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PROSPECTS OF THE
STATE OF RELIGION ABROAD.

THE present age has exhibited unprecedented and eventful vicissitudes. Their probable influence upon the interests of Europe, the balance of power, or the fate of nations, now engrosses the attention of politicians and speculatists. Serious and reflecting minds, at the same time, cannot fail to observe new aspects of the state of religion in the world, and interesting circumstances, which seem to forebode to it a more extensive reception. It has been generally remarked, that, from the consideration of the awful convulsions which pernicious opinions have fomented abroad, a greater external reverence has been professed for religion at home. Charity the most fervent, cannot, indeed be so blind as to imagine that this profession is very extensively sincere. Yet though it may neither, in this point of view, be the subject of great triumph to Christians, nor productive of lasting benefit to individuals, still this certain advantage results from this temper of public opinion, that the doctrines of the gospel are listened to with greater respect, and its followers regarded with less prejudice.

VOL. I.—No. 1.

How widely different was the aspect and reception of religion in the world, at a very late period! Innumerable pretenders to science, astonishingly dissimilar in spirit and manner to the philosophers of antient times, and destitute of the features and the love of genuine wisdom, had poisoned, by their seductive lucubrations, the public mind. The encyclopedists, economists, and witty superficial sophists of France, the grave and argumentative sceptics of Britain, the metaphysical, pompous, or extravagant pretenders of Germany, had obtained a wonderful and pernicious ascendancy over the opinions of their readers; and these readers were found in almost every rank of society in Europe. The unprincipled were delighted with their imaginary triumphs over religion, order, and virtue. The giddy and unthinking were intoxicated with their wit. The grave were astonished at their presumption. The studious were perplexed with their sophistry. Even the well disposed and sober-minded were somewhat abashed at the boldness of their assaults, at the arrogance of their pretensions, and the seductive splendor of their promises. The world was to be enlightened. The nations were no longer to be deceived. Man was to be restored to his rights.— Their philosophy was to effect m
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raculous revolutions. And the golden age was to return to the world.

The fatal experiment was at last tried. The dreams of these pretended sages were for a time realized. And they were permitted, by awful lessons, to teach the nations, what human society would be without religion; what man is by his nature, when freed from all restraint; and what is the happiness and the freedom which such philosophy as their's can confer?*

The current of public opinion is now changed, and, in some countries, flows back even with too violent a revulsion. In France, such is the impression of the people's fatal experience, such the cravings of remorse in some, such the impulse of fear in others, such the prevailing horror for the enormities of atheism, and such the defect of salutary instruction, that, though real religion is little known, Popery, with all its defects, is again, in many districts, eagerly embraced. It is not merely the illiterate and bigoted who are seen to adopt this, the most irrational and superstitious perversion of Christianity, but many of the learned, many that were once even its most decided opponents, now willingly profess its peculiarities.—Of these the amiable and eloquent

La Harpe was a singular example; once the favorite disciple, the intimate friend of Voltaire, and consequently a zealous and remorseless infidel; but lately the most active defender, and professed champion, of the established religion of his country. The very form of the new ecclesiastical establishment of France is infinitely more favorable to the revival of Popery, though the priests are far from thinking so, than the restoration of its antient power and splendor would have been. The late persecutions, the present poverty, the increased parochial duties, the higher exertions, and respectability required in the clergy, expose them less to the temptations of their former pomp and affluence, and tend to render them more venerable in the eyes of the people.

The present Ruler of France has sufficiently shewn, that he regards the established religion merely as an engine of state, and that he will model and direct its forms as he thinks most conducive to his views. But if ever the royal family shall be restored, it may be readily conceived, that the aspect of the public religion will be totally dissimilar to what the restoration of the British Charles exhibited, though from precisely similar causes. As during the preva-

* ——— Through the devoted land,
Discord unfurls her flag; War sounds his larums;
Famine spreads her fangs; and howls her dismal song.
At their dire ravages, Philosophy aghast,
Gazes on mighty mischief, which her dreams
Foretold not but provok'd. Religion veil'd,
Retires awhile, to shroud her sacred head:
And liberty, that mountain-nymph so bright,
Shrinks from the miseries foster'd by her name,
Feebly supports her standard stain'd with blood,
Beckons for distant aid, and turns her eyes to weep.

lence of the republic and the usurpation of Cromwell, a strict and severe religion was professed, in direct contrast to this, infidelity and licentiousness, even to affectation, became the characteristic badge of the court. In France, as licentiousness and atheism have been the boast of the republic, it is highly probable that if royalty should be restored, it would be the fashion, even among courtiers, to affect to be religious and devout.

From the present government of France, the Protestants, in that country, have received considerable encouragement. By the Roman Catholics, they have been accused of partaking in the enormities of the revolution; particularly of joining in the persecution of the priests, and bending too obsequiously to the ruling powers. When not only the long exclusion of the Protestants from the common privileges of their country, but the actual and severe persecutions for conscience sake which they had endured, are considered, it was not to be expected, that, under a change of circumstances, at first flattering and plausible, with prospects of protection and new privileges under the new constitution of the state, all of them should have been able to maintain the tempers of moderation and wisdom. Irregularities and errors were certainly committed by some of their unstable and misguided members in Provence and Languedoc; but many more were perpetrated in their name, or laid with aggravations, by designing men, to their account. When under the present government, they received a legal pledge for protection, and restoration of some valued privileges, they expressed their grati-

tude to the Chief Consul, and submission to the powers that were, in language far stronger than might be thought becoming men professing godliness, which the feelings of repose from the horrors of anarchy and the hope of peace and security seem to have dictated. Mr. Marron, their chief pastor at Paris, an able and eloquent preacher, is much esteemed, and sometimes consulted by Bonaparte, who seems disposed to be favourable to the Protestants, either from the conviction of their respectability as citizens, or the desire of being supported by their good opinion.

The present Protestants in France, however, have degenerated sadly from their venerable predecessors of the reformed church in that country, not only in solid learning, but in true religion and pure manners. Once possessed of two celebrated colleges, of many zealous pastors, and of numerous converts and followers, whose lives adorned the doctrines they professed, they can now boast but of very few of these honours. Their pastors have been long reduced to seek instruction in divine and human science at Geneva, a fountain once deemed so pure and hallowed; but now also neglected or polluted. Their children they are now permitted to educate in schools of their own appointment and principles; but they complain of a sad scarcity of competent and zealous teachers. New places of worship they are allowed to erect, &c. are likely to increase; and some among them are sufficiently desirous to supply them with faithful and able pastors.

It is computed that there are about two millions and a half of Protestants now in France. They re-

side chiefly in the southern provinces, and in the ancient Alsace, tho' they are also to be found in considerable numbers in many of the more populous cities.

The most favourable prospects for religion in France, arise from the spirit of toleration, forbearance, and attention to serious inquiries, which, in many places, now prevails, and which, by the blessing of God, may pave the way for unprejudiced discussion, and for the active labours of enlightened and zealous Christians.

In Germany, the prevalence of sceptical and licentious opinions was lately greater, perhaps, than it had been even in France, before the revolution. An active but unsound ferment, which, for some time past, has been operating with violence in the literary spirits of that country; the ambitious desire, not merely of celebrity, but of notoriety, in the needy professors of so many rival universities; the seductive effusions of some popular but pernicious poets; the fatal example and writings of the admired Frederick of Prussia, the Russian Catherine, and Joseph the Second; with the delusions of many petty Princes in the Empire, aspiring to ape their sentiments, or emulously flattering and supporting the bold sophists of the day, from the affectation of being supposed patrons of literature, with the laxity of the clergy even in the Protestant states, and the glaring revolting defects of superstitious establishments in other districts, had all combined to poison the public current of opinion, and to foster widely licentiousness in principle and in practice. In the late convulsions of Europe, the sophists have been disgraced, by the practical display of their systems in

actual experiment; the immoral and seductive poets are neglected, from the discovery of the dangerous tendency of their writings, and the introduction of a better taste; the princes are alarmed, if not converted, and profess now, to despise pretenders to modern philosophy, and to encourage the restoration of religion. The well known attempts of Joseph the Second, to disperse the gloom of bigotry and ignorance which prevailed in the Austrian states, to suppress useless convents, and to introduce a more liberal toleration in religious opinions, have been productive of some advantage. The present Elector of Bavaria has been still more active in scattering the inhabitants of the convents, and more liberal in promoting the interests of the Protestants, and the temperate discussion of religious principles.*

* A very interesting proclamation has just been issued by the Elector of Bavaria, upon the subject of religious freedom and toleration. By this law, all Christian persuasions, established, and to be established, in his dominions, are to possess the full enjoyment of all civil rights, both active and passive: No exclusion shall be exercised towards any man, on account of his religious profession: In nominating men to the public offices, the Elector will choose those whom he judges most worthy, without making any distinction among the three religions introduced into the German empire. Nothing shall ever be required of any individual, inconsistent with his religious principles, or his peace of conscience: Those who do not form a particular community for the exercise of social devotion, shall not be disturbed in their domestic worship: No member of one communion shall be obliged to observe the festivals of another: he may attend to his affairs, provided he

In the states professedly Protestant, a fatal departure from their original principles, and threatening laxity both of practice and opinions, have been for a considerable period too conspicuous. Yet even this unhappy degeneracy is chiefly confined, in its operation, to the great towns, princely residences, or the more sophisticated universities. In these, the vices which so readily become the concomitants of courts, camps, luxury, pomp, intrigue, or sophistry, have produced their usual fatal effects: and, perhaps, from the peculiar circumstances of Germany, already mentioned, have there broke forth into action with peculiar virulence. Yet in the retired parts of the country, the villages and smaller towns, much of the primitive simplicity of manners still subsists, much of the happy influence of the principles of the Reformation, and considerable zeal, in some parts, for genuine religion. This is peculiarly remarkable in the states of Hesse and the Upper Rhine. Like

disturb not the worship of others: The Elector will neither interfere in the internal affairs, nor the creeds of the churches, except by the duty of superintendence and police, attached to the supreme power of the state.

This singular and unprecedented edict concludes with these words: "We expect the more confidently that our subjects will not mistake the beneficent and paternal intention of this decree, because it has no other object but the advancement of their well-being, and of their virtue; and because it is entirely founded upon principles generally acknowledged, and imperiously prescribed, by the pure and incorruptible morality of that standard, to which all Christian systems are referred."

the Protestants of France, the inhabitants of these countries are called Reformed, or Calvinists. The Landgrave of Hesse Cassel professes the same distinction of principles, and promotes the interests of religion. Though he was at one time highly unpopular among his subjects, chiefly for his hiring out and transporting his troops to America, in the unhappy contest of Britain with her colonies, he is now much respected, and exercises his power for the solid interest of his country, and the advancement of piety and learning. The university of Marburg, under his protection, is professedly a Calvinistic institution, and is distinguished by many respectable names, and some pious teachers. Giessen is Lutheran, where the venerable Koeester long employed his zeal to oppose the progress of false religion and infidelity in Germany; but now, from the infirmities of age, he has desisted from his salutary labours. The schools and gymnasia, throughout the territories of Hesse, are, in general, under excellent regulations; and the people eagerly seek to have their children early and thoroughly taught the principles of useful knowledge, and the doctrines and duties of their religion.

In Saxony, the manners of the people are not so pure; the clergy are more relaxed; some of the universities have been conspicuous for obnoxious opinions; the rulers are either too bigoted, like the Elector, who is a Roman Catholic, or too indiscriminating and inattentive to the manners or opinions of their subjects, like the Princes of Gotha and Weimar. Yet still there are many eminent characters, pious individu-

als, great learning, and even much real religion in Saxony. The prevailing forms are Lutheran. The Lutheran mode of worship is very interesting and attractive. Forms of prayer, simple, energetic and comprehensive, are prescribed in their books of devotion. To these, the officiating pastor adds prayers called *extemporaneous*, adapted to the subject of his discourse, or the circumstances of his audience. The sermons are of considerable length, often devout, animating and eloquent. The hymns employed, are many of them the compositions of Luther himself, and sometimes display wonderful felicity of expression, sublimity of thought and ardor of devotion.* Their sacred music is singularly beautiful and affecting; tho' in their large towns, or courtly churches, their bands and variety of instruments, appear unsuitable and theatrical. There are some fopperies and seemingly superstitious rites in some of their forms, especially in the communion-service and the festivals of some saints, that too obviously betray their Popish origin.— But still the discipline, the tendency, the spirit of Lutheranism claim much well-merited praise, and have been productive of unspeakable good to the northern nations of Europe.— The usual hymns and prayers, and even the mode of preaching in the Lutheran churches, in Sweden and Denmark as well as in some parts of

* Besides obligations of infinitely higher value, for which the Germans (and Europe in general) are indebted to Luther, the first classical polishing of their language, the rudiments of their poetry and the foundation of their literature, are to be numbered among the effects of his genius and his labours.

Germany, are addressed powerfully to the heart and affections, and employ strong language, and ardent sentiments, which in England would be called Methodistical. There are, however, more than enough of modish courtly preachers, whose discourses are as cold and unimpressive, and as destitute of the peculiar and animating doctrines of Christianity, as any fashionable audience could wish. Such are the published sermons of Politz, Fischer, Ammon, Zoliker, and Reinhard, tho' they are admired and extolled by many in Germany. The sermons of Cramer, and of the celebrated historian Mosheim, are of a very different character. The last indeed, if they were not sometimes too long, and encumbered with some adventitious superfluities, might be regarded as models of pulpit eloquence and faithful preaching. They unite qualities which are seldom or never found either in French or English sermons; ardent piety, with vigorous judgment; solid argument, with powerful eloquence; a deep acquaintance with human life and the heart of man, with a thorough knowledge of the scriptures, and skilful distribution of the doctrines of Christ.

The states which are subject to the Prussian government, display a motley variety of ecclesiastical forms. In Silesia and Poland, the Roman Catholic profession predominates. In Prussia and Brandenburg, the Lutherians are most numerous. There are, however, a very great number of churches and societies called Calvinistic, or Reformed.— The King himself professes this creed. It has indeed been the profession of the royal family for several reigns. The great Elector, it was

said, when upon a visit to his son-in-law, the Prince of Orange, in Holland, was so struck with the simplicity and purity of the Calvinistic and Presbyterian worship of that country, that he resolved to embrace it himself, and to recommend or promote its adoption in his own territories.

A sad decline, since that period, has fatally appeared in the aspect of religious opinions and manners in the Prussian states. Frederick, so little entitled, in their just sense, to the names, which the world lavished upon him with its usual blindness, the Great, and the Protestant Hero, employed every insidious art, and indeed avouched an avowed purpose, to undermine or extinguish all religion in his kingdom. Frederick William, his successor, as a judicious Professor has remarked, effected, if possible, more injury to religion than his predecessor. For he sometimes professed to be devout, and published edicts to enforce the interests of religion, but the open irregularities of his life, not only counteracted his professed designs, but brought them, with himself, into contempt. The present King is regular and decent in his conduct, domestic and retired in his manner of life, but displaying no energy to promote an essential reformation in the manners of his people, or to restore the dignity and active influence of religion. Though he is, in some respects, unpopular among his subjects, yet the decency of his private conduct merits praise, and is certainly, in every point of view, far more beneficial than the dazzling but pernicious examples of some of his predecessors. At Potsdam, he regularly attends the institutions of

public worship, and joins in the communion-service once in the year. Too many of his courtiers and officers retain the unhappy impressions of the former reigns; but there are also some, who exhibit better principles and shew a sincere regard to sound faith and good morals.

Of the Calvinistic and reformed profession of faith, there are many churches at Berlin, and in the states around, where the service is performed either in the German or the French languages. The revocation of the edict of Nantz drove many French Protestant refugees to seek shelter in this country, and to enrich or adorn it with their industrious habits and salutary principles. Among the pastors of these the names of Abbadie, Lenfant, Beufobre, Formey, Ansellon, are well known, and long celebrated. The venerable Erman is at present their senior pastor, entitled the Dean of their College, and presides over a most useful seminary of education under that name. In this college, many students, both of French and German extraction, are taught the principles of useful knowledge, classical literature, mathematics, logic, moral and natural philosophy, biblical criticism, and theology. Candidates for the office of the ministry are strictly examined in public, in the Latin and French languages, and sometimes in German, upon their progress and attainments, twice in the year. The King shews much attention, and reposes great confidence in Erman the Dean.

It would be tedious to detail the particular state of the other provinces and chief towns of Germany.—Through the whole Empire, the influence of the Popish Church is

greatly enfeebled, the institutions of the Protestant religion more extensively respected, and, in some districts, well-disposed and devout men, of other denominations, Moravians, Baptists, and Independents, exert their labours to promote or revive the influence of religion.

It is a singular circumstance in the strange revolutions of the age, that even in the adjusting of the proposed indemnities in Germany, many Popish jurisdictions and institutions have been overthrown, the number of Protestant states and voters in the Diet of the Empire have been greatly increased; and a probability appears, that at some future period, a Protestant Emperor may rule in Germany.

From the striking alteration in the current of public opinion resulting from the horrors of the French revolution, from the conduct and obvious interests of the present rulers of the Continent, from the peculiar circumstances of the nations around, from the disgrace of sophistry, and the prevalence of religious toleration and dispassionate respectful inquiry into the claims and doctrines of Christianity, more animating prospects perhaps may be entertained of a more extensive reception of a sound and primitive religion, than any former period since the Reformation has afforded. The sovereign Disposer of all events still may ordain good out of evil, confound the projects of his foes, by the very issue of their own devices, and cause the subtilty of sophists, the persecution of tyrants, whether democratic or despotic, the frenzy or the impotence, the power, or even the wrath of man, to render him praise.

The following Narrative was found among the papers of the late Wm. Craghead, Esq. formerly one of Mr. SAM'L DAVIES' Elders, in Hanover.

An exact Narrative of the conversation which passed between Mr. THOMAS L. DENNIS and his friends, in his last sickness.

THE first thing that he said, worthy of observation, was, "Youth is the only time for religion; the passions are then tender, and the mind easily impressed: but when persons grow old, they are occupied with other things, and grow insensible to religion." One day, a friend called on him, and found him under great uneasiness, expecting that his disorder would be fatal: he prayed with him, recommended him to the mercy of God, and left him under serious impressions. A few days after, Mr. D. wrote him a letter, in which he expressed a desire to have some books sent to him, suited to his case; and also the company of his friend. As soon as convenient an answer was returned, with *Doddridge's Rise and Progress*, which we hope were not in vain, through the great grace of God. He now began to think on his former ways, with abhorrence. About this time his aunt (with whom he lived) returned from a long journey, to whom he said, "I am sorry that I slighted you so much in your late sickness: will you forgive me? Yes, said she, with all my heart. Then he cried out, Oh! how good are you, and what a vile, worthless creature am I! You don't know what a vile sinner I am: but I bless God for this sickness—I hope it is sent for my good: Oh how have I slighted my best friends! It might have been well

with me, if I had taken advice ; but now alas ! what shall I do ? She read to him the 12th chap. Heb. He asked, where that was, saying, he had never observed it before, and that he thought there was some comfort in it. He then desired her to read Mr. Davies's sermon, on "God so loved the world," &c. John iii, 16, to which he gave great attention, and with which he was much pleased. To one who came to see him, he said, "I am glad to see you, my dear friend,—I am going very fast—I have no ease, day, nor night—I cannot sleep—as soon as I close my eyes, my breath is gone, and I am surprised with frightful images—I can hardly tell what, only that I am in great distress—you do not know what a sinner I am—I have sinned beyond my power ; for when my abilities failed, my inclination was as strong as ever"—It was replied, "It is a great mercy that you are sensible of your sins : for to know the disorder is considered as half the cure. Jesus came to seek and save those that were lost, and to give his life a ransom for many. And whosoever believes on him shall not perish but have everlasting life." But says he, I am a very great sinner—You do not know how great a sinner I am. It was answered, "no matter how great, Christ has said that all manner of sins and blasphemies are forgiven unto men.—Only believe, and all is well." You see, said he, how many of my companions in sin, that were strong and healthy, are cut off ; and I, who am but *half a man*, am spared ; for I have ruined my constitution with debauchery. He was told, that he ought to look upon this, as an intimation of intended favor ; "and in-

deed, it is a very great mercy, for which you ought to be very thankful ; for the strong and healthy have died, but without any conviction for sin, that we have heard of : therefore, you ought to esteem your sense of sin a great favor." After this he said, "Can there be any mercy, for such a sinner as I am ?" It was replied, yes, there can. There was mercy for Manasseh, there was mercy for Mary Magdalene, there was mercy for Saul the persecutor, and I hope there is mercy for you ; if you will truly repent. Jesus has told us, if we seek we shall find—if we knock, it shall be opened unto us. After this he prayed much, with great fervor, and many penitent confessions of his vileness ; and would stop and say, "the world is plaguing me after all ! Just now when you were speaking, the thoughts of my own, and other peoples affairs were running in my mind." He desired that Mr. Davies' sermon, on the *bruised reed*, might be read to him, a little at a time, as he could bear it : which was done accordingly. He said, he had been much interested in Mr. Davies' staying in Virginia, and loved to hear him preach ; but after he went away, tho' he had been often at the point of death, he had never had one serious thought of eternity, till this sickness, and not in it, till very lately. He said, again, is it not proper for me to be viewing Jesus Christ, as suffering for my sins, on the cross ? It was answered, yes, very proper ; for they shall look on him whom they have pierced and mourn ; and the blessed Jesus invites you to it ; for he has said, "if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me." Well then, said he, "I will cast myself down at the foot of the

cross, and if I perish I will perish looking unto Jesus." It was replied no one ever perished there, the complaint of the blessed Saviour was "They will not come unto me that they might have life."

To a friend, who came to see him, he said, "My dear friend I beseech you to remember your soul: do not take example from my wicked life, but look on me now, and take warning—I neglected religion, and conscience is now lashing me for it—I would have you to be careful to get a living, but that you may do, and be religious too, O! mind religion! Mind your soul!"

At another time he said with a loud voice, Oh Gracious God! I am a vile sinner, and have no righteousness of my own; but I have heard of thy mercy to millions of sinners such as I am—Let thy mercy be extended to me also. I am well pleased with the method of salvation through Christ. It just suits me—I have nothing to offer—If I am saved it must be a free salvation. Well, blessed God! if thou art determined to punish me, I must be taken from the foot of the cross to punishment, for there I am determined to lie.

In the morning, after a night spent in fervent prayer, he was asked, "whether he had had, any clear views of the method of salvation through Jesus Christ; how God could be just, and justify the ungodly who believed in him." He said, "Please to repeat that again;" that being done, "Stop, said he, Don't let me deceive myself and you too; I cannot say that I had; but I felt that I loved my blessed Saviour more than ever. I saw that all my afflictions were for my good, and

felt a willingness to bear any with patience, that God would lay on me.

He was much disquieted at times, at the remembrance of past sins. Many texts of scripture were repeated to comfort him, such as "he that spared not his own son, &c." "He is able to save to the utmost, &c." and the whole story, concerning our Saviour's conversation with Simon about the woman who was a sinner, was repeated to him, upon which he said, "This is comfortable!" He seemed greatly satisfied when these words were recited: "Cast your care upon him for he careth for you"—and, "Fear not, for the very hairs of your head are numbered." Some meditations, suited to his case were read to him, in short sentences at a time, by which he was much affected; and asking for the book, after he had looked into it, he said, "this puts me in mind of my sins. If I at any time took up a book of divinity, I flung it down again; but if it was a Play or a Romance! aye, these were the books I took delight in." How often would he cry out, O my God! have mercy on me! pardon my sins! Wash me in thy blood, O my Redeemer! I have no hope but from thy cross—thy atonement! My dear Redeemer! extend thy mercy to a vile sinner! My chief complaint is, said he, when I view the cruel sufferings of my Saviour for my sins, that I can love him no more.

What a happiness, said one, that you did not die the other day when you so much desired it: since which you have enjoyed much comfort; and your friends are much better satisfied about the sincerity of your repentance. O! said he, how good

is God! He knows what is best for us—If we were always to have our request, we should soon destroy ourselves. A few days before he died he was in great pain, and cried to God to take him into the arms of his mercy, that he might praise him to eternity with all the host above, and said, thou art a gracious God—I know that thou art, for thou hast pardoned all my sins. Then he stopped and said, I cannot say that I am sure—but I hope he has. After a little sleep, he heard some birds singing, when he exclaimed: How gay is nature! All things praising God—And shall I be silent? No my God! I will praise thee! And I hope e'er long to join with the blessed company above, to praise my adored Redeemer, to all eternity.

Looking one full in the face, he said, do you think we shall meet again in heaven? The person answered, I hope so—Then he said, may you late be translated thither, and I shall be the first glad spirit to run and bid you welcome. It was then replied, I hope you will soon see our dear friend, Mr. Davies. Whilst here, he longed much for your salvation, and I doubt not but the prayers he put up for you are now answering. Ah! said he, I might have had much good company if I would; but I slighted their kindness—but I will still hope to enjoy it.

The next morning a dear friend of his came to take leave of him, and told him he never expected to see him in this world again. He replied, no, my dear friend, I do not expect it; and may God Almighty bless you, and grant that when you come to be in my circumstances, you may have such dear, good friends as you have been to me. To another he

said, I hope you will not leave me; before to-morrow morning I expect you will see the end. In the afternoon, he uttered many desponding expressions in prayer, to the great grief of his friends; which made them repeatedly beg mercy of the Lord for him: That if it was his blessed will, he would yet shine into his soul, that his latter end might be joy and peace. In the evening a neighbor came in, whom he took by the hand and said, "*There is a great eternity just before you.*" Whatever you do, attend to your soul; what good does the world do me now? I am just going to leave it—Suppose I have a little more money than you, what does it profit me? If I owned all the land between this place and Williamsburg, what good would it do me? I beg of you, my dear friend, *mind your soul! mind religion.*—After this a negro came in, whom he had ill-used on account of religion. He told him, that he was sorry for what he had done, and repeatedly asked forgiveness; and prayed that God would bless him. When his own negroes came to see him for the last time, he spoke to them of the worth of their souls in the most emphatical language, and exhorted them to attend to religion, as the one thing needful.

It was suggested to him, that it might be proper to surrender himself to God in a solemn and formal manner; and the following words were repeated for that purpose:—
 "O! LORD, GOD ALMIGHTY! here
 "am I a poor guilty sinner, at the
 "point of death, that desires to give
 "himself up to thee in an everlasting
 "covenant, never to be forgotten!
 "ton! Receive me into the arms of
 "thy mercy. O! blessed Lord Jes-

"Jesus! pardon my manifold sins, and
 "take me into the mansions of joy
 "above, where I shall praise thee
 "throughout an endless eternity."
 To which he gave a most affectionate Amen.

About 8 o'clock he was asked, how his mind was composed? whether he now felt a love to the blessed Jesus? He cried out, "O, Yes! that I do—I love my dear Redeemer! I love him more and more!" This was indeed matter of joy to all present. Then as usual his friends withdrew for some hours. When about 2 o'clock, to the astonishment of all, he broke out in a rapture, "I am coming O! my dear Lord Jesus! I am coming! Do thou come and receive my soul to everlasting rest, for thou hast redeemed it! Now I am almost sure that my sins are pardoned! O! that my friends could know how happy I shall be in a little time! And thus he went on with an audible voice for some time.

By the morning the lamp of life was just burnt out—He bade his friends farewell, and soon became speechless—About fifteen minutes before his departure, he tried much to speak—he cast his eyes upon one, who immediately began to recommend his departing soul to God, and it was observed that when prayer began, he made a motion with his head as if that was what he wanted.

He died April 22d, 1774 about nine o'clock in the morning; aged thirty eight years.

During his illness, he expressed great thankfulness for the mercies he was daily receiving, and especially for this sickness; which he numbered amongst them, and which he said he knew would turn out to his eternal advantage.—His temper was

so changed, that from being fretful, peevish and discontented, he became meek, patient and resigned; and those around him, who had been often abused by him, heard now, nothing but the language of love—and altho' his pains were oftentimes great, yet for five weeks, he never uttered an unbecoming word; but would often cry out for mercy in the midst of them, and say, "I deserve it all."

He desired that Mr. M'Robert should preach his funeral sermon, from Psalm 34, 6, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of his troubles."

N. B. The above request was complied with, and Mr. M'Robert preached from the words at the lower meeting house in Hanover, May 18, 1774.

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Some Observations on Luke, xiv, 18.

"And they all with one consent, began to make excuse."

OF those who are invited to the gospel feast, a large majority it is presumed, intend at some future period to accept the invitation; but feeling no inclination at present to comply, it is necessary that they be furnished with some excuse for a refusal. Hence, various excuses are made, which by some are considered amply sufficient for their exculpation. But as men are liable to err, and exceedingly prone to judge too favourably of themselves; and as errors respecting the interests of the soul, may be fatal; it may not be improper to examine into the validity of some of the excuses, so frequently made, for

the rejection of the gospel and its blessings. A good excuse will not shrink from examination, nor can it be invalidated by it; a bad one cannot be too soon detected.

The excuse of one for inattention to the gospel and its precepts, is that professors of religion are split into so many parties, and entertain such a variety of opinions that it appears to him impossible to determine which of them holds the truth.

Would the person who makes the excuse, enter on a careful examination of the tenets, of the different sects professing christianity, he would perhaps find it less difficult than he now supposes, to ascertain, which of them is most conformed in sentiment and practice, to the standard of truth. No person at least can candidly object against the jarring sentiments of christians as a stumbling block thrown in his way, who knows not what these sentiments are. But this person in making his excuse, seems to mistake entirely his present duty. God calls upon him not to judge others, but to receive and obey the gospel himself; but other people, it seems, adopt so many methods of serving their maker, that he is afraid of falling into error, and of the too evils he would rather disobey than mistake. But if some do entertain erroneous opinions, the mistake of one servant certainly ought not to excuse the disobedience of another.

Were it reasonable to neglect the service of God until all christians could agree respecting the doctrines he has revealed, the services he requires, and the most proper method of rendering these services; it would be much more reasonable, to be governed by this rule in the common

pursuits of life. Men differ much respecting the proper method of cultivating the earth, yet reason never dictated that it would not be proper either to plough, sow, or reap, until all farmers could agree respecting the proper time and method of performing these operations. Were it possible for any man free from insanity to make such a resolution, his neighbours would very probably convince him of his mistake, not by reasoning, but by a method of treatment more proper for one in such a state, by a strict observance of the apostolic precept. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat."

A person about to engage in business as a merchant, applies to his friends for advice; they all readily give it, but two of them cannot agree respecting any of the particulars on which advice is necessary, though they all assign plausible reasons for the advice which they give. How is the man to proceed? "he cannot dig," perhaps, and is ashamed to beg! Is it therefore the sentence of reason that he must starve, if the jarring sentiments of his friends cannot be harmonized? No, if the advice of friends is of no advantage, he must follow the dictates of his own judgment, substituting caution in the room of advice, and by so doing he will probably succeed better than if he had received, and acted on the unanimous instructions of his friends, by whose opinions he wished to be regulated.—The application of these observations to the excuse under consideration is easily made. But the fact is, that the difference of opinion among christians, is not so great as to occasion all this perplexity; the errors of no sect among us, will be

considered so destructive as to prevent salvation. If a person therefore should adopt the sentiments and conform to the practice of any denomination of christians, conceiving them to be most agreeable to the scriptures, he would doubtless be much better prepared to appear at the bar of God, than he could possibly be, with the best excuse for disobeying the gospel. All christians agree respecting things essential; all condemn the man who continues in sin; but if the case were otherwise, and the sentiments of all were erroneous and absurd, truth would not be injured by their error, nor a person excusable in deviating from the right path because they had set him a bad example. But if a person neglects religion, because others entertain different opinions respecting it, the implication is that if all christians were of one mind, he would be a professor of religion; but a profession made on this principle, it is to be feared, will not be more advantageous in the day of judgment, than the excuse under consideration. As every man must render an account for himself, it is requisite that every man think, and act for himself; and as we would all with propriety, reprobate a law, requiring our observance of any system of rules, however popular, which our consciences condemned; we ought thankfully to improve the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, by a careful and arduous enquiry, what the will of the Lord is and a strict conformity to it. All revealed truth is of importance; and it is certain that the various sentiments of professed christians, cannot all be correct; but it would be very uncharitable to conclude

that every person who is chargeable with trivial errors, is an enemy to the truth. When we consider the weakness of the human mind, and how liable men are to deception; instead of being surpris'd at the different sentiments prevalent in the christian world, on the subject of religion, we ought rather to rejoice, that respecting things essential, all are of one mind. Let us imitate christians of every denomination, as far as they are guided by the scriptures—Let the most charitable construction be put on their failings and mistakes; whilst at the same time we guard against the dangerous doctrine, that “it is immaterial what a man believes, provided his conduct be good;” as tho’ a man’s sentiments had no influence on his practice; or falsehood were as well calculated as truth, to sanctify the heart.

Another person pleads as an excuse for the neglect of religion and its institutions, the variety of his worldly pursuits. In making the necessary provision for himself and others dependent on him, his mind is so perplexed that he cannot possibly attend to the subject of religion, or discharge its duties, with that undivided attention, and fervent devotion, which are requisite. He therefore hopes, that for the present, he will be excused.

Can this person conjecture how many months or years must elapse before he will probably enjoy the desired repose? When will he wind up his plans, disentangle himself from the world, and retire to be religious? Has he yet made any advances towards this happy issue? His excuse intimates nothing of this kind. Alas! when men are so fully devoted to the world, as to leave no

time for the service of God, there is little probability that a period will ever arise, when their worldly desires will subside and the love of God predominate in their hearts. The man who is indisposed for the service of God by worldly cares, to-day, is in danger of being doubly so, to-morrow. Evil dispositions are not to be conquered or weakened by gratification. Sinful habits are strengthened by every instance of indulgence, and he who once excuses himself for the neglect of his duty is in danger, of becoming more disposed to make excuses, and of satisfying his conscience with such as are less plausible, until the day of his death. Then they will be heard no more; no sinner will say to God, in the last day, "I had not time to serve thee."

But this man complains of perplexity &c. distressing cares attendant on the management of his worldly affairs. How greatly is he to be pitied who in these circumstances rejects the only thing calculated to sweeten his toils and smooth the rugged path of life. Would such be persuaded to "seek first the kingdom of heaven," they might dismiss their anxiety, and confidently trust the promise of God, that all other things should be added unto them. Instead of pleading worldly cares therefore, as an excuse for the neglect of religion; where their cares are excessive, religion ought to be instantly embraced as the only connective. They are greatly mistaken who confine the advantages of religion, to a future state. Godliness has the promise of the present life; it affords all necessary support under trials; direction in doubtful cases, and assistance in the discharge of e-

very duty. It has a tendency to connect excessive desires, and to encourage those possessed of it, with child-like confidence to approach God, as their Father, and ask for their daily bread.

But the objects pursued by the person who offers this excuse, are said to be necessary. If so they furnish no excuse for inattention to religion; it would be a transgression of the law of God to neglect them. "He that provides not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." No man was sent into this world to be idle. "If any will not work, neither shall he eat." Attend to every duty in its season, and bestow on every pursuit the degree of attention it merits—and you may as confidently expect the approbation of God whilst you are employed in the shop or the field, as when you bow before his throne in the most solemn acts of devotion. Food and raiment are necessary for us; and the beneficent Creator has not placed us in a world richly replenished with every thing necessary to supply our wants, and at the same time made it unlawful to use the means, necessary to make us partakers of his bounty. Be assured that nothing is needful for us which cannot be obtained without transgressing his law. And why will any expose themselves to so much perplexity, in this world, and to endless misery in the next, to obtain the possession of things unnecessary? "Why spend ye your money, for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not?" Let excessive cares be resisted, unlawful pursuits relinquished, and engage in the service of God, that you

may without distressing perplexity procure the necessaries of life and enjoy his blessing with them. Without this the wealth of the Indies would not render you happy, but possessed of this, though afflicted and poor as Lazarus, you must be blessed. Now be cautious in making your choice, should you continue to excuse yourself when God invites you; and to pursue temporal blessings in preference to his grace, you may possibly receive "your good things" here. But remember that this world passeth away; soon you will be summoned to leave it. Then your wealth and honors will no longer prevent serious reflection. No artifice will be sufficient to conceal the guilt of those who shall have persisted in disobedience to God and in rejection of his gospel; presuming on their worldly cares as a sufficient excuse.

Another excuses himself for inattention to the gospel, by observing in general terms, that there are many things in the scriptures difficult to be understood, and not a few doctrines which are incomprehensible.

Though this excuse favors of infidelity, yet many express themselves in this manner, who acknowledge the scriptures to be a divine revelation. The person who admits this, is at once rendered inexcusable for inattention to the word of God, unless he finds it impossible to determine from the scriptures, what his faith or practice ought to be in any case—unless the whole contents of the Bible are to him incomprehensible. In this case indeed he would be as excusable for inattention to the Bible, as they are who have never seen it. But all acknowledge that the precepts and the most important

doctrines of the christian system are clearly revealed, and not difficult to be understood by an impartial enquirer after truth. Nay, they at once commend themselves to the conscience of such an enquirer as impressed with the image of God, suited to the necessitous circumstances of a ruined sinner and worthy of his cordial acceptance. Let it be supposed then that the inspired penmen have written "some things hard to be understood." Will this furnish a sufficient excuse for disobedience to precepts unequivocally enjoined, or for unbelief of doctrines clearly revealed and easily comprehended? Would any sinner venture to say to his Maker, I will neither believe, nor obey, any part of thy word, until the whole is made plain to my understanding? It would seem as though some men were of the opinion that if God should make a revelation to man, all men must equally and perfectly understand it, however various their capacities; and that this revelation must be forcibly made to those who were unwilling to receive it, otherwise no creature would be bound to believe or observe it. Thus vain man presumes to call in question the proceedings of his Maker.—"He would be wise." Forgetting that he is a creature of the dust, he aspires to be as God. But when the experience of all men evinces, that they are incapable of understanding themselves, or of comprehending any of the works of God, to perfection they ought not to be surprised, nor stumble at his word, should it be found to contain doctrines, not contrary to, but above their reason. Instead of seeking for an excuse for our criminal inattention to religion,

in the mysteries of revelation thus endeavoring to make God accountable for our crimes; let us rather praise him, that his word is sufficient to make us wise to salvation—that the path to heaven is so plainly delineated there, that fools need not err; and that by honestly endeavouring to do the will of God, we shall obtain a deliverance from many of our present doubts—our perplexing difficulties will vanish, and “we shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.”

Of the numbers who endeavour to excuse themselves for rejecting the gospel, not a few quiet their consciences, or endeavour to do so, by the following observation: If I am to be saved, I shall be saved.

This, is confessedly a truth not to be controverted. But what shall we infer from it? That a sinner may possibly be saved, contrary to the method of salvation which God has revealed? Can a sinner justly infer, from any premises whatever, that he may possibly be saved without faith and repentance, or holiness? If he can, he may likewise infer that he may be saved without salvation.

The observation, “If I am to be saved, &c.” seems to imply that the man is in doubt whether he shall be saved or not. Now though we are not made acquainted with the secret things which belong to God; such as the precise number of those who shall be saved, or the names of the individuals of whom that number shall be composed; there are other things of which we have certain information. “Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish. He that believeth not shall be damned.”—The man, therefore, who neither repents nor believes the gospel, is

not in a doubtful state, “The wrath of God abideth on him.” In the day of judgment, when summoned by the trump of the arch-angel, to appear before the Son of Man, such a sinner may then say, with as much truth as he now says it, “If I am to be saved I shall be saved.” But would this observation, could we suppose it possible for a sinner then to make it, have any influence on the judge, or any tendency to mitigate the dreadful sentence, which he will then pronounce against all unbelievers? No. All such will then realize that they who are to be damned shall be damned, and that of this unhappy number will all those be found who shall have continued to rely on any thing as a sufficient excuse for disobedience to the gospel of Christ.

Would the person who offers this excuse for slighting the gospel invitation, be willing to act conformably to it, in the concerns of this life? Suppose him seized by a violent disease, and urged by his friends to apply to a physician of skill, as the only method of escaping immediate death—would he calmly reply, if I am to live, I shall live? Or suppose he objects against the tedious methods, by which according to divine appointment, food and raiment are to be obtained, and refuses to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow—pleading as his excuse for thus deviating from the common practice, that he firmly believes if he is to live, he shall live. Would he not at once be committed to the Bettering-house or Bedlam as a person deranged? It is only in matters respecting their salvation that men resort to these absurdities. In temporal concerns they act from sentiments more rational; they look not for the end without the

means; they expect a crop only where seed has been sown. Thus rationally, however, must all be brought to act, who obtain salvation. We must run, to obtain the prize.—If we enter the straight gate it must be by striving—There is but one way to heaven, and that is narrow, strewn with thorns, and infested by numerous foes. Embracing the gospel, we enter this way—by keeping the eye fixed on Jesus, we shall be protected and guarded to the end of our journey, and at last owned and blessed as his humble followers; whilst conscious guilt shall seal in lasting silence, the lips of those, who shall have continued to make vain excuses; or if they speak, it will be but to acknowledge the justice of the sentence, which shall consign them to remediless woe.

Then no more vain excuses make,
When Jesus bids you come;
Come now, and of his grace partake,
O! enter while there's room.

Now is the time, th' accepted time;
All things are ready now.
Welcome, ye poor, ye halt, ye blind,
The feast was made for you.

Here richest dainties crown the board
Dear bought, by blood divine—
Here sinners sup with Christ the Lord
And on his breast recline.

How will the wretch his crime excuse,
Who flights so rich a feast?
When Christ invites, who can refuse,
To be a grateful guest?

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Observations upon Acts x, 34—35.

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.”

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THIS is the beginning of the discourse delivered by the Apostle Peter to Cornelius the Centurian, and his friends. This piece of Evangelical history is so reasonable; and the circumstances so well in the recollection of every one in the habit of reading his Bible, that it is unnecessary to repeat the particulars.

For the purpose of explaining the first clause of this passage of scripture, I shall observe that this Cornelius was a Roman, and a Gentile. Now it was a common opinion among the Jews that God viewed their nation with peculiar regard; so that every Jew, because he was a Jew, was acceptable to God.—Whereas every Gentile, because he was a Gentile, was supposed to be an out cast of Heaven, neither under the protection, nor in the favor of God. It is well known that this opinion was prevalent among the Jews. It arose from partial incorrect views of the dispensations of God towards the Jewish nation. It was supposed that this people was selected in preference to others—that the lively oracles were committed unto them, and that there were most remarkable interpositions of Heaven in their favor, because the Lord loved them above all the na-

tions of the earth. And hence, of course, they looked upon other nations as unholy, polluted, and accursed. Themselves they believed to be the chosen of God, to the exclusion of others. Hence even the Apostles were astonished when they observed the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit conferred upon the Gentiles: I say that their views were partial and incorrect: for it must be manifest to the attentive observer, that the design of the Deity in choosing the Jewish nation as his peculiar people, and distinguishing them from all others, was, that the knowledge of the true God might be preserved in the world; and that through them all the nations of the earth might be blessed. And even, with respect to Abraham, it is manifest that he was chosen, because, perhaps, he was the fittest man in the world to answer the purpose, which God intended in the choice, "For I know him, saith the Lord, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." And this, no doubt, was the light in which the better sort of Jews viewed this matter. It might however have been expected, that those who had not correct views of the dispensations of God would fall into the errors which I have mentioned, especially when it is recollected that the Jewish nation was not only remarkably distinguished by providential interpositions: but that various rites, and ceremonies were instituted for the very purpose of preserving them distinct from other nations. Hence although they knew, or at least might

have known that Jehovah was the one true God, yet they supposed that he was in some way the tutelary Deity of the Jews; that he regarded them with a particular affection, because they were Jews: that is, they supposed God to be a respecter of persons. And it is evident that the Apostles, as well as others, fell into this error; neither were they better instructed, until after the ascension of our Lord, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The intention of the vision, which Peter saw, while at the house of Simon the tanner, was to remove those undue prejudices, which had arisen in his mind, respecting other nations. As is manifest from the Apostle's own account of it, after his return to Jerusalem: By comparing what he had seen, with the accounts given both by the messengers of Cornelius, and by Cornelius himself, his prejudices gave way, he comes to this conclusion, "I perceive, says he, that God is not a respecter of persons: He regards no man with favor because he is a Jew: because he is of this or that nation or condition in life: But in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." Or, as it might more properly be rendered, is acceptable to him. And this, I hope, will not be thought insufficient for the explanation of the first clause of the passage under consideration.

Let us now briefly consider the latter clause, "But in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." To whatever controversies this text may have given rise, or however it may have been tortured by partial interpreters, I believe a man of a plain unsophisticated mind would

hardly think of starting a difficulty from it. The meaning of the words is well determined by the connection in which they stand. Let the history just preceding be attended to for a few minutes. Cornelius was a devout man among the Roman soldiers. The place where he was stationed gave him no doubt the opportunity of learning the great truths of the Jewish religion, the unity and perfections of the Deity; and the service which God required of his creatures. "He feared God with all his house, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." We learn too from the discourse of St. Peter that he had heard reports concerning the life, the doctrine, the miracles, and the death of Jesus Christ. No doubt, Cornelius felt the blindness of his mind, and his need of instruction; and he who prayed always, surely prayed that God would afford him the light which he needed. No doubt he felt himself a sinner, but what to do he knew not. This is manifest from the words of the Angel, "Send unto Joppa, for Peter, (says he) and he will tell thee what thou oughtest to do." We may suppose that Cornelius, as he had just before been engaged in prayer, in all humility had been entreating the God whom he feared, to send him light, and give him direction: his cry, perhaps, was "Lord what wilt thou have me to do."

The answer by an angel was, "Send for Peter, and he shall give thee information." Peter's mind had been prepared, by the vision, to obey the summons of Cornelius.—He therefore, without hesitation, goes to him though a *Gentile*; and hearing from Cornelius himself a

confirmation of the words of the messengers; and a more minute account of the appearance of the angel; he opened his mouth and declared that he plainly perceived that "God is no respecter of persons; but that in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him." And immediately, in continuation, he unfolded the Gospel plan of Salvation, he preached Jesus Christ unto them, and faith in his name, as the only ground of pardon and acceptance.—From this plain simple unadorned story, I would draw this conclusion, that, in every nation, he who lives according to the light which he enjoys—he who fears God, and performs the duties incumbent upon him as far as he perceives his duty—who prays unto God, and begs of him to shew him the truth and to preserve him from error—that he will be viewed by Heaven with a propitious eye—that his services and sincere desires will be so acceptable unto God, that he will in some way or other give him the light and knowledge necessary to salvation; he shall be instructed what he ought to do. And if any other conclusion can be fairly drawn from this passage I should be glad to know what it is.

Having thus very briefly, but I trust plainly, stated what I judge to be the true meaning of this text of scripture, I shall with like brevity animadvert upon one or two notions attempted to be founded on this passage, but which appear to me to be erroneous.

In the first place then, there are some who from this passage attempt to support the opinion that our own works are the ground of our accep-

tance with God, and of course of our salvation. But this opinion cannot be reconciled with the design of Peter's mission to Cornelius, nor with the latter part of Peter's speech delivered on the occasion, nor with other parts of scripture. If our own works are the ground of our acceptance with God, and if Cornelius was a devout, just man, (as is evident from the history) why need Peter be sent to him to instruct him what he should do? It is inconsistent with Peter's sermon, for he preached Jesus and remission of sins through belief in his name. It is inconsistent with the tenor of scripture, "for by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God"—similar to which many passages might be quoted. But let us just consider for a moment the state of the two parties, the preacher and Cornelius and his friends. The Apostle's mind, it is manifest, had been deeply infected with Jewish prejudices, and the very intent of the vision was to remove them. He knew however the terms of salvation, for the Holy Ghost had been given, and Peter had preached the gospel to the Jews with wonderful success; it was his belief however, previous to the vision, that the gospel was intended only for the Jews, that it was for their sakes the long expected Messiah had come: that he came for the redemption of Israel. Cornelius knew, no doubt that Peter was a Jew: it was therefore highly proper that the Apostle should make some observation to quiet the uneasiness which Cornelius and his friends would naturally feel on this very account.—The introduction to the sermon, was therefore conciliating. He is convinced that the gospel was not to be

confined to the Jews; in the very act of beginning to preach Jesus, he declares this conviction in the words of the passage under consideration; and then immediately proceeds to preach remission of sins thro' Christ.

Another opinion, held by those who call themselves liberal men, is, that if those who have minds so constituted (to use the modish expression) as to be unable to perceive the force of the evidences of the Christian religion, and who of course do not receive it as a revelation from heaven; that, if such as these fear God and work righteousness, they will be accepted with God. Certainly I believe that invincible ignorance will be excused; and I as certainly believe such men as Cornelius will have the instruction necessary to salvation afforded to them. But this opinion, as held by those who express themselves as above, is rather too liberal. It is one of the extremes into which the human mind is prone to fly. Once he who in the smallest punctilio differed from the creed established by law, was denounced as heretic, and the Anathemas of the church were thundered against him. But now in many parts of the world the cant of liberality and moderation is the cant of the mode, and a man, provided he be but a liberal man, may be just any thing else that pleases him. Let it not be said however that I condemn liberality and moderation. They are marks of the enlightened Christian—but there are bounds beyond which they are not to pass; let them be guided and moderated by truth.—Let us not cherish and encourage a false impostor under a specious name, to the mutilation and destruction of the religion of the gospel. The libe-

rality now in vogue is an impostor. the spurious offspring of infidelity and false philosophy; a deceitful pretender to the character of Christian benevolence. Those who think that one religion is as good as another, and those who believe that no religion is better than all, are mighty sticklers for what they are pleased to term liberality and moderation.—Christian benevolence at the same time that it leads us to treat all men with meekness and patience, obliges us to hold fast the truth; to defend it to the utmost, to declare it openly, without *fear, favor, or affection*. And one truth which is often inculcated in the gospel, and is not contradicted by the passage before us, is, that however fair the external deportment, however specious the conduct of men, unless they have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they cannot be saved. But the opinion to which I am now opposed is founded upon suppositions which are not true. It in the first place, supposes that there are in Christian nations, men who fear God, and work righteousness, and pray always, who yet reject the gospel of Christ; and secondly that such is the nature of the evidences of our religion; and such the constitution of certain minds; that though they ever so much desire the truth, and search for it with all diligence, yet it is undiscoverable by them: Both which opinions, it is maintained are erroneous.—And in the first place it is asserted without fear of contradiction, that there is not within the sound of the gospel such a deist as Cornelius was before the gospel was preached to him. The observation of every man (who has had the opportunity of making observations upon this subject)

is sufficient to convince him that those who reject the gospel, are not the men who fear God, and work righteousness, and pray always.—Such men as Cornelius receive the gospel whenever it is preached unto them, as he himself did. On this head I shall only add a request to those who are not satisfied, that they would for themselves observe the character and conduct of unbelievers. This will convince them.

The second opinion is equally unfounded with the first. It is indeed not a little surprising that any who believe the scriptures should hold such an opinion. Because, I think, we have sufficient assurance that those who humbly and diligently seek for the truth shall find it.—And moreover, if the nature of the evidence by which the gospel history is proved to be true be examined, we shall find nothing in it which may not be discerned by one man of common sense as well as another. It is as easy for a man of common capacity to ascertain the authenticity of the gospels or epistles as that of Homer's Iliad, or Cicero's Orations. The fulfilment of those prophecies which are of obvious signification can be known by a man who can know that Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in a short time after the death of Jesus Christ. And a man who is fit to be a juror in a civil cause, can judge of the testimony of simple unartful men. There is nothing in all this, but what a plain man of good plantation-sense (if I may so speak) can easily understand. But if we turn from the evidences of religion to those who reject it, it will be easy enough to unravel the whole mystery. We can understand why religion is rejected. We perceive the

caule, not in the constitution of the intellect, but in the temper of the heart. It is the want of sincere love to the truth which makes men unbelievers. Let them only be bro't to pray for light as Cornelius did; and they will soon find the evidences of religion sufficiently strong for conviction. But while the temper of the heart is wrong, if the proof of Christianity were rigid mathematical demonstration at every step it would be rejected. The mind can by shutting its eye reject any evidence. They are mistaken who think it is superior acuteness, and uncommon sagacity which makes men infidels. It is a CORRUPT HEART.

In those countries then where the light of the gospel is shed abroad, those who fear God, and work righteousness and pray alway, are Christians; and they will be accepted with God through faith in Jesus Christ. And universally, they who according to the light they have, fear the one living and true God; who live according to the law given unto them, and who earnestly pray that God would shine into their hearts, and teach them the truth; who enquire earnestly what they must do, will find acceptance with God, so that he will, as in the case of Cornelius, by some mode or other, communicate what is necessary to be known, and this without regard to the nation to which they belong, or the condition of life in which they are placed.

P.

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Upon Profane Swearing.

A Charge delivered before the Grand Jury of Luzerne county, (Penn.) Nov. 1800, by Judge Rush.

Gentlemen of the Grand Jury,

THE inhabitants of Pennsylvania, have been favored with a succession of legislators, who, from time to time, and by a variety of laws, have endeavored to extend the interests of virtue and morality. At the head of these, for many reasons, we must place the illustrious founder of the province, WILLIAM PENN, a man not less distinguished by accomplishments of the understanding, than the more important virtues of a character eminently pious and moral. The comprehensive mind of this modern Lycurgus, as he has been properly styled by Montesquieu, was deeply sensible of the absolute necessity of combining *religious belief* with a corresponding practice, in order to lay a solid foundation for social happiness and prosperity. Under his auspices, and during his administration, the public acts of government, evince the greatest anxiety to blend with the civil laws of the country, those *religious* institutions that are calculated to advance the best interests of mankind. And though an unaffected sense of piety predominated in his mind, and always lay near his heart, yet it never led him to aim at any improper exercise of power, or to erect his *own creed* as a standard of popular belief. His Christianity drawn from the purest sources; and

while it taught him the most profound veneration for the *rights* of conscience, it served to expand and illumine the genius of the law-giver. It was the opinion of this enlightened Christian philosopher, "that no person should be compelled to *maintain* or to *frequent* any place of religious worship whatever—or be ever molested on account of any *religious* principles, *provided* he believed in the existence of ONE GOD."—But however liberal his ideas were on controverted points of theology, yet the pernicious member of society—the immoral man, whose actions are hostile to virtue and a good life, was justly held in abhorrence, and delivered up to the secular power, to be dealt with according to his desert. The drunkard, the swearer, the adulterer, the Sabbath-breaker, the gambler, with the whole crew of moral disorganisers, were in his judgment, proper objects of legal cognizance; because no dictates of conscience can be pleaded for violating the duties of natural religion, or justify overt acts, or even expressions, when they are subversive of private rights, or social order.

If the people of Pennsylvania at large, have derived no benefit from the excellent laws and instructive example of this truly great and benevolent legislator, we may be permitted to hope, the society at least, of which he was a conspicuous member, have profited by his precepts and his labours. It is certain, that from some cause, the vice of common swearing, so generally and so shamefully prevalent in our country, is not so much as heard of amongst them; and that they are still distinguished by an undiminished zeal in support of their public institutions,

a punctual discharge of their religious and social duties, and a rigid and scrupulous attention to the morals and education of their youth.—In these respects, they are highly worthy our imitation, and should be an example to every other denomination of Christians among us.

The law for the prevention of vice and immorality, in Pennsylvania, continued pretty much the same from the year 1705, till the late revolution, which separated the United States from Great Britain. It was then for the first time considerably enlarged, and assumed the general form and features it has since retained. Not only unnecessary labour on the *first* day of the week, was forbidden, but all *sports* and *diversions* were restrained. The same able and enterprising legislative body, that in the year 1780, laid the plan for the final abolition of domestic slavery, have happily incorporated into our municipal code, the *Christian* prohibition of all sports and diversions, as well as unnecessary labour on the *first* day of the week.

It was upon *this* subject, I had the honor of addressing the last Grand Jury, assembled for the county of Luzerne—and I then proceeded to go through a methodical discussion of the law of 1794, for the prevention of vice and immorality; the second section of which, in course, now presents itself to view. This section imposes a penalty of sixty-seven cents, for profanely cursing and swearing by the name of GOD, CHRIST JESUS, or the HOLY GHOST—and for cursing and swearing by any other name or thing the penalty of forty cents. If the penalties are not paid, the offender

¹n the first case, is to be committed to the house of correction, for a period not exceeding 24 hours, and in the latter not exceeding 12 hours; there to be fed with bread and water, and to be kept at hard labour.

Of all the vices, the wickedness and ingenuity of man have been able to invent, there is none that furnishes a more melancholy evidence of moral degradation and depravity of mind, than the practice of swearing in common conversation; because it is attended with no possible advantage or pleasure. With respect to almost every other vice that can be named, it may be easily traced to some passion in the human breast; and in the momentary pleasure attending the gratification, we perceive the cause, though not an apology for the crime. The unchaste, the glutton, the drunkard, the adulterer may plead in their behalf, the pleasure resulting from sensual indulgence, and the strength of temptation, arising perhaps, from some constitutional bias. We may however, venture to assert, whatever predisposition to certain vices may be connected with particular constitutions, no person was ever born with a propensity to swearing or blasphemy, or ever experienced a moment's pleasure from it. To the commission of this crime there is no inducement. The swearer is neither stimulated on the one hand by the hope of profit, which animates the thief and the gambler; nor on the other by the prospect of gratifying some bodily sense or appetite, which influences the glutton, the adulterer, or the drunkard.

I well know, Gentlemen, that profane swearing is too generally considered as an offence of the most ve-

nial kind, and altogether below notice. But I take the liberty of saying, this is the language of folly and inconsideration: for if the question be examined on the ground of reason or revelation, it will appear to be a sin of peculiar aggravation as it respects the Supreme Being, and of infinite mischief as it respects our fellow creatures. Permit me here to observe, that in reading over the ten commandments, the difference of expression in which they are delivered is discernable and striking. When murder is forbidden, it is said thou shalt *not* kill. When adultery is forbidden, it is said thou shalt *not* commit adultery. When perjury is forbidden, it is said thou shalt *not* bear false witness against thy neighbour. But when profane swearing is forbid, it is in language vastly more pointed and emphatic. It is written thou shalt *not* take the *name* of the Lord thy God in *vain*; and an alarming reason is added to *this* case, and in *no other*; as if to shew a greater degree of transgression, and certainty of punishment—"for the Lord will not hold him guiltless," that is, according to a Hebrew mode of expression, he will most assuredly punish him "that taketh his name in vain." In short, if the entire absence of all temptation to vice, and the utter exclusion of all pleasure in the commission of sin, necessarily enhance the guilt of an action, we can be at no loss to account for Heaven's pointing its most dreadful thunders against swearing and blasphemy.

Should an earthly monarch permit the subjects in one part of his empire to trample on his authority, and to treat with contempt his name and character, the example would soon spread into other parts of his

dominions, and be followed by the most fatal effects to his government. A conduct of this kind would, demonstrate his imbecility, and unfits to sway a sceptre; and under his feeble administration, every thing would soon rush into disorder and ruin. Now as God is the moral Governor and Ruler of the Universe; the Sovereign not only of this world, but of unnumbered others, it is absolutely necessary that he should maintain good order in every part of his universal empire. It is necessary he should secure his name and government from contempt, in the estimation of the inhabitants of this lower world, as well as of the millions of moral agents that are dispersed through the boundless scenes of creation, and who no doubt pry into his ways and laws. The supposition that the command not to profane the name of GOD, is limited to this small speck of creation, is a very narrow and erroneous conception of the subject, and altogether unworthy of the Sovereign of the Universe. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe, that it is a law equally extensive with moral agency, and binding on all ranks of intelligent beings, in whatever form, and wherever they exist; because it is conceived a law of this kind is indispensably necessary to support the throne of God himself, and to the very existence of his moral government. But alas, Gentlemen! such is the preposterous wickedness of man, "that he who acknowledges the most profound veneration to be due to an earthly King, and dareth not repeat his name without honour, yet blusheth not to *profane the name* of his Creator, and to call on him to witness a lye.—

He who feareth to breathe a whisper against his earthly sovereign, trembles not to invoke the name of his GOD on the most trivial occasions. He forgetteth his majesty, he rejudgeth his judgment. Why art thou unpunished O man, but that this is not the day of thy retribution?"

With respect to the more than brutal rudeness of common swearing; what shall I say of it, gentlemen? It has been remarked, and truly, that politeness and good manners are displayed in an easy deportment and conversation, that render a man agreeable to all around him. Slighting and disrespectful expressions of an absent friend, are acknowledged to be inconsistent with every idea of good breeding and civility; because they excite uneasy and painful sensation. For the same reason, to traduce to your face, the character of one who is notoriously your Patron and Benefactor, has been always esteemed indecent and offensive. It is no doubt, on this ground, the military servants of a Monarch, are supposed to be treated in a very improper manner, when their sovereign is spoken of in their presence in terms of reproach or dishonour.—Bring the matter home, at once, to your own bosom. Thou hast a friend—or perhaps a wife, dearer than any friend upon earth. What would you think in this case, of the person who should maliciously or wantonly sport with her fame and honor to your face and in your hearing? The wretch who could thus speak daggers to your heart, would deserve universal execration, and to be driven from society as an unfeeling monster. Suppose then only for a moment, (and we are confident

the case will be often found to be more that supposition) than there are some persons in the world, who venerate, love, and adore their Creator as the greatest and best of beings, who are deeply sensible of their obligations to him, and whose hearts are filled with the most ardent gratitude to him for his mercy and goodness.—Suppose I say a case of this sort, and you will then be able, by comparing it with the proceeding to form some idea of the agony and distress a good man may be supposed to feel when he hears the name of his Sovereign, Father, Friend, and Benefactor, treated with the highest irreverence, profanity, and insult. Cease, thou impious man, whosoever thou art, to harrow up the very soul of thy brother; and let at least a sense of decency, teach thee to respect the feelings of others, if thou canst not be restrained by higher and better motives.

But however impious towards heaven the offence of Swearing may be, and however repugnant to every maxim of Politeness & good-breeding among men, yet neither its impiety or rudeness will be a sufficient ground for the interference of the Legislature, to make it punishable in human tribunals. It must be something more than *rude* or *impious* to warrant their inserting it in the catalogue of crimes, against social order.

Religion consists in what men are to believe—and what they are to practise—in other words, in matters of faith, and moral duties. Human authority has no right to prescribe, what others shall think, or to dictate their religious creed. It is the prerogative of God to inform and to direct the conscience, and to

him alone we are responsible for the rectitude & sincerity, with which we form our articles of faith. The infinite diversity of opinion, that always prevailed on theological questions is a clear demonstration of the impossibility of men thinking alike on these points. The fruitless efforts that have been made for this purpose by the persecutor or the sanguinary bigot, have indeed deluged the world with the blood of saints and martyrs, or occasionally made hypocrites but never one single convert. On the supposition government is vested with a power of supporting and defending the laws of God, and avenging his cause, it will be impracticable to say when they ought to stop, or to decide what measures of punishment, are adequate to an offence against the majesty of an infinite being. We know not in what light the transgressions of his different laws may be viewed in the divine mind; and it would be the most extravagant folly to attempt to make his infinite abhorrence of sin, the measure of human punishment. History furnishes us with a memorable instance of fanaticism, arising from a mistaken zeal of this sort. An unfortunate Jew having been accused in the dark ages of popery, of blaspheming against the Virgin Mary, was tried, and sentenced to undergo the dreadful punishment of being flayed alive on a public scaffold, erected for the purpose. Upon being brought forward, together with the executioner, a number of gentlemen armed with knives, instantly ascended the scaffold, and driving away the executioner, proceeded to carry into effect the bloody sentence with the utmost deliberation, in order, as they said, that they might

themselves be the avengers of the injury done to religion, and the Blessed Virgin. The notion that man is God's vicegerent on earth and the punisher of crimes committed against *him*, is fraught with evil consequences, and is the most wild and destructive idea that ever entered the heated brain of an enthusiast. The Deity is the only Lord of conscience—and is infinitely able to maintain the cause of righteousness and truth, and the dignity of his own moral government, without the assistance of blind and feeble mortals. To him it is our duty cheerfully to leave the punishment of crimes *considered as violations of his holy and perfect laws*.

But though government has no right to impose articles of faith, or to inflict punishment for offences on the ground of their being committed against heaven, yet it certainly has a right to protect itself against every thing that threatens its destruction, either from internal or external causes. It has clearly a right of self preservation. But as all immortality tends in its very nature, and by inevitable consequences, to the overthrow and ruin of society, government has a right to correct its mischievous effects, in the person of the transgressor.—This right of self preservation, is the only true and genuine source of all lawful power, exercised by human governments. For this purpose, they may punish any, and every act of immoral tendency—or, which is injurious in any respect, or degree to an individual, or to the society at large. When our laws punish murder, theft, or a luitry, it is not as immoral acts, or violation of the divine law; but because such acts necessa-

rily tend to the subversion and ruin of society. So when our law punishes slander, it is not because the divine law has forbidden it, but because it is injurious to our neighbour and has a tendency to disturb the general tranquility. It is true, elementary writers mention the law of God as one foundation on which our laws are built. But we are not to understand by this, that government derives its right to punish even immoral acts from revealed religion. The expression only purports, that when our laws punish immoral acts, they proceed in *conformity* to the laws of God, which strictly forbid every thing of an immoral nature.—Both laws prohibit the offence, and the prohibition by the human laws accords with, and is supported by the *Divine* law. The penalty for the breach of the commands of God, having reference to a *future* state of existence and the punishment for the violation of the municipal laws being of a *temporal* nature shews that there is a conformity between the two laws only in the circumstance of the *prohibition*; and this unquestionably flows in both instances from the same cause, viz. the pernicious and destructive nature of vice. God having designed that virtue and order should subsist among men, has no doubt decreed the intervention and use of government as the *means* of furthering his designs in the world. In this sense, and in no other, is civil magistracy, in my opinion, an ordinance of God; and that form of government, is consequently most agreeable to Heaven, which has the most direct tendency to produce these valuable ends.

But it may be asked, is profane swearing incompatible with the wel-

fare and order of society? I answer yes, every way gentlemen—and extremely so—and therefore the laws ought to restrain and correct it, agreeable to the principles that have been just laid down.

If government may inflict punishments on acts of immorality which endanger its existence, such as murder and felony, it may lawfully forbid *every thing* that incites or leads to the commission of such offences. It is upon this principle, the laws punish those who only *counsel and advise* others, to the perpetration of a crime. It is universally acknowledged, that oaths are the grand cement of the social compact, the very ligaments by which government is kept together. From the President of the United States through all the intermediate offices and departments, down to the constable of a township, the qualification of an oath is indispensibly requisite to the execution of the trust. The judge, the lawyers, the grand-juror, and the witnesses, all make a solemn appeal to God, the searcher of all hearts, to testify to their truth and sincerity. Now as oaths are the only security, we have, for the preservation of life and property, and their binding force or efficacy depends almost entirely, on the belief that God abhors falsehood, and will punish perjury; every thing that weakens the sense of this obligation upon the conscience, must be extremely pernicious. But the general profanation of the name of God, by oaths and curses, must unavoidably diminish that awe and reverence of the Supreme Being, which it is well known is the only effectual guard against the crime of perjury, and must therefore be vastly injurious to society. Our

laws, with reason, punish even the vice of lying, when it happens to wound the fame of a neighbor.—The person who traduces another, and ascribes to him the commission of any enormous offence, is responsible in damages, unless he can support his assertion on the basis of truth and fact. It is scarcely necessary to add, that constant profanity leads to lying; and that the practice of lying is on the high road to perjury.

But swearing and blasphemy though contrary to every principle of religion—of morality—of decency—and to the laws of our country, has like all other vices its advocates and its apologists—and it is said by way of excuse, *that without knowing it, or meaning any harm, men frequently fall into the commission of this crime.*

That so silly an observation should ever have been made, may well excite surprise; and much more so, that it should be so often repeated.

Where is the man, whose conversation is ever so much polluted with swearing, that does not immediately refrain from it if brought into the presence of a king, or any other celebrated character, whose rank and station produce an awe upon his spirit. What is the reason that the most abandoned swearer lays aside his infernal dialect, standing before a Court of Justice, and answering in the capacity of a witness, juror, or the like?

The experience of every day is sufficient to convince us, that the same man, who, in private life, is in the perpetual habit of swearing, is yet able entirely to overcome it when engaged in the discharge of a public office, where it would be incompatible with every idea of de-

cency and dignity. A late celebrated English Chancellor,* who as a private man had long, challenged an infamous preeminence in this vice, was never known to violate on the Bench in a single instance by a rash or improper expression, the public decorum due to his rank and station. For my own part, I should believe it might quite as easily be proved, a man could break open his neighbours desk, or debauch his wife, without knowing it, as that he should make use of profane and blasphemous language without being conscious of it.

But in the name of wonder, why is the apology, *that he means no harm*, confined to the swearer? Why not extend the benefit of so happy a discovery to the habitual Slanderer, Lyer, Drunkard, and so forth? Nay, gentlemen, it would be difficult to adduce any good reason, why the thief too should not be allowed to come in for *his* share of it; especially an *old* thief, who had destroyed all sense of shame and remorse, by the frequent repetition of his crimes. For *then* he would bring himself precisely into the situation of the swearer *who thinks no harm*.

I dismiss the subject with the following reflections. It is deeply to be deplored, that so many persons of influence and fashion among us, are addicted to this vice. Vain are all hopes of a reform, while this is the case. The pernicious example, like a torrent descending from some precipice, spreads desolation and ruin through our land. What pity is it, that the noble motives of obe-

dience to God, and regard to man, are inadequate restraints on a crime which does them no good; but alas! is the source of incalculable mischief to their fellow creatures!

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Constitution of the Lexington Missionary Society.

TO THE PIOUS AND BE-NEVOLENT.

A NUMBER of the Clergy and others, within the bounds of the Lexington Presbytery, reflecting on the situation of many parts of our country, where the Word of Life is seldom or never preached, nor the Gospel Ordinances administered; where the Sabbath is a day of idle amusement; the youth brought up in ignorance of God, neglect of his worship, and disregard of his authority; where impiety, profanity, and the grossest immoralities abound. Considering, also, the worth of the souls thus perishing for lack of knowledge, and the dreadful end of such courses; the obligations on all Christians to do all in their power to promote the Kingdom of the REDEEMER, and thus save immortal souls from ruin—have formed themselves into a MISSIONARY SOCIETY, and solicit your concurrence & support.

That pecuniary aid is necessary to carry such a plan into execution is evident: and as you have received so many benefits from God, and live daily on his bounty, we cannot doubt but you will manifest your gratitude to him, your concern for his glory, and the good of your fellow men, by contributing cheerfully and liberally.—“Honor the Lord

* Lord Thurlow, see British and Irish public characters of 1728.

with thy substance, and the first fruit of all thy increase—so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses burst out with new wine.”

**YOUR SIGNATURE IS SOLICITED
TO THE FOLLOWING CONSTITUTION.**

In order to extend the Missionary Business, or make it practicable to send Missionaries more frequently and with better effect, through the state of Virginia, or to the Heathen, and to distribute suitable books among them—We the subscribers do agree to form ourselves into a *Society*, and bind ourselves to act agreeably to the following Constitution :

ART. I. The Society is denominated “ *The Lexington Missionary Society* :” and its business shall be transacted by Managers, appointed in the following manner : Every regularly ordained Minister, of the Presbyterian denomination, within the bounds of Lexington Presbytery, who is willing to act, shall be a Manager, *ex officio* ;—and whenever thirty dollars are subscribed in any Society or district of country, not too large to admit of the subscribers assembling together or a majority of them, they shall choose a Lay-Manager, who shall hold his office during good behaviour, in the choice of a Manager each subscriber shall be entitled to a vote for every dollar he shall have subscribed, and six Managers shall be competent to do business.

ART. II. It shall be the business of the Managers to choose the Officers of this Society—to obtain as many signers to this Constitution as possible, and when any person signs the Constitution, it is under-

stood that he becomes a Member of this Society—and when any Member wishes to withdraw from the Society, he shall give notice thereof to some Manager at or before the end of some year, and pay his arrearages if any are due.—Every year of this Society shall be considered as beginning the first of January, and ending on the last of December—and the yearly quota of each Member shall be at least one dollar, to be paid at the commencement of the year.

ART. III. The Officers of this Society, to be chosen by the Managers, shall be a President, Secretary, Treasurer and Clerk ; the President and Secretary to be chosen from among the Managers—the Treasurer and Clerk at discretion.

ART. IV. The Society shall hold annual meetings on the first day of the Autumnal Session of the Lexington Presbytery, and to be at the same place ; at which time a Sermon shall be delivered suitable to the occasion by some Member of its body, previously appointed ; but should any emergency require an extraordinary meeting, the President shall have power to call one at the request of any three Managers, and in this case, shall give notice to all the Managers at least fifteen days before such meeting takes place.

ART. V. The business of the Managers in their deliberation, shall be to devise the means of collecting the monies subscribed by the Members of this Society—to form the most advantageous plans for increasing its funds—to institute enquiries for ascertaining to what parts of the country Missionaries may be sent with the greatest prospect of success,

and for finding out and employing proper persons for undertaking missions, and compensating them out of the funds of the Society : It shall be the duty of the Managers to publish an annual report of their proceedings : Provided, nevertheless, that the Managers of this Society shall have it in their power to appropriate its funds, or any part of them, to carry into effect any Missionary plan of the Synod of Virginia.

ART. VI. If any part of this Constitution shall be found not calculated to answer the designs of this Society, it shall be in the power of the Managers (the consent of a majority of them being obtained) to amend any part of it as they may deem proper.

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From the minutes of the General Assembly, of May last.

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The Committee appointed to draw up, and present to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, a summary of the information received during a free conversation on the general state of religion, exhibited the following report.

ALTHOUGH every sincere Christian must lament that inattention to the ordinances of religion, and the small impression which its sacred truths make on the hearts of men, which are visible in many, and extensive portions of our country, yet, the Assembly have heard, with the highest satisfaction, of the prevalence, and increasing influence of vital and practical godliness throughout the greater part of the Presbyteries which compose our

body. Within those wide districts, towards the south and west, from which the last Assembly heard, with so much pleasure, the glad tidings of great the salvation manifested there, the power of religion appears still to prevail, with little abatement. And although through the subtlety of the adversary of souls, and the influence of human frailty, some errors, extravagancies, and instances of reproachful behaviour, have taken place, which the Assembly do sincerely regret and most unequivocally disapprove and condemn; yet are they happy to learn, and it is a sacred duty, which they owe to the churches, to announce, that notwithstanding the malignity with which the enemies of religion have studied to misrepresent, and, rejoiced to exaggerate these undesirable events, they are chiefly confined to one district of no great extent; and they are certainly very rare, considering the immense region, through which this work has prevailed, and the vast variety of characters who have been its subjects.

The Assembly, moreover, have the unspeakable satisfaction to announce, that the extraordinary influences of the Divine Spirit have, since the last year, been spread over new and very extensive countries, still farther to the south and west. To the north-west and north, from the river Ohio to the Lakes, a vast region which, a few years ago, was an uninhabited wilderness, new churches are forming with astonishing rapidity; and the Spirit of God seems to be remarkably poured out, and to accompany the word, and ordinances of the gospel, with the most solemn and affecting impressions.

The same spirit appears to prevail through a large portion of the Synod of New York and New Jersey and the Synod of Albany. Its effects though more silent, seem to be not less deep, nor consoling to the friends of true religion. Sinners are convinced and sincere believers comforted, and established in the faith and hope of the gospel. Proselytes are continually raised to the grace of the Redeemer; and numbers are almost daily added to the church of such, we trust, as first be saved. In the churches in which these extraordinary influences of the Divine Spirit are not so conspicuous, the power, and the salutary effects of the ordinances of the gospel, seem, notwithstanding, to be visibly progressing. That inattention to the things of religion; that neglect of its institutions; that tendency to infidelity, or to scepticism in principles and to dissoluteness of manners, which a few years since, the truly pious had so much reason to deplore are, in most places, evidently arrested; and the tide of public sentiment is happily begun to flow in a contrary direction. Places of divine worship are, in general, more frequented; the institutions of religion are held in higher honor, and attended with greater solemnity, and apparent devotion.—The like agreeable tidings have been received from our associated brethren of the eastern churches, who are dwelling together in peace, and in the unity and faith of the blessed gospel.

The Assembly have likewise heard with uncommon satisfaction, of the increasing number of societies, for the purposes of prayer, and for the promotion of piety and good morals. It is the ordinary course of divine

providence, that, when God designs to pour out his Spirit in a remarkable manner on his churches; and to increase and extend the influence of true religion; he first awakens among his own people a spirit of prayer, and of fervent supplication at the throne of grace, for this blessing. And the Assembly do earnestly recommend it to all who love the appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, to meet often together; *to stir one another up to love and good works*, and to wrestle in prayer with God, like the saints of old, for the prosperity of Zion, *till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

It is, moreover, no small ground of consolation, to observe the pious disposition manifested, and the increasing efforts which are made, more effectually to extend the knowledge of the way of salvation to the unhappy and enslaved blacks in our country; and to send the inestimable blessings of the gospel, along with the improvements of civilization, to the heathen and savage tribes in our vicinity; to save these wretched people from utter extermination; and to raise up from the remnants of so many destructive wars, the seeds of future and great nations, who shall enlarge the kingdom of the Redeemer. The reports of the Assembly's missionaries in the Cherokee, and Catawba nations, have rendered the prospects of introducing among them letters and civilization, the arts of peace, and the precious lights of the gospel, more promising than, at any period, they have ever been.

Finally, the Assembly, rejoicing themselves in the grace of the Great Head of the Church, have again the

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The Assembly, moreover, have the unspeakable satisfaction to announce, that the extraordinary influences of the Divine Spirit have, since the last year, been spread over new and very extensive countries, still farther to the south and west. To the north-west and north, from the river Ohio to the Lakes, a vast region which, a few years ago, was an uninhabited wilderness, new churches are forming with astonishing rapidity; and the Spirit of God seems to be remarkably poured out, and to accompany the word, and ordinances of the gospel, with the most solemn and affecting impressions.

The same spirit appears to prevail through a large portion of the Synod of New York and New Jersey and the Synod of Albany. Its effects though more silent, seem to be not less deep, nor consoling to the friends of true religion. Sinners are convinced and sincere believers comforted, and established in the faith and hope of the gospel. Tropics are continually raised to the grace of the Redeemer; and numbers are almost daily added to the church of such, we trust, as shall be saved. In the churches in which these extraordinary influences of the Divine Spirit are not so conspicuous, the power, and the salutary effects of the ordinances of the gospel, seem, notwithstanding, to be visibly progressing. That inattention to the things of religion; that neglect of its institutions; that tendency to infidelity, or to scepticism in principles and to dissoluteness of manners, which a few years since, the truly pious had so much reason to deplore are, in most places, evidently arrested; and the tide of public sentiment is happily begun to flow in a contrary direction. Places of divine worship are, in general, more frequented; the institutions of religion are held in higher honor, and attended with greater solemnity, and apparent devotion.—The like agreeable tidings have been received from our associated brethren of the eastern churches, who are dwelling together in peace, and in the unity and faith of the blessed gospel.

The Assembly have likewise heard with uncommon satisfaction, of the increasing number of societies, for the purposes of prayer, and for the promotion of piety and good morals. It is the ordinary course of divine

providence, that, when God designs to pour out his Spirit in a remarkable manner on his churches; and to increase and extend the influence of true religion; he first awakens among his own people a spirit of prayer, and of fervent supplication at the throne of grace, for this blessing. And the Assembly do earnestly recommend it to all who love the appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, to meet often together; *to stir one another up to love and good works, and to wrestle in prayer with God, like the saints of old, for the prosperity of Zion, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.*

It is, moreover, no small ground of consolation, to observe the pious disposition manifested, and the increasing efforts which are made, more effectually to extend the knowledge of the way of salvation to the unhappy and enslaved blacks in our country; and to send the inestimable blessings of the gospel, along with the improvements of civilization, to the heathen and savage tribes in our vicinity; to save these wretched people from utter extermination; and to raise up from the remnants of so many destructive wars, the seeds of future and great nations, who shall enlarge the kingdom of the Redeemer. The reports of the Assembly's missionaries in the Cherokee, and Catawba nations, have rendered the prospects of introducing among them letters and civilization, the arts of peace, and the precious lights of the gospel, more promising than, at any period, they have ever been.

Finally, the Assembly, rejoicing themselves in the grace of the Great Head of the Church, have again the

happiness to offer to the churches under their care, increasing cause of thanksgiving and praise, to the God of all mercy and truth. And, they intreat the co-operation of their prayers, and their charity, for the promotion of the Redeemer's glory, and the salvation of precious and immortal souls.—And now, to God Almighty, Father, Son, and Holy-Spirit, who hath given us this reason to rejoice, be glory and honor, world without end! Amen!

—:O:—

The following is a letter from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church, to the Rev. David Rice, of Kentucky.

From the Minutes of the General Assembly.

DEAR SIR,

YOUR letter of the 18th of April has been regularly laid before the General Assembly; and although it ought to have been accompanied with an extract from the Minutes of the Presbytery of Transylvania, yet, the Assembly, having perfect confidence in you, easily waived that formality.

The enquiry which you propose, in the name of the Presbytery, concerning the propriety, in your present circumstances, of licensing and ordaining men to the work of the Gospel Ministry, without a liberal education, is certainly of great magnitude. Considering the great and ardent zeal on the subject of religion, which has been awakened throughout so large a portion of the United States; the multitudes who are earnestly demanding of you the bread of life, and the few, comparatively, who are regularly ordained to break it among them;

the reasoning seems specious at first, which would encourage us, in the instances you mention, to depart from the spirit of our standards upon this subject: and some plausible facts frequently occur, which appear to confirm this reasoning, and mislead the judgments of many honest and well meaning men. On all subjects on which the human mind is roused to uncommon exertions, and inflamed with uncommon ardor, men become eloquent for a season; and even the most weak and ignorant, often surprise us by the fluency, and pertinency, as well as fervor of their expressions. And in general revivals of the spirit of religion, that copiousness and pathos in prayer and exhortation, which are not uncommonly to be found, even among men who are destitute of any liberal culture of mind; and often even of any considerable natural talents, may tempt themselves and lead others to conclude, that they are endued with peculiar and extraordinary gifts for the service of the church, which ought not to be suffered to lie useless and unemployed.

An ardent zeal, too often united with a certain spiritual pride, and strong self-love, is apt to inspire some weak persons, of an enthusiastic temperament, with vehement impulses to preach the Gospel; which they flatter themselves are calls from Heaven.—But experience has repeatedly shewn us, that these inward impulses most commonly affect men of great imbecility of mind, or of strong vanity—experience farther shews, that when this fervor is somewhat abated, all their barrenness, and de-

spect of furniture for the holy ministry, and the sound interpretation of the sacred scriptures, become manifest: and too many unhappy examples have occurred, of those who have abandoned good morals, when deserted by their zeal. And with regard to supposed calls to preach the Gospel; no man can be rightly called to that sacred office, out of the regular order which Christ has established in his church—no such inward call can be judged of by any church judicatory, nor distinguished by any certain criterion, from the visionary impulses of enthusiasm. The judicatories of the church can judge only of the life and conversation of men; their knowledge, and their talents to teach.

Besides, we know that the nature of true religion is, to render men humble. And such is the solemnity and importance of the duty, of interpreting the word of God to the people, and speaking in his name, that a sincere penitent will rather wait to be sought out, than forwardly intrude himself into so holy a calling, and do we not find, in fact, that they are not usually the most prudent, judicious, and qualified to teach among the laity, who are most solicitous to be constituted public guides and instructors in the church?

We do not say that a liberal education is absolutely essential to a man's usefulness in the Ministry of the Gospel; but reason and experience both demonstrate its high importance and utility. And where ignorant men are permitted to explain the holy scriptures, it ought to be subject to the direction and control of others, of greater know-

ledge. But this is an order which it has not been thought proper to adopt in the Presbyterian church. And the superior comparative prosperity and usefulness of our church, and that of our eastern brethren, which is similarly constituted, is a demonstration by no means equivocal, of the approbation and smiles of Heaven upon us, in the exercise of our present form of government and discipline.—But, were our opinion on this subject different from what it is, we cannot lawfully and conscientiously depart from our present standards, till they be changed in an orderly manner, by the consent of a majority of the Presbyteries, which compose the body of the General Assembly.

You express your apprehensions lest, if certain illiterate and unqualified men, should not be admitted to the Ministry of the Gospel among you, they may withdraw from the church, and become the promoters of dangerous schisms. We answer, the path of duty is a safe path. Do what is right, and commit the event to God. If they are men of such a spirit, it is only a new proof that they are most unfit for the office to which they aspire. Parties created by them, will neither be important, nor durable. But if the gates of the church are opened to weakness and ignorance; she will soon be overflowed with errors, and with the wildest disorders. We shall bring the ministry into disgrace and contempt, which should be like the priesthood of Aaron, without blemish.—If men are sincerely desirous of promoting the glory of God, let them first bestow the necessary pains and time, to acquire the requisite qualifications, for feeding and lead-

ing the flock of Christ: let them be regularly initiated into the priesthood; and not hallow to offer unhallowed fire on God's altar. If they are sincerely desirous of doing good, let them do it in that sphere, in which they appear destined by Providence to move. In this, every christian, the poorest and the humblest; has ample scope to exercise his pious and benevolent dispositions, and to exert his talents, whatever they may be.

Notwithstanding the preceding reflections, it is the opinion of this Assembly, that where the field of labor is too extensive for the ordinary and regular ministry, certain assistants, like the helps or catechists of the primitive church, may, under proper restrictions and limitations, be usefully employed in instructing the young in the principles of our holy religion; and conducting the praying and voluntary societies of private christians. Great caution, however, ought to be used in employing such an order of men; lest an indiscreet zeal, should impel them to extravagancies which may prove dishonorable and injurious to religion; or lest, being lifted up with pride, they come at length to spurn the authority which has appointed them, create divisions in the church, and so *fall into the condemnation of the Devil*. In some parts of the church their utility might be very great, while in others, they would prove not only useless, but dangerous. It must be left solely to the regular and established judicatories of the church, according to the circumstances which may exist within their respective limits, to judge upon this subject. But, wherever it may

such helps, we give it as our advice that none be employed but men of *prudent and sound* minds, as well as of sincere piety: men who are humble, and willing to submit to order, as well as zealous in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let their duties be clearly pointed out to them, and circumscribed within precise limits. And under the direction of the Presbytery, let them, as frequently as possible, be visited, and their conduct inspected, to see how far they are both able and faithful in discharge of the trust committed to them. They are not to be considered as standing officers in the church; but may be appointed, or removed, at the discretion of the Presbytery. But, if any, upon full experience, are found to possess uncommon talents; are diligent to acquire the requisite qualifications for preaching the Gospel, and promise to be eminently useful in the church, they may, in time, *purchase to themselves a good degree*, and be admitted according to the regular course, to the holy ministry.

These things we leave to your prudence, and are,

Dear Sir,

Your Brethren, and

Fellow Labourers, &c.

Signed by order, &c.

MODERATOR.

—:C:—

The Rev. Gideon Blackburn and the Rev. Mr. Davis' progress among the Indians.

From the Minutes of the General Assembly.

TWO interesting papers relating to Missionary concerns among the Indians, were read before the M-

12th, 1804, from the Rev. Gideon Blackburn, the other a report to the Synod of the Carolinas by the Rev. Mr. Davis. Mr. Blackburn was appointed, the last year, by the Assembly to act as a Missionary for two months among the Cherokee nation of Indians. This mission he fulfilled with great diligence, zeal and judgment. His ardour to promote the gospel induced him to spend three, instead of two months among the Indian nation. The design of Mr. Blackburn's mission was, not so much to preach the gospel regularly to them, as to conciliate their esteem & affection, and to establish a school for the instruction of their children. This was judged to be the best method for preparing them for the regular preaching of the gospel.

The success of Mr. Blackburn's mission was highly encouraging.—He was received very cordially, and permitted by the Indians to establish a school, to which they send their children. "On the first day (February 21) there came, says Mr. Blackburn, 11 scholars; on the 8th of March there were 16; the 27th there were 20; and several more are expected in a few days, as soon as I can get cloathing ready for them. The children behave past expectation; and I am persuaded by a discipline well balanced, by inducements and well timed authority, they can be kept in as good order as any school on the continent. Their progress is very remarkable. The first day several of them could distinctly pronounce half of the alphabet. By the 8th of March all of them could say their letters backward and forward, and could know them wherever they could see them; and three could say their abs. They continue

their progress, and I flatter myself that their proficiency will exceed the most sanguine expectations."

Since the establishment of this school, Mr. Blackburn has received a very earnest request, from the principal chiefs of the lower district of the nation, to establish a school among them.

The spirit, the zeal, the ardour, the diligence of Mr. Blackburn strikingly appear in his letter: "I have spent three months," says he, "in close service to the institution, beside numberless attentions I am obliged to pay to it at home. The interest I feel in carrying this business into effect, would secure my exertions, should I receive no pecuniary returns from any person on earth. Should the Committee of Missions require the continuance of my services, I will use every possible means, to forward the design; and if they should not, both my credit and happiness will bind me not to let it sink, if in my power. I have pledged myself to the nation, and my property is at stake on the issue of the undertaking."

Larger extracts from this very interesting letter would be given, were it not for the intention of the Committee of Missions to publish it in connexion with a narrative of the state of religion in various parts of the world without the limits of the Assembly's superintendence and jurisdiction. The greater part of this narrative was read before the Assembly, and received their approbation. Accompanied with the Assembly's narrative, it will form a small pamphlet; which will present to the reader an interesting view of the state of religion, so far as relates to revivals and Missionary ef

throughout the world. By this publication the Committee hope at once to edify those who read it, and, by the sale of it, to increase their ability for carrying on the very important concerns of Missions. Those who desire to aid their exertions, will do well to purchase this pamphlet both for their own profit, and for the advancement of religion.—The Committee, it is expected, will take measures for circulating the pamphlet as extensively as they can.

Mr. Davis was appointed last year by the Synod of the Carolinas, a Missionary to Indian tribes bordering upon their limits. The Committee appointed to form this appendix, regret that they have not the report of Mr. Davis in their hands, and have to rely upon their recollection for particulars. This Missionary was cordially received by the Indians. He spent among them two or three months, during which time he established a school consisting of 25 Indian children. This report was highly interesting. It afforded great encouragement to hope that success will attend missionary labours among those tribes.

On the whole, it appears that it has pleased God to open a door for much usefulness among the Indian tribes bordering upon our country. Christians have reason to rejoice in the prospect, that, by efforts, vigorous and well conducted, these miserable sons of Adam may be delivered from a state of barbarity and heathenism, and brought into a state of civilization and religion. The prospect is more encouraging and flattering than it has been at any past time. God has done enough to convince us that the work of civilizing and evangelizing the Indian tribes is

not impossible, but practicable.—What heart that loves the Lord Jesus and the souls of men will not rejoice? Shall the golden opportunity be suffered to pass away unimproved? Forbid it gracious God! Christians, embrace, improve it.—Let the rich contribute out of their abundance pecuniary aid, let the ministers, who can devote themselves to this service, do it; let all send up their fervant cries to heaven for help; and we may soon behold our red brethren sitting with us around the same table, and meeting with us to worship the same divine Saviour.

—:O:—

The following is a Pastoral letter, of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, adopted at their sitting in May last.

From the Minutes of the General Assembly.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

UNITED to you in the bonds of love, and of Christ, we feel all the constraint of the ties which binds us to you as one body in our common Lord. Assembled, by the good providence of God, in the supreme judicatory of the church, we feel the duty imposed upon us, as the guardians of the peace, order and purity of the body of Christ, of addressing you on the great subject of our common salvation.

Dear brethren, we still have cause of mutual congratulation and joy on account of the increasing prosperity of Zion in these lands, which not long since were so dry and barren. They are, in many places, watered with the abundant Dews of Heaven; and righteousness has run down the streets of our Jerusalem like a mighty stream. God has appeared to

revive his cause in the midst of the years of great great declension, and in the midst of deserved wrath, he has remembered mercy. In many parts of our church, God has poured out a spirit of prayer upon his people, and has been graciously pleased to answer their prayers by a copious effusion of his blessed spirit. The boldness of infidelity and the profligacy of impiety, have been greatly repressed; and tho' here and there we still behold its violent struggles exerted against the Saviour, they appear to be only the convulsive struggles of despair. The truths of revelation are gradually acquiring a decided ascendancy in all parts of our land; and in many they are daily coming home to the hearts of men with uncommon evidence and power.

For more particular information on these subjects we refer you, brethren, to that summary of the state of religion within the bounds of the general assembly, which accompanies this letter. You will there perceive, however, that, amidst so many subjects of gratitude and praise to Almighty God, for the riches of his grace displayed in the revivals of of the religion in various portions of our church, we have also some causes of deep affliction and regret mingled with them. Human frailty is apt to mar and disfigure, in some degree, whatever it touches: and the great adversary of souls and of Christ, taking advantage of the passions of convinced sinners, of the hypocrisy of deceivers and of the imperfections even of the best of men, sets himself too often effectually, to tarnish the beauty and glory of the work of God.

An unhappy separation of five,

who had formerly appeared to be zealous and successful ministers of Jesus Christ, in union with the Synod of Kentucky, has given no small occasion of grief to the churches. Too great an ardor of spirit for what they conceived to be the truth, and, perhaps, too great heat concerning the meaning and importance of words have created a division, which christian charity should exert all its powers to heal. We beseech you, brethren, yet receive one another in the spirit of love and forbearance. Remember how divisions and contests between men engaged in the same glorious cause will wound the hearts of sincere christians, and distract the minds of the weak; remember how apt they are to embitter the meek spirit of the Gospel, and to quench the zeal of genuine piety, in the unholy passions of strife and contention; remember we entreat you, for the love of Christ, how the adversary will blaspheme and rejoice, and the Redeemer be wounded in the house of his friends. Brethren, reunite your hearts and your labours in this great and blessed work, and let not its progress be arrested, or its glory impaired, by the baneful influence of your divisions. Meet together for the purpose of conciliation, using the councils and aid of the committee which the General Assembly has thought proper to send you, to endeavor to repair so undesirable and dangerous a breach in the walls of our Zion. If you love the Lord—if you love and pray for the peace of Jerusalem, will you not sacrifice much to these objects, so dear to every real christian?

With not less regret have we heard of certain extravagancies in the ex-

ercises and agitations of many persons, who in this work, otherwise so desirable, have once been the subjects of strong religious impressions. That the sudden blaze of divine truth upon a mind hitherto covered with thick darkness; that a deep conviction of guilt, and a sense of the wrath of God against an offending worm of dust; especially, when these apprehensions are raised to the highest pitch by the power of sympathy, and the panic excited by the emotions of a vast assembly, should often produce strong bodily affections, is not surprising to those who are acquainted with the human œconomy. That the transports of a mind suddenly brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, suddenly raised from the borders of despair to the extacies of religious hope and joy, should be accompanied with a similar influence on the nervous system, is not incredible.

The preceeding are not pretended to be assigned as the certain or sole reasons of many extraordinary appearances in some of our southern churches. It is sufficient to answer the views of the Assembly, to shew that such causes are adequate to the production of the highest effects of this kind, in order to preserve them from the unjust imputation of a fanatical or demoniacal influence. But, when bodily agitations, which, in most instances disturb the serious, sober and rational exercises of the mind, instead of being soothed and restrained within the bounds of decency, are encouraged, and excited by those who lead the worship, and some who join in it, they very easily run into excesses highly reproachful to religion. When they go into antic gellures, ridiculous contortions,

to movements of apparent levity, and contrary to propriety, and religious order, and which dissemble the effects of delirium, or of a spirit very different from the spirit of the Gospel, these are the evidences of a wild enthusiasm, whose extravagancies are infinitely various, and unaccountable. When each person has a psalm, a prayer, a triumphant exultation, in the public worship of God, is not this the very evil which once took place in the Corinthian church, which the apostle severely reproveth, saying, *God is not a God of confusion, but of order?* In genuine and rational religion, however, high and fervent may be its affections *the spirit of the prophets are subject to the prophets.* And if so, surely this power is still more necessary for the sake of order in every ordinary christian.

We strongly bear our testimony against those persons who pretend to immediate impulses, and revelations from Heaven, those divine communications which were given only to the prophets and apostles, who were appointed by God to reveal to mankind the way of eternal life. When men presume that the Holy Spirit, contrary to the established order of Providence, interferes by particular impulse, to direct them in all the common affairs of life; when they deem themselves to be impelled by him to particular acts, or particular religious exercises, contrary to the established order of the Gospel, and the obvious duties of the moment; when, finally, they pretend to miraculous powers, or prophetic influences, and the foretelling of future events: all these are evidences of a wild enthusiastic spirit, and tend, eventually, to destroy the authority of

the word of God, as the sole rule of faith and practice. Ecclesiastical history furnishes us with many examples of such enthusiastic impulses, following great revivals of religion, which have ever been wrongly and uniformly condemned by the voice of the whole church, as in the case of the French prophets, the fanatics of Munster, and we may add the fanatical Jews, who sprung up in such numbers, and persevered with such obstinacy, even while the disasters of their city and their temple, were daily refuting their predictions. And it will be a subject of sincere lamentation to us, if any ministers in our communion should unhappily be found to encourage such great evils. But we hope better things of you though we thus speak.

Dear brethren, and fellow labourers in the Gospel of our common Lord, study to prevent excesses so dishonorable and contrary to the beautiful order of the church of Christ, or zealously endeavor to repress them, wherever they begin to appear. In a great and general inflammation of the human mind, we ought not to be astonished, if these fervors, operating sometimes on weakness, sometimes on an enthusiastic temperament, should impel a few men to very considerable excesses. Such have happened in every revival of religion, and even in every great political commotion; and such, especially happened in various instances in the memorable and glorious reformation of the christian church, from the spiritual thralldom and errors of popery. By common concert and counsel, endeavour to restrain every irregularity in the worship of God at its very commencement. Disorders of an en-

thusiastic spirit may often be checked in the beginning with facility, which when suffered to progress, come at length to overleap all the barriers of authority, and burst thro' all the bounds of order and of decency. Solemnly bear in mind, brethren, how much the great head of the church has committed his glory, and the glory of his holy cause to the world, to your activity and your usefulness, to your *prudence* as well as your *zeal*.

And now fellow christians, of every order and condition in life, we intreat you earnestly to co-operate with the public servants of Christ in promoting the glory and extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Faithfully improve the precious season of divine grace which God is now bestowing on his churches.

By your prayers draw down the blessing of Heaven on your families, on the church, on your country, on the world. God will appear for his people with a great salvation; but for all these things will he be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them. Let your prayers for the prosperity of Zion continually ascend in secret to the throne of grace. Promote and encourage assemblies for social prayer. 'For Jerusalem's sake rest, not, and for Zion's sake hold not your peace' Whenever God has appeared in my signal display of his mercy to the church, he has usually in the first place, 'poured out on the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, a spirit of grace and supplication:—that we may continue to wait at his footstool; he condescends to bestow his special and extraordinary grace in answer to the prayers which he himself has inspired.

Parents, train up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Your houses should be temples of the living God, in which should ascend to his mercy-seat the continual incense of your daily sacrifices. Pious parents can most effectually preach to the hearts of their children by their affectionate precepts and their holy example. Your instructions will best prepare them to receive benefit from the public ordinances of religion. And Oh! can you see these dearest portions of yourselves ready to perish without earnestly reaching forth a hand to pluck them as brands from the burning!

Children obey your parents in the Lord. You are the future hope of the church and of the world. Your early piety will be your glory and your happiness. And remember that shortly the glory of your Creator and redeemer, in the world, will rest with you.

Beloved Brethren! Christians of every class, 'Be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.' Adorn the doctrine of God your Saviour by the purity, the simplicity, and sanctity of your lives, that the enemies of the cross may have no occasion to blaspheme the master by whose name you are called. Let God witness the humility of your spirit, the sincerity and fervor of your devotion. Let the world witness your ministerial charity and love, 'that others seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in Heaven'. We commend dear brethren, that God may ever have you in his holy keeping. And now to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the throne of his

glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. Jude 24, 25.

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From the Minutes of the General Assembly.

WHEREAS the Assembly, for several years past, have been taking measures to obtain materials for a complete History of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America; which materials, as far as they have been obtained, are in the hands of the Stated Clerk; and it seems expedient that the history contemplated, should be entered upon as soon as possible; therefore,

Resolved, That the Rev. Dr. Ashbel Green, and Mr. Ebenezer Hazard, be, and they hereby are, appointed to write the History of the Presbyterian Church, in the United States of America; under the care of the General Assembly; and to lay a copy thereof, when completed, before the Assembly: that they have the free use of the materials collected; and that the copy right of the History, when finished, shall belong to the said Dr. Green and Mr. Hazard.

And whereas there are certain Presbyteries and congregations, under the care of the Assembly, that have not yet furnished materials for their history, though often solicited, therefore,

Resolved, That all the Presbyteries and congregations be, and they hereby are, strictly enjoined, to do all in their power to complete their histories as soon as possible, and to forward them without delay, to the

said Dr. Green and Mr. Hazard resident in the City of Philadelphia, who are hereby authorized, if they find it necessary, to write to the Presbyteries and congregations that may not forward to them the historical documents required: and to urge them to the performance of their duty, and to state to the Assembly the names of those Presbyteries and Congregations, if such there be, who shall not ultimately furnish the information necessary.

And this Assembly do also hereby recommend to all the people under their care, especially to gentlemen of literature and leisure, within their bounds, to furnish the gentlemen appointed to this service, with all the information in their power to give, relative to the history in contemplation, that this important work may be completed, in a manner as accurate and satisfactory as possible.

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The following is an interesting account of a revival of religion, in New-Jersey, in a letter from the Rev. ROBERT FINLEY, to Col. JOHN NELSON.

Basking-Ridge, Dec. 23, 1804.

DEAR SIR,

THINKING it might be agreeable to you, to have some account of the manner and extent of the work of God among my dear people, and wishing, once more, to have an opportunity of expressing my affection and respect, I shall drop you a few lines on this interesting subject:—When the present year commenced, it found us in a profound sleep, with regard to our everlasting concerns.—All was still; nor was there any voice heard.—The valley of the son of Hinnom was

here, full of dry bones, and lo! they were exceeding dry.—Yet the day of deliverance was at hand, and at this midnight, the cry was preparing, “the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” The clergy of the Presbytery of New-York had now, for a month or two, been engaged in preaching from church to church, after the example of the Lord’s disciples, who were sent out two by two. A serious attention to religion had also been called forth in one of the adjoining churches. In the month of February, I was invited by the Rev. Mr. Armstrong, Pastor of the church at Mendham, to meet the brethren, who were to visit his people, about that time: I complied, and saw a large assembly eagerly bent on hearing the word of life.—I saw no external appearances, and felt no inward refreshings.—I then learned, what I have felt much more sensibly since, “that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth.”—“But that every good gift, and every perfect gift, cometh down from the Father of Lights.” Being invited to unite in the exertions that had begun to be made in favor of religion, I gladly accepted. The arrangements were made every two months. That period returned, and I met, for the first time, with the brethren, the first Tuesday in February. The assembly, to which they preached, was neither large, nor very solemn; but, in making an address on the exhortation, “why stand ye here, all the day idle?”—there was imparted to my soul, a sensation, and a view, which I hope was worth the world. I knew not what it was, and hardly what it meant.—The night seemed like the beginning of Heaven.—The A. A.

light brought my heart again to the same subjects—I felt like one that had been bewildered, and was just awakening to the hope of deliverance from the maze.—Towards evening, my feelings came to a point, and I began to think of the afflicted captives by the streams of Babylon. Their mighty attachment to the beloved city was understood, and its broken down walls were mourned over. I was about half the distance on my way home, and many a desire did I feel to return, and join the travelling brethren.—The remainder of the week was spent in eager lookings for the Sabbath.—A faint idea of the Apostles feelings was obtained, when he said, “my little children of whom I travail in birth.” When the Sabbath arrived, the day was so stormy and tempestuous, that new discouragements were excited. There had been many fine days, and crowded assemblies, when there was no heart to speak, nor agonizing desire to awaken and rescue men.—And now, when the desire was intense, and the resolution superior to all fear of man, the people were kept at home.—It was of *him*, whose councils may not be challenged.—Only about twenty persons attended the church; of these, about one third were professors, and of the remainder, there was not one, who was not laid under a solemn conviction. It now brings to my remembrance the army of Gideon, which was reduced before it could gain the victory. The subject of discourse that day, was, “the night is far spent, the day is at hand.”—How beautifully true, did the Lord make it to be, with regard to the church: A good proportion of the few of that day, are now in union with the

church, and none of them have turned back to folly, as yet. O! that the gracious Lord would not let the curse of Carazin, and Bethsaida, come upon them. The vibration of the stroke upon these few hearts, was more widely felt than could have been expected. On the evening following, there was an assemblage of about forty young persons, for their improvement in music—their teacher did not attend, and under the awe of the preceeding day, a few of them desired a discourse: It was given them from the words, “What is thy request?” It appeared to be from the Lord, that the teacher did not come—some other persons were this evening awakened to a consideration of their ways, and when they were dismissed, it was delightful to observe, that they went away with a beauteous decorum, and solemn silence. It seemed as if every heart had received a portion of something, the nature of which was yet to be opened up. It was natural, and agreeable to duty, to keep these things in the heart, and ponder them well, to see if the Lord was in very deed in these things. Nearly the whole who were present on that occasion, are now members of the church. On Thursday of this week, Mr. Kollock and Mr. Thomson, in their circuit, visited my church, for the first time—and they appeared to be sent in the fullness of the blessing of the Lord:—The people generally attended, and seemed as if they were in expectation, that something of an interesting nature would take place. It had since been seen, that impressions before made were much deepened, and that various persons were newly awakened from their long sleep. The Lord had now

prepared his means, for producing a great and sudden sensibility, on the subject of the soul and eternity. A few persons from Mendham, who were seriously seeking for eternal life, continued during Thursday night in this vicinity, and next morning came to converse with the ministers at my house. Whoever beheld them, seemed to look upon them, as persons that had received a call, to prepare to meet their God. I was asked, whether I would be willing to meet with a few that evening? Being much indisposed, I declined.—Notice was, notwithstanding, circulated of a meeting, and when I attended, judge of my joy and wonder, when I saw a large assembly in solemn and weeping silence. Wherever I turned my eyes, I observed anxiety and tears. The difficulty of beginning an address was only equalled by the difficulty of leaving off. A perfect silence was diffused throughout, till we were separating, when two young persons, who were particular for their intimacy, met each other from different parts of the house, and on seeing their mutual situation, fell into each others arms, with a momentary emotion, which was widely felt. It was now evident to all, that there was much room for hope and prayer. We then appointed to meet on Friday of the next week, at the Academy. You may suppose, dear sir, that the Sabbath was now looked for with very great desire.—It was one of the most stormy days I ever saw. Notwithstanding this, we had a considerable assembly, who resembled Mr. Bunyan's pilgrim, when, putting his fingers in his ears, he began to run and cry life!—life!—eternal life! I took my first tour this week

(2d week of February) and left my people till Friday morning: I had a most pleasant tour, though it was the severest weather we had that winter. In my absence, the almost instantaneous death of one of my most respectable people, greatly increased the number and depth of the conviction. A large assembly collected, and the very silence that reigned (for there was no service) seemed to be blessed by God, to the furtherance of the work. The evening of the day on which I returned, was our first regular appointment for prayer meeting. The report had by this time, spread through the congregation, that there was a serious awakening in the neighbourhood of the church. So that, notwithstanding the darkness of the night, and badness of the travelling, there was a large assembly. A discourse was preached without any thing discoverable, except a very fixed attention. When the general round of exercises was gone through, it was made known, that any who wished, might depart—but that a few words would be addressed to those, who were supposed to be awakened by the Holy Spirit; no one departed: An address was then made, as above mentioned, when, on their being summoned to come out and be separate, there was, in the twinkling of an eye, a suppressed cry* from, it is supposed, not less than fifty persons. I leave you, my dear friend, to conceive the sensations that would be awakened by an event like this, in the bosom of a Minister. Ab-

* That I may be understood, I mean by *suppressed cry*, a cry resembling that which children make, when they are forbidden to weep aloud.

forbed and lost in wonder, joy and praise, we forgot the time, and passed the hour prescribed generally by prudence. The first thought of time, presented us with the hour of eleven. This is a solitary instance. And, whether, under these circumstances, it can be excused or not, I cannot tell. But of this I am sure, it was a night to be remembered among a thousand. It might be counted upon as certain, that in the space of twelve days, from the first Sabbath till now, an hundred persons were brought under deep convictions. On the next Sabbath, each neighborhood was desired to institute societies for prayer, and four or five of them were attended, each week, with preaching. On the third week of February, there was nothing remarkable, till Friday evening in a distant part of the Congregation, when there was weeping and lamentation, which threatened disorder. It was occasioned by the accidental collection of a number of those most affected into one corner of the house. By advice, it was immediately reduced to silence. This was a time of amazement to many hard and wicked persons, and it seemed as if they would all bow with one accord. But while men slept an enemy was permitted to sow tares, and for a season the heavenly plant was choked. In other distant parts of the congregation there did not promise any thing of a harvest for some time. It might have been three months, which would bring us to the month of May before the work appeared in a powerful and general manner in the southern part of the congregation. It then appeared to seize on nearly every heart. About this time I saw the

only bodily affection, as it has been called, that ever came under my observation. It was a case of a young woman who might be classed with the Galilees in religion. During the greater part of the discourse, she appeared utterly unconcerned.—Toward the close, her countenance changed and fell visibly, and in a moment: She began to pant like one who was asthmatic, shed, for a minute, a flood of tears, and when these were stayed, the panting increased, and seemed to approach to suffocation.—Her hands were cold and considerably convulsed.—Without the least confusion, she was removed to the next room, where she was nearly alone, and where she could hear, for she was unwilling to be taken from the house. I have been the more particular on this point, because it is probable some misrepresentations have been made. About midsummer a similar solemnity began to appear in the western part of the congregation. And also in that part where it was mentioned the tares were sown, there was a precious and most acceptable reviving. In every quarter there had now been a truly heavenly shower, but on the eastern part. There were droppings, indeed as from the skirts of a majestic cloud, which lighted on some of the most darkened, and malignant and, as we hope, enlightened & sweetened their souls. When we were almost in despair of this portion of our dear people, about the month of November, we were animated with a delightful prospect. The evening was dark and rainy so that not more than perhaps forty attended. But so far as information has been obtained, there was scarcely an individual who was not greatly affected either with

joy or anxiety. Some very hardened persons wept bitterly, and some of extreme youth were very tenderly moved. The renewal of something like this, was very refreshing in the same place since that time, from which we are looking with humble hope for a little harvest.

It had often seemed to me almost the sole cause of a ministers grief, that men could not be made to awake. But now when there were so many excited to a serious consideration, there was an anxiety called up, which had been unknown before. While the immortal soul stood hesitating between the choice of life and death, and there was a jeopardy every hour, lest some temptation should prevail, or death close all opportunity, you may well suppose, they were viewed with an earnest eye. Every human excitement was put before the heart. But, experience gave evidence, that conversion was no less a work of God than conviction. There were none who were made to taste very speedily of the joy of their Lord. In about five or six weeks, however, there were some who began to hope, that the Lord had graciously revealed himself to them. These first, it was observed, generally soon lost their hope, and were plunged more deeply than ever, in sorrow, and overwhelmed, more than before, with a sense of their sin and helplessness. Those, who continued longer before obtaining faith and hope in the mercy of God, appeared more steady from the beginning of their joy.— Yet the former did, for the most, recover again, and stand more firmly than at first. In the course of three months, we received into the communion of the church, with much

joy and anxiety, sixty four persons. Others continued a longer or a shorter period, as it pleased *him*, who is the *truth* and the *life*. It was happy, beyond expression, in constantly mingling with the people, to find, here and there, springing up, new plants of our heavenly Father's planting. In the month of October, the church again opened her gladdened bosom, and admitted fifty six more to its communion.

In the manner of conviction, there was but little variety. The general grief was sin, and particularly the sin of forgetting God. The Lord brought to their remembrance his own expostulation, "If I be a father where is my fear." Grief, for sin, seemed to augment, from finding that, whereas their heart had loved idols, it was, by nature, still inclined to follow them. They were thus, we hope, taught that conversion was necessary, and that it must come from God. The Lord was very gracious in this, that though conviction was very sharp with many, yet I have met with no instance that bordered on despair. When the Lord had said, "thou hast destroyed thyself," he seemed to add, "but in me is thy help found." As the manner of conviction bore a strong affinity in nearly all, so their manner of expressing their hope of acceptance with God, had a very great uniformity. There were a very few, who, in the hour of deliverance, felt such a remarkable animation of the pleasing and dutiful dispositions of heart, that they seemed to rest much on the change of feeling, and less on the *great attonement*. And there was one, and only one instance, of a person, whose experience was of the visionary kind. While, by far the

greater part were humbled, through a sense of their fallen and helpless state, and looked to him, who was lifted up to take away the sins of the world. It was truly refreshing, and even establishing, to the soul that had gone that way to hear, with what clearness, some who had been utterly ignorant of religion, now spoke of *Christ* as the wisdom and power of God, to every one that believeth. I have seen no instance of raptures. But I have seen a great many solid comforts which were truly delightful to behold. It has been mentioned that an hundred and twenty had been added to the communion of the Church. About forty others have expressed a belief, that they are builded upon the rock of ages. In addition to these, a large number were awakened to a serious concern. In all probability not less than three hundred persons of all ages, sexes and descriptions. We had reason to hope, that an aged man, after he had lived considerably above eighty years, was received into the divine favor, in the last month of his life. And what perhaps, may be mentioned properly, in this place, there were awakened on one Sabbath, and these near the close of the work, four persons, each nearly seventy years of age. The seriousness among little children, was also very extensive, and though no encouragement whatever was given in this way, it was admirable, to hear them telling of the light of the scriptures, and of their fear to go to sleep, lest they should lose their delightful views of heavenly things. The number of new convictions are now, but very few, the number of those, who have expressed themselves as awakened,

and are, from time, to time led to the waters of healing, is comfortably great; and blessed be God, as yet, we have had nothing to lament, as to the unbecoming walk of any. We have now a goodly flock; but already, it begins to scatter. Nearly a dozen have removed, one or two died, so that in a few years, we shall stand in the same need, as ever of a sower and a harvest. O! that the Lord may look on us, and keep us as the apple of his eye, and be ever ready to renew the happy year, which his free and rich grace has now given to us. Thus sir, I have traced a few of those events which have taken place among us, and if the relation shall give any satisfaction to you it will be a pleasure to one who is happy to say, how respectfully and affectionately he is

Yours,

ROBERT FINLEY.

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From the CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.

Remarks on a passage from the Spectator.

ON looking the other day into the first volume of the Spectator, I met with the following passage —“A little before our club-time, last night, we were walking together in Somerset Garden, where Will Honeycomb had picked up a small pebble of so odd a make that he said he would present it to a friend of his, an eminent virtuoso. After we had walked some time, I made a full stop, with my face towards the west, which Will knowing to be my usual method of asking what's o'clock in an afternoon, immediately pulled out his watch, and told me we had seven minutes good. We took a turn or two more, when, to my great sur-

prise, I saw him squir away h watch a considerable way into the Thames, and with great sedateness in his looks, put up the pebble he had before found in his fob."

After indulging a hearty laugh at the ludicrous circumstance with which the foregoing narrative concludes, I began to consider seriously, whether the mistake of this absent man might not be paralleled by what is done every day by a great part of mankind.—A little reflection supplied me with many instances of an affirmative solution of my query; to every christian observer of the transactions of the world they will readily occur.

When, for instance, men confine all their care to their bodies, and abandon their souls to destruction—when they grasp, with trembling eagerness, the treasures of this world, but carelessly suffer those of a better to slip for ever from their hands—when they toil to obtain the applause of mortals, like themselves, but disdainfully reject that "honor which cometh from God"—when they impatiently pursue the gratifications of sensual luxury, but forego all the solid and lasting pleasures of religion—when, in short we hold fast the trifles of time, but prodigally relinquish the inestimable blessings of eternity—what do they but emulate, or rather surpass the folly, without possessing the excuse of him who, while he pocketed a pebble, threw his watch away!

Report of the Lexington Missionary Society.

ON the 8th of November 1804, *The Lexington Missionary Society* had its second annual
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meeting at New-Providence. As the members of this Society are now considerably numerous, and dispersed throughout the country in different directions; it becomes necessary, in compliance with our constitution, to lay some account of our proceedings before the public.

It will be recollected, that the existence of this Society commenced with the beginning of the present year, and as the managers felt themselves obliged to contribute a reasonable proportion out of their funds, in behalf of the Presbytery of Lexington, to support the Missionaries employed by the Synod of Virginia, they did not for some time after their first constitution, deem it expedient to employ any missionaries of their own. But, at a meeting called by the President, in May last, the state of their funds appeared so promising as to induce the managers to employ the Rev. BENJAMIN ERWIN to itinerate in our vacancies, and principally within the bounds of Rockingham and Augusta counties, and on the waters of Greenbrier.

At the present meeting, Mr. Erwin reported, that he had spent five months, agreeably to his directions, in the service of the Society; during which time, he had preached upwards of fifty sermons, besides attending a great number of societies—that in different vacancies he had assisted nine times in the administration of the Lord's Supper—had received one hundred new members to the communion of the Presbyterian Church, and baptized about fifty infants. In addition to these circumstances, which were considered as very encouraging, Mr. Erwin stated in his report, that wherever he had itinerated, the people had

discovered more than common attention to the gospel; that the call for missionary labors was great, and apparently increasing; and the prospect of usefulness flattering. It is, perhaps, proper to state, that of all the vacancies visited by our missionary, the head of Greenbrier, and the little levels, were the places apparently most favored by the effusions of the divine spirit. In those places an extraordinary revival of religion had commenced, and was in progress when Mr. Erwin first arrived. But as the people were almost entirely destitute of divine instruction, it is impossible to say what might have been the consequence, had not the public and regular means of grace been so seasonably afforded. In the above place Mr. Erwin admitted almost the whole of the new communicants mentioned in this statement.

Upon the whole, when the managers review the operations of the past year, they cannot but recognize the hand of a gracious Providence in prospering the attempts of our infant Society. When the projection of this institution was first suggested, the plan appeared to many of its friends too bold and impracticable to afford much prospect of success. The friends of religion were dispersed over an extensive region, and it seemed next to impossible to unite them in any joint and vigorous efforts for missionary purposes. But when the scheme was laid before the people it became evident that divine Providence had already prepared the way for the execution of our measures. The missionary spirit had spread through our churches, and the most unexpected liberality was discovered in almost every quar-

ter where any experiments could be made; and already have we been able to send 'the sincere milk of the word,' to those whose Sabbaths were silent, who were wandering like sheep without a shepherd, and had none to break the *bread of life* amongst them. These things we consider as a token for good, from the great Head of the Church, and a strong ground of encouragement, to persevere in contributing our mite to the promotion of that common cause, which of late, has so universally interested the household of faith in every part of the world. It is surely no common consolation, to reflect, that we are only a small part of that great system of attack, which is now carrying on against the kingdom of darkness—and that thousands, in different parts of the world, are engaged at the same time in spreading the knowledge of a Saviour's name.

Let it also be recollected, that many extensive regions of our country are yet in darkness, and must remain in darkness, unless our exertions are continued—many of our christian brethren are raising families in the wilderness, where, from local circumstances, the stated means of grace cannot be procured. These are ready by their prayers and contributions, to aid our Society in carrying the gospel to hundreds who are now perishing for lack of knowledge; so that those already embarked in this undertaking are certain of many auxiliaries, and will, therefore, not find it necessary to impose upon themselves any intolerable burthen, for carrying their measures into execution. These things, we have thought proper to state to our absent brethren, that they may not be dis-

couraged. Indeed the cause and the work are God's ; and God seems to have opened to us an effectual door for sending the preaching of the everlasting gospel to many of our fellow creatures : Already he seems to have owned and blessed our instrumentality, and made us the humble means of bringing a number of precious souls to the knowledge of *eternal life*. Let us then, in dependance on *almighty grace*, persevere in this laudable work. "Honor the Lord with thy substance," in confidence, that whatever is given with a christian spirit, is only so much lent to *him*, who has "the fullness of the earth, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." We also hope that our christian brethren will be mindful of our missionaries at the throne of grace. The seed of the word must be watered by the prayers of the faithful, otherwise, we have reason to fear, it will become unfruitful. Let us then persevere in the use of all lawful means to publish the gospel of our God and Saviour. This is the way to do good to ourselves as well as to others. The present is a day of uncommon conflict between the kingdoms of light and of darkness—it seems needful, for our own safety, that we fly to the standard of our *almighty leader* : There, and there only we shall rest under the shadow of his wings, who is able to keep his people in peace.

By order of the Society,
G. A. BAXTER,
Secretary.

From the Lon. Evan. Magazine,

Mr. Mason's Farewell.

The Visit of the Rev. Mr. Mason,
of New York, to this Country,

having interested many, by his nervous and animated style of preaching ; the following Extract from the Conclusions of his Farewell-Discourse, at White-row Meeting, may be acceptable to many of his Friends ; and the Insertion will oblige your constant Reader,
N. N.

P. S. The Discourse was founded on 2 Pet. i. 11. After considering the Happiness of the Future State under the Image of a Kingdom, the Preacher remarks,—

EVERY believer in Jesus shall be in his kingdom ; but there is a great difference in their manner of entrance. In attending to the injunctions of inspiration, we find the Apostle saying so ; *an entrance shall be administered abundantly* ; by which he manifestly insinuates, that some Christians pass into the kingdom of their Lord and Saviour under circumstances of greater triumph and glory than other Christians do ; and O ! how often has this been exemplified in the experience of believers.

One looses his anchor from this earth, and goes into eternity a gallant vessel, with every sail set to the favouring breeze, and rushes into the harbour of eternal peace, amidst the plaudits of redeemed men and of waiting angels.

Another,—the frail bark is tossed by the billows, almost wrecked, so weak, it is scarcely able to reach the port ; but blessed be God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, it reaches it safe at last. The latter has an entrance, but the former an abundant entrance, and if there is aught, my brethren, which can be interesting to us in this world, ref-

precious moment of our departure from it, it is that we may leave it under that full sail of bliss which will bring Heaven into our hearts before we get into Heaven, and enable us to leave behind us our Ebenezer, our stone of help, and inscribe it with our hand, while death calls our vigour,—“Hitherto hath the Lord helped me.”

You have heard of the death of statesmen and of warriors; you have heard of generals perishing at the head of armies while boldly approaching the cannon's mouth; they have received the deathful ball; the historian's page has celebrated their praise, poets have sung their valour, monuments have perpetuated their names; but take me to the side of the bed of a Christian, departing under the assured hope of everlasting life in the Lord Jesus.—You have heard of men dying in seeming perfect composure while enemies to the gospel: “Died Abner as a fool dieth?” They die stupidly, insensibly, because they know not what is before them; but did you ever hear of an infidel triumphing in death? Did you ever hear of a man rejecting the gospel, who when laid upon the bed of a lingering death, with all complacency of heart, welcomed the summons to an eternal world, and that with a soul full of hope, full of immortality? The case is not to be found, by brethren; nor are we the least in danger of having the challenge accepted to our shame, when we throw the guntlet to all the tribes of infidelity, and ask them to produce the instance. But, from the bed of sorrow, from the abode of wretchedness, has the spirit of a believer in Jesus sprung into life everlasting, and had an en-

trance ministered unto it abundantly into its Lord and Saviour's everlasting kingdom; that spirit was in his presence and bosom before the breath which testified his love was well gone, or the lips through which it issued were cold.

But what is the connexion under which such an entrance into their Master's kingdom may be expected by believers!

The Apostle states it: “Give all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity;” it is in the cultivation of every precious grace that we must be exercised: believers who neglect this, rob themselves: though real believers in Jesus, they lose much happiness, they lose their light; and it is unpleasant going even into Heaven in the dark. Glory will be the surprisal of the soul of the careless tottering Christian, though doubtless he shall behold the Lord in peace. But terrible indeed is the ordeal of plunging into eternity, knowing what eternity is, and not knowing where we shall land! If we would be established Christians, we should be heart Christians; if we would have great glory, we should aim at greatly glorifying Christ here; we should be imitators of his character, be followers of him, showing forth the virtue of him who hath called us; for if these things be in us, we shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

My brethren, how little do these prospects render earthly things!

what is it to have a few acres of land here? thou hast a palace yonder. What is it, if thou farest sumptuously every day, and art gorgeously clothed, in comparison with such prospects? We shall replace the acres of land, and that with a boundless possession; we shall replace its palaces with a heavenly temple, its sumptuous entertainments with rivers of joy, and its gorgeous apparel with robes of righteousness! Who can compare prospects with the believers? I know that the heart of the worldling often trembles when they hear of a believer's prospects; they may smile; but it is the smile which puts a mock upon an agonizing heart. What hast thou better? Have we such prospects through the Lord Jesus Christ, how safely may we give the challenge then to all the tribes of unbelief! Let them call us fools and fanatics, these names do not fix the thing; I am not a fool because my neighbour calls me so, nor shall I lose my Heaven because he mocks me: names are but wind.

But there are men who set up for wise men, that have discovered the imposture; they have found out the cheat; they wish to unhackle you; they would release you from your thralldom: what! from the thralldom of a hope of the everlasting kingdom? Do you wish to be released from such thralldom? God have mercy on thee if thou dost! Have they aught to give in compromise? Can they tell us what awaits us beyond the grave? No; if they think at all, it is darkness, uncertainty, and dread conjecture! The laugh of a fool is a miserable exchange for an eternal hope. Why, cruel philosopher, would you take

away the joy of my heart? Why would you remit me to the melancholy thought of no paternal providence, no redeeming love? Enjoy your guilt alone, breathe out your complaints to the woods and to the rocks; curse not me with your discoveries, nor kill me with your truths. Oh comfortless Heavens! oh melancholy earth! oh gloomy world! oh wretched Nature! without the prospect of an entrance into the Masters kingdom. How loud the winds howl! how loud the waves roar! how cruel the storm! tossed hither and thither by the tempest, directed by no pilot, bound for no port, but where Lethe flows, where the black river of Oblivion rolls! Oh no, no;—not upon such terms; keep your discoveries, we will; not give up our hope of an entrance into the kingdom, and we will press closer to our hearts the precious volume which reveals it to us; this is the anchor of our hearts.

And if we have such a prospect, how tender ought our union to each other to be! Are we fellow-heirs of the kingdom, and can we but love each other? Time, place, and circumstance, separate our intercourse; but they break not the attachment which terminates in the kingdom. It is but a little while that we can see each other upon this globe, but we shall meet *yonder*: there is no change, there is no interruption, there we shall not feel the pang of having found Christian acquaintance only as it were, to know the bitterness of the breach of the tie, which united us. Blessed be God, the kingdom is there: and there may you, and there may he who now, in all probability, for the last time in this world addresses you, meet; when the myl-

series of God shall be finished, and the great Archangel shall lift up his hands, and swear by Him who liveth for ever and ever, that there shall be time no longer. Amen.

Anecdote of the Rev. Mr. Thoroughgood.

A GENTLEMAN conversing with him in his illness, concerning the influence of divine truth on his own mind; replied, "I have made the investigation of truth the grand business of my life, and am fully persuaded of the truth of the gospel.—I know that I deserve destruction as a sinner, but rely with confidence on the divine mercy, as displayed through Christ Jesus. My heart is full with what I wish to say to my people, should I ever again address them." Soon after, he added, with great emphasis, "I am as happy as a man can be." On its being said, "That nothing but the truths of which he had been speaking, could support a person in such a situation," he answered, "Ah! Sir, nothing but these things ought to satisfy a person before he comes to this situation."

Practical Criticism.

A Plain country man, who was effectually called by Divine grace (under a sermon on Zech. iii. 2. "Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?") was, some time afterwards, accosted by a quondam companion of his drunken fits, and strongly solicited to accompany him to the ale-house: But the good man steadfastly resisted all his arguments, saying, "I am a brand plucked out of the fire." His old companion not understanding this, he explained it thus.—"Look ye," said he, "there is a great difference between a brand

and a green stick; if a spark flies upon a brand that has been partly burnt, it will soon catch fire again; but it is not so with a green stick.—I tell you, I am that brand plucked out of the fire, and I dare not venture into the way of temptation, for fear of being set on fire again."—Was not this good practical divinity?

A certain lady once asked a minister, whether a person might not pay attention to dress & the fashions, without being proud? "Madam," replied the minister, "Whenever you see the tail of the fox out of the hole, you may be sure the fox is there." Decency of dress, in some proportion to our circumstances, is highly becoming; but too much attention to it, or time wasted on it, betrays a carnal heart. The ornaments of the mind and the dress of the soul ought to be our principal concern.

Walking in the country (says the Rev. Mr. Jay) I went into a barn, where I found a thresher at his work. I addressed him in the words of Solomon—My friend, "in all labour there is profit." Leaning upon his flail, and with much energy, he answered—"No Sir; that is the truth, but there is one exception to it—: I have long laboured in the service of Sin, but I got no profit by my labour."—"Then you know somewhat of the Apostle's meaning, when he asked, 'What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?'"—"Thank God," said he, "I do; and also know that now being freed from sin, and having become the servant of righteousness, I have my fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

ORIGINAL.

WE trace the globe, and hope
to find

Substantial joys to fill the mind,
And set our hearts at ease ;
We exercise our strongest powers,
In plans and schemes, till midnight
hours,
For things which soon displease.

Each pleasure, when in prospect
view'd,

Delights us more than present good,
So fond are we of change !

And all the arts which we employ,
Are but to seek, not to enjoy,

Each object, while 'tis strange ;

We fashion, paint and then admire
Those joys, to which we would as-
pire,

To their defects we're blind,
Each real good, a fancy seems,
While we are led by idle dreams,
Which but delude the mind.

'Tis thus we're led, 'tis thus we move
Till heav'nly influence, from above,

Direct our choice aright,
To things substantial as the soul ;
To real joys, that ever roll

In worlds beyond our sight.

—:o:—

TIME drives along with rapid flight ;
How swiftly glides the rolling year ;

We grasp its pleasures with delight,
But Whilst we grasp they disappear :
We march along with heedless care,
Unmindful of the great concern ;
What stupid things we mortals are,
Can nothing make us mortals learn ?

The flower that deck'd the Summer's
green,

The grass that crown'd the verdent
lawn,

Each, in their comely form, I've seen,
And now their dead, forgot, and gone ;

The rose, before the blushing dawn,
And pink appear'd in gayest red,
But e'er the nightly shades come on,
They both were number'd with the
dead.

The lordly oak, the forest's pride,

The pine, that waves his tops on high ;
By Times relentless hand destroy'd—
Presages all must shortly die.

Where e'er I turn my gazing eye,
All nature sounds this doleful strain,
As with a voice aloud they cry,
Dust shall return to dust again.

Vain man, with all his pomp and show,
Robust, athletic, firm, and strong,

While youthful vigor mark'd his brow,
How blithe and gay the thoughtless
throng :

But O ! I've seen 'em, e'er 'twas long.

How was their strength and glory fled,
Now cast, the silent tombs, among
And darksome regions of the dead !

Well, since our bodies are but grass,
 Or flowers, beneath the scorching sun,
 Let's catch the moments as they pass,
 And have the *one thing needful* done.
 Tho' they with tenfold swiftness run,
 Improve the minutes as they roll—
 What's all the world to him, when won,
 That looses his *immortal soul*.

X Y Z.

—:O:—

THE DESIGNS OF PROVIDENCE UNSEARCHABLE.

GREAT is the Lord, let men proclaim!
 Exalted seraphs do the same,
 They see thy power in worlds of light
 Adore and wonder at the sight.
 But who, thy ways can understand,
 Or scan the wonders of thy hand!
 Beyond our sight, are all thy ways,
 Thou plant'st thy footsteps in the seas.
 Yet man, by wisdom, fain would know
 All that thou dost on earth below:
 Why was it thus, and what the end,
 In vain he strives to comprehend.
 But thou great God, who reign'st above,
 And deal'st in vengeance, and in love;
 Art bound to give account to none,
 Nor men, nor seraphs round thy throne.
 May this be then my highest aim
 To know myself, and love thy name,
 Obey thy will, adore thy hand
 In things I cannot understand.

C.

SELECTED,
 From the *Lon. Evangelical Mag.*

THE SEASONS.

With a blooming hopes and budding joys
 The Spring like cheerful youth appears,
 Yet oft some sudden blight destroys
 The promise fair of future years.
 With fervid rays and mellowing pow'r
 Shine's Summer's manhood strong and
 gay;
 Yet oft will the tempestuous hour
 Its strength and glory sweep away.
 From shorten'd days and tears of dew,
 The fruits and leaves in Autumn fly;
 So Age bemoans his days are few,
 And feels his gifts before him die.

Then Winter comes with frost and snow,
 O'er earth an icy tomb to spread;
 So Age at last, entomb'd below,
 Shall moulder with the silent dead.

Yet soon shall Spring, with genial breath
 New life and joy to Nature bring:
 So saints shall burst the clod of Death,
 And blossom in Eternal Spring.

ALIQUIS.

—:O:—

In sleep's serene oblivion laid,
 I safely pass'd the silent night;
 Again I see the breaking shade,
 And drink again the morning light.
 New-born, I bless my waking hour;
 Once more, with awe, rejoice to be!
 My conscious soul resumes its pow'r,
 And springs, my gracious God to thee!
 Oh guide me through the various maze
 My doubtful feet are doom'd to tread;
 And spread thy shield's protecting blaze,
 When dangers press around my head.
 A deeper shade will soon impend,
 A deeper sleep my eyes oppress,
 Yet shall thy guardian care defend;
 Thy goodness still shall deign to bless.
 That deeper shade shall fade away,
 That deeper sleep shall leave my eyes;
 Thy light shall give eternal day,
 Thy love, the rapture of the skies.