regular arrangement with which the Society of Methodists is constituted, it does not appear that there are any common principles, or written articles of faith, to distinguish their profession. The doctrines more generally inculcated among those, not of the Calvinistic persuasion, are *Salvation by faith only, instantaneous and perceptible conversion, and assurance* of reconciliation to God, which they term the *new birth* *.

This Essay is not the proper place to discuss opinions, any further than they may be supposed to influence the public mind.

* Gregory's History of the Christian Church, Vol. ii. p. 536.

When

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When Methodism was first established, free scope appears to have been given to Enthusiasm. It is yet within the memory of many what *agitations* of mind and body accompanied the first impression of their preaching among the common people under the name of *convictions*. They felt, I will presume, as much as they expressed, but it was frequently a false impression of the mind; a mistake, in applying the feelings of the man, to an immediate and perceptible influence of the Spirit. Some of the first preachers discouraged these agitations; and time has shewn that they must have arisen sometimes from imposture, and sometimes from bodily affections, as the same cause does not now produce the same effect.

A considerable degree of judgment is necessary in carrying even the best intentions into execution. This observation might well be applied to the first promoters of these religious societies, as they appeared to make no distinctions in the ca-

pacities or attainments of the persons among whom their doctrines were first propagated.

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The minds of the poor and ignorant (among which number may be ranked even many of the possessors of this world's riches) however desirous they might be of receiving the *word preached*, required some previous instruction. For want of this, they fell frequently into dangerous errors. Even the evangelical doctrine of salvation by faith only, was often fatally understood by the untaught and unsanctified Christian*.

I trust there are not many well instructed members of the Church of England, who do not believe this article of our religion in its true sense; not, as if implying, that he who has faith needs not good works, but that he who relies on faith in Christ, rests on that foundation which alone is essential to his salvation. Not discrimi-

* I have seen a convict under sentence of transportation for very serious crimes, reading with great apparent devotion, a Treatise on the Doctrine of Grace.

nating

A. D. 1727— nating between good works, as the *result* of a pure faith, and good works considered as *merit* in man, too many, willing to get rid of the burthen of their sin as easily as they can, remember the *faith* to which the blessing is promised, but forget the *good works*, the “*holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord* *.”

The Church of England does not in this doctrine, properly explained, differ essentially from the body of the Methodists; for I do not look upon the charges against the Antinomians as applicable to that society in general, who carry the doctrine of the imputed righteousness of Christ, and salvation by faith without works, to such lengths, as to injure, if not wholly destroy, the very obligation to moral obedience. Salvation is not to be effected by our own works, or obedience, but this glorious prospect is opened to us by Christ's death and resurrection, and by the gracious condi-

* Heb. xii. 14.

tions of that covenant which is published A. D. in the Gospel; which conditions are *Faith* 1727— and *Repentance*.

With respect to the *assurance* of reconciliation to God; a good man, no doubt, may be filled with *hope*, even a *well-founded hope*, which will comfort and refresh his soul. But what shall we say, when we are told that a condemned criminal could rise from his knees, and eagerly exclaim, “I am now ready to die. I *know* Christ has taken away my sins, and there is no more condemnation for me*.” It is not for a Minister of Christ to deny the power of his salvation, neither can he be a judge of the degree of conviction which is impressed on the heart of man: but surely he should be cautious of encouraging deceitful hopes, much less deceitful *assurances* of salvation.

It is with caution that the Apostle himself admits the doctrine of assurance, and therefore he styles it, “*the assurance of hope.*”

* Whitehead’s Life of Wesley, vol. ii. p. 69.

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 Nor is the meaning of the expression altered, when he proceeds, in the same epistle, to call it *the assurance of faith*, as he considers this assurance as arising from a true, pure, and assured profession of Christianity; which he emphatically denominates *a new and living way*. “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water*.” We should be cautious in encouraging an indiscriminate assurance, independent of religious experience. “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him †.” This indeed is the test of assurance, and it is with fear and trembling, that the best of Christians approaches it. But as he is directed to have “boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of

* Heb. x. 22.

† 1 John iii. 18, 19.

Jesus,”

Jesus," let him in all humility of mind ascend into the hill of Sion, and laying aside all human righteousness, he shall *then*, and then only, "have confidence towards God." A. D.
1727—

An impression favourable to the prejudices of the common people, but by no means consistent with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, is frequently made by many leading members of these societies, by depreciating human reason as well as human learning. I am aware that our "faith cannot stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*:" I am assured, that he who exalteth reason above revelation, betrays his ignorance of heavenly things, and will never discover the sacred spring of divine knowledge. But I know also that he who degrades that noble faculty, by which an all-wise Being has distinguished man from the beasts of the field, relinquishes that superiority which nature and religion have equally bestowed

* 1 Cor. ii. 5.

A. D. upon him. If he vilifies that distinction
 1727— by mis-using it, he incurs a double penal-
 ty; as it is as inconsistent with his duty
 to exalt it to an exaggerated height, as to
 depress it below the level of human na-
 ture. Though religion is not subject to
 the judgment of men, and ought not to
 be presumptuously arraigned at the bar of
 human reason, yet Reason, which may
 justly be called a bright ray of the Divi-
 nity, teaches us to enjoy all the comforts
 of religion. A blind, unproductive faith,
 is not the faith of the Gospel, that flows
 from the purest source; it is, indeed, a
*living water springing up into everlasting
 life.*

The same argument may be employed
 with good effect, in defence of human
 learning. Many useless volumes, no doubt,
 have been delivered to the world. Many
 sleepless nights and weary days have at-
 tended those whose minds have *mused on
 many things.* But because some have
 abused the time or the talents which a good
 Providence

Providence has assigned them, are all to be involved in the censure? Or will any one pretend to say, what branch of *real knowledge* does not magnify the divine attributes of our great Creator? The investigation of hidden causes, the development of ancient history, the study of modern manners, the state of man, in any remote, or present age, have all a reference to the great book of Nature, inscribed by the pen of Nature's God. True it is, there are many objects of study not worth a wise man's search; and the time bestowed upon them will be strictly required at the day of universal account. But let us not arraign the things of which we cannot judge: let us not imagine that any man is mis-employing his time, because we perceive not that he is doing the *immediate* work of God.

But it is said, "ye shall be all taught of God." True; that is the great happiness of man. "Every good, and every perfect gift cometh from above." The Spi-

A. D. 1727— rit of God is our great Instructor, and
 “ no man can say that Jesus is the Christ,
 but by the Holy Ghost.” Let us not, how-
 ever, under this impression, reject all in-
 formation that comes not by a perceptible,
 divine impulse. The scripture warrants
 not such a conclusion. The influence of
 the Spirit is indeed like the breathings of
 the wind: but no man has a right to as-
 sume to himself an extraordinary illumi-
 nation, which can only be known by *its*
fruits. It is the duty then of the sincere
 follower of Christ, neither to *quench* that
 portion of the Spirit which is assuredly dis-
 tributed to every good man, that he may
know of the doctrine whether it be of God;
 nor yet be so elated with enthusiastic ardor,
 as to suppose himself the *chosen of God*.
 The Spirit of God rests upon the humble
 heart; and in such a soil it will bring forth
 fruit abundantly.

There is another charge, by which many
 members of the Methodist connection ex-
 cuse their separation from the established
 Church;

Church; and that is, that the *Gospel* is not preached in it. This was the great accusation against the Clergy at the first appearance of these societies, and continues to be repeated to this day. It is well known, that during the fatal usurpation of the government in the 17th century, sectaries of various descriptions arose in this country, who preached often dangerous and mysterious doctrines. Christian morals were displaced to make way for speculative theological disputations. It is too natural a propensity of the human mind to be driven into opposite extremes. This might, in some measure, be the case with some of our public discourses at this period, and for some time after. Endeavouring to avoid the error of enthusiasts, the clergy might dwell with peculiar emphasis on the excellency of the moral system. This system, indeed, can have no proper foundation independent of Christian principles; and let us charitably hope, that, while, with St. Paul, they “preached

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 of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come\*," they did so in subserviency to the revealed will of God, which changes every moral virtue into a Christian grace. If it be granted, that some of the clergy might, at that time, adopt, and some, perhaps, may still practice, however erroneously, this method of preaching; the charge does not attach itself to *all*. Besides, how beneficial soever preaching may be esteemed in the Church, it is certain, that it is only a secondary consideration in our public services. Devotion undoubtedly is the first; and it must be acknowledged, our enemies themselves being judges, that the Liturgy of the Church of England abounds with the soundest doctrines of the Gospel, and that every devout supplicant, bearing a part in her solemn services, may read his duty, and the motives of his duty, in his truly evangelical petitions.

\* Acts xxv.

If it still be urged *by this description of* A. D. 1727—  
*christians*, that the *gospel* is not preached in  
 our churches; it may fairly be replied to  
 many, you do not come there to assure  
 yourselves of the truth of your observation.  
 If you did, the same unvaried charge could  
 not be delivered down from age to age.  
 Some, surely, of your parish ministers would  
 be found preachers of the gospel, as their  
 salvation, as well as your own, depends  
 upon the due discharge of their important  
 trust. The conscientious minister is bound  
 to this by his sacred commission—"a dis-  
 pensation," he says, "a stewardship is com-  
 mitted unto me—a necessity is laid upon  
 me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the  
 gospel\*."

It is not my intention, by any means, to  
 apologize for those ministers of the esta-  
 blished church, who preach *morality*, in-  
 stead of the pure doctrines of the christian  
 faith. If such there are, let them bear the

\* 1 Cor. ix, 16.

A. D. blame of the offence they commit: but let  
1727— the designs of the church of England be  
acquitted. Willingly I subscribe to the  
opinion of many excellent prelates and  
pious men, that we ought to return, in our  
preaching, to the first elements of our faith;  
that we should reject a morality without mo-  
tives, and a philosophy without principle.  
So far have men been led away by wild and  
fanciful opinions in the present age of the  
world; so far have they been deluded by  
an unsteady and deceitful meteor, that they  
require the direction of that *true light*,  
which alone can lead them to everlasting  
life. The gospel of Christ is a sacred, it  
is an awful deposit. It was delivered from  
the depths of divine wisdom, for the final  
salvation of mankind. Let no minister of  
Christ, then, betray the important trust  
thus placed in his hands. Let him guard  
it with more, much more, than common  
care; let it be dearer to him than life itself.  
Let him dispense it with diligence and zeal  
to the hungry, and the naked, who are  
waiting

waiting for its benefits. Thus only, in the great day of accompts, shall we be made to hear these joyful words, “ I was hungry, and ye gave me spiritual food ; I was thirsty, and ye made me drink the waters of salvation ; I was naked, and ye clothed me in robes of righteousness, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

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The Methodists have thought fit to employ *lay-preachers* in their societies. There is no rule, in any case, why one man may not edify another. I have only to observe to those who hold communion with the church of England, that, by the appointment of Christ himself, a regular succession of men has been ordained to minister in his church. It was not, till very late ages indeed, that any other ministry was introduced, than that which had originally been appointed. A reformation from popery did not create a *new* church, but purged and improved the *old one*. It will be worth the attention of the Methodists, at this time,

A. D. 1727— when many are wavering between their connexion with the established church, and a new settlement of their own, to consider what was the construction of the primitive church of Christ. However power may be delegated to men of superior talents and information, or of superior attainments in religious wisdom, which ought to be the great object of consideration in their appointment, surely no such power, no such sanctity, can accompany those who rise from mechanic trades, self-created ministers of a church, which should be “*holy and without blemish* \*.” It is said that lay-preachers are often, which is really the case, men of piety and character, and that they are not ministers, but *helpers*, as they have been called, in the Lord’s vineyard; it may be replied that, in a place appropriated for public worship, by whatever denomination it may be called, the common people will not make the distinction; and if improper persons assume that

\* Ephes. v. 27.

sacred character, even the Methodists themselves cannot prevent the unwary from being led into their snares.

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The last observation I have to make, in opposition to the indiscriminate introduction of methodistical societies, is, that they disunite, in the strongest manner, the established minister and his parishioners. This observation must be qualified by an acknowledgment, that it is not every society of Methodists which produces this effect. In many places, they work together for mutual edification; they promote the great cause in which they are equally engaged; they take “sweet counsel together, and walk in the house of God as friends.” But in others, it is with grief of heart I repeat it, the signal of reproach is hoisted; and the language is, “Stand by thyself; come not near to me; for, I am holier than thou\*.”

Such a division of interests, as has been occasioned by the introduction and increase

\* Isaiah lxxv. 5.

A. D. 1727— of Methodism in this kingdom, is no indifferent subject of reflection to every member of the established church, but particularly to its ministers. The object of its principal influence, is the common people. And here, in many cases, the enemies of its general principles ought candidly to acknowledge its merits. While we have seen the colliers of Kingswood or Newcastle; the miners of Cornwall or of Durham, reclaimed to a sense of their religious duties, meliorated in their manners, and putting on, in numerous instances, more than the form of godliness, let the most prejudiced of other denominations of christians, condemn, if he can, the benevolent exertion. The diffusion of religious principles, when consistent with the pure doctrines of the gospel, must always be beneficial to mankind. We but regret, when they degenerate into superstition, or lose their good effects, by encouraging an excess of presumption and enthusiasm. Both extremes may naturally be expected in a large society; but neither, in

in candour, ought to be attributed to the whole.

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The situation of the Methodists, as members of a particular religious society, is here delineated, as it continued invariably from its first establishment, to the conclusion of the century. In appreciating the merits of this society, a difficulty has always arisen in my mind, between the good, which is evidently intended to be done, and the manner by which it is attempted to be accomplished. A good man wishes to see the kingdom of Christ enlarged, *even to its greatest extent*; he rejoices therefore with every successful disciple of his Master. A good man desires to see the will of Christ fulfilled by the establishment of an *universal church*, on those principles, and on that foundation which the gospel itself reveals; he sighs, therefore, when he beholds the introduction of such plans as are new in the doctrine and discipline of the Christian church, and do not always lead to the due accomplishment of so excellent an end.

As

A. D. 1727— As an illustration of the present state of Methodism, I shall conclude these reflections, by noticing *three* divisions by which the members of this society are distinguished, in a “ Report of the Clergy in a District of the Diocese of Lincoln \*.” 1 Persons professing to be members of the church of England, who regularly attend divine service at church, and partake of the holy sacrament, but have places set apart for additional exercises of devotion, at such hours as do not interfere with the church service. “ These,” they remark, “ they do not consider as enemies to the ecclesiastical establishment, much less as contributing to the neglect or perversion of religious worship, but, on the contrary, have found them useful and zealous auxiliaries, in reforming and reclaiming many habitual sinners, both by their admonition and example.” 2. Per-

\* Report from the Clergy of a District in the Diocese of Lincoln, convened for the Purpose of considering the State of Religion, &c. Printed for Rivingtons. 1800.



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 prehension of the reporters, and, I doubt not, of the established Methodists also.

Persons of this last description have become very numerous indeed, particularly in London, and other populous places, where both hearers and preachers may be met with in abundance: they are generally found haranguing the passengers on a Sunday, during the summer season, in the Spa-fields, or in the avenues leading to Islington, Hackney, &c. most of them beardless boys, and ignorant mechanics, or labourers by profession; the doctrines they inculcate, are of the Calvinistic cast; and they are patronized by a lady, the supposed successor to the Countess of Huntingdon, and hence commonly called Lady Ann [Erskine's] preachers\*. Many of them are *named*, in a pamphlet quoted by the author of that from whence this extract is taken, and ap-

\* Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis, by William Hamilton Reid. London. Hatchard. 1800.

appear

appear to be of the very lowest descriptions of life. Not less than 397 preaching licences were taken out at the New Sessions-house, Clerkenwell, in the course of the years 1796 and 1797\* : and a member of parliament mentioned in the House of Commons, that he had been applied to, and *obliged* to grant a licence to a boy of seventeen years of age, as a *preacher of the gospel*. In a little tract, lately published by a clergyman of the diocese of Salisbury, it is said, that from the city of Salisbury alone, there issues forth on the sabbath, no less a number than between *fifty and sixty* dissenting preachers †, of the same description with those above mentioned ‡.

\* Ibid.

† It is to be remarked, that the Methodists, as a society, are yet unknown to the Legislature; and, therefore, the licences granted to these preachers, as well as to their meeting-houses, are directed solely for the use of dissenting congregations.

‡ Daubeny's Appendix to his Guide to the Church, p. 500.

A. D. 1727— It is hardly necessary to make one remark on this representation of facts. It is painful to the reflecting mind to consider, that such an abuse of religion should exist in the midst of a country, blessed beyond all other countries, in its establishments both of church and state. A belief in the religion of Christ, should be accompanied by a sober dignity of deportment, and a serenity of mind, the natural consequence of possessing superior principles. The personal conduct of our Lord, is the fairest delineation of his gospel. No undue elevation, either of language or action; no unseasonable intrusion, no rude, uncourtly declamation, distinguished his public preaching, but, as St. Paul observed of himself to Festus, “ he spake forth the words of truth and soberness \*.” Far be it from me to recommend a temporizing conduct to the ministers of the gospel; the *righteous man*, much more the *righteous minister*, is as

\* Acts xxvi. 25.

“ *bold*

“ *bold as a lion* \*.” Well-tempered zeal A. D. .  
 should mix itself with steadiness of prin- 1727—  
 ciple, and then he will neither shrink from  
 his proper duty, whether contending with  
 beasts at Ephesus, or reprovng the flagrant  
 vices of a trembling Felix. As no message  
 can be of greater importance than the mes-  
 sage of salvation, so no commission can be  
 more honourable than that which conveys  
 such glad tidings to the world. Instead of  
 trusting the delivery, therefore, to a motley  
 multitude, unqualified in all respects for the  
 task they are forward to undertake, let a  
 double care be bestowed on the appointment  
 of labourers for this vineyard. “ *As the*  
*apostles ministered to the Lord, and fasted,*  
*the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas*  
*and Saul, for the work whereunto I have*  
*called them. And when they had fasted and*  
*prayed, and laid their hands on them, they*  
*sent them away †.”* Neither did the apostles  
 ordain, nor were Barnabas and Saul or-

\* Prov. xxviii. 1.

† Acts xiii. 2.

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 dained, without the authority of the Holy Ghost. The fasting, praying, and laying on of hands, by duly constituted authorities, is a solemn separation for the ministry, very different from an application for a six-penny licence, and a presumptuous assumption of a sacred office.

Let me not be thought, in any degree, desirous of restoring the cruel days of persecution, or of wishing, even the church of England, to rule with an heavy hand. I am a friend, a warm friend, to toleration; but I would wish to exclude pernicious doctrines, as well as pernicious practices, from every profession of christianity.

With respect to ourselves, the best reproof which the established church can give to such intruders into her mysteries, is to guard her own character by an increasing piety, an unadulterated faith, and an extensive charity. Let her clergy be uniformly exact in every part of their duty; firm in their belief of those heavenly doctrines, which the Spirit of God only can dictate,  
 and,

and, considering the perilous times in which <sup>A. D.</sup> we live, exemplary, and *even rigorous in* <sup>1727—</sup> *their conduct.* Let ambition and pride bear no part in their reflections; but let them preach the Gospel *for the Gospel's sake.* They are not now, indeed, in the midst of civilized society, and in a land of Christians, to go out as the first apostles did, and “take nothing for their journey but a staff only\* :” but, like them, they are to be richly laden with the *gifts of the Spirit*, with primitive piety, and simplicity of heart. Surrounded by the tender objects of his domestic and evangelical cares, the stationary Pastor makes a daily progress in his great work, and labour of love, the forming the ductile mind to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ †.” In imitation of his beloved Saviour, he “feeds his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs with his arm, and carries

\* Mark vi. 8.

† Eph. iv. 13.

A. D. them in his bosom, and gently leads those  
1727— that are with young\*.”

Thus, and thus only, can this Church regain her primitive and apostolic purity; thus only, can we perpetuate the blessings which we have enjoyed under her protection; thus only, can we expect to deliver them unsullied to posterity.

\* Isaiah xl. 11.

END OF PART III. SECT. II.

PART

## PART III.

### SECTION III.

*Reflections, &c. during the Reign of  
George II.*

A. D. 1727—1760.

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THE period which gave rise to the Society of Methodists, produced some others, not less zealous though less numerous. The HERRNHUTERS, or MORAVIAN BRETHREN, distinguished also by the Latin name of UNITAS FRATRUM, made their appearance in this country about the beginning of the reign of George the second. Their establishment in England has always been upon a small scale, and their influence, as a body, very trifling. Though they pretend a derivation from the old Moravian, or Bohemian Brethren, who were celebrated

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as

A. D. as a sect, previous to the reformation, yet  
 1727— they have never been able to trace the  
 1760. connection; and their origin is more ge-  
 nerally ascribed to Nicholas Lewis, Count  
 Zinzendorf, who, in the year 1722, made  
 a settlement of this description, in Germa-  
 ny, to which he gave the name of HERRN-  
 HUTH. In 1738, Mr. John Wesley visited  
 this Society, and afterwards adopted some  
 parts of their discipline, as he did also of  
 their doctrines. Authors differ in their ac-  
 counts of the tendency of the principles of  
 this sect. The Moravian Brethren are re-  
 presented by some, as a sober, inoffensive  
 people\*: by others, as disfiguring the sa-  
 cred truth of the Gospel, and sapping all  
 the foundations of morality†. It does not,  
 however, appear that this severity of cen-  
 sure is altogether just; though the warm  
 impassioned language of their hymns, *which*

\* Gregory's History of the Christian Church, vol.  
 ii. p. 532.

† Maclean's note to Mosheim's Ecclesiastical His-  
 tory, vol. v. p. 85.

*are addressed to Jesus Christ*, cannot but be offensive to sober piety. They form themselves into classes, according to sex and age, and are extremely devoted, in their places of worship, both to vocal, and instrumental, music. There is a considerable settlement of them at a village near Leeds, and in a few other parts of the kingdom; but public fame has never stigmatized their conduct with any particular marks of reprobation.

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1760.

Though it does not appear that a religious body, distinguished by the name of **MYSTICS**, originated at this period, yet as several at this time studied a visionary divinity, which had long obtained this appellation, they require to be noticed among those sects, which claimed a peculiar degree of sanctity. It is with regret that we are obliged to rank Mr. William Law in this number, many parts of whose writings have made deep impressions on the mind. “When at Oxford,” said Dr. Johnson, “I took up Law’s ‘*Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,*’

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 1760. Life, ' expecting to find it a dull book, and, perhaps, to laugh at it. But I found Law quite an over-match for me; and this was the first occasion of my thinking in earnest of religion, after I became capable of rational enquiry." From this time forward, says his biographer, religion was the predominant object of his thoughts. At another time, he much commended Law's " Serious Call," which, he said, was the finest piece of hortatory theology in our language\*. That Law should have adopted the mystical philosophy of Jacob Behmen, is much to be lamented, as it has thrown a cloud over his writings in divinity. Dr. Horne, the good president of Magdalen-college, Oxford, and afterwards Bishop of Norwich, conformed himself, in many respects, to the strictness of Mr. Law's rules of devotion, but being sensible how easy it was for many who took their piety from Mr. Law, to take his errors along with it, he drew up a very

\* Boswell's Life of Johnson, vol. i. pp. 26 and 583.

useful paper, published in his Life, for the direction of such persons as might not have judgement enough to distinguish properly, under the title of “Cautions to the Readers of Mr. Law:” and in the same book will be found, as a companion, a Copy of a Letter to a Lady, on the Subject of Jacob Behmen’s writings\*.

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The MYSTICS profess a pure and sublime devotion, with a disinterested love of God, free from all selfish considerations. Passive contemplation, is the state of perfection to which they aspire†. Of this sect was the celebrated Madame Bourignon, and Fenelon, the amiable Archbishop of Cambray. We no not wonder, that the mind of a good man should wish to assimilate its feelings to the serenity of heaven. We do not wonder, that he should be desirous of rejecting all terrestrial imaginations, and be absorbed,

\* Jones’s Life of Horne, pp. 73 and 198.

† Evans’s Sketch of the Denominations into which the Christian World are divided, p. 107.

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1760. as it were, in the contemplation of the divine  
perfections. But we wonder, indeed, when  
we find him forgetting the station allotted  
him in this world, and resolving all obedi-  
ence into abstract meditation. The absur-  
dities that have arisen from this practice,  
should be a warning to those who encourage  
such flights of fancy. The reveries of  
Behmen, which he derived from Robert  
Fludd, an Englishman, are too mysterious  
for any but one of the initiated. “The  
books of Fludd,” says honest Anthony à  
Wood \*, “are many, and mystical, cloud-  
ing his high matter with dark language.”  
How such instructors can procure hearers,  
is truly a matter of admiration; unless  
they be of the same description with the  
auditors of Archdeacon Aylmer; of whom,  
Wood says †, “when they grew dull and  
unattentive, he would with some pretty and  
unexpected conceit, move them to atten-  
tion. Among the rest, was this: he read a

\* Athenæ Oxon. vol. i. p. 519.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 611.

long text in Hebrew, whereupon all seemed to listen what would come after such strange words; then he shewed their folly, that when he spake English whereby they might be instructed, and edified, they neglected, and hearkened not to it; and now, to read Hebrew, which they understood no word of, they seemed careful and attentive.”

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Besides that mystical divinity, which has, so wonderfully, been the delight both of the learned, and unlearned, another object of study, equally fanciful and mysterious, made its appearance about this period; though, from its nature, confined in a great degree to the students of the Hebrew language. Mr. John Hutchinson, a native of Yorkshire, who died in the year 1727, left his name to a party, that increased much after his decease; which, in imitation of their master, pursued a new and uncommon train of thinking in philosophy, theology, and heathen antiquities. In opposition to Dr. Woodward's Natural History of the Earth, he published, in 1724, the first part of his  
book,

A. D. book, called *Moses's Principia* : the second  
 1727—part was presented to the public in 1727.  
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He opposes the ground-work of Sir Isaac Newton's Theory, and considers the principles of Scripture-philosophy to consist in a plenum, and the air. The Hebrew language, written without points, he imagined to be the language of God himself, and representing some obvious idea of action or condition, raised by the sensible object which it impresses and farther, designed to signify spiritual or mental things. From hence, by etymology, he deduced the philosophy which he inculcated; and so far did his followers carry this mode of interpretation, that, (to use the words of a respectable favourer of their system,) they adopted a mode of speaking, which had a nearer resemblance to cant and jargon, than to sound and sober learning\*†.

Many

\* Jones's Life of Bishop Horne, p. 59.

† The following specimen of Hutchinson's mode of philosophising, is generally produced by writers on the  
 subject.

Many valuable men of the university of Oxford were avowed students of Mr. Hutchinson's philosophy; among these were enumerated the late Bishop Horne, and the Rev. William Jones, men, whose characters will be the best apology for their principles. A particular account of the studies of the HUTCHINSONIANS will be found in Jones's Life of Bishop Horne, as well as in a curious and scarce pamphlet, written by the latter, entitled, "An Apology for certain Gentlemen in the University of Ox-

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subject. "The air exists in three conditions, fire, light, and spirit; the two latter, are the finer and grosser parts of the air in motion; from the earth to the sun, the air is finer and finer, till it becomes pure light near the confines of the sun, and fire in the orb of the sun or solar focus. From the earth towards the circumference of this system, in which he includes the fixed stars, the air becomes grosser and grosser, till it becomes stagnant, in which condition it is at the verge of this system; from whence the expression of *outer darkness, and blackness of darkness*, used in the New Testament, seems to be taken." See Evans's Sketch: Encyclopedia, &c.

O

ford,

A. D. ford, aspersed in a late anonymous pamphlet." See also Dr. Horne's Abstract of 1727—1760. Hutchinson's Writings, and Jones's Lectures on the figurative Language of Scripture.

Though forming a strong party at this period, the followers of Hutchinson totally disclaimed any separation, or intention of separation, from the established church. Indeed, there was no necessity for so violent a measure; for the faith which they professed, was the true protestant faith, founded on our own principles. Many persons, however, of learning and science, soon revolted from their *system*, which, they thought, discarded all pure mathematics, and disowned all true philosophy.

The violence of party made the charges serious which were brought against them; they were told, that their fanciful system of philosophical and theological opinions on the construction of roots and symbols, tended to the subversion of natural religion and morality, as well as the destruction of human

human learning. As these charges are ana-  
 logous to some which are made in the pre-  
 sent age, the answers shall be selected from  
 Dr. Horne's pamphlet; not that I aim, in  
 any way, to vindicate Hutchinsonianism,  
 but to defend those principles which were  
 attacked through the sides of Hutchinson.  
 With respect to the charge of non-con-  
 formity, he says, "In the communion of  
 the church of England, we intend to die,  
 being fully persuaded of the necessity of  
 being in the *unity* of the *church*, to obtain  
 salvation\*." "Instead of labouring to  
 discredit, which was another charge, all  
 other preachers of the gospel, they laboured  
 only to discredit," he says, "all false doc-  
 trines preached by many who *SHOULD preach*  
*the gospel*. It is the complaint of hun-  
 dreds of pious christians, that there is at  
 present, not only a lamentable relaxation of  
*discipline* in the church, but as lamentable a  
 falling off from the *old way of preaching*,

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\* Horne's Apology, pp. 3, 6, 14, &c.

A. D. and *expounding, the word of God.* Let any  
 1727— one read the sermons of the primitive  
 1760. fathers, and our divines that lived in the  
 times succeeding the reformation, who  
 preached from the fathers, as the fathers  
 did from the scriptures, and compare their  
 discourses with those of this last century,  
 and they must pronounce one or other of  
 them to be many removes from christi-  
 anity.” With respect to the religion of  
 Nature, the pretended religion of the mo-  
 dern philosopher, when he condescends to  
 avow any profession which bears that name,  
 “ it is a religion without the *knowledge of*  
*God, or the hope of salvation; which is*  
*deism; and such as it is, it owes its birth,*  
*not to nature, but a corrupted tradition;*  
*that is, in one word, instead of natural re-*  
*ligion, it is traditional infidelity. As a reve-*  
*lation was made to man, of the covenant of*  
*works, before the fall, and the covenant of*  
*grace after it; and as we are certain that*  
*all mankind came from one common stock,*  
 it is a plain and evident *matter of fact,* that  
 from

from *Adam* to this day, there never *was*, or *could be*, a man left *to himself*, to make a *religion of nature*."—But morality, as well as natural religion, is an object of their depreciation. "Moral duties are what scripture calls *works*. If these are done *in Christ*, they are *christian virtues*! and then here is a *distinction* without a *difference*. If they are done *out of Christ*, upon any other than *christian motives*, they are *nothing* to any *saving* purpose. And if they are done *against Christ*, as *meritorious* to *salvation*, they are much *worse* than *nothing*. Whoever preaches *moral duties* without *justification* and *sanctification* preceding, may as well declaim on the advantages of walking, to a man that can *stir* neither hand nor foot. Such is the natural *impotence* of the *soul*, to do any *good* thing, till it is *justified* and *sanctified*. Let the declamation be ever so elegant, St. Peter's *plain* address, I suppose, would be worth ten thousand of them, to a cripple—*In the name of Jesus of Nazareth*

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A. D. between an *ethical divine* and *christian*  
 1727—*preacher.*” The last charge, relates to ‘the  
 1760. destruction of human learning. The an-  
 swer in all ages is, “ *That* depends upon  
 the *nature* and *kind* of the learning. Such  
 kind of learning, as the present age is given  
 much to admire, has done no service to the  
 cause of *truth*, but on the contrary, it has  
 done infinite disservice to it, and almost re-  
 duced us from the *unity of the Christian faith*,  
 to the *wrangling of philosophic scepticism.*”  
 These observations are so just, when applied  
 to the philosophy and learning of the pre-  
 sent day, that they must form my apology  
 for their introduction in this place. They  
 prove, indeed, that the scheme of infidelity  
 was progressive, and that many were instru-  
 ments of its success, who, probably, were  
 very far from wishing for its prosperity.  
 That this was really the case, we may learn  
 from an author of that day, who was much  
 involved in the Hutchinsonian controversy.  
 “ Of Hutchinson,” says Mr. Jones, “ we  
 hear but little; his name was the match  
 which

which gave fire to the train : but the question seems really to have been this ; Whether Christianity, in the truth and spirit of it, ought to be preserved ? or, Whether a spiritless thing, called by the name of Christianity, would answer the purpose better ? In other words, whether the religion of man's philosophy, or the religion of God's revelation should prevail \* ?”

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There

\* If any one should be inclined to know the nature of the etymological part of this controversy, I add an extract from Dr. Sharp's Reflections on Mr. Hutchinson's Exposition of the word Cherubim. Hutchinson says, it is derived from the *quasi*, rubim *the great ones*, the similitude of the great ones. Cherubim—an hieroglyphic, a sacred image to describe, as far as figures could do, the ALBIM, and man taken into their essence. In answer, Dr. Sharp says, “ The question now before us is not concerning the truth of any of the great articles of religion, which are sufficiently explained, but concerning the validity of a new proof of them, drawn from a word variously applied in the Old Testament, and a figure not completely described therein.” Cherubim, he says, may mean *multitudo cognitionis*, the likeness or representative of the multitude, viz. of the

A. D. 1727—  
 1760. } There is nothing too fanciful for the human mind, when it leaves the calm and well-tempered climate of reason, and the sure letter of revelation, and attempts to soar above the region of spiritual existence. Unchecked, even by the heaviness of matter, it throws off the garment of discretion, and ventures boldly on an unknown sea. The observation will be found correspondent with the subject, if we consider many of the tenets of those religious sects or parties, which have just passed in review before us. But what shall we say to that which now follows in the train?—Emanuel BARON SWEDENBORG, a Swedish nobleman, about the middle of the century, established a *new church*, or rather religious party, (as heavenly host. This, he adds, is only conjecture, and the hypothesis of *sicut multitudo*, is only setting up an improbable conjecture against two others that seem less probable; for *all is conjecture where we have no positive direction*.—Dr. Sharp's intention seems to have been, to check the fanciful interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures, rather than to wish to establish any new interpretations of his own,

-he

he lived and died in the Lutheran com- A. D.  
 munion) which took the name of the *New* 1727—  
*Jerusalem Church*, in allusion to the *New* 1760. 

Jerusalem, spoken of in the Revelation of St. John. His tenets, though founded on scripture, differ essentially from every other system of divinity in Christendom. He asserts, that in the year 1743, the Lord manifested himself to him in a personal appearance; and at the same time opened his spiritual eyes, so that he was enabled constantly to see, and converse with spirits and angels. In consequence of this appearance, he relates several wonderful things of Heaven and Hell, the state of men after death, &c. which, he says, were revealed to him\*. It is unnecessary to dwell on Baron Swedenborg's theology, as no reasonable person can have any doubt of the effects of enthusiasm operating on such a mind as his. At the same time, we are told, that the practical morals recommend-

\* Evans's Sketch, p. 110.

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1760. } ed by him are of the purest, and most un-  
exceptionable kind, with which his life per-  
fectly corresponded\*.

Such a character as that of the Baron, distracted by a wild imagination, endowed perhaps with a sublimity of thought, and building systems on a foundation of his own, is not uncommon in the world. But when these fancies are communicated to others, and acted upon as if they had a real basis, it then becomes matter of admiration indeed!

The Society of NEW JERUSALEMITES were more numerous in Sweden, and in Germany, than in England. But of late they have increased in London, and in some other populous towns, where they have opened places of worship under the name of Temples †. It has been imagined, that

\* Gregory's History of the Christian Church, vol. ii. p. 545.

† The following advertisement appeared in one of the London papers last winter. "New Jerusalem Temple

that the promoters of modern infidelity, have seized upon this post, among others, to accelerate their plans. “What must we think of a sect,” says a modern writer, “who, under the appellation of Christians, explain away the doctrine of the atonement, the resurrection, and the day of judgment? who exclude from the New Testament the Epistles of the Apostles, which they class as *private letters*? who assert, that the day of judgment is more a *figure* than a *fact*? that it commenced about 1758, in the printing and publication of the judgment of Emanuel Sweden-

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Temple, Cross-street, Hatton-garden. The members of the Society of the Lord's New Church (and the readers of the highly favoured and enlightened, the Hon. Baron, Emanuel Swedenborg's writings) are informed that the Rev. —— will preach, &c. It is remarkable, that this worthy priest of the Lord's New Church has given his labours of love (without salary, fee, or reward) to this Society, every Sunday morning and evening (writing a new sermon every week) and attending the reading meetings once a week for 13 years without interruption,”

borg,

A. D. 1727—  
1760. } borg, to condemn, collectively, all the doc-  
trines of the Old, or Trinitarian, Church. These, and several other opinions held by the disciples of the New Church, would certainly meet much of the approbation of Infidels, as some of the most eligible means of bringing Christianity in general into disrepute\*." Happily, according to the same author, their allurements are not successful, though they have adopted a pompous mode of worship, have fantastically disposed two officiating ministers in one chapel, and adopted, as a dress of the pastor in another, that of a Chef de Famille, among the French Theophilanthropists.

It would be degrading to human reason to record the impositions which that noble faculty of man endures. Too true will this reflection be thought on this occasion, when we are told, that the establishment of this sect in England arose from a printer's job, near the spot where the Baron

\* Reid on the Rise and Fall of Infidel Societies, p. 53.  
formerly

formerly resided when he was in London, A. D. 1727—  
 to quicken the heavy sale of a new trans- 1760.  
 lation of his works, and the dispersion of  
 a magazine of Heaven and Hell; and a  
 romance calculated to introduce his prin-  
 ciples in a more captivating shape. It  
 then appeared, partly in the modern and  
 fashionable form of a debating society: but  
 instead of preachers collecting the people,  
 these people were so hard run to collect  
 preachers, that for a considerable time the  
 office was generally confined to the printer  
 alluded to, and one of his relatives. Not-  
 withstanding the exertions which are made  
 to support this society, if appearances are  
 to be trusted, Mr. Reid says, *the most he-  
 terodox opinions that ever bore the name of  
 Christian* will not trouble the orthodox  
 much longer\*.

I have

\* This Society, or at least, one built upon this foun-  
 dation, is noticed in the second Report of the Secret  
 Committee of the House of Commons, 1801. "A  
 Society," says the Report, "appears to have been  
 3 formed

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 1760. I have thus concluded a short review; of those sects or parties of Christians which made their first appearance in this country, during the period now under consideration.

formed in a part of Yorkshire, under the title of New Jerusalemites, whose leaders have inspired them with a belief in the pretended prophecies of Brothers, and who look, under his guidance, for the speedy commencement of the millenium. The views of these people seem totally unconnected with any political object, though their tenets leading to an independence on an earthly government, and in the expectation of the subversion of the existing order of things, would naturally make them indifferent spectators at least, if not active instruments of any attempt to accomplish that end."

Is this the same society, denominated in the public News-papers, *Ezekielites*, from the erroneous interpretation of a passage in the prophecies of Ezekiel, chap. xxi. ver. 25, 26, 27?—Another religious society may with propriety be mentioned in this place. A traveller in Wales, in 1798, mentions a sect he met with, called *Jumpers*. He attended their meeting on a Sunday evening. A man, to appearance, a day-labourer, was preaching to a very ignorant multitude. The chapel was not divided by pews or seats, and contained about one hundred persons. The preacher was extremely

deration. It will not be difficult for the discerning reader, to appreciate their different merits. Nothing human is without its alloy of error. Even the divine face of Religion herself, is clouded by deformities of human invention. But wilfully to seek error, when truth may be found, is a mistake of the most fatal nature. Here it is that reason, under the direction of divine grace, should be our constant guide. God hath not only given us faculties to judge, but hath promised his assistance in the acquisition of true wisdom.

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extremely extravagant in his manner, and uttered the most dismal howls and groans imaginable, which were answered by the congregation so loud, as occasionally to drown his voice. At last, nearly exhausted by continual vociferation, he sunk down in his seat. A psalm followed; in the midst of which, a part of the assembly began to *jump* in small parties of three or four together, lifting up their hands, beating their breasts, and making the most horrid gesticulations. This strange sect, I am informed, is to be met with in some parts of England, though I have not been able to learn their peculiar tenets.

We

A. D. 1727—  
1760. We have seen, in this account, in more than one instance, a superstructure erected, whose parts are discordant, and no way suited to the original simplicity of Christianity. But whatever opinion we may form of the profession of individuals in religious matters, it will be evident from the numerous students in divinity at this period, that religion was considered as no trivial study. Some, in every party, endeavoured to promote her interests. As the enemy increased, the artillery was at hand. Happy would it have been, if the weapons of this warfare, had all been selected with judgment, and applied with discretion. Some, undoubtedly, were, and with the very best effects. “ I rejoice,” says an amiable dissenter to an equally amiable minister of the establishment, “ to be assisted and supported by gentlemen of your character and station, in my cordial, though feeble endeavours, to spread the spirit of true, catholic, vital Christianity; and to root out, as much as possible, that  
sour

sour leaven of bigotry and faction, which is, under all denominations, too ready to insinuate itself to the dishonour of our great Master, and the lamentable detriment of his family. But, blessed be God! I hope it begins to be dispelled; and many excellent persons in the establishment, as well as of the separation, have shewn so amiable a disposition to unite in bonds of mutual respect and friendship, while diversity of forms continues, that I look upon it as a happy proof of the prevalency of real religion in some considerable degree, and a blessed omen of its more abundant prosperity\*.”

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THOUGH religion may, and does, subsist, independent of politics, yet political events and circumstances will always, in a degree, influence the practice of religion in a state. This was very much the case at the era

\* Memoirs of Bishop Hildesley. Letter from Dr. Doddridge, 1749.

A. D. of the rebellion, in the year 1745; which  
 1727— was instigated by party, not less to re-  
 1760.

store the exiled family to the throne, than to replace popery on that eminence, from which she had fallen. England has suffered much from popery; and therefore it will not be thought surprising, to find every vigorous exertion used at this eventful period, to avert the danger with which she was threatened. Spiritual, as well as temporal arms, were lifted up in her defence. Every popular publication was filled with warnings, and every pulpit with admonitions. The civil and religious effects of popery were once more laid before the people, and they did not appear insensible of its dangerous tendency. It happened upon this occasion, however, as in all other violent commotions, that the language of reproach was often virulent and uncharitable. But what might not be expected from the injured? What might they not apprehend from the restoration of exiled and exploded principles, from the influence of a man,  
 to

to use the words of a patriotic Prelate\*, A. D.  
 “ who brought his religion from Rome, 1727—  
 and the rules and maxims of his govern- 1760.  
 ment from Paris and Madrid?” “ Drive far  
 from you (said Warburton, in his energetic  
 language, and during the continuance of  
 that scene, which could not but make a  
 strong impression on the minds of his au-  
 dience, and give an uncommon ardour to  
 his expression)—“ Drive far from you the  
 yoke of Rome, now ready to be once more  
 cast upon your necks. A yoke, which  
 your forefathers could not bear, even when  
 use had made it habitual, and ignorance had  
 shut them up from the sight of truth and  
 liberty. But you who have a clear view,  
 as well as a free choice, of good and evil,  
 will, doubtless, prefer gospel light to the  
 anti-christian kingdom of darkness. You  
 will, doubtless, prefer liberty of conscience  
 to blind obedience, or the dungeons or  
 fires of an inquisition; you will prefer

\* Archbishop Herring's Speech at the Castle of York.

A. D. piety to superstition, virtue to fanaticism,  
 1727—your Bible to the Mass-book, and sense  
 1760. to nonsense\*.”—“Happy nation!” he  
 adds, “the nurse of heroes, the school of  
 sages, the seminary of holy martyrs, the  
 distinguished favourite of heaven! But how  
 momentary are all these blessings, when  
 freedom is once separated and divorced  
 from virtue! for, according to the gene-  
 rous saying of that ancient freeman, *that*  
*very day which sees a man a slave, takes*  
*away half his virtue.*”

This last attempt of the unhappy race  
 of Stewart, to regain that throne which  
 they had lost by the intemperate use of  
 power, and bigotry, opened the eyes even  
 of the disaffected; and has left us in the  
 happy enjoyment of all our religious and  
 civil rights. So wonderful are the changes  
 of time, under the direction of a kind  
 Providence, that this nation, possessing a  
 Monarch who reigns in the hearts of his

\* Warburton's Sermon on Popery, Nov. 1745.

people,

people, and no longer dreading those principles which once gave it so much inquietude, has become the asylum of many thousand distressed members of the popish church. May we continue to retain our integrity, as well as to increase our charity; that while we exercise our benevolence with prudence and discretion, we may not endanger, by our vices, our infidelity, nor our lukewarmness, the true, pure, and genuine principles of the protestant faith!

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—In 1753, a bill for the naturalization of the Jews was brought into parliament, which excited much discussion, as well as great variety of opinion. In early periods of the history, not of this country only, but of most Christian nations, the annals are disgraced by a narrative of the cruel punishments and oppressions of the Jews. This people, indeed, afford a striking evidence of the truth of the divine revelation. They are a living, and perpetual miracle; continuing to subsist as a distinct, and pe-

A. D. 1727—  
 1760. } peculiar race, even in the midst of other nations; flowing forward in a full and continued stream, like the waters of the Rhone, without mixing with the waves of the expansive lake through which the passage lies to the ocean of eternity. I do not know that the Jews have ever formed a constituent part of any political body, since the days of their first dispersion. Their request, therefore, to be naturalized by the British parliament was at least new in their history. The reason why the act was passed at all was rather political than religious; government thought to strengthen itself by the accession of so powerful a monied interest as this plan seemed to suggest. Popular clamour, however, prevailed; and the bill which had been enacted in one session was repealed in the next. It does not appear that any injury could have arisen from the indulgence, either to the state or the people; whilst, it is probable, some, at least, of this unbelieving race might have been reclaimed. The  
 Bishops,

Bishops, no doubt, were of this opinion, as they, very liberally, acquiesced in the passing of the bill; and did not, in the following session, oppose its repeal, as that appeared to be the more general sense of the nation. The arguments in opposition were probably dictated by prejudice; for the bill could not be interpreted as opposing the voice of that prophecy which declares that the Jews shall be a scattered people till the time of their return to their own land, as no human declaration, no act of any nation, however powerful, can frustrate the completion of the will of the Almighty. One advantage attending the increased liberality of public opinion is, that this oppressed people are no longer the objects of those debasing injuries, to which, in the dark ages, they were perpetually subject\*. We leave them in the hand

\* The change of public sentiment, with respect to the Jews, is evident in the public exhibition of their character on the stage. Shakespear's Jew is represented

A. D. hand of Providence, whose ways are not  
 1727—our ways, and whose mysterious counsels  
 1760. will be revealed in the most proper time  
 and place.—

—Another Act of Parliament having an ecclesiastical foundation, but produced upon civil principles, at the same period, occupied much of the public attention, that is, the celebrated act under which marriages are now solemnized, entitled, “*An Act for preventing clandestine Marriages.*” This act has been the object of much censure and applause, but in general, it has been considered as a just medium between the shameful irregularities which formerly prevailed in the celebration of this ceremony, and the tyrannical practices of too close a restraint in so important an article of human happiness. It is not necessary

as cruel and avaricious, and endowed with all the strong prejudices of his nation—“ I hate him for he is a Christian.”—Cumberland’s Jew is humane and benevolent ; characteristic indeed in his manners, but honest, liberal, and friendly to persons of all denominations.

to enter into a minute consideration of the arguments on either side of this question; for though experience has in many instances shewn its utility, some alterations might undoubtedly be made in it, with the very best effect.

Marriage is considered by our laws as a civil contract, allowing at the same time a proper force to the canon law, which protects it as a religious ceremony. Blackstone says, "It is held to be essential to a marriage, to be performed by a person in orders; though the intervention of a priest to solemnize this marriage is merely *juris positivi*, and not *juris naturalis aut divini*, it being said, that Pope Innocent the third [who lived A. D. 1216.] was the first who ordained the celebration of marriage in the church, before which it was *totally a civil contract* \*." Allow me, with much diffidence, to reply to this very respectable authority, in the words of Dr. Comber. "The

\* Blackstone's Commentaries, book i. chap. 15.

Christians

A. D. 1727—  
1760. Christians of old thought it did exceedingly tend to the solemn making, and strict keeping this holy bond of marriage, to have it sealed by an ecclesiastical person; and therefore St. Ignatius, A. C. 120, saith, *It is fit that the bridegroom and bride be joined by the Bishop's concurrence, that the marriage may be according to the Lord, and not according to lust.* Ignat. Ep. ad Polycarp. Tertullian, who lived in the next age, declares, that *Christian marriages were confirmed at the sacrament, and sealed by the Church's blessing.* Tert. ad Uxor. l. ii. It was decreed in the famous African Council, An. 398. *That parents and par-nymphs should bring the man and his spouse to be blessed by the priest, before they came together; nor was it esteemed a lawful marriage without this blessing.* Concil. 4 Carthag. Can. 13. Upon which St. Augustine [A. D. 597.] grounded that constitution of his, mentioned by Posidonius, Vit. Aug. cap. 27. *That when the marriage was agreed upon, the Priest was to be called,*  
that

*that their compact might be confirmed, and their persons blessed\*.*" To pass over other evidence both of earlier and later times, it was one of the laws of our Saxon King Edmund [A. D. 940.] long before the era of Innocent the third, that a *Priest should be present at the making of espousals, who by giving them the divine blessing, might assist their sacred confederation in all holiness* †.

A. D.  
1727—  
1760.

Marriage, being of the first importance to the happiness of society, becomes an

\* Comber's Companion to the Temple. Matrimony Service.

† Si quis virginem ducere aut fœminam voluerit, ipsâ et amicis suis consentientibus, debitum est, cùm *ex jure divino*, tum ex humana institutione, ut sponsus primò, non solum fidem prebeat de prælocutis perimplendis, sed unâ etiam cautionem se eam ita cupere, ut secundum legem Dei eam habeat uxorem, et hoc etiam vadiant amici ejus.

8. Nuptiali huic dationi missalis aderit sacerdos : is, *de jure*, eorum conjunctionem Dei benedictione in omnem felicitatis plenitudinem promovebit. Leges Edmundi regis.

object

A. D. 1727—  
 1760.  object of the tenderest care of every civilized government. That it is so of ours, it is needless to observe; but I may be allowed to add, that in consequence of the numerous divorces, which are sanctioned by our legislature, the marriage-contract, by the dissipation of the present day, is considered as a *civil contract indeed!* a contract which they adhere to, as long as they find it convenient for it to last; but when dissolved by a legal power, where that power is respected, as with us, or by a more easy method, as with our republican neighbours, marriage, in many cases, has neither charms nor comfort; the innocent offspring is sacrificed to the abandoned prostitution of the parent, and every endearing link of private affection, or public union, is violently rent and torn asunder.

In some instances, specified in this marriage-act, the marriage is declared void *ab initio*. Where it infringes on the prohibited degrees of kindred, or is celebrated in opposition to legal disabilities of a moral

ral

ral nature, such as a prior marriage, &c. A. D. 1727—  
 by which confusion might be introduced 1760.  
 into society, or the true ends of marriage  
 not properly attained, there let the *parties*  
 be subject to severe penalties of the law;  
 let the marriage be void *from the beginning*,  
 because they contracted it under illegal  
 circumstances, of which they themselves  
 could judge: but when the offence is of  
 a different nature, such as a violation of  
 legal forms, with respect to time or place,  
 &c. or an infringement of any positive  
 law, wilfully committed, by which illegal  
 marriages are contracted, let the severe  
 penalty fall upon the *person* by whose  
 means the marriage is contracted, because  
 he ought to have complied in all respects  
 with the injunctions of the legislature.  
*But let the marriage vow be sacred.* “Till  
 death us do part,” are words of awful im-  
 port. They should neither be lightly pro-  
 nounced by the contracting party, nor has-  
 tily annulled by any human jurisdiction.

It is understood, that in some cases,

A. D. 1727—  
1760. where no legal sentence is pronounced against a marriage illegally solemnized, it is considered as *voidable, but not void*. This is often a dangerous snare to the parties. It is an incentive to do ill, upon a probability that they may not be discovered, or that they may not be prosecuted to conviction. But if a marriage, under specified circumstances, were known to be *really void*, it would never be contracted. \*

The

\* Case. Horner against Liddiard. Miss Liddiard was the natural daughter of John Whitelock, Esq. This gentleman died when Miss Liddiard was of the age of 11 years, and devised a considerable property to her by will. This he directed to be paid to her when she should attain the age of 21, or be married with the consent and approbation of her mother, Sarah Liddiard, and George Ashley, or the survivor of them; to whom he further gave "the tuition and care of his daughter during her minority." Miss Liddiard being a minor between 18 and 19 years old, was married, by special licence, to Thomas Strangeways Horner, Esq. who had then arrived at the years of legal discretion. The licence stated "that the marriage was solemnized

The ceremony of marriage was restored A. D. 1727—  
 by our Saviour, the Christian's Legislator, 1760.  
 to the primitive purity of its original institution. Many things had been allowed by the legislator of the Jews, in consequence of the hardness of their hearts, which had not existed in the earliest arrangements of society. Amongst other things, polygamy prevailed, even amongst the patriarchs themselves. But the Christian dispensa-

lemnized by and with the consent of Sarah Liddiard, there styled, Sarah Whitelock, widow, her mother, and guardian, and which consent was in fact obtained." In Feb. 1799, three years after the consummation of the marriage, Mr. Horner institutes a suit and obtains a sentence of divorce. The parties, from personal and private considerations, acquiesce in this sentence, though a further investigation, by appeal, was hinted to them in the sentence itself.—Thus is the religious obligation of marriage totally overlooked in the legal decision: and thus may a designing man impose upon an innocent young woman; and children, thus born to a virtuous and wedded mother, may, by accident, or design, be rendered illegitimate. See *British Critic*, June 1801.

A. D. 1727—  
 1760. } tion brings back the ancient establishment  
 of the religion of Paradise: let every man  
 have *his own wife* τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα, and  
 every wife τὸν ἰδίον ἀνδρα her proper hus-  
 band\*.” “It hath been said, whosoever  
 shall put away his wife, let him give her  
 a writing of divorcement: But *I say unto*  
*you*, said Christ, that whosoever shall put  
 away his wife, saving for the cause of for-  
 nication, causeth her to commit adultery,  
 and whosoever shall marry her that is di-  
 vorced, committeth adultery †.” However  
 the last clause of this injunction may be  
 interpreted, whether, under the divine au-  
 thority, the person divorced for the sake  
 of fornication, may, or may not, be per-  
 mitted to marry again, the legislature of  
 every country, surely, possesses a right of  
 punishing, in whatever way appears to be  
 most eligible, profligate manners and irre-  
 ligious delinquency. It cannot be consist-  
 ent with the purity of Christian morals, to

\* 1 Cor. vii. 2.

† Matt. v. 31, 32.

see the adulterer and adulteress deriding the marriage vow, contemning those laws, human and divine, which are established for the protection of innocence, and the punishment of the wicked, and living in all the fatal security of sin. It cannot be for the benefit of society, to see such depraved examples among us. Let us put away the evil, and cleanse ourselves, at least, from this iniquity. Let the Legislature, while it protects the minor from seduction, not forget the offences of the more mature and deliberate offender.

A. D.  
1727—  
1760.

The ceremony of marriage, though regulated by acts of parliament, is still a solemn act of religion, and was always so reputed, except in the times of the great rebellion, when the celebration of it was taken out of the hands of the church, with the design of bringing the clergy into contempt, and, as if it were a mere political engagement, assigned to those of the civil magistrate. Banns of marriage were published in the market-place, and the officiating minister

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was

A. D. 1727—  
 1760. } was a justice of the peace. But if we would not behold so many melancholy instances of unhappy marriages, and broken vows, we should endeavour to replace this important ceremony on its true foundation. We should assure ourselves, that it is holy from its author, and venerable from its antiquity: that the greatest friend of man, the Legislator of Christianity, restored it to its original purity, and some of his first apostles sanctioned it both by their precepts and examples. No legal or spiritual restrictions are put upon it, but such as are necessary for the general good of society; and all parties, in the language of St. Paul, “are at liberty to be married to whom they will; *only in the Lord*\*: that is, upon those pure principles of religious engagement established by the blessed revelation of the gospel †.

The

\* 1 Cor. vii. 39.

† In 1781, this act was attempted to be repealed, but without success. At this time, a very singular circumstance took place; it was discovered, in consequence

The licentiousness of the common people, A. D. in consequence of *the unrestrained USE of* <sup>1727—</sup> *SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS*, was remarked in a <sup>1760.</sup> former part of this essay. In the year 1759, an additional duty was proposed to be laid on the distilleries. I mention this, to introduce an observation of the Lord Mayor and City of London, in a petition to the House of Commons on this occasion; that “ they had with great pleasure observed the

quence of a legal decision, [King's Norton and Northfield—Burn's Justice, vol. iii. 600.] which had never been foreseen when the act was passed, that all marriages, which had been celebrated in churches or chapels, built since the passing of the act, were void; as that act declared, that all marriages, celebrated in places *where banns had not been usually published*, should be considered as void *ab initio*. Thus were many thousands innocently involved in a grievous and calamitous situation. Such was the concurring zeal of all parties, to prevent the irremediable mischiefs, which were likely to arise from a knowledge of the late decision, that, though the subject was only introduced into the House of Commons on the 28th of May, the bill was read the third time, and passed, on the 7th day of June.

A. D. 1727—  
 1760. happy consequence produced upon the morals, behaviour, industry, and health of the lower class of people, since the prohibition of the malt distillery:” praying, “ that the present prohibition of distilling spirits from corn might be continued, or that the use of wheat might not be allowed in distillation.” As the Legislature of the country are the guardians of the people, such a visible improvement in the morals of the lower ranks of men, arising from judicious regulations, should operate as an encouragement to check vice and licentiousness, by discouraging the means by which they are supported.

The latter end of George II. does not appear, within the remembrance of the observer, to present any other public event, of the nature professedly selected in these pages, which had any near connection with the history of the Church, or influenced, in any particular way, the morals or religious profession of the nation. On one side, we have seen the current of infidelity attempting to work itself a secret passage: on the other, we

we have beheld, sometimes misguided zeal, A. D.  
1727—  
1760.  
and sometimes true piety and religion, endeavouring to oppose their efforts. Such are the various struggles on the ocean of life. “The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly, but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier\*.”

If we consider the state of morals and religion at the conclusion of this reign, in a general view, we shall perceive an essential difference between this period, and some of those which preceded it. It neither rose to any supereminent degree of virtue, nor sunk to any material depravity of manners. If any one term should be thought more appropriate than any other, to the general profession of religious principle, I fear, it would be that of *lukewarmness*. Attached, and strongly attached, as the people of England are, and long have been, to the *name* of the protestant religion, they too frequently suffer the genuine spirit of

\* Psalm xciii. 4.

A. D. 1727—  
1760. it, to become faint and languid. Having, for so many years, enjoyed the prosperity of a highly valued church, they were under no apprehensions that it might be removed out of their sight. Such security is often fatal. Happily it has not yet been so to us, in a national light: though we must attribute the forbearance to God's goodness, and by no means to our own merits.

Though the amiable figure of religion might not, at this period, be seen to the most advantage, yet the features of vice were much softened, and her aspect, which no decoration can make agreeable, was rendered less offensive and disgusting. The increase of *national taste* effected this alteration, and iniquity continued to flourish, more insinuating in her appearance, and for that reason, often more fatal and destructive in her devastations.

“ *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times,*” was, about this period, given to the world by a very ingenious author, whose opinions, in summing up the evidence

evidence of public morals at the conclusion of this reign, would have been more valuable, had they been less exaggerated. A. D.  
1727—  
1760.

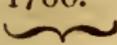
This work gained much popularity, not only from its vigorous language and bold assertions, but from the circumstances of the times in which it was published. A long and unsuccessful war had produced discontent, which made, even a severe satire on national principles and manners, not unacceptable to the public disposition. But the applause which it obtained, was fully balanced by the censure which it incurred. Some *few* remaining virtues in the nation this author allows, which he classes under three heads; viz. the spirit of liberty, the spirit of humanity, and the pure administration of justice: yet even these cannot redeem the character of the manners of the times, which, he says, is, not that of abandoned wickedness and profligacy, but of a “*vain, luxurious, and selfish effeminacy.*”

To this principle, he refers both the religion and morals of the age. Even *infidelity*,

A. D. he thinks, too abstruse a study for the times.  
 1727— “ Notwithstanding the general contempt of  
 1760. religion among the fashionable world, the  
 uninformed reader is not to imagine that  
 the present age is deep in the *speculations of*  
*infidelity*. No such matter: for that would  
 imply a certain attention to these subjects;  
 a certain degree of self-converse and  
 thought; and this would clash with the  
 ruling manners of the times. This is the  
 plain reason why so capital a book as the  
 writings of Lord Bolingbroke, in five huge  
 quarto volumes, fraught with the very  
*marrow* of infidelity, met with so cold a  
 reception in the world\*.” The candid re-  
 flector, it is to be hoped, will ascribe this  
*cold reception* to a different cause: for,  
 though sceptics began to multiply, the pro-  
 fession of Scepticism was confined to a few;  
 the shelves of the many, were not yet  
 pressed by books of this description. Though  
 languor might sometimes creep through the

\* Dr. Browne's Estimate, vol. i. p. 36. Dabl. Edit.

extremities of the body politic, it had not yet made direct approaches to the heart. A. D. 1727—

The character of the clergy, in this publication, is not treated with greater deference, than that of the nation in general. 1760. 

The author of the Estimate speaks of the contempt, in which, he says, they are held, not only as proceeding from a general defect of religious principle, but as, in many instances, attached to the professors themselves; and adds, this general *slander*, that the “worthy part of them cannot aspire at *truer glory*, than to have become the *contempt* of those, who are become the *contempt* of EUROPE\*.” “The truth is,” he says, “the clergy are neither better nor worse than other men, but are naturally carried away in the general stream of manners. The idea of a proper clerical conduct is carried higher in *speculation*, than human nature will in reality admit. The laity seem to forget, that the clergy are men of

\* P. 58.

like

A. D. like passions with themselves. From this  
 1727—archetype of *ideal* perfection, it comes to  
 1760.

pass, that any ridicule in this order of men, is doubly ridiculous; any *crime*, doubly *criminal*." Notwithstanding the truth which may be in this observation, it is equally certain, that men professing holiness, should use every endeavour to become *holy men*; and that it is better to raise up the clerical character, and aim even at an *ideal perfection*, than to apologize for its *necessary defects*, by placing it on a level with human infirmities. Sanctity of character has, undoubtedly, been attached to the clergy from the earliest institution of christianity, and therefore it is their duty to attain a corresponding sanctity of conduct. That this, in numerous instances, has been the case, through a long succession of men, might easily be shewn. Even this author says—  
 “With all their defects and failings, the writer is of opinion, that among the middle ranks of this profession,” (—and, I add, with confidence, the highest ranks of those

who

who preside in the church, as well as of those who tread the paths of sequestered piety in her lower orders,) “ there is more regard to duty, more open and undesigning hospitality, more unaffected generosity, as well as charity and piety, than in any other order of men now living\*.”

A. D.  
1727—  
1760.



I conclude these remarks in the words of a writer of the same æra, whose opinion the author must always regard with reverence, and whose indignation was excited by the impression of a *false estimate* of the principles and manners of his country, contrasted with the brilliant period of success which distinguished the *golden sun-set* of George the second's reign. “ The manners of this nation, if ever they deserved it, stand now superior to the criminal charge of cowardice and effeminacy. If individuals have corrupted themselves, let them bear the reproach they have so justly incurred ; but let a brave and victorious people no longer be

\* Estimate, vol. ii. p. 79.

A. D. made a by-word amongst its neighbours,  
1727— from the unfinished *drawings* of an hasty  
1760. *pencil*\*.”

\* A Thanksgiving Sermon, preached in the church  
of St. Nicholas, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Nov. 29,  
1759, by Richard Brewster, M. A., Curate of St. Ni-  
cholas.

END OF PART III. SECT. III.

PART

## PART IV.

### SECTION I.

*Reflections, &c. during the Reign of  
George III.*

A. D. 1760—1780.

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IF ever any period opened upon this nation with more than an ordinary degree of lustre, it is that which placed the youthful virtues of George the Third on the throne of Great Britain. Other periods have given prosperity to our arms; other periods have beheld wisdom in our counsels; but what æra shall we point out, distinguished as this is, in the person of the Sovereign, by an absence of those pernicious pleasures, which enervate the body and destroy the soul, and by an assemblage of those christian graces, which, under the guidance of the good

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

8 Spirit

A. D. Spirit of God, invigorate and preserve both?  
 1760—  
 1780. } In some parts of the history of our ancient  
 monarchs, we have seen many amiable,  
 many splendid instances of virtue; we have  
 seen the profligacy of an Henry the fifth  
 succeeded by illustrious proofs of reforma-  
 tion; but, happily for this nation, and for  
 himself, George the third was impressed by  
 an early sense of piety and religion, which  
 has carried him safely through many trying,  
 and unlooked for difficulties: it has sup-  
 ported him with intrepidity amidst personal  
 inflictions of the most grievous nature, and  
 public distress, the most poignant and op-  
 pressive; it has shed upon his breast a  
 nobleness of soul, which renders him fear-  
 less of danger, and the century has closed  
 upon his reign, still beaming with the steady  
 light of conscious integrity.

If we look behind the veil of royalty,  
 the practice of every domestic virtue strikes  
 us in so pleasing a light, that we exclaim,  
 This was indeed a MAN! And if we regard  
 his public, as well as private profession of  
 religion,

religion, his unremitting care, in imitation of the patriarch Abraham, to “command his children and his servants after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgement\* ; if we observe his zeal to maintain, in all its purity, that true protestant faith, established in his dominions, we may proceed one step further in his praise, and say, This was indeed a CHRISTIAN ! The remembrance of him will be as the remembrance of the good Josiah, “sweet as honey in all mouths, and as music at a banquet of wine †.”

It might be expected, that so eminent an example of virtue would diffuse itself through a large extent in the circle of nobility, and descend with increasing influence to the lower ranks of the community. I hesitate not to say, that it has done so, notwithstanding many glaring instances of profligacy in high life, and the vicious imitation of such con-

\* Gen. xviii. 19.

† Ecclus xlix. 1.

A. D. duct in persons of inferior station. This will  
 1760— be evident to those who compare the cor-  
 1780. ruption of public manners in the present  
 age, with that of Charles the second, when  
 the court, the city, and, in consequence,  
 the country, were overspread by a contagion  
 of licentiousness. Licentiousness, it is true,  
 abounds at present, and in no small degree;  
 but in how many instances is its destructive  
 passage checked by virtue? Whatever may  
 be the general opinion upon this subject, it  
 will be allowed, that the example of our  
 amiable King will rise up in judgement  
 against every votary of vice, every con-  
 temner of religious duties within his realm,  
 and will condemn him; for he, amidst the  
 perplexities of a public station, amidst the  
 boisterous waves of a contending world,  
 maintains, with firmness, his dependence on  
 the King of kings; whilst the other, un-  
 fettered by any outward restraint, free to  
 serve his God, either in the walks of public  
 life, or in the shade of a peaceful retire-  
 ment,

ment, throws himself into the lap of luxury, and his soul perishes with hunger in the midst of abundance.

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

Almost the first act of this good King's reign, [Oct. 31, 1760] was to issue a royal proclamation for the encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for preventing and punishing of Vice, Profaneness, and Immorality; which is directed, and continues to be read, at the opening of the assizes, and general quarter sessions of the peace, as well as occasionally in parish churches. The personal considerations which dictated this proclamation, do credit to the heart which produced them.—“ We humbly acknowledging, that we cannot expect the blessing and goodness of Almighty God (by whom kings reign, and on which we entirely rely,) to make our reign happy and prosperous to ourself, and to our people, without a religious observance of God's holy laws: to the intent, therefore, that religion, piety, and good manners may (*according to our most hearty desire*) flourish and increase under our administration and

R

govern-

A. D. government, We have thought fit, &c. to  
 1760— issue this our royal proclamation—And for  
 1780. the encouragement of religion and morality,  
 we will, upon all occasions, distinguish persons of piety and virtue, by marks of our royal favour.”

His Majesty's first speech to his parliament [Nov. 18, 1760] strengthens the impression of piety and true loyalty, occasioned by his first proclamation; and ought to call forth, in every British bosom, sentiments of the warmest, and most inviolable, attachment.—“ Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton; and the peculiar happiness of my life will ever consist in promoting the welfare of a people, whose loyalty and warm affection to me, I consider as the greatest and most permanent security of my throne; and, I doubt not, but their steadiness in those principles will equal the firmness of my invariable resolution to adhere to, and strengthen, this excellent constitution in church and state; and to maintain the to-  
 leration

leration inviolable. The civil and religious A. D.  
 rights of my loving subjects are equally 1760—  
 dear to me with the most valuable preroga- 1780.  
 tives of my crown: and, as the surest  
 foundation of the whole, and the best  
 means to draw down the divine favour on  
 my reign, it is my fixed purpose to coun-  
 tenance and encourage the practice of true  
 religion and virtue."—To forget such ex-  
 pressions, is impossible: to omit repeating  
 them, when occasion prompts, were an un-  
 grateful silence.

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It was remarked, in the account of the  
 early part of this century, that two eccle-  
 siastical parties prevailed in this country,  
 distinguished, according to their opinions  
 of church-government, by the names of  
 the High Church, and the Low Church,  
 parties. As in all controversies, extremes  
 of sentiment were adopted on both sides;  
 the authority of the church was, perhaps,  
 exalted as much too high by the one, as it  
 was depressed too low by the other. Those

A. D. 1760—1780. who wished to avoid the pomp and despotism of the popish hierarchy, favoured the republican plainness of presbyterian government, and those who thought the primitive arrangement of ecclesiastical power, essentially different from that now established in Scotland, and now, or lately, established in Holland, bent with too strong an inclination, to that mode of outward worship, which had been long exhibited to the world, in the church of Rome. In the midst of warm discussions, a middle party might have been, and perhaps was formed, of men of moderate principles, who derived episcopal government from the earliest establishment of christianity by Christ and his apostles, and were glad to receive it, undulterated by the accretions of time, the appendages of superstition, or the dreams of enthusiasm. They needed not to have gone further for a pure example of church-government, than the times which succeeded the period of the reformation, and which, in many instances, has been imitated in the church

church of England during the preceding century. A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

The two parties alluded to, may be traced through a succession of many years, varying indeed with the times, but still holding a decided, if not a respectful, distance from each other. When the Bangorian controversy ceased, the storm appeared to subside; but some streaks of the cloud still lingered in the horizon, ready to be re-united, when similar times, or men of similar dispositions, might be inclined to call them into action. This was the case at this period of our history; and the calm, which had so long prevailed, was succeeded by new tempests. The fear of popery became again the *watchword* of party. Not indeed, as I imagine, that popery was the real object of fear, (for where the principles of popery really prevail, fear can hardly be too much magnified,) but it will appear, on this occasion, that the word *popery* was used, to introduce principles of an opposite nature. Ever since the rebellion of the year 1745, loyal

A. D. 1760—  
 1780. subjects of the king, and members of a pure protestant church, united their endeavours to suppress every encroachment of the power of Rome. They did not indeed, as on former occasions, bring into parliament new bills of pains and penalties against professors of the Roman Catholic religion. No. They acted upon more liberal principles; and though they carefully watched their movements where danger might have been apprehended, they avoided every violent interruption of their mode of worship. This has been the happy policy of the present reign. Most of the severe acts against papists have been repealed; and they are checked only, where they ought to be so, in such points of temporal and spiritual government, as are inconsistent with our own establishment in church and state.

That the Roman Catholics, about this period, [A. D. 1765] might make some ineffectual attempts to revive their power in this kingdom, will neither be affirmed nor denied. But this just observation of Macleane,

leane, will probably be universally admitted, as characteristic of the times when this controversy was maintained; that, “the public appearance of popery, which is justly complained of, is no *certain* proof of its growth, but rather shews its indiscretion than its strength, and the declining vigour of *our* zeal, than the growing influence of *its* maxims\*.”

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

Under this point of view, Archdeacon Blackburne's ‘Considerations on the present State of the Controversy between the Protestants and Papists of Great Britain and Ireland,’ will appear to be a proper introduction to his celebrated work ‘The Confessional; or, a full and free Inquiry into the Right, Utility, Edification, and Success of establishing systematical Confessions of Faith and Doctrine in Protestant Churches,’ which was delivered to the public in 1766. No publication, since the days of Hoadley, produced a greater sensation in the Church of

\* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Appen. 2. vol. 5.

A. D. 1760—  
1780. England than this; a sensation which did not subside for many years, and roused the slumbering pretensions of her less orthodox members. Bold in assertion, and ingenious in argument, the author of 'The Confessional,' became the Coryphæus of a powerful party; and it was not till the Legislature, at the distance of several years, determined an important question resulting from it, that the controversy ceased.

The free discussion of the right of protestant churches to require subscription to systematical confessions of faith and doctrine, was attended with this beneficial effect, that it laid open the motives which occasioned it. While the controversy continued, the parties on both sides were too much heated to discuss coolly the tendency of their dispute. But we, who can look back thirty years, may be expected to view dispassionately, though certainly not without interest, so important a discussion. It is evident, that if the object which then occupied the public attention had been attained,

tained, the faith of every sincere member of our excellent church had been endangered, and a door opened for the introduction of discordant theological opinions. It is evident that a disbelief of many of the fundamental doctrines of christianity dictated the opposition, and therefore, had it been successful, in all human probability they would not only have overturned the Church of England, but the *Church of Christ*.

In consequence of the warm representations of the Confessional, and its numerous advocates, an association was formed at the Feathers-tavern in London [A. D. 1772], by certain clergymen of the church of England, and certain members of the two professions of law and physic, and some others, who were desirous of being relieved from the subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. A petition \* to parliament for  
this

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.



\* Copy of the petition to the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain in parliament assembled.

A. D. this purpose, was framed by this society,  
 1760— signed by about 250 of the clergy, and pre-  
 1780. sented

The humble Petition of certain of the Clergy of  
 the Church of England, and of certain of the two  
 professions of Civil Law and Physic, and others,  
 whose Names are hereunto subscribed,

SHEWETH,

That your petitioners apprehend themselves to have  
 certain rights and privileges which they hold of God  
 only, and which are subject to his authority alone.  
 That of this kind is the free exercise of their own  
 reason and judgement, whereby they have been brought  
 to, and confirmed in, the belief of the christian religion,  
 as it is contained in the holy scriptures. That they  
 esteem it a great blessing to live under a constitution,  
 which, in its original principles, ensures to them the  
 full and free profession of their faith, having asserted  
 the authority and sufficiency of Holy Scriptures in—  
 “ All things necessary to salvation ; so that whatsoever  
 “ is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is  
 “ not to be required of any man, that it should be be-  
 “ lieved as an article of the faith, or be thought requi-  
 “ site or necessary to salvation.” That your peti-  
 tioners do conceive that they have a natural right, and  
 are also warranted by those original principles of the  
 reformation from popery, on which the church of Eng-  
 land

sented to the House of Commons, on the 6th day of February. After perusing the petition, A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

land is constituted, to judge in searching the scriptures, each man for himself, what may or may not be proved thereby. That they find themselves, however, in a great measure, precluded the enjoyment of this invaluable privilege, by the laws relating to subscription; whereby your petitioners are required to acknowledge certain articles, and confessions of faith and doctrine, drawn up by fallible men, to be all and every of them agreeable to the said scriptures. Your petitioners, therefore, pray, that they may be relieved from such an imposition upon their judgement, and be restored to their undoubted right, as protestants, of interpreting scripture for themselves, without being bound by any human explications thereof, or required to acknowledge, by subscription, or declaration, the truth of any formula of religious faith and doctrine whatsoever, beside Holy Scripture itself.

That your petitioners not only are themselves aggrieved by subscription, as now required (which they cannot but consider as an encroachment on their rights competent to them, both as men and as members of a protestant establishment) but with much grief and concern, apprehend it to be a great hinderance to the spreading of Christ's true religion: as it tends to preclude, at least

A. D. petition, it will not be difficult to guess at  
 1760—the arguments made use of to support it.  
 1780.

“ Religious

least to discourage, further enquiry into the true sense of scripture, to divide communions, and cause mutual dislike between fellow protestants: as it gives a handle to unbelievers to reproach and vilify the clergy, by representing them (when they observe their diversity of opinion, touching those very articles which were agreed upon for the sake of avoiding the diversities of opinion,) as guilty of prevarication, and of accommodating their faith to luerative views, or political considerations: as it affords to papists, and others disaffected to our religious establishments, occasion to reflect upon it, as inconsistently framed, admitting and authorizing doubtful and precarious doctrines, at the same time that Holy Scripture alone is acknowledged to be certain, and sufficient for salvation: as it tends (and the evil daily increases) unhappily to divide the clergy of the establishment themselves, subjecting one part thereof, who assert but their protestant privilege to question every human doctrine and bring it to the test of scripture, to be reviled, as well from the pulpit as the press; by another part, who seem to judge the articles they have subscribed, to be of equal authority with the Holy Scripture itself: and, lastly, as it occasions scruples and embarrassments of conscience to thoughtful and worthy

“ Religious toleration, they said in the debates, could never be too extensive; and that

A. D.  
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worthy persons in regard to entrance into the ministry, or chearful continuance in the exercise of it.

That the clerical part of your petitioners, upon whom it is peculiarly incumbent, and who are more immediately appointed by the state, to maintain and defend the truth as it is in Jesus, do find themselves under a great restraint in their endeavours herein, by being obliged to join issue with the adversaries of revelation, in supposing the one true sense of scripture to be expressed in the present established system of faith, or else to incur the reproach of having departed from their subscriptions, the suspicion of insincerity, and the repute of being ill-affected to the church; whereby their comfort and usefulness among their respective flocks, as well as their success against the adversaries of our common christianity, are greatly obstructed.

That such of your petitioners as have been educated with a view to the several professions of civil law and physic, cannot but think it a great hardship to be obliged (as are all in one of the Universities, even at their first admission, or matriculation, and at an age so immature for disquisitions and decisions of such moment) to subscribe their unfeigned assent to a variety

A. D. that nothing could be more absurd, or more  
 1760—contrary to reason and religion than, to  
 1780. oblige



riety of theological propositions, concerning which their private opinions can be of no consequence to the public, in order to entitle them to academical degrees in those faculties; more especially as the course of their studies, and attention to their practice respectively, afford them neither the means nor the leisure to examine whether, and how far, such propositions do agree with the word of God.

That certain of your petitioners have reason to lament, not only their own, but the too probable misfortune of their sons, who, at an age before the habit of reflection can be formed, or their judgment matured, must, if the present mode of subscription remains, be irrecoverably bound down in points of the highest consequence, to the tenets of ages less informed than their own.

That, whereas the first of the three articles, enjoined by the 36th Canon of the Church of England to be subscribed, contains a recognition of his Majesty's supremacy in all causes ecclesiastical and civil, your petitioners humbly presume, that every security, proposed by subscription to the said article, is fully and effectually provided for by the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, prescribed to be taken by every Dea-  
 con

oblige people to subscribe articles which they did not believe." I shall not recite the arguments of the violent of either party, but confine myself to the principles

A. D  
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1780.

son and Priest at their ordination, and by every Graduate in both Universities. Your petitioners, nevertheless, are ready, and willing, to give any farther testimony which may be thought expedient, of their affection for his Majesty's person and government, of their attachment and dutiful submission in church and state, of their abhorrence of the unchristian spirit of popery, and of all those maxims of the church of Rome, which tend to enslave the consciences, or to undermine the civil or religious liberty of a free protestant people.

Your petitioners in consideration of the premises, do now humbly supplicate this Honourable House, in hope of being relieved from an obligation so incongruous with the right of private judgment, so pregnant with danger to true religion, and so productive of distress to many pious and conscientious men, and useful subjects of the state; and in that hope look up for redress, and humbly submit their cause, under God, to the wisdom and justice of a British Parliament, and the piety of a protestant King.

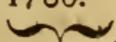
And your petitioners shall ever pray, &c.

A. D. upon which a large majority [219 against  
 1760—73] decided against the petition. “ They  
 1780. insisted that all governments had a right  
 to constitute the several orders of their  
 subjects as they pleased; that the priest-  
 hood, in this instance, stood in the same  
 predicament with the others; that it was  
 necessary that those who were to be appoint-  
 ed the public teachers and instructors of  
 the people, should be bound by some cer-  
 tain principles from which they were not  
 to deviate; that to prevent the disorder  
 and confusion incident to so great a num-  
 ber, it was also necessary, that some pub-  
 lic symbol should be established, to which  
 they should all assent, as a mark of their  
 conformity and union; that a simple as-  
 sent to the scriptures, would in this case  
 be of no signification, as every day’s ex-  
 perience shewed, that no two would agree  
 in their general construction of them, and  
 that it was too well known, that the great-  
 est absurdities, and even blasphemies, had  
 at different times been attempted to have  
 been

been supported or defended upon their authority. It was also said, that so far as subscription related to the clergy, who were those principally concerned, it could not be considered that they suffered any injustice, as they were under no necessity of accepting benefices contrary to their conscience, and if their scruples arose afterwards, they had it always in their power to quit them; and that every man now, according to the prayer of the petition, was at liberty to interpret the scripture for his own private use; but that his being authorized to do so for others, contrary to their inclination, was a matter of a very different nature\*.”

There is an argument, not mentioned in the petition, but alluded to in the debate, which casts an additional light on the motives of the petitioning party. “A happy opportunity,” they said, “was now offered, of opening such a door for the dissenters,

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.



\* Dodsley's Annual Register, 1772, p.\*89.

A. D. 1760—  
 1780. } as it was probable that most of them would enter at, and thereby be received into the bosom of the established church.”—Happy indeed, would that opportunity be, which could accomplish so important a purpose. I pray sincerely and earnestly for the union of all Christian churches. May they speedily become *one fold, under one Shepherd!* But I would not betray the true treasure of the gospel, for all that India or Ophir could produce. I would not see the invaluable doctrines of revelation invaded by an heterogeneous multitude sheltered under *any* denomination of Christians, who might impose upon the ignorant and unwary, who might preach a faith, which is not the faith, and establish a church, which is not the church, of Christ. I mean not, by this expression, to reject the offer of union with any believers in our crucified Saviour. We have all, probably, prejudices to be conquered. But the salvation of our souls, is, or ought to be, equally near to us all. Therefore, as we regard  
 our

our everlasting welfare, we should “buy the truth, and sell it not\* ;” we should deal honestly with our own hearts ; we should not compromise the great truths of the gospel, but love them, cherish them, live with them, die with them. External ceremonies indeed form no necessary part of the gospel of Christ. Times and seasons will alter their appearance. But no time, no season, can alter that faith which was once delivered to the Saints. “Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but *my words* shall not pass away †.”

Immediately after the discussion of the petition, a motion was made in the House of Commons with no friendly intention to the established church, for leave to bring in a bill to quiet the possession of the subject against dormant claims of the church. A bill of this nature had passed with respect to the claims of the Crown, but the argument stood upon a different founda-

\* Prov. xxiii. 23.

† Matt. xxiv. 35.

A. D. 1760—  
 1780. } tion with respect to the church. The combinations of rich farmers, the quick succession of incumbents, &c. it was said, would render the effects of this bill very injurious to the poorer clergy, who were unable to defend their rights; that “the Nullum Tempus claimed by the Crown, was an engine in the hands of the strong to oppress the weak; but that the Nullum Tempus of the Church was a defence to the weak against the strong\*.” The bill was rejected.

In consequence of the favourable sentiments expressed in the late debates with respect to the dissenting ministers, it was thought a seasonable opportunity for them to apply to parliament to be relieved from subscription to certain articles of religion, which was enjoined them by the Act of Toleration. The doctrines thus enjoined to be assented to, at the time the act was made, were equally the belief of the

\* Debates.

established and dissenting church. At present, this was supposed not to be the case. A. D. 1760—1780.

The bill, though carried through the House of Commons by a large majority, was thrown out of the House of Lords by a majority of 102 to 29.

The year following, the question of subscription was again brought forward, and discussed in the House of Commons, though with a different object, and on a narrower scale. A motion was made, Feb. 23, 1773, for the Speaker's quitting the chair, that the house should take into consideration the question of "Subscription to the 39 Articles, or any other test which may be required of persons at their matriculation at either of the Universities." This likewise was rejected by a large majority, 159 against 67. In both the Universities the same attempt was made, but without success.

The last application to parliament on this ground was on the 5th of May 1774, upon a motion for the relief of *all* parties

A. D. 1760—  
1780. concerned. This application was not more successful than the preceding. So decided indeed was the general opinion, that the mover of the question did not divide the house.

“ Here then,” says a relater of the successive attempts in this business, “ come we to that period, where, for the present, all proceedings stop. We will not enter into arguments. Let it suffice to remark, that Christianity, simple, and unadulterated, as exhibited in the scriptures, remains, even at this day, and in this country, not only not established, but—not tolerated by legal authority\*.”

Is it possible, that this language is ad-

\* “ A short View of the Controversies occasioned by the Confessional, and the Petition to Parliament for relief in the Matter of Subscription to the Liturgy, and 39 Articles of the Church of England.” In this pamphlet, signed J. D. and dated April 17, 1775, are enumerated 43 publications on the controversy occasioned by the Confessional; and 102 on the Clerical Petition Controversy.

dressed to the mild, the benevolent, the truly TOLERANT Church of England? Is it possible that any member of that church should have occasion to use this language? Individuals, perhaps, in all states and churches, may be found indulging harsh measures, the consequence of harsh tempers. But that in INTOLERANCE should be attributed to a government, and to a church protected by that government, whose principles are generally known, and in which *Christianity, simple, and unadulterated, as exhibited in the scriptures,* is professedly taught, will hardly be believed. That this church should watch with a careful, and even a jealous eye, over so valuable a treasure as she possesses, no one ought to condemn: that she will suffer any, *every* man to partake with her in this inestimable blessing, all dispassionate observers will allow. But that she should wilfully adopt a conduct destructive of true religion, that she should oppress any description of conscientious persons, so as

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

A. D. 1760—  
1780. } to call forth violent invective, and intemperate reproof, and induce them to say, in the language of the author of this pamphlet, sore with disappointment, that *Christianity, in this country, is not only not established, but not tolerated by legal authority*, is neither consistent with her general professions, nor her general practice.

What the true motives were which actuated several of the petitioning clergy, soon became evident by the secession of a few. A chapel was opened in Essex-street by a very worthy, and, I doubt not, conscientious minister, who relinquished a distinguished situation in the church on account of his religious principles. This was also the case in a few other instances, which certainly deserve commendation: as it can be no mark either of piety or honesty to retain the emoluments of a station, which both principle and inclination tend rather to destroy than to support.

The introduction of Arian and Socinian tenets appears to have been, with many, the

the chief motives of this important controversy. Liberty of conscience, erecting its standard by the side of civil liberty (according to such definitions of liberty as began then to prevail) took advantage of the times to prefer its plea. Many luminous pens were drawn upon the occasion on both sides; and the Church of England, as usual, met with many advocates. This controversy, having had its day, has now sunk into oblivion; but it has left a consequence behind it, which co-operating with the free opinions of more modern times, has diffused no salutary influence through many a peaceful retreat. The true faith of the Gospel indeed has not been shaken as a public profession; but in some large cities and populous towns, places of worship have been opened, though many of them were not long supported, on the Arian and Socinian plan; some adopting the use of the Book of Common Prayer as originally published by Dr. Samuel Clark, and others conforming to the Presbyterian model

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.



A. D. model of public devotion. So unfettered  
 1760—indeed are modern sectarists of this descrip-  
 1780. tion, that the names both of Arius and  
 Socinus have gone out of fashion, and  
 that of *Unitarian* almost universally adopt-  
 ed. Perhaps there is policy in adopting a  
 name, which, in one sense, even the most  
 orthodox believer needs not reject; as he,  
 as well as they, acknowledges that “*there  
 is none other God but one*”.\* But the or-  
 thodox believer will not reduce his faith  
 to a level with that of Mahomet; he will  
 not look for salvation in the Manual of  
 Epictetus, or in the Offices of Cicero. Mo-  
 rality, however excellent as a rule of life,  
 will not become a *living principle* in the  
 heart of man, if it be not mixed with faith  
 in those who are instructed in it. The  
 religion of the *Unitarian* therefore (in *their*  
 sense of the word) may be called the re-  
 ligion of the Deist, or of any other un-  
 believer of the revelation of the gospel.

\* 1 Cor. viii. 4.

Indeed,

Indeed, if we take away the nature of A. D.  
 God, as displayed in the awful words of 1760—  
 scripture, we remove all distinctions be- 1780.  
 tween Christians, and those Infidels, who  
 are not Atheists. “ I believe in God, and  
 Mahomet his prophet,” says the disciple  
 of the celebrated Oriental impostor. “ I  
 believe in God, and Jesus Christ, a prophet  
 and teacher,” is the creed of the Unitas-  
 rian. But the member of the church esta-  
 blished among us, finds a fuller *faith* in  
 scripture which is *the anchor of his soul,*  
*both sure and certain;* a faith, which has  
 God for its object in the most perfect state  
 of unity, but in whose essence are *Jesus*  
*Christ,* the son of his love; without whose  
 meritorious death and sufferings, sinners  
 never could have been reconciled to the  
 Almighty, and All-just;—and the *Holy*  
*Spirit,* without whose inspiration, the best  
 of men could neither think a good thought,  
 nor perform a good action. The language  
 of scripture is rendered consistent by thus  
 considering the great object of religions  
 adoration.

A. D. adoration. The true state of man's con-  
 1760— dition is laid open, his utter incapability  
 1780. } of redeeming himself from the penalty of  
 sin, is rendered clear and perspicuous; his  
 sole dependence on a Saviour is made ma-  
 nifest, in whose person are united both the  
 human and divine natures, that He might,  
 at once, though sinless himself, represent  
 that nature which had sinned, and at the  
 same time afford an adequate propitiatory  
 sacrifice; and his gratitude is inflamed by  
 a revelation of that Holy, Divine Com-  
 forter, who descends into his heart with  
 gifts and graces, the precious fruits of faith,  
 and the blessed assurance of immortal hap-  
 piness.

What have heathen morals, what have  
*the corrupted doctrines* of christianity, to  
 offer, equal to these great and invaluable  
 blessings? Man, who knows his own weak-  
 ness, relies not on his own merits, but the  
 merits of his Saviour: man, whose carnal  
 heart sinks under worldly oppressions, and  
 worldly temptations, rises superior to them

all in the confidence of spiritual assistance. A. D. 1760—  
 “If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; 1780.  
 but if ye, *through the Spirit*, do mortify  
 the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For  
*as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they*  
*are the Sons of God.* For ye have not re-  
 ceived the spirit of bondage again to fear;  
 but ye have received the spirit of adop-  
 tion, whereby we cry, Abba, Father\*!”

It will be evident to those who have made the History of the Church of England their study during the eighteenth century, that she has, upon every occasion, supported the principles of religious toleration in the purest manner. It will not, indeed, be supposed, that, in adhering to this charitable conduct, she has betrayed her own interests, or connived at the introduction of doctrines, inconsistent with the purity of her faith. On the contrary, she has guarded her *own treasure* by every means which prudence or propriety could

\* Rom. viii. 13, 14, 15.

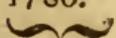
dictate;

A. D. 1760—  
 1780. } dictate; at the same time that she has permitted others to use *their riches* in any manner they chose, provided they did not employ them to her detriment or destruction. This has certainly been the general principle on which she has acted, notwithstanding any particular instance which her enemies might judge oppressive. Neither has she ever suffered by her charity; not will she ever suffer, by uniting mildness and moderation with well-tempered zeal, and the practice of true christianity.

From long experience, that men are more easily led by the cords of love, than constrained by compulsion, the legislature of this country has been induced, at various times, to relax the *necessary* restraints, which it had occasionally thought proper to exercise on the profession of systems of religion differing from our own. The Roman Catholic and Protestant-dissenting persuasions are the most eminent of those, which have stood forth most in opposition to that of the Church of England. These,

as circumstances of danger were removed, have frequently experienced the clemency, and indeed, corresponding with the alterations of time, the justice of the state.

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.



The liberality of England to the Roman Catholics appeared at this time in the arrangements which took place in settling the civil and religious constitution of government in the province of Quebec, A. D. 1774. The religion of Rome, it was said, by the bill which was passed for this purpose, was not only protected, but established. This was considered by many as contrary to the principles of the English constitution. A warm petition was presented to the throne from the corporation of London previous to his Majesty's signing the bill, "requesting that he would not give his assent to it. "The Roman Catholic religion," they said, "which is known to be idolatrous and bloody, is established by this bill, and no legal provision is made for the free exercise of our reformed faith, nor the security of our protestant fellow-subjects of the

A. D. 1760—  
 1780. the Church of England in the true worship  
 of Almighty God according to their con-  
 sciences.”—These intemperate expressions  
 did not produce the desired effect. Mur-  
 muring and discontent followed: which  
 were succeeded at no very distant period,  
 with daring and atrocious outrage\*.

Principles of toleration, happy indeed in  
 their general consequences when directed  
 with judgment, continued to gain ground  
 among the liberal part of the nation; so  
 that when a patriotic member moved the  
 house of commons [May 14, 1778] for  
 leave to bring in a bill, for the repeal of  
 certain penalties and disabilities, provided  
 in an act of the 10th and 11th of William  
 III. entitled “An Act to prevent the  
 further growth of Popery,” the motion was  
 received with universal approbation, and  
 a bill was brought in, and passed, without

\* In the year 1791, the mistakes of this bill were  
 rectified by another, in which a very ample allotment  
 of land was made, in both the divisions of Canada, for  
 the maintenance of a protestant clergy.

a single

a single negative. This was certainly no proof of any well grounded *fear* of popery. It must also be remarked, that the removing of penalties, and promoting principles of toleration, do not operate as an encouragement of obnoxious doctrines. The law still remains in force against the propagation of pernicious opinions; whilst the personal exercise of private modes of worship is allowed. The language of the Roman Catholics, in an address to the throne, at this period, when disaffection must have been attended with danger, was modest and respectful. “Our exclusion,” they said, “from many of the benefits of that constitution, has not diminished our reverence to it. We behold with satisfaction the felicity of our fellow-subjects; and we partake of the general prosperity which results from an institution so full of wisdom. We have patiently submitted to such restrictions and discouragements as the legislature thought expedient. We have thankfully received such relaxation of the

T rigour

A. D.  
1760 —  
1780.

A. D. 1760—1780. rigour of the laws, as the mildness of an enlightened age, and the benignity of your Majesty's government, have gradually produced: and we submissively wait, without presuming to suggest either time or measure, for such other indulgence, as those happy causes cannot fail, in their own season, to effect. We beg leave to assure your Majesty, that our dissent from the legal establishment, in matters of religion, is purely conscientious: that we hold no opinions adverse to your Majesty's government, or repugnant to the duties of good citizens."—In removing the restrictions of the Roman Catholics at this time, the legislature was not unmindful of the constitution of the kingdom, in church and state; and therefore required a reasonable test, or oath, to be taken by the parties to be benefited by this indulgence, without which they could not receive any advantage from the act.

The relief thus granted to the Roman Catholics soon formed a precedent for the  
dissenting

dissenting interest to expect similar concessions. Accordingly an act was passed in 1779 which removed many disabilities from protestant dissenting ministers and school-masters, requiring them at the same time to take the usual oaths to government, and to sign a declaration in general terms, that they are “Christians and Protestants, and that they 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 they receive the same as the rule of their doctrine and practice.”

It is said to have been the intention of government in the year 1780, to have extended the same relief to the Roman Catholics of Scotland, which their brethren in England received in 1778: but this liberality was prevented by private associations, nominally for the defence of the protestant religion; and public clamour was excited by every possible means. It will be necessary as a justification of our mild

A. D. and *unpersecuting* profession of religion, to  
 1760—shew that the insurrection which shortly  
 1780. after followed in the metropolis, and in  
 other places, and the injuries suffered by  
 Roman Catholics, as well as by those who  
 had supported the humane act of parlia-  
 ment lately passed in their favour, did not  
 spring from any ecclesiastical or civil re-  
 sentment, or from any general influence  
 of public opinion, but that it arose, *at*  
*first*, from an inconsiderable committee,  
 and afterwards from an enraged mob,  
 whose object was plunder, and who knew  
 nothing of popery or protestantism but the  
 names. The first Scotch committee was at  
 Edinburgh, and “in point of number  
 amounted only to thirteen persons; the  
 three first, or principal of these were a  
 merchant, a goldsmith, and a teacher of  
 the poor in an hospital; the remainder  
 were men either exercising mean trades,  
 or else writing clerks, some serving in  
 counting houses, and others in public of-  
 fices; excepting only the thirteenth, who,

being yet an apprentice, filled, notwithstanding, the important office of secretary to the committee\*." But, how great a fire, will not a little spark kindle! By persevering in intemperate language and intemperate publications, the wild-fire of invective ran speedily along, a spirit of outrage began to display itself, and, not being immediately checked by the civil magistrate, it fell, with great severity as well as cruelty, on the persons and property of several Roman Catholics in Edinburgh, and Glasgow, and some other places in Scotland.

About the same period, a small society was formed in London, of very obscure men, corresponding with the society in Edinburgh, who assumed to themselves the name of "The protestant Association;" holding themselves forth as representatives of the protestant interest, and having the same objects in view with the original asso-

\* Dodsley's Annual Register, 1780, p. 27.

A. D. 1760—1780. ciators in Scotland. The name soon increased the numbers to an incredible degree. Under the pretence of presenting a petition to parliament for the repeal of the act lately passed, in favour of the Roman Catholics, an immense multitude, amounting, it is said, to upwards of 40,000, assembled in St. George's Fields for that purpose, under the direction of Lord George Gordon, a lunatic and a fanatic, who had said, that he would not present the petition, if he was attended with less than twenty thousand persons. The consequence was the same with that which had occurred in Scotland, but accompanied with more extensive mischief.

The history of the shocking and disgraceful transactions in London, which immediately followed this unprecedented step, is too well known to be here repeated. It does not, however, appear from the numerous trials which took place on this melancholy occasion, that there was any deliberate plan of persecution. The

blind zeal, and perhaps, the interested vil-  
 lany of a few, afforded an infatuated mob  
 an opportunity of committing various acts  
 of plunder and depredation. “No po-  
 pery,” might be the universal cry: “No  
 popery,” might be inscribed on doors and  
 window-shutters, to deprecate the wrath of  
 an infuriated multitude; but the fear of  
 popery, at this time, certainly, never truly  
 entered the heart. What connection could  
 there be between the demolition of popery,  
 and the destruction of the public prisons?  
 What was the intention of the mob when  
 they aimed to attack the national credit of  
 the kingdom, the bank of England? Was  
 that done on the ground of popery, or for  
 the repeal of the bill?—I do not know that  
 even designs of a political nature, can be  
 inferred from this temporary confusion of  
 the metropolis. It was the rash attempt  
 of a deluded mob: it was the violence of  
 waves set in motion by the dæmon of the  
 storm: it was an irregular system of plun-  
 der and destruction, which might with  
 T 4 equal

A. D.  
 1760—  
 1780.

A. D. 1760—  
1780. equal facility have fallen upon any description of persons. To use the words of Lord Chief Justice Loughborough, in his charge to the grand jury of the county of Surry, after opening a special commission for the trial of the rioters—"Religion, the sacred name of religion, and of that purest and most peaceable system of christianity, the PROTESTANT CHURCH, was made the profane pretext for assaulting the government, trampling upon the laws of the country, and violating the first great precept of their duty to God and to their neighbour,—the pretext only; for there is not, I am sure, in Europe, a man, so weak, so uncandid, or so unjust to the character of the reformed church, as to believe, that any religious motive could by any perversion of human reason, induce men to attack the magistrates, release felons, destroy the source of public credit, and lay in ashes\* the *capital of the* PROTESTANT FAITH!"

\* The following *picture* of the shocking effects of unpremeditated tumult, I should suppose, would extinguish

Two years before, when the act was passed, it excited few fears, and no tumults : It gave its sanction to no principles inconsistent with the security of our reformed faith, but merely removed several penalties which every liberal and humane man would have wished to see removed. Lord Mansfield said, in his charge to the jury:

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

tinguish the torch even of sedition itself.—“ As soon as the day was drawing towards a close, one of the most dreadful spectacles this country ever beheld was exhibited. Let those who were not spectators of it, judge what the inhabitants felt, when they beheld at the same instant, the flames ascending and rolling in clouds from the King’s Bench and Fleet prisons, from New Bridewell, from the Toll-gates on Black-friars bridge, from houses in every quarter of the town, and particularly from the bottom and middle of Holborn, where the conflagration was horrible beyond description. The houses that were first set on fire at this last mentioned place, both belonged to Mr. Langdale, an eminent distiller, and contained immense quantities of spirituous liquors.—*Six and thirty fires, all blazing at one time*, and in different quarters of the city, were to be seen from one spot!—During the whole night,

A. D. jury at Lord George Gordon's trial, "It  
 1760— is most injurious to say that this bill is  
 1780.  a toleration of popery. I cannot deny that,  
 where the safety of the state is not con-  
 cerned, my own opinion is, that men  
 should not be punished for mere matter  
 of conscience, and barely worshipping God  
 in their own way: but where what is al-  
 ledged as matter of conscience is dangerous  
 or prejudicial to the state, which is the  
 case of popery, the safety of the state is  
 the supreme law, and an erroneous reli-  
 gion, so far as upon principles of sound  
 policy that safety requires, ought to be  
 restrained and prohibited; no good man

night, men, women, and children, were running up  
 and down with such goods and effects as they wished  
 most to preserve. The tremendous roar of the au-  
 thors of these horrible scenes was heard at one instant,  
 and at the next, the dreadful reports of soldier's mus-  
 quets, firing in platoons, and from different quarters;  
 in short, every thing seemed to impress the mind with  
 ideas of universal anarchy and approaching desolation."

Annual Register, 1780.

has

has ever defended the many penal laws against papists upon another ground: but this bill is not a toleration, it only takes away the penalties of one act out of many.

A. D.  
1760—  
1780.

—Be the merits of the bill what they may, it is totally a misrepresentation to infer from thence, that papists are tolerated: It is a cry to raise the blind spirit of fanaticism, or enthusiasm, in the minds of a deluded multitude, which, in the history of the world, has been the cause of much ruin and national destruction.”

Soon after these tumults had been appeased, the House of Commons entered into several resolutions to remove the apprehensions of many well-meaning, but ill-informed persons, by assuring them that the bill in question did not authorize the danger which they had imagined, and that they would watch over the protestant religion with unremitting attention. A bill likewise was brought in, and passed the House of Commons (but was lost in the House of Lords, being considered as unnecessary)

A. D. necessary) “for affording security to the  
 1760—protestant religion from any encroachments  
 1780. of popery, by more effectually restraining  
 papists, or persons professing the popish  
 religion, from teaching, or taking upon  
 themselves the education, or government  
 of, the children of protestants.”

In consequence of an order given at this period, by the House of Lords, to make an exact enquiry into the number of papists in England and Wales, it appeared, from the returns, that the increase since the last survey in 1767, was very trifling; not more than might be expected from the general increase of population. \*

In the midst of these tumults and riots, whether arising from motives of religion

|                             |           |              |
|-----------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| * Number of papists in 1767 | - -       | 67,916       |
| Ditto                       | - in 1780 | 69,317       |
| Increase in 13 years        | - -       | <u>1,400</u> |

If the number of inhabitants in Great Britain amount to eight millions, the papists, at this period, did not make one hundredth part of the whole.—Bishop of Chester's [Porteus] Letter to the Clergy, 1781.

or not, it is no small satisfaction to observe, that the serious and earnest professors of our reformed faith, who took no part in these excesses, still retained principles of charity to those who cultivated systems of belief differing from their own. So may it always be! And though we cannot wish success to an erroneous religion, neither look with indifference on the fallacious assurances of a corrupted church; yet should we consider every member of a christian community as allied to us by that universal chain which binds all the servants of our Lord together; who will confirm the weak, and correct the mistaken, who will give wisdom to the ignorant, and pardon to the penitent; who will, finally, conduct every faithful follower, in his own good time, and manner, through all the changes and chances of this mortal life, to “the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven.”

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1760—  
1780.



END OF SECTION I. OF PART IV.

PART

## PART IV.

### SECTION II.

*Reflections, &c. during the Reign of  
George III.*

A. D. 1780—1790.

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A. D. 1780—  
1790. } THE history of a century, like the history  
of a day, though proceeding forward in an  
uninterrupted, progressive course, is yet  
distinguished in its several parts, by vary-  
ing, but appropriate scenery. Each change  
approaches, like the altering lustre in the  
dawning of the morning. The golden  
beam first tinges the mountain, but is soon  
lost behind a bank of fog; gradually it  
removes this obstruction, and shines upon  
the world, yet a heavy cloud is waiting for  
its reception, and once more interrupts its  
genial influence; the evening of the day  
is

is marked, either by an illustrious effulgence of light, or is shut up amid the dreary shades of darkness and horror. The century thus changes its features, and its prospects. The sun-shine and the gloom of public morals, alternately offer themselves to the view. Customs and manners of various tendency, and endless succession, prevail and disappear. Happy those times, when the profession of true religion produces a correspondent decency and decorum of manners! Melancholy the æra, when a disregard of the duties of the christian, generates the immoralities and vices of the heathen!

Some ages, unpolished perhaps in their manners, and uncultivated in outward embellishments, present vice before us under an harsh and disgusting appearance. Other ages, more refined in their acquisitions, from an easy familiarity of conduct, preserve the semblance of virtuous intercourse, whilst they indulge in every sensual gratification. Of this description, was the tinge of  
of

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.



A. D. of public morality at this period. A nobleman, of sprightly wit and fascinating manners, had written a series of letters, on general subjects, to his son\*. These, contrary, indeed, to the writer's intention, at least not with his concurrence, were published about the year 1774; and made an impression on the public mind of the most dangerous and pernicious influence. They were read, they were *studied* by persons of every denomination in life; and *simulation* became the favourite system, from the peer to the peasant. The *graces* were substituted for the *virtues*; convenience and decorum took place of truth and justice; true friendship was lost in courtesy, true religion in an affected benevolence. The effects of such a flattering picture of vice, who cannot but deplore? The publication of these letters forms an æra in the history of the fashionable world; and stamps upon the age, which received it with so much ardour and exulta-

\* Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son.

tion,

tion, the despicable character of *moral hy-* A. D.  
*pocrisy.* 1780—  
 1790.

The minds of the opulent were now assailed from the press, by every species of literary seduction. Rapid had been the improvement, in this country, in every art and science. Learning was no longer confined to schools and colleges, and many began to think the metropolis the best university. With freedom of action, freedom of thought naturally kept pace: and the want of seasonable restraint, occasioned the luxuriant mind to wanton in, and even to solicit, the lures of a vain, and sceptical philosophy. Authors of rank, as well as ability, fanned this flame. The subtle history of *Hume* was succeeded by the insinuating infidelity of *Gibbon*. In short, hidden vice was interwoven with elegance of manners, and a concealed irreligion with the finest flowers of history.

The times were ripening to a lamentable dereliction of principle, and new writers arose, at this season, to inculcate the *materiality*

A. D. *riality of the human soul*\*. What! after  
 1780—enjoying a pure revelation for 1800 yéars,  
 1790. which informs us that life and immortality  
 are *clearly illustrated* by the gospel; after  
 being in possession so long of every evi-  
 dence, both internal and external, that that  
 revelation was made to man from a just and  
 an eternal God; shall we, in these latter days,  
 talk of the soul, as of a *material substance*?  
 Will reason itself confirm such a supposi-  
 tion? But as a comprehension of the works  
 of nature, in innumerable instances, is far  
 beyond the powers of *reason*, why do we  
 thus treacherously appeal to *reason*? Let us  
 go to that fountain of truth, the holy Scrip-  
 tures alone, and there we shall learn, that  
 in the world to come, *both* soul and body  
 shall be the objects of punishment or re-  
 ward—“fear Him, that after death is able  
 to destroy *both soul and body* in hell †.”

When we are informed that these were the  
 studies of the polite part of the nation, we

\* Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit, &c.  
 by Joseph Priestley, LL. D. &c.

† Matt. x. 28.

shall not be surprised at the frivolous habits, as well as profligate manners, of the age.

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The cause, as well as the consequence, of this inundation of vice under the mask of elegant pleasures, is pointed out in “An Address of the Archbishop, Bishops, and Clergy of the Province of Canterbury, in Convocation assembled,” presented to his Majesty on the 17th of November, 1780.

“Amidst all the protection and favour we derive from the goodness of your Majesty’s heart, we lament the necessity of confessing, that the licentiousness of the times continues to counteract your paternal care for the state of national religion. Bad men and bad books are the produce of all times; but we observe with particular regret, that the wickedness of the age hath of late been directly pointed at the fences of piety and virtue, established by God Himself, and apparently secured by law. The open violation of the Lord’s day, and the invitations of men to desert the religious duties of that day for amusements,

A. D. frivolous at best, appears to call for the aid  
 1780— of the civil magistrate, to check the pro-  
 1790. gress of an evil so dangerous both to church  
 and state, by suppressing, on the Lord's  
 day, places of resort for pleasure, where the  
 interposition of the ministers of religion is  
 impracticable."

Public debating societies, such as the  
 Robin Hood society, &c. had been long  
 established in the metropolis, on different  
 evenings in the week; but it was not till  
 about this period, that Sunday evenings  
 were selected for that purpose. Under the  
 pretext of a free discussion, subjects, dan-  
 gerous both to civil and religious order,  
 were introduced; sentiments were diffused,  
 often pernicious in their tendency; and the  
 sacred day profaned, by disquisitions inimi-  
 cal to the pure truths of christianity. Places  
 of public amusement too, being prohib-  
 ited on that day, private subscription-  
 rooms were opened, under the names of  
 promenades, musical societies, &c. to kill  
 that precious time, which was given us  
 for

for very different purposes. A total cessa-  
 tion of business, an entire vacuity of a day,  
 was too much for the never-ending votaries  
 of dissipation to endure.

A. D.  
 1780—  
 1790.

- “ O ye Lorenzo’s of our age ! who deem  
 “ One moment unamused, a misery  
 “ Not made for feeble man—  
 “ How will you weather an *eternal night*  
 “ Where such expedients fail ? ”—

Meditation, prayer, the reading of the scriptures, the conversing with, and instructing of our family and dependents, form the best employments for the retired hours of the sabbath-day. The Sabbath, or day of rest, is an emblem of Heaven ; and if we do not use it, in this world, as a preparation for what we expect hereafter, I fear, an opportunity never will be given to us, as to those who are emphatically called *the people of God*, of entering into the *true rest*.

In compliance with the wishes of the Convocation, a law was made [A. D. 1781,] with heavy penalties, against those who  
 “ within the cities of London and West-  
 minster,

A. D. 1780—  
 1790. — minster, or in the neighbourhood, should open any house upon the Lord's day for public entertainment, amusement, or debate on religious or any other subjects."

The law had the desired effect with respect to public amusements, within the district to which it was limited. But why was its influence not extended to populous places, though remote from the metropolis? Yet, what law can reach the heart hardened against the law of God? Private dissipation demands the severest reprehension; as it is from private reservoirs of wickedness, that public places are supplied with licentious and abandoned attendants.

There are, alas! too many methods, not noticed by law, indeed, not cognizable by a human tribunal, by which the day of God is peculiarly profaned. Some acts of profanation might be restrained, which are not. Amongst the rest, I cannot omit to mention, the display of military parade, but, above all, the use of military music on the sabbath. The public street is crowded with

with idle spectators. The effects of music are well known, and the mind of the devout is hurt by a concatenation of ideas, which, at another time, would have given delight.

Amongst other exertions about this period [1784], to counteract the profanation of the sabbath-day, and at the same time to lay an happy foundation for the instruction of the poor, schools began to be established for the purposes of Sunday education. The original projector of these very beneficial establishments was Mr. Robert Raikes, of Gloucester, whose name ought to be delivered to posterity with every mark of veneration and respect. The plan was adopted with alacrity, in almost every part of the country. Its success, at first, was considerable; and, even now, when the ardour of novelty has a little subsided, it is productive in many places of inestimable benefits. The good naturally look to such institutions, for a reformation in the bulk of mankind; and, through the divine

A. D. blessing, I trust, they will not be disap-  
 1780—pointed. God will bring about his own  
 1790. pleasure, in his own manner. The year  
 after the foundation of these schools [1785],  
 the good Dean of Canterbury, Dr. Horne,  
 thus expressed himself. “Dark as the  
 prospect was, a ray of light has broken in  
 upon it, and that from an unexpected  
 quarter. An institution has been set on  
 foot by a private individual, to the excel-  
 lency of which, every man who loves his  
 country must rejoice to bear his testimony.  
 From small beginnings, it has increased and  
 diffused itself in a wonderful manner. The  
 sagacity of the wisest, cannot foresee how  
 much good may in the end be done by it,  
 and how far it may go towards saving a  
 great people from impending ruin. At the  
 moment in which I am speaking, no less  
 than one hundred thousand pupils are said  
 to be in training under its care. There  
 may soon be ten times that number; and,  
 if it finally succeed with half these, five  
 hundred

hundred thousand honest men and virtuous women, duly mingled in the mass of the community, will make a great alteration \*." A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

In the year 1786, the benefits of the church of England were extended to the episcopal church of North America. While the American provinces were under the jurisdiction of Great Britain, it was found difficult to establish episcopacy in that country. But after the convulsions of a destructive war, and a declaration of independence in civil and religious rights, so inconsistent is human nature, episcopacy was required. An act of the British parliament was passed, to "empower the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Archbishop of York, for the time being, to consecrate to the office of Bishop, persons, being subjects or citizens of countries out of his Majesty's dominions." For want of an act of this nature, previous to this period, a North American Bishop had received consecration from the Non-juring

\* Sermon at Canterbury.

A. D. Bishops of Scotland. The English liturgy  
 1780— had been revised, and proposed to the use  
 1790. of the protestant episcopal church, at a  
 convention of the said church, in the states  
 of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania,  
 Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and South  
 Carolina, held at Philadelphia from Sept.  
 27th to Oct. 7th, 1785. This American  
 church adopted the alterations of our Book  
 of Common Prayer, which had been pro-  
 posed in 1689, by several eminent and ex-  
 cellent divines\*, acting under a commission  
 of government for that purpose; but the  
 purpose of the commission at that time  
 miscarried, and it has never since been re-  
 vived. The alterations, thus made and  
 adopted, affect no point of faith, doctrine,  
 or even discipline, but are confined to such  
 circumstances of language or arrangement,  
 as time appeared to render necessary. While  
 arms and arts find their way into remote re-  
 gions of the earth, while trade penetrates with

\* Bishops Patrick, Burnet, Stillingfleet, Tillotson,  
 Kidder, and Tennison.

inconceivable assiduity the secret recesses of inhospitable countries, and traces the savage footsteps of the ferocious animals of the forest, we are happy to remark an extension also of religious benefits. The vast continent of America now increasing in population, and receiving from this country many great and inestimable benefits, at a moment when the great link of social intercourse seemed broken, offers to our view a sublime prospect of future greatness. I mean not such greatness as arises from its civil constitution; I leave that to political judges; but such greatness as the gospel bestows, such as springs from an union of many nations, lately savage and uncultivated, now the followers of the Lamb, and the worshippers of the true God. “After this, I beheld, and lo! a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying,

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

A. D. saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth  
 1780— upon the throne, and unto the Lamb \*.”

1790.

The light of the gospel, we have seen, both in former ages and our own, removed from many countries deemed unworthy of its presence. God grant, that our increasing wickedness, may not bring this judgement heavy on ourselves! A passage from the Sermons of an eminent Prelate strikes my memory, which appears to be even more applicable to this subject, at this period, than it was at the time when it was written, in the reign of King William. “ The light of the gospel, and the blessed opportunities which thereby we enjoy, are of an uncertain continuance, and may be of a lesser or longer duration, as God pleaseth, and according as we make use of them, and demean ourselves under them.” I remember there is a very odd passage in Mr. Herbert’s poems, which, whether it be only the prudent conjecture and foresight of a

\* Rev. vii. 9, 10.

wise man, or there be something more prophetical in it, I cannot tell; it is this: A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

- “ Religion stands on tiptoes in our land,  
 “ Ready to pass to the American strand,  
 “ When Seine shall swallow Tiber, and the Thames  
 “ By letting in them both, pollute her streams,  
 “ Then shall Religion to America flee :  
 “ They have their times of gospel, even as we.  
 “ My God, thou dost prepare for them a way,  
 “ By carrying first their gold from them away :  
 “ For gold and grace did never yet agree :  
 “ Religion always sides with poverty :  
 “ We think we rob them, but we think amiss :  
 “ We are more poor, and they more rich by this.  
 “ Thou wilt revenge their quarrel, making grace  
 “ To pay our debts, and leave our ancient place  
 “ To go to them, while that which now their nation  
 “ But lends to us, shall be our desolation.  
 “ Yet as the Church shall thither westward flie,  
 “ So Sin shall trace and dog her instantly :  
 “ They have their period also and set times  
 “ Both for their virtuous actions and their crimes.”

Mr. Herbert compares the course of the church to the course of the sun, both travelling westward; the one followed by sin, the

A. D. the other by darkness, till they both come  
 1780— round again to the east.  
 1790.

“ But as the sun still goes both west and east ;  
 “ So also did the church by going west  
 “ Still eastward go ; because it drew more near  
 “ To time and place where judgement shall appear\*.”

The meaning of it is this, that when the vices of Italy shall pass into France, and the vices of both shall overspread England, then the gospel shall leave these parts of the world, and pass into America, to visit those dark regions, which have so long *sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death.* And this is not so improbable, if we consider what vast colonies, in this last age, have been transplanted out of Europe into those parts, as it were on purpose, to “ *prepare and make way for such a change †.*” More singular will this observation be, if we consider the present establishment of the States of America, in consequence of the events

\* Mr. G. Herbert’s Church Militant.

† Tillotson’s Sermon, 248. Preached Feb. 15, 1685.  
 which

which terminated in the general peace of A. D  
1780—  
1790.  
the year 1783; as well as the extensive settlements which the British government still possesses, both on that continent, and in the islands of the West Indies. The propagation of the gospel, on its true principles, is an awful and important subject; but while we are solicitous to promote its interests abroad, let us not forget to correct that conduct, which diminishes its influence at home. The gospel will, undoubtedly, flourish to the end of the world; but its rays may brighten other countries, while we are buried in a ten-fold darkness. “As many as I love,” says the Spirit to the churches, “I rebuke and chasten, be zealous, therefore, and repent\*.”

The Bishops of New York and Philadelphia, were consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth, on the 4th day of February, 1787.

In the month of March, the same year,

\* Rev. iii. 19.

A. D. 1780—  
1790. an attempt was made to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts, which, as usual, was unsuccessful. The extension of civil and religious liberty, and the interest of the Dissenters, have generally, by themselves, been considered as constituting one and the same cause. At this period, when the flame, of what was called *liberty*, broke out on the continent, it communicated itself with inconceivable rapidity and vigour, to that party which thought itself aggrieved by political and religious restraints. This party was directed by several persons of brilliant talents, but turbulent dispositions. Discontented with the continued repulses, which their applications met with from the the legislature, they looked, with warm expectation, to the momentous events which were then beginning to develop themselves in France. They were too forward, however, for themselves, in avowing their principles; and an incautious expression of one of their leaders did more injury to their cause, than the whole tenour of his conduct

duct did it good. “ The silent propaga-  
 tion of truth,” he said, “ would in the end  
 prove more efficacious. They were wisely  
 placing, as it were, grain by grain, a train  
 of gunpowder, to which a match would one  
 day be laid, to blow up the fabric of error,  
 which could never again be raised upon the  
 same foundation\*.”—If we apply this ex-  
 pression to many of the scenes which we have  
 lived to behold ; if we adapt it to that vio-  
 lence which has so frequently, within a very  
 few years, erected itself both against church  
 and state ; if we consider the danger which  
 both have experienced, from foreign foes,  
 and from secret domestic enemies, ought  
 we not to humble ourselves under the  
 mighty hand of God, for so great, and un-  
 merited, a deliverance ?

The subject of the Test Laws has been  
 often, and critically, discussed. For much  
 longer than a century, have they been con-  
 sidered as a security of the national esta-

\* Dr. Priestley's Letter to Mr. Pitt.

A. D. 1780—  
 1790.  bishment. Every change of government has confirmed the same opinion. Why, then, should they not acquiesce in a determination, which so many wise legislators, or eminent men, have considered as essential to the constitution of the kingdom? Religious toleration they certainly enjoy, in its fullest sense. The religion of the dissenters, therefore, as such, has no complaint to make: and if it be determined that political necessity requires such a restraint over individuals, they have no more right to remonstrate, than a possessor of less than forty shillings a year, freehold estate, has to complain, that he is restrained from voting for a representative in parliament; or one of the royal family (being a Roman catholic) that he could not inherit the crown of this United Kingdom.

Our Sovereign, ever anxious for the preservation of religious order, followed up the act of parliament, occasioned by the address of the convocation, by a re-publication of his proclamation, [June 5th, 1787,]

“ for

“ for the encouragement of piety and virtue, and for the preventing and punishing of vice, profaneness, and immorality.” The times required severer language than had been used at the King’s accession; and, therefore, it was altered and adapted to new offences, which had sprung up in this age of dissipation.—“ We cannot but observe, with inexpressible concern, the rapid progress of impiety and licentiousness, and that deluge of profaneness, immorality, and every kind of vice, which, to the scandal of our holy religion, and to the evil example of our loving subjects, hath broken in upon us.”—In addition to the usual objects of public censure, such as “ playing on the Lord’s day at dice, cards, or any other game, either in public or private houses, excessive drinking, blasphemy, &c. public gaming-houses, and other loose and disorderly houses,” are added upon this occasion—“ all unlicensed public shews, interludes, and places of entertainment, as well as *loose and licentious prints, books, and*

A. D. 1780—  
1790. } *publications*, dispersing poison to the minds of the young and unwary.”—Many of these offences are common to all ages, but some of them are peculiar to our own. *Persons of honour, and those in places of authority*, are particularly exhorted to *set a good example*. This motive, though good in itself, is not the only motive which should influence the conduct of persons of honour and nobility. The good example should flow from the good conduct, not the good conduct merely from the good example. Duties of all kinds are of a *personal* nature. A man is responsible, *in his own person*, for his own conduct. And though it be no bad argument, to say to a person of rank and fortune, “you should go to church, you should act so as to set a good example,” yet if he shelter himself under his greatness, and perform his public duty on no other motive, his example will be soon detected, and do more harm than good to society. The rich and the poor meet together before the same God, for the same purposes.

The

The corruption of human nature appears equally in both. Both, therefore, implore the same forgiveness: both expect the same mercies from the same Redeemer. Let the rich man, then, do his duty, *as to God*, and for the sake of Him who has called him “out of darkness into his marvellous light,” without any regard to outward show or appearance, and then the consequence will be happy; happy for himself, happy for those who look up to him for an example.

*Persons, of what rank or quality soever,* are enjoined, “not to play at cards, &c. on the Lord’s day, either in public or *private* houses.” I am truly concerned, that any injunction of this nature should be thought necessary. In the higher ranks of life, and, perhaps, among the dissipated of all ranks, this offence may be committed. But happily for the morals of the middle, and lower orders of men, it certainly is not common. Where it is, it should be remembered, that a man’s house is *not his castle*, when he presumes to

A. D. perform in it any unlawful action. If no  
 1780— other eye beholds him, the eye of God pe-  
 1790. netrates the very blackness of darkness it-  
 self; and in a well-ordered community, like  
 our own, the magistrate pursues him, even  
 to his most secret recesses. Gaming, on  
 any, or every occasion, is the source of  
 every personal and domestic misery. It is  
 always a misuse of valuable time, and, when  
 pursued on a *gamester's* principles, it is a se-  
 rious, and a complicated offence. Inno-  
 cence, peace, tranquillity, *and religion*, the  
 source and consummation of all other vir-  
 tues, fall melancholy sacrifices before this  
 inhuman shrine.

The public exhibition of *loose and licen-  
 tious prints*, is a new offence, and calls for  
 the interposition of those, who are legally  
 constituted the censors of public morals.  
 To render vice familiar to the young and  
 unexperienced, is laying the ax of destruc-  
 tion at the root of the tree of virtue. Too  
 soon is the mind tinctured with evil and  
 corrupt principles. Too early does vice ob-  
 tain

tain an ascendant over the youthful heart, and lay prostrate with the dust the purest sentiments of religion and virtue. The exhibition of vicious scenery is no proof of a virtuous age. It would seem as if the Spartan fashion were revived, and immoralities were to be taught by pictures. How different from the days of the satyrist!

A. D.  
1780--  
1790.

————— “ Forgive me if I say,  
“ No lessons now are taught the Spartan way :  
“ Though in his pictures lust be full displayed,  
“ Few are the converts Aretine has made \*.”

Could the proclamation have looked a few years forward, it would have found another object of reprehension, differing little from the exhibition of loose and licentious *prints*; I mean the exhibition of loose and licentious *persons*, in public ball-rooms, theatres, and assemblies. It may seem too trifling an object of censure to mention female dress; but when the robe of decency is laid aside, the *character is changed*, and the spectator

\* Pope's Translation of Donne's Satyr.

A. D. will not expect to find the modesty of vir-  
 1780—tue beneath the trappings of a *wanton*.  
 1790.

Who is it that Solomon describes as distinguished by her *attire*\*? And who is it that St. Peter cautions against excess, or impropriety of apparel; and to whom he recommends rather *the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit*? for “after this manner,” he says, “of old time, *the holy women, who trusted in God, adorned themselves* †.”

*Books, and publications of a licentious tendency*, are, very justly, the next objects of censure. This age has beheld, even with astonishment and horror, the devastation of public morals which has been occasioned by an immoderate and improper use of a most noble and valuable art. At the time when this clause was added to the royal proclamation, government could hardly be sensible of the extent of evil shortly to be introduced by the press. The rapid diffusion of literature, renders this, the most obvious

\* Prov. vii, 10.

† 1 Peter iii. 5.

and easy channel, to the minds of the multitude. Soon was the pure stream of knowledge corrupted, by the most despicable and pernicious effusions of treason, wickedness, and irreligion. Another species of literature too has disgraced this age, under the name of *novels*, and given to it a character of levity, unknown to the good sense of our ancestors. Assuming the air of epic history, they have debased an excellent species of composition, by which a few eminent authors had “taught the heart to move at the command of virtue.” These modern excrescences have not only usurped the sceptre in the kingdom of *taste*, but have sent into a melancholy exile, much more useful and substantial knowledge. It is true, many excellent and elegant publications have continued to appear. But those, who were watching for an opportunity to overturn long established governments, and undermine the law and the church, seized upon this strong-hold, and privately, and suddenly, diffused its baneful influence through

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.



A. D. through the literary world. Public con-  
 1780—versation, as well as public morals, has suf-  
 1790. } fered by this abundant circulation of trifling  
 publications. *An equality of mind prevails.*  
 The master and his groom, the mistress and  
 her maid, are *edified* by the same narratives.  
 Whilst that BEST OF BOOKS, which makes  
 all men equal indeed, by offering an *equal*  
*salvation* to every son and daughter of  
 Adam, is not only not opened, as the great  
 foundation of domestic instruction, but be-  
 comes the object of profane criticism, and  
 ignorant railery, from men of every rank,  
 of every description.

May the arm of the avenging angel,  
 which hath already smote more than “an  
 hundred and fourscore and five thousand in  
 the camp of the Assyrians\*,” soon be stay-  
 ed! May the voice of Omnipotence soon  
 cry, “It is enough.” And may we, re-  
 formed by the inflictions of a merciful Pro-  
 vidence, hear the consoling accents of for-

\* Isaiah xxxvii. 36.

giveness!

givenness!—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon \*." A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

In 1788, a subject was brought into the House of Commons, which had undergone much public discussion, and which seemed to have engaged the hearts, feelings, consciences, and best reasoning faculties, not of the bulk of this nation only, but of many neighbouring countries; this was the total abolition of Negro Slavery. Were I to suffer my pen to follow its natural direction on this occasion, I might proceed to great length of argument; and if I thought my readers could want any stimulus on so interesting a subject, I could retail the language of some of the most eloquent, and most humane men of the age, some of the best divines, as well as the wisest legislators, which any æra has produced. That

\* Isaiah lv. 7.

A. D. 1780—  
 1790. } the Negro slave-trade has prevailed for  
 above two centuries, is no more an argu-  
 ment for its continuance, than that there  
 should be an edict to make vice perpetual,  
 or that policy should always triumph over  
 humanity. No sophistry can change the  
 nature of moral principles, or alter an esta-  
 blished precept of religion. “Wo to them,  
 who call evil good, and good evil\*.” “Let  
 God be true, and every man a liar †.” The  
 eternal law of justice must always remain  
 the same. That which is fundamentally  
 wrong, no time, no practice, can render  
 right. “*Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.*”

But it is said, upon the faith of govern-  
 ment, much money has been embarked in  
 this trade. True. But till it can be proved  
 that the blood of innocence may legally be  
 purchased with money, the observation is  
 without effect. Money can do much, but  
 money can neither buy nor sell the gifts and  
 graces of Almighty God. “Thy money

\* Isaiah v. 20.

† Rom. iii. 4.

perish with thee," said Peter to Simon the Sorcerer, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money\*." Besides, it may be alleged in behalf of government, that she might have been mistaken in the nature of the trade, at its first establishment in this nation. The objects of suffering were far removed from her sight—she saw the treasure, but saw not the miseries, heard not the sighs and groans with which it was procured. Rumour, perhaps, never told her of negroes deceitfully trepanned from their friends and country—of negroes chained together and thrown into the sea to lighten a ship in the middle passage, or dying of putrid disorders between the decks,—of negroes stripped in the West-Indian markets, and sold, without any consideration of kindred and family affection, the wife torn from her husband, the child from its despairing parent;—of negroes smarting, mangled, murdered under

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

\* Acts viii. 20.

A. D. the whip of a severe task-master. Govern-  
 1780—ment surely never knew, or never consi-  
 1790. dered, these dreadful instances of human  
 cruelty.

No question was ever discussed with more zeal, or greater ability than this. A society was formed in the year 1787, under the direction of a chairman, one of the most benevolent of men, whose object was to endeavour to effect the abolition of the Slave-trade. The subject has been brought before parliament, by a member, whose religious and philanthropic principles do honour to humanity. Unsuccessful in his first attempt, he pledged himself to bring forward this important discussion in every succeeding session. In the debate of 1792, a majority determined, that the trade should be abolished, January the first, 1796. Yet new impediments have arisen with the times; and with the clearest evidence of the pernicious and barbarous nature of the traffic, laid before the Privy-council, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons,

mons, it is still suffered to prevail, a disgrace to all those who are called by the name of Christ—by the name of Him, <sup>A. D.</sup> 1780—<sup>1790.</sup> “ who was sent to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound\*.”

It was our duty to have given religious, as well as civil, liberty to the negroes; to have rescued them from the slavery of sin, to the *glorious liberty of the sons of God*. It was our duty to have carried the gospel to their shores—to have checked, according to our ability, the cruel policy of their native princes—to have cherished the spark of humanity which is known to exist amongst them †, and to have given to them the knowledge of a Redeemer, who makes no distinctions in the colour of men, but *saves all who come unto him*.

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\* Isaiah lxi. 1.

† See Park's Travels in Africa.

A. D. THE fifth day of November, 1788, was  
 1780—celebrated with great vivacity and sincerity,  
 1790. in the metropolis of this country, and in  
 almost every quarter both of England and  
 Scotland, as the centenary of the Revolution  
 of 1688. As a political event, it comes  
 not within the plan of these reflections;  
 but as the religion of the nation, by this  
 transaction, found new securities, and was  
 enabled, by the blessing of God, to avoid,  
 in all probability, fresh trials of persecuting  
 zeal, by avoiding the snares of James II,  
 the æra ought to be remembered with grati-  
 tude and thankfulness. This age naturally  
 shrinks at the word, *Revolution*. So many  
 dreadful circumstances are involved in a  
 great political change, that to remove one  
 stone from the well-compacted arch of go-  
 vernment, must always be attended with  
 danger. At the same time, we have an in-  
 stance before us, that when God guides the  
 counsels, even important alterations may  
 take place with security. The least devia-  
 tion from the true principles of religion,  
 which,

which, in scripture language, is called *the fear of the Lord*, the least deviation from true loyalty which may be called *the fear of the King*, is accompanied by so many public and private calamities, that *the crime*, in some measure, becomes *the punishment*. “ My Son ! fear thou the Lord, and the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change : for their calamity shall rise suddenly ; and who knoweth the ruin of them both \* ? ”

While the nation was rejoicing for the blessings secured to it by the revolution, and on account of the establishment of our civil and religious liberties under the auspices of the House of Brunswick, the head of that house was attacked by a disorder which clouded every eye, and impressed upon every heart, melancholy and dejection. The indisposition of the King, which, for a time, deprived him of the reins of government, was a circumstance

\* Prov. xxiv. 21.

A. D. 1780—1790. novel in the history of this country. The nature of the discussions respecting a regency was new; and though, as it might be expected, political interests took different sides, yet the principles of the constitution directed the deliberations, and the public mind was satisfied and tranquil. No attestation to the amiable character of the King, could be greater than that, which was given to it upon this occasion. Every party was united in his praise; at a time too, when there were lamentable apprehensions on the public mind that he might never be again sensible of his people's affection. Public prayers were offered up for his recovery, not only in the national church, but in places of public worship of every description within the kingdom, and indeed, in some foreign countries. The form of prayer in the Dutch Church shews the estimation in which our sovereign was held, as the head of the protestant\* in-

\* "Almighty God! be graciously merciful to our friend, and neighbouring Ally, whom it hath pleased thee  
thee

terest; and it is in this light in which he is to be considered in this Essay. Earnest and affectionate in his own devotions; he has ever looked up to the influences of the Holy Spirit of God, for direction in the management of the reformed church, over which he presides. His sentiments in this respect have ever been the same which he expresses in his answer to the address of the House of Convocation in 1780—“ I hear with pleasure the zeal you profess for the interests of our holy religion, and I shall continue to make it my constant endeavour to support them, upon the principles of the reformation, against the encroachments of *licentiousness* or *superstition*.”—When these are known to have

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1790.

thee to afflict with a dangerous illness; and, O Lord, if it is consistent with thy all-wise decree, spare his life, not only for the welfare of the land over which he reigns, but *of these provinces, and the whole protestant religion*. O Lord! with thee nothing is wonderful; thou hast but to speak the word, and the King shall recover:”

A. D. 1780—  
 1790. } been the genuine effusions of his heart,  
 every loyal Briton may wish to adopt the  
 warm language of Lord Chancellor THUR-  
 LOW, in the debate on the regency, "WHEN  
 I FORGET MY KING, MAY GOD FORGET ME!"

It was a singular interposition of divine Providence, which restored our beloved sovereign, early in the following year [1789] to the prayers of his faithful people. The more singular, if we consider the influence which a longer continuance of his indisposition might have had, on the affairs of Europe, united with that anarchy, which, shortly after, discovered itself in France. While we contemplate, therefore, the probable effects of an unsettled government, and the degree of security which we possess, in the midst of a tumultuous world, we may say with David, "The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly, but yet the Lord who dwelleth on high is mightier. The kingdom is the Lord's, and He is the Governour among the nations \*."

\* Psalm xciii. 4. xxii. 28.

The 23d day of April was appointed as a day of public thanksgiving for the King's recovery; and heartily, and sincerely, was it observed throughout the realm. The King's personal praises and thanksgivings were offered in the cathedral church of St. Paul's, London. It was an awful and impressive sight, to behold the sovereign of a great nation, prostrate in the midst of his people, before the King of kings, on so interesting an occasion. The circumstance is still more deserving of admiration, when we know that it arose from a true sense of duty, and a conscientious humiliation of mind. With much propriety of expression, and interest of feeling, did the venerable prelate and preacher say:—

“Throughout the whole of the King's severe trial, his *trust in God* never forsook him: and before that God, he now appears in this holy and venerable structure, surrounded with his faithful and affectionate subjects, to offer up, in the most public manner, and with a seriousness and

y 3                      a solemn

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

A. D. 1780—  
 1790. a solemnity suited to the occasion, his praises and thanksgivings for those signal mercies, which have been so recently vouchsafed to him, and through him to this whole kingdom. A spectacle more striking, more awful, more dignified, more interesting, more edifying, has scarce ever been presented to the observation of mankind\*.”

Soon after this [May 8, 1789] the question of the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts was again agitated in the House of Commons; and though the numbers, on a division, were much nearer an equality, it was again lost. New arguments could hardly be expected; old ones had often been answered. The complexion of the times had put government on its guard against innovations. And when it was argued that it was unjust and tyrannical, to infer the future conduct of men from the speculative opinions they entertained; it was answered (—and who that has be-

\* Bishop of London's Discourses, vol. ii. p. 326.

held the baneful consequences arising from speculative opinions in modern times, but would also answer?) that government had a right to prevent any civil inconvenience which such opinions might produce; that the established church was considered as a part of the constitution; and that the acts in question were justifiable on the principle of self-defence. Great quiet, it was observed, obtained at present, relative to religious differences; and if there was any thing that could interrupt the harmony and moderation which subsisted between sects, once contending with great virulence and asperity, it would be by awakening a competition, and re-kindling the sparks of ancient animosity, which mutual forbearance had almost stifled and extinguished.

This was indeed the case, at this period, with respect to religious parties. But there were turbulent persons, who, now and then, broke over the bounds of moderation. These, however, were more or less tinctured

A. D. 1780— tured with political opinions, and made religion only the vehicle of invective. :

1790.

Immediately after this debate, Earl *Stanhope* moved the House of Lords for leave to bring in a Bill for “relieving members of the Church of England from sundry penalties and disabilities, to which by the laws now in force, they may be liable, and for extending freedom in matters of religion to all persons (papists only excepted) and for other purposes therein-mentioned.” This was, indeed, attempting to set the Church of England at variance with herself. The intention was perceived, and the bill miscarried. It may be for the advantage of those who are enemies to all establishments, just to recite the wishes of the noble Lord upon this occasion. Besides repealing several obsolete statutes, his bill enacted, that “all persons (papists, on account of their persecuting and dangerous principles, only excepted) shall have free liberty to exercise their religion; and by speaking, writing, printing, and publishing,

ing, or by all, or any of the said ways or means, to investigate religious subjects; and by preaching, and teaching, to instruct persons in the duties of religion, in such manner as every such person respectively, shall judge the most conducive to promote virtue, the happiness of society, and the eternal felicity of mankind."—  
 Though it might have been proper to have revised the penal ecclesiastical laws in some particulars, yet the wild extension of opinions on subjects of religion, so far, indeed, as to include every dangerous extravagance which the fertile genius of man could produce under that sacred and venerable appellation, rendered it impossible to obtain the sanction of a wise and discreet legislature.

Though such eccentric principles could not make an impression on the ear of government, moderate and modest pretensions not only met with a patient hearing, but relief in some points of political importance. Often, during this century,

A. D.  
 1780—  
 1790.

A. D. 1780—  
 1790. as well as previous to it, has the subject of popery been discussed. In many different lights has it been viewed by government, sometimes with a severe, sometimes with a jealous, and sometimes with a compassionate eye. The time at length arrived, when a division was made among the papists themselves. Long had they considered the interests of the whole body as indissolubly united. The power of the Pope, though broken, with respect to others, was not destroyed with respect to themselves. But sentiments of a more liberal nature began to prevail amongst them. Perhaps the abolition of the society of the Jesuits might have some influence in eradicating ancient prejudices. Certain it is that what has been called *philosophical principles* made great encroachments on the continent, so far, indeed, as to be not only aiding and abetting, but a principal cause, in the total demolition of the Gallican Church. The extent to which this system of destruction was carried, could not, at that

that time, be perceived; at the same time, many might imagine, that alterations, *apparently* for the better, were ready to be disclosed. I would not be supposed to infer, that the English Catholics, of whom I am about to speak, were any way connected with these enemies of public order. But the same principles, which, about this period, admitted protestants to bear a part in the government of France, might induce English Catholics to be more than usually explicit in their declaration of attachment to the political constitution of government under which they lived.

It was not to be supposed, however, that perfect unanimity could prevail on such a subject. Those, therefore, who signed the Declaration, and Protestation, and on that ground petitioned parliament for relief [May 8, 1789] have been distinguished by the name of *Roman Catholic Dissenters*. In the Declaration and Protestation, they state—"Whereas, sentiments unfavourable to us as citizens and subjects,

have

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

A. D. have been entertained by English Protestants, on account of principles which are asserted to be maintained by us, and other catholics, and which principles are dangerous to society, and totally repugnant to political and civil liberty; it is a duty that we, the English Catholics, owe to our country as well as to ourselves, to protest, in a formal and solemn manner, against doctrines that we condemn, and that constitute no part whatever of our principles, religion or belief.”—The particular articles which they protest against are these: 1. That princes excommunicated by the Pope may be deposed or murdered by their subjects: 2. That implicit obedience is due to the Pope. 3. That the Pope can dispense with the obligation of compacts and oaths. 4. That not only the Pope, but even Catholic Priests have power to pardon sins. 5. And that it is a principle of their religion, that “Faith is not to be kept with Heretics.”—“We solemnly declare, that we do make this declaration and protestation, and

and every part thereof in the plain and ordinary sense of the words of the same, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation whatsoever. And we appeal to the justice and candour of our fellow-citizens, whether we, the English Catholics, who thus solemnly disclaim, and from our hearts abhor, the above-mentioned abominable and unchristian-like principles, ought to be put upon a level with any other men who may hold and profess those principles\*.”

In consequence of this declaration, &c. a bill was brought into parliament, and passed, in the year 1791, to remove from *such Roman Catholics as shall take the oath and make the declaration therein appointed*, a variety of penalties, and to admit them to such privileges as are mentioned in the said act.

It is gratifying to the feeling mind, to

\* The reader will find a Catalogue of 31 Tracts, &c. published on this occasion, *Gent. Mag.* 1792, p. 119.

A. D. 1780—  
 1790. } see any body of men making one step to-  
 wards a reformation of principles, and soft-  
 ening the asperity of those opinions which  
 have long held the world in terror. God  
 forbid that any truly benevolent person  
 should deprive them of these indulgences!  
 Some of them, indeed, have not taken the  
 advantage of this liberality of government.  
 I will not more closely investigate this ap-  
 parent division of sentiments in the Roman  
 Catholic Church of this country. But I  
 cannot avoid giving this caution, that while  
 we enlarge their privileges, we should give  
 place, no, not for an hour, to their pecu-  
 liar doctrines. Though they solemnly re-  
 nounce *every political* opinion with which  
 they have been charged, still, their *reli-  
 gious tenets* remain the same. Let the pure  
 protestant continue to make a distinction  
 between the profession of a true religion,  
 and its corruptions. The Church of Eng-  
 land, though she has been accused of  
 verging towards popery, will not be found  
 guilty of the charge, if she retains the doc-  
 trines,

trines, and the discipline, which, by the blessing of God, she now possesses. The fire-brand and the sword, are not the weapons she must use to preserve them. Severity will make few converts: and in the great day of the Lord, those only will be received with the welcome appellation of, "Good and faithful servants!" who have walked *in the Spirit of Christ*, have trusted to his merits, and followed his example.

A. D.  
1780—  
1790.

END OF SECTION II. PART IV.

PART

## PART IV.

## SECTION III.

*Reflections, &c. during the Reign of  
George III.*

A. D. 1790—1800

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A. D. 1790—  
1800.  WE are now approaching an era, the most important, perhaps, and awful, of any which many centuries have produced. We stand upon a point of time in which we view around us an unsettled world: kingdoms and nations, rising and falling in quick succession, like the agitated waves of the ocean—"upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and looking after those things which are coming on the earth\*." The ac-

\* Luke xxi. 25.

commodation of this passage to the state of Europe during the last ten years of the century, will neither be thought a forced application of them by those who have been partakers of the miseries which have desolated many countries, nor by those who, with feeling hearts, have beheld the sufferings of their neighbours. The cup of divine indignation was full, and many powerful nations have been made to drink of it to the very dregs.

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1800.



It will not be expected that I should attempt, in this Essay, to analyze the public history of the times, or to trace out the causes from which so many calamities have flowed. We have ourselves been no uninterested spectators: and if we have hitherto escaped many personal inflictions in the contest, which we had too much reason to expect, to our Almighty Protector, not to ourselves, in any sense, be our deliverance ascribed. We live too near the times when these great events have happened, to look upon them with an un-

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prejudiced

A. D. 1790—  
 1800. } prejudiced eye; and therefore we should not attempt, in all respects, to determine that cause which the soundest human judgment cannot develope. We see, however, enough to be assured, that the progressive encroachment of pernicious principles has spread far and wide the blasting breath of desolation. It is not a partial wind from the wilderness, which sweeps away and buries in the sand an unfortunate horde of Tartars, or a caravan of travelling merchants, but it is of the nature of that dreadful storm in the book of the Revelation of St. John, chap. viii. ver. 7, when “the first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” Under such circumstances what was the fate of the inhabitants? Alas! the fate of the inhabitants, it was beyond a metaphor to describe. In many instances they were made first the victims of delusion, and afterwards

terwards the victims of destruction. In so general a calamity it will be imagined, that the deserving and undeserving have been subjected to grievous and excruciating punishments, have been hurried into unexpected and untimely graves.— The trumpet of war, an unextinguishable war, as it should seem, has been sounded for many years. The success of it has varied, and France, the centre of these mischiefs, has often changed her heads, yet still the sword remains unsheathed, and Great Britain, supported by loyalty and religion, fights the battles of the world. But oh! how sweet, how grateful to the ear, would sound the pipe of peace! May the Almighty Ruler of the universe soon stop the effusion of human blood! soon may he say to the tumultuous waves of human passions, “peace; be still!”

But let not the impression of the aggravated miseries of man, hurry my pen beyond its purpose. Truth and conviction are not to be found in general declama-

A. D. 1790—1800. tion, but in a just deduction from specific instances. Too many of which offer themselves to our notice, in the history of this unhappy period.

It will not be surprising to those who have beheld the diffusion of sceptical opinions on the continent, during more than half a century, that some of those fatal and pernicious sentiments should find their way to this island, and fixing themselves on the minds of the turbulent and disaffected, should attempt to accomplish the same scenes of confusion here, which they had produced at home. The first dawn of the French revolution brought exultation to the hearts of many of our, falsely denominated, *patriots*, which were previously prepared for its reception. French *liberty*, if I am not accused of a libel on the word by using it in this sense, was not the less welcomed for bringing scepticism in her train. Thus united, like the dæmons of the storm, they have carried wildness and frenzy into every class of society.

Some-

Sometimes, working in darkness, they have plotted the destruction both of church and state; and sometimes, they have made more open incursions into the territories of loyalty and virtue.

A. D.  
1790—  
1800.

I ought not, however, to blend, in one indiscriminate censure, those whose wild imaginations have thrown off all order and decorum, all piety and virtue, with those who, misled by imposing names and appearances, have given a sanction to those principles which their more mature judgment could not but condemn. Yet while candour and good-nature are willing to look with less severity on their error, let them not so readily acquit themselves. False judgment, the hasty adoption of false principles and acting upon them, *with respect to the public*, differ not in their consequences, from the most dangerous conduct of the most dangerous men. Many, in this age of revolution, have found themselves in this predicament, and have suffered for it.

The history of the period at which I am

A. D. now arrived, commences with the renewed  
1790— attempts of the protestant dissenters to  
1800. accomplish a repeal of the corporation and  
test acts. Having lost the question the  
last time by a very small majority, they  
were tempted to come forward again, which  
they did with every exertion that party  
could give them. Observing the change  
which had taken place in the political senti-  
ments of several of the Roman Catholics,  
who, like themselves, were now distin-  
guished by the name of *Dissenters*, and  
finding the public mind softened towards  
them, they wished to consolidate their  
cause with their own, and imagined that  
they should acquire additional strength by  
including them in the intended applica-  
tion to parliament. This was accordingly  
the case, and their cause was entrusted to  
the most popular leader of opposition in the  
House of Commons,

So formidable was this attempt imagined,  
that the friends of the established church,  
thought it necessary to oppose it with  
greater

greater exertions than had been used on the two former occasions. The indefatigable industry of the dissenters was met by the vigorous appeals of the church: and the issue was expected with much agitation.

Had the question remained upon its ancient foundation, there is no reason to suppose that the sentiments of the last majority would have been changed. The reasons continued the same. But this was not the case; the circumstances of the times were altered; the question was enlarged, and had greater and more insuperable objections to contend with. The chimæra of uncontrouled liberty had taken possession of the minds of several eminent leaders in the dissenting interest, who neither concealed, nor wished to conceal their opinions. The consequence was, that the friends of the establishment were justly alarmed, and the House of Commons, by a large majority [March 2, 1790.] chose to give a decided opinion on a subject which might unsettle, but could not in-

A. D. 1790—vigorate, government, in times of peculiar difficulty and danger\*.

1800.

It was discovered that, the repeal of these obnoxious acts was hardly an object to those who appeared most to desire it. The demolition of all establishments was avowed. The religious doctrines of the old Presbyterians were no longer respected by some of their own body; and the name of *dissenter* was used as a covering for a motley multitude of religious opinions, which, according to their own acknowledgments, “disagreed with each other more than some of them differed from the doctrinal parts of the established creed †.”

\*. Numbers on different motions for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, at different periods in the House of Commons:

In 1736 *For* the repeal 123—*Against* the repeal 251

In 1739 ———— 89————— 188

In 1787 ———— 100————— 178

In 1789 ———— 102————— 122

In 1790 ———— 105————— 294

† Address of the Protestant Dissenters of Yorkshire to the People of England, 1791.

In

In the last section I mentioned an un-  
 fortunate simile of gunpowder, which oc-  
 casioned an explosion different from that  
 which the author had intended. How  
 well the same author improved the meta-  
 phor, will be seen from the following ex-  
 tract, which I insert as the undisguised  
 sentiments of the party at this period.  
 “ On this account I rejoice to see the  
 warmth which the cause of orthodoxy (that  
 is, of long established opinions, *however*  
*erroneous*) and that of the hierarchy is  
 now taken up by its friends. Because, if  
 their system be not founded, they are  
 only accelerating its destruction. In fact,  
 they are assisting me in the proper disposal  
 of those grains of gunpowder, which have  
 been sometime accumulating, and at which  
 they have taken so great an alarm, and  
 which will certainly blow it up at length;  
 and perhaps as suddenly as unexpectedly,  
 and as completely, as the overthrow of the  
 late arbitrary government in France.—If  
 I be laying gunpowder they are providing  
 the

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A. D. 1790—  
1800. } the match—If they proceed as they have begun, I should be sorry to insure their system twenty years longer. The greater their violence, the greater is our *confidence* and final success\*.” This is plain language indeed. But upon a nearer investigation of this *confidence of final success*, it will be found, that it did not so much originate in the violence of the clergy, or in any other cause immediately connected with our ecclesiastical establishment, as from the usurping principles which were then victorious in France. Every day brought some account of new innovations; every rank of men threw off its ancient trammels. Even the nobility and clergy, infected by the epidemic equality, disclaimed their honours and their orders, and melted themselves down to the common mass of citizens. This was a flattering prospect for those whose minds were prepared for such vio-

\* Preface to Letters to the Rev. Ed. Burne, Birmingham, by Dr. Priestley.

lent alterations. “Whatever may be the errors, the defects, or the inexperience of some of their plans,” says the address of the Yorkshire Dissenters, “we think it sufficiently evident, that more than twenty millions of people, who have been long political slaves, are now become freemen. In this auspicious change, we anticipate a glorious addition to the general happiness of mankind. We exult in the reflection that we live in an age, which has produced a body of legislators, who, by directly *disclaiming all offensive wars*, have presented a new example to an admiring world.”

It is unnecessary for me to add one observation after these extracts. I do not, however, hastily condemn all who have made this declaration, or imagine them all to be “partakers of other men’s sins.” An open liberal mind will sometimes be too sanguine in its expectations, and of course be frequently deceived by appearances. The particular violence, too, used by some of the Dissenters, in the instance of applica-  
tion

A. D. 1790—  
1800. } tion for the relief of parliament on this occasion, did not meet with the approbation of many of their brethren." Thus the addressers mentioned above, say, "A few *indiscreet* expressions in the resolutions of a single society, in a neighbouring county, have indeed been pointed out, and condemned with a willing asperity; but the public may be assured that they were *entirely disapproved by the general body of dissenters.*" Credit may be given for this assurance; at the same time, we must hesitate in confining *indiscreet expressions* to the resolutions of a *single* society.

It is but justice to that church, which has produced a Watts, a Doddridge, and an Orton, to remark, that their principles of religion are still cherished by many with unabated warmth, but with others they are very much altered, though they continue to be distinguished by the same denomination. A material change of religious principle began to take place in several dissenting congregations. The fundamental truths of  
Chris-

Christianity were controverted: and a large secession was made, both from the established and non-conforming churches, under the name of Unitarian. Thus dis-belief and dis-loyalty, met together on terms of friendship, for the purpose of demolishing a structure venerable for its age, beautiful for its architecture, admirable for its utility. Happily, however, the combined efforts of the Unitarian church have not succeeded. The numbers soon diminished. Socinian principles have already lost a part of the attraction which recommended them to the public; and are, for the most part, dispersed among that sect of modern philosophers, who are too liberal to be restrained, too wise to be instructed.

“ It is a mournful fact,” says one of their own society, “ that a large body of modern dissenters, under the sanction of reason and science, falsely so called, have apostatized from the *doctrines* of the *reformation*, and some can vilify, in very opprobrious language, the truths which their ancestors

con-

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A. D. 1790—1800. contended for, with *meekness of wisdom*, at the expence of their liberty, treasure, and blood.”—“ This sad apostacy of modern non-conformists is to be ascribed to, at least, a partial denial of the inspiration of the scriptures, particularly the epistles of St. Paul.”—“ I do venture to affirm (though uncommissioned) in the name of many of my brethren in the ministry, men venerable for their years—of sound learning and exemplary piety—useful men, and highly esteemed in our churches—as well as in the name of a vast body of the laity—I affirm, that we greatly disapprove of the theological and political sentiments of those, who (by a patent of their own creation) style themselves rational dissenters\*.”

The sentiments of some of these non-conformists, who were too much influenced by popular revolutionary opinions, occasioned the animadversion of many learned

\* The duty of Christians to Magistrates, a Sermon, with a prefixed address to the public. By John Clayton. 1791..

and judicious writers. Among others, a political sermon on the anniversary of the Revolution of 1688, by the Rev. Dr. Price, a celebrated dissenting minister, called forth the luminous pen of Mr. Burke, who, in very animated language, took the opportunity of discussing those false principles, which had produced in France an important change of government. This eminent work, though political in its discussions, made too great an impression on the public mind to be passed over totally in silence. Indeed, the profession of religion became too much connected with politics. Though the modern politician professed himself indifferent to every spiritual service, the services of religion were not abandoned to those who had some sense of duty left, neither were the persons of the religious unmolested. Age—venerable age, piety, virtue, were driven with violence from those altars, where the God of Christians was worshipped. Though they affected to despise religion, the professor of religion, if he were an ecclesiastic,

A. D.  
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1800.

A. D. 1790—1800. } clergy, was treated not only with every indignity, but with every cruelty: and the time was at no great distance, when the language of the mob of Jerusalem was adopted by the mob of Paris, “Away with such a fellow from the earth; it is not fit that he should live!”

How truly, and how soon, were the sagacious “Reflections” of Mr. Burke realized! They have been dignified by the name of *prophecy*. An acute observer of the principles of the times, could not but *foresee* so distressing a catastrophe.

One of the most important consequences of the publication of these Reflections was, that they excited the dangerous talents of a writer, whose name was not wholly unknown, though it had not yet attained the celebrity of infamy. “*The Rights of Man*,” Part I. by Thomas Paine, was published as an Answer, to what he called Mr. Burke’s *attack* on the French Revolution. If any definition of this term is required, it may be read in the bloody scenes which soon accompanied

accompanied the declaration of such un-  
 checked, such unqualified *rights*. The pam-  
 phlet exhibited, in every sense, a false view  
 of the rights of society, and was a libel  
 upon all legitimate governments. It has  
 been often answered by men of much talent  
 and ability. Indeed it required neither one  
 nor the other, to confute calumny, or deny  
 the validity of his bold assertions. But it was  
 necessary to counteract the careful and mis-  
 chievous industry of a dangerous party,  
 who had disseminated this deadly poison,  
 into the minds of many virtuous, and ob-  
 scure individuals. The effect of the publi-  
 cation of the Rights of Man, was that of  
 electricity. A shock was felt, but it was  
 hardly known from whence it originated,  
 nor to what purpose it was given. A new  
 and deceitful light seemed to break in upon  
 the lower orders of society ; and if it had not  
 been for the vigilance and prudence of a  
 wise and vigorous legislature, under the di-  
 rection of one " who seeth not as man  
 seeth," the same scenes of horror and devas-

A. D. 1790—1800. tation might have been exhibited on the plains of Great Britain, which were deplored on those of France.

In times of turbulence and convulsion, men are very apt to be driven into extremes of action. It is with pain that I again mention the name of dissenters connected with any disaffection to government; but I would be understood to do so, under the distinctions which I have before mentioned. Some leaders of this denomination, kept no terms in their publications on the subject of politics; of course they incurred the censure of the loyal members of the community.

The celebration of the 14th of July, 1791, (the second anniversary of the demolition of the Bastile, as a festival dedicated to French *liberty*,) drew together, in various places, the friends of the event. At Birmingham a society assembled for the same purpose. Some injudicious friend, or *enemy*, previously circulated a hand-bill of a most inflammatory nature: a mob soon was brought together, and a scene of conflagration

tion and destruction followed, for several days, which was a disgrace to civil and religious order. The words "*Church and King*," were again prostituted to the purposes of plunder and insurrection. Sorry I am to state a circumstance, which every true member of the Church of England must deplore, but which arose from a combination of causes, not difficult to be explained.

Though the vengeance of the mob fell upon the dissenters, they were dissenters of a certain description, who were obnoxious to the public, probably more for their political, than their religious opinions. None suffered a more serious injury than Dr. Priestlye, an ingenious philosopher and a dissenting minister, who resided near Birmingham, who lost, in philosophical apparatus, books, and furniture, to a considerable amount. Though no argument can justify insurrection, no words palliate such an atrocious attack on the persons and property of individuals, on account of any peculiarity of sentiment; yet it must be

A. D. 1790—  
1800. owned, that the political, and, I may add, religious, writings, of this gentleman, did not tend to remove a strong prejudice which had gone out against him: on him the tempest broke.

How much more consistent with the spirit of true christianity, and the dignity of our profession of it, would it have been, had Dr. Priestley and his writings been left solely to support themselves by their own merit, and to the investigation of those learned men, who had undertaken to undeceive the world with respect to his assertions in politics and divinity. We have to thank him, however, for exciting many publications of very eminent value\*, which have tended to counteract the baneful effects of those principles, which his prolific pen, and versatile genius, had so diffusely disseminated. Let us give him credit for his chemistry, and his experimental philosophy,—but let us visit him only in his laboratory.

\* Particularly the Works of Bishop Horseley.

As the church establishment has been ac-  
 cused of intolerance and persecution on this  
 occasion, I will reply in the words of a  
 member of the House of Commons, in a  
 debate—"It was in vain to assert that the  
 riots originated in religious bigotry; they  
 were evidently of a political nature. Dr.  
 Priestley had long lived at Birmingham, and  
 long taught his Unitarian principles, not  
 only unmolested, but, by his own confes-  
 sion, with success and pleasure. Why had  
 he never been persecuted before? How  
 came the madness of the populace to be re-  
 served for that unlucky moment, when he  
 chose to sink the character of the divine in  
 that of the politician, not only to lavish  
 the most extravagant praises on the French  
 Revolution, but to recommend to the people  
 of England; a celebration of that event  
 from the chair," at a public meeting in  
 London.

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Notwithstanding all that had passed with  
 respect to the repeal of the Corporation and  
 Test Acts, a motion was made in the House

A. D. of Commons [May 11, 1792] for a repeal  
 1790— of certain penal statutes of the 9th and 10th  
 1800. } of William III, which had for their more  
 immediate object, the suppression of Socinian or Unitarian principles; or rather, the support of the orthodox faith. This, it will appear, was another blow aimed at the ecclesiastical establishment of the country. The intention of the attempt, indeed, went further, even to separate the Unitarian, from the Presbyterian church, and to give to that system, espoused by Dr. Priestley and his associates, “ a local habitation, and a name.” The Church of England wishes penal statutes to continue for ever dormant; but she does not wish to throw down fences which have been thought necessary; she does not desire, even in appearance, to part with doctrines which she imagines essential to true christianity. The Unitarian faith reduces the religion of Jesus to a system of morality. It denies the divinity of the Saviour: of course, it destroys the important doctrine of the atonement, and removes

far

far from us the blessedness of a redemption. Extinguish the christian's faith and hope, and *what good will his life do him?*—But the House of Commons did not think with Dr. Priestley, and the motion descended into oblivion.

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1790—  
1800.

The year 1792 was fraught with serious apprehensions. “Without were fightings, within were fears.” The affairs of France were growing to a crisis, and the wild fancies of many Englishmen were too ready to adopt their dangerous theories. It is not my business to examine the political situation of this country, at this period. It has not passed without notice; and when the storm shall be overblown, many able men will be ready to record its effects. Its moral situation was indeed deplorable. Popular societies were formed upon the same principles, which had just overturned the throne of France. Far from confining their pernicious speculations to their own breasts, they organized assemblies, and were indefatigable in gaining proselytes, not merely

A. D. in populous towns, but in remote and se-  
 1790—questered villages.

1800.

The society which distinguished itself most in promoting these views, was *the London Corresponding Society*, whose members were persons in inferior stations, and whose influence therefore was expected to be more diffusive, and of consequence more mischievous. It is hardly possible to imagine the immense loads of pamphlets and publications which were industriously circulated to support these principles. They were printed in the cheapest manner, and sold below their value, that they might find their way to garrets and shop-boards. A second part of "*The Rights of Man*," was as greedily received as the first. It had this *advantage* to recommend it, that it surpassed its elder brother in the intemperance of its language, and, which brought it under the clutches of the law, it proposed to "*combine practice with principle.*"

The King's proclamation for the preventing of tumultuous meetings, and seditious writings,

writings, made its appearance May the 21st, and providentially was attended with the greatest possible benefit. It roused the attention of the nation; assemblies were holden to curb sedition and licentiousness; the friends of order and good government, the friends of piety and religion united themselves together, for the beneficial purposes of supporting the best interests of our king and country. Publications of a very different tendency were put into circulation; a court of justice adjudged Thomas Paine's last pamphlet to be a libel; and the public eye began to be less frequently disgusted with the *open* violation of order and decency.

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But, alas! the worm was still gnawing at the root. The mine was laid, but not sprung; and thousands, I am sorry to say, were eagerly waiting for the explosion.

All this was transacted when the country was at peace. We had not unnecessarily interfered with the important changes which had taken place on the continent. But the  
time

A. D. time was now come, when we must either  
 1790—  
 1800. declare open hostilities against the adversa-  
 ries of all order, and enemies of all religion,  
 or suffer ourselves to fall an easy prey to  
 disaffection at home, seconded by every vile  
 principle of anarchy and confusion abroad.  
 Dreadful alternative!—Yet we are sure that  
 when the Lord says, “Sword! go through  
 the land,”—when he sends war, one of his  
 four sore judgements, upon any people, it  
 is meant as a salutary correction for some  
 complicated iniquity. That the morals and  
 manners of this nation demanded a severe  
 punishment, the small recital I have given  
 will sufficiently explain. “Yet ye say,  
 the way of the Lord is not equal. Hear ye  
 now, O house of Israel, Is not my way  
 equal? Are not your ways unequal? There-  
 fore will I judge you, O house of Israel,  
*every one according to his ways*\*.”

The year 1793 opened upon the world  
 with a peculiar degree of melancholy and

\* Ezek. xviii. 29, 30.

apprehension. Near its commencement, A. D.  
 [Jan. 21st] was “ a day of darkness and 1790—  
 of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick 1800.  
 darkness, as the morning spread upon the  
 mountains\*.” It will soon be recollected  
 that I allude to the circumstance, when the  
 French people murdered on a scaffold the  
 last and best of their kings. I do not en-  
 large on this subject of heavy regret, but  
 request my reader to look upon it as one, of  
 many instances of depravity, which have  
 distinguished the inauguration of the *new*  
*philosophy.*

To define the nature of this philosophy,  
 should be now my business, if I could find  
 any fixed moral principle on which it rested.  
 Admired, as it has been, by the superficial;  
 adored by him who resolves all his morality  
 into feeling; adopted by those, whose self-  
 sufficiency is directed to pull down ancient  
 landmarks, without the ability to establish  
 new ones; imitated by the *bad*; abhorred

\* Joel ii. 2.

and

A. D. and abandoned by the *good*—it will be  
 1790—found on close inspection to be a tissue of  
 1800.

ill-regulated maxims, a compound of dangerous and inveterate evils. If, to sacrifice every private domestic affection on the broad altar of public utility; if, to decorate the vicious with new names of approbation; if, to reverence the arm which revenges public injuries by plunging a dagger in the breast of the parent or the brother; if crimes are rendered amiable and attractive by adding *grace* to the performance of them; if sincerity be to supersede duty; and the law of nature, the divine law of revelation—then, O Philosophy! great are thy triumphs, and well do the memories of many of thy votaries, and particularly the memory of Rousseau, deserve thy commendation.

Well do I remember the infatuated admiration of the writings of this master of the science of the new philosophy. The fascinating elegance of his pen, and the seductive looseness of his morality, made a  
 deep

deep impression, long before the French A. D.  
 revolution was thought of. When that 1790—  
 event had taken place, this was the great 1800.  
 object of imitation in the first National  
 Assembly. “Every body knows,” says Mr.  
 Burke\*, “that there is a great dispute  
 among their leaders, which of them is the  
 best resemblance to Rousseau: in truth,  
 they all resemble him. His blood they  
 transfuse into their minds, and into their  
 manners: him they study; him they me-  
 ditate; him they turn over in all the time  
 they can spare from the laborious mischief  
 of the day, and the debauches of the night.  
 Rousseau is their canon of holy writ; in  
 his life he is their canon of *Polycletus*; he  
 is their standard figure of perfection.”—  
 And what is that perfection? The same  
 writer shall tell us.—“Their great problem  
 is to find a substitute for all the principles  
 which hitherto have been employed to re-  
 gulate the human will and action. They

\* Letter to a Member of the National Assembly.

A. D. find dispositions in the mind of such force  
 1790— and quality, as may fit men, far better  
 1800. than the old morality, for the purposes of  
 such a state as theirs, and may go much  
 further in supporting their power, and de-  
 stroying their enemies. They have there-  
 fore chosen a selfish, flattering, seductive,  
 ostentatious vice, in the place of plain  
 duty. True humility, the basis of the  
 Christian system, is the low, but deep and  
 firm foundation of all real virtue. But  
 this, as very painful in the practice, and  
 little imposing in the appearance, they  
 have totally discarded. Their object is to  
 merge all natural, and all social sentiment  
 in inordinate vanity. It is that new in-  
 vented virtue which your masters canonize,  
 that led their moral hero constantly to ex-  
 haust the stores of his powerful rhetoric  
 in the expression of universal benevolence,  
 whilst his heart was incapable of harbour-  
 ing one spark of common parental affec-  
 tion. Benevolence to the whole species,  
 and want of feeling for every individual

with whom the professors come in contact, form the character of the *new philosophy*.”

A. D.  
1790—  
1800.

The diffusion of these sentiments of false humanity, however, was but the dawn of a very melancholy day. A dreadful and gloomy infidelity succeeded. Emanating from the school of the jacobins, it spread abroad with a desolating rapidity, and communicated its contagion to distant regions. It was not long before this period that a member of the French national convention avowed himself *an Atheist*. “What!” cried the infamous Du Pont, “thrones overturned! sceptres broken! kings expire! and yet the altars of God remain! *Nature* and *Reason*, these ought to be the gods of men! these be my gods!” [here the Abbè Audrien cried out, “There is no bearing this;” and rushed out of the assembly—a *great laugh*!] Admire *nature*, cultivate *reason*. The tyranny of kings was confined to make their people miserable in this life; but those other tyrants, the priests, extend their do-  
minion

A. D. 1790—  
1800. } minion into another, of which they have  
no other idea but of eternal punishments,  
a doctrine which some men have hitherto  
had the good nature to believe. But the  
moment of the catastrophe is come—all  
these prejudices must fall at the same time.  
—*We must destroy them, or they will destroy  
us.* For myself! I honestly avow to the  
convention—*I am an Atheist!*” [Here some  
noise and tumult; but a great number of  
members cried out, “what is that to us?  
you are an honest man.”] After the speech  
was ended, there were numberless applauses  
almost throughout the *whole assembly and  
galleries.*

I should not have polluted these pages  
with such an extract, if I did not look  
upon it as a powerful antidote to its own  
poison. It will not be thought surprising  
that the same assembly should order an  
inscription to be placed on the churches,  
and places of public sepulture, enough to  
harrow up the soul of affection, and destroy  
the prime springs of human nature itself—

“DEATH

“DEATH IS AN ETERNAL SLEEP.” After this, we shall not wonder that the ministers of religion should be made to feel, as a body, the severest stroke which had been inflicted on the real or supposed enemies of the French republic. They were murdered without mercy, and without provocation. They were banished by cruel decrees; or forced, for self-preservation, to seek an asylum in foreign countries:

I rejoice with my country in the reflection, that she has opened her benevolent arms for the reception of the French emigrant clergy; that she has kindly cherished their misfortunes, regardless of religious distinctions; and will return the survivors of them to their own nation, as friends and brothers, whenever that nation shall be wise, or just enough to restore them to the comforts of domestic peace. As men and christians, they have acquitted themselves well; as ministers of the gospel they have borne their calamities with a patience and fortitude becoming their profession.

A. D. 1790—  
1800. } fession. As a minister of the same gospel, reformed from those corruptions of christianity which we cannot but believe to be still inherent in their church, I sincerely pray that their residence among us may have increased their liberality, and shewn them that true religion consists not in unauthenticated doctrines, or superstitious practices, but “in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

But while much commendation is due to this nation, for its reception of the French clergy, as individuals, we ought to be so just to ourselves and our religion, as to prevent their settlement among us as an united ecclesiastical body, either in the stile of a monastic institution or in any other shape. Humanity and christian charity, at the first moment, checked the most distant thought which might add to the embarrassments, and in some places allowed them to settle with the forms they brought with them, and respected even the vows which accompanied them from  
the

the cloyster. But as a predilection for A. D. popery has for many years been banished 1790— from this land, let us be careful of intro- 1800.  ducing a principle among us which might involve us in long-forgotten difficulties. Far be it from me to deviate one moment from the duties of hospitality; but let that hospitality be shewn with due discretion. Make what personal sacrifice you please to the performance of humane and benevolent actions, but neither let pity nor compulsion induce you to make a sacrifice of religion. If it should be found necessary that any order of monks, or nuns, now domiciliated in England, should continue here for any time to come, the watchful legislature will doubtless take proper care that such society should not increase by the admission of new members, whether of our own nation or any other. In this case, we should neither violate the rights of hospitality, nor injure the religious establishment of our country.

A. D. 1790—  
1800. Under the reign of Robespierre's tyranny, in consequence of a wild deputation from the section of the *Sans cullottes*, attended by a *Wanton* decorated in the fanciful robes of liberty, religion was publicly abolished in the French nation [Nov. 10, 1793] "The people," said the delegates on this occasion—"The people have but one cry—*no more altars, no more priests, no other God but the God of Nature!*—We, their magistrates, we accompany them from the temple of Truth to the temple of the Laws, to celebrate a new liberty, and to request that the *ci-devant* church of *Notre Dame*, be changed into a temple consecrated to Reason and Truth."

In any period since the introduction of christianity, however savage, however sceptical, could we imagine such a dreadful scene to have been transacted?—But in what did it differ from the profanation of the same tyrant, who made this decree in the assembly of the nation [May 7, 1794] —"The French nation acknowledges the  
existence

existence of a Supreme Being, and the  
immortality of the soul.”—As if the exist-  
ence of the Deity and a world to come  
were a recent discovery of his own, and his  
adherents.

A. D.  
1790—  
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Not contented with the unnecessary acknowledgment of this awful truth within the walls of the convention, which apparently established Deism, but in reality was a confirmation of their atheistical opinions, an impious festival to the Supreme Being was decreed to be holden under the canopy of the heavens, on the 8th of June following. On that day, “seated on a tribune, in the centre of a large amphitheatre raised in the gardens of the Thuilleries, Robespierre, as president of the convention, appeared; and having for a few hours disencumbered the square of the Revolution of the guillotine, this high priest of Moloch, within view of that very spot where his daily sacrifice of human victims was offered up, covered with their blood, invoked the Parent of universal Nature,

A. D. 1790—  
1800. } talked of the charms of virtue, and breath-  
ed the hope of immortality. Having fi-  
nished this profane mockery of Heaven,  
he descended from the tribune, and walked  
with great solēmnity to a grotesque figure  
which had been erected in the front of the  
palace as a symbol of Atheism; and hav-  
ing set fire to this image of deformity, its  
cumbrous drapery soon vanished, and a  
fair and majestic form was discovered, em-  
blematical of wisdom and philosophy\*." It  
was remarked, that from the day of the  
celebration of these impious rites, the au-  
thor of them appeared like one devoted  
to destruction; and in a little more than  
a month he followed his own victims to an  
untimely tomb.

Who does not, in this instance of divine  
vengeance, see another Herod Agrippa?  
“Upon a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal  
apparel, sat upon his throne, and made  
an oration; and the people gave a shout,

• Letters from France, by H. M. Williams.

saying,

saying, It is the voice of a God, and not A. D.  
of a man. And immediately the angel of 1790—  
the Lord smote him—and he was eaten of 1800.  
worms, and gave up the ghost\*.”

I have not unnecessarily deviated from my purpose in considering these instances of French infidelity, as they will be found to have too close a connection with the religious history of this country at the same period. I must, in this place, still further observe, that the scenes which have been described, are the natural consequences of a long-meditated and deep conspiracy. To prove this, I have only to refer to the *Abbé Baruel's History of Jacobinism*; *Robison's Proofs of a Conspiracy*, and some other publications which are in every hand; but, above all, as the undisguised and bold promulger of this execrable combination, to the posthumous works of the *great Frederic the second*.

\* Acts xii. 21.

A. D. 1790—  
1800. } To repeat all that I have thought, or to recite the substance of those dark pages which have been generally read, on this subject, would be to detain the reader on a series of transactions, which every good man would wish, if it were possible, to erase for ever from his memory. Voltaire, D'Alembert, Diderot, and the numerous list of German Illuminati, appear like the shifting scenes of a dreadful tragedy; a tragedy, whose fatal catastrophe even exceeds the high-wrought expectation of the most terrified spectator.

Wherever the arms of the French Republic have been successful, they have, for the most part, been preceded by the diffusion of those desolating principles, which are at once the crime and punishment of those nations which receive them. "A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness.—A nation is come up upon my land, strong and without number,

number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion\*.”

A. D.  
1790—  
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What was attempted and executed, with respect to many other countries, was attempted also in our own. The Providence of God, though it has permitted us to be smitten for our iniquities, as well as others, will upon our *true* repentance, “remove far off from us the *depredating* army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate;”—and will say, “Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things †.”

—The rise and progress of societies expressly established for the purpose of disseminating principles of infidelity, mark this part of our history with horror. That some speculative men in their studies have reasoned themselves out of their faith; that others, immersed in vice and sensuality, have affected to disbelieve, what they durst not persuade themselves to be

\* Joel ii. 3. i. 6.

† Joel ii. 21, 22.

A. D. true, is equally certain; but never till this  
 1790— period was a regular plan laid for the ex-  
 1800. } tirpation of Christianity by rendering books  
 of the most pernicious tendency familiar  
 to the very lowest classes of the commu-  
 nity. The system was even carried fur-  
 ther; for imagining, that though the age  
 was enlightened, some might not be able  
 to peruse, or understand the poisonous  
 pages prepared for their instruction, read-  
 ing-clubs were instituted, and speakers ap-  
 pointed, who might retail, in language  
 suited to their capacities, the sentiments  
 of gloomy infidelity.

The places where these clubs were holden  
 in London, and the use to which they were  
 put, have been pointed out in a publi-  
 cation, which has not been contradicted,  
 and to which I refer as evidence for some  
 of the following remarks\*.

The *London Corresponding Society*, whose  
 first object undoubtedly was, the promul-

\* The Rise and Dissolution of Infidel Societies in the  
 Metropolis. By Wm. Hamilton Reid. 1800.

gation

gation of political revolutionary principles, A. D.  
 was among the first to “add deism to the 1790—  
 democracy of its converts.” A mad em- 1800.  
 piric in politics began to try the same ex-  
 periment in religion. In 1793, the *far-*  
*famed* Thomas Paine published in France  
 the first part of “The Age of Reason;”  
 a pamphlet retailing in low language, the  
 often repeated cavils of a long race of scep-  
 tics. The object of this work was the pro-  
 pagation of *deism*, and he lays the founda-  
 tion of his argument in this proposition,  
 that “the visible book of nature is the  
 only book of revelation.” “The creation,”  
 says a venerable and pious Prelate in reply  
 to this observation \*, “is, indeed, an ever-  
 existing original, which all men can read;  
 but it is often in a style, which is obscure  
 to the wisest human intellect. What, but  
 this difficulty in explaining “the visible  
 word of God,” could have produced the  
 many discordant systems of the universe

\* Bishop of Durham’s Charge, 1797.

which

A. D. which have prevailed, and revolutions of  
 1790—philosophy, which have taken place, from  
 1800. the days of Pythagoras to those of New-  
 ton? What was the origin of idolatry, but  
 the misconstruction of the visible unwrit-  
 ten word? and, which is still more to our  
 purpose, what has corrected those errors  
 of idolatrous worship, but the propagation  
 of Christianity by the light of the written  
 word of God?"

A second part of "The Age of Reason" appeared in 1795, in which the scriptures were attacked with re-doubled virulence. Though every post might have been defended with the slightest weapon, yet as both the language and the objections were calculated to make an impression on the common people, a suitable answer was provided by a learned and excellent prelate, who twenty years before had given to the world a masterly "Apology for Christianity," in reply to the sceptical insinuations of Gibbon. The Bishop of Landaff in his "Apology for the Bible," closely investi-  
 gates

gates the bold assertions of this rash as-  
sailant of Christianity, exposes his igno-  
rance, and completely confutes his argu-  
ments. If the readers of the *Age of Reason*  
were as ready to be convinced of the  
truth, as they were forward in the re-  
ception of error, gladly would they accept  
the kind services of this eminent and use-  
ful author.

When the merits of this publication were  
brought before a court of justice, a cele-  
brated counsellor made a speech in oppo-  
sition to its justly detested tenets, which  
breathed the purest principles of christi-  
anity, and glowed with all the energy of  
eloquence and truth; which did equal ho-  
nour to the speaker, and to the profession  
of which he is so distinguished a member\*.

The London Corresponding Society was  
the prototype of most of the infidel societies  
in the metropolis. The introduction of  
“The Age of Reason,” at first, indeed,

\* London Chronicle, July 1, 1797.

A. D. 1790—  
1800. } occasioned a struggle which was soon over-ruled; and a bookseller persuaded to undertake a cheap edition for its more ready dissemination through the divisions. It was blasphemously termed "*The New Holy Bible*," and the bare circumstance of having *The Age of Reason* in a house was deemed a collateral proof of the *civism* of the possessor\*. In consequence of the adoption of these opinions, a schism took place among them, and a new society was formed under the denomination of the *civil and religious society*; evidently pointing out that the latter epithet was no way applicable to a part at least of the original association. In choosing their delegates,

\* This observation of Mr. Reid is confirmed by the following extract from the Second Report of the Committee of the House of Lords, on Seditious Societies, April, 1801.—“The members to be admitted by a test, or declaration on oath, to be sworn on the Bible *when it can be produced*; but it is observed, that since Paine’s *Age of Reason*, it is looked upon as a mark of *incivism* to keep a Bible.”——

those persons were preferred, who were <sup>A. D</sup> doubly recommended by *their religion* and <sup>1790—</sup> their politics. In the recommendation of <sup>1800.</sup> any person to an office among them, it was common to distinguish him, as “a good democrat and a deist;” or, to fix the character more strongly, to add, that “He is no Christian.”

The author, from whom I have selected this information, mentions several places where similar meetings were holden, which multiplied very much about the year 1795. Deism itself became too strong a faith for many of the unhappy members. The frenzy of Atheism seized them; and an imitation of the infamous Du Pont induced them to avow themselves disbelievers of a Deity.—“I am an Atheist!” exclaimed one of them; and jumping upon a club-room table, “Here,” said he, holding up an infant, “here is a young Atheist\*!”

\* Reid’s Rise and Dissolution, &c.

A. D. In the spring of 1796, it was proposed  
 1790— to open *a Temple of Reason*, in London,  
 1800. after the example, probably, of the Theo-  
 philanthropic Temple at Paris, where the  
 doctrines of Deism might be accessible to  
 persons of every description. Great ex-  
 pectations were formed of this institution;  
 Christianity was attacked with the whole  
 artillery of Voltaire, David Williams, and  
 others, who were distinguished by their vi-  
 rulence against it. But all would not do:  
 Deism could not support itself. This tem-  
 ple fell, as most of the other societies had  
 done before it; and many have done and  
 continue to do since its demolition; some-  
 times assailed by the interference of the  
 magistrates, and sometimes oppressed and  
 shaken to pieces by their own weight.

The propagandists of infidelity, about  
 this time, seized another post of instruc-  
 tion: the practice of arresting congrega-  
 tions in market places and fields had been  
 for several years adopted by the metho-  
 dists, though much more at the time of  
 their

their first appearance than at present. Field-  
 preaching Deists now followed their example,  
 in hopes of drawing the attention of those  
 who usually appeared on those occasions.

A. D.  
 1790—  
 1800.

“ During the summer of 1797, a very formidable party were organized and assembled, every Sunday morning, at seven o'clock, near the City-road: here, in consequence of the debates, forced upon the preachers or the hearers, several groupes of people would remain upon the ground till noon, giving an opportunity to the unwary passengers to become acquainted with the dogmas of Voltaire, Paine, and other writers, of whom they might have remained in ignorance; in fact, the fields were resorted to, by the new reformers, upon the same principle as a sportsman goes in quest of game:—*we shall be sure to find some Christians in the fields*, was the standing reason for these excursions\*.” “ At the conclusion of a field-sermon, in 1798, it was remarked,” says the

\* Reid, ut supra.

A. D. 1790—  
1800. same author, “ that the Deists did not oppose the Arian preachers with the same virulence as the Trinitarians. The full force of the observation was admitted, while it was urged, as a reason for this forbearance, that the Infidels considered the Arians as doing a part of their business for them.”

The indefatigable members of these societies, supported, no doubt, by the private assistance, both in money and talents, of persons of superior rank and consequence, endeavoured to establish in various parts of the country, associations of a similar nature. “ No sooner was the opening of the Temple of Reason known in the country, than a notice was given in that assembly, that, if any person, qualified as a teacher, could make it convenient to leave town, a society at one of the western ports, could insure him from 150l. to 200l. per annum\*.” The amiable Bishop of London informs us, he *knew* that “ impious

\* Reid, ut supra.

and indecent publications had been distributed with infinite activity and industry, not only in the metropolis and its neighbourhood, and in large manufacturing towns, but in little obscure villages in the remotest parts of the kingdom; nay, they had even found their way into the very bowels of the earth, among the miners of Cornwall, and the colliers of Newcastle, some of whom are said to have sold their Bibles, in order to purchase *the Age of Reason*\*." From the very respectable authority of Lord Belgrave, the Bishop acquaints us, that "there was *then*, [1799] forming in a large town, in this kingdom, *a society of Atheists*, who had agreed to meet at certain times, and to produce each of them an atheistical tract, to be issued into the world, with a view of corrupting the people of this country." The report of the Committee of the House of Lords, will be thought also incontrovertible evidence of the fact, that

A. D.  
1790—  
1800.



\* Bishop of London's Charge, 1799.

A. D. 1790—  
1800. “ cheap editions of such tracts have been distributed gratis, and in large quantities, and that their circulation among the labouring classes, has been a principal occupation of *emissaries deputed* to various parts of the country, from the societies established in the metropolis.”

Some of these societies may, perhaps, still be discovered among us. It is however comfortable to reflect, that they are not formidable. They contain within themselves principles of dissolution ; and though, after being dissolved in one place, they may start up again in another, still they rise, like the short-lived myriads of the insect-tribe, only to shew themselves, and disappear.

But, O ye leaders in a dreadful cause ! what recompence can ye make to the souls whom your blasphemies shall have destroyed ? Why remove those motives, sanctions, duties, and consolations, which have so often poured balm into the sharpest wounds of human life, and alleviated the sorrows of  
the

the miserable? Why attempt to destroy that holy Faith, which a revolution of many ages has sanctified, which the evidence of every age has contributed to confirm? What, but the motive of him who “*goes about seeking whom he may devour,*” could induce you to snatch from your deluded followers all hope, all joy, all consolation; all trust in *his* merits, who alone can bring them tidings of salvation; all confidence in his example, all expectation of enjoying, through Him, the happiness of a life of glory?—And you, unhappy men! disciples of such dangerous masters! What advantage do you expect to gain by a denial of your God, a renunciation of your Saviour, and in *Him*, an annihilation of every hope both here and hereafter? It makes my heart bleed to address you upon this occasion. Can *the Age of Réason* compensate for the endless ages of eternity? Can the futile arguments of a man like yourselves, a man considerably *worse* than yourselves, induce you to cast away from you *the strong hold of*

A. D.  
1790—  
1800.



A. D. *hope*, the hope of everlasting life, which  
 1790— you will *one day*, whatever you may now  
 1800. think, long after with straining eyes, and  
 aching hearts. Suppose you gain all the  
 objects of your terrestrial inclinations, your  
*liberty*, your *equality*, your *republic*; sup-  
 pose you persuade yourselves that there is  
 no heaven, no hell, no God, no future  
 state.—What then? Is there no future  
 state, heaven, hell, or Supreme Being, be-  
 cause you think so? Who made you crea-  
 tures of infinite intelligence? If then you  
 cannot reduce these things to mathematical  
 demonstration, at least have the modesty to  
 respect the faith of others, and take some  
 assistance, which may place every argument  
 in favour of revelation, in a light which  
 you do not now perceive. Believe me, the  
 great truths of Christianity possess evi-  
 dence—clear, uncontrovertible evidence—  
 evidence that has been acknowledged by  
 the wisest and best of men; not by priests  
 only, whom you affect to despise; but by  
 the Bacons, Boyles, Lockes, Miltons, New-  
 tons,

tons, of every age. They possess an evi- A. D.  
 dence not written with pen and ink, nor yet 1790—  
 inscribed on the fleshly tables of man's heart; 1800.  
 but the EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT, *whom*  
*they that believe on Jesus shall receive.*

END OF SECTION III. PART IV.

## PART IV.

## SECTION IV.

*Conclusion.* A. D. 1801.

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A. D. 1801. **I**F the history of a century may with propriety be compared to the variations of a day\*, how much more strongly does it resemble the period of human life? The Eighteenth Century, with respect to this nation, exhibits in its different æras, a reciprocation of virtue and vice, of prosperity and adversity, of strength and comparative debility. It has had its youth, its manhood, and its old age. It has shewn a vigour proportioned to the several stages of its progress; bending sometimes before violent assaults, but always recovering sufficient energy to repel them. The last ten years of its existence, indeed, has been

\* Page 286.

marked

A. D.

1801.

marked with peculiar circumstances of trial. In this too the resemblance holds. “If a man live many years, and rejoice in them all: yet let him remember the days of darkness; for they shall be many\*.” In the midst of apprehension the century expired. The Sceptic was ready to pronounce this epoch, to be the end both of its natural and political life. Insultingly, he cried—“Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations †!” But, thanks be to God! a bright and penetrating beam breaks joyfully upon both. *Human* existence acquires new powers, when it hears the voice of the Saviour exclaim, “Lazarus! come forth.” *Political* existence revives, when the same voice (for it is the same voice) declares PEACE!—“Peace to him that is near, and to him

\* Eccles. xi. 8.

† Isaiah xiv. 11.

that

A. D. that is afar off;" peace to the individual,  
 1801. peace to the world; temporal peace, the  
 happy harbinger of peace eternal.

This most soothing and interesting sound, more soothing, more interesting, from its sudden and unexpected arrival, gratefully assails my ear, while my pen is adding its last touches to this essay\*. Happy am I in congratulating with my country on this important event: fortunate in leaving an impression on the minds of my readers, which may soften or erase the memory of recent circumstances, which have harrowed up the souls of the righteous. May it be propitious to us, both in a civil and religious capacity! May we recover the injuries which society has sustained, during a contest of unparalleled asperity and calamity; a contest, not merely of swords and spears, but of much more deadly and dangerous weapons, of vile principles and polluted opinions! And may the New Century,

\* Preliminaries of Peace signed at London, October the 1st, 1801.

which

which has just opened to our view, introduce us, still smarting under correction, to prospects of greater felicity; may it rise upon us, like the dawn of the resurrection, and assure us, that though "heaviness may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning\*!"

A. D.  
1801.

From a perusal of the last section it will be too apparent, what the state of practical religion was, at the conclusion of the century. Gladly would I draw a veil over the scene which now presents itself; earnestly would I turn away from that profligacy and dissipation, which the eye cannot but behold. But how then should I discharge the duty which I am commissioned to fulfil? Yet how shall the minister of Christ, himself a child of infirmity and sin, *cast the first stone* of reprehension? Let him fall prostrate before the throne of divine grace, and then let him "Cry aloud, and spare not: let him lift up his voice like a trum-

\* Psalm xxx. 5.

pet;

A. D. 1801. pet; and shew the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins\*.”

The refined manners of the present age, indeed, shrink back at the introduction of *plain language*; and, like the Jews of old, “ Say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, *speak unto us smooth things*, prophesy deceits †.” Yet let the public teacher beware of so fatal an accommodation to the refinements of any age, lest it be said, “ Every one, from the least even unto the greatest, is given to *iniquity*, from the prophet, even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely. For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people *slightly*, saying, peace, peace; when there is no peace ‡.” But as the manners of men differ in various periods, and countries, reprehension itself must, in some measure, take its tone from prevailing habits. The disposition which is not assailable by direct contradiction, and

\* Isaiah lviii. 1.

† Isaiah xxx. 10.

‡ Jer. viii. 10, 11.

harsh language, may be subdued by the gentleness of reproof: and he, whose heart cannot be melted by tears, must be persuaded by terror. “Of some have compassion, making a difference; others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire\*.”

A. D.  
1801.

Some of all ranks have suffered from the fatal tendency of the principles of the times. Vice and profligacy are the growth of every age; but seldom have they been planted in so prurient a soil, as that which the present æra affords. The consequence is—*a. lurrant harvest!* I might be particular in proving this assertion; but I speak to those who live in the midst of examples, and who know and *feel* the weight of the observation. I might refer to the multiplied instances of unfaithfulness to the marriage-bed—to the midnight revels of abandoned prostitutes—to the cool deliberate snare of the gamester—to the secret society of sedition, or the open lectures of the infidel. I

\* Jude 22.

A. D. 1801. might refer to the overflowing theatre—the crowded assembly—the perpetual card-table—and the *deserted* church; but this would be only to offer to the view frequent and familiar scenes.

It might have been imagined, that the long continued sound of the trumpet of war, attended with complicated misery and distress, would have awakened the slumbering springs of virtue and religion, would have roused the attention of the most inconsiderate, and recalled the flitting spirit of piety and devotion. It might have been thought that the common, but impressive argument of adversity, would have excited the same sentiment now, that it once did in the repentant monarch of Israel—“ Before I was troubled I went wrong; but now have I kept thy word\*.” Nothing, however, like this happened, in the politer circles of life.

The good Bishop of London, indeed, after a season of political apprehension,

\* Psalm cxix. 67.

thought

A. D.  
1801.

thought he perceived an alteration favourable to the interests of religion. But too soon he had occasion to retract his observation. "Some degree of moderation," he says, "in pleasure and amusement, both private and public, some serious sentiments in religion and devotion, began evidently to prevail, in the spring of 1798. But this fair prospect (with grief it must be confessed) has been miserably overcast in the course of the present year [1799], in which the spirit of dissipation, luxury, and profusion, seems to have returned with redoubled violence; and not only have gaieties, diversions, and entertainments of every kind, multiplied beyond example, (at least in the metropolis;) but what is a still more alarming consideration, the number of divorces has been greater than in any preceding year. Is it thus, then, that we reform? *Is our goodness as the morning cloud, and as the early dew goeth it away?* Does our religion spring solely from our fears, and is the degree of our danger the measure of our piety?

A. D. 1801. piety? Does the ardour of our devotion cool, as our apprehensions of public calamity subside; and is our morality a mere *occasional conformity* to the rules of the gospel, varying continually with the varying aspect of our affairs abroad and at home? These are mortifying and humiliating questions, but it becomes us to weigh and consider them well; and may God in his mercy grant, that they may produce their due effect upon our hearts \* !”

The state of religion amongst the poor does not offer a much more flattering prospect, than among the rich: the poor, I mean, of large towns, and of populous manufacturing countries; for in villages, from situation, the poor will more or less escape contagion. The reason has been explained in speaking of the diffusion of pernicious

\* Charge, 1799.—An excellent compendium of the state of practical religion in this country, might be selected from the admirable Charges of many of the Bishops of the Church of England, published during the last ten years of the century.

publications. Where the principles circulated are bad, the conduct resulting from them cannot be good. A. D.  
1801.

But, painful as these remembrances are, I will not adopt the gloomy opinion of the Psalmist, and say, “ They are *all* gone out out of the way.” For however true the observation may be, of the original depravity of man’s nature, a fairer promise sometimes meets the eye, and leads us to hail, in the good man’s conduct, the influence of the spirit of the gospel of salvation.

Though the practice of religion has undoubtedly decreased, by the propagation of a vain philosophy among those who cultivate the wisdom of this world, as well as among the more ignorant and dissipated disciples of that sect, still this age is proud to acknowledge a glorious assemblage of piety and virtue, breaking forth like the refreshing water in a thirsty soil. Difficult times are productive of extremes in conduct. The storm raised by a dæmon, requires more than a dæmon to allay it. The

A. D. 1801. turbulence of the last ten years produced many desperate, and dangerous characters: the same period has offered to our view, not merely the judicious statesman, or the intrepid warrior, but men of a very different description, defenders of a much insulted faith, and patient, suffering, Christians. In the higher ranks of life, men of worth and value have appeared, men deeply impressed by the circumstances of the times, guarding the sacred deposit of religion, and sedulously counteracting the profligate examples of their brethren. Never have charitable institutions been better supported than at present. But I rest no argument on these; for superfluous wealth may be thrown into the scale of ostentation; and Araunah said, "I will not offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing\*." But those establishments exhibit the genuine fruits of the spirit, where *personal* assistance is given

\* 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

to their support, where the practice of religion is united to its faith, and where the heart is improved in improving the objects of its charity\*.

A. D.  
1801.

Amongst the labouring poor, too, much impression has been made: Many energies have been called forth, which would have continued dormant in prosperous times. The clergy have not been the last to exert themselves in beginning a necessary reformation: churches are better frequented, and religious duties more punctually performed. Many laymen, of distinguished piety and abilities, have taken up the pen of the divine. Many females, amiable for their sex and their talents, have undertaken the instruction of the poor. The zeal of these attempts is only equalled by their success; and we are encouraged to pursue this heavenly track by the words of Christ Himself—"Lift up your eyes, and look on

\* Philanthropic Society—Society for the Reformation of Principles, &c. &c.

A. D. the fields; for they are white already to  
 1801. harvest\*.”

While the philosophers of the continent were erecting schools of infidelity †, and diffusing every pernicious opinion into the youthful mind; how were many of the opulent, and the good, employing themselves in England? They were instituting schools of a different description. If we consider this circumstance, as connected with the particular history of this period, we shall look upon it as a singular act of Divine Providence that, a few years before the revolution took place in France, a revolution, doubtless, occasioned by a preparation of infidelity, *Schools for Sunday Education* began to be established in this kingdom. And I will venture to affirm, that they have saved many, many, from destruction. Let it not be objected, that knowledge is dangerous for the poor. The knowledge of true religion is dangerous for

\* John iv. 35.

† Abbé Baruel's History of Jacobinism.

no man. It is his food—it is his life. In-  
 stil it once into his heart, and it will bear  
 him through every conflict—he will say, A. D.  
1801.  
 “ Though I walk through the valley of the  
 shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for  
*Thou art with me*—Thy rod, and thy staff  
 comfort me\*.”

Education is a subject which has em-  
 ployed the pens, and exercised the talents  
 of the wisest of mankind. I mean not to  
 enter into the discussion: but it is neces-  
 sary, in appreciating the moral conduct of  
 the present age, to remark, that though in  
 the higher and middle classes of life more  
 attention is paid to education than ever was  
 before, yet that attention not being always  
 directed to a right end, has in many cases  
 proved very detrimental to society. The great  
 increase of luxury, has brought the dif-  
 ferent ranks of persons nearer to a level.  
 The rich merchant feels himself not inferior  
 to the man of hereditary dignity. Wealth,

\* Psalm xxiii. 4.

A. D. 1801. he imagines, is an equivalent for greatness ; and the heirs and heiresses of both parties, meet together under the roofs of education. The system of instruction, in many respects improper for both, is fatal to the families of the merchant, or the tradesman. A refinement of manners takes place among them considerably above their situation. The head, and not the heart, is cultivated. Real information is sacrificed to superficial accomplishments, and the unhappy pupils are returned to their fathers' houses furnished with few beneficial ideas, and certainly with less regard to religion, less command of their passions, less filial affection, than they carried with them to their schools.

The observation is equally true, if we descend a few steps lower in society. Numbers are too prone to emulate the profusion and dissipated manners of the rank immediately above them. Even the simplicity and neatness of the farmer's family ; that modesty of deportment, that strict attention to moral and religious duties which  
 distin-

distinguished the household of the old English yeoman, have shrunk from the contagion of too refined an education. A. D. 1801.

If I penetrate the venerable recesses of our universities themselves, though I find much to commend, something, I fear, will be still left to condemn. The manly and liberal system of education adopted in these eminent nurseries of British youth, has not altogether escaped the contagion of luxurious indulgences. Far from joining in an indiscriminate censure of the revered parent to whose fostering care I owe an indelible attachment, or of her equally celebrated sister, I may be allowed to express serious apprehensions, lest the general relaxation of morals, and luke-warmness in religious exercises, should have encroached on the salutary discipline long established in these ancient seminaries. This inquiry is a matter of national importance. But it is not for me to suggest, what their own wise guardians are ready to execute. One observation, however, I must make

A. D. 1801. with regard to expence. The universities, for several ages, have nurtured many a valuable race of theological students. The clergy of our church, sensible of the benefits they have themselves derived from these sources, have always been earnest in sending their sons to imbibe the rich streams which they themselves have tasted. But if luxury invade the seats of learning and of virtue, if expences increase where frugality should reign, farewell to the acquisition of all their beneficial attainments; farewell to the painful scholar who wastes his midnight lamp in deep researches; farewell to the youthful servant of Heaven who is preparing his mind for pastoral avocations. The sons of the inferior clergy must acquit themselves in other duties, must find other employments, and a most useful body of men will, in these respects, be lost to the state.

The object of these remarks is to recall propriety of conduct, and to recommend the study of religious knowledge as an essential

sentia] branch of public instruction. Why, that should be most neglected which is most material, is an enquiry few can answer. Yet so it is. The effect is but too visible. Some have cast off their religion, if they ever had any, out of compliment to Voltaire and Rousseau ; others have suffered it to slide both out of their memories and practice, because they are unable to “ give a reason for the hope that is in them.” Alas ! who can wonder that *iniquity should abound*, when we see so plainly that, “ the love of many waxeth cold”—*very cold indeed*, towards the blessed author of their salvation.

A. D.  
1801.

Now, my friends and countrymen, is the hour arrived when we should call forth our ancient loyalty, our ancient religion. The waves of this troublesome world are once more subsiding to a calm. We feel an ardour at the prospect, proportionate to the dangers we have escaped. But let not extravagant joy overpower the sentiments best suited to our situation. *Our day*

A. D. *day of trial is not over.* Nay, start not;  
1801. perhaps it is only now beginning. I say  
not this, with a gloomy spirit, to cast a  
damp over the general exultation which  
every where prevails. In common with  
every Briton, I rejoice sincerely at the  
happy change. But I would not wish the  
voice of warning to be totally neglected.  
A state of outward ease is generally attend-  
ed with unguarded moments. As no man  
falls suddenly into an extremity of wicked-  
ness, as it required many years to mature  
the pernicious principles of the French  
philosophers, so will it probably require as  
many more to assure the world of their  
entire reformation. The passage of the  
Straight of Dover is short: the communi-  
cation between the two countries, when  
once opened, is easy: principles are light,  
and messengers are ready. With these  
considerations, that solicitude will not ap-  
pear mis-placed, which adopts the words  
of the apostle, and applies them with their  
full emphasis to the men of this country,  
and

and of this generation—"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ\*." A. D.  
1801.

Among the blessings which the opening of a new century has brought within our view, I ought not to forget the return of that abundance, of which we had been deprived by a failure of the produce of two preceding seasons, in addition to many local circumstances, and particularly, an increased consumption of provisions occasioned by the war. Thus is a kind providence inclined to try us once more, in every respect, with prosperity. "He maketh peace in all our borders, and filleth us with the finest of the wheat. He openeth his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing †." Peace, at all times acceptable, is doubly so when accompanied with such a companion: and if the times

\* Colos. ii. 8. † Psalm-cxlvii. 14. cxlv. 17.

A. D. 1801. of unparalleled difficulty have made a due impression on our hearts, every son of Britain will have an happy occasion to say —“It is good for me that I have been in trouble.”

I have now, by the blessing of God, brought these reflections to an end—the century has come to an end—and we, who have been actors in it, some of us busy actors, in a few years, or perhaps a few days, will come to an end likewise. Selecting from the succession of time, one portion of its history, how quickly is it gone? But far, very far is it from being erased from the memory; very far from gliding unheeded along, like the current to which it often is compared. Strong and permanent will be the mark of the waters; for awful and instructive has been the fluctuating scene.

Various are the lights in which we have viewed the face of religion during the preceding century. The events, as they passed by us, checked the presumption of human

man judgment. Often they arose through the turbulence of passion, and often settled into peace without the intervention of temporal means. The hand of Providence which brought forth the storm for our punishment, frequently cleared the horizon for our instruction; that we might not forget to say, "This is thy hand, and Thou, Lord, hast done it."

A. D.

1801.

As a nation, as a *religious* nation, we have had repeated causes for thankfulness; but never greater than at present, when the Ruler of the universe holds forth his golden sceptre, and says to a distracted world—"Peace! be still!" Let us hail the omen, and profit by this most timely instance of God's mercy. In the midst of many changes, this happy change truly deserves our gratitude. Let us make one change more—Let us *change our hearts*. Without this, *Peace*, that comes to all, will never come to us; and *Hope*, that cheers even the gloom of the dungeon, will never rest within our breasts. But  
let

A. D. 1801. let us not imagine our own powers equal to so great a change. Nothing can effect it, except the influence of that Spirit, which brought "peace on earth, good-will towards men"—and nothing can continue it to us except—

"Him first, Him last, Him midst, and without end\*."

"JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY,  
AND TO-DAY, AND FOR EVER.' Amen.

\* Milton.

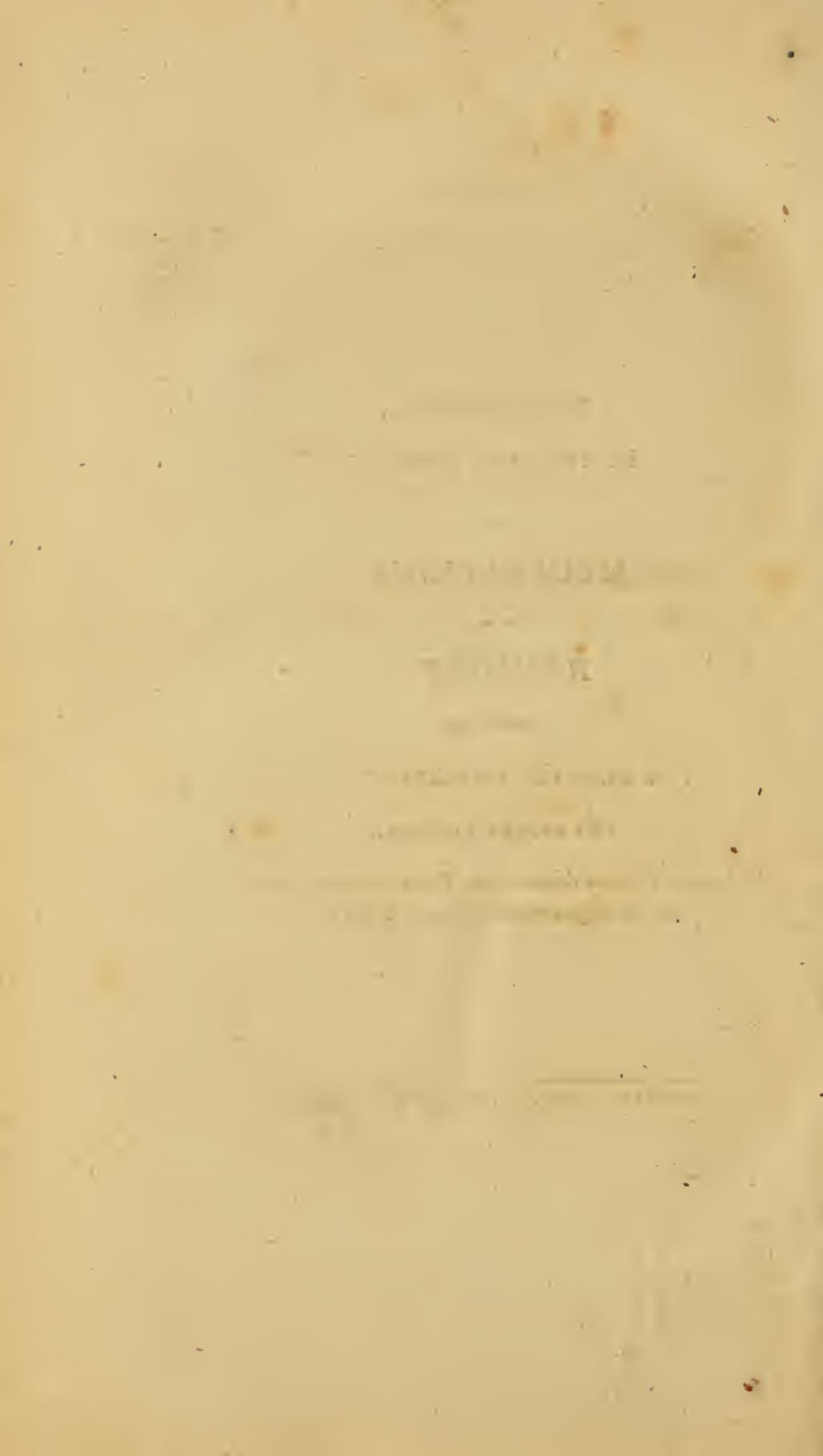
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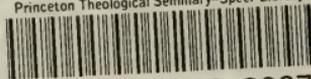




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