

A

LETTER

TO THE

Rev. Robert Hawker, D. D.

Vicar of CHARLES, Plymouth;

CONTAINING

STRICTURES

ON

His LETTER to the Rev. R. POLWHELE,

Vicar of Manaccan, Cornwall.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

An Address to the Public.

SECOND EDITION.

By JOHN WOTTON.

“ Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee.”

Luke xix. 22.

“ Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth.”

Gal. iv. 16.

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IN compliance with the pressing solicitation of many friends, I have published a *second Edition* of my *Letter to the Rev. D. H.*; and with pleasure I embrace this opportunity, to offer my grateful acknowledgments to the enlightened and unprejudiced part of the community, who have been pleased to honor my recent attempt with decided tokens of approbation. It would be doing injustice to the cause of truth, my friends, and to myself, to suffer to pass, unnoticed, the unfounded reports of men, who not being able to refute my arguments, seem determined to undermine them, by assassinating my character. I shall just glance at a few of their wretched inuendos, that are only worthy to be used by the persons from whom they sprung. It has been conjectured by some, and confidently asserted by others, that I am not the Author of the Letter, to which my namé is annexed, but have merely lent it to some other person; such an evasive scheme I despise; nor did I ever, nor ever will,

lend my aid to such a nefarious traffic. Moreover do affirm, that no person whatever read the manuscript, or heard it read, before it was delivered by myself to the printer, for publication.

Again, I have been accused of ingratitude by Dr. H. who has declared, at different places, he was the means of getting me into the Victualling-Office; against this declaration I enter my protestation, and will prove it to be erroneous; as I have been, and am still, solely indebted to the Officers of the Victualling-Office, for my entrance and continuance there, from whence myself and family derive support. It is highly probable, the Doctor's mistake is alone owing to the lapse of time that has intervened between the present and that period, when the circumstance the Doctor has alluded to took place, and is simply as follows. — About eleven years since, the Doctor was at my room to baptize an infant, I then requested him to look over a letter which I had written, and intended to give the Agent-Victualler, therein requesting to be continued in the station I then filled as an apprentice; (my term of apprenticeship being at that time just about to expire.) After reading and approving of my letter, the Doctor kindly offered to go in person to the Agent, with a view to get me established in the station I then filled for my master: pursuant to his generous offer, he made application, but
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the result proved him unsuccessful, as the birth was before promised, and I was compelled to relinquish it, for an inferior situation; *nor was any favor ever bestowed on me in consequence of the Doctor's application.*—For the truth of what is here related, with permission, I refer to *William Crees, esq.* who will authenticate it.

I have never ceased to entertain a due sense of the Doctor's kindness, nor should I have yielded to the strong impulse of duty, had I not thought him sincere, when he circulated, through the country, an indiscriminate invitation, in these words:—"I SHALL THANK ANY MAN TO POINT OUT MY ERROR."—But, it is said, want of love caused me to write: to this I reply, Dissimulation merits no love from the christian;—must all be deemed destitute of love, who will not join, sycophant like, to lavish strains of nauseous adulation and flattery on Dr. HAWKER; as is frequently done by some who denominate themselves, *his people*; who, it is to be feared, look more to man than to God the rich dispenser of all blessings. Shall I do violence to conscience, to escape the censure of superstitious bigotry, by echoing the popular shout "BE HE PRAISED?"—No; rather let me say with the Apostle Paul: "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." Gal. ii. 11. From what I have ever heard, my

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opinion

opinion verily is, that before the main question in religion is asked once, "What think ye of Christ?" — What think you of the Doctor? is asked a thousand times.—I trust my heart will ever remain an entire stranger to the love www.dlibro.com that leads Dr. H. to doom his fellow-creatures to endless misery, because they cannot believe and embrace a set of human dogmas, that are avowedly incomprehensible.

To these talkers of love, I recommend this text of scripture: "He that rebuketh a man, afterwards shall find more favor, than he that flattereth with the tongue." Prov. xxviii. 23. Again, there are some who have cavilled with the note in p. 2d; (p. 9, of this edit.) so far from retracting from what is there advanced, their cavils lead me to be more explicit, by saying, ardently as an increase of Gospel Ministers is to be wished, it has given many pain to reflect that there have men of unqualified ambition, under the auspices of the Doctor, mounted the pulpit in the old tabernacle with minds more sable than their garments; for one of them repeatedly called the Gospel of Christ, "a BUTTEFUL TOFFIC;" and another pronounced it to be "a PROGLEGATION to sinners." Thus giving an "uncertain, and not a certain sound," their ill-guided zeal is surely a degradation to the name of religion, as well as to those who actuate them to exercise it;

it: yet, these wiseacres who call their "text the CONTEXT," would fain be thought God's inspired ambassadors; whereas their talents prescribe no offices in the church for them, except that of candle-snuffer, or deputy sexton.—While the pretended friends of the Doctor have alledged me and my letter to be unworthy notice, have so far deviated from their avowed system, that the whole tenor of my life has been ransacked, and my domestic concerns explored to find wherewith to traduce my name. This has been only equalled by their pulling down, or effacing every bill which announced the publication of my Letter; whether their conduct militates most against the Doctor or myself, competent judges have already decided. Is it because I have ventured, with the purest motives, to accept of the Doctor's invitation, that I am denounced, by the *zealots* of a *sect*, an immoral character? If an unrivalled attention to the duties of a laborious vocation, and in the interval between it and nightly rest, a studious devotedness to the education of my children be immorality; to the arraignment of those inquisitorial censors my plea is guilty, and I have no defence to offer. But, if scripture and rationality do not convince me of error, the steeled barb of persecution, will never extort the sigh of compunction from my heart, for what I have written. I

disdain to take any further notice of their meanness than what is contained in this distich.

“ Their slander cannot work my shame,
 “ Their false reproaches only raise my name.”

There are some persons who, not being able to distinguish between keen truths, and false aspersions, have condemned my Letter for a scurrilous Libel, and would fain invoke a prosecution on my head; those enemies to fair discussion may find an instructive and admirable lesson in the conduct of Oliver Cromwell, who, when his courtiers informed him that one had published a pamphlet, inveighing against his arbitrary government, and urged him to prosecute the author. Cromwell, though a Despot, sternly replied to his servile minions, in these memorable words: “ MY CAUSE IS TOO STRONG TO BE HURT BY PAPER SHOT.”

Should my late attempt, though effected in much weakness, be ultimately instrumental in doing good, if in ever so small a degree, it will abundantly recompence and afford exquisite satisfaction to one, who desires to be found what he subscribes himself, with humility and deference,

A Lover of Consistency.

“ Public censure is a public foe,
 “ Unless a zeal for virtue guide the blow.”

LETTER, &c.

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Plymouth, October 1, 1799.

REVEREND SIR,

A Short time since, a Pamphlet was brought me for my perusal unexpectedly; as it was unsought for, I read it with some degree of avidity, and found it to be an answer written by you, to the Rev. Mr. POLWHELE's Letter. It would have been highly grateful to my feelings, if the reading of it had produced no other sensations of mind but those of approbation; but, as your reply was directed against the most vulnerable part of the Vicar of *Manaccan's* Letter, namely, its *inconsistency*; the perusal of your letter (as was before hinted) aroused emotions in my mind, quite opposite from those of pleasure, as it lays you open to every discerning person who is acquainted with your situation in life, and compares your doctrines and practice

together, as a person fraught with *irreconcilable inconsistency*.

To demonstrate the fact, *and prevent, if possible, a repetition of it in future*, is my principal design in addressing this LETTER to you from the Press; a mode of conveyance, I hope, the the least objectionable, or at least ought to be so when it is recollected, that a controversial Pamphlet, written and sent by you to Mr. Porter, through the medium of the Press, was, with the usual fee, the easy purchase of your Diploma of Doctor of Divinity. However, nought but the *eccentricity* of your conduct gave birth to the ideas which you will find in this, and your late publication, provoked their appearance.

I am aware that my Phraseology and Diction will afford you much scope for criticism; I frankly acknowledge my manner is not very courtly; but when your education, rank in life, &c. are contrasted with mine, there will be found in this respect, such a vast inequality, that a single apologetical line need not be written by me to extenuate the defective manner in which this comes to hand. And, indeed, it is observable, that those whining prefaratory addresses which precede some literary works, feigning incompetency, mean nothing less than to appreciate the talents of the opinionated authors.

As it is my sole desire for *truth* to be the principal feature and characteristic of this Letter, all redundancies or deficiencies of another kind found in it, will scarce disturb the serenity of mind felt and enjoyed by me, for having acted from the purest motives arising from a sense of *duty*. To fulfil the intention before intimated, I mean at present to confine myself strictly to what your Letter may furnish me with for that purpose; but should any matter be introduced which you may deem extraneous, having not the minutest wish personally to offend, hope it will be obliterated from your mind: should this hope prove fallacious, am no way concerned on the score of your arguments, rather defying than fearing a controversy;* notwithstanding, with sincerity I declare, I should have hesitated to enter the list against such a powerful opponent as yourself, had you not, in the threepenny Pamphlet now under consideration, given a general invitation to that purpose, in these words: "I shall thank any man to point out my error, that through God's Grace, it may be acknowledged and corrected."

* Should any person, into whose hand this may drop, deem it something worse than presumptive boldness in me to offer some-what-like argument to Dr. HAWKER on a religious topic, their thoughts will perhaps vary, when informed the Doctor's humility leads him so far as to attend (if not prompt) the illiterate and senseless pulpit harrangues of men, whose natural and acquired abilities scarcely capacitate them to fill the office of clerk in a parish church.

In your Letter, (if I am not deceived) Sir, you have betrayed much fear; and that fear seems to have arisen from the idea of your being suspected to entertain Sentiments unfavorable to the Church of England. That you are strongly attached to your *benefice*, no one that knows you can reasonably doubt; but that you have not manifested an equal and invariable attachment to the whole *ritual* of the Church, is as doubtless, and shall be irrefragably shewn before my pen is released from its engagement, thereby assisting the mean design of pointing out your *irreconcilable inconsistency*. It being quite foreign from my design, shall not enter into a *critical analysis* of the Service of the Church of England, nor contend whether or not it be strictly consonant to the revealed will of God; shall only quote such parts of it, as are indispensably necessary, to see how far the tenets held forth in your Letter, the Liturgy of the established Church, and your Practice, both within and without the walls of the Church correspond.

Before I proceed directly to this, shall notice by the way, an expression in your Letter, which does not strictly harmonize with the word of God; nor indeed with some parts of your conduct. You seem to start and recede from the charge of *Itinerancy*, as if it was a *crime*, by saying, "So very opposite is this to my real character."

character." *—That it may be, Sir: yet, why take fright at, and pain, to prove you have not (or but seldom) promulgated the glad tidings of *Salvation* beyond the *pale* of your *district*, when you have the example of the *Prophets*; yea, even of *CHRIST* and his *Apostles*, for your support. Out of many, I shall adluce a few Scripture evidences to prove it; these following shall suffice. —“Go and tell this people. Is. vi. 9. But the Lord said unto me, Say not I am a child; for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee. Jer. i. 7. Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel. Ezek. ii. 3. Arise, go to Ninevah, that great city, and cry against it. Jonah i. 2. And as ye go, preach. Matt. x. 7. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them. Matt. xxviii. 19. And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And they went forth and preached every where. Mark xvi. 15, 20. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent. Luke iv. 43. And they departed and went

* At this time, I admit the above assertion to be true, on the bare supposition, that your ingenuity might lead you to apply another appellation, instead of *ITINERANTING* to your re-iterated journies to the parishes of *Stoke Damerel*, *Egg Buckland*, *Yatmpton*, &c entirely for the purpose of preaching.—Want of memory or fortitude in you, Sir, was surely the cause of that assertion appearing.—“Alas! what is man?”

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through the towns preaching the Gospel. Luke ix. 6. As my father hath sent me, even so send I you. John xx. 21. And ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Acts i. 8. Therefore, they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. Acts viii. 4."

To enumerate more Scripture proofs would be useless, as these already quoted abundantly prove that itinerant, more than local preaching, was designed by the *great Head of the Church*, "the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls," although you boast of not having practised it. As the hope is fondly to be cherished, that all who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," earnestly pray for the verification of that soul-animating promise, "The knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth," &c. And though we know the Lord is not restricted to means, yet it is highly rational to conclude, the means are connected with the end; then there is little reason for you timidly to recoil at the imputation of Itinerancy; sheltering under a pretended attachment to *forms and ceremonies*. If your conduct was closely pursued, there would be little reason to hope the **GLO-RI-OU-S GOS-PE-L OF CHR-IST** will sound throughout the Asiatic land, and the more untutored and inhospitable shores of Africa. But it must be expected

expected from the instrumental exertions of such men as WHITFIELD and WESLEY, whose manners in life and writings, you seemingly are unacquainted with, or ashamed to recognize, that this grand work will be accomplished, rather than from those who, as the Scripture says, “ Eat the fat and clothe themselves with the wool ; but when the sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill, and was scattered upon all the face of the earth, they did not seek or search after them.”

There does not appear the slightest ground for Mr. POLWHELE'S uneasiness on account of your so far imitating *Whitfield*, as to quit hastily your present Residence, where you are so much looked up to, by those whose morals you have, in a measure, reformed, by adding the manners of the Gentleman to the accomplishments of a Scholar ; and I think it only justice to say, that your *excellent pulpit discourses* have been, in all probability, blessed to the conviction, comfort, and edification of many souls now on earth, and of others who are, doubtless, gone to glory. Yet, with all these pleasing reflections, I am led to suspect, should a more *lucrative Benefice* become attainable, you would deem it *an irresistible call from God*, and consequently obey it, leaving your numerous followers your well-wishes to console them for their loss, by your embracing what

would

would be more eligible than the *Vicarage of Charles*. Should this ever be the case with you, Sir, it need not create much surprise, for such an event taking place, with the pretext already assigned for it, is far from being novel, as a transient *Itinerancy* of the description before mentioned, (if we may judge from facts) so far from being deemed despicable, is allowed by most to be vastly preferable to a continued locality. In the foregoing lines, it is the least wish of my heart to cast the slightest reflection on the character of any Minister who exercises his Ministry statary; I mean merely to prove, that *the Word of God*, sanctions by precept and example, the practice of *Itinerancy* in those who, from conscience, see it their duty so to act. Therefore, you might, Sir, with more security, have repelled the attack of Mr. P. by taking post on the *immutable basis of God's Word*, than by making a *flying retreat* under cover of your strict adherence to the *Vicarage of Charles*.

The next part of your Letter which has arrested my attention, is your Note (page 12,) wherein you have endeavoured to justify your political principles. For my own part, I think any justification from you totally unnecessary on that subject, firmly believing there is not the slightest foundation for supposing any Gentleman, filling a like station with yourself, can be
disaffected

disaffected to the present order of things, much less tainted with *Gallic Mania*; for if ever such a calamitous event as a *Revolution* should overwhelm this nation, (*which may God in mercy avert*) he must be an *idiot*, who could harbour a single thought. that in such a case any set of men usurping the Government, let them be of what cast soever, would appropriate a larger portion of wealth to the Church, than what she at present enjoys.

Lest I wander too far, shall come at once close to the point intended, by unreservedly declaring your Reasons for publishing, anonymously, the *Appeal* alluded to in your Note, appear to be equivocal; and the conclusion you have drawn from its publication erroneous.—Your Note runs thus: “When I wrote it (meaning your *Appeal*) I sent it into the world anonymously, that neither the insignificance of the author on the one hand, nor his particular situation as a Minister of the Establishment on the other, might impede its utility.” Why your signature in this particular instance should be deemed so insignificant, appears to me strange, when it is prefixed to your other publications of greater as well as lesser magnitude and importance. When an author publishes any anonymous work, I always suspect he has some latent principle to gratify, or secret occasion to serve, rather than
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the bare reasons ostensibly set forth in the preface, or given through some other channel; and this peculiar instance of yours strengthens my opinion: for assuredly, in this country, it would be little less than a Libel on the Constitution, to assert, that the Clergy have nothing to do with Politics. Whereas, the Bishops form a constituent part of the highest Tribunal on earth, which takes cognizance of temporal as well as spiritual misdemeanors. Do not the Bishops in the exercise of their legislative functions, debate on the greatest national concerns relative to Peace and War, with other affairs of less importance, though equally of a temporal nature? This being, I presume, so universally known, can any one for an instant believe, that your reasons for publishing a Political Pamphlet anonymously, were on account of your being a Minister of the Establishment, when it is a most unquestionable truism, that though the *parochial Clergy* have not actually assailed the *French Deistical Regicides* with muskets, swords, or missile instruments, yet many of them have, indefatigably, tongue-banged them from their pulpits; and also employed against them, more formidable weapons, the Pen and the Press. And, as I conceive you are not a stranger to the knowledge of these facts, let me ask, Is it possible that you could suppose it any way derogatory to the character

you

you sustain ; or, that it would have been unfashionable, or improper, to declaim in public, with vehemence against the unlimited ambition, and too fatally successful triumphs of *Gallican Democracy*? Surely not.

I crave your pardon, www.liberalism.com sentiment concerning what appears to me to have been your real motives for not prefixing your name to the political Pamphlet, published by you in the year 1794, any thing like illiberality is seen ; for I frankly confess my belief to be, from your having been always tenacious of your followers, you was unwilling, at that time, to risk the loss of any of them, by an avowed opposition to the *modern philosophy* that predominated in a neighbouring country. It is not my desire to limit your motives simply to this ; for my belief is also, that you had your eye on the Pamphlet, at the time of writing, for another design, to serve as a retainer to refer to, should your obscure political principles be ever called in question. It is unnecessary to add, that you have availed yourself of all the advantages that could result from such a distant reference.

It now remains for me to prove, that the conclusion drawn from the publication of your sentiments in the year 1794, cannot ascertain your exact state of mind in the present time. I wonder that such a public character as Dr. HAWKER

is, should find it needful to recur for evidence five years back, to prove the loyalty of his principles; for it unluckily places you in a more awkward dilemma, than that in which you stood prior to the appearance of what cannot be allowed a defence; for it can be of no utility to any man, whose loyalty is doubted, to tell what he was five years since, when man is known to be a mutable being. To elucidate this, it would be needless waste of time, to take a retrospect view of what transpired at the *Restoration of King Charles*, or the *Revolution* effected by *King William*, to shew the political changes that took place in the minds of men of most exalted rank, in a less number of days than the years you reverted back, to adduce exculpatory evidence, (if such it can be called) for even in the present age, have we not known a *Burke*, who was the very soul of the *opposition* in the *House of Commons*, and of whom the most respectable of that party learnt their political Creed.—A man, in whom all the qualifications of a Senator seemed to concentrate. Yet, even he, after acting so long a period on one side, almost instantaneously forsook the party, of whom, it may be said, he was Chief, and joined the Minister; and so became the most powerful and energetic opponent to those with whom he before had uniformly coalesced. Thus, Sir, you may see, no stress can

can be laid on sentiments, nor even transactions, which took place five years back; so as to refute the insinuation of Mr. P. Countless are the instances that might be found to prove your inference erroneous; but one more shall suffice, and that shall be an experimental one with me.

I cannot forego this favorable opportunity, as it is strictly pertinent to my argument, to acknowledge there was a time when I looked with a favorable eye on the *French Revolution*, considering it would rescue millions in France from absolute tyranny and oppression, and give unto them in a ratio, the blessings of *civil* and *religious liberty*. But, lo! what an egregious delusion! for, the very men, who through blood waded to power, have, with professions of Freedom and Justice on their lips, flagrantly violated and trampled under foot, every principle of religion, justice, morality, and humanity: instead of liberating their unhappy countrymen, they have doubly enslaved them, by annihilating (when they please) trial by jury, and the liberty of the press; they sat out in their apostate career, protesting against foreign conquests, but have attempted to revolutionize and get possession of every country where they could gain admittance, or foist their impracticable theories, whether in the character of friends or enemies. They have, under the specious mask of philanthropy, caused

torrents of blood to flow, indiscriminately, from the wounds of friends and enemies. The succession of Republican Despots have amply verified that exclamation of the quondam friend and accomplice of that sanguinary and ferocious ruffian, *Robespierre*. Yes, that arch-democrat, *Danton*, while viewing the Guillotine that was about to terminate his flagitious existence, exclaimed, “OUR REVOLUTION IS A HIDEOUS MONSTER, LIKE SATURN DEVOURING HIS OWN OFFSPRING.”

As an Englishman, I take shame and remorse to myself while reflecting, that some of the most able tongues and pens in this country, have been employed to panegyryze an event that ought to be deprecated by every individual in Europe.

It is more than probable, that at the time you writ your Appeal, vast numbers of those who have lately been executed for treason in *Ireland*, were untainted with *French fraternity*: yet their former loyalty could not atone for subsequent guilt, nor exonerate them from its attendant punishment. As I never read your Appeal, can be no judge of its purport, yet imagine, from your recent reference to it, that it is of a party nature; if so, I cannot omit remarking, that you having pretended not to speculate on politics, by saying, “The Bible is my politics;” while, at the same time you emit, privately, an anonymous

mous Political Pamphlet; it could be only for the reasons before given; such a manœuvre discovers no trait of consistency or ingenuousness in your character.

In page 14 of your Letter, you say, "Uncalled upon, I profess and declare that, www.libtool.com.cn WITHOUT ANY MENTAL RESERVATION WHATEVER, I do very cordially and heartily subscribe to the Doctrines of the Church of *England*, as set forth in her most excellent Articles, Homilies, and Liturgy, as by law established." This declaration, though in itself candid and explicit, is no more than might be expected from you, who are kept in affluence by the Church of *England*.

We will now examine how far your practice corresponds with your cordial subscription.—To your lasting credit be it known, you so far imitate Christ and his Apostles, in going about, doing good, that you frequently visit the sick, with a view, no doubt, to administer to them, spiritual relief, as far as in you lies; but neither in the Articles, Homilies, or Liturgy (though you have published your cordial subscription to them) is there any thing so excellent as to be used by you on such occasions, not even a single prayer out of the whole Form, which in the Common Prayer Book is expressly prescribed for that purpose; nor will you (as I am informed) condescend to absolve sick persons, though con-

vinced they need it, by using these words, which is intended in the Form for that end: "AND BY HIS AUTHORITY, COMMITTED TO ME, I ABSOLVE THEE FROM ALL THY SINS." What think you of these words that you have feigned to subscribe to, or what is more applicable? Do you use them, Sir, or do you not? You are reduced to the alternative of one or the other; it is quite a matter of indifference to me, whether you answer in the negative or affirmative; if in the former, how does your refusal tally with your "cordial subscription?" does it not bespeak you to be a half-hearted Non-conformist, rather than a Clergyman of the Church of England? But, if the reverse is the case, and you do use the words, thereby pretending to absolve or forgive sins, is not this crying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace?" Let me desire you, Sir, to make a candid appeal to CONSCIENCE, the faithful Monitor, and then say, whether or not you unfeignedly believe the power of forgiving sin is delegated to any man under the wide expanse of Heaven, even if his parchment titles would extend from here to Japan; and if you cannot fully believe the drift of the words, and yet apply them as intended, your Cordial Subscription is a non-entity. Moreover, your acknowledging such a belief, would
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give the lie direct to the doctrines held forth in your Letter, or at least your assent to them.

Again, when you attend Private Meetings for Prayer, (which you are allowed to be the Founder of) do you ever recommend or use any of the Prayers in the Service of the Church of England? Is it not notorious you treat all manner of FORM relative to prayer, with a cool indifference at these places? and, I might add, with truth, also contempt. How far such conduct in Dissenters is proper or improper, let their own hearts determine: but, for you who fearfully have pretended to approve of the whole of them, and yet neglect, despise, and substitute (when in private) others in their stead, is an inconsistency that I am at a loss for language to pourtray it in proper colours.

For some years past you have laudably occupied your Sunday evenings in giving Lectures within the walls of your Church: at these opportunities, as in private, Do you not lay by the *Psalms of David*, and select *Hymns* for singing, written by some of the firmest Dissenters? And, I would further ask, whether it was from necessity or choice you discontinued the use of Dissenters' Hymns in the Afternoon Service? It is scarce going too far to say, in this instance, *Love was sacrificed to Fear*.—That your love is inviolable for the emoluments derived from the

Church of England, is absolutely certain yet, I scruple not to say, that even those, who best know you, (making your practice the criterion to judge by) could not have thought her Service ranked so high in your estimation. No doubt, many of them are strangely puzzled by reading your Letter, as there is something so paradoxical in the sentiments it contains, and your public and private practice together, that a solution to it, must prove highly agreeable to free them from the perplexing embarrassment, which they have been subjected to, by your clashing doctrines and practice.

The next passage that attracts notice, is in page 15: you there have given your readers one of the pre-requisites for entering on the Ministry, to wit, That the candidate must declare, "He is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, to take upon him, the Office and Ministration to serve God, for the promoting of his Glory, and the edifying of his people." Knowing nothing of your person, life, or conversation, at that period, when you made the above asseveration, christian charity teaches me to hope and believe it was sincere. However, it is a theme that affords the most poignant disquietude to the minds of real christians, when reflecting that numbers who assume the characters of *Gospel Heralds*, live in love with Self and Sin, preaching not JESUS, but
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legal morality unto sinners ; nor can otherwise be expected, while parents and guardians of children designate them for the Ministry, before they can discover that turn of mind and propensity to which their riper years might lead them ; for it will readily be allowed, that any person who designates a child for a Minister, before he has inclination to choose, or capacity to deliberate on the vast importance and responsibility attached to such an official character, is actuated by abstracted and subordinate motives, vastly different from those suggested and required by the Church of England. For in this case, it is clear, that temporal convenience, with the pecuniary advantages issuing from such a lucrative profession, are the primary considerations, rather than the glory of God and the good of souls. As we ought to be anxiously concerned and solicitous for the *honor of Christ and his cause*, in this respect ; let me, with humility, importune you to address parents and guardians, in a small Treatise on this subject, as it is connected with such vast moment :---and do moreover desire you to urge, in the most emphatical manner, when you see it meet, the few following queries, to those who may hereafter make such designations as are above described. Can you discover in the child appointed (by you) for a Minister, a suitable pre-dilection for the real work

work of the Ministry? Have you discovered in him, as is requisite, any divine leadings there-to? or, if not, Are you gifted with a *prescience*, that these important and essential qualifications and influences will appear with manhood; and as his years roll on, that he will “bring forth fruits meet for repentance?” for, “all men have not faith.” My reason for assigning this easy task to you is, knowing no man is more capable of handling the subject, either from the press, or in the pulpit. Beside, Sir, was you to make it the thesis of a publication, it would do more good, than ever was done by spending your time in Lecturing and writing on Confirmation, which, by the bye, *your* belief in the necessity of, is only tantamount to my own.

It is much to be desired, that no man would arrogate the sacred character of a Minister of Jesus Christ, unless actually moved thereto by a desire to promote the Glory of God, and the edification of his people. Happy indeed would it be for the cause of pure religion, if that prerequisite, which the Church of England deems indispensably needful, was found in every one, prior to his embarking in a cause of such momentous consequence; if so, there would not be found such a swarm of *Pulpit Empiricks* and *Simon Magus's*, who are the pest, rather than the support of *Christ's Religion*; their only aim
being

being to enrich themselves, by impoverishing their credulous hearers. We then should cease to hear and read of Litigations in Courts of Judicature, by some of the Clergy, for tithes; and as seldom the less private, but more insatiable cravings of Dissenting Preachers for augmentation of salary.

The Apostle *Peter* has, with much appositeness, delineated the characters of such preachers in his 2d Epistle, chap. ii. ver. 2, 3; “And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of; and, through covetousness shall they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you.”—However, it is pleasureable to add, that this rule is not universal; for, to their lasting praise be it mentioned, there are vast numbers of liberal-minded Ministers, both in the Clerical and Dissenting Departments, who are honorable exceptions to such un-christian procedure.

I hasten now to establish, in a more direct manner, the proposition held forth in the early part of this Letter.—Turning to p. 17 of your Letter, I there find you have given such a masterly explication of the term REGENERATION; adding also, the united Testimony of Scripture, to demonstrate it more fully, that in a like number of words, I scarcely believe, that any one could

could define it more correctly, or with greater perspicuity.

“ I cannot forego the occasion afforded me of
 “ correcting your ideas of Regeneration. I
 “ never should have believed if I had not
 “ found it in your letter, that any man of
 “ Mr. Polwhele’s discernment, could have
 “ committed himself so much as to say; ‘ ac-
 “ cording to this doctrine our regeneration
 “ depends not in the slightest degree upon
 “ ourselves.’ Most unquestionably not! The
 “ very term regeneration, carries with it the
 “ fullest refutation of such an absurdity.
 “ For the reiteration of any act, be that act
 “ what it may, implies, that it is the doing
 “ somewhat, which hath been done before.
 “ So that unless it could be said, that a man
 “ contributed to his generation before, it
 “ would be a misapplication of the term to
 “ call it regeneration after. And the merest
 “ school-boy, in the first rudiments of gram-
 “ mar, is supposed to know this.
 “ If Mr. P. would attend more to the in-
 “ formation of scripture, and less to the pre-
 “ sumptuous reasonings of his own mind on
 “ this grand point, his ideas would be clearer.
 “ It is the distinguishing character by which
 “ inspiration hath marked the regenerate,
 that

“ that ‘ they are born not of blood, nor of
 “ the will of the flesh, nor of the will of
 “ man, but of God.’ John i. 13. And to
 “ define if possible, still more accurately the
 “ characters of the divine agency in the
 “ work, as distinguished from any co-operation
 “ with human power, the opposite pro-
 “ perties mark them distinctly: ‘ That which
 “ is born of flesh, is flesh; and that which
 “ is born of the Spirit, is spirit.’ John iii. 6:
 “ And moreover to shew how free and spon-
 “ taneous this mercy is on the part of God,
 “ and how wholly unmerited on the part of
 “ man, the operation of the Divine Spirit
 “ is compared to the unknown source of
 “ the air, ‘ which bloweth where it listeth.’
 “ For as we hear the sound of the air, and
 “ see and feel its effects, yet all the while ‘ we
 “ know not whence it cometh, nor whither
 “ it goeth.’ ‘ So’ (says Christ) adopting this
 “ figure by way of explanation, ‘ is every
 “ one that is born of the Spirit.’ John iii. 8.
 “ Mr. P. may, if he pleases, Nicodemus
 “ like, cry out, ‘ how can these things be?’
 “ But the question will only serve to shew
 “ that he is a stranger to the principle, but
 “ by no means tend to call in question the
 “ principle itself. That both this, and the
 “ other great points of the gospel, at which

Mr.

“ Mr. P. cavils, are capable of being proved
 “ from scripture, I aver, and profess my-
 “ self always ready, God helping me, to
 “ assert against any man, or any set of men,
 “ who being ignorant of experimental reli-
 “ gion themselves, venture to question its
 “ reality in others.”

Now, Sir, let us examine, whether or not your practical doctrines go hand in hand with the admirable and fundamental principal (with you) contained in your note?—I positively affirm they do not:—for, the doctrines advanced by you at the Font, are entirely dissentaneous thereto, so cannot be alike orthodox, nor have obtained equal credit from you: which of them your heart sincerely believes, is not for me to enquire; shall only prove, that at different times, and for different purposes, you seemingly assent to each.

In regard to the doctrine of Regeneration, (as specified in your note) you seem firmly grounded therein, by saying, “ You are ready to prove it from Scripture, against any man, or set of men who may question its reality.” This challenge is, undoubtedly unnecessary, as you need not look to any man, or set of men, to contradict your doctrine of Regeneration; for you do it *yourself*, as often as you can get paid for it; or
 else,

else, what mean these words which you speak at the Font, after *you have crossed and sprinkled the infant?* “This child is, by baptism, regenerate and grafted into the body of Christ’s church.” And again, you “thank God for having regenerated the infant with his holy Spirit.” And when you speak of the laver, (that is, I apprehend, the bason, for the term laver means a vessel or bason to hold liquid in) this bason you call the “Laver of Regeneration;” and by it, you further declare, “the infants are received into the number of the children of God, and heirs of everlasting life.”

Now, Sir, can any one parallel be drawn between *this* Doctrine of Regeneration, and *that* which you have held forth to Mr. P.? Certainly not; for it is irreconcilable, being quite another species. If any thing more need be opposed to your real belief of the Doctrine of Regeneration, found in your Letter, it is your teaching the children under your patronage and tuition, to declare, “they were made, in their baptism, members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of Heaven.”

While treating of everlasting concerns, it is, surely, no time to be jocular; else, I might indulge, in a vein of pleasantry, on *your* mode of education; but forbear, at this time, to offer any comment thereon, recommending to your weighty regard,

regard, this passage of holy writ : “ Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, because ye have spoken vanity, and seen lies, therefore behold I am against you, saith the Lord God. And mine hand shall be upon the Prophets that see vanity and that divine lies ; they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel ; and ye shall know that I am the Lord God, because, even because they have seduced my people, saying, peace, and there was no peace.”

Your uttering and publishing twofold Doctrines of Regeneration, is another indubitable proof of inconsistency. Thus you ring discordant changes with a vengeance! for, after having *regenerated* children at the Font, and made them “ heirs of everlasting life,” you, from the pulpit, thunder damnation on them for being *unregenerate* children of the Devil!—Here I pause with astonishment to think, that a man of such *erudition*, as you are allowed to be, should, in such a palpable manner, barter your veracity for worldly gain ; for certainly, the most superficial reader of your Letter must see, unless blind from choice, that you have exposed your *insincerity*.

As you very regularly preach a sermon on the evening previous to your administration of
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the Lord's Supper, it is much to be wondered at, you have never embraced an opportunity to practice the like, on account of the Ordinance of Baptism; for it is obvious from the Bible, the one is no more *essential* than the other, though the both are to be continued by Believers to the end of time; and that of Baptism is more frequently and strongly recommended in the Bible. Yea, just as our blessed Lord and Redeemer was about to ascend to Heaven, after having proved himself unconquerable by death, by rising from the tomb, he then gave it as a command in his last and great commission to the Apostles. This hint is not thrown out on account of the seldom administration of the Ordinance of Baptism by you; nay, for your pocket can amply witness to the contrary of that, but to desire you may endeavour to beget in your followers, a proper spirit to investigate the true meaning and design of Baptism? and, in doing this, be sure to recommend only the *chief fountain of truth*, namely, the *Bible*; as it is the surest guide in all religious disquisitions, where they may find, with ease, all that relates to Baptism, as it were written with a sunbeam.

I hope you have too much candor to think harshly of me, for recommending a strict scrutiny into our religious customs, to see whether they are scriptural or not; for, in page 14, of your
 e Letter,

Letter, you say, "it is impossible that the true ore should sustain any loss in the crucible, from the hottest fire; it serves but to refine it more, and bring it out again with increased brightness; it is the *false metal* only which cannot bear the heat." A vast variety of other ideas crowd in upon my mind at this present moment, concerning the irreconcilable extremes there are in your *Font* and *Pulpit* Doctrines of Regeneration; and, if possible, the more strange way of your practice thereon; but reasons of a prudential, more than moral nature, prevent their appearance in this Letter.

The next and last clause in your Letter, which I intend offering at this time, any thoughts on, may be found in p. 20; the clause contains these words: "However confident you may be, Sir, of the rectitude of your mind, and rest upon it as the consolation of a dying hour, I bless God that I have not so learned Christ." This rectitude of mind which you here seemingly *triumph over*, as coming from, and expressed by Mr. P. may be found in the 16th page of your Letter: "Let us all be aware whatever our tenets may be, that nothing can afford us comfort at the hour of death, but the consciousness of having done justice, loved mercy, and walked humbly with our God." Now, though for my own self, I hesitate not to declare, that independent
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of all human merit, my hopes and dependance for Salvation, is entirely on the *Blood of Christ* to atone for all my natural and practical sin ;— and also, that my only trust is in his *perfect and imputed Righteousness*, to justify my otherwise helpless soul, and make it eternally happy. Yet, as the Scripture positively declares, “Without holiness, no man can see the Lord.” Myself, nor any other sinner, has no right to conclude himself interested in the blessings of Redemption, unless his faith be a living one, *wrought in him by the spirit of God*, and producing the *fruits of righteousness*. Hence, it ill becomes you, Sir, to erect in your heart a tribunal to decide on the insecurity of any one, whose “life and conversation is as becometh the Gospel of Christ,” because he does not exactly shape his creed according to your *hypothesis*. Methinks your insinuation falls little short of this, where you pretend to shudder at Mr. P’s dependance,—but more of this anon.

You have, as was before mentioned, “thanked God for not so learned Christ;” which means, I presume, trusting on the merit of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God : how far you may be right or wrong in this respect, falls not within my province to determine, as it relates to futurity. However, it is agreed nearly on all sides, that any person who lives

and dies an enemy to God, by wicked works, without any sign of repentance, his soul must be eternally lost. The two following portions of scripture, selected from many others of the same purport, proves the just and awful truth: "The wicked shall be ~~cast~~ ^{cast} into hell, and all the nations that forget God." Psalm ix. 17. "Then shall he say unto them on his left hand, depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels." Matth. xxv. 41. As you admit of this certain truth in its *fullest extent*, when at *private meetings*, I request you will keep it in mind until you come to the end of this Letter, or thereabouts, as it will furnish you with a clue to self-conviction of inconsistency, and that of the most glaring kind. Be not appalled, Sir, at this close manner of reasoning, for truth cannot suffer from the strictest discussion.

I shall now examine what analogy there is between the language in your Letter, respecting Mr. P's hopes of future happiness, and that used by you at funerals:—I believe there are but three classes denied the funeral service; viz. unbaptised infants, excommunicated persons, and self-murderers. In regard to the first of these classes, they are irremediably debarred from it; the second rarely or never occurs; and, as for the third class, it mostly happens that a secular jury

jury puts a salvo on their last desperate act, whereby they are allowed the funeral rite. You have made so free with Mr. P's hopes of future happiness, as to pronounce it "awful prevarication and duplicity." Though, it should be allowed, that the virtues he mentioned, are in practice, some of the greatest ornaments that can adorn the christian character. However your language respecting them is, "I shudder at the idea of such a mistaken calculation!"---Concerning this declaration of yours, I must believe one of two things, that it was pretended, and not sincere; or, if sincere, that Mr. P. is the only one for whom you ever did shudder. This inference is a natural one, when your practice is compared with the above declaration; for it is an undeniable fact, that for your accustomed fee, (a few paltry shillings) you do declare, over the corpse of the most impenitent and incorrigible wretch that ever died, if it comes to your lot, "that the deceased is gone in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life;" and then you pretend to pray to God, "that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother (if it be a man) doth." Have you not used the language, Sir, indiscriminately, over the remains of immense numbers of all ages and descriptions of characters, without considering how their lives were spent, or

in what state they died? This being your invariable language in church-yards, can any one believe that, in your study you shuddered for Mr. P.? No, impossible, unless it can be thought that that gentleman's state created sensations in your heart hitherto unknown to you.

While addressing you, nothing shall be kept in reserve on this head, as it is no trivial concern, nor no time to equivocate; therefore, I will unbosom my soul, in a particular instance, to exemplify the fact more clearly, if possible. Hearing, some time since, you had *refused to precede* the corpse of a person to the grave, who had lived the most reprobate life, and died the most wretched death, having literally fell and broke her neck, while *imprecating the vengeance of God* on her guilty soul; curiosity stimulated me to attend the place of interment, as I knew you, in private, pretend to be more precise than your Brethren of the Clergy; however, at the grave, I positively heard you pronounce her gone “in *sure and certain hope* of the resurrection to eternal life:” you also “thanked God for having taken her out of the miseries of this sinful world;” and then, seemingly, prayed to God that, “when we (meaning those that were present) shall depart this life, we may rest in him, *as our hope is this our sister doth.*” On hearing this language from your lips, the question with

me was, Who then can be lost? It fills my mind with astonishment to think, that you who have made a proficiency in Science, and attained to such an eminence in Literature, and by pretending singularity, are looked upon by your followers as the Oracle of Heaven, and Mirror of Evangelical Purity, should do violence to your conscience, for the sake of sordid pelf. I would ask you, whether the bare recital does not make you shudder? I should think it must; as according to your Letter, you do when there is much less reason to. Perhaps it may be said, why not offer your reproof in private? I answer, this is not directed against private errors of judgment or practice; the reproof is not more public than the conduct that called for it: beside, it can be no crime to animadvert (by way of the press) on what came before the public through the same channel.

Having fulfilled what was at first proposed, permit me, with becoming deference, Sir, at this time to recommend, earnestly, a few hints to your calm and dispassionate consideration; and surely, unless you are merged into the most stupefactive apathy, they will not be treated totally with indifference. When you are engaged privately in spiritual exercises, such as prayer and exhortation, singing hymns, visiting the sick, and administering to them the *Lord's Supper*; in

these cases, I believe you use no part of the forms ordained by the church for these purposes. Why then use, when in public, the forms at the font and the grave? Must this inconsistency be attributed to this cause, that there is no money paid for the former, but a fee accompanies each of the latter? Can this harmonize and reconcile the use of them to you? Oh! Sir, if you really feel that attachment to the Service of the Church of England, which you have in one solitary instance, on paper, aimed to make people believe, close the chasm which you have opened for more than suspicion, by a *consistent* adherence to all that thereto belongs. While you are a Clergyman, ACT IN CHARACTER, and not bring it into disrepute by *neglect* on one hand, and *innovation* on the other.

Could I, if but for a moment, think you steadfastly loved the Ritual of the Church of England, my highest ambition of heart would not prompt me to urge the shadow of a dissuasive argument from adhering to it: no, *far be that from me*. But, while you act in the double character of Churchman and Dissenter, and if the love of brevity was not prevalent with me, I would expatiate more fully, and adduce more evidence, if needful, to prove that, it is absolutely the case with you. Then, as we live in a land where Religious Dissent is tolerated, each one being permitted

permitted to worship God according to the dictates of conscience, it is fair and warrantable to believe, that nought but gain preponderates in your mind, in favor of the establishment; nor will it obviate this belief to talk of your charity; for that man, whoever he be, who receives from one hand to give to another, can only be considered as the vehicle of the donation, and not as the donor. “How long halt you between two opinions!”—If Daniel-like, you wish to exercise the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience, in praying and preaching extempore, “Why not come boldly without the camp,” and emancipate yourself from the drudgery of Forms and Ceremonies, which is so irksome to you, and used no longer than the fear of losing your place compels you to? Let not the fascinating charms of wealth and vulgar popularity captivate your best powers to such an ignoble artifice: bid your mind expand, and soul soar, beyond the fleeting and sublunary objects of this terraqueous globe. Fear not! the God who fed Elijah by ravens, can and will provide for you and yours; having given you grace, can you entertain a momentary doubt of his providing for you the lesser blessings of providence?—As you see the inutility of Forms, can the emoluments derived from the use of them, compensate for that pain of mind, that sooner or later will
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be felt, for having acted against your better judgment?—Would you not, by obeying the dictates of your mind in public, as you do in private, immortalize your name, by resigning your prunello disguise, and so become at once a monument of greatness of mind and fidelity to your Lord and Master?

Such a disinterested instance might appear singular in the present day; but if we look back in the history of our country, to the reign of King Charles 2d. when that remarkable Act was passed on *Bartholomew Day*, 1662, called the “ACT OF UNIFORMITY;” the most obnoxious clause of which was, that requiring all episcopalian Ministers, on pain of losing their living, to subscribe to every *iota* contained in the Book of Common Prayer.—The consequence was, upwards of a thousand conscientious Ministers, (many of whom held very valuable livings) seceded from the Established Church, and took their lot among the Dissenters.—I was going to add, “Go and do thou likewise?” well knowing such an example would have more influence on the minds of Sceptics and Deists, to convince them that there is *something superior* in revealed Religion, to what they call Priestcraft, than the most elaborate and argumentative discourses ever delivered by you from the pulpit or the press, on the subject.

Oh!

Oh! Sir, let the result be what it may, I adjure you to make *sincerity* the polar principle, to guide you in all your religious labors, as well out of as in the pulpit; this will afford more consolation in a dying hour, than all the illusive and gilded vanities with which you may amuse yourself, on account of the sublimity of your doctrines and popularity, that can avail nothing, if experimental sincerity be wanting. The Lord, while giving his commands respecting religion, to Moses, said, "In all things that I have said unto you, be circumspect." Ex. xxiii. 13. In vain will be your attempts from the press, to make people believe you respect forms and ceremonies, while you embrace all opportunities to disentangle yourself from their use; you well know facts speak louder than words: therefore, while you privately treat all forms with contempt, and strenuously recommend the contrary system, after the manner of Dissenters, as often as you publish, *for particular reasons*, that "you cordially and heartily subscribe to the Liturgy of the Church of England." So often would I reply in the language of Jeremiah, to an assertion made by a Captain of the Ward, "IT IS FALSE." Jer. xxxvii. 14. This, you may say, is bold language; it is, and Scripture language too. When I took up my pen, I was determined not to mince the matter, well knowing,

unless

unless I had the *word of God* for my support, and proofs of your inconsistency numerous, it would be folly to think of meeting you on equal ground ; my manner may be uncouth and irregular, abounding with solecism ; yet, style, you know, Sir, is nothing more to the subject, than the shell or shadow is to the substance : indeed, your own language pervades every defect of mine on this score ; for you have told Mr. P. in your Letter, “ The mere shadow is nothing, provided the substance be not wanting.”

I hastily approach the close of my intention ; and, if you are not insensible to your best interests, will maturely weigh what is herein contained. Much on my part remains unwritten ; for what is written, I appeal to the *omniscient God*, for the rectitude of my intention, having no latent or sinister principle to gratify ; nothing is designedly wrapt up in disguise ; my wish is “ earnestly to contend for the Faith once delivered to the Saints.”

If in this attempt trivial errors have crept in, on being so convinced, would cheerfully acknowledge and renounce them ; yet, even that would not altogether destroy the satisfactive state of mind enjoyed by me, from a perfect conviction, that my slender talents have been (though in a slight measure) exerted in the discharge of a disinterested duty, with which my conscience coincides.

coincides. If for this attempt, partial and contracted minds endeavor to stamp odium on my name, I trust my mind will be equally unsusceptible to that as to vulgar applause. In religious matters, we are commanded to "call no man master." The hope is to be cherished, that you will not, in this instance, prize truth less, because delivered by one of plebeian race. My worst wish for you is, that your greatness and public utility may keep pace with your sincerity. Oh! Sir, if you would wish, when Life's setting Sun enters the horizon for eternity, for conscience to speak in the cheering accents of consolation, rather than the corroding language of remorse, make the pure and simple Mandates of KING JESUS, your only rule for faith and practice; remember what his WORD speaks to you; "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

As this is, perhaps, the last time I ever may address you, I entertain the pleasing hope, that when the happy time arrives for the Religion of JESUS to be experienced and enjoyed in its purity, without a mixture of sinful alloy, where it will need no human pomp and pageantry to recommend and set it forth; then all shades of differences in opinion subsiding, we may, with our connections, meet with all the ransomed of the

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the Lord, in that full fruition of glory, to which the Religion of Jesus certainly leads.

Finally : In that great day of the Lord, when his tremendous vengeance shall be deluged on those, who in a time state slighted his grace, and despised his gospel, from its direful consequences may we find ourselves equidistant, shielded under the immaculate and impenetrable Robe of a Redeemer's perfect Righteousness, woven by eternal love.

I am,

Reverend SIR.

Yours, &c.

John Wotton.

“ The Truth which men may criticise,
“ Great God be near to patronise.”



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