

A  
S E R M O N  
A N D  
O R A T I O N,  
OCCASIONED BY THE  
D E A T H  
OF THE LATE  
Rev<sup>d</sup>. CALEB FLEMING, D. D.

[ PRICE ONE SHILLING. ]

S E R M O N

A N D

O R A T I O N

OF

D O C T O R

AND

OF THE

OF

OF

A  
S E R M O N,  
PREACHED AT NEW BROAD-STREET,  
AUGUST 1, 1779,  
OCCASIONED BY THE  
D E A T H  
OF THE LATE  
Rev<sup>d</sup>. CALEB FLEMING, D. D.,  
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE JULY 21, 1779,  
IN THE EIGHTY-FIRST YEAR OF HIS AGE.  
BY JOHN PALMER.  
WITH THE  
O R A T I O N,  
DELIVERED AT THE  
I N T E R M E N T,  
BY JOSEPH TOWERS.

L O N D O N:  
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M.DCC.LXXIX.

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**I**T is at the request of the affectionate and long happy consort, but now forrowing widow, of my highly esteemed friend, the late Reverend, and truly venerable, Dr. Caleb Fleming, that I am this day to address you, on his dismissal from this scene of labour and trial; after having attained, through the favour of Providence, to the uncommon age of almost eighty-one years.

I could not refuse my best endeavours, to perform this last public instance of respect to the memory of one, whose character I so much revered, and with whom I had the pleasure of a long and peculiar intimacy. His relatives, and other friends who may be present on this occasion, particularly those, who have enjoyed the benefit of his pastoral services; to whom his worth must be better known than I can describe it, will kindly accept

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the attempt, short as it may fall of their convictions and my wishes.

The words I have chosen to insist on, because in a high degree characteristic of our departed friend, and, at the same time, replete with admonition and comfort, are those of the Apostle Paul,

2 COR. I. 12.

*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.*

**S**T. Paul, whose principle and line of conduct, and whose happy experience, consequent upon his steady adherence to them, are described in the passage now read, was by his profession as a Christian, and still more by his office as an apostle, exposed to peculiar difficulties and dangers. Pure and excellent as the religion of Jesus is in its nature, and mighty as the evi-  
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dence was, with which it was attended, of its divine original; on its first publication, it met with a general and violent opposition. Both Jews and Gentiles, widely as they differed in their religious tenets and usages, considered Christianity as a dangerous innovation; and thought themselves highly concerned, if possible, to defeat the success of it. Hence the far greater part of both these classes of men not only rejected it themselves, but also united in their endeavours to discourage the profession of it, by the most contemptuous and injurious treatment of those who ventured to make it. And as the alteration, which the Christian scheme was designed to introduce, by substituting a new and very different institution of religion, instead of the former Jewish and Heathen establishments, could not but be particularly offensive to those who were in authority; the aid of the secular arm was therefore not wanting to support the clamours of the people, and bring the

abettors of this new doctrine to what they judged a condign punishment. More particularly was the resentment of an infidel world levelled against those, who, while they avowed the Christian faith themselves, were also engaged in bringing over others to the reception of it. Accordingly, when malice had perpetrated, to the utmost of its power, its cruel designs on the person of the great Founder of our holy religion, by putting him to the painful and ignominious death of the cross; the same evil spirit continued to exert itself in persecuting the apostles of our Lord, who, agreeably to the special commission which they had received from him, were employed in the communication of that word of truth, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself. St. Paul was no less distinguished by his sufferings in the Christian cause, than by the zeal which he manifested in the support of it; and the greatness of the one, in such a state of things, is, indeed,



deed, naturally to be accounted for, by the vigour and steadiness of the other. In the epistles of this apostle, we have frequent mention of the troubles he underwent, or to which he stood exposed; though never in any such way as was inconsistent with true fortitude of mind, or, indeed, in any other, but what was clearly and strongly expressive of it. In the chapter where our text is, he particularly addresses the Corinthian converts on this subject; acknowledging, in terms of the warmest gratitude, the abundant support with which he was favoured by the God of all comfort; and this with the benevolent design of strengthening the minds of the persons, to whom he wrote; who, as professors of the same religion, though only in a private capacity, were partakers with him in suffering on that account. He speaks of one deliverance, which he had experienced, when in imminent danger of death, which animated his confidence in the same divine power

and mercy, to which he thankfully ascribes this escape, for his further preservation, as long as Infinite Wisdom saw fit. He was, however, prepared for the worst; being fully determined, that, with the divine aid, he would still continue faithfully to discharge the important duties of his apostolic office; whatever perils might await him in the execution of it: and under all his past trials, and those to which he was further liable, there was one grand source of consolation, from which he derived the firmest support to his faith and hope; and what that was, he informs us in the text; *for our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity, and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* It may not be altogether undeserving of notice, that, though it is to be supposed St. Paul had a more direct reference to himself in this description; he yet makes use of plural terms, including other of his fellow-labourers

bourers in the gospel, and hereby suggesting, with a generosity of heart, worthy of imitation, that he considered them, not only as professedly embarked with him in one noble design, but also as conducting themselves on the same excellent principle, and pursuing equally upright measures, for the accomplishment of it. And there is the more reason for supposing this to have been his view; as, in the first verse of the chapter, he speaks of Timothy, whom he calls our brother, as being with him, at the time when he wrote this epistle.

The words are in themselves so plain, as to need but little comment upon them. They represent, in a clear and forcible manner, what that spirit, or disposition of mind, was, which actuated and governed him in all his services, as an apostle of Christ, and the whole of his behaviour, towards all, with whom he had any connection, or to whom, under the guidance of divine Providence, he was led

to minister. This was, simplicity, or plainness of heart, and sincerity before God, or a sincere, prevailing regard to his approbation and acceptance—not a fleshly wisdom, that is, not that worldly policy, which seeketh its own private emolument or secular gain—but, on the contrary, the spirit of that wisdom which is from above, whose illuminating and animating influences were graciously imparted to him in an eminent degree. Such was the complexion and happy turn of the apostle's mind; these the principles on which he acted.

If any further illustration were necessary; the apostle has himself given us a sufficient one in the ivth Chapter of this Epistle, Ver. 2. where he says—*We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.* It was the consciousness of this religious integrity,

integrity, or the testimony of conscience to the power of it in his mind, that was the ground of his rejoicing. The word<sup>a</sup>, which we render rejoicing, is elsewhere translated, glorying; and the latter is its more literal meaning. I scarce need, however, to observe, that no other kind of glorying can be intended, than such a just self-approbation, as is the inseparable attendant of habitual integrity, in a well-informed mind. This is intirely consistent with a humble sense of its imperfection, and obligations to the grace or free goodness of God, for all its attainments in knowledge and righteousness; as the faculties, by which we acquire them, are his gifts, and all the means of improving these nobler powers of our nature are of his appointment, and the effects of his grace or favour. To him we are all highly indebted for his co-operating aids; though both Reason and Revelation teach us to regard them, as ever communicated

<sup>a</sup> καύχησις

in a way perfectly consistent with the agency of man; not as superseding, but assisting that moral culture, which is our indispensable duty, and which immediately depends on our own proper choice. This humble and grateful sense of our dependence on the Father of our spirits, for our attainments in goodness, in the view now given, while it is intirely consistent with the just applauses of an approving conscience, is also in itself a very important branch of that religious temper, the consciousness of which is the foundation of our glorying or rejoicing. St. Paul was a most illustrious example of the influence of this truly pious and Christian disposition. Accordingly in the text, with that conscious integrity, in which he rejoiced, he unites the important consideration of the grace or favour of God, as aiding and animating him in the acquisition of it.

I shall only just add here, that in the glorying or rejoicing, of which the apostle speaks,

speaks, we are undoubtedly to consider him as including, both the present inward satisfaction, which he experienced, arising from the judgment of his own mind; and likewise the glorious hope of that immortal life and blessedness which the gospel set before him; as a reward, which would amply compensate all his labours and sufferings, and crown his utmost wishes. That the character of the Apostle fully corresponded to the view of it given in the text, the history which we have of his life, in the writings of the New Testament, affords us the clearest and most satisfactory evidence.

But not to enter into this at present; I hasten to the proper application of the passage, which I shall

I. Consider, as descriptive of the temper and conduct of the faithful ministers of Christ in general. I shall then,

II. More particularly direct your thoughts to that bright example of such a cha-

a character, which has been set before us in the life and conversation of our departed friend.

These views of the subject will suggest some further reflections, consolatory and instructive, as the improvement of the whole.

I. Of the declaration of St. Paul in the text, as applicable to the faithful ministers of Christ in general.

It is descriptive, (1.) Of the integrity of their views and conduct in the exercise of their ministry. And (2.) Of the happy effect of it, in the satisfactions and joys, which flow from the testimony of conscience to the prevailing influence of such a principle.

(1.) As to the principle itself, by which they are governed in their public labours, or, agreeably to our Apostle's language, in the general tenor of their conversation with the world. Though the ministers  
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of the gospel are not, in common, exposed to the same difficulties and dangers as the apostles were; they are, however, by no means exempt from all trials of their integrity. If they are not under the like temptations to a total apostacy from the Christian faith, they are yet not without their discouragements in a steady adherence to what, upon careful examination, appears to them to be the genuine truth of Christianity.

Not to proceed too far into this copious subject—In the ministry among Protestant Dissenters, though the liberty of private judgment is, among Christians of that denomination, an acknowledged principle; and is, indeed, the only rational ground of their separation from all religious establishments; it is yet not to be denied, that they are far from being consistent in maintaining the exercise of that principle in its proper extent. Many there are, who, while they claim this privilege for themselves, will by no means allow

allow the same liberty to others. Creeds and confessions, of meer human authority, which have no better an origin and support than the opinion of fallible men (deserving and venerable as their characters may be in some respects) are too commonly held in a degree of estimation, to which they can have no just claim: and though the sanction of the civil power may be denied, as having, in truth and reason, any weight to enforce the reception of them; they are yet implicitly followed, with an equally blind submission, as any formularies whatever, which are magisterially established and defended. I am sorry to add, few, comparatively, are those dissenting societies, in which a true liberality of spirit so far generally obtains, as to admit their ministers to think and judge freely for themselves; or, at least, to speak, with freedom and without reserve, what they apprehend to be the pure, uncorrupted doctrines of Revelation,

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There are too often some favourite points of doctrine; at best, matters of dark and doubtful disputation, if not doctrines notoriously repugnant to the dictates of reason and common sense; or, which is much more to be regretted, doctrines, which, though, I doubt not, they are viewed in a very different light by many who hold them, do in themselves directly tend to weaken the obligations, if not sap the very foundation of morality, by furnishing false grounds of hope, and such as are independant on moral and personal righteousness; there are, I say, some points of doctrine of this nature, which, absurd as they are in themselves and hurtful in their tendency, are too often looked upon, as attended with that certainty, and deemed so sacred, that for a minister to be silent about them, but, still more, to declare against them, is sufficient to incur upon him the heavy charge of unsoundness in the faith, and render him odious to those, whom he wishes to serve in their best interests.

I forbear

I forbear pursuing these unpleasing, though too well-grounded reflections; and shall conclude them with observing, that these are circumstances, which have a very discouraging aspect on the ministerial character, and are no inconsiderable trials of the integrity of many, who have taken it upon them. In such a situation, what judicious Christian will doubt the propriety of our adopting the noble sentiment of St. Peter, as the rule of our conduct, namely, that *we ought to obey God, rather than men*<sup>b</sup>? Truth is the cause of God. Of this we profess ourselves ministers; and are, therefore, by the nature of our office, called upon to stand forth in its defence, and to endeavour to the utmost of our power to promote the knowledge of it.

All truths are not, indeed, of equal moment. Unquestionably, those, which relate to practice, are of the highest importance, and ought chiefly to be insisted

<sup>b</sup> Acts v. 29.

on. There is also a great diversity both in the gifts, which the great Father and Lord of all hath seen fit to impart to those who are engaged in the work of the ministry, and in the capacities and taste of those among whom they labour. This not only admits of, but calls for, some difference in the manner in which ministers are respectively to conduct their ministrations; each taking care to make choice of that, by which they are likely to render themselves most instrumental to the edification of their hearers. But still all should be consistent with simplicity and godly sincerity; which, if they form the heart, will have a governing influence on all the services of those, who preach the word. The faithful servant of Jesus will honestly, and without disguise, impart the result of his enquiries, on all those grand points which concern the duty and happiness of man. All duplicity of speech he will carefully avoid; considering it as a practice no less disho-

nourable in itself, than it is incompatible with the proper design of his office, by a servile accommodation to the prejudices of mankind, to strengthen, instead of correcting, their mistakes, and confirm them in error, instead of leading them into the knowledge of the truth. In a word, he will not shun to declare to them the whole counsel of God, respecting their everlasting salvation; but, in conformity to the advice of our Apostle to Timothy, and Titus, he will *in meekness instruct those that oppose themselves; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering; in all things, shewing himself a pattern of good works, in doctrine uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil to say of him.* And great must be the happiness, which every minister of this description enjoys in this world: for whatever difficulties or discouragements of an

° 2 Tim. ii. 25. Chap. iv. 2. Titus ii. 7, 8.

external nature he may meet with; he has a treasure within him, which is of incomparably superior worth to all the treasures of earth, even that inward solid peace and satisfaction, which the world can neither give nor take away.

Of this happy effect of godly sincerity, in the discharge of the ministerial duty, I now proceed to speak. Having before hinted at the extensive influence of bigotry and uncharitableness, in matters of religious opinion; I should be greatly wanting, did I not observe, on the other hand, that the cause of truth and liberty has a considerable, though, in a comparative view, but a small, number of steady friends and generous supporters, by whose concurrence and liberality, ministers of the same enlarged turn of mind are, in some degree, encouraged to go on in the prosecution of their studies and labours.

But, at the same time, while narrow, party systems, and almost every species of doctrine which the ignorance or arti-

fice of man can devise, and which are as unintelligible, as they are indefensible, aided by the efforts of a blind, but furious zeal, are daily increasing their votaries; how notorious and visible is the declension among the friends of free inquiry, and liberal sentiments! Hence neglect, and detraction, become the trying lot of many, whose time and talents are employed in promoting the noble cause of religion and virtue amongst mankind. Painful, however, as these returns are for their upright and diligent labours; their conscious integrity and hope of the divine approbation give a firmness and stability to their minds, which alleviates all their mortifications and trials. To secure the testimony of that inward witness, which is either the best friend or the worst enemy of man, is the ultimate view of every one, who worthily fills the ministerial character: and his heart not condemning him, he has confidence towards God. If his pious and benevolent endeavours have

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not been crowned with the success he wished ; he has, yet, the satisfaction of reflecting, that he has been steady in his adherence to the great interests of truth and virtue, and has not basely sacrificed them, for the sake of popular applause or sordid gain. That sublimest of all joy, which springs from this testimony of conscience, renders him calm and submissive under all the evils he suffers ; adds a true relish to every blessing which he shares ; and animated by its cheering influences, he anticipates the awful hour of his dissolution with composure and resignation ; till, having finished his course, and kept the faith, he is called to receive the glorious future reward of all his labours and sufferings, even that crown of righteousness, which the Lord hath promised to them, who love and obey him.

In the brief delineations now given, and in which I have endeavoured to set forth, in a general view, the spirit and design of

the apostle's description in the text ; we have those moral features, which are so truly characteristic of our departed friend, as must have pointed him out to the lively remembrance of all who knew him. So conspicuous and exemplary was the integrity of the late Reverend Dr. Caleb Fleming, as to be almost universally acknowledged and admired, and even by those who differed most from him in their religious sentiments. They, who had any acquaintance with him, could not but observe that he stood eminently distinguished by an honest plainness of heart, a disinterested regard to what appeared to him to be truth and right ; insomuch that there was scarcely any one, who was not ready to declare their full conviction, of the strictest conformity, in all his ministrations, to the dictates of his best judgment, and of the rectitude of the views upon which he acted ; much as they might think him mistaken in some of his opinions, and though they might entertain

tain the most formidable apprehensions of their tendency.—A testimony this, to the character of our friend, which does him the highest honour, and is much more to be valued, than the warmest eulogiums, which could have been bestowed upon him, either for the clearness and rationality of the doctrines which he preached, on the one hand, or the supposed orthodoxy of them, on the other.

In those well-known strictures of our admired poet;

*An honest man's the noblest work of God.  
For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.*

ESSAY ON MAN, Ep. 4. l. 248. Ep. 3. 305, 306.

But your expectations, and my own desires, lead me to be more particular<sup>d</sup>.

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<sup>d</sup> The Doctor, in his 70th year, drew up some memoirs of his life, which he left to his particular friend, and relation by marriage, the Reverend Mr. Joseph Towers, to be disposed of at his discretion.

He was born at Nottingham, of reputable parents, who had a very respectable descent. He very early discovered an uncommon taste for literature, and seems also, from his earliest youth, to have had an inclination to the ministerial character. A close attention was given by his parents to the culture of his mind; who, likewise, consulting his genius, put him under proper masters, to instruct him in classical, as well as other branches of learning; though their views do not appear to have been directed to that profession, of which he became so bright an ornament. So early, as between the years of six and seven, he had made a considerable degree of proficiency in the knowledge of the Latin language; to which, and other studies of the like nature, he continued his attention for several years after. At about sixteen years of

Accordingly, from those memoirs I am furnished with most of the incidents related in the following account.

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age, he applied himself to the study of Logic, Ethics, Natural Philosophy, and Astronomy, in which he had the assistance of the Reverend Mr. John Hardy<sup>c</sup>, a learned divine, and a man of a very liberal mind. He was also instructed in Geometry and Trigonometry, by a Mr. Needham, who was distinguished for his skill in those sciences, and under his care, he went through several books of Euclid. He also had particular advantages for improvement in the knowledge of Theology from the instruction of the judicious and learned divine beforementioned, of which he made the best use; as he all along seems to have had his attention directed to that kind of knowledge, and to have made it his favourite pursuit. He continued at Nottingham for several years after, when he removed to London. Here

<sup>c</sup> Mr. Hardy lived in Nottingham, and, for many years, took the care of a small number of pupils, who were boarded in his house, and instructed in various branches of literature.

he acquired a considerable intimacy with the Reverend Mr. John Holt, who was afterwards, for a number of years, one of the professors of the Academy at Warrington. To that gentleman he also acknowledges himself greatly indebted, for assisting and encouraging him in his studies, and for much useful instruction. By his advice, he further improved himself in classical knowledge, and particularly applied himself to the study of the Greek and Hebrew languages; though he had not as yet come to any determination of taking upon him the ministerial character.

From these anecdotes it appears, that a good foundation had been laying from early life, to qualify him for his after profession; and though he did not enter upon it till long beyond the usual time, yet few persons have entered upon it better furnished, and especially in that branch of knowledge, which is more peculiarly proper to this office, and necessary to the

useful discharge of the duties of it. Such were his abilities and improvements, that, previous to his engaging in the ministry among the Protestant Dissenters, he became noticed by the Reverend Dr. John Thomas, the present Bishop of Winchester, by whom he was recommended to the regard of Sir George Fleming, the then Bishop of Carlisle. In consequence of this, the Bishop sent him a presentation to a living in Cumberland, with the promise of a further ample provision. And here I cannot omit mentioning an instance of generosity on the part of Dr. Thomas, which does no small honour to his character. The benevolent-minded Prelate, apprehending our friend's circumstances to be narrow, made him an offer of advancing a handsome sum to defray the expences of a removal to so great a distance. This alluring encouragement was set before him at a time, when he had a wife and several children, having been early married to his now-mourning widow,

widow, and was destitute of all resources to provide for them, as he had then quitted the secular employment, in which for a number of years he was engaged. In this destitute condition, and with all the weight of a care upon him, in which every tender and affectionate feeling of his susceptible heart must be deeply interested; disapproving, on mature deliberation, the terms of conformity, with a fortitude, which marks out an uncommon elevation of mind, but, at the same time, with the just respect which was due to his compassionate and very obliging patrons, he declined accepting the proposal. The part which that truly amiable woman, the sympathetic companion of his life, and sharer in his distresses, took in this matter, must not be overlooked. She kindly aided his pious and virtuous resolution, by the fullest and tenderest assurances of her chearful readiness to undergo the most extreme hardships, rather than obtain relief at the expence of his integrity and peace.



peace. Such was the noble sacrifice which this truly religious pair united in making to the calls of duty and conscience; committing themselves to the care of that merciful Providence, to whose sacred will they gave this signal proof of the most cordial and unreserved obedience. And from that Almighty Power and Goodness, in which they trusted, they soon derived that outward succour in this time of their need, which has been matter of grateful remembrance to them ever since.

Having, not long after, began his ministry among the Dissenters, and preached occasionally, in different places in the country, and round the metropolis; he was, on the death of the Reverend Mr. Munckley, in the year 1738, chosen to succeed him, as pastor of a congregation in Bortholomew Close.

To that people he had a very honourable recommendation by Dr. Avery, who had been one of their ministers. Soon  
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after his election, he was ordained ; which service he justly placed in the only rational point of view, of being recommended, by his fathers and brethren in the ministry, to the favour of God, and the affectionate regard of the people<sup>f</sup>. On this occasion, he asserted the freedom with which he thought, by consenting to no other confession, than a general declaration of his faith in the revelation of the Gospel ; which, allow me just to observe here, as made before the people to whom we minister, stands upon a very different footing, from the making that, or any other declaration of our religious faith, at the requisition of the civil magistrate ; and in compliance with his demand, as a condition of legal toleration. The ceremony of the imposition of hands he also refused

<sup>f</sup> The ministers, who assisted at his ordination were, Dr. Jeremiah Hunt, Mr. Samuel Chandler, Mr. Thomas Mole, Mr. George Benson, Mr. Joseph Symonds, and Mr. Nathaniel Sandercock—Dr. Hunt preached, and Mr. Chandler gave the Charge.

to submit to, because he considered it as void of any just meaning, where no extraordinary gifts are, or can be, imparted.

In this situation he continued to officiate till the year 1753, when, on the declining health of that judicious, as well as eloquent, and, by all the friends of rational religion and free enquiry, greatly admired preacher, the Reverend Dr. James Foster, then minister to a morning society, at Pinners Hall, our friend was appointed to the office of Assistant-preacher to him, still officiating in the afternoon at Bartholomew Close. On the death of Dr. Foster, which took place not long after, he was chosen to succeed the Doctor in the pastoral office, in which view he had been also warmly recommended to the society by his worthy and benevolent predecessor. It was not long after this appointment, before the Society in Bartholomew Close, being greatly reduced, and that chiefly by the death of its aged members, was dissolved, most of the remaining few uniting  
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themselves to the society at Pinner's Hall; where, as you well know, Dr. Fleming continued to officiate with a most exemplary assiduity, till disabled by the growing infirmities of his far-advanced age, which did not lay him wholly aside till within some months short of two years before his death.

He began and ever pursued his ministry with a manly and truly Christian liberality of mind; withholding nothing that he thought profitable to his hearers, and opening to them his sentiments on the several doctrines of religion with the greatest freedom; to his views of which he fixed the attention of his audience, in an uncommon degree, by the easy and natural, but spirited and truly forcible, manner, in which his discourses were delivered.

It might have been expected that so bright a manifestation of the influence of the true principle of religious liberty, the first and vital principle of the

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the Protestant Dissent, would particularly have recommended him to the affectionate esteem of all the ministers of that persuasion; but here I am sorry to observe, from his own memoirs, the case was so much otherwise, that many of his brethren, and not only those who were more Calvinistic, but some who might well have been supposed to be better informed, instead of encouraging his labours, behaved towards him with great coolness and disrespect. This was as unfriendly as it was unmerited, and greatly tended to injure his reputation among the laity, and by that means to defeat his usefulness, as well as expose him to difficulties. I will not further unveil this unpleasing part of his history. Let the living be admonished by it, to be more consistent with themselves, and act more worthy of the noble cause for which they profess themselves advocates. Under the neglect and disaffection of many, he had, however, the esteem and countenance of a few others;

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who, in their day and generation, were burning and shining lights, and who, being dead, yet speak, in those useful publications, which they have left behind them. I here particularly refer to those learned and judicious divines, as well as pious and excellent men, the Reverend Dr. Jeremiah Hunt, and Dr. Nathaniel Lardner, the former of whom was the immediate predecessor of Dr. Foster, at Pinners Hall. With both these ministers he held a peculiar intimacy, and, as he respectfully and gratefully mentions, derived many advantages from it. Dr. Fleming, also, by his obliging temper and manners, by his improving conversation, but especially and above all, by that freedom and fidelity, which appeared in his public ministrations, procured the highest regard from many respectable characters among the laity, whose generous support he speaks of with the utmost gratitude.

Our departed friend was an able and judicious defender of the truth of the

Gospel-revelation, and a close and diligent examiner of its sacred content. He was a steady assertor of the rights of private judgment and conscience, in their proper latitude and extent. He explained the Scriptures, as they appeared to him, with precision and freedom. The leading principles of that theory of religion which he taught, and which guided and animated all his ministrations, were such as are highly honourable to God and friendly to man. These, whatever there was of a critical or argumentative nature in his discourses, he always took care to apply to their moral and practical uses; enforcing all which he uttered in the pulpit, by the exemplary consistency of his own temper and conduct. He had many proofs of the success of his ministry; though he had also his difficulties and discouragements.

He distinguished himself as an author as well as a minister. His publications were numerous; some on the most inte-

resting subjects, respecting the common cause of Christianity and liberty; and his discussions of these were such as were honoured with the approbation of not a few persons of great judgment and learning, as well as high in rank and station.

Upon the whole, the life we have been surveying, was both a very honourable and useful one; our ideas of which would be still further heightened, were we to unite with his qualifications as a minister, the many amiable virtues, personal and social, which he exhibited in a private station. But to those who knew him, to say more would be needless; and especially after the just and pleasing delineation of his character, given, on the solemn occasion of his interment, by my Reverend friend and brother.

To apply the whole :

I. The subject is in the highest degree consolatory, under the loss of such characters as we have been describing. To



die—is, indeed, no other than an event to which we are all liable at every age, and in all conditions of life. That the body, which is worn out by age, should dissolve and turn to dust, is to be expected from the operation of those laws; which the God of nature hath ordained, and is unavoidable. But still a scene of death is in every instance awful; nor can the removal of those, who have worthily filled the stations assigned them by Providence, ever take place, though deferred to the latest season, without leaving impressions of serious concern on the thoughtful and well-inclined. The stroke must be yet more deeply felt, where the bonds of nature, or of friendship and love, have formed a closer and more endearing connection. We are not, however, left to sorrow, as those who are without hope. The gospel administers the best support, by the full assurance, which it gives of a happy exchange of states for the truly good, on

their departure hence. They rest from their labours, and their works follow them, to be crowned with that glorious reward, which the Lord hath promised to his faithful servants. To this source of strong consolation, let me point the attention of the friends of that venerable minister of Christ, who has now finished his work and obtained his dismissal; to compose their spirits, and inspire submission to the merciful, though afflictive will of heaven. The sympathetic heart must feel in the tenderest manner for the affectionate widowed consort of this excellent man and best of husbands, who is mourning over the dissolution of the dearest of all connections, cemented by sixty years experience of the most perfect mutual amity. May the God of all comfort support her under this painful stroke, and the infirmities of her far advanced years!

2. The doctrine of the text, and the voice of Providence in the dispensation  
before

before us, afford matter of the most useful admonition.

Ministers are hereby reminded of the indispensable obligations they are under—to fidelity, in the communication of truth, according to their judgment and convictions.—to maintain a sincere regard for promoting the influence of pure and undefiled religion, and the true, everlasting happiness of man—and to an upright discharge of all the duties of their office, with a humble dependance on the favour and blessing of the Almighty Father of Spirits, for the furtherance of those important ends. It is this, and this alone, which will secure the testimony of conscience, and lay a solid foundation for rejoicing both living and dying: while, if we are destitute of these best of all qualifications, in which-ever of the different denominations of Christians we rank, or whatever opinions we may espouse and defend; and whether we have been applauded or neglected by the

world around us; in the hour of impartial reflection, our own hearts must reproach and condemn us, and we shall at last be numbered among the wicked and unprofitable.

They, who once enjoyed the benefit of our departed friend's ministrations, will allow me just to hint, how highly it concerns them, to remember him, who spake unto them the word of God, and to follow his faith, considering the end of his conversation.. They will permit me particularly to point to their recollection the stability of his adherence to the Christian faith, not as laid down in any established, or party systems, but as taught in the genuine records of the gospel revelation. In the belief of that revelation, he was fully confirmed by the external evidence with which it came attended, and which he considered, as amounting to a clear and satisfactory proof of its divine original. It was from that pure fountain of truth, that he drew all  
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his instructions, and on its gracious assurances and precious promises he built his hopes: nor was there any thing which he more resented, than the idea of his joining issue with the infidel, because he laboured to expose those irrational doctrines, which were matter of offence to both. “ So far (says the Doctor in his Memoirs) “ we are agreed; but then my “ design has had a contrary direction; “ namely, to point out the rational interpretation and its divine evidence. “ Whereas the unbeliever has played off “ all his ridicule at the abusive representations of Christianity, in order to “ throw contempt on the very idea of a “ divine revelation. We have agreed in “ pulling down the absurdity, but have “ differed widely about establishing the “ reality.” You, his friends, who highly esteemed and honoured him, and who are fully apprized of the clearness and propriety of these his distinctions, will not forget his solid reasonings, nor lose the

convictions which they wrought in your minds, but by reflection on the one, will give strength and permanence to the other. With your faith you will also unite those several virtues and graces of character, which he taught from the pulpit and enforced by his example in private; that you, like him, may, in the testimony of conscience, enjoy that noble fruit of integrity, which time will improve, but accident can never blast.

Finally, The instruction of the apostle and the present call of Providence extend to us all. They powerfully exhort—to fidelity in our several stations, public or private—to that honesty of principle and rectitude of conduct—that undisssembled piety and inflexible virtue—that devotion of mind, in the performance of all the external duties of religion, and that just dealing in our worldly transactions: in a word, they loudly admonish us to cultivate that simplicity and godly sincerity, which are the springs of true goodness,

ness, and the best security to the regular practice of it—which form the character of the upright man and the real Christian, and which will make us happy in ourselves and useful to others—So shall both ministers and people rejoice together here, and the testimony of our conscience be finally confirmed and honoured with the plaudit of our merciful Lord and Master, the appointed judge of quick and dead, in that all-enlivening sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord*<sup>s</sup>; and God grant that this may be the honour and happiness of us all. Amen.

<sup>s</sup> Matt. xxv. 23.

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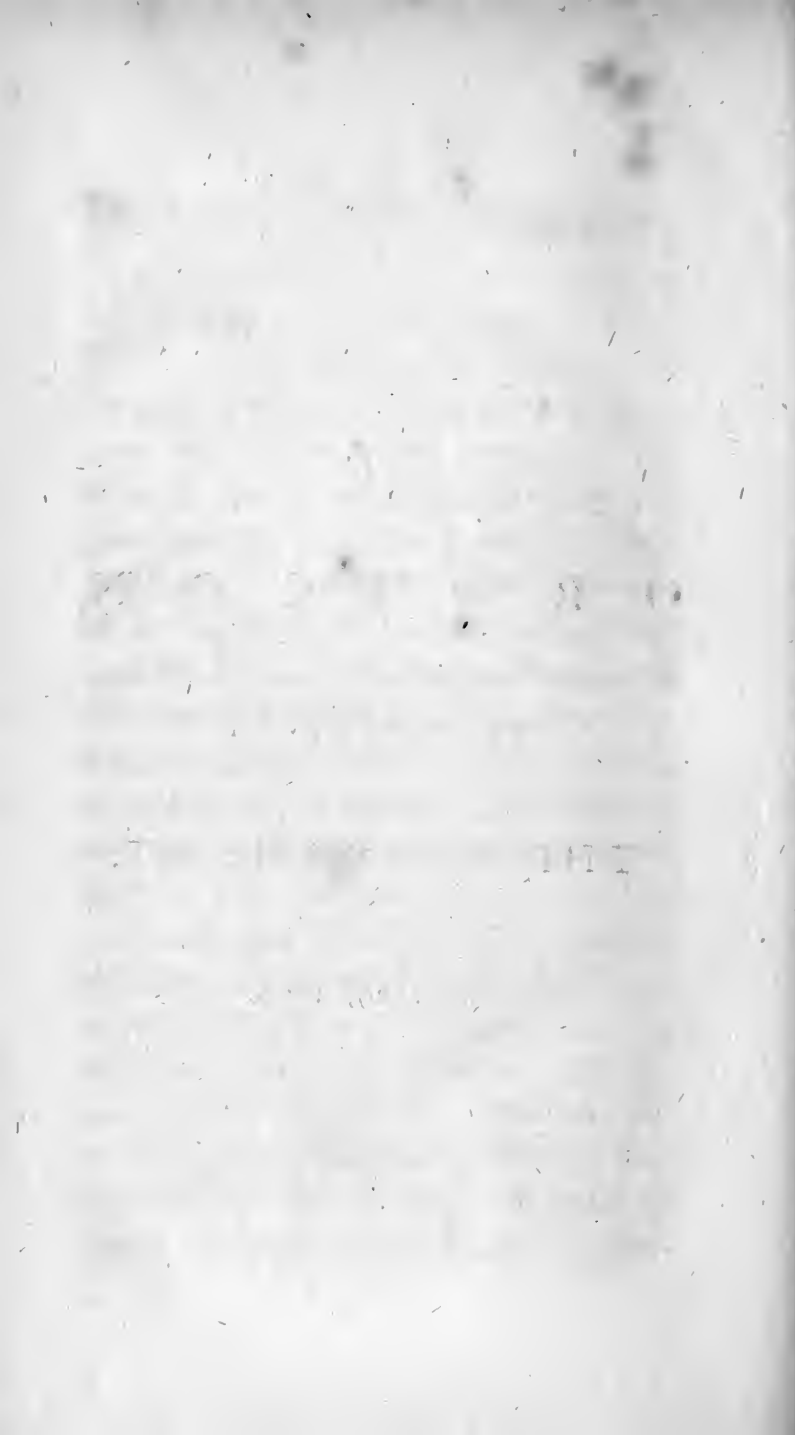


A N  
O R A T I O N,

DELIVERED AT

THE INTERMENT,

JULY 29, 1779.



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T H E

FUNERAL ORATION.

**T**HE most casual survey of those numerous mansions of the dead, which this place exhibits to our view, must have a natural tendency to inspire some degree of seriousness and recollection even into the most thoughtless and inattentive. The tombs around us proclaim, in the most emphatic terms, that *it is given unto all men once to die*. Nor can any be wholly insensible, that as these graves are filled with the remains of our fellow-creatures, some of them perhaps once our friends, it cannot be long before we also must descend into the same dreary habitations. The various scenes of life are, indeed, perpetually pointing out to us, that our residence here is only temporary. *As for man, his days are as grass,*

*as*

*as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth; the wind passeth over it, and it is gone, and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

Whatever may be the possessions, whatever the attainments of human beings, they must all in a few years quit this scene of action, and launch into the regions of futurity. This is the inevitable lot of all, of the poor and of the rich, of the weak and of the powerful, of the ignorant and of the learned. No age, no sex, no rank or dignity, is exempted from the general decree. Whoever thou art, whatever thy situation, thy character, or thy circumstances, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.*

We are now assembled to commit to the silent grave, the body of our late reverend, and departed friend and brother, Dr. CALEB FLEMING, who sustained, for many years, with much reputation, the character of a Protestant Dissenting Minister in this metropolis. He hath finished his labours, and is gone to make

up his account with his great Maſter, with his and our common Lord. Indefatigable in the purſuit of truth, and zealous in the promotion of what he apprehended to be ſo, he ſpent the greater part of a long life in the duties of the miniſterial office. A very large portion of his time, for a conſiderable ſeries of years, was entirely appropriated to the ſtudy of divinity, and to thoſe parts of knowledge which are immediately connected with it; other ſtudies engaged comparatively little of *his* attention; theology was at once his buſineſs and his pleaſure. Ordinary amuſements and modes of relaxation were little adapted to his taſte. For though he had naturally great chearfulneſs of temper, yet the gravity of the Divine eminently predominated in his character. Of the rights of conſcience he was a warm and reſolute aſſertor; and ever oppoſed, with a manly indignation, all invaſions of the right of private judgment. He was a Proteſtant, and a Proteſtant

testant Dissenter, from inquiry, and upon principle. He engaged in the pursuit of truth with perseverance, and with ardour; and those who differed from him in opinion could not question his sincerity, if they were under the influence of candour, or of equity. He had refused liberal offers to enter into the establishment, and such as, in the circumstances he then was, he must have accepted, had he been influenced by lucrative views. But his integrity was unquestionable; and he delivered his opinions in the pulpit, with so much seriousness and energy, and such a degree of openness and frankness, as naturally impressed his auditors with a strong conviction of his sincerity. He paid no regard to established systems, and considered the interposition of human power and authority in matters of religion, as the principal source of the corruptions in Christianity. This sentiment, which is certainly well grounded, he was extremely solicitous to inculcate, both in

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his preaching, and in his writings. His seriousness and piety, the uprightness of his character and conduct, the abilities which he displayed as a preacher, and his many private and social virtues, procured him many respectable friends, and entitled him to general esteem. Towards the close of his life, he was rendered incapable of the public exercise of his ministry, by bodily weakness and disease. But even then a remarkable cheerfulness and vivacity were often observable in him, till the powers of nature became nearly exhausted, and his enfeebled frame announced his approaching dissolution. As a man, he was an object of much regard and esteem; and as a divine, and a diligent inquirer after religious truth, let his numerous publications speak for him.

But the true design of funeral addresses of this kind, is, not chiefly to do honour to the dead, but to benefit the living; to awaken a sense of that common mortality, to which we are all subject; and

which, nevertheless, human beings are too apt to forget. The shortness of human life, though it is one of those obvious truths of which none can be ignorant, is yet too seldom practically remembered. The generality live as if this were to be the whole of their existence: they are anxious to procure the advantages, the conveniencies, and the enjoyments of the present life; but they make little provision for futurity.

Far different should be the conduct of Christians; and far different will be their conduct, if the principles of the religion they profess have their proper effect. They should live by faith: an habitual persuasion of the reality and importance of the great truths of the Gospel should influence their whole conduct. If sentiments like these have made a deep and just impression on our hearts, terrestrial objects will appear comparatively of little importance. What was it that led the earlier professors of Christianity to undergo



every suffering, every pressure of distress, every calamity that human power could bring upon them, with patience, with serenity, with the most heroic fortitude? It was that faith in the great truths of religion, in the infinitely-momentous doctrines of the Gospel, which made them consider all temporary sufferings as trivial, compared with the future and immortal blessedness which Christ had set before them. They had *respect unto the recompense of reward*. They were animated by the prospects which the author and finisher of our faith had set before them. We profess the same religion, and should be influenced by the same principles; and if this be in reality the case, it will be productive in us of a similar conduct. We shall then think nothing of so much importance to us, as to obtain the favour and approbation of our great Judge. We shall then look not chiefly *at those things which are seen, and which are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, and which are eternal.*

One of the most mournful scenes in human life, is that of taking our last farewell of those whom we have long loved and esteemed, and who are about to descend into the grave. But this separation would be rendered much more painful, were it not for the prospects which religion sets before us. This is our great consolation, when we are deprived of our virtuous and pious friends by death, that on their departure from this world, the righteous are removed to *mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem; to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to God the judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of the New Covenant.* Sentiments and views like these will naturally alleviate the distressful reflexions which may arise in the breasts of the surviving relatives of our late honoured and departed friend, in consequence of the loss which by his death they have sustained.

Death

Death puts an end to all our temporal cares, to all our temporal pursuits, to all our temporal enjoyments; but it puts not an end to our being. We quit this scene; but we are removed to another infinitely more important. What will be our situation there, is an inquiry of all others the most interesting. Can there be one around me indifferent, what will be his future allotment, what the sentence which he shall receive at the bar of the Almighty? It is impossible. Nothing but gross and shameful inattention to the great truths of religion, can conceal from us their importance.

When we leave these mansions of the dead, let not those salutary impressions be wholly lost, which may on this occasion have been excited. As we know, that we are mortal; as we know, that a few years will put a period to our temporal existence; let us improve the time with which we may yet be favoured by the all-gracious Author of our being; let us cultivate

tivate all the virtues which should adorn the Christian character, and by which our divine Master himself was so illustriously distinguished. At the last day, when the trumpet of the archangel shall sound, when all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, it will then be of infinite importance to us, what part, what character we shall have sustained, what shall have been the general tenor of our conduct, in the present world. It will then be of infinite importance to us, whether we shall be numbered among the righteous or the wicked; among those who have served God, or those who have served him not. Let us then fix our views upon the end of life; and be induced, by the certainty of its approach, sincerely and diligently to keep the commandments of God. Then may we rejoice in hope, that *this corruptible body shall put on incorruption*, and that *this mortal shall put on immortality*. Amen.

The following is a List of-most of the  
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 CALEB FLEMING, D. D.

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