

4721  
ADDRESS

TO THE

P U B L I C,

CONCERNING

P O L I T I C A L O P I N I O N S,

AND

P L A N S L A T E L Y A D O P T E D

TO

P R O M O T E R E L I G I O N

IN

S C O T L A N D, K

&c. &c.

---

BY ROBERT HALDANE.

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We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for, as concerning  
this Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

ACTS xxviii. 24.

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ERRATA.

Page 4. line 4. *for was read were*  
113. 11. *for takes read take*



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**T**HE gross misrepresentations of my conduct and views, and the unfounded reports to my prejudice, which have been for years past unremittingly circulated, compel me, however reluctant, publicly to vindicate my character and principles. Were I alone concerned in these misrepresentations, I should continue to maintain that silence which I have hitherto observed, and either leave the refutation of groundless calumny and unmerited reproach to others, or to the gradual operation of the peaceable principles which I entertain, and to the irreproachable conduct, as far as it regards the public, which I pursue. But although I have been particularly aimed at, many besides are implicated in the same charges; and, above all, the cause of Christianity is concerned, while those who profess to be Christians are accused. It is not on the ground of enthusiasm alone, or of extravagant speculative notions, that I and my friends are attacked, but on account of opinions which it is confidently asserted we hold, subversive of

every thing valuable to society, leading to confusion and anarchy ; and, although propagated under the mask of religion, yet tending to promote, if not absolutely connected with sedition, treason, and rebellion.

Those who have the slightest acquaintance with the predictions and warnings of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, and with the history of his church in succeeding ages, will not be much surpris'd at the repetition of such charges. There are many, however, who have not much considered these matters, and we need not wonder if such should be alarmed at the reports they so incessantly hear of intentions and measures to sap the foundation of the Established Church, and afterwards to overturn the State. If these indeed were actually the intentions of the persons accused, the total unfitness of the instruments employed for carrying into execution operations of such magnitude and extent, might rather excite ridicule than create alarm ; were it not for the peculiar complexion of the times, and the awful and singular events which daily occur. Alarming as these in reality are, an undue advantage is taken of them ; and, by means of the most cruel misrepresentations and positive falsehoods, the public mind is misled, and persons are represented as artful and dangerous, whose conduct is the most open and undisguis'd, and the furthest removed from oppo-

sition or hostility to the good order of civil society and the government of the country.

Among those individuals who are thus reproached, as it is notoriously the fact, it can be no vanity in me to say, that I stand among the foremost. A number of circumstances have concurred to occasion this, and these, it must be confessed, have been very carefully improved; while all the opinions I ever held that could be mentioned to my prejudice have been artfully mistated, or shockingly exaggerated, nor has the profession of any change of views ever been admitted to be sincere.

I did hope, that a little time would have worn off unfavourable impressions respecting my political sentiments; but I have found it otherwise. To render those inexcusable, should they persevere, who can thus so lightly and basely traduce their neighbour's character, I shall give a faithful statement of my former and present sentiments, and of the progress and gradual change of my mind.

Until the commencement of the French Revolution, I had never particularly turned my attention to political discussion. I had read Delolme's Treatise and Blackstone's Commentaries on the Laws of England, and was a sincere admirer of the British constitution. I had also perused, with much satisfaction, Smith's Inquiry

into the nature and causes of the wealth of nations. The first books I read upon the subject of government, after the change that took place in France, was Mr Burke's *Reflections*, Mackintosh's *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, and afterwards several of the pamphlets, by Christie, Paine, Barlow, Priestley, and others, which appeared in so great numbers about that time. Although I did not exactly agree with these writers, nor indeed with any that I happened to meet with, a scene of melioration and improvement in the affairs of mankind, seemed to open itself to my mind, which, I trusted, would speedily take place in the world; such as the universal abolition of slavery, of war, and of many other miseries that mankind were exposed to, and which appeared to me wholly to result from the false principles upon which the ancient governments had been constructed. I exulted in this prospect, from motives of benevolence, and, as far as I know, without any allowed mixture of selfishness. I rejoiced in the experiment that was making in France, of the construction of a government, at once from its foundation upon a regular plan, which Hume, in his essays, speaks of as an event so much to be desired.

In every company I delighted in discussing this favourite subject, and endeavoured to point out the vast advantages that I thought might be expected as the result. At this time I was

in habits of intimacy with some very worthy clergymen, residing at, and in the neighbourhood of Stirling. They were acquainted with a principle I did not then admit, and which, although a fundamental part of the creeds of the Established Churches both of England and Scotland, is not generally admitted; I mean, the total corruption of human nature. Reasoning from their firm persuasion of this truth, they assured me, that such effects as I expected, unquestionably so desirable in themselves, could not flow from any change of government; and that the cruelties in France, then beginning to be exercised, were the natural effect of certain circumstances, in which the people of that country stood, and would, in a greater or less degree, take place in any country in a similar situation. I widely differed from them; and continued to maintain my own opinions, ascribing all or most of the enormities of the French, *solely* to the state of degradation, to which I thought their minds had been reduced, during the ancient despotic government.

Numerous political societies, about the same time, were established in England and Scotland, but of these I expressed my decided disapprobation, and never went near a single one of them. I always thought, that by them the minds of the people were much more likely to be inflamed than informed, and that they were

calculated to produce confusion, rather than reformation. Besides, as I saw so many well-informed men, who had at first approved of the French Revolution, beginning to set themselves directly against any change in this country, I was persuaded it would ensure the most dreadful consequences, were any attempt to that purpose to be made by these societies or their leaders. The French were making the experiment upon themselves; from them I wished to see its effects. I thought these would be so good as soon to convince other nations, and make them willing to follow their example; and I hoped that this might one day take place, without either bloodshed or loss of property.

I am sure these were distinctly my sentiments, at the time my mind was most filled with political speculations; as I recollect, when the societies were set on foot, that I wrote a letter to a friend, expressing my strong disapprobation of them, containing also the other opinions I have just mentioned. This letter he shewed to several persons at the time; and, for aught I know, it may remain to this day. I there took pains fully to declare my sentiments, and kept a copy of it, and of another letter, in which I expressed my abhorrence of all secret cabals, or open violence against the government; and these, together with a speech I delivered at Stirling, in a county meeting,



which I had accurately written, I should have been inclined to have inserted here, had I not, a considerable time ago, committed them all to the flames, as treating of a subject which I have for ever renounced.

Having mentioned that speech, it may be proper to say something concerning it, as it made some noise at the time; and being the only circumstance in my public conduct that could be taken hold of, has been carefully kept in remembrance, much mistated, and made a ground of accusation against me to this very day.

A meeting of the Freeholders of the county of Stirling was called, on the 1st of July 1794, to consider the propriety of arming corps of volunteers throughout the county, at which his Grace the Duke of Montrose was in the chair. I had never before, in public, delivered my sentiments respecting any political subject; but when called upon in my place, I thought it proper to come forward and explicitly to avow them. The view I took of the question before the meeting was, that all those who disapproved of the present war must, to be consistent, oppose the measure of forming volunteer corps, as arming the men who should compose these, would only enable government to send more of the regular forces out of the kingdom, and so to persist in the war; but

would add nothing to the internal security of the country, the professed object of the measure. Besides, that as it was said many were disaffected to government; the measure itself might be dangerous, by putting arms into the hands of such; and, at any rate, that it seemed an attempt to govern the country by force, which, if the majority of the people were disaffected, would be impossible, if otherwise, unnecessary. I then delivered my opinion upon what I conceived the impolicy and injustice of the war. I afterwards described what I considered to be the true character of a person properly called a democrat, as a friend of his country, and a lover of peace, and one who cherished the sentiments of general benevolence; and contrasted it with that of persons who held opposite sentiments, who were desirous of hugging their prejudices, and of adapting the maxims of government of the seventeenth to the end of the eighteenth century, a period so much more enlightened. I next endeavoured to describe the bad effects of prejudice, and of undistinguishing resistance to every thing new, although confessedly for the better, as exemplified in the history of all nations, and particularly in the history of the Reformation. I afterwards took a view of the advantages which the world, I was confident, would derive from the principles of freedom being better understood, in

the universal peace and security that would consequently prevail ; although, I observed, an attempt to strangle these principles in their birth, by the convulsed grasp of the expiring monster despotism, had caused the most dreadful disturbances in Europe. I then declared to the freeholders, that I thought they would have been much better employed, had they been meeting to consider how all abuses, that were generally allowed to be such, might be reformed, than in following the example of those societies, who had most improperly intended to arm, but who might easily be prevented from doing mischief by that power which government already possessed. I added, that, from their situation in life, they would assuredly have much more influence with their countrymen in any other way than as armed men. And I concluded the whole with a solemn declaration of my conviction of the propriety and truth of the sentiments I had stated.

The above is an accurate account of the leading features of what I said that day ; and I am persuaded those who were present will bear witness to the faithfulness of this report. The above speech created to me many enemies, and caused much misrepresentation ; but the consequences of it, I reckon, were eventually very happy. It produced indeed a considerable coolness and distance on the part of some of the

neighbouring country gentlemen ; but this led me into the company of others, from whom I derived more advantage.

I have mentioned above, that I was frequently in company with several respectable clergymen, who lived in my neighbourhood. However much, from knowing more of the actual state of human nature, they might perceive the improbability of attaining universal peace and justice in the world, and of all human affairs being conducted upon these principles, they nevertheless thought me sincere ; and instead of withdrawing from my company, constantly attempted to lead my mind to infinitely higher concerns than those I had hitherto pursued. And here I cannot help saying, if any among them have in the least suffered in the public esteem on account of thus preserving their connection with me, they have suffered most unjustly. I know they were advised by people, calling themselves their friends, to give up going to my house ; but they considered it their duty to act otherwise, hoping, that, through their means, I should at length become partaker of like precious faith with themselves. With this view they persevered, and often sat till a late hour at night, (when perhaps they had to rise early to depart to their parochial duty,) conversing, after the period above alluded to, (viz. the meeting of freeholders of the county

of Stirling), not always on political arrangements or the government of this world, as was commonly supposed and falsely reported, although of these we also spake, but chiefly upon the concerns of our immortal souls, and the things that belonged to our everlasting peace. The effects have been profitable to them and to me, and such I trust as they and I shall mutually rejoice in, when time shall be no more. The greater number of those concerning whom I write, belong to the Established Church. Are they and I become enemies, because we follow not now in all things together, and do not yet see eye to eye? God forbid!

Conversing with these gentlemen, and reading a good deal upon the subject of religion, I was brought gradually to perceive, in some measure, the glory of the doctrines held out in scripture, and the consistency of the truth as it is in Jesus. I became anxious to be better informed, and daily gave myself more and more to the investigation of it. I happened to be at a friend's house two winters, in a situation where I had much leisure for such inquiries. I enjoyed great comfort in pursuing them, and think I can truly say, that, under a deep sense of my own ignorance in the things that related to God, and considerable perplexity, amidst opposite opinions upon the subject, I earnestly besought the Lord, that he would

enable me to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

I know it has been said, that at one period I was a Socinian. The report is not true: A Socinian clergyman, who accompanied a friend of mine upon a visit from England, was some time in the year 1794 at my house; we often discussed his sentiments, I constantly endeavouring, with the little knowledge I had upon the subject, to maintain the Trinitarian views, in which, in the language of the pastoral admonition, I had been "bred up." I used often to retail his arguments, partly to learn from others better informed than I was, what could be urged against them, and also to dispute upon the subject as a matter of speculative inquiry, without any proper impression of its awful solemnity or importance. Indeed the fact was, I neither understood the one side of the question, nor the other. But I recollect, when I came seriously to consider the matter, I was three or four days really in doubt whether it much signified what I believed concerning it; but I did not longer continue uncertain respecting its importance, although it was some time before my mind was settled, and I never did profess to be a Socinian.

After I returned home, the same subjects, chiefly, occupied my attention; and whatever good or harm the study of politics may have

done to others, they certainly led the way to much good to me.

Before the French Revolution, having nothing to rouse my mind, I lived in the country, almost wholly engrossed by country pursuits, little concerned about the general interests or happiness of mankind, but selfishly and unthankfully enjoying the blessings which God in his providence had so bountifully poured around me. As to religion, I contented myself with that general profession which is so common and so worthless, and that form of godliness which completely denies its power. I endeavoured to be decent, and what is called moral, but was ignorant of my lost state by nature, and of the deep depravity and corruption of my heart, as well as of the strictness, purity and extent of the divine law. While I spoke of a Saviour, I was little acquainted with his character, the value of his sufferings and death, the need I stood in of the atoning efficacy of his pardoning blood, or of the imputation of his perfect obedience, and meritorious righteousness; and of the sanctifying influences of the eternal Spirit, to apply his salvation to my soul. When politics began to be talked of, I was led to consider every thing anew. I eagerly caught at them as a pleasing speculation. As a fleeting phantom, they eluded my grasp; but, missing the shadow, I caught the substance; and, while obliged to abandon these

confessedly empty and unsatisfactory pursuits, I obtained, in some measure, the solid consolations of the gospel; so that I may say, as Paul, concerning the Gentiles of old, He was found of *m-* who fought him not.

Some time after this, when I trust I had been led to choose that good part which cannot be taken from any one, and to adopt the views of religion I at present hold, I first heard of the Baptist Missionary Society, and their mission in Bengal. It immediately struck me that I was spending my time in the country to little profit, while, from the command of property, which, through the goodness of God, I possessed, I might be somewhere extensively useful.

After considering the matter deliberately for about six months, I proposed to Mr Innes, then minister at Stirling, now at Dundee, (having obtained my wife's consent), to go to Bengal and to spend the remainder of our lives in endeavouring to communicate the precious truths of the gospel to the Hindoos who were living under the British government. He and I maturely weighed the business for six or eight months more, to the best of my recollection, when we invited some others to join us. Being persuaded that, without liberty from the government in India, we should not be permitted to act upon the extensive scale proposed, we applied to the India Company



for leave to go out; but leave was not granted. After doing every thing we judged lawful and proper to obtain it, we abandoned the plan, especially as new schemes of usefulness began to open at home, indicating, as we judged, the will of God that we should remain where we were. Many have blamed us for not going out quietly without asking leave; but I never could see the probability of this succeeding on the plan we had laid down, and I have since been completely confirmed in my opinion, by particular accounts received from a gentleman in India, well qualified to judge, and from what I have since observed in this country. He writes to a correspondent as follows: " I heard something lately of the intention of some of your friends to settle at Benares. I request you will discountenance this Utopian mission. They cannot obtain the sanction of the government; and without it, they can neither live, pray, nor preach in this country. But, *with* such a sanction, a dozen persons of piety and learning, purchasing territory, and establishing a college, would soon spread a light over Hindostan. Wait the Lord's time. In the mean time, what your hand finds to do (in Edinburgh), do it with all your might."

It is sincerely to be wished, that the Directors of the India Company may, ere long, see this matter in a different light, and desire to im-

part, or at least not to prohibit the blessings of Christianity from being carried to their numerous subjects in Bengal, in order to rescue them from the cruel superstition, and degrading immorality, in which they are at present sunk. Thus might Britain, which has so largely partaken of the temporal good things of the nations of India, in return, be the instrument of enriching them with spiritual blessings. For my own part, I am satisfied in having made the attempt, although it appeared by the event clearly the will of Providence that we should not go. I have not a doubt that this was ordered for good; and our being prevented, whether from unworthiness, or from whatever other cause, which we know not now, we shall know hereafter. I could not, however, help particularly observing the massacre of the Europeans that lately took place at Benares, where it is probable we should have been, had we obtained our desire. With the apostle, then, I would here thankfully exclaim, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unfathomable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

Bad motives in this business were ascribed to us: but surely such judging is very unwarrantable. There was no Christian Established Church in India, of which we might wish to lay the foundation, and no probability, from the

power and strictness of the government there, of any attempt succeeding, had we been disposed, to overturn the State.

I had not seen at that time indeed, as I have since, that it was my privilege to abstain from all political interference in this country; nor was I so deeply and practically convinced of the corruption of human nature, as I trust I have since been, so as to expect less from it under any political arrangement: Yet, as a missionary, I had determined to renounce the subject, thinking that, at least in that situation, I might, with a good conscience, give it up altogether. This was expressly settled and agreed upon, as an essential condition to be observed by all of us, who joined in the intended mission. I have it, however, in my power to shew distinctly, as I shall now do, what my views and intentions were respecting government, when I applied for leave to go to India, by giving extracts from some letters I then wrote to Mr Secretary Dundas.

In a letter, dated, London, Sept. 21. 1796, it is said. (I copy *verbatim*), "From what you have probably heard of my political opinions, it may appear strange to you that I should now wait upon you. I have no doubt, however, that report has conveyed them to you, very different from what they really are, or ever have been. Such as they were, I always

spoke them fairly and openly, which I know makes me exceedingly liable to misrepresentation. I mean not to retract any thing I have ever said, or deny what I now hold ; but if, in consequence of the following communication, which I address to you, you should be desirous, as indeed you will be entitled, to know what they are, I am happy I have it in my power completely to satisfy you, by answering any questions you may please to propose to me on the subject. And I hope, if you should think me mistaken, you will at least give me credit for sincerity, for which the possession of the property I enjoy, and the favourableness of the present arrangements to people in my situation, give a pretty strong pledge. I believe no one who knows me, will lay to my charge a desire of making myself of consequence in the country. Indeed I have always acted in a contrary manner ; and, except once, when I considered myself called upon in my place, never came forward in any public society of men, though often solicited. Nor have I ever, in the smallest degree, attempted to inflame any who, from their situation, might be supposed to have less information than myself, while, among those who were my equals or superiors in knowledge of the subject, I have constantly spoken plainly and openly all I thought.”——

“ Whatever fear may be expressed with regard

to the political sentiments of any of us, as making it dangerous to send such persons to India, will not apply here. As citizens of this country we conceive we have a right, and we esteem it a duty, to speak freely our sentiments about government. As missionaries abroad we have no such business. Our mouths on that subject will be sealed for ever, when we devote ourselves to preach only the gospel of Jesus Christ, and what it contains, in a foreign land. On all men it enjoins peaceable and quiet lives, which we shall uniformly inculcate. Indeed I trust we shall be found useful in no common degree, (should God grant us success), in promoting the peace and happiness of the country, and the stability of the government, which we believe to be the best in India. We are fully convinced, that nothing will tend to bind India so closely to England as the introduction of the gospel among the natives. (While the heathen slaves in the West Indies have united in insurrection, the converted Africans have continued peaceable and faithful; such is the natural influence of Christianity on its votaries.) And at the same time, we are confident, that nothing will provoke God to deprive England of the empire in the east, and the benefits resulting from the possession of it, so much as neglecting to send the gospel to them, and especially refusing to allow it to be sent, when you are hum-

bly intreated to grant permission. The laws of the India Company with respect to people going out are very strict; but the spirit of them is to prevent those, whom they do not authorise, from meddling with their arrangements or commerce. Our business, and our aim, is to propagate the gospel, and save the souls of the miserable heathens; and we should think ourselves culpable in the highest degree, were the rulers, or those who are intrusted with the direction of commerce, ever to have any just cause of complaint against us. Surely it can never be thought, that we have any sinister views in this business, or any other than what we hold out. To it we dedicate our all, we leave very many comforts in this country, (for I assure you it is not discontent that carries us away); and we risk, nay, almost certainly incur, bad health, and many inconveniencies, and disagreeable circumstances, that natives of the opposite side of the globe must necessarily encounter. Indeed, considering every thing, if we do not go with pure views, and from good motives, in the language of the apostle, I have no hesitation to say, “We must be of all men most miserable.”——

In another letter, dated, London, Sept. 30. 1796, it is further said, “Many thousands have gone to India to attain a decent competency or splendid affluence; we go with a direct view, not to enrich ourselves, but to save the souls of

men: And surely, Sir, it is no unreasonable request, that at least we may be permitted to go out quietly, and enjoy the protection of the government of India, while we demean ourselves well.—

“ If we do not act there as we propose, the government can at any time send us home; we shall be sufficiently in their power. I am persuaded, however, they would never hear of us, but as inculcating quietness and peace.”

It is here proper to observe, before I proceed, that the expression in the above extracts, “ I never came forward, in any public society of men, though often solicited,” entirely alludes to the county meetings of the freeholders. My principles at all times were too well known for any one to solicit my attendance in the self-created political societies. I never had any private intimation of what was going on among them. At that time I often publicly declared, had I ever known of any thing dangerous to government, even if I had lived in Turkey, where they have one of the worst governments, I should have accounted it my duty immediately to reveal it.

The only solicitation of this kind ever made to me, was a request by letter, to subscribe money for those persons who had been tried in England for sedition, and acquitted. Although acquitted, I highly disapproved their conduct, and

wrote an answer to this effect, that the person soliciting me, had wholly misunderstood what my political sentiments had always been, otherwise he would not have made such a proposal to me.

I have further to remark, that the above letters were written in London, and that the expression, "as citizens, &c. we deem it our duty," &c. did not apply to my two associates in Scotland, who, as ministers of the gospel at home, always thought it their duty to act in the same manner, in every respect, as they would have done if missionaries abroad, and as having nothing to do with politics.

From these extracts, it will clearly appear what my views at that time were ; and indeed, offering to go to Bengal was certainly declaring, in language sufficiently strong, that it was not politics I had in view, when I wished to place myself, my family, and property, entirely under the power of a government which is so strong, as the English government in India, from its relative and particular situation, necessarily must be.

While there remained any expectation of our obtaining leave to go to Bengal, I did not relinquish the object, but continued to use all proper means for that purpose. While I was thus engaged, a very unexpected and cruel attack was made upon me and my associates, in



a well known book, published by Professor Robison, although I had never been a free-mason, and knew nothing of the Illuminati. The foul calumny was afterwards retracted by him in the newspapers. He introduced this accusation, by calling me a very eminent friend and abettor of Dr Priestley; but he could not have been more unfortunate in his epithet, as there was no person to whom I stood more opposed in religious principles. Nor did I ever agree with him in his political sentiments. I believe Dr Priestley's religious system to be practical atheism, and that it will lead its unhappy votaries to eternal destruction. If a man does not acknowledge the God of the Bible, in the emphatical language of Scripture, "he has made God a liar," while the idea set up in the mind, is a mere creature of the imagination, and no God.

I shall here insert my correspondence with Professor Robison. I once did not intend to have troubled the Public with this business; but I now find it necessary for my own vindication. Mr Robison's retractation in the newspapers was very unsatisfactory, as is also the correction of his error in the later editions of his book. In these, he continues to call me "an eminent follower of Dr Priestley\*." It is true I took no notice of this part of the calumny in my correspondence with him, my letters being hastily written, and my

\* The words in P. S. 4th Ed. p. 500, are, "I was mistaken as to the expression of an eminent follower of Dr Priestley," &c. In page 485, it is said, "I grieve that he (Dr P.) has left any of his friends and abettors among us," &c.

whole attention directed to the refutation of the infamous sentiment he had said I uttered. After what had happened, he ought however to have been more cautious, and proper enquiry would have prevented this second injury. The Professor's accusation has also been again brought forward, in the most unhandsome manner, in a periodical publication, and there are misrepresentations concerning it, circulated to this very day. I shall add two letters from Mr Somerville, minister of the Established Church in Stirling, in whose house the conversation alluded to, and so much misrepresented, took place, and the Professor's correspondence with Mr Ewing, one of the gentlemen who was to have accompanied me to India.

*Copy of a Letter to Professor ROBISON.*

SIR, *Airthrey, Sept. 21. 1797.*

I have just been informed that a book, lately published by you, contains the following paragraph.

“ I grieve that he (Dr Priestley) has left any of  
 “ his friends and abettors among us. A very  
 “ eminent one said in company a few days ago,  
 “ That he would willingly wade to the knees in  
 “ blood, to overturn the Establishment of the  
 “ Kirk of Scotland.” I understand that he  
 “ proposes to go to India, and there to preach  
 “ Christianity to the natives. Let me beseech  
 “ him to recollect that among us Christianity is  
 “ still considered as the gospel of peace, and

“ that it strongly dissuades us from bathing our  
“ feet in blood.”

As it is supposed that I am the person alluded to in these sentences, I must request that you will inform me, whether it is so or not.

I am, Sir, &c. &c.

(Signed) ROBERT HALDANE.

To Professor ROBISON.

*Copy of a Letter from Professor ROBISON, dated,  
Stirling, 29th Sept. 1797.*

SIR,

I received your favour of the 21st instant, on Wednesday, in the country, where I have been confined for some time by bad health. The moment I received it I set off for this place, to give you all the satisfaction in my power; and expected to find here ——, to whom I have the pleasure of being well known. His absence has disappointed my hopes of a friend, who might be a witness of what passed between us.

I do not presume to judge, why you suppose that you are the eminent disciple of Dr Priestley alluded to in the passage which you have fairly quoted. I have not said that you are, but I cannot at present give you more satisfaction by answering your question; which I am sorry for, because it is required with politeness. Could I have found a proper friend to accom-

pany me, I should have had an interview ; but having had the honour of serving my King and country as an officer in the Royal Navy for several years, I have the stronger reasons for being cautious how I act, and must not yield to my wishes, to give you more satisfaction at present.

I can only say that if you still find yourself aggrieved, I am ready with my life to give you that satisfaction which one gentleman is entitled to require of another.

Permit me to say as an author, that inclination, as well as duty, makes me also wish to correct any mistakes that I may have fallen into. I am therefore sparing no pains to come at the truth of several things, which were repeated to me as the current talk of the country, both here and in England ; and if I find that I have misrepresented any thing, I will rectify it in the most public manner, without loss of time. But this may require a few days, because my health is very indifferent, and I cannot bear the fatigue of travelling without a little interval of rest. This may retard, but shall not prevent my discharging, to the utmost of my power, the duty that I owe to the public. I am, with due regard, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

(Signed) JOHN ROBISON.

To ROBERT HALDANE, Esq.

*Copy of the Answer to the above, dated, Airthrey,  
Sept. 30. 1797.*

SIR,

I have this moment received your letter, dated from Stirling. You say you do not presume to judge why I suppose that I am the disciple of Priestley alluded to in the passage I quoted; by this, seeming to insinuate, that it may be some other person. I certainly could have no wish to apply to myself such a charge as your book brings against one, who is desirous, you say, to go to India to teach Christianity there, were it possible for either me or my friends to suppose that you meant any other. It was upon this ground that my supposition was founded. If you, however, declare that I was not the person alluded to, that is quite sufficient; and on this supposition I am certainly entitled to require and expect, that you make this declaration (as you know that it is generally applied to me) upon every principle of candour and justice.

I now beg leave to inform you, that I never made use of such an expression as the one referred to, nor ever said any thing at all like it; that the sentiment appears to me shocking in itself, and the most remote possible from every idea I entertain on the subject. No, Sir; I would

not spill one drop of human blood, to support or destroy all the religious establishments in the world. I should consider such a way of attempting to advance the interests of Christianity, as infinitely mad, and infinitely wicked. I have over and over again declared this both in public and private; and it is well known by all my friends, and those who are intimate with me, to be my decided and fixed principle.

I observe, you say, that if you find you have misrepresented any thing, you will rectify it in the most public manner, without loss of time. This is all that I require; and I have even no objection to your taking some days to gain all the information you desire. But then it must be done in the most explicit manner. No name should be mentioned, as there is none in your book; but it should be said, after quoting the sentence, that the author finds, upon enquiry, that it was totally void of foundation, and therefore that he takes the earliest opportunity of publicly contradicting it. This, or something equivalent, must be put into the Scotch newspapers, and a note must also be written to the reviewers, lest they retail it.

I feel that a regard to myself and associates, as standing in some measure on public ground, requires this. Had I not been in this situation I should very possibly have taken no notice of it, but should have let it pass, with many other un-

founded calumnies that have been repeated against me.

I should also imagine that as soon as you are satisfied of the assertion being unfounded, your own candour and feelings will dictate the very course <sup>here</sup> pointed out.

As to your saying, that if I feel myself aggrieved, you are ready with your life to give that satisfaction which one gentleman is entitled to require of another, it appears to me a very strange way of talking in this business. If you have publicly repeated a false calumny against one who never interfered with you, ought you not to desire, as soon as possible, even without being required, to make him reparation by as publicly contradicting it? which is the only rational satisfaction that can be obtained or given in such a business. If you mean the term, however, in any other acceptation, I must beg to inform you, that whatever the maxims of the world in such a case might dictate, Christianity, which I consider as the gospel of peace, has taught me, that it would be no satisfaction, to bathe either my feet or my hands in your blood.

I have only to add, that I think an interview would be very proper, and that it need not be prevented by your not having a friend to accompany you, I shall be happy to see you here this day, if you find it convenient. I am persuaded the business might be amicably set-

bled in a few minutes. It is not in my power to call upon you, as I am confined to-day by a cold, and swelled face. I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

(Signed) ROBERT HALDANE.

P. S. I have not yet seen your book, but am happy to find that the passage is fairly quoted.

To Professor ROBISON.

The servant who was sent with the above letter, brought it back, and informed me, that Professor Robison had left Stirling the day before. Upon hearing this, I inclosed it in the following note, dated Sept. 30. afternoon.

SIR,

Immediately on receipt of your letter from Stirling, which, though dated Sept. 29. I only got this forenoon, I sent a servant with the inclosed, directed to you in Stirling, but on his return found you left it yesterday. As I have nothing, however, to add to what I have written, I send you the same letter directed to you near Glasgow, and have only to request a speedy answer. I am willing to believe that, without further trouble, when you find that you have so grossly and rashly calumniated me, you will



Immediately make reparation for it in the way proposed. I think, indeed, you owe it to your own character as well as to me. Should you accordingly agree to contradict it, in the way stated in my letter, I think you had better send me a note of what you mean to publish, before you actually do it, to prevent any further trouble, if it should not be thought satisfactory. All I want is a denial of this unfounded piece of defamation, (which, I doubt not, however, you believed true when you wrote it), as public as the assertion of it has been.

I am, Sir, your most obedient,

(Signed) ROBERT HALDANE.

To Professor ROBISON, Boghall, near Glasgow,  
care of James Arthur, Stabler, Bunn's Wynd,  
Glasgow.

Professor Robison, instead of returning to Boghall, went to Edinburgh, and therefore had not received my two letters inserted above, when he wrote what follows.

*Copy of a Letter from Professor ROBISON, dated,  
Edinburgh, Oct. 2. 1797.*

SIR,

I have not lost a moment's time, in my endeavours to perform my promise in my letter of

the 21st \*, and have been wheeled from place to place, tracing back my authorities for the passage quoted by you from my publication, till I am quite exhausted, and obliged again to take to my bed. I was in hopes of inserting the correction of my mistake in the Edinburgh papers of this day. But the particulars of an eager and desultory conversation, are so twisted and transformed in every repetition, that hardly two accounts agree with sufficient precision. I have been at half-a-dozen places, at a considerable distance from each other, in chace, and almost in sight of the person, with whose evidence I shall finish my enquiries, and it will be Thursday, before the result can appear. But, in the mean time, the following advertisement shall be inserted in the newspapers of to-morrow.

*Edinburgh, Oct. 3. 1797.*

“ Professor Robison takes the earliest opportunity in his power, of acknowledging a mistake, of which he has been guilty, in a work just published by him, entitled, *Proofs of a Conspiracy*. In the 485th page, it is said, &c.

“ This assertion having been called in question, Professor Robison immediately set about

\* This must be a mistake in the date; it surely ought to be the 29th, instead of the 21st.

investigating the truth of it. But he finds it extremely difficult to obtain the particulars of a desultory and eager conversation, in which many persons of a large company had an interesting share. He can only say at present, that he now has reason to believe, that he has stated the words very erroneously, and that the person alluded to, expressed no such sentiment on that occasion.

“ Mr Robison does not, however, consider this, as a sufficient correction of his mistake, and is at present doing every thing in his power to come at the truth; and he hopes, that in three or four days, he shall be able to state the matter accurately to the Public, and explain by what means he was so far misled, being much gratified by having it thus in his power, to efface the impression made by a report which he found almost universal.”

With respect to the final correction itself, I shall insert it in the Edinburgh Mercury, Courant, and Advertiser, and in the Sun, and other respectable papers in London. My publisher tells me, that a second edition is wanted. The exceptionable passage shall be cancelled; and if you can point me out any other reasonable method of destroying the effect of what has been done, I shall employ it with pleasure, because nothing can be more agreeable to me, than

clearing my performance of every thing that trenches on truth. I am obliged to go back to where your letter found me, whither I had gone in order to get a little health, and settle my little country affairs, before I engage in the task of the winter. I wish to remain there a fortnight, or at most three weeks. I presume that nothing can occur, that requires my presence in town before that time. But if otherwise, your letter will find me, if directed to Mr Robison of Boghall, to be forwarded to James Arthur, Stabler, Glasgow.

I am, with due regard, Sir, &c.

(Signed) JOHN ROBISON.

TO ROBERT HALDANE, Esq. of Airthrey,  
Stirling.

*Copy of the Answer to the above.*

SIR, *Airthrey, Oct. 3. 1797.*

I am just now favoured with your letter from Edinburgh, and it gives me much pleasure to observe, that although you could not have received my letter of the 30th, you have taken the very steps pointed out in it. There is only one observation I would make on what you have published, that I think it was unnecessary to have alluded to any conversation at all, and I hope that in your final correction, you will sim-

ply state, that you find the report of such a sentiment having been uttered, was entirely groundless. If you wish completely to do me justice to the Public, before whom you have, in some measure, placed me, you will have the goodness to say, that on strict enquiry, it gives you pleasure to add, that nothing can be more remote from the ideas, or abhorrent from all the principles of the person who was said to have uttered it, than the sentiment alluded to. This would give me complete satisfaction. However, from what I have heard of your character, since I wrote you last, from a friend who lives in Stirling, and what I have seen to-day by your letter, of your candour and regard for truth, I am persuaded I may leave the business to yourself, and doubt not that you will act properly.

I can only assure you again, that I never entertained the most remote idea, of ever wishing to see a drop of blood spilt on account of religion. The idea appears to me shocking. And that, whatever misstatement there may have been, I never said any thing *in the least like* what was repeated. If I had, I should have deemed it very uncandid, to have objected to your statement, because the words only were misquoted.

I am sorry that you have travelled about so quickly, as to have injured your health. I would much rather have waited some days, before the explanation had taken place. I regret

that we had not an interview on Friday, which, I am sure, would have saved you much trouble. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed) ROBERT HALDANE.

To Professor ROBISON.

*Copy of the Professor's Reply, dated, Edinburgh,  
5th Oct. 1797.*

SIR,

I received your favour of the 3d, in due course, but by miscalculating my time, I was too late with my answer for the post in the evening.

Your letter most agreeably surpris'd me, and had I known what Mr Haldane could do, I should have saved myself and him some trouble. I was given to understand that he was a person easily provoked, and apt to say very disagreeable things. I was sensible that I was the aggressor, and that your demand was most reasonable. But the very demand made me suspect that I had misrepresented things. Yet I could not answer it without a great risk, whatever might be my determination to do you justice. It was natural to expect that my refusal would draw on me expressions, which, by the tyrannical rules of society, I could not bear with

patience, and afterwards shew my face in the world, and my wife and family would have been involved in my disgrace. I acknowledge that I could not bear that thought, and no way occurred to me for preventing this, but the one I took, and *afterwards*, to meet you, or correspond with you, in sight of a friend. You will, I dare say, allow, that when I could charge you with the sentiment expressed in my book, these were natural fears. But I would gladly hope, that you did not misunderstand me, when I said that I would give you what the world calls the satisfaction of a gentleman. I can only give you my solemn assurance that I never would have added the guilt of hurting you to that of slandering you, and that I would have stood your passive mark. I beg you to think of my situation, with all the extenuating circumstances that attend it. Even if I had had the courage to bear with opprobrious names, how could I remove the distress from the wife and children of a coward in the eye of the world? I did not know you, Sir, and my ignorance was innocent, for you was much misrepresented.

You will see in the Edinburgh papers of this day a complete rectification of my mistake, as far as it respects you, and the best excuse for myself to the public that I could make. I had the fullest conviction of the truth of the injurious paragraph, and I have stated the grounds

of this conviction. The rectification of my error is more circumstantial than you have recommended, but perfectly agreeable to the best information I could obtain, and, I am happy to learn, perfectly agreeable to what you have permitted a friend to say in your name. This minuteness was necessary, I thought, for my own sake, by shewing the probability of the perversion of that unlucky conversation.

I have written to a friend in London to insert my recantation in the Sun, nearly in the terms you propose, and to send a note of it to the different reviews. I dont know them, nor their places of publication, but am convinced my friend will not omit any of note.

Were it not that I must run immediately to Bughall, from thence into Renfrewshire, and be here again before the 26th to begin my academical labours, I should most certainly have paid my respects to you at Airthrey, and begged leave to cultivate your acquaintance, or correspondence.

O my dear Sir, if you had gone through the horrid mass of corruption, which I have lately waded through, and seen the gradual progress, from the pure doctrines of Christianity, to scepticism, Socinianism, infidelity, naturalism, and atheism, in the course of the attacks on the king of Prussia's edict for conformity, I imagine you would think, that in this luxurious and dissolute



state of the world, an establishment is necessary. I grant most readily, that Christianity was almost ruined by Constantine's establishment of a church, vested with riches and power. But at present the teacher who would secure popularity, will flatter the prejudices of a luxurious and dissolute vulgar, and religion will soon be exploded by system.

Allow me to say further, that you might do more service perhaps, and have as great probability of success, if you would try to win over the infidels among ourselves. Also one of these would, by his influence, be of more value than fifty Hindoos. Let me beseech you not to give up this thought. There are yet remains of religion among us, and I imagine there are still more obstacles in your way in India. The divisions into casts is next to unmountable; for a religion which asserts the equality of all in the sight of God, will be called rebellion or sedition. But I ask your pardon. You have no doubt reflected deeply on it. I can only pray, May God be with you, and give you comfort. I am, with sincere wishes for your health and happiness,

Sir, your most obedient humble servant,

(Signed) JOHN ROBISON.

P. S. Your favour of the 30th has not yet reached me.

ROBERT HALDANE, Esq. Airthrey,  
Stirling.

*Copy of a Letter from Mr SOMERVILLE, one of  
the Ministers of Stirling, dated, Stirling, Oct. 10.  
1797.*

DEAR SIR,

I am glad to hear that you are better, and hope you will soon be quite well. When I shall have the pleasure of seeing you, and when we shall talk over the late disagreeable subject, which has given me much uneasiness, as it must have given you, I am confident only of one thing, that I have had no other hand in it, than studiously and determinately to repress the calumny from the first moment that I knew it existed.

Dr Robison's conduct, in the first instance, was rash and inexcusable. In his recantation, he has been incorrect and undecided. He should, in one sentence, have declared, that with respect to the passage in his book, he had been completely misinformed, and that truth and justice required it to be obliterated, as it now was.

You wish to know what passed betwixt him and me. Why, very little; for he was very unwell. The sentence about wading in blood was given up. It was asked if you had not said, there was nothing you would not do to overturn establishments. I answered, that I heard no such language. It was asked, if —

did not say, Now you have shewn the cloven foot, and would you bathe your feet in blood, to overturn establishments? I made the same reply, adding, that I heard nothing said about blood at all, and was sure that no such thing could be said, because you was not wont to use any such language. It was asked, if there was any arguing against establishments? I answered, that the argument was general about the utility or inutility of establishments, but nothing about overturning them that I recollected.

The professor grew so uneasy and sick, that he could sit no longer. Indeed he was very unwell, and declared that he was willing to contradict what he had said.

He has done it, in my opinion, very improperly; but as I understand he is to do his utmost to wipe off all the influence it may have on those who could most impede or thwart your views, I should think that the less is said about it so much the better. I too have been often the victim of calumny, and have uniformly found compliance with the Psalmist's direction, the best way of surmounting it, "Commit thy way to the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass: and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon day." I have, however, no title to direct, nor do I mean to prescribe, or

even to insinuate, that there should be no reprehension of what so justly deserves it. In that you are the best judge; and all I can say is, that my own consciousness acquits me of having said or done any thing in this vile business that I should not have said or done, or of having neglected any thing that became me to remove so malignant an aspersion.

I am, &c. &c.

(Signed) JAMES SOMERVILLE.

*Mr Somerville's Second Letter.*

MY DEAR SIR,                      *Stirling, Oct. 24. 1797.*

I wrote you in my last, so far as I can recollect, what was the substance of the conversation betwixt Professor Robison and me. What he published in his apology was, for the most part, new to me, and by no means the result of any conversation he ever had with me. What I stated in my last I am ready to stand to; but his account of the matter is by no means the account he got from me, get it from whom he would.

I am, my dear Sir,

affectionately your humble servant,

JAMES SOMERVILLE.

Supposing Profeffor Robifon was in Edinburgh, I transmitted my first letter to Profeffor Robifon, dated, Sept. 21. to Mr Ewing, that he might take charge of delivering it. Upon receiving the letter, Mr Ewing immediately went to the Profeffor's house with this view; but after what had happened, he thought it prudent that a friend should witness whatever conversation might take place between them. Mr Ewing was informed, that the Profeffor was at Boghall near Glasgow; he therefore inclosed my first letter in the following, which he sent by post that same day.

*Copy of a Letter from Mr EWING to Profeffor ROBISON, dated, Rose Court, Edinburgh, 23d Sept. 1797.*

SIR,

Accompanied by a friend, I this day called at your house in Buccleugh Place, with a view to deliver the inclosed letter from Mr Haldane of Airthrey, into your own hand. Upon learning that you were now in the country, I took a note of your address, that I might immediately transmit it to you by post. I have just seen the book lately published by you, from which a paragraph is extracted in the inclosed letter, and I find that paragraph followed by another, a part of which also, I shall take the liberty to transcribe.

‘ I grieve that he (Dr Priestley) has left any  
 ‘ of his friends and abettors among us. A ve-  
 ‘ ry eminent one said in a company a few days  
 ‘ ago, that “ he would willingly wade to the  
 ‘ knees in blood, to overturn the establishment  
 ‘ of the kirk of Scotland.” I understand that  
 ‘ he proposes to go to India, and there to preach  
 ‘ Christianity to the natives. Let me beseech  
 ‘ him to recollect, that among us, Christianity is  
 ‘ still considered as the gospel of peace, and that  
 ‘ it strongly dissuades us from bathing our feet  
 ‘ in blood.

‘ I understand that more apostles of this mis-  
 ‘ sion are avowed enemies of all religious esta-  
 ‘ blishments, and indeed of all establishments of  
 ‘ any kind.’

As I am one of those who propose going in a mission to India, it is supposed that I may be the person alluded to in the first paragraph, or one of those that are alluded to in the second. I must therefore request that you will inform me, whether it is so or not. I have to state, further, that the Reverend David Bogue of Gosport, and the Reverend William Innes, one of the ministers of Stirling, are associated with Mr Haldane and myself, in our intended mission. As the first of those gentlemen resides at a considerable distance, and the second is at present from home, I presume neither of them has yet met with your publication; but as they have

the same concern that I have, in obtaining an explanation of the forecited paragraphs, I conceive myself entitled, in their name, to demand it, and to ask, whether you allude to either or to both of them. I shall expect an answer by return of post, and am,

Sir, &c. &c.

(Signed) GREVILLE EWING.

To Professor ROBISON, Boghall, by Glasgow, care of James Arthur, Stabler, Bunn's Wynd, Glasgow.

*To be forwarded immediately.*

On a subject so interesting to the persons concerned, it will be allowed that the expectation of a speedy answer was reasonable. When a whole week had elapsed without hearing from the Professor, Mr Ewing began to suspect wilful delay, and as he had kept a copy of his letter, he wrote another of the same, and inclosed it in the following.

*Copy of a Letter from Mr EWING to Professor ROBISON, dated, Rose Court, Edinburgh, 2d Oct. 1797.*

SIR,

Inclosed I send you a copy of a letter, which I wrote you about eight days ago, including

one from Mr Haldane of Airthrey, and to which I have not yet got an answer. I have written again, lest by any accident, my first letter should have miscarried. This, however, is not very probable, as I got the direction from one of your own family, and put the letter into the post-office with my own hand. If my letters are not acknowledged, I have only to say, that other methods shall be used to produce an explanation.

I am, Sir, &c.

(Signed) GREVILLE EWING.

To Professor ROBISON, Boghall, by Glasgow, care of James Arthur, Stabler, Bunn's Wynd, Glasgow.

*Copy of a Letter from Professor ROBISON to Mr EWING, dated, Buccleugh Place, Oct. 3. 1797.*

SIR,

It must appear strange to you that I have so long delayed answering your letter, and although it will be somewhat tedious, I must trouble you with my reasons. As I had no regular communication with the post town, it did not come to my hand till the 26th. I was in bed, where I had lain three days fatigued with acute pain. Your formal intimation, that you had come to my house accompanied by a friend,



startled me, and it immediately struck me that I had misrepresented things, otherwise it was of no consequence what my answer should be. I instantly got up, with the intention to trace my authorities to their source, and come at the truth, and then do the duty of an honest man. My disorder makes me unable to travel on horseback, and I had no carriage, and was obliged to set out in a hay cart 12 miles. This knocked me up, and confined me to bed all next day. The day following I got to Stirling, where I hoped to get complete information, and a friend (after your prudent example) who should witness what passed between Mr Haldane and myself. I was disappointed, and learned that my friend was in Edinburgh, and also those who could complete my search after the truth. Being alone, and a stranger there, I was obliged to come off, leaving a letter to Mr Haldane, informing him of my wishes to give him every satisfaction in my power. I came hither on Saturday afternoon, and learned that the persons I wished to meet with were out of town. I was unable to follow them, being again obliged to go to bed. Yesterday, being recruited by a day's rest, I renewed my inquiries; and though I have not yet gotten the particular information I expect, I have learned enough to see that things have been greatly misrepresented to me. My duty is therefore plain, and I have this moment

sent an advertisement to the papers of to-day; and last night I sent Mr Haldane intimation of what I had done, and mean to do.

Thus, Sir, I have been as much occupied with Mr Haldane's question as I could be, and the condition of my health is such that I really could not do more.

With respect to your question, Sir, I can only say, on my word, which is all that can be given, that when I wrote the passage, "I understand that other apostles of this mission are avowed enemies of all religious establishments," I had no individual in my thoughts. I have been trying to recollect whether I could connect any remarkable expression that I have heard, with any of the names which have been repeated to me. But I cannot with any distinctness. Indeed the names were all strange to me, and indifferent; so that I paid little or no attention to them, and did not recollect to have heard Mr Innes's name mentioned. The truth is, that I first heard of the above imputation when in London in December last. I happened to associate with some gentlemen in the East India trade, and some clergymen, and one or two more, who interested themselves in these things. Nothing was more uniform than the accounts I got of the discourses, and conversation of the missionaries to India. Strong dislike of national faiths, national worships, na-

tional churches, and particularly national establishments, with emoluments and influence annexed to them ; and strong assertions, that all the corruptions of Christianity, both doctrinal and practical, had arisen from the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, as the religion of the empire. (I have this moment, ten o'clock, the unwelcome account that my advertisement is too late for to-day's paper, upwards of 200 being printed, and the press cannot be stopped ; a preparatory note however is inserted.) This flutters me greatly, for I am not at all well ; but, to go on :---On these occasions, I have heard Mr Bogue's name mentioned, and I suppose yours, but I thought it was Greville. I heard a Mr Tookes, a Mr Nelthorp, a Mr Taylor, and others ; and I heard of these gentlemen also, that they supported the peculiar views which Dr Priestley has last given of Christianity. I heard the same things in some country families in Berkshire, and much more at Birmingham. In short, it was on these accounts that I had formed my general notion of the association. When I returned to Edinburgh, I frequently spoke of what I had heard, and learned, to my surprise, that pains were taken to spread the same opinions here. You must observe that all this was brought to me, for I was unable to go abroad, and all I could do was to go in a chair every day to

College, and I dont imagine that I was twenty times on the street for more than ten months. And my information was therefore very defultory and incomplete. It is not three months since I imagined that the conversation was in England, of which I have unfortunately misrepresented a part. But it was so often repeated to me by persons of judgment and worth, and also communicated with so much seriousness, that I was fully convinced of its truth. And with respect to the general and strong disapprobation of all religious establishments, I never heard it contradicted, and the more I enquire, the more I hear of it, to this hour. This made me wonder, when you named Mr Innes, a member of our established church, although I know others of the same opinion in a more moderate degree.

When speaking of these matters, I doubt not that I have frequently expressed my belief, that this was the opinion of the members of your association; and this, you will observe, is all I have said in my book, "I understand," &c. And in thus expressing it, I never conceived that I was saying any thing unacceptable to the parties concerned, because I understood that such were their avowed sentiments. But I must repeat it, *When I wrote that sentence, I had no individual in my thoughts, and spoke of a body of men.*

I have trespassed much on your patience, but I wished to tell you the state of my mind. What use you may have for this information I can only guess at. It may be troublesome, and even distressing to me; for a man continually racked with pain is easily disturbed. I must bear it as well as I can, comforting myself with the reflection, that I meant no hurt to any person, and was warning my countrymen against what I thought hazardous to their peace and happiness. Providence has been pleased to disable me from giving any more effectual aid to my neighbours. May you, Sir, never know my trying situation, but long enjoy the precious gift of health. And, if you are to employ it in enlightening a darkened and corrupted world, with the pure light of the gospel of peace and love, may you have much comfort in the success of your labours. But, O Sir, do you not think, that you may find many here to give you *full* employment, and that the conversion of some of *them* would have a more effectual influence on the happiness of mankind, than those at so great a distance? But you have taken your ground, and may God bless your honest endeavours.

I am, Sir,

Your wellwisher in all truth,

(Signed) JOHN ROBISON.

P. S. On Thursday or Friday I shall be able to publish all I know respecting Mr Haldane's question.

To the Rev. GREVILLE EWING,  
Edinburgh.

*Copy of Mr EWING's Answer to the above, dated,  
Edinburgh, 5th Oct. 1797.*

SIR,

I confess I was very much surpris'd at your delay in answering my letter, which to me, at least, was so interesting. As I was ignorant of the cause, and also of your intention of coming so early to town, I on Monday last, transmitted you another copy of it, lest by any accident, the former should have miscarried. I am now convinced that you lost no time in endeavouring to give me the satisfaction I required, and am really sorry, that, in your ill state of health, you should have made it necessary for me to give you so much trouble.

Your letter of the third instant, which I received yesterday, has excited in me a variety of emotions. I can say with truth, that the account you give of your distress makes me tenderly sympathise with you. I can say, further, that I regret you should have brought yourself into so very aukward a situation as that in which

you now stand. Although I had not, as I once expected, the pleasure of being your pupil (having attended the natural philosophy class when Professor Stuart taught for you,) yet I have occasionally heard you lecture, much to my satisfaction, and instruction too, and I have always entertained for you that affectionate respect, which a student naturally conceives for the well established, and high literary character of a Professor.

As you seem to acknowledge that the first of the paragraphs which I quoted from your book alluded entirely to Mr Haldane, and are sensible and willing to declare, that the assertion contained in it is altogether unfounded, I shall say nothing more on that part of the subject of our correspondence. With respect to what you call my question, I feel myself bound to make a few remarks, though I really do it with reluctance, and would certainly not run the risk of adding to your pain, were I not constrained by what I reckon duty to myself, my friends, and the cause in which I am engaged.

Surely, Sir, you will allow, then, that you did wrong in publishing so serious a charge against any man, or body of men, upon information, which you yourself call "very desultory and incomplete." You have nothing to refer to, but conversations which took place, you say not with whom, nor where, and which had been re-

tailed perhaps a thousand times before they came to you ; and even for the reports brought to you, you only produce anonymous authority. You confess that you cannot connect any remarkable expression with any of the names that have been repeated to you. You declare, that you paid little or no attention to the names mentioned ; that one of our names you never before heard of, that my name you only suppose to have been mentioned. You say you heard of a Mr Tookes, a Mr Nelthorp, a Mr Taylor, and others, (none of whom I ever heard of till I read your letter), and yet you tell the world that you *understand* that so and so are the sentiments “ of more apostles” of the mission to India. It was strange you should write so rashly in any book : it was passing strange you should do it in a work which was dignified with the title of “ *Proofs*.”

But I must remark further, Sir : Supposing the information which you say you had received were all literally true, (which I by no means grant) will it justify what you have said in your book ? Recollect, Sir, your book is called “ *Proofs of a conspiracy*.” You have alluded to us in the same page, where mention is made of a Socinian, if not a deist. Nay, one of us is called a very eminent friend and abettor of his, and a man professedly willing to wade in blood, and then the rest of us are called “ *avowed enemies*



of all religious establishments." Will any person say, that such words, in such a connection, convey simply the idea, that some, or all of us, may have expressed in conversation opinions unfavourable to religious establishments? Is it not obvious, that the tendency of the whole passage is to represent us as a branch of the grand conspiracy, or at least as a set of designing and blood-thirsty villains, who have combined, and are actually endeavouring, by deceit, or by violence, or by both, to carry into effect some clandestine project, by which we shall force our opinions upon mankind? Sir, were I capable of acting a part in such an association, (I pronounce my own sentence), the sooner I were hanged so much the better. Were any of my friends capable of it, they never should be called friends by me. You seem surpris'd to hear, that one of us is a minister of the established church. I must surpris'e you still more by the information, that I also am a minister of the same church; and that I am not conscious there would be any propriety, in consequence of any opinions I hold, in my leaving my present situation.

It is really painful for me to continue my strictures, and yet my heaviest charge against you remains to be brought forward. Sir, you have not answered my question fairly. I am willing to believe that this has been owing to forgetfulness; but I deem it my duty to re-

fresh your memory. My question, Sir, was founded upon a whole sentence of which you have taken notice of only a small part. The sentence runs thus : “ I understand that more apostles of  
 “ this mission are avowed enemies of all religi-  
 “ ous establishments, *and indeed of all establish-*  
 “ *ments* of any kind.” What could you mean by this last clause? Prove this, and you will prove us villains indeed. Good men may undoubtedly differ in opinion as to the propriety of religious establishments; but that a good man should be the avowed, or the secret enemy “ of  
 “ all establishments of any kind,” is utterly impossible.

You seem to suspect that I may make use of the information you have given me, in such a way as to be troublesome, and even distressing to you. God forbid, my dear Sir, that I should willingly give distress to you, or to any human being. If I could alleviate your pain, or do any thing to comfort you in your heavy affliction, God is my witness, I would cheerfully do it. Christianity, Sir, forbids me to do any thing in revenge, or so much as to harbour an unkind thought against even my enemies, amongst whom I do by no means insinuate that you should be numbered. Had it not been that I am in a public situation, and that both my usefulness as a minister of the gospel, and my scheme as an intended missionary, might have been af-

fectcd by what you have published, I hardly think I should have taken any notice of it.

The purity of your intentions, in what you have written concerning us, I will not dispute. I say, you have been misinformed, you have been credulous, you have been rash, perhaps you have been abused by persons who delight in devising or in giving currency to malicious reports. I think you should have ascertained your authorities a little more accurately before you proceeded to publish; and that now, if you cannot establish, (as I am persuaded you cannot), you should wipe off, the foul aspersion you have cast upon us. I think this should be done in a very public and explicit manner, and I hope your own sense of justice will lead you to do so. I am disposed, therefore, to leave the particular way of doing it entirely to yourself; and unless you wish it, or make it necessary, I shall not trouble you with further correspondence.

I ought not to omit saying, that I take in good part, your expostulation upon my intention of going to India. That intention is not cherished for want of employment at home, nor for want of love to that employment, but from an idea, that the gospel, which is well known in this country, and will continue, I trust, to be preached in it by thousands, should without delay be published in every part of the world, especially in a field so favourable as that of a

country which enjoys the protection of the British government. I am much obliged by the blessing you implore upon all my honest endeavours. May your good wishes be recompensed a thousand fold into your own bosom. May our heavenly Father restore you, if it be his will, to health, and usefulness in the world; or (which is surely better,) may he sanctify your affliction, and give you those everlasting consolations which are known to us only by means of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. O think how aggravated every pang would be, if you had never heard of a Saviour, and knew nothing at all of a blessed immortality! While you flee to this Saviour as your only hope, for pardon of sin, and peace with God, think how forlorn must be the state of a sick or a dying heathen, and then, I trust, your opinion of missionary undertakings will not be so unfavourable as it seems to be at present.

I am, Sir, and ever shall be,

Your sincere wellwisher,

GREVILLE EWING.

To Professor ROBISON.

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Upon the above correspondence it is necessary to remark, there must have been some misunderstanding, about my approving of the manner in

which the retraction in the newspapers was made. It is said in Professor Robison's last letter of Oct. 5. "I am happy to learn the rectification of my error is agreeable to what you have permitted a friend to say in your name." This was, however, far from being the case. I perfectly recollect my conversation with that friend; in which I told him, that I by no means denied the opinion (which I held at that time) of the injurious nature of establishments of religion; and that, as I always spoke openly all I thought on these subjects, I was exceedingly liable to misrepresentation. In the middle of the conversation, we received the newspaper containing the apology, with which I expressed myself much dissatisfied; and, from various things that it contained, and the whole manner of it, said, it was impossible that this could be the final correction. My friend said, he supposed it was. I neither charge him, however, nor the Professor, with intentional mistatement of that conversation; a small alteration of words might easily lead to the mistake, especially as I believe they did not directly communicate with each other.

I must also remark, that the correction promised in the Professor's letter of Oct. 2. never appeared. To his last letter I made no reply, as I was dissatisfied with the explanation he gave in the newspapers, but did not see how it could be altered. This made me request

Mr Somerville of Stirling, in whose house the conversation he alluded to took place, to inform me what he had said to the Professor about it, which occasioned his first letter above inserted, and his second, upon further enquiry on my part. Those persons who, to this day, misrepresent the above business, will perhaps learn from the foregoing letters to speak more cautiously, when they are not fully informed of all the circumstances of any case, where their neighbour's reputation is concerned.

For some time after this, I did not lay aside my endeavours to get out to Bengal, and in the mean while, was busied in selling my estate, that there might be no delay on my part, if obstructions from without should be removed. I accordingly at length found a purchaser; and, with great satisfaction, left a place in the beautifying and improving of which my mind had once been much engrossed. In that transaction, I sincerely rejoice to this hour, although disappointed in getting out to India. I gave up a place and a situation, which continually presented objects calculated to excite and to gratify "the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Instead of being engaged in such poor matters, my time is now more at my command, and I find my power of applying property usefully, very considerably increased. I can truly say I

experience the accomplishment of the gracious promise, that leaving house and lands, (although in a very restricted sense), as I trust for the gospel's sake alone, and what I esteemed my duty, I have received many fold, though, as it is added, "with persecutions." The number of falsehoods propagated, since that time, to my disadvantage, are truly astonishing; sometimes against my moral character, and at other times respecting my opinions, and the secret motives of my heart. I pray God that none of these things may ever move me, or be laid to the charge of those who defame me. They serve daily as a fresh confirmation of the truth of the Scriptures, respecting the state of the world, and also of our Lord's predictions; and they are well calculated to operate as salutary checks, and as calls to much searching of heart, and humiliation before God, who is greater than our hearts; who, knowing all things, knows how much we stand in need of such admonitions.

In the year 1797, and afterwards in 1798, some of those plans respecting religion began to be pursued, which have caused so much conversation, and have been so much misrepresented. It has been said, they were the effects of a deep laid design, in which every circumstance was previously arranged. Nothing can be more false; for, on the contrary, like most things in human affairs, they arose one out of another, frequent-

ly without the agents in them perceiving the next step they were to take. I shall now communicate in order, what information I possess respecting them.

Missionary societies had, for some time, been exerting themselves to send the knowledge of the Christian religion to foreign nations; but, as no extraordinary efforts were making to spread the gospel in Scotland, or, as Professor Robison expresses it, and advises, "to win over the infidels among ourselves," many people began to object to Christians spending their zeal abroad, and doing nothing more than usual at home, while, in several places, there was a confessed deficiency of the means of grace. Christians felt the force of this objection, from whatever motive it was urged, and began to shew an unusual concern for the best interests of their countrymen, as well as for others. The first effort this occasioned, was setting up a number of Sunday Schools, which poor ignorant children were invited to attend, who had formerly been employed on the Lord's day, running in the streets, doing mischief. The persons who undertook to teach them, did it *gratis*. These schools were formed upon the model of a few that had been before established in Edinburgh and elsewhere, in which the teachers were paid for their services. Many of the most respectable of the clergy occasionally visited these, as



they have also assisted in the new ones. The good effects of these schools have appeared in many instances ; and, notwithstanding the malicious cry of sedition raised against them, and industriously propagated, although they are always conducted in the most public manner, every one who pleases having access to them, I have not heard of one single expression, bordering upon disloyalty, being fixed upon, or, as far as I know, being laid to the charge of any individual teacher of the many that are so employed.

Whoever is acquainted with the state of the large towns in Scotland, and of the villages in their neighbourhood, must know, that there are great numbers of people who never go to any place of worship, and many families in which there is not a Bible to be found. These, of course, are completely ignorant of their duty to God, and of their consequent obligations to man, and ready to neglect both. Of how great advantage must a Sunday school be to such people, who may frequently attend at first, perhaps from no higher motive than curiosity ! How much may they be benefited by hearing the catechism taught, and the Scriptures repeated, with a short, but plain and serious exhortation from the teacher, if he is capable of it, together with the singing of psalms, and prayer at meeting and dismissing.

The schools were first instituted, chiefly, if not entirely, for such children as must necessarily be neglected at home from the ignorance of their parents. But even those who are well qualified to instruct their children, and who know how backward they are to such exercises, have found the great advantage of these institutions, in which the mind is more impressed by the public meeting, as well as the attention more easily kept up. It may here be proper to say, however much I approved of these schools, and believe they are calculated to do great good, I had no concern whatever in planning, or in setting them agoing.

In the middle of summer, of the same year 1797, a journey to the North, for the purpose of preaching the gospel, was undertaken by Messrs Rate, Aikman, and my brother, Mr James Haldane, a full account of which has been already published.

In the month of December, of the same year, a meeting of some friends took place in Edinburgh, to digest a plan for spreading the gospel in Scotland, and the persons present unanimously agreed to form themselves into a Society for that purpose, under a name exactly expressing their object, resolving to call it *The Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home*. The very name of this Society has been objected to; but surely this objection can only be

made by those who are ignorant how similar it is to that of others in Scotland, which are well known, and have been long established; such as, *The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland; The Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor, &c.* The whole of the exertions of the latter, and nearly all those of the former, are made at home.

At the first meeting, an address and certain rules were proposed and unanimously agreed to, and afterwards published, in which the intentions of the Society are distinctly defined, and with these their proceedings have to this day been strictly in unison. They, some time afterwards, and before the meeting of the last General Assembly, published a full statement, containing an account of their rise and progress. Their address, the rules they prescribe to those they send out, letters of instruction to their preachers and catechists, and part of the concluding remarks, as they may not have been generally read, are inserted in the Appendix.

Whoever wishes to have more information concerning this Society, may find it in the pamphlet itself, entitled, *Account of the Proceedings of the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, from their Commencement, Dec. 28. 1797, to May 16. 1799*, where a particular account is given of the origin of the Society, of

their plan and rules, and of the labours of those they send out.

Proceeding upon the plan laid down, several pious persons, willing to devote themselves to the work, were engaged in the stated service of the Society. In selecting and receiving these, the greatest care has always been taken. Their character is most particularly enquired into, and they undergo a very strict examination as to religious knowledge. No charge of immorality has yet been brought against any of them, nor has the Society had cause to dismiss one of them from their service. This, I know, they regard, rather as a token of the goodness of God, than as a proof of their own discernment. The charge of plots and treason, in men of the character of these catechists, is too absurd to be noticed. Their peaceable conduct, their quiet and cheerful submission to the laws of their country, which form the best and most unexceptionable proof of loyalty in their situation of life, are strictly enquired into. Indeed of politics, I believe, they know nothing further than the Scripture doctrine of submission to government for conscience-sake. There is every reason to believe, that good has been done by the faithful labours of these men. It also equally remains an undisputed fact at this day, as that before stated, respecting the Sun-

day school teachers, that although their employment is of a public nature, and chiefly among strangers, not a single expression bordering upon disloyalty, that I ever heard of, has been charged against any one of them. Three persons are at present in the service of the Society, viz. two catechists and a preacher. One of the former is in the Western Islands, where means of instruction are much wanted, and most of the people are Roman Catholics. He was sent thither at the particular desire of some of the proprietors, by whom he is patronized and encouraged in his labours.

The Society also, like others instituted for that purpose, distributes a number of small tracts, with which no one, as far as I know, has ever pretended to find fault. Among several others of this kind, they have printed, and distributed *gratis*, ten thousand of the Assembly's Catechism in Gaelic. The Society has likewise occasionally paid the travelling expences of ministers of approved characters, as faithful servants of Jesus Christ, who wished to itinerate in their own neighbourhood.

I have spoken with the more confidence of what concerns this Society, as I have been present at most of its meetings from its first formation; and, although not the first projector of it, nor do I know if it originated with any indivi-

dual, I was one of those who assisted in forming the plan and rules belonging to it.

Such being the truth, what possible danger can be apprehended from this Society? It does what it can to promote serious religion in the country, which must ever strengthen the bonds of civil society. It attempts to supply deficiencies in the means of grace; and these are admitted, on all hands, to exist. For this very purpose, the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, received its charter. This Society is conducted, chiefly by the most respectable established ministers; and, large as their funds are, they acknowledge them quite unequal to supply all deficiencies, especially in parts of the country where parishes are often forty miles in length, or where they perhaps include a considerable number of large and widely scattered islands.

I shall conclude this article, by noticing a most glaring falsehood, inserted lately in the Anti-Jacobin Magazine, against the Society, with the evident intention of misleading and prejudicing the public mind. In that publication, it was confidently asserted, that the Clerical Review was employed as an engine of the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, to sap the foundation of the Church of Scotland. When the Clerical Review made its appear-

ance, the authors of it were diligently enquired after, and are known to be men altogether unconnected with the Society. Indeed, the principal mover in the business lately confessed, that the publication was ultimately intended against the Circus. This example, among many, may serve to expose the temerity and malignity of such as propagate these and the like reports, and the credulity and folly of those who are the dupes of them.

The next thing that took place among those plans which seem to have caused alarm, was the employment of the Circus as a place of worship, after it had been left by the Relief congregation, who first used it as such. A few persons, who wished to see the interests of religion more extended in Edinburgh, conversed together about forming a Tabernacle there; a thought suggested by a minister from England, when on a visit to this place, not upon my invitation, but employed in preaching in the established churches\*. The

\* It is a mistake to suppose that this institution, and the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, are the same. As a Society, the one has no connection with the other, although many individuals are members of both, any more than the latter has with the Edinburgh Missionary Society, of which many of its members are also a part. The fact is, that in Edinburgh, most of the religious or benevolent Societies, though unconnected, are composed of nearly the same people. This

general idea affixed to these houses called Tabernacles, is that of large places of worship, where as great variety as possible is kept up in the preaching, by employing different ministers, in order to excite and maintain attention to the gospel, especially in such as are living in open neglect of religion. Such are the different tabernacles in London, to which, by the way, when they were erected about fifty years ago, very great opposition was made, and great alarm excited on account of them. The cry was, as of old, that the church was in danger; and that if the tabernacles did not overturn it altogether, they would at least draw multitudes of people from it.

Through the liberty and protection, however, enjoyed under the British constitution, and which his late Majesty declared, notwithstanding the misrepresentations and solicitations of the clergy, should never be impaired, they continued unmolested. All fears on account of them have long ago subsided; the established church still remains where it was; and now people may build a tabernacle in every corner of London, if so disposed, without molestation. Indeed, it is said, they have had a contrary effect from what

is the case all over Scotland, and in every country. And this often gives the appearance of association in pursuing similar designs, when none in fact exists but the common bond of Christianity.



was predicted ; and that, although for a while at first, they drew away many from the established church, yet more were brought to attend them, who before had gone to no place of worship ; and many, after being thus accustomed regularly to hear sermons, and attend public worship, became wearied of so frequent a change of ministers, (they keep a *constant* rotation), and at length went to some stated ministry of such as they preferred. Thus, these tabernacles, it is said, (although I have not sufficient information to say whether it be so or not), have eventually assisted in filling the churches.

Those of us who met to consult about this business, were uncertain how such a plan might answer in Edinburgh. We therefore invited from England only three ministers at first. The Circus, as being a large and commodious place, was engaged for a few months, and Mr Rowland Hill, so well, and so long known in England as a successful and able preacher of the gospel, opened the place. The multitudes that heard him, and the spirit of attention that seemed to be excited, encouraged us to go on. After some time, a church was formed, of which at first we had no intention. The gospel continues to be preached in the Circus to this day in an earnest and faithful manner ; and I am sure, there is no church where peaceable and contented submission to the ruling powers is

more unequivocally and conscientiously enforced. With respect to the doctrines taught, they are essentially the same as those contained in the Confession of faith, and in the articles of the Church of England, and preached by those in the Church of Scotland denominated evangelical or gospel ministers. The form of church-government is what has been called congregational. It is exercised in the presence of the church itself, by its pastor and church officers, and with the consent of its members, independent of any other jurisdiction ; a form long known, and acted upon in England. A strict discipline also is maintained\*. The characters of all persons admitted as church-members are particularly examined, and great numbers have been rejected; either from ignorance of the gospel, or from not appearing to maintain a becoming walk and conversation. Disloyalty, as being one of these things which are contrary to the express precepts of scripture and to the spirit of Christiani-

\* Were it not that an outcry is commonly raised against every thing that appears new, surely less danger is to be apprehended in a political light, admitting there were cause for any, from unconnected congregational churches, than from those called Episcopalian or Presbyterian. In the one of these a few individuals exercise the whole authority ; in the other it is vested in sessions, which generally are small secret meetings, synods and presbyteries, greater and lesser affiliated and corresponding societies, under one parent society called a General Assembly.

ty, would be a complete disqualification, and some have been rejected on this very ground. The church-members are exhorted to watch over each other in love; if any one be overtaken in a fault, he is reprov'd, but if convicted of departing from the faith of the gospel, of deliberate immorality, or allowed and continued indulgence in sin, he is put away; and restored only upon credible proofs of repentance. Such regulations, we believe, to be according to scripture, and calculated to promote edification.

After a trial for a considerable time, I must say, I rejoice in this institution. Many advantages, I think, have attended it. At the Circus, the seats are free to all; the ministers, at present, who officiate, either stately, or occasionally as those from England in summer, receive no pay for their labours, and all sorts of people are welcome, without either expence or inconvenience. By this means, many in Edinburgh I believe have attended the worship of God, who, although they could afford it, would not have been at the trouble to procure a seat in any church, where they are let. I have heard of several such people, coming first from curiosity, or because they got a place without difficulty or expence, who, afterwards, have become sensible of the value of the preaching of the gospel. I have heard of others, who had been violent in their political sentiments, and abusive against the government,

(not belonging to the Circus Church, for such would not be admitted there, but among the hearers), who, after attending there some time, have learned to respect lawful authority, “to forbear speaking evil of dignities,” and to turn their attention from other mens faults to the corruptions of their own hearts. I have understood that ale-houses had been emptied and shut up, which used to be full on the Lord’s day, by the frequenters of them going to the Circus. There are besides many serious people who attend regularly, from deliberate preference of it to other places. For my part, I have no idea that the inhabitants of Edinburgh can become less moral, less religious or loyal, because an additional large place of worship is opened, where the strictest doctrines of faith and holiness are uniformly taught. On the contrary, I am persuaded they must, upon the whole, be less licentious and profane. In the evenings also, a large place is thus open, when most other churches are shut, and many stragglers occasionally drop in. Should my assertions respecting the doctrines preached, and the peaceable and loyal conduct uniformly inculcated, not be believed, our doors and seats being open to all, people who doubt, may come and judge for themselves. Upon the other hand, I am often grieved when I think of the difficulty of procuring seats, almost to the total exclusion of the

poor, in many churches of Edinburgh, and that so many of these, especially when they are collegiate charges, are shut up in the evenings, when they might be occupied, and the seats free. I am sure I shall be happy, as I often declare, to see the Circus thinned in the evenings, by more places of worship being opened. If good be done, and sinners converted to Jesus Christ, I care not where it may be.

After all that may be said, for or against the institution of the Circus, I am convinced, that in an age of so much indifference to the concerns of eternity, and so much practical infidelity among all classes, there ought to be such places free and open, in every large town, where people may be invited to go, without the least obstruction or trouble. At any rate, there ought to be a large open space in every church for strangers, as there is in the London tabernacles, and the practice of taking money at the door for seats, a practice, I believe, peculiar to Scotland, ought to be abolished. The poor people, I am informed, are not even allowed to stand in the open spaces of some of the well attended churches, without paying for it. This ought not to be so. I do not mention these things to find fault, but that they may be corrected, and to shew the necessity there was for the institution of the Circus.

After writing the above, a pamphlet lately

published was put into my hands, containing the following sentiments upon the same subject. (I do not say they are all correct; the same gospel only can do good to rich or poor.) The suggestions contained in it, shew that I am not singular in my opinion of these things, and I hope they will soon be more attended to.

“ It has become fashionable among all ranks, to speak, even with passion, lamenting the increasing immorality of the lower orders of the people; of the want, or rather the perversion of principle amongst them, and thereby of the facility with which ignorant or ill meaning demagogues have impressed their minds with opinions inimical to sound government, to right morals, and true religion. Even the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland have indulged themselves to speak unwarrantably upon that subject. But when I consider how the matter truly stands, *at least in the City of Edinburgh*, I observe, that the whole conduct of the Magistrates and Town Council, has gradually, but unavoidably, rendered it impossible but that the poorer people shall remain ignorant and immoral: for, notwithstanding the increase of the numbers of the inhabitants, the number of religious teachers upon the establishment continues still the same. Besides, though from the general elegance of modern manners, it has become impossible that good Christians should

now sit so close, and crowd upon each other in church, as they did in former times, one or two persons being now reckoned sufficient to occupy a pew; and it is even by some thought a sufficient mark of respect to religion, if a family shall rent a seat, though they should never occupy it at all; notwithstanding all this, there is no more room provided for the inhabitants, than they had an hundred years ago, insomuch, that though the churches are almost desolate, the inhabitants cannot be accommodated with seats. And further, the churches are all newly repaired, and elegantly ornamented, the seat rents are become *an object of City finance*, by which means their price is raised beyond the reach of the poor, and they are now so elegant, that it would be thought disgraceful to see them occupied by any person with a bad coat upon his back; so that, upon the whole, the Magistrates could not have devised any method more effectually to exclude the poor from public worship and instruction; and it is no wonder that, *as the clergy seldom see any of the inferior ranks among their hearers*, they should adapt their sermons to their audience, and forget that they are by any ties connected with the vulgar. What title then have the rich, who rent the seats they never occupy, and thereby exclude the poor from public worship---what right have the magistrates, who, by imposing heavy rents, yet more effectually

exclude them from the means of instruction--- what right have any of them to complain of the people as being ignorant and unprincipled? How can they complain of them as giddy and hypocritical, when they see them running after new teachers? *Hear me, and I will tell you the reason of this apparent unprincipled levity.* It is not so much on account of the principles of these teachers, nor of the attractions of their popular eloquence, that they follow them with such avidity : but they find themselves excluded ; they are neglected ; they are in this respect in fact despised, and human nature revolts at the usage. Is it wonderful, then, that they should go where they find the doors of the churches laid open to them, where the ministers treat them with attention, and with kindness, and where they express and manifest a sincere concern for their interest and happiness? Will any man of discernment say, that it can be difficult, in such circumstances, for teachers, though possessed of no higher powers than warm hearts, animated with enthusiasm, to gather together the scattered, the neglected, the perishing people ?

“ I would excuse the magistrates in this matter, if they were compelled by any necessity to bear so hard upon the inferior orders of the people, who constitute eight tenths at least of the inhabitants of Edinburgh ; but they cannot say that



their funds appropriated for that purpose are too narrow and circumscribed. I have seen by Mr Smith's statement, that the funds belonging to the ecclesiastical establishment in this city, amount to the great sum of L. 6598 *per annum*, and there is not more than one half of it at present applied to the appropriate purpose to which it was originally destined. Now, it is surely highly improper, to alienate the remainder to any different purposes; and the Magistrates, who are only trustees, cannot, upon any sound principles, excuse the misapplication otherwise, than from inadvertency.

“ It would have been greatly to the honour of \_\_\_\_\_, if in this respect they had manifested a well timed and honest compassion for the poor. I do not altogether admire Mr Haldane's *Propaganda fide* schemes, but I am decidedly of opinion, that a greater benefit could not be done to this city, than to try to make all ranks among them good Christians. The higher ranks are already cared for, being under a tuition just suited to them; and I think it but right, that the lower ranks should also be attended to. Now, I apprehend that the ecclesiastical funds are sufficient to *double the number of churches upon the establishment in Edinburgh; and this ought to be done without delay.* I do not mean that they should be erected at the expence of L. 20,000 each, according to the elegant plan of the late

Provost Elder, proposed for Charlotte Square ; I would propose, that they should be erected in proper central situations, at a moderate expence, plain, clean, and commodious. I would propose, that no seat should be let above one shilling, and that with this express provision, that if it shall not be occupied by the time the first psalms shall be concluded, the door of it shall be laid open to the first person who chooses to sit in it, who shall not be disturbed for that day in his possession. And as the Magistrates have been at due pains to provide the other churches with pastors so completely suited to the taste of the higher ranks, they should not now grudge a little trouble to find Clergymen for the proposed establishment, suited to their duties ; men of plain, strong sense, of pure principles and sound morals, endowed with benevolent affections, and, if you please, a little *enthusiastically attached to the Christian religion* : Men sincerely desirous to teach and enforce its doctrines its precepts, and its hopes ; who shall be more desirous to do good than to shine : Men who shall not be disgusted at the idea, nor refuse, when occasion requires, with compassionate and benevolent hearts, to enter even into the poorest and dirtiest house in Edinburgh ; where they might find opportunity to instruct, to assist, and comfort the veriest wretch that lives, and not disdain to call him brother ; and, finally, men who

would have patience with the weak, the obstinate, and even with the vicious. Such men would collect the multitude; they would teach them principles, and instil into them the love of virtue. Let not the Magistrates of Edinburgh be alarmed: it never was my intention that the number of the ministers in Edinburgh should be increased; but my idea was, that the moment any of the present incumbents should sleep with his fathers, *the church should no longer be collegiate*; for I consider that a clergyman who is in health, and cannot singly perform the duties of a church and parish, is not worthy of the important station which he fills. Upon the whole, the funds are sufficient, the obligations are peremptory, and the objects are of infinite importance; so that I apprehend it is impossible, that any consideration should ever influence the Magistrates to delay or disappoint the important and interesting scheme." \_\_\_\_\_

When Mr Hill, who had been at the opening of the Circus, returned to England, I accompanied him; and it was while travelling along, and revolving the advantages which I conceived Edinburgh might derive from the tabernacle, that it occurred to me, that such houses, nearly of the same kind, although a rotation of ministers could not so well be kept up in them, might be equally useful at Glasgow and Dundee. I supposed,

while my brother could supply the Circus as the stated minister, Messrs Ewing and Innes, who were to have accompanied me to Bengal, would be well calculated for the other places; and that an interchange might now and then be made with the houses of the same kind, which had been erected at Perth and in Caithness; and that any others which afterwards should be erected upon similar plans, through the country, if they conformed to the same strict and scriptural discipline, might be united, as far as congregational principles admit. I merely hinted these things to two gentlemen in England, neither of whom seemed to approve my views. I therefore said no more about them while in the South, nor was any one else then acquainted with them.

When I came to Scotland, I proposed the scheme to my brother, and to Messrs Ewing and Innes, which met with their approbation. One of them, some time since, opened the Circus at Glasgow as a place of worship, which was purchased for the purpose, and the other is about to open another house, which is building at Dundee.

I shall now advert to two seminaries lately instituted. When in England, or before I went there with Mr Hill, in the year 1798, (I now forget which), I conceived the idea of sending to England, and educating there, a number of

pious young men for the ministry, who might be taken, as in primitive times, and, as is still common in England, from the various occupations of life, and chosen for the ministry, on account of their piety, and promising talents, but never for the latter without the former.

I afterwards abandoned the idea of sending them to England, finding considerable prejudices were entertained against that part of the scheme, and they were sent to Mr Ewing in Edinburgh, who began to instruct them in divinity, and in other branches of knowledge that were thought necessary or useful. With him they still continue, not having yet finished their studies. A sufficient number in a few months was collected to make a class. The greatest care was taken in the selection, both as to character, knowledge, and gifts; and whenever any thing respecting the first of these appeared improper, or upon examination deficient in the others, they were not received. Their political principles were also strictly and particularly enquired into. I am persuaded they are all most peaceable subjects, and of sentiments which lead them to be such; men who fear God, who honour the King, and who do not meddle further with matters of government. If, after all the care that has thus been taken, should it appear, in the course of their studies, that we had been mistaken in their characters, or should any thing

improper be detected in their conduct, they would immediately be dismissed. In short, every possible precaution is used, to get proper persons for these seminaries.

Since they began their studies, a more numerous class has been assembled at Dundee, collected in the same manner, and with the same care, to be one year under Mr Innes, and another with Mr Ewing; two years being the time allotted for their course of improvement, which, with their previous advantages and knowledge of divine things, it is to be hoped, will fit them, in some measure, to be able ministers of the New Testament.

It may here be asked, For what purpose are so many thus educated, and for what places are they destined? I answer, that I know as little as the enquirer, where they may be afterwards employed: but if they are useful in spreading the knowledge of the gospel, my end is attained, wherever that may be; and I doubt not, that abundant openings will occur for them, in the course of Providence, either at home or abroad. In different parts of this country already they are wanted, and will be received when their studies are finished. But although there yet appear but few openings at home, the state of the world is such, and there seems to be so increasing a desire, both in Europe and America, to hear the gospel, that I am persua-

ded they shall not be without work. Time will shew their destination, and where the Lord chuses to assign each his place. I have yet no idea, nor is it possible to conjecture, where that may be. From a persuasion that such were much needed at home, the first class declared their intentions, when they began their studies, to continue for life in Scotland; but they were not at all bound to this, should they change their mind. No declaration of the same kind was required of the second class; and they are all at liberty to go where they please. Only for one year they engage to continue at home, if required, and paid for it, either by me, or by the Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home. I have only to add, that no motives of pecuniary advantage are held out to them, but quite the reverse. I believe, there are few among them, who did not formerly earn more by their different occupations, than they at present have, or who were not as comfortably settled, in respect to temporal things, as they are ever likely to be afterwards.

A good deal has also been said of Lay-preaching, as it is called, as connected with the above schemes; yet, if it be an evil, it does not seem likely to spread. I do not know above three or four at most in Scotland, who ever attempt it. I except the students, who are occasionally sent out by their tutors.

I have now detailed very fully all the different new plans that I know of, or am concerned in, to promote the interests of the gospel in this country; and I have been very particular, both as to their origin, and what is intended by them, as far as I know them; because they have been the objects of suspicion, especially since the clamour that was so unjustly raised against them last year. This was due to the Public. I pledge myself for the truth of my statements; and that, concerning these things, I have told, as far as I know it, and as is material, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

What the success of these plans may be, I know not. If they be not of God, I hope they will not long continue, and did I not believe they were so, I should not wish them to last another hour. If, on the other hand, they be of Him, nothing can possibly overthrow them. Once for all, I would repeat it, how absurd is it to look for plots and treason, in schemes conducted with so much publicity, as these must necessarily always be, and when not one word uttered by a single person concerned in them, has been fixed upon, that has the smallest appearance of hostility or disaffection to government!

I shall here subjoin the address of the conductors of the Arbroath Sunday-schools, occas-



tioned by the late Pastoral Admonition of the General Assembly.

*Address in Defence of the Arbroath Society for establishing and conducting Sabbath-evening Schools.*

They neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city; neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. Acts xxiv. 12, 13.

AT a time like the present, when Sabbath-evening schools, are become so much the topic of conversation: We, members of the Committee of the Society for establishing and conducting Sabbath-evening schools in Arbroath, conceive it to be our duty to come forward, and openly avow our intention to the world, lest our silence might endanger the cause.

Conscious to ourselves of the rectitude of our intentions, in endeavouring to establish and conduct these schools, we went forward cheerfully, rejoicing in the success of our poor endeavours, and gladly looking forward to the more fully attaining the end in view, namely to be a mean of keeping children off the streets on the evening of the Lord's day, and training them up, in the fear of the Lord.

Yet our well-meant endeavours (we are sorry to say) have not escaped the tongue of slander; we are pointed out as seditious persons,

who, under the cloak of Sunday schools, harbour the base design of undermining our happy constitution; and we are charged with holding secret meetings, and corresponding with other societies for that base purpose; in short, we are branded as dangerous and designing men, notoriously disaffected to government. Than these aspersions, nothing can be more false; “but the tongue of calumny hath searched us out, and the keen edge of reproach is levelled against us.”

In answer to these and other calumnies, we beg leave to observe, that when our Society was formed, we certainly had the countenance of our ministers, as per following copy of a letter received.

“GENTLEMEN, *Arbroath, May 8. 1798.*

“Having considered your proposal, for erecting Sabbath schools for the religious instruction of youth, we highly approve of the same; being convinced, that if properly conducted, they will tend much to the benefit and happiness of the rising generation. We therefore, agreeably to your request, humbly propose the following regulations, and wish you all success in the laudable work in which you mean to engage. We are, with respect,

Gentlemen, Yours sincerely,

GEORGE GLEIG,

ROBERT THOMSON.”

We catechise agreeably to the word of God, which (glory be to his name) is plain to the meanest capacity, "so that he who runs may read," and the Scripture saith, "Whoever shall do these commandments, and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." We know none of our teachers notoriously disaffected to government, (the followers of Jesus are taught obedience to the powers that be.) Our schools are not connected with any secret meetings. We keep a correspondence with no Societies in the neighbourhood or elsewhere, for political purposes. Christians of every denomination, provided they have a good moral character, are admitted members, and the consent of the whole members is not necessary to their admission. We are not bound to secrecy; on the contrary, our proceedings are all conducted in an open manner. The Sabbath evening preceding our quarterly-meetings; public intimation is given in the schools, and the children are desired to inform their parents of the same, in order that they may attend, if they please. We have no door-keepers; all who choose to come are admitted, whether members of our society or not; when met, we have nothing secret to transact; the whole of our proceedings are conducted openly to the view of all present, and politics are never once mentioned at any of our meetings. We hold no meetings but in

Arbroath. We pour forth no loose harangues. We censure neither the doctrines nor characters of our ministers. We alienate the affections of no people from their pastors : neither do we engage any to join a new sect ; but we highly revere the respective modes of worship to which we adhere. In conducting these schools, we endeavour to store the minds of children with the holy Scriptures, but not with treason ; to make them acquainted with psalms and hymns, but not with sedition : We teach the Assembly's Catechism, but neither Anarchy nor Confusion. And we declare to the world, nay more, we appeal to that God, whom we all pretend to serve, to the Almighty, who alone knows the hearts of all men, that we have no political end in view, but the glory of God, and the good of our fellow-creatures. We avow these to be our designs, and (notwithstanding the sneer of the world) we are not ashamed of them. We declare, that we are amply recompensed by the pleasure we have in conducting these schools. Come, ye jealous mortals, and behold a teacher surrounded by the children in his school ! hear them repeat their respective tasks with becoming seriousness, and mark their growing knowledge ! and, prejudiced as you are, you will be constrained to confess, that such a scene is truly agreeable ; yes, to a good man it must be delightful ! what can be more con-

sonant to the feelings of a Christian, than to speak and hear of the things of God? the teacher can truly say, that these are among the happiest moments of his life, knowing that *here* "virtue is its own reward."

Every unprejudiced person will see, from this candid declaration, that our proceedings have been misrepresented; and such conduct (we must observe) is illiberal and uncharitable; to such we would say, "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for to know the heart, is the prerogative of God alone."

We seek not the praise of men, we are ambitious of the favour of God only: and until some mode shall be adopted, better calculated for the religious instruction of youth, we will endeavour, through divine aid, to go forward as we have begun, and we desire the prayers of all good men for a blessing on the means used by us, for instilling into young and tender minds, the principles of our holy religion: for this purpose we invite all well disposed Christians, to unite with us in this undertaking; for we seriously think that a good Christian can never be a bad member of civil society; and we are of opinion, that the farther we advance in Christian knowledge, the more we will be impelled to do our duty as peaceable subjects.

Parents, you will judge for yourselves, whether the religious instructions given by you to

your children at home, aided by our endeavours in the Sabbath-evening schools, be more conformable to your duty as Christians, or to let them go about the streets on the Lord's day, hearing, and learning the language of Belial?

We know, that in prosecuting these designs we shall meet with difficulties; but we will not be afraid of the world, neither will we mind the calumny of tongues, we serve no such capricious matters; and although the current of reproach seems now to be against us, we will not be discouraged, "for he that is for us, is greater than all that can be against us." Ye whose narrow minds cannot believe these things, and who hesitate not to affirm, that we have other ends in view, we fear not your slander, but we must pity your uncharitable dispositions. Though you may think these things as trifles beneath your notice, yet we think them matters of the last importance; and though we may thus differ in opinion from you. be ye so charitable as believe, that we mean well, and leave us to enjoy our own way of thinking.

In these latter times, when Popish superstition is ashamed to shew itself in our happy isle, we are grieved to see, that there are yet men among us, who have the spirit of persecution; ---but, thanks be to God, they have not the power to persecute for conscience-sake; yet they have done what they can do, in endea,

youring (but we hope in vain) to vilify the characters of their fellow-men ; but it ill becomes the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, to act such a part against unoffending men, without the least shadow of proof, but merely upon hearsay.

Afraid as some are of French principles, had we met on the Sabbath-evenings, and taught that part of French philosophy that denies the existence of God, we are led to think we had not met with half the opposition we have met, and are likely to meet with, in conducting Sabbath-evening schools, for purposes diametrically opposite. Yet we would wish to judge charitably of all men ; we hope they have proceeded thus far, in an unguarded moment, and that they are now sorry for the measures they have taken.

We take this opportunity to declare our attachment to the British Constitution, and the high veneration we have for our beloved Sovereign.

N. B. The regulations received with the preceding letter, have been strictly adhered to, and may be seen at large in our articles.

Published in the name, and by order of the Committee of the Arbroath Society for Establishing and Conducting Sabbath-evening Schools.

WM BANNERMAN, *Clerk.*

I have already stated my former views of politics, and declared that they were changed, I now proceed to narrate that change more particularly.

When at first I began to speculate about politics, I was ignorant, as I have already said, of the deep corruption of the human heart. I was also ignorant of, or at least had not sufficiently attended to the express precepts of Scripture, respecting obedience to the ruling powers. It will easily be perceived how deeply the full admission of the depraved state of man must enter into the question, of the improvement of human society. I do not say it ought to make us abandon the desire or pursuit of what is confessedly excellent, but it may teach us to discriminate between what is attainable, and what is not ; and thus, by enabling us to form a proper estimate of the capacities for improvement of the subject upon which we have to work, may direct our exertions into a proper channel. It also points out, where the chief impediment lies, and, of course, where we are to begin in the work of reformation. The doctrine of the fallen corrupted state of man, however much it may be ridiculed, opposed, or softened down, by substituting the terms



frailty, instead of wickedness, and imperfection instead of guilt, lies at the very foundation of the Christian system, and is either expressed or implied in every page of the sacred volume.

How affecting a comment upon the truth of the existence of this leading principle of revelation, does the history of the world, of nations, of private families, and of every individual, present! The world, from the beginning to this very hour, has exhibited a scene of private animosities and feuds, of extensive public misery, violence, and bloodshed. That this is certainly the case, every one of the smallest knowledge or observation must admit, while, to the production of effects so uniform in every age, an unvarying cause must surely be assigned. Although this cause now appears to me written every where in characters so legible, it was long before I perceived it. I had often heard of it, but did not admit it. I conceived bad civil governments to be the fertile source of wars, and of every evil. This was indeed reasoning superficially, and it was a very erroneous way of judging, to suppose that human government, the creature of man, should uniformly be bad, cruel, or very imperfect; although he who planned and conducted it, was amiable, good by nature, and possessing a high degree of perfection. This radical mistake, however, lay at the foundation of my political

system; and I know, that it still continues to blind and mislead many others.

It was natural, then, for me earnestly to wish for a peaceable change respecting what I viewed as the bane of the happiness and virtue of man. And I thought, if the French succeeded in establishing their government, upon the principles on which they had set out, that the invaluable blessings of friendship, security, peace, and concord, at least to a great degree, would quickly follow in every civilized nation, who would, no doubt, gladly imitate their example, embrace the salutary and virtuous principles of renouncing war for conquest, and of considering all mankind, in every nation, as connected in one social bond, and equally the objects of benevolence and love. Upon these views, my subordinate political opinions were certainly reasonable and consistent, and I held them, as I have said, from no selfish motive.

As soon as I began to perceive the melancholy fact, that human nature was deeply and radically depraved, my system, built upon the supposed perfectibility of man by natural means, tottered, and my illusory expectations gradually vanished. It was not, however, till practically convinced of the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of the human heart, both testified in Scripture, and confirmed by my own experience, that I abandoned them altogether. I did it reluc-

tantly, but do it, I found, I must. My views of government, of course, became very different; and, instead of laying to its charge all the moral evils by which mankind is afflicted, I was taught to refer them primarily to a very different source, and to wonder rather that human affairs went on so smoothly and well, and that so much security and happiness were, upon the whole, enjoyed.

This change of opinion was very gradual and slow, and its progress was entirely regulated by my growing conviction of the principle to which it owed its rise. Let me not, however, be misunderstood, as if I were pleading the cause of conduct not consistent with the strict rules of right, either in governments or in individuals. Sorry should I be to hold any opinion, that would operate as a bar to the desire of any, or even the greatest improvement. Perfection, I know, is the mark to which we are called to press on, although we should never be able to attain it. The moral depravity of man forms no excuse for his misconduct, but is its perpetual and culpable cause.

I have said above, that I was also ignorant of, or at least had not sufficiently attended to, the express precepts of Scripture, respecting obedience to the ruling powers.

After I had fully, as I trust, desired, to submit to the will of God, revealed in his word, I

had many conscientious scruples, respecting my conduct as it regarded politics. I saw that nothing external so much influenced human affairs as civil government, and that to it, in a great measure, might be traced the various opinions, situation and character of the different nations of the world, while these again had a reciprocal effect, and stamped the character of the other. I reflected that, becoming a Christian, I did not cease to be a citizen; and I thought that, especially under the British constitution, where public opinion is so much and so justly regarded, it was my duty to be well-informed in that science, which regulates and directs every public movement. I was persuaded, that good general principles upon that subject were of great service to the world, and therefore thought it my duty to inform myself, as far as possible, concerning these, and carefully to store them up in my mind. The common maxim, that *Tuum scire nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter*, or, in other words, that knowledge is of little avail unless imparted, at least upon most subjects, forcibly struck my mind, and I considered it to be my duty, as far as I could, to communicate, what I imagined to be truth, to others.

I, however, began clearly to perceive, that the Scripture requires the most conscientious and cheerful submission to the government of

the country, whatever it may be, stating it to be the ordinance, or appointment of God himself, to mankind for good. Upon the 29th of November 1798, the day appointed for a general thanksgiving, Mr Ewing, now minister of the tabernacle in Glasgow, preached his last sermon in the Established Church, without, however, having any idea of its being so, as the managers of Lady Glenorchy's chapel well know. There had been so much political discussion of late years, that he considered it his duty upon that day, after mentioning the causes of national gratitude to God, to call the attention of his congregation to the Scripture doctrine concerning government. He preached from the passage in Tit. iii. 1. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work." He quoted and considered the various passages in the New Testament where these duties are inculcated. He stated and answered several objections; and asserted, that the result of the whole was, that a Christian's subjection to principalities, powers, and magistrates, ought to be Conscientious, Unresisting, Disinterested, Respectful, Practical, and Pious, which topics he severally illustrated and explained at length. I have inserted part of that sermon in the Appendix. The sermon itself is still to be had at the booksellers. And

I beg to recommend it to the careful perusal of such Christians as wish further to consider the important subject of which it treats.

Soon afterwards I came very near his views on that subject. I was before this fully satisfied, as I have said, of the doctrine of voluntary subjection, not for wrath, but for conscience-sake, being the doctrine of Scripture ; but I was not sure if any one had a right to give up inculcating the best modes of political arrangement as a part of truth. Almost immediately after this, however, it forcibly struck my mind, that the Lord Jesus himself, and his apostles, whose example we are called to imitate, though living in their own country of Judea, had not at all intermeddled with the subject ; then, why might not, or rather why ought not I to follow them in this respect ? This entirely satisfied my mind. I reflected further, that such conduct appeared in itself the best, as Christians could do much more good, by calling mens attention to the concerns of a future world, and to their own depravity, and to the gospel of salvation, than in being so much occupied with the arrangements of time, or turning their attention so often to the faults or defects of the kingdoms of this world. I immediately perceived the good effects that flowed from the apostles' conduct in this respect. The doctrine which they preached wrought a rapid, and, though

gradual, yet a powerful change; and what philosophy, humanity, and political science, had been unable to accomplish, the preaching of the cross, and the noble moral principles connected therewith, insensibly effected. The cruel treatment of prisoners, the shews of gladiators, the exposing of infants, domestic slavery, and many other glaring evils, which disgraced society, but which the apostles had never directly attacked, fell before the irresistible energy of their peaceful doctrine. The example of the apostles then, in this respect, I resolved to endeavour steadily to pursue. I have since done so, and of this resolution I do not repent. I was even strongly inclined to follow it, a considerable time before the period above mentioned, and before I could fully satisfy my mind of the propriety of doing so. I perceived, that in this world Christians should beware, as much as possible, of adding to the "offence of the cross," and this strongly inclined me to it. The humiliating method of salvation through a crucified Saviour, "not by works of righteousness that we have done, but by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," will, of itself, be sufficiently offensive and irritating to the proud unhumiliated heart of an unconverted man.

And here I would say, that, if any thing in my former conduct, by drawing unjust suspi-

cions upon me now, respecting my present intentions and plans, has been the means of hardening any one in unbelief, of rivetting him in his opposition to the doctrines of grace, or has been in any way the means of casting a stumbling-block in the way of a sinful and ungodly world, or of prejudicing good men against these measures, I desire to lament it in the most unfeigned manner.

As it may now be asked, what are distinctly my present sentiments respecting government, I shall endeavour to give a satisfactory reply. For this purpose, I shall state more fully my views of the Scripture doctrine upon this subject, as the foundation of them. Whatever that doctrine may clearly appear to me to be, by that I consider myself bound without any reserve.

I must begin with remarking, that where obedience to civil rulers is spoken of in the Bible, it only does and can relate to the law and appointments of man, when these do not interfere with the laws of God. The Scriptures contain a complete rule to direct us how we are to serve God. Nothing is wanting, and nothing is redundant. They relate to the concerns of a future life, they are able to make men wise unto salvation, and not one word must be added to them, or taken away. Civil government, then, cannot be a divine ordinance to regulate men in



matters of religion or of conscience. *With these it has nothing at all to do.* Human authority can add nothing to divine ; and, where the former contradicts the latter, it destroys itself. Every man, who has a Bible, is called upon, at the eternal peril of his soul, to receive what it contains as his supreme rule, to judge of its meaning, and to interpret it for himself, without regard, in matters purely religious, to the supposed authority of civil government, of Popes, Councils, Bishops benches, Synods or Assemblies, whether supported or not by civil power. These may indeed declare and recommend the articles of their own faith, but may not decree them as at all binding upon others. In short, whenever the laws of man run counter to the laws of God, they cease from that moment, in as far as they do so, to be binding ; and, with the apostles Peter and John, we may appeal to all “ rulers, elders, scribes, and priests, whether it be right, in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” The civil magistrate then, as such, has nothing to say, in matters purely of a religious nature.

As to the authority of human government, in things relating solely to this life, the scriptures speak in the most decisive manner. They inculcate every where the deep depravity and wickedness of man, and speak of various restraints that must be laid upon him, both as sa-

lutary and absolutely necessary in his present state. The reciprocal obligations, authority, and subjection of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, are distinctly pointed out, and explained. The duties of man, in his social capacity, are also clearly defined, and the general government or regulations of society being the *primum mobile* of the whole, and that which gives effect to all the others, and to which, if need be, they must ultimately appeal, are particularly denominated the *ordinance of God*.

This appointment or ordinance, stamped with the authority of God, all Christians are commanded to obey, and are called upon to attend to it, as to other duties, by peculiar motives, and not from fear only, but also for conscience sake. Christian subjects, as well as Christian servants, are also reminded, that their submission to Jesus Christ, and their being subjects of his kingdom, does not release them from the obligations of their relative and social ties, but bind them closer, from their particular situation, and the influence of their example in the world. Christians also, being more deeply, and practically acquainted than other men, with the depravity of their nature, and especially with the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of their own hearts, felt in their daily painful experience, as well as testified in scripture, learn to know,

that, even in its worst state, civil government is a most extensive blessing, indeed even a *sine qua non* to the existence of society. It being so necessary to mankind, and such a blessing, they judge that they ought to do nothing that might tend to weaken its authority.

At the same time, the word of God prescribes no particular mode of government, as exclusively of divine right, nor even shews a preference to any one. On the contrary, while modes may vary according to circumstances, the general institution under every existing form, claims submission and respect from Christians by the authority of God.

This appears obviously the meaning of scripture passages upon the subject; and although Christianity does not interfere with the kingdoms of this world, and disclaims the office of "a divider" among men, as it was intended to be universal, it teaches Christians their *express* duty under every form. To prove this to be the case, let it be observed, that all scripture is directly practical. This is a very distinguishing feature of the sacred page. The inspired writers do not employ themselves in treating questions of an abstract, and merely speculative nature; they come directly, in every line, to the situation, circumstances, and obligations of all to whom they write; and with motives of

peculiar force, and sanctions of awful energy, they urge their doctrines home. "Let every soul, say they, be subject to the higher powers." Here is the command; and whoever reads it, in any age or country, has only to remember, that *he* is addressed, and to enquire who are the higher powers of the country in which he lives. Next follows the motive to obedience, the most forcible to the Christian's mind. "For there is no power but of God, the powers that be (that actually do exist) are ordained of God." Then comes the sanction, backed by Almighty power. "Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God, and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." The reasonableness of the command is afterwards adduced, in order to reconcile our minds to it, that our subjection may be voluntary and cheerful. "For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil."

I know that it has been objected, that the description of government here given, could not possibly apply to bad governments, or to that of Nero, which existed when the apostle wrote, and was confessedly so tyrannical. For it is said, "Rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same; for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that

which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain. For he is the minister of God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." It is urged, that the above inference plainly shews, that the whole passage is descriptive, in general, of what governments ought to be, as regulated by the principles of justice, without referring to any one in particular; and that, at least, it clearly could not apply to Nero's government, under which the apostle himself, although he continued to do good, instead of having praise, was put to death. This objection is inadmissible. It is setting aside the plain and obvious meaning of the words: It is also setting aside the practical tendency of the whole passage. If the apostle does not refer to the Roman government, what rule, in that respect, was he giving to the Christians at Rome? and how should we be able to fix its application to any government, and thus to know from scripture, when we ought to obey rulers, and when not? Would not this be making the whole passage unintelligible, and the rule completely useless? thus, rendering void the scripture in this particular, whereas nothing, in fact, can be more precise, obvious, and forcible, than the doctrine here laid down.

The epistle in which these directions are con-

tained, was addressed *to* the Christians at Rome, and was written, as the whole Scriptures are, *for* all in like circumstances; that is, for all Christians in every country to the end of time. It, of course, applied to the Roman government in those days, and it applies to the British, and to every other government, in the present day, under whatever form or name it may exist. The apostle was certainly speaking of government as it then was, and as it ever has been in the world, not in its minute characters and exceptions, but in its general features, what it is upon the whole, and as always attaining, in a greater or less degree, its end, *viz.* protection and security. To confirm this, let it be considered, in what situation a world like ours, full of wickedness, would be placed, without any general laws or government, and then compare that with Nero's government. I believe, from our never having seen such a state, or read of it in any history, in its full extent, we have little conception how men would act, and how their evil passions, obtaining full scope, would work, if wholly set free from these restraints, under which we see them placed. I am confident, that a short time's experience of any thing bordering upon this, would fully explain the force and meaning of such a passage as the one quoted, and shew us, what a blessing government has been, even under its worst forms, and

how kind and merciful it is in God to have ordained it for our good.

The apostle himself often experienced protection under that same government, of which, it is said, it was so bad that he could not be writing of it. It had often saved his own life, and it had frequently been the means of defending Christians against the fury, both of the Jewish priesthood, and of the Pagan churchmen.

Although, therefore, like all human affairs, it admitted of considerable exceptions, it did, upon the whole, fulfil its appointed end, repressing vice, and promoting good. If there is any thing clear in the whole Bible, or indeed in language at all, this interpretation is plain, and these precepts gain additional force, and are much illustrated, by being delivered under a government confessedly one of the worst.

Taken altogether, then, it was not a terror to good works, but to the evil; it was the minister of God for good; a revenger to execute wrath upon them that did evil: and it was the command of God, that Christians should be subject to the higher powers, not for wrath, (not merely from fear, or because they could not help it); for, adds the apostle, the powers *that be* are ordained of God.

It may, however, again be urged, that government, in another view, may justly be considered, what the apostle Peter calls it, the

ordinance of man ; and that, being fixed and regulated by human agency, every person ought to set himself to reform it, as far as in his power ; and thus, by such active interferences, changes to the better have been produced.

To this reasoning we may reply, that the government of great nations, or the general arrangements they submit to, are subjects so vast and unwieldy, and depend upon so many remote relations, that changes, by active interference, have oftener been produced to the worse than to the better. Besides, no man can foresee, when alterations in a body so unmanageable takes place, to what point they may go, or where they shall stop. It may also be observed, that all turbulence in subjects has given the best apology for tyranny in rulers, and has, more frequently than any other cause, produced it.

But into these matters it is not my business at present further to enquire. I shall only mention what satisfies me, why submission to civil government ought to be enjoined on Christians, as it clearly is in Scripture, and why it is proper they should submit to the powers that be, and stand aloof from political interferences, even if it were not so expressly commanded.

Such is the well known state and disposition of man, that nothing so much stirs up angry passions, as intermeddling with civil govern-



ment, in which all men feel themselves so deeply interested. Nor can the change of government, generally speaking, ever be effected without violence, bloodshed, and probably doing evil that good may come. This, then, is not work for Christians; they could not, upon *their* principles, go through with it; therefore they should not begin to meddle. They are pilgrims and strangers, mere passengers through this world; they are comparatively but small in number, a weak minority in every country. "Strait is the gate, (says our Lord), and narrow is the way that leads to life; and few there be that find it; many are called but few are chosen." Their interference, therefore, would be at best of little avail.

Nor could they act properly, even in deliberation, upon most matters, with the men of this world, their principles and opinions being so opposite to theirs. Vain-glory, emulation, pride, and other motives, to which men of the world appeal, of which they make use, and by which they are supremely influenced, cannot be countenanced by Christians. They know that many things, and especially these things that are highly esteemed among men, are an abomination in the sight of God.

Let, then, the men of this world, in matters of worldly ambition, contend, if they will, with one another, Christians are pursuing higher ob-

jects. By their peaceful, and inoffensive behaviour, attended at same time with a bold and undaunted profession of Christianity, and being valiant for the truth upon the earth, and by making their light so to shine before others, that they, seeing their good works, may glorify God; let them endeavour to diffuse the knowledge of salvation. They will thus do more good, and be more successful in reforming the world, and civil governments, both rulers and subjects, than in any other way whatever. Thus acting, they shall experience, that the weapons of their warfare, although not carnal, are mighty through God to the pulling down the strong holds of sin and Satan.

At any rate, if they are not convinced by these or such arguments, and although they should not yet perceive their bounden duty in this respect, let them consider well the examples we have in Scripture of the behaviour of the people of God in every age, and under every dispensation. Let them consider the example of the prophets and believers of the Old Testament, and the apostles and saints of the new; but especially of *Him*, concerning whom it is declared, that he gave us an example that we should follow his steps. Neither he, nor his servants, ever interfered to alter the arrangements or constitutions of civil government.

Under the Old Testament dispensation, we frequently find the Lord's servants acting as magistrates, and fulfilling the duties of the station in which they were placed, or to which they were called by Providence. Such conduct I consider perfectly lawful on Scripture principles, and agreeable to the passages of Scripture above quoted. By interfering to alter the arrangements of civil governments, I do not mean exercising the stated duties of magistracy, or subordinate offices under government, provided nothing contrary to the law of God is required. A Christian may lawfully exercise these. Of the expediency of doing so, according to circumstances, he must judge; but I understand by it, attempting to change the settled order of these arrangements, and to introduce new systems.

Now I do not recollect a single instance of one believer, under the Old Testament dispensation, in the character of a subject, having thus interfered with the government under which he lived, whether under that settled at different times, and in different ways, by God himself, or under the governments of the other nations where they dwelt. Even when in Egypt we do not find the children of God rebelling, or attempting to change the laws of their cruel taskmasters. They waited till the Lord himself deli-

vered them. In their journey through the wilderness, and after they had taken possession of the land of Canaan, into which they entered by the express command of God, and, by that same command, expelled or extirpated the inhabitants, (whom, for their wickedness, it is said, the land vomited out, and of whom the Israelites, by the authority of God, and by his express commission, were the appointed executioners), in Canaan, I say, they lived quietly under the government settled for them. The nation in general, it is true, even the elders \*, demanded, in Samuel's time, that kings should be substituted for judges. But this does not contradict my assertion.

The majority of that people were not believers, though they all professed to be such, any more than the majority of nations called Christian are Christians. This we know from their general conduct, from the testimony of the prophets,

\* The elders joining in this business does not invalidate the above assertions. It by no means follows, that, because elders, they were real believers. No one who has attended to, and understood the Scriptures, will think so. I have heard ministers of the Church of Scotland declare, that they had not sufficient evidence to affirm, some, that there was one, others, that there were more than one or two Christians in their parishes. They had nevertheless all the elders who compose the session, in each parish.

from their treatment of these prophets and of the Messiah. They are not all Israel, says the apostle, which are of Israel. The Lord Jesus directly charges them with not believing the Old Testament Scriptures, for which they professed so ardent a zeal: "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"

What I assert is, we do not read of one person, to whom we have reason to affix the character of a spiritual Israelite or believer, joining in attempts, secret or avowed, to change the form of government. These appear to have proceeded from, and the whole matter agitated, by such as disregarded the authority of God, and incurred his displeasure, of whom God said, *They have rejected me.* We may fairly conclude from Scripture, that none of that small remnant among them, which composed the true Israel of God in the Jewish nation, joined either them, or those who rebelled in the wilderness; even of that number of whom the prophet Isaiah says, "Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us *a very small remnant*, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah."

David acted by express command before, and when he entered upon his office as king, nor did he at all change the form of government.

Indeed his loyalty before he was king, is all along conspicuous. Nor did he usurp the throne upon Saul's death, but respectfully waited till called to it in a regular manner, by the express appointment of God. The rebellion against him was raised by wicked men.

When the Israelites, for their idolatry and general departure from God, were carried to Babylon, although captives under a foreign yoke, it was commanded them by God, "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away, and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace." It is said of Daniel while in Babylon, "They could find no occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God." Upon the return of the Jews to their own land, many things were to be arranged anew, but Nehemiah, Ezra, and others, directed the whole by divine authority.

The prophets, in different ages, predicted what should happen to the rulers; but they delivered their messages directly from God, while we find they personally shewed due respect to the government under which they lived. They were indeed reckoned the troublers of Israel, on account of the warnings they were employed to deliver, and their holy uncomplying conduct, when any thing contrary to the law of

God was required of them. . . But with any further interference they cannot be charged.

I must now observe, that I am well aware, how exceedingly dangerous it is to argue from the Old Testament dispensation, which is so distinct from the New; or from the conduct of the Israelites, a peculiar nation, and who had every thing directly arranged by God himself, both in church and state. I know few things that have tended more to mislead Christians, in many instances, than doing so, or which have given rise to more hurtful opinions and practices. But I think, in this particular, we may appeal to the conduct of ancient believers; especially because, when in Egypt, in Babylon, and afterwards under the Roman government, they were placed in different circumstances from those in which they lived immediately under their own government. It may be said, indeed, they stood in these circumstances by the express appointment of God. This is true; but these were different, in some respects, from their own immediate government, and the Israelites were placed in them by God, exactly in the same manner as he arranges the events of nations in modern times. We cannot so distinctly indeed trace the causes of his operations now, these not being revealed to us, but we should see them to be the same, if the veil of Providence

were drawn aside, as it is in the histories in the Bible, which makes them so instructive. At any rate, we cannot err here, as we have concurrent New Testament examples, without which indeed, under the very different dispensation that we live, I should lay no stress upon the former one. I take what I have mentioned from the Old Testament only as corroborating evidence, and now turn for irresistible proof to the New.

When the Lord himself appeared, although living in his own country, and fulfilling all the duties of a citizen of that country, we never see him interfering with the government, although at that time in the hands of foreigners. "Who made me, says he, a divider among you?" He never, indeed, speaks upon the subject, but to inculcate obedience, submission, and readiness to every good work. His answer to those who asked him, "Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar?" fully declares his will in this matter. The Pharisees and Herodians, the most opposite sects, agreed to ensnare him with their questions. The Pharisees were zealous formalists in religion, although in reality they had no religion, and were disaffected to the Roman government. The Herodians were the courtiers of the day, who made religious opinions subservient to their political interest. Both of them no doubt imagined, that which,



ever way he answered their question, one or other must get hold of his words. If he should order payment of tribute to the Emperor, which was very unpopular, and by many deemed unlawful, the Pharisees would excite the people against him; if he should forbid it, the Herodians would accuse him to the government. His answer applied to, and silenced both parties; and while he gives a good reason for paying tribute to Cæsar, and commands it to be done, (their current coin, bearing his stamp, thus shewing, that they enjoyed security and protection under him), he reminds the Herodians, of that and of every future day, to render also unto God his due, and that no authority can interfere with his.

The conduct of the apostles, and of all the holy men recorded in the New Testament, is exactly conformable to this example. They lived in times in which the rulers were most tyrannical and arbitrary, in many respects, both in Judea, and in other parts of the Roman empire. This they experienced, even to the shedding of their blood. These governments also permitted and established abuses, to which we have nothing similar; yet the inspired writers exemplified and inculcated submission, except where the laws of men opposed the laws of God.

If then we examine carefully all the passages

in the Bible, which respect the duty of subjects, we shall find they uniformly speak the same language, and point out no other duty, in that relation, but ready obedience; and there is not an approved example of one believer, either of the Old or New Testament, interfering in political subjects, except particularly called by God, to fill certain situations, or to deliver his messages.

Are Christians, then, to disquiet themselves, by anxiously enquiring further about the matter? Let them beware of doing so, lest God reprove them. Even if "called, being slaves," let them not be anxious on that account. It is only if they may be free by peaceable means, or in the providence of God, that they are entitled to use their freedom. The great arrangements of the world are, at any rate, beyond their reach; God will direct these in his providence. To them it is enough, that whatever they are, these arrangements shall work, according to his promise, for their individual good, and the good of all his redeemed. Let them not fret themselves on account of evils which they cannot prevent, nor take any anxious thought for tomorrow, the events of which they are unable to controul. The Lord reigneth! Let them attend to present duty, in present circumstances, and bless God for their advantages in society, and in government, which, as well as all

they have besides, are so much above their defects.

Upon the whole, in consistency with my present political sentiments, deliberately formed, both on scripture precepts and example, and from my firm belief that civil government is one of the greatest blessings enjoyed by mankind, I cheerfully submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake. I am a peaceable and loyal subject. I would be so under any government on earth; and I consider myself bound to obey the existing powers, as far as their authority does not interfere with the laws of God. While these sentiments would make me a good subject in any country, I desire to be particularly thankful to God, for the blessings I enjoy under the British government. I sincerely and frequently pray for his Majesty the King, that he may be long preserved to these lands; and that, under his lawful authority, his subjects may lead quiet and peaceable lives. I truly desire this, from conviction of the many advantages Britain now enjoys, and has long enjoyed, above any other country in Europe.

Even were I actuated merely by selfish motives, I should desire the continuance of the present government; for ever since I was any way distinguished, by the supposed singularity of my opinions or measures, either in politics or religion, I have been convinced, that on it de-

pended, under God, both my property and life; for I firmly believe, and have done so many years, that I should be one of the first victims of any change.

Upon the subject of which I have been writing, I admire, and desire to imitate, the conduct of the first Christians; and shall make no apology for subjoining a passage from Milner's Church-history. The sentiments therein contained, respecting their political views, are so congenial to my own, that last year I extracted it, and sent it to the Missionary Magazine, in which it was inserted.

“ The most singularly striking characteristic of the Christians of the first three centuries, has not yet been noticed. Though they had a regular polity, guarded by great strictness of discipline, distinguished into a number of communities, each administered by a bishop, presbyters, and deacons, and concentrated by general councils held from time to time, they neither had, nor strove to obtain, the least secular support of any kind. They lay exposed to the rage of the whole world around them, incited by its natural enmity against God, and love of sin, and finding itself condemned by these upstarts, as deservedly obnoxious to the divine displeasure. The whole Roman world embraced thousands of discordant sects and parties; these

all tolerated one another, because all agreed to treat sin with lenity, and to allow one another's religion to be right on the whole. It was impossible for Christians to do this; hence the spirit of persecution was excited: and whoever at this day lives in the same sincere hostility against all sin, and in the exercise of the same charity, patience, and heavenly-mindedness, as they did, will undesignedly, yet unquestionably, excite the wrath of the rest of mankind, just in the same manner. But how precarious their state in society was, on this account, is evident. They had not the least legal or secular aid against persecution. Obligated, like the rest of the subjects of the Roman empire, to contribute to the general defence, and to serve in the Roman armies, when called on, as much as others, they had no civil privileges; if an emperor chose to persecute, they were perfectly defenceless, and had no political resource against oppression.

“ What could be the reason of this? Shall we say their circumstances were, during the first three hundred years, too low, and their means too weak, to encourage them to attempt any thing of this kind? This has been said by those who are not willing to allow, that their passiveness under injuries, proceeded from principle. But suppose now, that they thought it right to resist the powers that be, and that those who

resist do not receive to themselves damnation, but merit the tribute of applause for supporting the natural rights of man ; then, as no people on earth were ever more unjustly treated, they would naturally feel their injuries as other men do ; and admitting them too weak and inconsiderable, in the first century, to have attempted any thing, surely in the second, and much more in the third, their thousands, and tens of thousands, must have been capable of shaking the foundations of the empire. . So far from being without means, they seem to have had much greater than many who have disturbed the repose of kingdoms.

“ Here is *imperium in imperio*, a regular well-united phalanx of men, inured to frugal habits, and a variety of hardships ; not a mere mob of levellers, but men taught to obey their religious governors, and submitting to great strictness of discipline. Among their governors, if history had not informed us so, we are sure there must have been some men of genius, fortitude, and capacity, who already had exercised their talents in the art of government, and possessed that eloquence which inflames the passions of the lower sort. Cyprian of Carthage is undoubtedly one of these. The same courage, capacity, discretion, and activity, which made him an oracle over half the Roman empire among Christians, would, had it been exerted

in a military line, have been formidable to the throne of the Cæsars. Their brethren in the Roman armies might have taught them the military discipline; the riches which a number of them possessed, might have purchased arms and military stores. Those captive bishops, who gained so strong an ascendant over the ignorant barbarous nations, might have easily effected an alliance between them, and those of the Christian name.

“ The reader easily sees the consequence. I do not say they would have prevailed in the end, nothing is more uncertain than the issue of war; but supposing them to have thought resistance lawful, amidst the distractions of the Roman empire, from within and without, they had both temptations and probabilities sufficiently strong to have excited a rebellion, such as any other people would have done, who in knowledge and civilisation were not inferior to those among whom they lived. The conclusion seems undeniable; if a set of men are very unjustly treated, have probable means of redressing themselves by force, and think it lawful to use those means, they will do so of course. On the contrary, it appears, not from a few passages here and there only, but from the whole tenor of their writings, and what is still more, from their uniform practice, without a single exception, that they thought it unchristian to

seek this mode of relief. Patience, prayer, and charity, were their only arms. NOR DO YOU FIND A SINGLE INSTANCE OF A CHRISTIAN INTERMEDDLING WITH THE POLITICS OF HIS TIME.

“ Must we not then say, that they understood the rules laid down in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans, and other parts of the New Testament, in a literal manner? that they thought it wrong to revenge injuries, public as well as private, and referred themselves wholly to him who hath said, “ Vengeance is mine !” I believe we have no other alternative. This was the sum of Christian politics; and in this light, what an advantage this spirit proved to them in making them feel themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth, in causing them to long for the heavenly state, in deadening their affections to the world, and exercising them in faith and charity, is not hard to conceive; and whenever real Christians, in our times, shall more fully emancipate themselves from the ambitious notions with which the present habits and prejudices of men infect them, and, through divine grace, catch the spirit of the primitive believers in this point, they will then see a beauty in the New Testament principles, on this subject, of which they have now little idea; the love of the world will cease so strongly to entangle them, and primitive apostolic faith and practice



may again visit the earth in genuine simplicity."——

It is recorded, that when "Jeremiah was in the gate, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah ; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false ; I fall not away to the Chaldeans."

After having so fully explained my political views, which are not contradicted by any part of my conduct, should any one still be disposed to repeat against me the stale and groundless calumny of sedition, I shall only reply, with Jeremiah, as above, when charged with an intention to betray his country, and to go over to the enemy, *It is false.*

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When I began to write these pages, I resolved to state the views I have been led to entertain of Ecclesiastical Establishments ; but this I shall at present defer, with the intention, however, of doing it soon. It is sufficient in this place to declare, that whatever my sentiments respecting the good or evil attending them may be, I have no hostile designs, (as has often been said), against the Established Church. I have avowed, in

the strongest manner, my decided persuasion; that all violence in religion is criminal and absurd. Besides, I would much rather build up than pull down, and, if possible, add to the means of instruction of my fellow-creatures, than in any way diminish these. While every man in religious matters ought conscientiously to abide by his opinions derived from Scripture, there is room enough in the world for all to exert themselves in doing good, without different parties devouring each other.

I shall here insert an extract from the XIth number of the Anti-Jacobin Review, published last year. I shall also subjoin a letter I wrote, in consequence, to the Editors of that work. They published it, as required, accompanied with some remarks to vindicate themselves, which are unworthy of notice, and without any apology for repeating the accusation extracted from Professor Robison's book, (which they must have known to be a false one), or for the marked manner of bringing it forward.

“ We have reason to be assured, that a sect is just now forming in Scotland for the avowed purpose of sapping the foundation of the Presbyterian church, as established by law. At the head of that sect is the gentleman, who, in the first edition of Professor Robison's *Proofs of a Conspiracy, &c.* was said to have expressed his

readiness " TO WADE TO THE KNEES IN BLOOD FOR THE PURPOSE OF OVERTURNING EVERY ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION." From the postscript to the second edition of the Professor's valuable work, we learn that Mr H—— " disclaims all sanguinary proceedings;" and we doubt not, but, before the breaking out of the French revolution, D'Alembert, Diderot, and Condorcet would have done the same. The zeal, however, of Mr H. against establishments, must be very ardent; for it has prompted him to sell a beautiful estate, and to apply part of the price to the endowment of a seminary in Glasgow, for the express purpose of educating itinerant preachers, who may propagate the gospel in purity wherever it is contaminated by the baleful influence of establishments. To the pupils of that institute we earnestly recommend an attentive perusal of Mr Ranken's Essay; to the heads of it, who, under the cloak of religion, have no political innovations in view, we beg leave to recommend the two works which we have already recommended to the author of the Essay; and to pious dissenters of every denomination we hesitate not to say, in the words of that Essay, that they can " gain nothing by the overthrow of the Establishment, though, in the general conclusion, they may lose much, even their own existence as religious societies."

*To the EDITOR.*

SIR,

In the last number of the Anti-Jacobin Magazine, I observe a very extraordinary paragraph, at the end of your Review of Mr Ranken's Essay on the Importance of Religious Establishments. That paragraph contains two assertions totally unfounded; and, as they relate to me, and implicate my character, I must require you to contradict them in the same public manner in which you have brought them forward. This you will not hesitate to do if you desire to maintain any regard for truth, or even the appearance of it, in your publication.

You have asserted, that there is a sect now forming in Scotland, at the head of which I am, for the *avowed* purpose of sapping the foundation of the Presbyterian church as established by law. You have also said, that zeal against Establishments has prompted me to sell my estate.

These assertions, Sir, are both absolutely false, and either your credulity has been imposed upon, or you have been led to utter these slanderous calumnies from some improper motive.

The public whom you have misled, must, however, be undeceived; and, although you have no title to any confession from me, I now inform you, that while I use the liberty of every British subject, to judge for myself in matters of religion, so far from avowing it, I never entertained, in my mind, the most distant idea of sapping the foundation of the established church; and that it was not for this purpose I sold my estate. So much as to what you have taken upon yourself to assert respecting me. I shall add nothing on your want of candour, in bringing forward, in large letters, with a slight refutation, if so it may be called, a calumny as false as those alluded to above, which Professor Robison, without knowing it to be such, put into his book, and afterwards, as you must have heard, publicly contradicted in the newspapers.

I must request you to insert this letter in your *next* number, and thus, at least, shew yourself as ready to vindicate where you have injured, and to retract where you have been misled, as to censure and make public what you conceive to be reprehensible.

I am Sir, &c.

EDINBURGH,  
June 26, 1799.

ROBERT HALDANE.

The statement I have given above, concerning my political principles and conduct, which no man can contradict, are sufficient, I am persuaded, to satisfy all candid persons, although their opinions should be different from mine.

I have distinctly declared, and now repeat it, that I do not consider civil government to be an ordinance of God to man for religion, the holy Scriptures containing every rule of duty which, in matters of religion, mankind are bound to observe. In the church of Christ, the civil magistrate, *as such*, can never, according to Scripture, under the New Testament dispensation, have any place. When he enters there, he must come, not as a magistrate, but as any other disciple. He must submit to the rules already prescribed by Jesus Christ, and he must assume no pre-eminence or authority, *from his official civil situation*, over others, even the meanest slave upon earth. This is expressly determined by the great Head of the Church. It is recorded, that when there was a strife among the disciples, respecting pre-eminence in his kingdom, Jesus called them, and said unto them, "Ye know, that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. *But so shall it not be among*

*you.*" And, in another place, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ; and *all ye are brethren.*" In short, not a hint is given in the word of God, that the regulation of any thing belonging to the churches of Christ, forms a part of the object of civil government; but, on the contrary, every thing is already settled, and published in the Scriptures respecting church-communication, and religious conduct, individually and collectively, to direct the Christian, or Christian societies, by the paramount authority of God himself.

Let no one conceive, that it proceeded from ignorance of the *letter* of the Scriptures, that the compilers of the Confession of Faith, could only refer to one passage in the New Testament, to support the doctrine they have advanced, concerning the power of the magistrate in religious matters. The passage they have quoted, is the account of Herod calling together the priests and scribes, to consult them concerning the place of Christ's birth, with a design to murder him! This example, whatever had been Herod's intention, and by whatever authority he had called them together, does not even belong to the Old Testament dispensation, far less to the New.

Upon the other hand, as to civil matters, I have declared, in the fullest and most explicit manner, what, I am persuaded, is the Scripture

doctrine respecting government, as an ordinance of God ; and have stated, plainly and unequivocally, my sentiments with regard to the duty of submission to it, under whatever form. I can add nothing stronger to what I have already said on that subject.

I once more repeat, that I am a sincere well-wisher to the stability of our present government. I can also truly say, that I never so fully appreciated the value of the British constitution, as I did last year, when so strong a desire to persecute, seemed to prevail ; and while, under its protection, I was living secure from the indecent violence of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and from the effects of the unmerited hatred and anger, their Admonition had excited in the breasts of many, against my friends and myself. I have often felt this with great force.

With cheerfulness I obey the government of this country, and bless God for its many advantages, and I am particularly grateful for the liberty of conscience it recognizes. May God avert any diminution of our religious privileges, which would weaken the attachment of thousands to the government, occasion the emigration of multitudes, and filling the prisons with people of a new description, would open the door, in the end, to proceedings perhaps little expected by its prime movers, and at which,



many of them, I doubt not, would shudder! Were the toleration, in the smallest degree, once violated, which his present Majesty has frequently given his solemn assurance shall never be the case, no line could be drawn, and the whole would, in time, though perhaps very gradually, be set aside. The full freedom of worship, so properly afforded to the Roman Catholics, was certainly a most politic, wise, and just measure. No harm has arisen from it, but, on the contrary, much good. The opposition that was made to that measure, by the people of England and Scotland, stands recorded as a mortifying exhibition of human ignorance and prejudice. By men of all ranks, and of every degree of information, with, however, many noble exceptions, a very general opposition was raised to the granting religious toleration, and freedom of worship, to their fellow creatures! When knowledge is attainable, ignorance of duty is a crime; and seldom has more ignorance been displayed, both of the letter and spirit of the word of God, than was manifested upon that occasion, by those at least who opposed it in a religious point of view. Many of these were good men, and no doubt they meant well; but truly they knew not what manner of spirit they were of. The British legislature, however, was more enlightened, and judged more wisely in the matter; and the unalienable right of conscience, which is beyond the domi-

nion of man, because beyond his controul, was recognized and acknowledged in the case of the Roman Catholics.

Without asserting, what all must concede, that there is not one expression or example in the whole Bible, to countenance any kind of religious persecution, under the New Testament dispensation, upon whatever pretence, experience has proved, whether government, or those who opposed the measure, were in the right. The Roman Catholics of Britain have since shewn themselves as loyal and faithful subjects, as those who opposed them. Their attachment to a government must have been greatly increased, which defended and protected them against the intolerant bigotry of almost a whole nation.

I trust there are many Christians of the present day, as well as numbers who then joined against the religious liberty of the Roman Catholics, who have not "so learned Christ," and who do not now so grievously misunderstand the Scriptures, as to desire to support his religion by persecution, or injustice.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, although they joined in the popular cry, expressed and recorded in their meeting, May 24. 1779, the following sentiments respecting toleration.

"The General Assembly of the Church of

Scotland, having taken into their serious consideration, the public alarm excited in this part of the united kingdom, from an apprehension of an intention to repeal the laws enacted to prevent the growth of popery, think it their duty, to make this public declaration of their sentiments, on a subject on which the interests of religion, and of their country are so deeply concerned. While they express their gratitude to Providence, for the invaluable privileges enjoyed by this national church, and the security afforded to the protestant religion, by established laws, they declare their firm attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty, and their earnest desire, *that universal toleration and liberty of conscience may be extended to Protestants of every denomination.*"

If the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, now adhere to these sentiments, it will be the last thing they will think of, to attempt to countenance or stir up the baneful spirit of persecution, which, having so long disgraced Europe, and shed torrents of blood, has, to the general peace of all, been now restrained for many years, but if again let loose, would speedily rekindle those murderous flames, which humanity fondly hoped had been extinguished for ever.

In the present times, and owing to the late frequent political discussions, the Scripture doc-

trine upon civil government, has perhaps been more studied and better understood by Christians, than ever it was before, since the Reformation\*, and I believe there never was a time, when, upon more solid and scriptural grounds, they held the duty of submission so sacred as they do at present.

The excellent sermons by Mr Ewing and Mr Braidwood †, which on this head speak the sentiments of all of us alluded to in the Pastoral Admonition, without one exception known to me, declare this to be the case.

We can certainly also say with Tertullian, the apologist of Christians in the third century, after he had refuted the *usual calumny of Christians feeding upon infants in their secret meetings*: “NOTHING IS MORE FOREIGN TO US THAN POLITICAL CONCERNS.” We can, with him also, affirm, “how readily and conscientiously we pay all taxes, without that spirit of fraud, deceit and evasion, which so many shew in these matters.”

\* The doctrine of *Passive Obedience*, preached in former times, was maintained on very different grounds from those on which the submission of Christians to civil government is rested in the Scriptures.

† See Mr Braidwood's Sermon, preached in the Baptist Meeting-house, Richmond-Court, Edinburgh, Aug. 4. 1799, entitled, *Loyalty Enforced by Arguments which are Founded upon Just Views of Civil Government.*

By our sentiments we are fitted to live quietly under any government. Indeed it would be a clear proof that these were not derived from the Bible, unless they would suit any country and any government that ever did or may exist. While, however, for the reasons given, we would submit to all governments, without attempting to interfere, in altering their arrangements, we are only called to approve of what is good in any of them. Approbation and submission in politics are wholly different. Faithfully to practise the latter, by no means implies the former. The Christian can approve of nothing, however sanctioned, which does not exactly comport with the revealed will of God. He remembers that in the law of his God it is said, "Wo unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." While his duty respecting submission to government is clearly pointed out, he is taught to keep at a distance from party-squabbles, and a party-spirit, which would gnaw like a worm at the root of all godliness; and while he avoids the paths of worldly ambition, and sits loose to the little arrangements of time, he will regard the history of nations, and the events of the day in which he lives, as those operations of Providence by which the Lord is carrying forward, and unfolding his mighty

plan, to hasten the coming of that kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

I would now close the whole, by addressing my fellow-Christians with whom I act, in the language of the apostle Peter, "although they already know, and be established in the present truth," "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well: for so is THE WILL OF GOD, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king." "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers. But the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But, and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye; and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. Having a good conscience, that, whereas they speak evil

of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed, that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing." "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this behalf."

These, and the other exhortations of the apostles of Christ, express my sentiments respecting obedience to civil government, and the rules of conduct to be observed in civil society; and I pray God, that I and my friends may be always enabled to act upon them.

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# APPENDIX.

No. I.

ADDRESS from the SOCIETY for Propagating  
the GOSPEL at Home.



*The Society for Propagating the Gospel at Home, to  
the Faithful in Christ Jesus.*

DEAR BRETHREN,

**I**N the present eventful period, many things concur to attract your attention. You see "the Lord coming out of his place to punish the nations." You hear of "wars and rumours of wars." "Upon the earth is distress of nations, with perplexity, mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." But a more pleasing object presents itself to your view, namely, the exertions which Christians are now making to spread the knowledge of their Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and which are unequalled in the annals of modern times.

Missionaries are either on the way, or already engaged in "preaching repentance and remission of sins" in every quarter of the globe. The attention of Christians of eve-



ry denomination has been called to the situation of their perishing heathen brethren. They have confessed, that they were "verily guilty" in remaining so long inactive; and whilst they lament the time they have lost, they seem determined, by future diligence, to make their much neglected brethren every reparation in their power. Instead of striving about words to no profit, they have united to oppose the common enemy. May the LORD himself cherish the flame of zeal he has kindled, and may the everlasting gospel ere long, according to the commission given by the LORD to his disciples, be preached to every creature under heaven!

But whilst the attention of Christians has been drawn towards the heathen, they have not been unmindful of their brethren at home, many of whom are likewise "perishing for lack of knowledge." In our land, multitudes are going down to the grave "with a lie in their right hand," thinking themselves Christians, because born in what is called a Christian country. The low state of religion, and the necessity of adopting measures for domestic instruction, gave many a plausible handle to decry *foreign* missions. It even damped the zeal of some pious people, who were ready to exclaim, *We have heathens enough at home.* That there are *many* such, is a melancholy but undoubted fact. Instead, however, of neglecting their countrymen, while they attempted foreign missions, Christians have been led to make uncommon exertions to promote religion at home, since their attention was so generally directed to the state of the heathen. Many Sabbath schools have been erected, thousands of religious tracts have been circulated, and the gospel has been preached both in villages and in the streets of many towns in Scotland. Various associations have been lately formed in England to spread the knowledge of salvation in our native land, nor have such endeavours been hitherto without effect.

While we sincerely pray for the success of every society whose views are directed to the propagation of the gospel, we cannot but remember, that much remains to be done. "The harvest is plenteous, and still the labourers are few." We therefore call your attention to a new and

important institution, namely, a Society which has for its object to promote the knowledge of the gospel at home.

The plan of this Society is now submitted to your consideration. It is not our design to form or to extend the influence of any sect. Our sole intention is to make known the everlasting gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of the unspeakable importance of such an undertaking, no Christian can be insensible. With confidence therefore, brethren, we call upon you for assistance. We solicit your prayers, your advice, and support. The extent of the Society's operations will, under God, depend upon your liberality. You have hitherto "abounded in this grace," nor have you had reason to regret what you have thus "lent to the Lord." Continue to "devise liberal things, and by liberal things you shall stand." There is that "scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty."

You cannot be ignorant of the wretched state of thousands of your countrymen in respect of religion. With the scriptures in their hands, (which is doubtless an aggravation of their guilt), they are as ignorant of the way of salvation as the natives of Otaheite. The Bible is to them as a "treasure in the hands of a fool." They seldom or never hear the pure unadulterated doctrines of the gospel, and being unaccustomed to reflection and study, they will not examine for themselves. This makes them doubly the objects of your compassion. Consider their situation. Do not pass by, like the priest and levite, but, like the good Samaritan, hasten to their assistance. "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth the soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every one according to his works?"

You, brethren, know the terrors of the Lord, and you are convinced that the "wrath of God abideth on the children of disobedience." You remember the time when you yourselves were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures; and you bless the Lord, that, having heard and believed "the message of reconciliation,"

you are now "made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And can you regard with indifference the situation of your perishing countrymen? From those to whom the "gospel of our Lord Jesus is foolishness," we expect no support. To whom then can we look for it, but to you? What an honour, if by your means, sinners shall be "converted from the error of their way, and souls saved from death!" "The blessing of him that was ready to perish shall come upon you." And should you not cheerfully assist in an undertaking, involving consequences so important to the souls of men?

Brethren, "the time is short." Whatsoever, therefore, your hands find to do, do it with your might. Let it not always be said, that "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Had we brought forward some plausible method of enriching ourselves and others, encouragement would not have been wanting. The "true riches" have been committed to your care; and will you not endeavour to communicate them to others? "Freely you have received, freely give." Having yourselves heard the glad tidings of salvation, like the woman of Samaria, invite your countrymen to the Saviour of sinners. Remember that the Lord Jesus has said, "*Whosoever shall do his commandments, and teach them, shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*"

We are sensible of our unworthiness to be employed in the Lord's service and of our unfitness for the work: But, in a humble dependence on the grace of the Saviour, we engage in the arduous undertaking. Brethren, pray for us, that in meekness and lowliness of spirit, with holy zeal and fortitude, with patient perseverance and singleness of heart, we may be guided in the path of duty.

In employing Itinerants, Catechists, or others, we do not consider ourselves as conferring ordination upon them, or appointing them to the pastoral office. We only propose, by sending them out, to supply the means of grace wherever we perceive a deficiency, and in this way of applying our funds, to use our judgment, both in choosing labourers, and in pointing out the nature and sphere of their labours. Our intentions may be misrepresented. We do

not expect to escape opposition. Nor shall you, brethren, while engaged in the Lord's service, escape the "scourge of the tongue." Men may "speak many things against you falsely for Christ's sake." But "if ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." Did the Lord himself "endure the cross, despising the shame," for your sakes, and will not you "take up your cross and follow him?" You may also suffer from the prejudices of some of your Christian brethren, who, misunderstanding your purpose, and alarmed at the appearance of innovation, although earnestly desirous of the spread of the gospel, may not at once approve your design. But let none of these things move you. Having in view the salvation of immortal souls, let nothing deter you from pursuing so interesting an object. Embrace the present opportunity of exerting yourselves in the service of your blessed Lord. As the peaceful followers of the Prince of peace, endeavour to promote the real good of your country, by diffusing the knowledge of the grace of God in Christ Jesus, which alone effectually "teacheth men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts," and to live quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty." Thus shall you "make your light to shine before men," and others, "seeing your good works," shall glorify their heavenly Father in the day of their merciful visitation. The Lord hath said, "Occupy till I come." "Therefore, beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

*By Order of the SOCIETY,*

Edinburgh,  
Jan. 11. 1798.

*JOHN RITCHIE, Secretary.*

## RULES of the SOCIETY for Propagating the GOSPEL at Home.

### GENERAL DESIGN.

I. The Society shall be called *THE SOCIETY FOR PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL AT HOME*; and shall be composed of persons of every denomination, holding unity of faith in the leading doctrines of Christianity.

II. The funds of the Society shall arise from the voluntary contributions of Members, or others. N. B. The Society shall consider themselves at liberty to apply all donations, as well as annual subscriptions, to immediate use, except when the donors otherwise direct.

III. The object of the Society is, by every proper means, to promote religious knowledge at home; and this shall be the only subject of discussion at their meetings. For this purpose, they propose,

1<sup>st</sup>, To employ approved men as itinerant preachers, to whom a certain district shall be assigned, and who shall regularly correspond with, and receive instructions from the Society.

2<sup>d</sup>, To encourage schools, especially Sabbath schools, throughout the country.

3<sup>d</sup>, To promote the reading of the Scriptures, circulate pious tracts, and establish libraries of books on practical religion.

4<sup>th</sup>, To correspond with, and, when necessary, to defray the expences of such ministers, or others approved by the Society, as may be willing to preach in towns and villages in the neighbourhood, on Sabbaths or week days. N. B. Such to send regular quarterly reports to the Society.

5<sup>th</sup>, To correspond with any Societies or individuals who have the same object in view. In short, to adopt any approved plan of religious-instruction.

## INTERNAL ARRANGEMENT.

I. A General Meeting of the Society shall be held on the second Thursday of every quarter.

II. At the general meeting in January, the Society shall elect a Secretary, Treasurer, Clerk, and fill up the Committee of Directors, which shall consist of twelve.

III. The Secretary, Treasurer and Clerk, shall, *ex officio*, be members of the Committee.

IV. The present Committee shall continue till the meeting in January 1799, when one third of the Directors shall go out, and shall afterwards continue to do so, every six months, by rotation, from the top of the list.

V. No member of the Committee of Directors shall be re-elected till one year at least after he goes out.

VI. Every meeting of the Society or Committee shall be begun and ended with prayer.

VII. The Committee shall hold stated monthly meetings on the first Tuesday of every month, at five o'clock afternoon, and shall have power to adjourn from time to time, as business may require.

VIII. It shall be the duty of the Committee to collect, arrange, and circulate whatever information they may judge important respecting the object of the Society, and to execute the plans determined upon by the general meeting.

IX. If between the ordinary general meetings of the Society, any business shall occur, which admits not of delay, and involves important consequences, the Secretary, by direction of the Committee, shall call an extraordinary general meeting, and shall lay the matter before them. Such business shall be specified in the intimation.

X. The Committee shall regularly give in a report of their proceedings to the Society.

XI. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to carry on the correspondence of the Society.

XII. The Treasurer shall annually lay before the Society an account of their receipts and disbursements, with a state of their funds; and they shall either examine this

account and statement in open meeting, or appoint for that purpose a special Committee, none of the members of which shall belong to the ordinary Committee for the year.

XIII. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to record the minutes of the Society.

XIV. At the end of every year, or oftener if necessary, the Society shall publish accounts of their plans and proceedings, receipt and expenditure, and communicate every information which may be material for enabling their Christian brethren to judge of their conduct and success: and shall request the aid of their prayers, of their advice and of their substance, as individuals, as societies, and as congregations.

XV. Sermons may occasionally be preached, and collections made for the benefit of the institution.

#### ADMISSION OF MEMBERS.

I. Every person who is proposed for admission, must be a benefactor to the Society, and shall declare his full approbation of every article in the printed regulations under the head, General Design.

II. New members shall be proposed, and their election made, at a General Meeting of the Society.

III. No person shall be proposed for admission, and elected a member at the same meeting.

IV. The election of members shall be made by ballot, and the member proposed shall be approved of by five-sixths of the members present.

#### ITINERANT PREACHERS AND CATECHISTS.

I. No person shall be employed as an itinerant, without being previously examined and approved of by the Society.

II. Every Itinerant must keep a regular journal of his proceedings, which shall be transmitted monthly to the Society.

III. Catechists shall make regular reports once a quarter, according to instructions given them by the Society.

IV. When an Itinerant is sent out, a meeting of the Society shall be held for the purpose of recommending him by prayer to the blessing, guidance and protection of the Great Head of the Church.

**GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR ITINERANT PREACHERS  
AND CATECHISTS.**

I. They are to avoid entirely speaking on politics; either in public or in private.

II. They are not to shew a preference to any denomination of Christians, either established or dissenting, but exhort the people to attend wherever the gospel is preached in purity.

III. They are to endeavour to strengthen the hands of all faithful ministers of Jesus Christ of whatever denomination; and, as far as they can, discourage all bitter party spirit, wherever they discover it among Christians.

IV. They are never to make any collection from the people, unless expressly authorized by the Society.

**PRAYER-MEETINGS.**

I. A meeting of the Society for prayer shall be held on the first Tuesday of every month, at half past six o'clock afternoon.

II. The Chairman of the Committee for the evening shall begin the meeting by reading a portion of Scripture.

III. He shall name three to engage in prayer; each person after prayer, to give out a part of a psalm.

N. B. Any proposal to alter or add to the above regulations, must lie upon the table one quarter of a year at least; and, in order to its being adopted, must be approved of by two thirds of the members present.

The following advertisement was inserted in the Missionary and Evangelical Magazines.

THE SOCIETY FOR PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL AT HOME, desirous of immediately commencing their operations, ear-



account and statement in open meeting, or appoint for that purpose a special Committee, none of the members of which shall belong to the ordinary Committee for the year.

XIII. It shall be the duty of the Clerk to record the minutes of the Society.

XIV. At the end of every year, or oftener if necessary, the Society shall publish accounts of their plans and proceedings, receipt and expenditure, and communicate every information which may be material for enabling their Christian brethren to judge of their conduct and success: and shall request the aid of their prayers, of their advice and of their substance, as individuals, as societies, and as congregations

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The following advertisement was inserted in the Missionary and Evangelical Magazines.

THE SOCIETY FOR PROPAGATING THE GOSPEL AT HOME, desirous of immediately commencing their operations, ear-

nestly entreat such persons as are willing to labour under their inspection, to signify their intention, as soon as possible, to the Secretary. It will be also necessary to transmit sufficient testimonials of their approved piety and ability.

The Secretary was directed to correspond with the various Societies in England whose general object appeared to be similar.

### No. III.

## LETTER OF INSTRUCTIONS from the SOCIETY for Propagating the GOSPEL at Home, to their Itinerant Preachers and Catechists.

DEARLY BELOVED BROTHER,

**D**EEPLY interested in you, and in the success of that highly important work with which you are entrusted, we, your brethren in Christ, in the bowels of Christian affection, beg your serious attention to the following Instructions, which we hope, by the blessing of God, may be of use to you in the course of your labours.

In the *first* place, we remind you of the unspeakable *magnitude* of the service in which you are employed. Unless the habitual impression of this abide on your heart, you will be extremely apt to do "the work of the Lord negligently." Consider then, we beseech you, that you are engaged in an undertaking peculiarly important. It is admitted that many of our countrymen are sitting in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death, either entirely regardless of the great salvation, or adopting mistaken and dangerous opinions, subversive of the pure and simple gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.---Our souls commiserate their situation: And we send you out, dear bro-

ther, that, by your fulfilling, with persevering zeal and fidelity, the duties of your office, you may be the honoured instrument of "opening their eyes, of turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in Jesus Christ."

We cannot but be greatly concerned, dear brother, that you may well understand the nature, and feel the weight of this service to which the Lord, in his providence, has called you. We beseech you frequently to revolve it in your secret meditations. Through the deceitfulness of our hearts, we are apt, in some degree, to lose an impressive sense of the importance of duty. Cease not to pray, that the awful truths revealed concerning a future everlasting state, may be ever present to your own mind. While men "know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ," they are every moment exposed to the execution of the condemning sentence of the righteous law of God; from which there is no deliverance but by the belief of the truth. As a man in the hand of JEHOVAH Omnipotent, you are called, by the publication of the gospel, to rescue immortal souls from this merited destruction. Your actually beholding your brethren perishing in their ignorance, we hope, will increase your conviction of the unspeakable importance of being instrumental in plucking them as "brands from the burning." Think, we beseech you, think continually, on the unspeakable magnitude of this work. Though only successful in gaining to the Saviour one solitary individual, how incalculable the acquisition!

In the *second* place, we beg your particular attention to the *manner* in which you are to conduct your mission. For this purpose you are already furnished with general instructions in the printed rules of the Society. On these we will make a few remarks.

The *first* of them contains an injunction *entirely to avoid speaking on POLITICS either in public or in private.* On this we hope it is unnecessary to say much. Your own good sense will convince you of the propriety of strictly adhering to it. By the law of Christ, Christians are bound

to "be subject to the powers that be;" "to pray for kings and all in authority;" and "to lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty." You are called to seek the peace of the land in which you enjoy peace. The smallest approach towards sedition, discovers a revolt of heart from the authority of Christ.---These things teachers of religion are bound to enjoin, and to exemplify in their own conduct. Study therefore to imitate the example of Jesus Christ, whose kingdom is not of this world. To act otherwise must necessarily hinder your usefulness; and we are persuaded, that love to the cause in which you are embarked, will prompt you carefully to observe the utmost circumspection of conduct. Men will be sufficiently disposed of themselves to speak all manner of evil against you, and they may even call you a mover of sedition. Take good heed to yourself therefore in this matter, that you give not the smallest ground for this accusation. Your work is too interesting to admit of such a departure from its spirit and principles.

The *second* general regulation directs itinerants to *show no partiality, in their public character, for any denomination of Christians*, either established or dissenting, but to exhort the people to attend wherever the gospel is preached in purity.---You are sent forth from the Society, dear brother, to promote, not the interest of any particular party, but the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is admitted, that the Lord has his people among the various classes of professing Christians. Wherever the gospel is preached in purity, and men conscientiously associate together to observe the ordinances of Jesus Christ, there he vouchsafes his presence and blessing. We trust the period hastens, when the people of God, who are all of one family, who are partakers of the same privileges, and who look forward to one inheritance, shall walk together as brethren in unity, being helpers of each others faith and joy. In the meantime you are enjoined, as an itinerant from this Society, not to interfere with the lesser matters in which Christians differ. You are required to know nothing among the people where you may be called to labour, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Your great object is, to rouse the at-

tention of men to their sinful state by nature; to their need of regeneration by the mighty energy of the Spirit of God; to the impossibility of their saving themselves by their own power or righteousness; to the all sufficiency of the atonement of Jesus Christ for the salvation of men; to the necessity of believing in him for the remission of sins; and to the indispensable obligation of holiness in heart and life. When men are savingly instructed in these first principles of the oracles of God, they will go on to perfection.

In the course of your itinerancy, we recommend to you to hear those ministers only who preach evangelical doctrine. Should you happen, however, to hear men of a different description, you are expressly prohibited from making *personal* reflections against them.

You are required by the *third* general regulation, to *endeavour to strengthen the hands of all faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, of whatever party.*—A faithful minister of Jesus Christ is a precious character. In strengthening his hands, beloved, you effectually promote the important end of your appointment, *Your stay in any place is transient, his is stationary.* If the Lord honour you as the happy instrument of leading careless people to attend on the means of grace, what beneficial consequences may arise from it! In the neighbourhood of many of the places through which you pass, there may be churches of some denomination, where the gospel is preached. Endeavour to get accurate information as to this: and press upon all to whom you have access, the necessity of attending on divine ordinances. Tell them of the inestimable value of the gospel of Christ; of their extreme need of it; and of the awful danger of neglecting it. You will thus discover your impartial regard to the cause of Christ, and your disinterested love to precious souls.

Nothing is more contrary to the genius of Christianity, than *bitter party spirit.* You are therefore expressly required to discourage it, so far as your influence extends. Mutual forbearance is the incumbent duty of Christians. Inculcate this duty on every occasion. Why should brethren fall out by the way to their Father's house? Beware of giving the smallest countenance to this practice. Such

conduct is highly unbecoming, especially in a Christian Missionary. Walk in the steps of your blessed Master; and thus comfort our hearts, while we hear of your meek and exemplary behaviour.

With regard to the *fourth* general regulation, *never to collect any money from the people*, we presume it is unnecessary to add a word. It no doubt gives you peculiar satisfaction, that you have it in your power to tell your hearers, that you seek not *theirs* but *them*. Be particularly watchful, that, in no instance, you discover a covetous temper. Nothing will more directly tend to hurt the cause which the Society has committed into your hands.

Having thus briefly called your attention to the General Regulations of the Society, we will now proceed, in the spirit of love, to offer you the following Advices.

*Study to live under the vital influence of the truth.* Those who are much employed in public work, will find it necessary to give earnest heed to this matter. We trust you have felt, in your own soul, the power of divine grace; and in the belief of this we have employed you. You will therefore be fully convinced of the necessity of attending to this advice. Much of your comfort in the course of your labours depends upon it. How shall you comfortably lay the truth before others if you discern not its glory and feel not its importance; and how can you abide in the lively experience of religion, if you be not frequently employed in reading and meditating on the word of God; in secretly pouring out your heart to your heavenly Father; in exercising faith in his promises; and in the other means whereby the Lord increaseth grace in the hearts of his children! *Then* are you most likely to speak to the conviction and edification of others, when you have the deepest impression of divine truth on your own heart. Remembering the gall and the wormwood of a natural state, you will beseech men to be reconciled to God and to flee from the wrath to come. Enjoying the consolations of the gospel, you will entreat them, by faith in Jesus, to taste and see that the Lord is good. Realizing the awful solemnities of a future state, you will warn every man, that he cannot escape if he neglect the great salvation. Thus

will you go on with comfort in your own mind, and with much probability of success.

We beg you would frequently recal to mind the Questions, which, in the presence of God, and before the Society, you answered to our satisfaction. We shall here insert them.

1. Is it your determination, by the grace of God, *constantly* to labour, as the Lord shall give you opportunity, in the important work assigned you by this Society, and in that solely, of instructing your countrymen in the knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ?
2. We have heard a satisfactory account from our Committee of your qualifications for teaching the doctrines of salvation: but we solemnly ask you, in the presence of that God who searcheth the heart, what are the motives by which you are led to offer yourself for this service? is it from supreme love to God our Saviour; from an affectionate concern for the salvation of your fellow-sinners; and a sincere desire to promote the Redeemer's kingdom: and not from any dissatisfaction with your former situation in life; from any hope of greater ease; or from any other selfish consideration?
3. Are you willing to endure hardships in this undertaking; and is it your desire, in the event of opposition, patiently to commit yourself to God in well doing?
4. Is it your firm determination, through promised grace, implicitly to follow the word of God as your rule, and to depend entirely on his blessing for success in your labours?

And, lastly, Do you promise to follow the instructions given to itinerant preachers and catechists in the printed rules of this Society; resolving, by divine assistance, to behave in that holy, meek and prudent manner, which becomes a person employed in spreading the religion of Jesus; which shall tend to promote your usefulness as an itinerant;



and to reflect honour on the Society by whom you are sent forth?

These questions, which relate to the motives from which you were induced to undertake your present office; and to the spirit in which you ought to pursue it; are highly solemn: Much depends on your acting agreeably to them. We beseech the Lord to enable you to do so; and we earnestly exhort you, dear brother, to continue instant in prayer; that you may be strengthened against every temptation; by means of which you might prove unfaithful.

You have said it is your determination to labour *constantly* in the important duties of your office: See then that you improve every opportunity of usefulness. One soul is of more value than the whole world. To be the means therefore of saving a soul, is a greater acquisition than if we had subdued kingdoms. How great the honour! Dearly beloved, may it be yours!

You have expressed your willingness to endure hardships in this undertaking. We forewarn you, that difficulties do await you. If you go on with fidelity and zeal, Satan will raise opposition. You may experience the trial of cruel mockings. Your intentions may be misrepresented: and while you breathe peace and good will to men, you may be branded, like the Saviour, as a pestilent fellow, perverting the nation. But, beloved, let none of these things move you. Attend to the benediction of your great Master: "Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold your reward is great in heaven." Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled. It is surely enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?---But let none of you suffer by your own imprudence or mismanagement. This must add a sting to your sufferings, and render them extremely bitter. Commit yourself to the care of that Lord whom you

serve, and he will support you. He will make your way clear before you. His promise to Paul is equally addressed to you, "My grace is sufficient for you;" and with him also you have ground to say, "I can do all things through Christ strengthening me." Continue patient in well-doing; looking unto Jesus, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

A Christian in this world is a pilgrim and a stranger: a Christian Missionary is so in a peculiar manner. Expect not therefore to meet with every thing to your wish as to external accommodation. Your Saviour had not where to lay his head. On some occasions, indeed, when travelling on foot through the cities and villages of Judea, there were friends who kindly welcomed Jesus to their houses: at other times, as on his last journey to Jerusalem, when his disciples entered into a village to make ready for him, the inhabitants would not receive him. In like manner, some from whom you look for kindness, may not be disposed to shew it. Let not this, however, discourage you. Means are in the hand of the Lord; nor shall you want any thing that is good for you. While you faithfully pursue the great object of your appointment, Providence may raise up friends who shall count it their honour to "bring you forward on your journey after a godly sort." But if, instead of being received with joy, you should be treated with contempt, and even thrust out of the city, remember that thus it was done to Him, who is Lord of all. Our Saviour hath left us the example of being dead to this world, and all its enjoyments. May you eminently imbibe his spirit, and walk in his steps!

We beseech you, dear brother, to behave, as you solemnly promised, in that holy, meek and prudent manner, which becomes a person employed in promoting the religion of Jesus. Many eyes are upon you. Weigh well every part of your conduct. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Watch always. Cease not to pray, that the Lord may guide, direct and preserve you. Remember your own weakness and your liableness to fall. In *your* situation, humility

of spirit is peculiarly necessary. In the course of your labours, you will frequently meet with temptations to pride. How dangerous to yield to the corrupt motions of our own spirits, while engaged in the service of God! Pride will unfit you for your work; while it naturally destroys your internal comfort. Be not ambitious of the applause of men. Stop your ear to the voice of flattery. Be content to decrease, if Christ increase. A servant of Jesus Christ should be a character exemplary humble. Those whom the Lord exalteth, he abaseth in their own sight.--- Under deep impressions, then, of unworthiness and insufficiency, lift up your eyes, beloved, to the Lord, from whom cometh your help. Your God, if you trust in him, will not suffer your foot to be moved. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil. The Lord shall preserve your going out, and coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore.

Be not discouraged, though, for a season, you see little fruit of your labours. It is yours to plant and to water, it is the prerogative of God to give the increase. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. He who blesseth the springing of the seed, and who crowneth the year with his bounty, will not fail in fulfilling his promise. "My word, saith JEHOVAH, shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."---"In the morning therefore sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they shall be alike good. If, by the grace of God, you can adopt the affirmation of the apostle, "We are not as many that corrupt the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ;" you shall also have fellowship with him in his exultation, "Now thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the favour of his knowledge by us in every place."

We are aware that it is extremely difficult to lay down rules applicable to the various circumstances in which you may be placed. A great deal, therefore, must be left to

your own prudent management. Study then to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. It is impossible that in every case you can be under our inspection. May you never forget, that you are always under the eye of God, and that to him you must give an account !

Much will our hearts be grieved, if, by your misconduct, reproach should be brought on the good work of the Lord in our hands. O may he preserve you faithful to the end ! Our prayers as individuals, shall be daily offered up for you ; nor shall we cease to pray for you in our associated capacity. And now, we commend you to God, and to the word of his grace. The good will of Him who dwelt in the bush be on you, when for a season separated from your brethren. Fear not, saith Jesus, I am the first and the last. My peace I give unto you ; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world !---Unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy ; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

*In name, and by appointment of the Society,*

*JOHN RITCHIE, Secretary.*

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## Particular INSTRUCTIONS to CATECHISTS, as to the manner of conducting their La- bours.

THE instruction of Children in the principles of Christianity, has been justly considered as an object of the greatest importance ; and wherever a revival of religion has taken place, it has been generally observed, that young people formed a considerable proportion of those brought under its influence. It is the wish of the Society, therefore, that you bend your attention particularly to children, endeavouring to instil into their minds the doctrines of salvation through a crucified Redeemer.

Adopt the most simple and affectionate method of communicating instruction. Tell the children that you love them, and ardently desire to promote their happiness ; and that in no way can this be done effectually, but by leading them to the true knowledge of themselves and of Jesus Christ.

Think not that it is a mean employment to instruct children. Our Lord Jesus, when on earth, manifested a peculiar regard to little ones ; he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. It is a device of Satan, who is unwilling to quit his prey, to represent as trifling the instruction of youth. We pray God to give you the abiding impression of its magnitude. When people in early life are brought to the saving knowledge of the truth, the cause of God is even more promoted than by the conversion of adults.

In the course of your itinerancy, therefore, collect the children in the first instance, and give them tracts suited for them. If they can repeat any questions or passages of Scripture, make these the ground-work of your examination. Ask them simple questions, and endeavour to make them understand them. Long exhortations are generally lost upon children. By frequent questions, and by asking them to repeat sentences after you, their attention is kept up, and their memories stored with divine truth.

Grown-up persons will generally attend you wherever you go. It is easy to form an exhortation to them from the subjects which you have gone over with the young people. Represent to them the importance of Sabbath schools, of which you have just exhibited the model.

In no case will you find it difficult to collect children, if you discover any anxiety to get them together. Should there happen to be a considerable majority of old people, make the exercise as profitable to them as may be, by exhortation and prayer. It is not your province, however, to chuse texts and discuss doctrines. You were not appointed a *preacher*, but a *catechist*, and it is necessary that you confine yourself to *catechetical exercises* alone.

It is not the intention of the Society to shut you up from one opportunity of being useful to the souls of your

brethren. If, therefore, on any occasion, *no children* come forward, you will inform the grown-up people, that you are a *catechist* sent out from the Society; that it is your principal object to instruct children: but as none have appeared, you will read a few questions of the Shorter Catechism with the Scripture-proofs, and endeavour to explain their meaning. Conclude your exercise with exhortation, prayer, and singing. Your exhortation may be either founded on the questions you have explained, or on a large portion of Scripture.

These directions are suggested, as proper to be observed in the course of your journeys. When stationed in a limited district, your work is more simple. You are then to teach a school regularly in the place of your residence on Sabbath morning and evening. During the other days of the week, you must exert yourself in establishing schools in every principal village round your residence, one for each day of the week. Endeavour to get proper persons to undertake the management of them, and if possible to teach them. Having visited them for some time weekly, you may then attend them once a fortnight, employing the vacant week in establishing schools in another direction. By this means you will have thirteen schools under your inspection; and if persons, properly qualified, engage in teaching any of them, you are thus left at liberty to extend your influence in a wider circle\*.

The Society have confidence in you, that you will diligently occupy your time to the best advantage. Your schools for religious instruction will be most conveniently held in the evening, in order to give parents or others an opportunity of attending. If, therefore, in the course of the day, you can overtake it, it would afford the Society much pleasure, could you teach a few poor children to read. You must also improve your leisure time in private religious conversation with the parents of the children, and in exhortation and prayer with the sick. The

\* These instructions were framed, before the Society adopted the alteration in their plan, Proceedings, p. 79. The Catechists have now a more enlarged sphere of usefulness.

every appearance of indolence will materially hinder your usefulness.

Preachers and catechists must send to the Secretary a written account of their progress once a fortnight; and besides this, they must keep a regular journal of their procedure.

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#### No. IV.

### Part of the CONCLUDING REMARKS, subjoined to the PROCEEDINGS of the SOCIETY for Propagating the GOSPEL at Home.

THE Society have thus laid before the Public a full account of their proceedings. They have fairly stated their precise objects, and leave it to their Christian brethren to judge of the probable utility of their design.

A conviction in the minds of the members, that sufficient means of religious instruction were not enjoyed in this country, gave birth to this institution; and after some experience, they are fully satisfied, that their conviction is too well founded.

Positive evidence has been afforded of the extreme ignorance of multitudes of our countrymen. It is unnecessary to enquire particularly whence this arises. It seems enough to say, that, while the fact exists, it is the incumbent duty of Christians to use means for the salvation of their fellow-sinners.

The Society rejoice that many doors of usefulness have been opened to them; and with much gratitude they acknowledge, that their most sanguine expectations have been exceeded. It seems a remarkable sign of the times, that a desire for propagating the knowledge of the truth, should be accompanied by a desire equally ardent for hearing it. The fields are indeed white unto harvest. May the Lord of the harvest send forth many labourers, and may their labours be crowned with remarkable success!

At their outset the Society were aware that their designs might be misrepresented. In this country their object was, in a great measure new; and they laid their account to meet with opposition. The best refutation, however, of ill-founded calumny, is the simple statement of facts. This, they presume, is fully done in the present pamphlet; and they willingly leave it to speak for itself. From it the Public will judge, whether there be any foundation for the insinuations which have been thrown out, that their measures are hostile to the government of their country. The principles of those sent out from the Society are fully investigated; they are known to be men, who are subject to the powers that be, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake; and they are strictly enjoined to avoid entirely speaking on politics, either in public or in private. In no instance has any sent from the Society been found transgressing this rule\*. Were they to do so, their connection with them would be immediately dissolved. On the other hand, the Society are happy to state, that instances have come to their knowledge, of some persons who formerly entertained seditious principles, being convinced of their error, by having their attention led to the gospel of Christ; an effect which must always follow, when the consciences of men are awakened to a concern for their souls.

Equally groundless is the insinuation, that the Society wish to promote any particular form of church-government. The best proof of this is, that men of very different sentiments on that subject, are employed in their service. The Society itself consists of Christians of various denominations; and they rejoice, that it has been in their power to aid the desire of good men to publish the gospel, whether they be Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or Independents. In these matters real Christians may differ. And if sinners be roused to attend to the salvation of their souls, it is left to their own choice to join any connection where the gospel is preached.—

\* A report was indeed circulated that a gentleman who had gone out from the Society had dispersed a political pamphlet. The Public, however, may be assured, that after the strictest investigation, the report was found to be absolutely false.



## No. V.

EXTRACTS from Mr EWING'S Sermon, entitled, *The Duties of Christians to Civil Government.*

ON the words of our text, (Tit. iii. 1. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,") it may be proper to make two remarks. The first is, that the terms, "principalities, powers, and magistrates," are of a general nature. Terms of this kind are commonly used in every part of the New Testament, where our duty to the higher powers is treated of; and the reason seems to be, that the Christian's duty towards them does not depend on any particular form of government. It is not necessary for him to examine the comparative merits of monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy; or to appreciate the excellence of a mixture of these forms, such as obtains in the British constitution; it is enough for him to know, that the principalities, powers and magistrates, call them what you will, are the existing and acknowledged government of the country in which he lives. That point he cannot be at a loss to ascertain; and when it is ascertained, he knows to whom the precepts of the text refer.

The second remark upon the words is, that there seems to be a gradation of duties here enjoined. "Put them in mind, says the apostle, to be *subject* to principalities and powers, to *obey* magistrates, to be *ready to every good work.*" *Subjection* is merely passive, and may be the effect of constraint. *Obedience* implies activity, from regard to authority. *Readiness to every good work*, seems to denote an activity, which is caused, not so much by regard to authority, as to the excellence of the thing authorized. "Every good work," here, though an indefinite phrase, seems, from the connection, to mean chiefly, works which

are good for society; which immediately promote the public welfare; and as such may be acceptable to the higher powers. The lesson couched in this last clause, seems to be, that where a thing is truly good in itself, although it may not be absolutely enjoined by authority, although it may be simply recommended, or even only encouraged indirectly; yet the Christian should cheerfully afford it his countenance; should be active in endeavouring to give a favourable direction to public opinion; to raise the general standard of morals; and to carry on every benevolent and useful undertaking. Here, therefore, he is enjoined to be, not merely submissive and obedient, but zealous, and indefatigable for the public good.——

We shall proceed to the second thing proposed, which was to draw a few inferences, which seem to be warranted by our text, and by the other portions of scripture with which it has been compared.

First, then, The subjection of a Christian to the higher powers, ought to be Conscientious. Many submit to government merely because they must do it. They obey, because they dare not rebel. A period of anarchy they would welcome as a season of emancipation and festivity; or, if they disliked it, their motive would be, rather that of fear for the consequences towards themselves, than that of duty towards God and their neighbour. But the Christian is taught, that the powers that be are ordained of God; that they all exist by divine permission and appointment; nay, that the existing power is the minister of God to the Christian for good. However imperfect human laws and human administration may be, he is sensible, that even a government comparatively bad, is better for society than none. At any rate, he knows that the measures of the higher powers, like all things else, shall work together for good to him, and to all his fellow Christians. He therefore cheerfully submits to the ordinance of God, and is subject, not only for wrath but for conscience sake.

Secondly, The Christian's subjection must be Unresisting: Many confess their obligation of duty to the higher powers, but perplex themselves with questions respecting the extent of that obligation. I have no hesitation in saying,

that I conceive the precept enjoining subjection, to be absolute. "Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation." These awful words are limited by no exception; and however strong they may seem, they are in perfect unison, both with the general morality of the gospel, and with all the examples in point, that are to be found in the New Testament. Put the strongest case you please; that, suppose, of persecution, or of any violent dealing under form of law; the morality of the gospel will still countenance the principle for which we contend. "Ye have heard, saith Christ, that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil," Matth. v. 38, 39. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy body in other mens matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf," 1 Pet. iv. 12.---16. If resistance had ever been allowable in Christians, it must surely have been so, when the liberty and the life of their Lord was attacked. But even then it was checked, and that not merely, because he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, but because it is not suited to the nature of his kingdom. "My kingdom, said Christ, is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." John xviii. 36.

If men in power should issue an order, prohibiting us to obey an express command of God; we could be at no loss which of the interfering authorities to prefer. But there

may be even a refusal to obey, where there is no resistance. This case receives a very happy illustration from the behaviour of Peter and John, of which the account was a little ago read. When the Jewish rulers forbade what Christ commanded, those apostles very properly answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men;" and they acted upon the principle of their answer. But they did not resist the violent interruption that was given them in the discharge of their duty. They did not resist the summons, nor the order of commitment. When threatened, they threatened not again. When summoned a second time, they obeyed as before, and that, although there was no compulsion. For we are told, that "the captain, with the officers, brought them without violence, because they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned." The force of this precedent seems altogether irresistible. On the one hand, here was a set of murderers, endeavouring to conceal one sin by committing another. That the blood of Jesus might not be laid to their charge, they were commanding the apostles not to speak at all, nor teach in his name, although nothing less than the salvation of the world depended on their doing it. On the other hand, here were men of the most unblemished character, who had wrought a notable miracle, and were preaching heavenly doctrine, and their persecutors could say nothing against either the one or the other. What is above all to be remarked, the persecutors had rendered themselves odious, and the apostles, for the moment, were become so popular, that they might be supposed to have had the power, as well as the right, to resist. If the people were ready to stone the captain and his officers of their own accord, how much more would they have been so, if the apostles had given them any encouragement. A rescue at least might have been made, if not a decisive rebellion. No such thing, however, was attempted; and we may be well assured, that no such thing would have been permitted. The apostles knew that in cases of persecution, the only lawful means of relief for a Christian, is flight from one place to another; and when opportunity of doing so is denied, the will of Christ evidently is, that his servants should be

brought before governors and kings for his sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. Matth. x. 18, ---23.

It is hardly necessary to add, that unresisting subjection, though utterly opposed to all conspiracy and violence, does not interfere with the use of constitutional and acknowledged privileges. When imprisoned, when bound, when in danger of a partial trial, Paul availed himself of the rights of a Roman. His conduct on these occasions may be explained by one of his own exhortations, 1 Cor. vii. 21. "Art thou called, being a servant (or slave)? care not for it; but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather." The principle evidently was this obvious dictate of Christian morality, which will also apply to the subject before us, that whatever Christ calls us to endure, we are to submit to it with cheerfulness, and whatever he permits us to possess, we are to enjoy with gratitude.

Thirdly, The Christian's subjection must be Disinterested. Some men may think themselves sufficiently conscientious in their duty to government, if they perform with common honesty any service in which government employs them, and for which they receive an adequate reward. They may profess loyalty, because it is their interest to do so; and, in the true spirit of hypocrisy, be perhaps officious to make their profession, and censorious of those who are not so loud in making it as themselves. Far be it from me to throw out this as a general reflection on those who are engaged in any public department. We are no doubt bound in charity to believe, that they are as conscientious, generally speaking, as men in other situations of life. But it is surely not too much, for the sake of illustration, to state, as at least a possible case, that some men may seem to be loyal, because they have their price, either in possession, or in expectation; that if this venal disposition should prevail, it would prove extremely embarrassing to any government; and that none would be more dangerous to the hand that feeds them, than venal friends, if interest, which is a variable consideration, should ever tempt them to change their party. The Christian must not be swayed by filthy lucre. He must submit himself to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake.

His principle is at once exalted and steady. It requires the most uniform fidelity of conduct, whether he occupy a public or a private station; whether his services be properly rewarded, or not; nay, although they should be despised or even misunderstood, and turned into matter of accusation against him.

Fourthly, The subjection of the Christian must be Respectful. Among the dues that belong to the higher powers, it is said, Render "fear to whom fear is due; honour to whom honour." On the other hand, it is mentioned as sin in the false teachers, that "they despised government, and spake evil of dignities." We are in great danger of thinking little of sin in these particulars; and yet no sins are more pregnant with mischief to society. The difference between great and little among men, when viewed abstractly, is no doubt very trifling. We have the authority of scripture for saying, "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie: to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity." Psal. lxii. 9. The possession of power, however, is very apt to intoxicate the mind, and to render men overbearing, haughty and vain. Hence, the insolence of office has become proverbial. The titles of dignity are frequently extravagant, and are often retained, after the authority that belonged to them is so completely obsolete, that their very meaning is hardly remembered. On these accounts the pride of inferiors is ready to take offence; and the same principle which makes the one class of society tyrannical and ostentatious, makes the other refractory and turbulent. When its workings are confined to the indignant feelings of the mind, or at least to merely verbal expressions of contempt, men are sometimes disposed to overlook it as harmless. There are some who would even encourage a licentiousness of speech in the inferior classes, as a salutary check upon the manners of their superiors. And there are others who conscientiously refuse to give titles of rank to a fellow creature, or so much as to use the ordinary phrases of civility, under the notion that these things are inconsistent with a proper regard to the word of God. But, except perhaps in the last case, the withholding of expres-

sions of respect, is the symptom of an improper spirit. God requires us to exercise humility, not only towards him, but also towards one another. Where contempt is cherished, obedience will not long continue to be faithfully paid. The bands of society will be probably broken, and authority, robbed of its due respect, will have recourse to coercion, as the only remaining means to preserve its existence. Hence, the squabbles of party, and the dreadful commotions of civil war, which, however they may terminate, are pernicious in the extreme. I would remind even those who may have conscientious scruples on the subject, that the scriptures recognize titles of office and dignity, as the means of preserving decency and order in society. Not to mention the numerous instances in the Old Testament, where servants of the Lord addressed even heathen kings, with the ordinary compliments of salutation to royalty; we find Paul, when under persecution, when rudely interrupted by a Roman governor, and charged with insanity, (which was certainly very ignoble conduct), not only replying with meekness, but using the language of respect, “I am not mad, *most noble* Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.” Acts xxvi. 25.

Fifthly, The subjection of the Christian must be Practical. Like every other part of his profession, it must be evinced by works. Among many of the professors of loyalty, there is reason to fear, that this is not the case. It is amazing, for example, how little conscience is made of defrauding the public revenue. Men who are not suspected of dishonesty in private transactions, will sometimes hardly deny that they heighten their charge, if it is a demand upon government. Smuggling is often acknowledged, as if it were neither dishonest or dishonourable. Even perjury itself is awfully common. A custom-house oath is often held to be no further binding, than men are prevented by vigilance from breaking it. All these crimes, however common, the Christian must abhor. The multiplication of oaths in collecting the revenue, is much to be lamented. But whatever improprieties may be committed in imposing them, they are nevertheless a solemn appeal to the omniscience of God and to future judgment. And if

a man cannot live by his business without perjury, it were surely better that he gave up his business. If this conduct were followed, (supposing a case that might require it), things would be more likely soon to find their own level; the unproductiveness of the tax would point out the expediency of such alterations in the law, as would suit the interest, both of the fair trader and of the state. To smuggle, indeed, is a crime, not merely against government, but against the public at large. For if, through its frequency, the revenue prove deficient, it is evident that another tax must be levied on the honest, that the deficiency occasioned by the fraudulent may be made up. The payment, therefore, of taxes, is at once an obvious and an important duty. "For this cause pay you tribute also," saith the apostle; "for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom," Rom. xiii. 6, 7. We have seen that when a demand was made upon Christ for the half-shekel levied on every Jew for the service of the temple; although, as Son of God, and Lord of the temple, he might have claimed exemption, yet, that he might not give offence, he wrought a miracle, and paid the money. Again, when his enemies, wishing to entangle him in his talk, asked him whether it was lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not? although that emperor had no other claim, than from what is called right of conquest; yet, since his power was permitted in providence to exist, and his coin, in consequence, circulated through the country, the answer was, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." This was not an evasive answer, as if he had said, Give every one his own. Our Saviour did not give answers of that kind. It was an express declaration, that they ought to give to Cæsar his tribute-money, and to God his worship, and that the one duty was not only consistent, but connected with the other.

As it is absolutely a sin to refuse paying taxes, so it is very unbecoming in a Christian to murmur at the amount of them. His treasure is in heaven. Silver and gold are



not his Gods. If taxes increase, God wills that he should be so much poorer; and good is the will of the Lord. Indeed, the precept to pay taxes should be considered as a blessing. Had it not been given expressly, conscientious men might have thought it necessary to know first how the money was to be applied, and to refuse wherever they disapproved of the expenditure. This would have given occasion to endless trouble and contention. But now, in consequence of the express precept, all occasion of scruple or uneasiness is removed; and, as of old, Christians were permitted to buy whatever was sold in the shambles, asking no questions for conscience sake, so now, whatever is imposed as a tax, it is our duty simply to pay, and to owe no man any thing, but to love one another.

Sixthly, The Christian's subjection must be Pious. Common honesty may lead other men to imitate him in the preceding particulars, but here he will leave them wholly behind. Instead of the selfish spirit, which is contracted within itself, and which cherishes rather a sullen malignity, than a generous benevolence towards the higher powers; the Christian, animated by the love of God and his neighbour, is taught to offer up "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, for all men; and particularly for kings, and for all that are in authority." How delightfully does grace enlarge and elevate the mind! Not content with doing good to all, as he has opportunity, and with rendering to all their dues, he still feels the debt of universal love; and in order to answer its unlimited demands, he draws by fervent effectual prayer on the inexhaustible treasury of heaven. Kings and men in authority, because they are commonly rich and mighty in the things of this world, are often thought to have no need of prayers. They are too much neglected even by Christians, in secret and family devotion; and when public prayer is made for them, there is sometimes visible a strange indifference, a cold formality both in the minister and in the people. Brethren, these things ought not so to be. It is like Cain to say of any man, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We should feel interested in other men, in proportion to the importance and difficulty of their several

stations. Kings, therefore, and all in authority, claim a principal place in our requests to God. On their behaviour, in a great measure, depends our own happiness, and the happiness of many. They may either be left to breathe out threatenings and slaughter, or, by respecting the liberty of conscience, have the honour of being nursing fathers to the Church of Christ. Besides, are we not to be earnestly concerned for their everlasting salvation? Their situation is attended with peculiar temptations, which render their danger extreme. What a sad thing to see men so much engrossed by affairs of state, as to have little time to think of the affairs of their own souls! And then they are almost beyond the reach of friendly admonition. A serious Christian is perhaps seldom in their presence. What remains then, but that with peculiar earnestness we commend them to God, in whose hand is the heart of kings, and who turneth them as the rivers of water. This duty should be enforced by a sense of the many benefits which we enjoy from civil government. At the same time the obligation of it does not depend on these. Not even the greatest injuries could afford us a pretence for neglecting it. Was ever injury, like that of Jesus, when, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, he was taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain? That injury was, in some sense, chargeable upon Jewish and Roman governors; yet were they certainly included, if not chiefly intended, in that admirable prayer, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke xxiii. 34. See also 1 Cor. ii. 8. I have to add here, that the piety of the Christian's subjection is not in vain. Ten righteous men would have saved Sodom and Gomorrha from the fire of heaven. Wicked men are not aware how much they owe to the unknown prayers of the Lord's people. And, whatever becomes of the wicked, precious in the sight of the Lord is the "death of his saints." If Sodom is to perish, a solitary Lot must first be warned to haste him, and escape, for the destroying angel cannot do any thing till he be come unto Zoar. If judgment is to begin at the house of God itself, the Lord will say unto his servant, "Go through

“ the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem,  
 “ and set a mark upon the forehead of the men that sigh,  
 “ and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the  
 “ midst thereof.” Ezek. ix. 4.

Let us now, as was proposed, in the

III. place, Reply to some Objections.

The doctrine of conscientious, or, as some may call it, passive obedience and non-resistance, is by no means popular. No doubt it has often been sadly abused, by court clergymen, who certainly did not preach it in a scriptural manner, or with a proper spirit. But truth, though wrested, is still truth. If a doctrine has been preached wrong, let us endeavour to preach it right; but if it be asserted in Scripture, let us never be offended at it.

It may be said, this doctrine is an encouragement to tyrants, whom it is not only lawful, but our duty to resist. I cannot see, that Christians are any where in Scripture either bound, or warranted to resist even tyrants. Supposing resistance were in certain cases lawful, the questions, when it is so, and how far it may be carried, must be always as difficult as they are critical: When are governors tyrants, and when not? What shall we do, when they are tyrannical in some things, and not in others? Shall we, in matters like these, tell the Christian to regulate his subjection, either by his own opinion, or by that of the public? Alas, he may be too simple to judge, or too much sequestered to obtain the needful information. The public mind may be much divided or much prejudiced, and its conduct such as would call rather for an opposing testimony, than an obsequious compliance. What incessant disturbances, what multiplied disputes, what distressing perplexities, would prevail in the church! How preferable then, both for its simplicity and safety, is the rule of Scripture! “ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather  
 “ give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is  
 “ mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Rom. xii. 19.  
 “ Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the  
 “ west, nor from the south. But God is judge: he putteth  
 “ down one, and setteth up another.” Psal. lxxv. 6, 7.

To him therefore who for wise ends setteth up, the Christian ought to leave the putting down of tyrants. If it be argued, that we must use means, and that resisting tyrants, implies not a spirit of vengeance, but rather of benevolence to society; I answer, Use only the means that are lawful, and you will find these at once the safest and the most efficacious for every salutary purpose. If what was said before be according to Scripture, resistance of higher powers can in no case be lawful for a Christian. And how much better will it be for him to oppose the proud and violent spirit of tyranny, by exemplifying the humble and meek spirit of the gospel, than to give to tyrannical violence its most plausible apology, by entering into the plots of conspiracy, the combinations of faction, or the dreadful deeds of civil war! When the little flock of Christ disperse for the purpose of joining with worldly men in political associations, the incongruous connection is hurtful at once to the spiritual interests of their own minds, and to the credit of the gospel; and their awkward, scrupulous, half length co-operation in many of the measures pursued, exposes them to the contempt, the jealousy, and the hatred of the rest of their party. Even their small number renders them insignificant. But when they keep to their own Shepherd, and their own fold, they dwell in quiet habitations, and in sure resting-places. Their consciences are not misled or overruled; their minds individually, and their communion with each other, are equally comfortable; and the influence of their avowed opinions, of their united example, of their heavenly and fast held profession, though gradual and silent in its operation, is irresistible in its progress, and mighty in its effects. I appeal to history, whether it is not a fact, that in every country where the gospel has been preached with considerable success, and professed by its disciples with a tolerable degree of purity, the standard of morals has been raised, the administration and the very principles of the government have been improved, and the conditions of all ranks meliorated. These blessings have been derived from the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, not from political schemes and measures, even when approved or helped forward by Christians. The

cabals, indeed, of churchmen and their adherents, are not only altogether distinct from the influence of the gospel, but form an humbling contrast to it, and have ever afforded to the infidel and the scoffer their favourite subject of declamation.

It may be objected, again, that the doctrine which we espouse, condemns the noble exertions of those excellent men, who were honoured of God to bring about the blessed reformation from popery, and afterwards what has been termed the glorious Revolution of 1688. I trust, that I feel strongly the importance of these remarkable events. I read the history respecting them with the liveliest interest. I admire the integrity and the fortitude of many who struggled for the cause of God and truth. I believe they were raised up of God for a blessing to their own, and to future times. I desire to enjoy the benefit of their efforts with thankfulness to the kind Providence, which crowned those efforts with success. But we must always distinguish between the holiness of God, and the imperfection of his instruments. After all, the reformers were only men. It remains to be proved, that the same, or perhaps superior, advantages could not have been obtained by means simply of preaching, and steadfast adherence to the spiritual faith and practice of the gospel. It is certain, that great as the attainments of the reformers were, they lived in times of general darkness as to liberty of conscience, mutual forbearance, and the way in which error should be opposed by the friends of truth. Besides, in a question of Christian duty may we not follow the obvious precepts of the word of God? Must we stop to accommodate what is legibly written in the law and the testimony to the opinions or practices of certain celebrated men? Grant that they were Christians and eminent Christians, did they give law to the Scriptures, or the Scriptures to them? What if the gospel should refuse to sanction the creed either of *Whig* or *Tory*? What if it should be found to be the religion of strangers only, and pilgrims on the earth? of men chosen out of the world individually; gathered into associations purely of a spiritual nature, and called to make themselves known to men, only by the

propagation of their faith, and the light of their good works?

Thus have we endeavoured to illustrate the duties of the Christian to civil government; and notwithstanding some objections which seemed worthy of reply, we have thought ourselves warranted by Scripture to say, that his subjection to "principalities, powers and magistrates," ought to be Conscientious, Unresisting, Disinterested, Respectful, Practical and Pious.

How thankful, brethren, ought we to be, that these duties, which are universally binding on Christians, are to us so easy! Had our lot been cast in Turkey, in a country where the government was absolute, and the administration ever so oppressive, our duties would have been the same, but the temptations to transgress would have been certainly great. In this land, however, the case is far otherwise. I firmly believe, (and I do not think any of you will ascribe it to mere partiality to my native country when I say), that no other part of the whole world is at present so highly favoured, in respect either of temporal or spiritual blessings. In our situation, therefore, the smallest approach to sedition, the cherishing of discontent, or the mere want of gratitude to God, would be most heinously criminal.

The land, which we live in, is indeed upon earth, and, like every thing earthly, has inscribed upon all its temporal advantages, "Vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit." What then! Let us desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. One thing is needful. God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. This, and this alone, is the ministry of reconciliation; the grand theme for thanksgiving both in time and eternity. Our victories in distant seas, our repelling of invasions, our internal tranquillity, our civil privileges, were they ten thousand times more important than they are, can neither save nor satisfy our immortal souls. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such

“ things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace,  
 “ without spot, and blameless: and account that the long-  
 “ suffering of our Lord is salvation. Beware lest ye, be-  
 “ ing led away with the error of the wicked, fall from  
 “ your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the  
 “ knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To  
 “ him be glory both now and for ever, Amen.” 2 Pet. iii.  
 13, 14, 15. 17, 18.

THE END.

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