

HISTORICAL NOTICES OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

REV. DAVID CLARKSON, B.D.

THERE have been but few men amongst the English Nonconformists more eminent for religion and learning than David Clarkson; and yet there is less known of his personal history and public course than perhaps of any of his distinguished associates.

The following notices of his life and writings, though collected at considerable pains, from various sources, afford but an imperfect account of him, and indeed do not comprise more facts than might be recited in his epitaph.

He was a son of Robert Clarkson, and born in the town of Bradford, Yorkshire, in the month of February, 1621-22, where he was baptized on the 3rd of March the same year. His father was a respectable yeoman in that important town, and possessed of that moral worth and social influence which caused him to be ranked amongst its leading inhabitants.^a The names of three children of his have been recovered: William, who died, rector of Addle, Yorkshire, in 1660; Mary, who was married to Mr. John Sharp, of Little Horton Hall, near Bradford;^b

^a There is decisive evidence of this in the fact that the Corporation of London conveyed, in 1629, the manor of Bradford to John Okell, vicar of Bradford, William Lister, of Manningham, gentleman, *Robert Clarkson*, and Joshua Cooke, of Bradford, *yeomen*.

^b The Sharp family belonged to the straitest section of the Puritans. Two sons by this marriage became eminent: Thomas Sharp, educated at Clare Hall, Cambridge, who succeeded, on the death of his maternal uncle, William Clarkson, to the rectory of Addle, from which he was removed at the Restoration by the challenge of Dr. Hitch, rector of Guisley, who claimed it as his right, having been excluded by the Act of the Long Parliament against pluralities. After his ejectment, he succeeded Mr. Stretton, at Leeds, where he died, August 27th, 1693, aged 59. Ralph Thoresby

and David, the subject of this notice. Nothing is known of his early training; but as he went to the University of Cambridge young, so it is not unlikely that he received his grammar learning in the school founded in his native place by the munificence of Edward VI.

He entered Clare Hall, Cambridge, probably about 1640, where he distinguished himself as a scholar and a Christian, and secured the friendship and confidence of his associates in college. In January, 1642, the town of Bradford, then occupied for the Parliament by Sir Thomas Fairfax and his soldiers, suffered an assault from the royalist forces, commanded by Sir William Saville, who were compelled to retreat to Leeds. Young Clarkson probably returned home to visit his family after this alarm, for we find that he was shut in his native town, when the Earl of Newcastle invested it a second time in June following, and took it by storm. A curious piece of contemporaneous biography, written by Joseph Lister, an apprentice to Mr. John Sharp, the brother-in-law of Mr. David Clarkson, describes the straitness of the siege, and "the desperate adventure" of Sir T. Fairfax and his men to break through the enemy's army sword in hand. In this attempt they were joined by Mr. Sharp and his brother-in-law David; but with what success the autobiographer recites in the following passage:—

"My master being gone, I sought for my mother, and having found her, she, and I, and my sister, walked in the street, not knowing what

had the highest regard for him, and has preserved in his diary a very affecting account of his death. The following impassioned exclamations from Thoresby's diary, witness to the intenseness of his attachment: "O Lord! O Lord! what a bitter and a heavy burden is sin, that has deprived us of the choicest mercy under heaven; such a minister of Jesus Christ as very few have equalled in this, or former centuries—an irreparable loss. Oh, black and dismal day!" &c. The Rev. Oliver Heywood says that he was "a profound scholar and of excellent refined gifts, and a holy and incomparable man." [Vide Calamy's Account, ii. p. 813. Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, p. 277. Thoresby's Diary, vol. i. pp. 236, 244. Thoresby's Letters, vol. i. pp. 229, 230.]

The other was Abraham Sharp, the celebrated mathematician, the friend and associate of Flamsteed, and the correspondent of Newton, Halley, Wallis, and Hodgson. He died at Little Horton, where his observatory still stands, on the 18th of July, 1742, in the 91st year of his age. (Encyclop. Brit. seventh edition. Article Sharp, and private information.) Immediately related to John Sharp, the father of Thomas and Abraham, was Thomas Sharp, an oilman at Bradford, who was also of the old puritanical school, the host of Lord Fairfax during the siege of Bradford, and father of John Sharp, who was born in that town, in 1644, and consecrated Archbishop of York, in 1691. British Biography, vol. vi. p. 394.

to do, or which way to take. And as we walked up the street, we met a young gentleman, called David Clarkson, leading a horse. My mother asked him where he had been with that horse. Says he, 'I made an essay to go with my brother Sharp, and the army, who broke through the enemy's leaguer; but the charge was so hot I came back again, and now I know not what to do.' Then I answered, and said, 'Pray, mother, give me leave to go with David, for I think I can lead him a safe way;' for being born in that town, I knew all the by-ways about it.

"David also desired her to let me go with him, so she begged a blessing on me, and sent me away, not knowing where we could be safe. So away we went, and I led him to a place called the Sill-bridge, where a foot company was standing; yet I think they did not see us, so we ran on the right hand of them, and then waded over the water, and hearing a party of horse come down the lane towards the town, we laid us down in the side of the corn, and they perceived us not. It being about day-break, we stayed here as long as we durst for being discovered, it beginning to be light. Well, we got up, and went in the shade of the hedge, and then looking about us, and hoping to be past the danger of the leaguer, we took to the highway, intending to go to a little town called Clayton; and having waded over the water, we met with two men that were troopers, and who had left their horses in the town, and hoped to get away on foot, and now they and we walked together, and hoped we had escaped all danger, and all on a sudden a man on horseback from towards the beacon had espied us and came riding towards us, and we, like poor affrighted sheep, seeing him come fast towards us, with a drawn sword in his hand, we foolishly kept together, and thought to save ourselves by running. Had we scattered from one another, he had but got one of us. We all got into a field; he crossed the field and came to us, and as it pleased God, being running by the hedge-side, I espied a thiek holly-tree, and thought perhaps I might hide myself in this tree and escape, so I crept into it, and pulled the boughs about me, and presently I heard them cry out for quarter. He wounded one of them, and took them all prisoners, and said, 'There were four of you; where is the other?' but they knew not, for I, being the last and least of them, was not missed; so he never looked after me more: but I have often thought since how easily we might have knocked him down, had we but had courage; but alas! we had none."^a

He gives no further information respecting young Clarkson, but it is most probable that he was taken to Leeds, and exchanged

^a "An Historical Narrative of the Life of Joseph Lister, sometime belonging to the religious society at Kipping, in Bradford-dale, in Yorkshire, &c." pp.18—20.

for some royalist prisoner, as he returned to Cambridge, and there, in another scene of that great struggle, was exalted to competency and honour.

Soon after the civil wars began, the heads of that university resolved to send their plate to the king to be coined into money for his military chest. This brought Cromwell, who was the member for the borough in parliament, to the town, and having raised a troop of horse in that neighbourhood, he employed his authority on this occasion in no way to the satisfaction of the royalist members of the colleges. Their activity attracted the attention of the Parliament to the state of the university in general, and the Earl of Manchester, serjeant-major-general to the associated counties, was appointed to visit it. He, with a committee, was authorised "to call before them all provosts, masters, fellows, and students of the university, to hear complaints against such as were scandalous in their lives, ill-affected to the Parliament, fomentors of the present unnatural war, or who had deserted the ordinary places of their residence." The Earl repaired in person to Cambridge, on the 24th of February, 1643-44, and commenced his work of reformation, which ended, according to Walker, in the expulsion of "near two hundred masters and fellows, besides scholars, &c., which probably might be as many more."^a The inmates of Clare Hall were subjected to the common inquisition, and Dr. Paske was removed from the mastership, and seven others were ejected from their fellowships. Among these was the celebrated Mr. Peter Gunning, who, after the Restoration, was elevated to the bishopric of Chester, and then translated to that of Ely. "On the first of May," says he, "I was expelled the University of Cambridge, for preaching a sermon at St. Mary's against the Covenant, as well as refusing to take the Covenant."^b It was to this fellowship that Mr. Clarkson was appointed; and the circumstances connected with it, appear to have been honourable to all the parties concerned. The Earl of Manchester, as described by Clarendon himself, "was of a gentle and generous nature: his natural civility and good manners flowed to all men, so that he was never guilty of any rudeness even to those whom he was obliged to oppress."^c

^a Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy*, &c., part i. p. 114.

^b Coles' *MS. Collections*, vol. xlix. British Museum.

^c Clarendon's *History*, &c., book vi.

The course this amiable nobleman took for filling up the vacant fellowships confirms this statement. He directed a paper to the colleges, stating, that "his purpose was forthwith to supply the vacant fellowships, and desiring that if there were any in the respective colleges, who in regard of degree, learning, and piety, should be found fit for such preferment, they would upon the receipt of that paper return him their names, in order to their being examined by the Assembly of Divines." The eminent Ralph Cudworth had been previously appointed master of Clare; and it was no small honour to David Clarkson to be nominated by a community over which he presided, and to be approved by such an Assembly of Divines as then sat at Westminster. "Mr. Clarkson was the immediate successor of Mr. Gunning, 5th of May, 1645, by warrant of the Earl of Manchester."^a

There were at this time two brothers collegians at Clare Hall, Henry and Francis Holcroft, sons of Sir Henry Holcroft, Knight of West Ham, on the border of Essex, near to London, and who also became fellows of it. These gentlemen were distinguished by the fervour of their piety, and were, like Mr. Clarkson, congregational in their views of church government. There subsisted between them and him "great endearments," which friendship at a subsequent period was confirmed by his marriage with their own sister.^b

Mr. Clarkson was now a tutor to the college, and on the 29th of April, 1647, he received as his pupil, one whom it was his honour and happiness to retain as his friend to the end of life—the celebrated John Tillotson, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury. This able young scholar succeeded Mr. Clarkson when he resigned his fellowship, about November, 1651; and to his tuition he also consigned the scholars then under his own care,"^c amongst whom was his own beloved nephew, Mr. Thomas Sharp.^d

The occasion of his withdrawment from college life, it may be

^a Coles' Collections, vol. xlix.—Neal has preserved the form of these warrants, thus,—“Whereas A. B. has been ejected out of his fellowship in this college; and whereas C. D. has been examined and approved by the Assembly of Divines, these are therefore to require you to receive the said C. D. as fellow in the room of A. B., and to give him place according to his seniority in the university, in preference to all those who are, or shall hereafter be put in by me.”—Neal's History, chap. iii.

^b Calamy's Account, vol. ii. p. 386, 86. ed. 1713.

^c Birch's Life of Tillotson, p. 381.

^d Vide note, pp. ix. x.

presumed, was his marriage with Elizabeth, a daughter of Sir Henry Holcroft, and sister of his beloved friends already mentioned. She appears to have been a lady of eminent intelligence and piety, fitting to be the companion of his leisure, and the mother of his children.

Whether he possessed any preferment in the church at that time is not known, but at a subsequent period he held the living of Mortlake, in the county of Surrey, and from which he was removed by the Act of Uniformity. The benefice is a perpetual curacy with a reserved salary of forty pounds per annum, paid out of the great tithes by the lessee, under the Dean and Chapter of Westminster. It had been a peculiar of the Archbishop of Canterbury, but was now included in the classis that had been set up for that part of Surrey, in which arrangement, however, Mr. Clarkson's opinions were not likely to permit him to acquiesce. The commissioners who were appointed in 1658 to inquire into the state of ecclesiastical benefices, endowed the curacy with the great tithes, and made it a rectory.

The parishioners of Mortlake, judging from the entries made in the parish accounts, warmly sympathised with the measures of the Puritan party, as the Covenant was duly taken, and a copy purchased and framed for the vestry; and the Common Prayer books of the parish were delivered up to the committee of the county sitting at Southwark, to receive them by order of Parliament. At a later period this agreeable village was the residence of Sir John Ireton, and Aldermen Paek and Tichbourn, who were amongst Cromwell's chief city friends, and were probably attendants on Mr. Clarkson's ministry there.^a

During the civil wars there had been held in the city of London, public services of extraordinary solemnity and devotion, called "the Morning Exercises," on behalf of those who were engaged in the army, or who were exposed to the miseries and perils inseparable from a state of intestine warfare. When the struggle at arms happily terminated, the ministers of the metropolis resolved to continue these "Exercises," but with a greater regard to preparation and method than had been practicable or expedient amidst the hurry and alarms of civil conflict.

The second course of these systematic Morning Exercises was

^a Lysons' Environs, i. 370, 375, 376.

fixed at St. Giles's church, Cripplegate, September, 1661, of which Dr. Annesley was then the minister, and from that pulpit were delivered twenty-eight discourses on "several cases of conscience," by some of the most eminent ministers. Amongst them we find David Clarkson, the tutor, discussing "What Christians must do, that the influence of the ordinances may abide upon them;" and Dr. John Tillotson, the pupil, illustrating "Wherein lies that exact righteousness which is required between man and man;" the former to be cast into obscurity as a despised nonconformist, and the latter to be elevated to the archiepiscopal palace of Lambeth!

Mr. Clarkson was now in the full maturity of his powers, and both able and willing to use them for the good of mankind, and the glory of God; but the Restoration had been followed by the passing of the Act of Uniformity, which came into operation on Bartholomew's-day, August 24th, 1662, and removed him with about two thousand of his brethren from the national pulpits. Whatever may be said in favour of that act as applied to ministers who had been episcopally ordained, and who had used the Book of Common Prayer, it was very hard upon men who, like himself, had entered public life under other auspices, and had adopted and defended other opinions.

"After his ejection he gave himself up to reading and meditation, shifting from one place of obscurity to another, till the times suffered him to appear openly."^a That comprised a period of ten years, as the first Declaration of Indulgence was not published until the 15th of March, 1671-2. There is no evidence that Mr. Clarkson availed himself of the royal ordinance, as many of his brethren did, to resume his public ministry, but continued to gratify his native modesty by remaining in retirement, though probably in London, or its environs: for he largely shared in the controversies of those times, a part it was not then easy to take far away from the metropolis.

The state of parties at home, and the aspect of foreign affairs, were regarded by all earnest Protestants as most threatening to the interests of the reformed churches, and there was felt a general anxiety to fortify the public mind against the aggressions of Romish emissaries. Amongst other methods adopted, the nonconformist

^a Neal's Puritans, vol. v. p. 44.

ministers resolved on a fourth course of Morning Exercises against Popery. These originated with Mr. Nathaniel Vincent, who had been ejected from the rectory of Langley Marsh, Bucks., but was now the pastor of a large congregation of dissenters assembling at a meeting-house near the Maze, in the parish of St. Olave, Southwark. He drew the plan, made the arrangements, and fixed the services at his own meeting-house. In this service Mr. Clarkson undertook to show, that "the Doctrine of Justification is dangerously corrupted in the Roman Church;" and no Protestant can read that discourse without acknowledging the learning and talent he has displayed, and the success of the whole argument.^a

But Mr. Clarkson was not satisfied with a solitary testimony against the errors of Rome, and therefore occupied his beloved leisure in the preparation of a work on the practical divinity of the Papists, as he thought that "the knowing of it would be a sufficient dissuasive from it to those who regard God and their souls." He held "that the danger of Popery in points of faith had been sufficiently discovered to the world by the divines of the Reformation; but their doctrine which concerns life and practice had not been so much insisted on." "And yet," said he, "there is as much occasion for this; for here the mischief is as great; an unchristian heart and life being at least as damning as erroneous belief; and hereby the great apostacy and degeneracy of the Papal church is as apparent; and herein they have proceeded with as much disregard of Christ and the

^a This discourse, with that preached by him at Cripplegate, will be found at pages 455, 471, in the present volume. Mr. James Nichols, the able editor of the latest and the best edition of the Morning Exercises, ascribes a *third* discourse in that collection, entitled, "What advantage may we expect from Christ's prayer for union with himself, and the blessing relating to it?" to Mr. Clarkson, viz. the twenty-fifth, in "A Continuation of Morning Exercise Questions and Cases of Conscience practically resolved, by Sundry Ministers, in Oct. 1682." This he has done "on the strength and credit of a List of Preachers, *written in an ancient hand*, and prefixed to a well-preserved copy of the volume." In our copy of his original edition there is a *printed list*, headed "The names of the Ministers," and the twenty-fifth discourse stands thus, "25 Mr. N. N." There is a mistake in the numerals towards the close of the volume, 25 being printed for 23, and 27 for 25. Assuming that the printer of our list overlooked this fact, and we take No. 27, that is ascribed to Mr. Barker, so that under either number this discourse is not attributed to our author. Besides which, Dr. Calamy only names the *two* sermons we have reprinted, (Account, ii. 667, 668;) and we therefore doubt the correctness of the *manuscript* list on which Mr. Nichols has mainly relied.

souls of men. Their design in this seems to have been, not the promoting of Christ's interest, for that is manifestly prostituted, but the securing and greatening of a faction which, under the profession of Christianity, might be false to all its realities. And their rule is the corrupt inclinations of depraved nature, to which they have thoroughly conformed their practical divinity; which easeth it of the duties for which it hath an aversation, how much soever enjoined; and clears its way to those sins to which it is disposed, as though there was no need to avoid them. This rule serves their design with great advantage, but souls are more endangered hereby, and their principles become more pernicious, because they are so taking. Persuade a man, that he may safely neglect the duties which he owes to God, his own soul, and others; and may gratify the lusts he is addicted to; and give him the maxims of religion, and the authority and conclusions of divines, and the teachers whom he trusts, for it; and he will like that religion, because he loves his sin, and is in danger to follow both, though he perish for it eternally. And indeed this is it which makes the condition of Papists deplorable, for though the principles of their *belief*, as it is Popish, be mortally poisonous; yet there might be some antidote in the *practicals* of Christianity, retained and followed, by those who are unavoidably ignorant of the danger of their more speculative errors; and so some hopes of such; but their practical doctrine being no less corrupted, the remedy itself becomes poison, and their condition who freely let it down, hopeless. Whether their errors in matters of *faith* be directly fundamental, hath been, with some of their opposers, a question; but those who will view their *practical doctrine*, may discern that it strikes through the heart of Christianity, casting off the vitals of it as superfluous, and cuts off those who will believe and follow it from the way of life; not only by encouraging them with security to live and die in all sorts of wickedness; but also by obliging them to neglect, as needless, the greatest and most important concerns of Christians, without which God cannot be honoured by us, nor salvation attained." ^a

To establish this affecting view of the practical influence of Popery, Mr. Clarkson brought together the results of vast reading and research, with that fairness, accuracy, and candour, which mark

^a The Practical Divinity of the Papists, &c. pp. 1, 2.

all his polemical writings. He did not, therefore, avail himself of the casuistical writings of the Jesuits, which, as Pascal has fully shown, would supply abundant illustrations of a defective morality; but he consulted the canonists and divines, secular and regular, of every sort, their canon law and decrees of councils. Indeed he does justice to the Jesuits by saying, "I cannot discern that the practical divinity of the Jesuits is more corrupt than that of other Romish writers their contemporaries. I never yet met with any author of that order so intolerably licentious, but might be matched, if not out-vied, by others." He, therefore, largely consulted the works of Cardinal Bellarmine, and their more ancient divines, and the best and strictest of their casuists he could meet with, the majority of whom were Dominicans, the most opposed of all the orders to the Jesuits, and the greater part of whom had written before that order was founded. It is true indeed, that he also quoted the voluminous writings of the Spanish Jesuit, Francis Suavez, "not for the sake of his own opinions indeed, but because he usually gives an account of the common doctrine out of unexceptionable authors."

In the year 1676, this learned treatise appeared in a small quarto volume, entitled "The Practical Divinity of the Papists discovered to be Destructive of Christianity and Men's Souls." It is comprised in ten chapters on the following subjects: 1. By the doctrine of the Romanists it is not needful to worship God really in public or private. 2. Christian knowledge is not necessary for Romanists by their doctrine. 3. Their doctrine makes it needless to love God. 4. There is no necessity of saving or justifying faith by the Romish doctrine. 5. There is no necessity of true repentance for Romanists by their doctrine. 6. Their doctrine leaves no necessity of holiness of life, and the exercise of Christian virtues. 7. Many heinous crimes are virtues or necessary duties by the Roman doctrine. 8. Crimes exceeding great and many are but slight and venial faults by the Popish doctrine. 9. Many enormous crimes are no sins at all in the Roman account; and, 10. The Roman doctrine makes good works to be unnecessary.

To those who are not familiar with the casuistry of the Romish divines, these heads of chapters will form the counts of a startling indictment, and they will require abundant evidence before they will credit such grave charges even against the practical theology of the Vatican. Our author has fortified every statement by

citations and references enough to satisfy the most incredulous. Respecting his quotations, he thus speaks in the advertisement :

“ When no other shift will serve, to hinder those from being undeceived whom they would delude, it is usual with them to make loud outcries of false citations, and that their doctrine is misrepresented.” “ I have been very careful,” he adds, “ to give no just occasion for this: being apprehensive that he who doth it, wrongs not them more than he doth himself and his cause. The places cited I have viewed again and again, where there might be any doubt of misconstruction: and set down their own *words* where it might seem scarce credible that Christians and divines, directing conscience, should speak at such a rate; and where that would have been too tedious, have I given their *sense* faithfully, so far as I could discern it, and directed the reader where he may find and judge thereof himself.”

The researches necessary to the composition of this “ excellent discourse,” as Dr. Calamy justly designates it, prepared Mr. Clarkson to take part in a controversy that arose in 1679, and which stirred the spirit of the nation more than any event which had occurred since the Restoration. It was the firm conviction of the public at large, that there existed a formidable plot to take away the life of the king, to subvert the constitution, utterly to extirpate the Protestant religion, and to restore Popery again in all its terrors. These apprehensions were strengthened by the mysterious murder of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, a zealous Protestant magistrate, who had received the depositions of Dr. Oates and others respecting the alleged conspiracy. London became like a city in a stage of siege. Posts, chains, and barriers were set up, the trained bands drawn out night after night, well armed, and watching with as much care, as if a general massacre was expected before morning.^a A considerable number of Popish lords and gentlemen, with five Jesuits, were arrested and brought to trial; and the latter, with whose conduct these remarks have alone to do, were tried for high treason, at the Old Bailey, on Friday and Saturday, 13th and 14th of June, were found guilty, and sentenced to death, and were executed at Tyburn, on the following Friday, June 20th. They all protested their innocency in very solemn and affecting terms, which must have produced an astound-

^a Calamy's *Life and Times*, i. p. 83.

ing effect on those who read their dying declarations, which were printed in various forms, and widely circulated in town and country.^a

To counteract the impressions of their touching appeals to the Judge of all respecting their innocency, there appeared several pamphlets criticising their statements, and amongst others, one in small folio, appended to a copy of their speeches, entitled “Animadversions on the last Speeches of the Five Jesuits, viz., Thomas White, *alias* Whitebread, provincial of the Jesuits in England; William Harcourt, pretended rector of London; John Fenwick, procurator for the Jesuits in England; John Gavan, *alias* Gawan, and Anthony Turner, who were all executed at Tyburn for High Treason,” &c. Although this folio tract is without the name of its author, it is attributed in several quarters to Mr. Clarkson; and from the character of its style, the line of its argument, and the class of authorities cited, in all which it agrees with his “Practical Divinity of the Papists,” it is most likely to have been the product of his learned pen. And though it may now be wished that he had not been found amongst the approvers of a transaction which Mr. Fox says, has left “an indelible disgrace upon the English nation;” yet, it must be remembered, that he adds, “in which king, parliament, judges, juries, witnesses, prosecutors, have all their respective, though certainly not equal shares,”^b it cannot be deemed surprising that Protestant dissenters, with their instinctive dread of Popery, should have largely shared in the universal and unspeakable terror of the people.

In this state of affairs, it was felt by most of the moderate nonconformists that an accommodation of differences between the Church of England and the dissenters would be the most effectual way to keep out Popery; and two of their leading ministers, Mr. John Howe, and Dr. Bates, were invited to confer with Bishop Lloyd, Dr. Tillotson, Dr. Stillingfleet, and others, upon the subject of a *comprehension*. The Christian spirit which Dr. Stillingfleet, when rector of Sutton, had displayed towards differing brethren in his “*Irenicum*,” made him a promising negociator in such a business. But the influence of Charles II. was successfully employed with the bishops against the

^a Memoirs of Missionary Priests, &c., part ii. p. 386—405.

^b J. C. Fox's History, pp. 33, 34.

"Bill of Exclusion," then before parliament, "it was," says Hume, "on the 15th of November, 1680, thrown out of the Lords by a considerable majority. All the bishops except three voted against it. Besides the influence of the court over them, the Church of England, they imagined or pretended, was in greater danger from the prevalence of Presbyterianism, than of Popery; which, though favoured by the duke, and even by the king, was extremely repugnant to the genius of the nation."^a

The nonconformists naturally regarded this as a great dereliction of duty on the part of the heads of the church, and they began to prepare for a battle with the champions of the establishment, which now seemed inevitable. Bishop Burnet says, that "the clergy stuck up with zeal for the duke's succession; as if a Popish king had been a special blessing from heaven, to be much longed for by a Protestant church. They likewise gave themselves such a loose against the nonconformists, as if nothing was so formidable as that party. So that in all their sermons Popery was quite forgot, and the force of their zeal was turned almost wholly against the dissenters."^b

The signal for the contest came, however, from an unexpected quarter. Dean Stillingfleet, the author of *Irenicum*, and the advocate for union, was called to preach in his own cathedral of St. Paul's, before the lord mayor and corporation of London, on the first day of Easter term (May 2nd, 1680,) and thought that a fitting occasion to deliver a sermon from Phil. iii. 16, which he entitled "The Mischiefs of Separation," in which he charged upon the nonconformists all the blame of separation from the church, and all the mischiefs which had arisen from it. This unlooked for attack, in which those who had been recently called "our dissenting brethren," were represented as schismatics, as enemies to peace, and dangerous to the church, &c., roused the spirit of the most temperate of the nonconformists, and was repelled by pamphlets from the pens of Howe, Owen, Baxter, Alsop, Barrett, and others.^c The Dean, nothing daunted, in the following year took up his opponents in a quarto volume, entitled "Unreasonableness of Separation." This work consisted of three parts, "1st, An Historical Account of the

^a Hume's History of England, chap. lxviii.

^b Bishop Burnet's Own Times, vol. i. p. 501.

^c Calamy's Life of Howe, pp. 73, 75.

Rise and Progress of Separation; 2nd, Of the Nature of the Present Separation; and 3rd, Of the Pleas for the Present Separation." Although Mr. Clarkson had not taken part in the first stage of the controversy, yet there were some matters in the last portion of the present work which led him to take up his pen. These passages occur in Sections 3—11 inclusive, in which Dean Stillingfleet treats of the episcopacy of the ancient church, and also in sections 24, 25, in which the question of the power of the people in the primitive churches is fully discussed. This led to the publication of the first treatise in the present volume, entitled, "No Evidence for Diocesan Churches," &c., which appeared in 1681, and which will speak for itself. It was replied to at some length by Dr. Henry Maurice, in the preface of what Mr. Baxter calls "a learned and virulent book," entitled "Vindication of the Primitive Church against Mr. Baxter's Church History," which had been published two years before. Mr. Clarkson immediately wrote an answer, but he laid by the manuscript for many months, till in 1682 the importunity of some, and the misrepresentations of others, forced him to publish it. This piece was entitled "Diocesan Churches not yet discovered in Primitive Times," and is the second tractate in this series. Although he did not publish anything more on this controversy, yet he prosecuted it in his study, and left behind him two manuscripts on "Primitive Episcopacy," and "The Use of Liturgies," which were published after his decease, and which will be noticed with his other posthumous works.

Twenty years had now elapsed since the Act of Uniformity ejected him from his pastoral charge, and that long period was mainly spent in privacy, partly the result of persecuting laws and partly the consequence of his constitutional modesty. The part which he had recently taken in the Stillingfleet controversy, and the support he had given to the arguments which Dr. John Owen had adduced in his pamphlet in reply to the Dean, may be imagined to have brought him under the notice of the church of which the Doctor was pastor, and who were then seeking for an able minister to become the co-pastor and successor of that eminent divine. "This church was collected soon after the black Bartholomew Act, in 1662, by the celebrated Mr. Joseph Caryl, and consisted of some of his hearers at St. Magnus, London bridge. After his death his people invited the learned Dr. John Owen,

then pastor of another society, at no great distance. Both congregations having agreed to unite, they assembled together the first time, on June 5th, 1673. At the time of this coalescing the united church consisted of one hundred and seventy-three members; amongst whom were Lord Charles Fleetwood, Sir John Hartopp, Colonel Desborough, Colonel Berry, and other officers of the army; also Lady Abney, Lady Hartopp, Lady Vere Wilkinson, Lady Thompson, Mrs. Bendish, grand-daughter of Oliver Cromwell, &c."^a

Although nearly ten years had passed away since then, still the church was one of high character for the intelligence, wealth, and station of many of its members. With persons of their piety and judgment, it was not a valid objection that Mr. Clarkson was now in his sixtieth year, for they doubtless considered the maturity of his mind, studies, and experience, greatly to compensate for the absence of youthful fervour and mere rhetorical display.

He was therefore elected as the co-pastor in July, 1682, Dr. Owen having, in a letter to Lord Charles Fleetwood, intimated that he should "esteem it a great mercy to have so able a supply as Mr. C."^b The Doctor's complicated infirmities, however, rendered their connexion but brief, as he was called to depart to his reward on the 24th of August, 1683.

Mr. Clarkson preached his funeral sermon on the Lord's-day after his interment, in which he does not enter at length on his character, and says nothing of his history. This is explained by a single sentence in which Mr. Clarkson says, "It was my unhappiness that I had so little and late acquaintance with him."

Three short years brought the life and labours of the surviving pastor to a close. His death was unexpected, so that his will^c was only executed the day before he died. Two of the witnesses

^a Walter Wilson's *Dissenting Churches*, vol. i. p. 253.

^b Orme's *Life of Owen*, p. 517.

^c Through the kindness of a friend, a copy of this document has been found in Doctors' Commons; and though it is singularly brief and hurried, yet it may have sufficient interest with some readers to justify its publication.

June the 13th, 1686.

I DAVID CLARKSON Clerke Doe make this my last Will. The Land that is at Idele or Eshall wherein I was joynt purehasor with my Father was settled upon my well-beloved Wife before marryage as parte of a joynture and it is my will it shall soe continue; and after her decease it shall be sold and equally divided among the children unlesse any of them shall prove debauch; if soe my wife shall dispose of their parte as shee pleases. I give unto my Wife all my Goods, Plate, and Jewells, and make her

to that document, Henry Sampson and Edward Hulse, were educated at Cambridge, ejected by the Act of Uniformity, and applying themselves to the study of medicine, became eminent physicians in the city of London. Their presence proves that there was no lack of skilful advice or of godly fellowship in his dying chamber. Although this mortal seizure was unlooked for, yet Mr. Clarkson declared it was no surprise, and being entirely resigned to the Divine will, he peacefully departed this life on the 14th day of June, 1686, to see the salvation of God.

Dr. William Bates preached his funeral sermon on John xiv. 2, to which is attached, "A Short Character of that Excellent Divine Mr. David Clarkson, who departed this life 14th of June, 1686,"^a which is as follows :—

"Although the commendation of the dead is often suspected to be guilty of flattery, either in disguising their real faults, or adorning them with false virtues; and such praises are pernicious to the living: yet of those persons whom God hath chosen to be the singular objects of his grace, we may declare the praiseworthy qualities and actions which reflect an honour upon the Giver, and may excite us to imitation. And such was Mr. David Clarkson, a person worthy of dear memory and

sole executrix of this my Will. The money that is owing unto me my Will is that it be equally divided among the Children unlesse there Mother for their debauchery shall thinke fitt to abate them: in that case shee shall give unto them as she pleases. If Robert will prove a scholar I give unto him all my Bookes excepting what English Bookes his Mother thinks fitt to take to her selfe. And if any controversy shall arrise aboute any parte of this my Will I leave it to be dissided by my Wife.

D. CLARKSON.

Sealed, published, and delivered in the presence of Henry Sampson, Edward Hulse, Joshua Palmer, Robert Davis.

Probatum fuit, &c.

^a In Birch's *Life of Tillotson* this "Short Character," &c. is quoted in a note, which says it was "*printed without the name of place or year.*" This suggested that there was extant a separate account of this estimable man; and the libraries at the British Museum, Sion College, Redcross street, London Institution, and Congregational Rooms, were searched for it, but in vain. At length a copy of the original edition of Dr. Bates's sermon was obtained at the sale of the late Duke of Sussex's library, and the mystery was explained. That discourse occupies 102 pages, and closes with "Finis," but without a word of Mr. Clarkson, then come two pages of the bookseller's announcements, "Some Books lately printed," &c.; and these are followed by a distinct title-page, "without the name of place or year," containing the above character, doubtless written by Dr. Bates, but nowhere so stated. It is possible that Dr. Birch had seen this as a detached tract of 14 pages, and quoted it as he found it, not knowing that it was from the pen of Dr. Bates, and appended to the Funeral Discourse.

value, who was furnished with all those endowments that are requisite in an accomplished minister of the Gospel.

“He was a man of sincere godliness and true holiness, which is the divine part of a minister, without which all other accomplishments are not likely to be effectual for the great end of the ministry, that is, to translate sinners from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Conversion is the special work of Divine grace, and it is most likely that God will use those as instruments in that blessed work, who are dear to him and earnestly desire to glorify him. God ordinarily works in spiritual things as in natural; for as in the production of a living creature, besides the influence of the universal cause, there must be an immediate agent of the same kind for the forming of it; so the Divine wisdom orders it, that holy and heavenly ministers should be the instruments of making others so. Let a minister be master of natural and artificial eloquence, let him understand all the secret springs of persuasion, let him be furnished with learning and knowledge, yet he is not likely to succeed in his Divine employment without sanctifying grace. ’Tis that gives him a tender sense of the worth of souls, that warms his heart with ardent requests to God, and with zealous affections to men for their salvation. Besides, an unholy minister unravels in his actions his most accurate discourses in the pulpit; and like a carbuncle that seems animated with the light and heat of fire, but is a cold, dead stone; so, though with apparent earnestness he may urge men’s duties upon them, yet he is cold and careless in his own practice, and his example enervates the efficacy of his sermons. But this servant of God was a real saint; a living spring of grace in his heart diffused itself in the veins of his conversation. His life was a silent repetition of his holy sermons.

“He was a conscientious improver of his time for acquiring of useful knowledge, that he might be thoroughly furnished for the work of his Divine calling. And his example upbraids many ministers, who are strangely careless of their duty, and squander away precious time, of which no part is despicable and to be neglected. The filings of gold are to be preserved. We cannot stop the flight of time, nor recall it when past. *Volat irrevocabile tempus*. The sun returns to us every day, and the names of the months every year, but time never returns. But this servant of God was faithful in improving this talent, being very sensible, to use his own words, ‘that the blood of the soul runs out in wasted time.’ When deprived of his public ministry, he gave himself wholly to reading and meditation, whereby he obtained an eminent degree of sacred knowledge, and was conversant in the retired parts of learning, in which many who are qualified to preach a profitable sermon, are unacquainted.

“His humility and modesty were his distinctive characters wherein he excelled. What a treasure was concealed under the veil of humility! What an illustrious worth was shadowed under his virtuous modesty! He was like a picture drawn by an excellent master in painting, but placed in the dark, so that the exactness of the proportions and the beauty of the colours do not appear. He would not put his name to those excellent tracts that are extant, wherein his learning and judgment are very conspicuous. He was well satisfied to serve the church and illustrate the truth, and to remain in his beloved secrecy.

“In his conversation a comely gravity mixed with an innocent pleasantness, were attractive of respect and love. He was of a calm temper, not ruffled with passions, but gentle, and kind, and good; and even in some contentious writings, he preserved an equal tenor of mind, knowing that we are not likely to discover the truth in a mist of passion: his breast was the temple of peace.

“In the discharge of his sacred work, his intellectual abilities and holy affection were very evident.

“In prayer, his solemnity and reverence were becoming one that saw Him who is invisible: his tender affections, and suitable expressions, how melting and moving, that might convey a holy heat and life to dead hearts, and dissolve obdurate sinners in their frozen tombs.

“In his preaching, how instructive and persuasive to convince and turn the carnal and worldly from the love of sin to the love of holiness; from the love of the earth, to the love of heaven! The matter of his sermons was clear and deep, and always judiciously derived from the text; the language was neither gaudy and vain, with light trimmings, nor rude and neglected, but suitable to the oracles of God. Such were his chosen acceptable words, as to recommend heavenly truths, to make them more precious and amiable to the minds and affections of men; like the colour of the sky that makes the stars to shine with a more sparkling brightness.

“Briefly, whilst opportunity continued, with alacrity and diligence, and constant resolution, he served his blessed Master till his languishing distempers, which natural means could not remove, prevailed upon him. But then the best Physician provided him the true remedy of patience. His death was unexpected, yet, as he declared, no surprise to him, for he was entirely resigned to the will of God; he desired to live no longer, than to be serviceable: his soul was supported with the blessed hope of enjoying God in glory. With holy Simeon, he had Christ in his arms, and departed in peace to see the salvation of God above. How great a loss the church has sustained in his death is not easily valued; but our comfort is, God never wants instruments to accomplish his blessed work.”

To this elaborate testimony must be added the following from the pen of the Rev. John Howe:—"His clear and comprehensive mind, his excellent learning, his reasoning, argumentative skill, his solid, most discerning judgment, his indefatigable industry, his large knowledge, and great moderation in the matters of our unhappy ecclesiastical differences, his calm dispassionate temper, his pleasant and most amiable conversation, did carry so great a lustre with them, as that, notwithstanding his most beloved retiredness, they could not, in his circumstances, but make him be much known, and much esteemed and loved by all that had the happiness to know him, and make the loss of him be much lamented. But he was, by the things that made his continuance so desirable in this world, the fitter for a better and more suitable world. He lived here as one that was more akin to that other world than this; and who had no other business here but to help in making this better."^a

Dr. Thomas Ridgley, when preaching the funeral sermon for Mrs. Gertrude Clarkson, a daughter of Mr. C., thus speaks of him—"He was well known in this famous city, notwithstanding all his endeavours to conceal his real worth, under the curtain of humility. So far were his attainments above what are common, that to attempt to set forth his character, though in the fairest colours, would be to lessen him. His writings are the most lively picture of his mind; his labours as a minister of Christ, I had almost said with the apostle, *more than a minister*, (2 Cor. xi. 23,) were refreshing to many, and his course at last finished with joy."^b

The long seclusion of this admirable man from the public labours of his ministry enabled him to compose several learned discourses, which his great modesty forbade him to publish, but which were with his other papers, at the disposal of his executrix and widow.

Amongst his manuscripts was the treatise entitled "Primitive Episcopacy Stated and Cleared from the Holy Scriptures and Ancient Records," and which contains a great mass of additional evidence in favour of Congregational episcopacy. This was printed in 1688, without any preface or advertisement except that

^a See Preface, page 380, *infra*.

^b Sermon on the death of Mrs. Gertrude Clarkson. London, 1701.

from "the Stationer," Nath. Ponder, who says, "Though a preface be a civility due to the following tract, the name of the author is reckoned much more significant than any preface. Those that know the calmness of his disposition, and his sincere desire of contributing all that he could to the composure of those unhappy differences that have so long troubled the Christian church, will think this work very suitable to his design; and being so esteemed by divers judicious persons of his acquaintance, those in whose hands his papers are, have been prevailed with to send it abroad into the world with this assurance, that it is his whose name it bears." This treatise, the third in the following volume, will be found to justify the judgment of his friends; and although a posthumous publication, Dr. Henry Maurice thought it necessary to reply to it, in an elaborate work which appeared in 1691, entitled "Defence of Diocesan Episcopacy, in answer to a Book of Mr. David Clarkson's, lately published, entitled 'Primitive Episcopacy.'" Whatever may be thought of the comparative learning and acuteness of the two disputants, there can be no comparison between them as to their tone and temper; Mr. Clarkson always maintains the bearing of a scholar and a Christian, but the Doctor descends to false accusations and vulgar personalities.

During the same year there was published another small volume called "A Discourse of the Saving Grace of God," with a preface by the Rev. John Howe, in which the doctrines of free will and free grace are discussed with great ability and force. This forms the fifth treatise of the present volume.

In 1689 appeared his last polemical work, a "Discourse on Liturgies," which was left by its author in a very imperfect state, and which unhappily was committed to very incompetent hands for publication, so that the mistakes, both typographical and literary, were very gross and numerous. Still it was not a work to be slighted, for Mr. Clarkson had assailed the principal arguments of previous writers in defence of liturgies. He appears to have had in view, "Considerations touching Liturgies," by Dr. John Gauden, the reputed writer of *Εἰκὼν Βασιλική*, or the Portraiture of his Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings;" Sir Hammond L'Estrange's "Alliance of Divine Offices;" and Herbert Thorndike's "Religious Assemblies, and the Service of God." Dean Comber, therefore, published in 1690, in two successive parts, his "Scholastic History of Liturgies in the Christian Church; together with an Answer to Mr. David Clarkson's

late Discourse concerning Liturgies," in which he follows the chronological course pursued by our author down to the year 1100, and the passages he had cited are strenuously defended from his alleged misrepresentations and glosses by the Dean. These facts are necessary to be known as parts of the history of these controversies, but a decision on the merits and success of the respective combatants is designedly avoided.

However learned and able Mr. Clarkson was as a polemic, yet the sermons and discourses which he wrote out at great length, are amongst the most valuable memorials of his excellent abilities and eminent godliness. After his decease, his family delighted to read them, and there is evidence that two of his daughters were greatly instructed and consoled by the perusal of several of these manuscripts. In 1696, thirty-one of these discourses were published in a large folio volume of more than a thousand pages. They treat on the following topics:—1. Original Sin. 2. Repentance. 3. Faith. 4. Living by Faith. 5. Faith in Prayer. 6. Dying in Faith. 7. Knowledge of Christ. 8. Justification. 9. Sinners unwilling to come to Christ. 10. The Lord the owner of all, an inducement from earthly-mindedness. 11. Hearing the Word. 12. Taking up the Cross. 13. New Creature. 14. Christ's gracious Invitations. 15. Man's Insufficiency. 16. Against anxious carefulness, but prayer for everything. 17. God's End in Afflictions. 18. The Conviction of Hypocrites. 19. Soul Idolatry. 20. Not partakers in Sin. 21. Unconverted Sinners in Darkness. 22. Christ seeking Fruit. 23. The Lord rules over all. 24. Sinners under the Curse. 25. Love of Christ, and Sacrifice of Christ. 26. Christ Dying for Sinners. 27. Christ touched with Feeling of our Infirmities. 28. Boldness of Access. 29. Christ's Intercession. 30. Fellowship with God. 31. Public Worship preferred before Private. These able and evangelical discourses were introduced to the "Christian Reader," by the following brief advertisement, under the joint names of the Rev. John Howe and the Rev. Matthew Mead:

"The Rev. Mr. Clarkson was so esteemed for his excellent abilities, that there needs no adorning testimony to those who knew him: and the following sermons, wherein the signatures of his spirit are very conspicuous, will sufficiently recommend his worth to those who did not know him. They are printed from his original papers, and with the Divine blessing will be very useful to instruct and persuade men to be seriously religious."

Besides these, there are only three other printed sermons of his extant, viz. the Funeral Sermon for Dr. Owen, and two discourses in the Morning Exercises. It was, therefore, thought preferable to reprint them in the present volume as "Occasional Sermons," rather than make a selection from the folio volume, or leave the reader without any specimens of his pulpit labours.

A fine print, engraved by White from a portrait by Mrs. Mary Beale, an eminent portrait painter of that age, gives a very pleasing idea of the person of Mr. Clarkson. He had a round handsome face, with an ample forehead, and long flowing hair. An expression of cheerfulness and good temper, confirms what his writings suggest, that he was blessed with sweet equanimity of temper, and a natural gaiety of manners, that contributed much to his own happiness and to the pleasure of those who were privileged to be connected with him.

It appears he had four children, one son, Robert, named after his grandfather, and three daughters, Rebecca, Gertrude, and Katherine. Rebecca, the eldest, was married to a Mr. Combe, and lived to a good old age. She died in the faith of Jesus, November 20th, 1744, aged 79 years, and was buried in Bunhill Fields cemetery.

The two younger daughters remained unmarried. Gertrude died in London, April 23, 1701. Her pastor, Dr. Ridgley, preached her funeral sermon, which he also published and inscribed to Mrs. Elizabeth Clarkson, the venerable relict of Mr. Clarkson, who thus survived her lamented husband at least fifteen years; but the time of her decease is not known.

The third daughter, Katharine, was also eminent for her piety, and died at Hitchin, Herts, Jan. 11, 1757, aged 84 years.^a Nothing is known of his son Robert, to whom his father bequeathed "all his books if he would prove a scholar."

In the Rev. Samuel James's "Collection of Remarkable Experiences," there are two papers which Mrs. Combe and her sister Gertrude gave in, of their religious convictions upon uniting themselves with the Independent church assembling at the Three Cranes meeting-house, Fruiterers' alley, Upper Thames street, then under the pastoral care of the Rev. Thomas Gouge, and Dr. Thomas Ridgley. As they contain some references to their honoured father, so they will form an appropriate close to these notices.

^a James's Collection of Remarkable Experiences, &c., pp. 62—66.

The choice experience of Mrs. REBECCA COMBE, eldest daughter of the late Rev. Mr. DAVID CLARKSON, delivered by her on her admission into fellowship with the church, late under the care of the late Rev. Mr. THOMAS GOUGE.

IN giving an account of the dealings of God with my soul, I desire truly and sincerely to represent the state of my case; I am sensible it will be in much weakness, but I hope my end is, that God may have the glory of his own work, which he hath wrought on so mean and unworthy a creature as myself.

I had the advantage and invaluable blessing of a religious education, both my parents being eminent for wisdom and grace. Under the instructions of my good mother, I had early and frequent convictions, though these impressions lasted not long, for I wore them off, either by a formal engaging in some religious duties, or else, by running into such diversions as were suited to my childhood. But my convictions being renewed as I grew up, and it being impressed on my mind that this way of performing duties, by fits and starts, merely to quiet an accusing conscience, would not satisfy the desires of an immortal soul capable of higher enjoyments than I took up with; this put me on serious thoughtfulness what method to pursue, in order to bind myself to a more stated performance of those duties, which I was convinced, the Lord required of me.

Accordingly I made a most solemn resolution, to address myself to God by prayer, both morning and evening, and never, on any occasion whatever, to neglect it, calling the Lord to witness against me, if I broke this solemn engagement. But, alas! I soon saw the vanity of my own resolutions, for as I was only found in the performance of duty through fear, and as a task, and, having once omitted it at the set time, I concluded my promise was now broke, and from that time continued in a total neglect of prayer, till it pleased the Almighty Spirit to return with his powerful operations, and set my sins in order before me. Then my unsuitable carriage under former convictions, together with my breaking the most solemn engagements to the Lord, wounded me deep. Indeed, I was tempted to conclude I had sinned the unpardonable sin, and should never be forgiven.

Yet, in my greatest distress and anguish of spirit, I could not give up all hope, having some views of the free and sovereign grace of God, as extended to the vilest and worst of sinners, though I could not take the comfort of it to myself. My sins appeared exceeding sinful. I even loathed and abhorred myself on account of them, and was continually begging a deeper sense and greater degrees of humiliation. I thought I

could have been content, yea, I was desirous, to be filled with the utmost horror and terror of which I was capable, if this might be a means of bringing me to that degree of sorrow, which I apprehended the Lord expected, from so vile a creature. The heinous nature of my sins, and their offensiveness to the pure eyes of his holiness, were ever before me, insomuch that I thought I could not be too deeply wounded, or feel trouble enough.

This put me on a constant and restless application to God through Christ, from whom alone I now saw all my help must come. I had tried the utmost I could do, and found it left me miserably short of what the law required and I wanted. I was convinced that an expectation of some worthiness in myself, as the condition of my acceptance before God, was that which had kept me so long from Christ and the free promises of the Gospel; and therefore, as enabled, I went to the Lord, and pleaded those absolute promises of his word, which are made freely to sinners in his Son, without the least qualification to be found in me. I was enabled to urge those encouraging words, Rev. xxii. 17: "Let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Also Isaiah lv. 1: "Without money and without price;" with many more of the like nature, which would be too tedious to mention. I desired to come to Christ, unworthy as I was, and cast my soul entirely upon him, for I clearly saw that all I had heretofore done profited me nothing, since my very prayers, considered as a sinner, were an abomination to the Lord. There was nothing left therefore for me to take the least comfort and encouragement from, but the free grace of God in Christ Jesus, which I continued to plead with much earnestness, and found my soul enlarged beyond whatever I had experienced before.

Soon after, I providentially opened a manuscript of my father's, and cast my eye upon that part of it, where he was showing, what pleas a sensible sinner might make use of in prayer. Many things were mentioned which were very reviving. I was miserable, and that might be a plea. I might also plead his own mercy, the suitableness, the largeness, and the freeness of his mercy. I might plead my own inability to believe, of which I was very sensible. I might also plead the will of God, for he commands sinners to believe, and is highly dishonoured by unbelief. I might likewise plead the descent of faith, it is the gift of God, and the nature of this gift, which is free. Yea, I might plead the examples of others who have obtained this gift, and that against the greatest unlikelihood and improbabilities that might be. I might and could plead further, my willingness to submit to anything, so that I might but find this favour with the Lord. Moreover, I might plead Christ's prayer and his compassions; the workings of his Spirit

already begun ; that regard which the Lord shows to irrational creatures : he hears their cries, and will he shut out the cries of a poor perishing sinner?—In short, I might plead my necessity and extreme need of faith, a sense of which was deeply impressed on my soul.^a

On reading these pleas I found great relief, yea, they were to me as a voice from heaven, saying, This is the way, walk in it. I was enabled to go and act faith upon a Redeemer, and could give up my *all* to him, and trust in him alone *for* all. I was now convinced by his Spirit, that he would work in me what was well-pleasing and acceptable to God, and that he required nothing of me but what his free, rich grace would bestow upon me. Now was Christ exceeding precious to my soul, and I longed for clearer discoveries of him, both in his person and offices, as prophet, priest, and king.

And oh, how did I admire his condescending love and grace to such a poor, wretched, worthless creature as myself ! I was greatly delighted in frequent acts of resignation to him, desiring that every faculty of my soul might be brought into an entire obedience, and could part with every offensive thing, and would not have spared so much as one darling lust, but was ready to bring it forth and slay it before him. In short, I could now perceive a change wrought in my whole soul ; I now delighted in what before was my greatest burden, and found that most burdensome in which I before most delighted. I went on pleasantly in duty ; my meditation on him was sweet, and my heart much enlarged, in admiring his inexpressible love and grace, so *free*, and *sovereign*, to so *wretched* a creature, which even filled my soul with wonder and love.

But this delightful frame did not long continue, for I was soon surprised with swarms of vain thoughts, which appeared in my most solemn approaches to God, and such violent hurries of temptation, as greatly staggered my faith, which was weak. Hereupon I was ready to give up all, and to conclude that I had mocked God, and cheated my own soul ; that these wandering thoughts, and this unfixedness of mind in duty, could never consist with a sincere love to the things of God. I thought my heart had been fixed, but, oh ! how exceeding deceitful did I then find it ! which greatly distressed me, and made me conclude my sins were rather increased than mortified, insomuch that I was ready to cry out, “ Oh, wretched creature that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ! ” and in consideration of the power and prevalency of indwelling corruptions and daily temptations, which I had to grapple with, I was ready to say, “ I shall one day fall by the hands of these enemies.”

But these discouragements were fully removed, by reading some of

^a Clarkson's Sermons and Discourses on Divine Subjects. Folio, pp. 122—126.

my father's writings, where it was observed, that a person had no reason to conclude his sins were more increased, merely because they appeared more, and became more troublesome, since this arose from the opposition they now met with, from that principle of grace which now was implanted. Hence I learned, that before the flesh reigned *quietly* in me, and therefore I perceived not the lusts thereof, but now all the powers and faculties of my soul were engaged against them, they gave me the *greatest* disturbance, and struggled more and more. Also these words were impressed on my mind with an efficacious power, 2 Cor. xii. 9, "My grace is sufficient for thee," which gave me peace in believing that it should be to me according to his word.

Thus after many conflicts, comforts, and supports, I determined to give myself up to some church, that I might partake of the Lord's supper, and have my faith confirmed in the blood of that everlasting covenant, which I hoped the Lord had made with me, since he had given me his Spirit as the earnest thereof. I accordingly was joined to a church, and in coming to this ordinance, found great delight: my faith was strengthened, and my love increased, from that sweet communion I then enjoyed with my Lord by his blessed Spirit, who often filled me with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Thus I walked under the sweet and comfortable sense of his love; and whilst in the way of my duty, I was thus indulged with such sights of the Redeemer's glory, and such a taste of his grace, I frequently wished that I might never more go back to the world again.

But after all these manifestations, oh, wretched creature! God in his providence calling me more into the world by changing my condition, this new relation brought new affections and new temptations, which, being too much yielded to, insensibly prevailed, and brought me into such perplexing darkness that I want words to express it. I lost the sense of the love of God, and hence my duty was performed without that delight I had once experienced, the want of which made me often neglect it, and especially in private, while I attended on public worship with little advantage or pleasure.

The consideration of this decay in my love, and the loss of those quickening influences of the Spirit which I used to experience in duty, increased my darkness, and I had doleful apprehensions of my state. And my inordinate love to the creature, and want of submission to the will of the Lord, in disposing of what I had so unduly set my heart on, prepared me to look for awful things, in a way of judgment from the righteous God, which I afterwards found; his hand was soon laid on that very object by which I had so provoked him; for a disorder seized him, under which he long languished till it ended in his death.^a

^a Her idolised husband died of a consumption at Hitchin, Herts, but in what year is not known.

This was a melancholy stroke, and the more so as I saw his hand stretched out still, for I continued in an unsuitable temper, and without that submission which such a dispensation called for. The Lord still hid his face from me, and it is impossible to give a particular account of those perplexing thoughts and tormenting fears which filled my mind. Everything appeared dreadfully dark, both within and without. Oh, were it possible to describe it to others, as I then felt it, they would dread that which will separate between them and God! I expected, if the Lord did return, it would be in a terrible way, by some remarkable judgment or other; but oftentimes, from the frame I was in, I could see no ground to hope he would ever return at all.

But was it to me according to my dismal apprehensions and fears? Oh, no! my soul and all that is within me bless and adore his name, under a sense of his free and sovereign grace, who manifested himself unto thee as a God, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin. This was the title by which he manifested himself to Moses, when he caused his glory to pass before him, (Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.) And it was in the clear apprehension, and powerful application of this by the Almighty Spirit, that I was brought to admire so greatly, the free grace of God, thus discovered to me in so extraordinary a manner, that it even transported my very soul with love and thankfulness, beyond anything that I had experienced, in the whole of my past life.

The beginning of this wonderful alteration in my frame, was hearing the experience of one, which I thought very much like my own, when the Lord first began to work on my soul. I concluded that this person was the subject of a real and universal change; on this occasion I determined to consider *my* former experience, in doing of which I found the blessed Spirit of all grace assisting me, and witnessing to his work upon my heart, inasmuch that, ere I was aware, my soul was like the chariots of a willing people; I was wonderfully enlivened in duty, and enlarged in thankfulness to God, for thus manifesting himself, and directing me to those means which he had so inexpressibly blessed, beyond my expectation.

Thus the Lord drew me by the cords of love, and lifted up the light of his countenance upon me, so that in his light I saw light, which scattered that miserable cloud of darkness, that had enwrapped my soul so long. Yea, he dispelled all those unbelieving thoughts which were apt to arise, on account of that low estate out of which he had newly raised me. It was suggested to me that this was not his ordinary way of dealing with such provoking creatures as myself, but that they are usually filled with terrors, and brought down even to a view of the lowest hell, &c. Thus Satan endeavoured to hold me under unbelieving fears, but the blessed Spirit, by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto me, prevailed over the temptation.

I had a discovery of the glory of the Father's love, as unchangeable, free, and eternal, which was discovered in pitching on me before the foundation of the world. And the glory of the Son as proceeding from the Father, and offering a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, and in bringing in an everlasting righteousness, which by his Spirit he enabled me to rest wholly and alone upon, as the foundation of every blessing which I have received, or he has promised, for the whole of my acceptance before God, for my justification, sanctification, and full redemption. On this foundation he has enabled me stedfastly to rely, which greatly enlivens and enlarges my soul, in its addresses to the Father, through the Son, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, for pardon and strength, against those powerful corruptions which still remain in my heart.

Oh, the love, the infinite, condescending, and unchanging love of the Father! and oh, that fulness of grace which is treasured up in my Redeemer, to be bestowed on me, by his promised Spirit! of which so much hath already been communicated, that my soul is even overwhelmed under the sense and consideration of it! The Lord appears to me as resting in his love, and joying over me with singing, as it is expressed, Zeph. iii. 17; which Scripture, with many others, has been so opened and applied, as makes my approaches to him exceeding delightful. And this sense of his love lays me low, in the views of my own vileness and unworthiness, and constrains me to love him and live to him, and to give him all the glory of that change, which, of his own free and sovereign grace, he has wrought in me. There was nothing in me to move him to this, yea, what was there not in me to provoke him to cast me off for ever? But, thus it hath pleased him to magnify his grace and mercy, on a creature the *most* unworthy of any that ever received a favour at his hands.

I know not where to end. He has recovered me from amongst the dead, and he shall have the glory of it whilst I live: yes, I will praise him, and tell of the wonders of his love to others, that so he may be honoured, and none may distrust him. He has filled me with his praises, though he has not given me that natural capacity which some have been blessed with, to express what I feel and find, of his work on my soul. But this I can say, I have found him whom my soul loves, he hath manifested himself to me, and there is nothing I dread so much as losing sight of him again. His presence makes all his ordinances, and all his providences, and everything delightful unto me. It is impossible to express the joy of my soul in sweet converses with him, with a sense of his love and the experience of his presence, under the influences of his Spirit, whose office it is to abide with me, and to guide, direct, and comfort me for ever.

It is from a sense of my duty and a desire to follow the direction of

that blessed Spirit, that I request fellowship with you of this church. Amongst you my Lord has been pleased to discover himself to me, and to make the ministry you sit under exceeding useful and comfortable to my soul ; by it I have been built up and settled on the right foundation, the righteousness of Christ, that rock that shall never be moved. Your order likewise appears to me very beautiful and lovely, being, as I apprehend, most agreeable to the rules of my Lord. Hence I desire to have communion with you, that so by your example and watchfulness over me, and the other advantages arising from church-fellowship, I may find what I expect, and earnestly desire in communion with you, namely, that I may experience fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit, whilst I wait upon him in the ways of his own appointment.

REBECCA COMBE.

December 17, 1697.

The remarkable experience of Mrs. GERTRUDE CLARKSON, second daughter of the late Rev. Mr. DAVID CLARKSON, given to the church with whom she lived in communion.

My education has been very strict. The constant instruction and example of my parents had so early an influence, that it is hard to tell which was my first awakening. Ever since I can remember anything of myself, I have had frequent convictions of the danger of sin and an unregenerate state, attended with fears of the punishment due to it ; therefore was desirous of an interest in Christ, by whom I might be pardoned and saved from the wrath of God. This made me very fearful of omitting duties, or committing known sins ; and, though these convictions wore off, yet they often returned, and rendered me uneasy, unless I was praying or learning Scriptures, or something which I thought good. In these exercises I was well satisfied, though it was my happiness to be under the most careful inspection and judicious helps for the informing of my judgment.

Before I apprehended what it was to rely upon an all-sufficient Saviour for righteousness and strength, I remember my notion of things was this, that I was to hear, and pray, and keep the Sabbath, and avoid what I knew to be sin, and then I thought God was obliged to save me ; that I did what I could, and so all that he required ; and I further conceived, that if at any time I omitted secret prayer, or any other duty, yet if I repented it was sufficient ; and, on this consideration I have often ventured upon the commission of sin, with a resolve to repent the next day, and then, having confessed the transgression, my conscience has been

easy, and I was well satisfied. Indeed sin, at that time, was not burdensome. I truly desired that my sins might be pardoned, but thought the ways of religion hard; and, though I durst not live in the constant neglect of duty, yet I secretly wished that I had been under no obligation to perform it. When I reflect on the thoughts and workings of my heart and affections in these times, and the confused apprehensions which I then had both of sin and grace, I am fully persuaded that, through grace, there is a real, and, in some measure, an universal change wrought in my soul.

After my father's death, I was reading one of his manuscripts, wherein both the object and nature of saving faith were described, and the great necessity of it pressed, &c. The plain and clear definition there given of the saving act of faith, caused other apprehensions of things than I had before.^a I then began to see, how short I had come in all my performances of that disposition of soul which the Gospel called for, and how guilty I was while depending upon these performances for acceptance with God, not casting myself wholly and alone upon Christ, and resting on his righteousness, *entirely*, for pardon and justification. The concern of my mind was very great, that I had lived so long, ignorant of those things which related to my eternal welfare. I was sensible, the means and helps I had been favoured with, for improvement in knowledge, were beyond what is common, but I had refused instruction, the consideration of which was very terrible to my thoughts, fearing lest I had sinned beyond all hope of forgiveness.

But in the most discouraging apprehensions of my case, my heart was much enlarged in the confession of sin, and in bewailing my captivity to it, which was attended with earnest wrestlings with the Lord, for pardoning and purifying grace. Those absolute promises in the 36th chapter of Ezekiel, of "a new heart and right spirit," were my continual plea, together with Matt. v. 6: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." I found longings and pantings of soul after that righteousness, and saw that it could only be received by faith: this faith I earnestly begged, and that the Lord would pardon that *great* sin of unbelief, which so provoked and dishonoured him, and that he would, by his own Spirit, enable me to embrace Christ, as freely held forth in the Gospel.

About this time I was much affected with the consideration of Christ's offices, as prophet, priest, and king. And though I durst not claim an interest in them, yet was often meditating upon them, admiring that infinite condescension which is manifested therein. I thought whatever my condition was in this world, yet if I might but be under his power-

^a This is the same discourse that was useful to her sister Rebecca, and is the third in the volume, entitled "*Faith*," and based on Mark xvi. 16.

ful and effectual teachings as a Prophet, and have the benefit of his atonement and intercession as a Priest, and be entirely subject to him in every faculty of my soul, as *my* Lord and King, then how satisfied and happy should I be!

I was under these strugglings a long time, before I came to any comfortable persuasion that I was accepted. Sins against light and love deeply wounded me, and the many aggravating circumstances which attended them, were so represented by Satan, that I could not tell how to believe such iniquities as mine would be forgiven. But in the midst of these distressing thoughts, I found in that manuscript of my father's, that none but *unworthy sinners*, who are empty of all good in themselves, were the objects of pardoning mercy, that the whole needed not the physician, but the sick. This encouraged me to plead with hope, that the Lord would glorify the freeness of his own grace in my salvation, and to urge that Christ called "weary and heavy laden to him with a promise of rest. (Matt. xi. 28.)

I found my soul was extremely burdened with sin; it appeared more exceeding sinful than ever before; sins of thought as well as words and actions, were then observed with sorrow, and lamented before him. Yea, even the sins of my most holy things, those swarms of vain thoughts, and wanderings of heart and affections, of which I was conscious in my secret retirements, and most solemn, close dealings with God. In short, my own soul was my intolerable burden, which made me often question, whether there were not more provoking sins in me than God usually pardons. Oh, I found how every power and faculty were depraved, and that I could not do the good I would!

It would be tedious to relate the many particular discouragements and temptations I laboured under, sometimes pouring forth my soul with some hope in his free mercy, sometimes only bewailing my condition without hope, till it pleased Him whose power and grace no impenitent heart can resist and prevail, to put a stop to my unbelieving reasonings, from the unlikelihood of such sins being pardoned, sins so aggravated and so provoking as mine, by giving me an awful sense of his absolute sovereignty from those words, Exodus xxxiii. 19, "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Also Isaiah lv. 1, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord." These considerations were so impressed on my mind, and struck such an awe upon my spirits, that I durst not any longer give way to my carnal reasonings; I thought I could commit myself to his sovereign pleasure, let him do with me as seemed him good.

After some time my mother, perceiving my concern, conversed very freely with me, and asked if I was not willing to accept of Christ to

sanctify, as well as to *save* me? I told her I desired this above all things. She then said he had certainly accepted me, adding, that it was Christ who had made me willing to close with him, and that he never made any soul thus willing, but he had first pardoned and accepted that soul. I shall never forget with what weight these words were impressed on my heart. I thought it was as a pardon sent immediately to me. I could not but say, I was above *all* things desirous to be entirely subject to Christ in every power and faculty of my soul, that every thought might be brought into subjection to Christ, and nothing might remain in me contrary to him, but that there might be a perfect conformity to his image and will in all things.

After this conversation I found great composure in my mind, believing that the Lord had created those desires in me, which nothing but himself, and the enjoyment of himself, could satisfy, and that he would answer them *with* himself; "that he would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax," Matt. xii. 20. My delight now was in nothing else but meditating upon, and admiring of, the *free* and *sovereign* grace of God in Christ, which distinguished me from many others who had not so highly provoked him, having called me out of such gross darkness which I had been long in, and given me any glimmerings of the light, of the knowledge, of the glory of his grace. My desires greatly increased after further discoveries, and clearer light into the deep mysteries of the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus: and all diversions from these meditations were a burden.

Oh, I then thought, "all old things were passed away, and everything was become new!" I experienced a universal change in my mind, will, and affections; the bent of them was turned another way. The ordinances, which were once irksome, were above all things pleasant, and the return of Sabbaths continually longed for. I was very thankful it was my duty as well as privilege to set apart the *whole* day for the worship and glory of my Lord. I bewailed much that I could love him no more, that there was so much sin remaining in me, and which I found mixed with all that I did, and that I was not wholly taken up in those blessed and delightful employments, without the least interruption. Oh, I longed for that state wherein all these fetters should be knocked off, and my soul set at liberty in the worship and praise of my God, being freed from corruptions within or temptations without!

My soul was thus delightfully carried out for some time, in which I heard a discourse from those words, John xxi. 17, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." The scope of this sermon was for a trial, whether *our* appeal could be made to him who knows all things, that we loved him? Under this discourse I found my heart greatly carried out in love to Christ, in all his ordinances, and the discoveries

made of his will therein. These subjects concerning the love of Christ, and his people's love to him, being long continued, one sermon after another, I found I sat under the word with great pleasure and enlarged affections.

At this time my mother was persuading me to join in communion with some church, which greatly startled me at the first. I could by no means think of that, not apprehending myself to have come so far yet. I thought there must be something more in me, or I should eat and drink damnation to myself. But being better informed both as to the nature and end of the ordinance, and that it was intended for the increase of grace and strength, and that it was a positive command of my Lord, with whose will in all things I was very desirous to comply, I was at last prevailed with to venture on that great ordinance, and was much refreshed and satisfied, in my renewed resignation, and enlarged expectations, of receiving all needful supplies from Him who is the head of the church. Oh, the condescending love and grace of my Redeemer, represented to me in these transactions, how greatly did they delight and affect my soul! I wished I might have been always thus exercised, expecting with great pleasure the return of those seasons, wherein I might hope for further manifestations, and larger communications, of grace and love.

But after some time my affections began to cool. I had not such sweetness and enlargement in my approaches to God in public, as I used to find. I thought the preaching more empty, and came short of what I found I wanted. This deadness continuing, filled me with no small concern, fearing I should fall off. I was very far from charging the ministry I sat under, but my own *wicked wavering* heart. I have often gone to the house of God with raised expectations of receiving those quickenings I used to be blessed with, but found sad disappointments. This frame of spirit as to public worship, was matter of continual mourning and bewailing in secret. I was often examining my heart as to its *aims* and *ends* in my public approaches, and could not but conclude my desires were above all things to glorify my Lord in all his appointments, and to receive those blessings from him which might enable me so to do.

The missing of the Lord's presence under the means, in the use of which he had commanded me to expect it, and which he had heretofore in some measure vouchsafed, was very grievous. I earnestly begged a discovery of every sin that might be hid from me, which might be the cause of this withdrawing. But the decay of my affections still remaining, it caused great misgivings of heart, that things were not right with me. Yet still I had supports in my secret applications to God, that his grace would be sufficient for me, and that I should be kept by his

almighty power, through faith unto salvation, which encouragements kept me still waiting with hope, that he would yet return and bless me.

After some time being providentially brought to this place, I found the preaching of your pastor so suited to my case, that I was greatly enlarged in thankfulness to God, who had so directed me. Those sermons upon Galat. vi. 3, "For if a man thinketh himself something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," though I had heard your minister before, with great satisfaction, brought me to a resolution of sitting under his ministry. I do not question but you remember what unusual and deep heart-searching discourses they were to me. They razed me again to the very foundation, and discovered the many secret holds Satan had in my heart, which before I thought not of, and how many ways I was taken up in something which was nothing. I wish I could express what they were.

These discourses caused deep humblings of spirit, and enlarged desires after further enlightenings. Oh I found these things reached me! I needed to be led into the depths of my own deceitful heart, and thereby observe, that secret proneness there was in me, to be laying hold on something in *self* to rest upon and expect from. In short, I now saw that utter insufficiency and weakness in myself, and everything done by myself, to satisfy the cravings of my immortal soul, which I had not so much as once thought of before.

I have been also led more to that fulness, from whence only I can receive what may render me acceptable to the Father, and have never found so much sweetness and solid satisfaction in my accesses to God, as when most sensible of my own unworthiness, and entire emptiness of anything agreeable to him in myself, and all my performances, and when most apprehensive of that infinite fulness and suitableness of grace laid up in Christ Jesus, from whence I am commanded and encouraged to be continually receiving fresh supplies. Oh those infinite inexhaustible treasures! Nothing, nothing less can satisfy the restless cravings and pantings of my soul! By *this* preaching, I have been continually led to this fresh spring that never fails, and have experienced great quickenings in my applications to Christ, and comfortable rejoicings in him. Notwithstanding all those miserable defects and failures in my poor performances, this gives me comfort, that there is a perfect righteousness wrought out for me, which I may receive *freely* by faith, and therein stand complete before God for ever.

The insisting on such truths as these, which have a direct tendency to lead from self to Christ, by opening and unfolding the mysteries of grace laid up in him, so admirably suited to answer all the necessities of poor helpless guilty creatures, I find above all things encourages me to, and enlivens me in, duty. My low improvements under these suit-

able instructive helps fill me with mourning, to think there should be no greater establishment, upon the sure foundation of a Redeemer's righteousness, on which I hope I have been enabled to build.

At times I can apprehend with some clearness that this righteousness was wrought out for me, and can apply to him with confidence and joy, as the "Lord my righteousness and strength," and gladly hope, that through *that* strength I shall be more than a conqueror over every disturbing corruption and temptation. Yea, that I shall see him shortly, as he is, in the full displays of the glory of that grace and love which I cannot now comprehend, and by the transforming sight be made like him. But oh how short! how seldom are these interviews! my unbelieving heart *still* returns to its former darkness and distrust, and gives me frequent occasions to bewail the fluctuations of my weak faith. Oh that it was stronger! that it was more stedfast! But blessed be his name in whom I put my *entire* trust, there is grace in him, to help me under all decays and failings, through weakness. It is from hence I receive strength, to elevate and excite the acts of faith and love, when sunk so low that I cannot raise them. Yea, it is from the same fulness I receive grace, to regulate the actings of grace, and to set my soul from time to time, in a right way of improving the grace I received, and for obtaining pardon for all my defects, as well as for the removing all my defilements.

These are truths that feed and support my faith, and without these were set home with power on my soul, I must give up, under the great aboundings of indwelling corruptions. I desire a submissive waiting for further manifestations of his love, in his own time and way. And although I have not those constant shines of the light of God's countenance, with which some of his people are blessed, yet I humbly adore him for the little light he hath afforded me, and beg your prayers that I may be kept close to him, and have such constant discoveries as may strengthen my faith, by a close adherence to him, and firm reliance on him, without wavering. But I am sensible that I am too apt to be looking off from the only support and foundation of my faith and hope, and to be depending on, and expecting from, the frame of my own spirit, and workings of my affections towards spiritual things.

Oh the unsearchable deceitfulness of my heart! which is so *many* ways betraying me into an unbelieving temper of spirit! I find I need greater helps than those many who are more established, and I dare not neglect those helps which my Lord has provided for his church. I need to be watched over, and excited and encouraged under difficulties, from those experiences which others have of the dealings of the Lord with them. I have been wishing for these advantages for a considerable time, being fully convinced that those who are members of his church,

should be building up one another. I bless the Lord that he has discovered his will to me in this point, and that he hath provided greater helps than what I had been before acquainted with, for my furtherance in my progress to heaven. Accordingly I would cheerfully and thankfully fall in with his will herein, and so take hold of his covenant in this church, expecting the blessing promised to those that are planted in his house.

GERTRUDE CLARKSON.