

M E M O I R.

HE who attempts to prefix, to such a mass of fine thought as this Edition of HOWE'S Works presents, a Memoir of the author, must labour under the enfeebling impression of being sure to disappoint the expectation which the volumes will excite. It is, however, consoling to reflect, that none who combine piety with intellect can rise without pleasure and improvement from the perusal of a life which presents the loftiest results of profound study, though in the most stormy period of our history; while the political connections into which our Divine was drawn by the force of events, left his character untainted even by the suspicion of earthly aims; so that his religion shines with the unusual lustre acquired by a successful struggle against the pride of intellect and the ambition of the world.

Loughborough, in Leicestershire, gave birth to Mr. Howe on the 17th of May, 1630. His father, who was a man of great piety, was the parochial minister of the town, and his mother was distin-

guished by talents so superior, that it is probable we owe to her early culture that pre-eminence of mind which the volumes now presented to the public sufficiently attest. Archbishop Laud, who had given to the elder Mr. Howe the living, must have been disappointed in the incumbent; for he proved a non-conformist to those ceremonies which the metropolitan enforced with the zeal of a man who sincerely mistook them for the beauties of holiness. The same hand, therefore, which had committed the flock to his care, drove him from the important post; and while other pastors, deprived, for similar causes, of opportunities for serving the Redeemer in their native land, obeyed his command by fleeing to Holland and America, the subject of this memoir was taken by his father to Ireland.

Though it does not appear in what part of the sister island the family took refuge, we are informed that while there they were in danger of having their blood mingled with that of the Protestants, which flowed so profusely wherever the arms of the Catholics were triumphant. But as the rebels were compelled to raise the siege of the place, our author was spared to the church and the world. Finding therefore that the civil war, which raged so furiously there, made Ireland unfit to afford them an asylum, the family crossed the Channel to Lancaster.

In this town Mr. Howe laid the foundations of that education which he afterwards raised to heights so noble. With regret we acknowledge our inability to record the name of the tutor, or to point

out the seminary that claims the honour of a pupil whom all would be proud to own.

His early proficiency is attested by his having been at Cambridge, taken a degree, and removed to Oxford by the time he was eighteen years of age. He first entered Christ's College, Cambridge, where he had the happiness to meet with scholars so distinguished as Dr. Henry More, and Dr. Cudworth, author of *The Intellectual System*. Becoming a great admirer of these associates of his early studies, he maintained a close friendship with Dr. More, till death removed him from the world; and to this friendship has been ascribed that tinge of Platonism which is observable in the more laboured productions of Mr. Howe.

Having graduated at Cambridge as Bachelor of Arts, he removed to Brazen Nose College, Oxford. Wood informs us, that he was Bible Clerk there in Michaelmas Term 1648. In the following year he took, according to a common practice, the same degree in his new college, to which he had already been admitted at Cambridge.* The diligence and success with which he pursued his studies, together with the excellence of his character, procured his election to a fellowship in Magdalen College. By the Parliament visitors he was made Demy, which Wood seems to mention as a reflection on him; but to those who have marked the honourable integrity which distinguished Howe's conduct through the

* Wood's *Fasti Oxonienses*, Vol. II. 750. Bachelors of Arts, 1749. Jan. 18, Howe, John, Brazen Nose College.

whole of life, something more will be required to blemish his character than mere insinuation. It would be difficult to find a person less likely to *worm* himself into another man's place, than the subject of this memoir.

Howe, formed for friendship, found here, as at Cambridge, men worthy to claim the honour of being his friends. Some of them were kindred spirits, not merely as scholars, but also as Christian ministers, who afterwards shared with him the weight of the cross which non-conformity was called to bear. Distinct mention is due to Theophilus Gale; Thomas Danson, Chaplain of Christ Church, and afterwards fellow of Magdalen, who became at length pastor of a dissenting church at Abingdon in Berkshire; and to Samuel Blower, who, Calamy says, died pastor of a congregation of dissenters in the same town. This latter was fond of expressing his attachment to Mr. Howe, observing, whenever the name was mentioned in company, "We two were born in the same town, went to the same school, and were of the same College in the University." To these companions of Mr. Howe's academic walks should be added, John Spilsbury, who was afterwards ejected for non-conformity from Bromsgrove in Worcestershire; with whom the author of *The Living Temple* maintained a correspondence at once intimate and endeared, until death separated for a while these bosom friends.

The author of *The Non-conformists' Memorial* mentions also, that besides two of the former per-

sons, Wood neglects to notice in his *Fasti* two others who were graduates while Howe was at Cambridge, George Porter and James Ashhurst, who died at Newington Green, near London. These omissions have been supposed to be designed attempts to diminish the apparent number of those who sacrificed their interest to their sincere disapprobation of the established church.

The President of Magdalen College, at the time that Howe held his fellowship there, was Dr. Thomas Goodwin, whose well known principles might induce an expectation that this fellow would have found himself at home in the church which the President had formed from the pious students of the College. But though it appears that Howe had already adopted those independent principles on which the church was formed, he did not offer himself to become one of its members. When Dr. Goodwin expressed to him in private his disappointment at being deprived of the fellowship of one whom he should have deemed so well fitted and disposed to join their church, Mr. Howe informed him, that a report concerning some peculiarities, on which they were said to lay too much stress, had induced him to keep silence on that subject. He assured the Doctor, that while he had no fondness for these things himself, he was not disposed to quarrel with those who had, but should be happy to join their society, provided they would admit him on catholic principles. That Dr. Goodwin has been unjustly condemned as a bigot to the

most rigid independency is manifest, from the cordial manner in which he now embraced Mr. Howe, and the assurance he gave him, that he should not only himself welcome this new member on these liberal terms, but could also pledge himself for the satisfaction it would afford to the rest of the church. What these peculiarities were, which kept such a man as Mr. Howe from joining the religious society which in other respects he most approved, we are not told; but they afford an opportunity of displaying the wisdom and dignity of that mind which, while it become a convert to a rising sect, guarded itself against the danger of losing its catholic charity towards other Christians; and of eliciting a truth honourable to the society, that they knew how practically to distinguish between regulations edifying to themselves, and terms of communion to be imposed on the consciences of others.

Mr. Howe now acquired that well-earned reputation, both in his own College and through the whole University, which is known by its operating as a stimulus to increased exertion. Previously to July 1652, when he took the degree of M.A. in his 22d year, he had gone through a course of philosophy, conversed closely with the heathen moralists—read over the accounts we have remaining of Pagan theology, the writings of the schoolmen, and several systems and common-places of the Reformers, and the divines that succeeded them. He also informed a person, who told it to Dr. Calamy, that he had at that time gone through a course of study of the

scriptures, from which he had drawn up for himself a body of theology that he afterwards saw very little occasion to alter, in order to adapt it to the systems of other divines.

The instructive and original glosses which Howe often throws on the Scriptures, and indeed the air of originality and independent thinking, combined with profound deference for inspired authority, which pervades the Theological Lectures that form the volumes of this edition, furnish the highest eulogium on this mode of study.

It is probable that Mr. Howe's family continued in Lancashire till this time, for as soon as he had taken his last degree, he went into that county, and was ordained by Mr. Charles Herle in the parochial edifice of Winwick, which is pronounced, by Wood, one of the richest churches in England. Mr. Herle, whose reputation was so great, that he was on the death of Dr. Twisse chosen prolocutor of the Westminster assembly of divines, had several chapelries under his, and, as the minister of these, officiated at Mr. Howe's ordination. The latter used often to say that few in modern times had so primitive an ordination as himself; believing that Mr. Herle was a scriptural bishop, and that in the concurrence of those ministers who assisted him there was the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery of which the apostle speaks.*

Divine Providence now unexpectedly removed Mr. Howe to the opposite extremity of the kingdom, by

* 1 Tim. iv. 14.

calling him to Great Torrington in Devonshire. This is pronounced, by a competent judge of such matters, a donative or curacy belonging to Christ Church Oxford, but equal to one held by institution. From Torrington, Mr. Theophilus Powel was ejected in 1646, when, Dr. Walker says, "he was succeeded by the famous independent, Mr. Lewis Stukely," who, removing to Exeter, where he gathered an independent church that worshipped in the Cathedral, created the vacancy which Mr. Howe was called to fill.

He entered upon the full exercise of his ministry with that ardour and ability which had characterized his preparatory studies, and soon reaped the fruits of his diligence in the sight of a flourishing charge. Several of the congregation had been in the habit of celebrating the Lord's Supper, as members of a church at Biddeford, of which Mr. William Bartlett, a particular college friend of Mr. Howe, was pastor. Whether this arose from dissatisfaction with Mr. Stukely, or from the strength of a prior attachment to Mr. Bartlett, it gave way to the high regard they entertained for Mr. Howe, to whose care their former pastor gladly resigned this portion of his flock.

To those who have become at all acquainted with Mr. Howe's spirit, it is unnecessary to say that, far from drawing around him a little circle and limiting his labours or affections to the people of his immediate charge, he formed connexions of friendship and usefulness through all the county,

where he soon attracted general esteem. Among the ministers of Devon, universal suffrage directed him to Mr. George Hughes, of Plymouth, as a man of pre-eminent worth ; and the reception which Mr. Howe found in this family led to his marriage with Mr. Hughes's daughter, March 1, 1654. From subsequent occurrences in this Memoir, it will appear that the match was as propitious as the pious connexion in which it originated might lead us to expect.

The father and son-in-law maintained a weekly correspondence by letters written in Latin, the strain of which may in some measure be guessed by a passage which occurred in one of them: "Sit ros cœli super habitaculum vestrum," "May the dew of heaven fall on your dwelling:" which has been brought into notice, because on that very morning on which it was received from Plymouth, a fire that threatened to consume Mr. Howe's residence was extinguished by mean of a violent rain.

But the comfortable connexion which Mr. Howe had now formed, both with the church to which he ministered and the family to which he was united, was destined to be disturbed by an event that changed the whole colour of his future life. Having occasion to go to London, he was detained there longer than he intended, and going one Lord's day to the chapel at Whitehall, his strikingly prepossessing countenance attracted the perspicacious eye of Cromwell, who was then Protector. Calamy says, that Cromwell knew by the garb that this was a country minister, though it does not appear by

what garb a rural pastor was known in those days. The Protector having sent a person to request an interview after the public worship was closed, desired Mr. Howe to preach before him on the following Lord's day. To Mr. Howe's expressions of surprise and assurances that he was utterly unprepared, Cromwell replied, that it was vain to frame excuses, for he would take no denial. Mr. Howe pleaded, that having dispatched the business for which he came to town, he was now going home, and could not be detained without inconvenience. What great inconvenience would result from the delay, said Cromwell? My people, replied Howe, are very kind to me, and they would think I slighted them and undervalued their esteem, if I delayed to return to them. To obviate this difficulty the Protector promised to write to them himself, and to send a person down to supply their pastor's place. Mr. Howe's first sermon induced Cromwell to press for a second and a third; till at length, after much free conversation, he whose word was like that of a king, armed with power, told the country pastor that he must stay and be domestic chaplain at the seat of government. Mr. Howe's reluctance availed nothing, for a successor, with whom Cromwell pledged himself to satisfy the congregation, was sent to Torrington; and Mrs. Howe, with the rest of the family, were brought to Whitehall, where several of Mr. Howe's children were born.

These most critical moments of Mr. Howe's life served only to elicit his superior worth; he dis-

played that happy combination of prudence with integrity, which proved that while he had not courted this promotion to serve his own interests, he was awake to the opportunities which Providence had thus afforded him, of promoting the welfare of his country, the church, and the world. His reputation as a preacher did honour to the discernment which placed him in this conspicuous post. He was chosen Lecturer of St. Margaret's, Westminster; and the tone of simple dignity which prevailed in his discourses, together with their freedom from every thing that might be branded as the cant of a party, would, as far as Mr. Howe's influence could extend, contradict the charges that have been brought against the preaching most in vogue in those times.

He has, indeed, escaped censure from those who have proved themselves greedy of every opportunity to charge all that were placed in his circumstances, with political manœuvring, or eagerness to found their fortunes upon the ruins of other men. To those who were known to differ from him both in religion and politics, he was studious to do good offices; and whatever hostility was meditated by others against learning or sobriety in religion, in Mr. Howe it found a determined opponent. He attempted to procure for Dr. Seth Ward, afterwards bishop of Exeter, the principalship of Jesus College Oxford; and so earnest was his recommendation, that the Protector, who had already promised that situation, asked the Doctor in a pleasant way, what he thought it worth; and receiving the answer, promised to

allow him that annual sum. On another occasion, Dr. Thomas Fuller, being called to appear before those who, from their appointment to investigate the qualifications of ministers, were called the *Triers*, was much alarmed, and applied to Mr. Howe in his usual style, saying "You may observe, Sir, that I am a pretty corpulent man, and I have to go through a passage that is very strait; be so kind then as to give me a shove and help me through." If we may judge of the kind of advice which Mr. Howe gave, from the event, it was highly honourable to all parties; for when the *Triers* asked the usual question, "Have you ever experienced a work of grace on your heart?" Fuller replied, "I can appeal to the searcher of hearts that I make conscience of my very thoughts." As this was no direct answer to the question, while it entered most deeply into the genuine character of the man, it shews that Mr. Howe knew the *Triers* were not anxious to promote the mere shibboleth of a party, and therefore advised Fuller to declare honestly in his own way, what was his religious character in the sight of God. The result was as successful as every pious and liberal mind could wish.

The generous manner in which Mr. Howe used his interest at court, in serving all men of worth who applied to him, met with its due notice from Cromwell, who one day frankly said to him, "Mr. Howe, you have obtained many favours for others, I wonder when the time is to come that you will ask any thing for yourself or your own family."

That Oliver's discernment should lead him to repose great confidence in one of so much disinterested integrity, can excite no surprise. Many secret services Howe performed, but always with a view to promote the interests of his country, or, which is nearly the same, those of deserving men. When once engaged, he distinguished himself by secrecy, diligence and dispatch : of this a particular instance is recorded, in which he travelled with incredible speed to attend a meeting of ministers at Oxford.

But as high places are well denominated in Scripture *slippery places*, it must not be supposed that one of Mr. Howe's independence of thinking and rectitude of action, could always avoid giving offence. He is said to have once preached expressly against Cromwell's notion of particular faith in prayer ; and to have created a coolness between himself and the Protector. But so equivocal were the proofs of displeasure, that Mr. Howe held his station at Court till Oliver Cromwell's death, and then was appointed chaplain to Richard, his son and successor.

It was during the short protectorate of Richard that the Independents held their meeting at the Savoy, to draw up their confession of faith. About two hundred pastors and messengers of churches assembled, in October 1658, and, with an unanimity that excited much surprise among those who regarded Independency as an anomalous thing which exhibited the jarring elements of chaos, agreed on that

formulary which they in subsequent days tacitly abandoned for the Assembly's catechism. At this meeting Mr. Howe assisted, along with Dr. Owen, and the other distinguished divines of the independent persuasion.

But the removal of Richard Cromwell from the seat of government occasioned Mr. Howe's return to his rural charge. He laboured among them in peace till some months after the Restoration, when the officious zeal of some persons in behalf of the new order of things occasioned some trouble, even to a man of Mr. Howe's catholicism.

He was informed against by John Evans and William Morgan, for delivering seditious and even treasonable sentiments, in two sermons, on the 30th of September and 14th of October 1660. After an adjournment of the Sessions by the Mayor, in order to accommodate the Deputy Lieutenant of the county, Mr. Howe in open court demanded the benefit of the statutes 1st of Edward VI. and 1st of Elizabeth, to purge himself by more evidences than the informers could produce. Twenty-one respectable persons then cleared Mr. Howe, upon oath, of the accusation, and the Court discharged him. The Mayor, however, was summoned to appear before the Deputy-Lieutenant, and conducted by a party of horse to Exeter, where he was committed to the Marshalsea, and fined several pounds. But when the affair was examined by the Judge, he said the whole was founded in mistake, and dismissed the suit. It was remarked,

that one of the informers soon left the town, and was seen no more; and the other cut his own throat, and was buried in a cross road.

As persecutions of this kind, which were of frequent occurrence in various parts of the kingdom, paved the way for the Act of Uniformity, Mr. Howe, on the celebrated Bartholomew's-day, preached his farewell sermon, in the parochial edifice of Great Torrington. His parting addresses were deeply affecting, and the congregation was dissolved in tears. Dr. Wilkins, who was one of Charles the Second's new bishops, meeting Mr. Howe soon after, expressed his surprise at the effects which the Act of Uniformity had produced; some who seemed most catholic in their principles and spirit, as Mr. Howe certainly was, being most determined non-conformists. Mr. Howe assured him, that his catholicism compelled him to dissent from an establishment which imposed such terms of communion as were now enforced by law. "Besides," said he, "I could not go into a falling house, for fear of its tumbling about my ears; and such I conceive your present ecclesiastical constitution to be, compared with that flourishing state of vital religion which I think I have sufficient warrant from the word of God to expect." The reply of Dr. Wilkins was singularly shrewd, and worthy of remark—"I understand you well; and if that be your mind, take this advice from a friend; don't think to gain any thing by sneaking or crouching, but bear up against us boldly and bravely, stand

to your principles, and sooner or later you may hope to carry your point."

In conformity to the spirit of friendship which he shewed towards Mr. Howe, Wilkins contended with Dr. Cosins against the severity by which the latter attempted to support the establishment. "I am persuaded," said Bishop Wilkins, "though reflected on by many for my moderation, I am a better friend to the church than your Lordship." When his Lordship expressed his surprise at this, Wilkins said, "While you, my Lord, are for setting the top on the piqued end, you will not be able to keep it up any longer than you keep whipping; whereas I am for setting the broad end downwards, and thus it will stand of itself."

Mr. Howe being now cast out from consecrated walls, began to consecrate the houses of his friends and acquaintances in the county of Devon, by preaching in them whenever opportunity afforded. But having on one of these occasions spent a few days at the house of a gentleman, on his return home he was informed that there was a citation out against him and the gentleman at whose house he had preached. The next morning, therefore, he took his horse and rode to Exeter; but while he stood at the gate of the inn where he alighted, one of the dignitaries of the establishment, with whom he was well acquainted, seeing him, said, "Mr. Howe, what do you do here?" To which Mr. Howe replied, "Sir, what have I done that I may not be here?"

Mr. Howe then said, that a citation was out against him, and that if he did not take care he should in a short time be apprehended. The dignitary asked him, if he did not intend to go to the Bishop? To which Mr. Howe replied, that he did not intend, unless his Lordship, being informed that he was there, should send for him. The person who thus accidentally met him immediately went to the Bishop, and brought from him a message, that he should be glad to see Mr. Howe. Having received him very politely, his Lordship began to rally him on his non-conformity; but was answered in such a manner, that he soon dropped the subject, and began to assure Mr. Howe, that if he would come in amongst them he might have very considerable preferment. They parted with mutual civility; and as neither party mentioned the process in the ecclesiastical court, so Mr. Howe and his friend heard no more of the affair.

In the year 1665 it was deemed not enough to have silenced the non-conformist ministers for three years, and therefore the infamous Five Mile Act was passed by the Parliament that sat at Oxford. The oath which was intended to bind men to passive obedience and non-resistance, was to be taken by the non-conformist ministers, or they were not allowed to come, unless on a journey, within five miles of any city or corporation, or any place that sent members to Parliament, or any place where they had been ministers, or had preached since the Act of Oblivion. As there was a difference of opi-

nion concerning the meaning of the oath, there was a correspondent diversity of practice ; but since the excellent subject of this memoir determined in favour of taking the oath, it may be interesting to our readers to see the notes which he drew up, and which are highly characteristic of the man :

“ 1. My swearing is my act. 2. The obligation I hereby contract is voluntary. 3. Swearing in a form of words prescribed by another, I adopt those words, and make them my own. 4. Being now so adopted, their first use is to express the true sense of my heart, touching the matter about which I swear. 5. Their next use, as they have now the form of an oath, is to assure him or them who duly require it from me, that what I express is the true sense of my heart. 6. It is repugnant to both those ends, that they should be construed (as now used by me) to signify another thing than what I sincerely intend to make known by them. 7. If the words be of dubious signification, capable of more senses than one, I ought not to hide the sense in which I take them, but declare it, lest I deceive them whom I ought to satisfy. 8. That declaration I ought to make, if I have opportunity, to them whose satisfaction is primarily intended by the oath ; if not, to them whom they intrust and employ : this declared sense must be such as the words will fairly bear without force or violence.”

It has been asserted, though upon what authority does not appear, that notwithstanding all Mr. Howe's concessions to authority, and all the friends which his former kindnesses had procured him, he was in the year 1665 imprisoned in the isle of St. Nicholas, where his father-in-law, George Hughes, and his brother-in-law, Obadiah Hughes, had been confined for a still longer period. Though Dr. Calamy could not discover the occasion of this imprisonment, or the means of his deliverance, the following letter to

his brother-in-law, after their liberation, renders the fact probable, if not certain :

“ Blessed be God that we can have and hear of each other’s occasions of thanksgiving ; that we may join praises as well as prayers, which I hope is done daily for one another. Nearer approaches and constant adherence to God, with the improvement of our interest in each other’s hearts, must compensate (and will, I hope, abundantly) the unkindness and instability of a surly, treacherous world, that we see still retains its wayward temper, and grows more peevish as it grows older, and more ingenious in inventing ways to torment whom it disaffects. It was, it seems, not enough to kill by one single death ; but when that was almost done, to give leave and time to respire, to live again, at least in hope, that it might have the renewed pleasure of putting us to a farther pain and torture in dying once more. Spite is natural to her ; all her kindness is an artificial disguise—a device to promote and serve the design of the former, with the more efficacious and piercing malignity : but patience will elude the design, and blunt its sharpest edge. It is perfectly defeated, when nothing is expected from it but mischief, for then the worst it can threaten finds us provided ; and the best it can promise, incredulous, and not apt to be imposed upon. This will make it at last despair, and grow hopeless, when it finds that the more it goes about to mock and vex us, the more it teaches and instructs us ; and that as it is wickeder, we are wiser. If we cannot, God will outwit it, and carry us, I trust, through to a better world, upon which we may terminate hopes that will never make us ashamed.”

While Mr. Howe was thus, like David, shifting from place to place, in order to evade an unreasonable and restless foe, he was induced to publish one of those valuable works which have turned the sufferings of the non-conformists into the most efficient means of perpetuating their cause. He had, indeed, already inserted in the *Morning Exercises*, a sermon

on "Man's creation in a holy but mutable state;" but the Treatise which he now gave to the public, entitled, the "Blessedness of the Righteous," was of a more important character, though it is said to have been the substance of a course of sermons delivered to his charge at Torrington. Had we no other means of forming a judgment concerning his style of preaching, we should, from this Treatise, pronounce it far too much laboured. But his posthumous discourses, which were taken down from his lips, are as luminous and idiomatic and free as we could wish them, and thus prove that the involved style of his larger treatises arose from excessive solicitude to render them worthy of the eye of the public, and of the learned. The preface to the Blessedness of the Righteous has been, with great justice, quoted as a fine specimen of sublimity of thought and catholicism of spirit; forming a porch in perfect harmony with a temple reared to the honour of the God who will crown the righteous with that bliss which arises from a transforming view of his own glorious character.

Mr. Howe was now reduced to great straits; for his family was increased, and he had been for some years without any sphere of labour from whence he could derive an income. But that God whom he faithfully served, and to whose approbation he had sacrificed his prospects of worldly gain, opened to him a source of relief by a liberal invitation from a person of rank in Ireland. He set off for Dublin, in the beginning of April 1671; but, on

the way, met with an occurrence very characteristic both of the man and of his times. In company with his eldest son, and a considerable number of friends, he was detained by contrary winds, at the port where he intended to embark, supposed to be Holyhead. In a large parochial edifice they found that prayers, without any sermon, were expected on the Lord's-day; and therefore they went in quest of some retired spot on the sea-shore, where Mr. Howe might comply with the request of the party by preaching to them. But as they were walking along the sands, they met two persons riding towards the town; and on one of the company addressing a question to the inferior of the two equestrians, he proved to be the parish clerk, who informed them that the other, who was the parson, never preached, but would be willing to lend his pulpit to a stranger. Upon application, this proved to be correct, and Mr. Howe, turning back with his party, preached twice to an auditory, which, in the afternoon, was very large and deeply impressed.

But, on the following Lord's-day, this created great embarrassment to the incumbent. For the inhabitants, not only of the town, but also of the adjacent country, observing that the wind had not changed, and that neither the vessel nor the strange minister were gone, came flocking into town in great numbers, hoping to hear Mr. Howe again. The parson, seeing a prodigious crowd, aware of their expectation, and having made no provision for preaching, either by himself or any other, was in

such consternation that he sent his clerk to Mr. Howe, entreating that he would come and preach again to the immense multitude, who were in eager expectation. The messenger found Mr. Howe so indisposed that he was in bed, and in such a state that it was doubtful whether he ought to comply with the request. But, reflecting that the voice of God seemed to call him out to an enlarged sphere of usefulness, where a starving flock eagerly looked for the word of life, he resolved to venture. Rising from his bed, he went as quickly as possible into the crowded congregation, where he preached, with great freedom and energy, to a people who seemed so much affected, that Mr. Howe used to say, "If my ministry was ever of any use, I think it must be then." Soon after, the vessel sailed, and Mr. Howe felt no ill effects from this effort to promote the welfare of others at his own risk.

In Ireland, he lived as chaplain to Lord Massarene, in Antrim, and enjoyed that respect which was so much his due. The Bishop of the diocese, together with the Metropolitan, demanding no declaration of conformity, gave him leave to preach, every Lord's-day afternoon, in the parochial pulpit of the town. Calamy says, he was informed that the Archbishop, in a meeting of the Clergy, declared, that he wished every pulpit over which he had any controul to be open to Mr. Howe.

During the first year of his residence in Ireland, Mr. Howe published his most eloquent discourse on the text "Remember how short my time is; where-

fore hast thou made all men in vain?" It was preached on an affecting occasion. Anthony Upton, esq. son of a kinsman of Mr. Howe, who lived at Lupton, in Devon, having resided between twenty and thirty years in Spain, was at length expected home, by his father and an affectionate family, who were collected from various parts to give him a joyful welcome. But the vessel for which they looked out so eagerly blasted all their hopes, by exhibiting the mourning signals of having on board the corpse of the young man, who had been suddenly snatched off by a violent disease, and whose ashes were now borne to find a grave in his native place. The assembled party, amounting to twenty, and composed of brothers and sisters, with their consorts and children, who had hoped to embrace their relative with joy, were thus called together to shed their tears over his untimely tomb. The preacher, in a strain of sublime pathos, pours the consolations of religion into the bleeding hearts of his relatives, by shewing that it would be unworthy of God to lavish such powers as he has bestowed on man, unless he had designed to perpetuate his being and his bliss beyond the narrow space of this mortal life.

The next publication which Mr. Howe gave to the world was, "A Treatise on Delighting in God." This also was the substance of a course of sermons preached at Torrington, and affords an honourable testimony to the dignified and devotional strain of the pastor's instructions.

In the year 1675, Dr. Lazarus Seaman, a Non-

conformist minister of London, dying, his congregation were divided in their choice of a successor. One part voted for Mr. Charnock, but another sent Mr. Howe an invitation. The solicitude of Mr. Howe to act according to the divine will is attested by his taking a journey to London, in order to judge of circumstances on the spot, and by the following paper, which he wrote previously to setting off.

“Considerations and Communings with myself, concerning my present journey. Dec. 20, 1675, by night on my bed :

I. Quære. Have I not an undue design or self-respect in it ?

1. I know well I ought not to have any design for myself, which admits not of subordination to the interest and honour of the Great God and my Redeemer, and which is not actually so subordinated.

2. I understand the fearful evil and sinfulness of having such an undue regard ; that it is idolatry, the taking another god, and making myself that god.

3. I find, through God’s mercy, some sensible stirrings of hatred and detestation in my breast of that wickedness, and a great apprehension of the loveliness and beauty of a state of pure, entire devotedness to God in Christ, and of acting accordingly.

4. I have insisted on this chiefly in prayer, in reference to this business, ever since it was set on foot, that I might be sincere in it.

5. I have carefully examined what selfish respects I have in this matter. Is it worldly emolument ? In this my heart acquits me in the sight of God. Is it that I affect to be upon a public stage, to be popular and applauded by men ? To this I say, 1. That I do verily believe that I shall be lower in the eye and esteem of the people in London, when I come under their nearer interview. I know myself incapable of pleasing their genius. I cannot contrive nor endure to preach with elaborate artifice. They will soon be weary, when they hear nothing but plain discourses of such matters as are not new to them. Yea, and ministers that now judge of me by what I have written, when matter and words were

in some measure weighed, will find me, when I converse with them, slow to apprehend things, slow to express my own apprehensions, unready and entangled in my apprehensions and expressions; so that all will soon say, "This is not the man we took him for." 2. It displeases me not that they should find and say this; I hope I should digest it well. 3. I have found, blessed be God, that the applause some have given me in letters (as I have received many of that strain, very many, long before this business, and that had no relation to any such, that no eye hath ever since seen but my own) an occasion and means to me of deep humiliations, when my own heart witnessed to me my miserable penury, and that I am thought to be what I am not. 4. So far as I can find, I do not deliberately covet or desire esteem but for my work's sake. All the design I can more vehemently suspect myself of, that looks like self-interest in any way, is, 1. The improvement of my own mind, which I know there may be great opportunities for, if this journey should issue in my settlement in London. 2. The disposal of my children. Yet I hope these things are eyed in subordination and indifferently, so as not to sway me against my duty.

II. Have I not a previous resolution of settling at London, before I go up?

1. I have a resolution to do what I shall conceive most to the usefulness of the rest of my life; which resolution I ought never to be without.

2. I am seriously yet at a loss as to judging this case, whether in this country or there.

3. If I can find clearly it is my duty to return, in order to continuance at Antrim, I shall do it with high complacency.

III. Quære. Am I not afraid of miscarrying in this undertaken voyage, by shipwreck? &c.

I find little of that fear, I bless God. To put off this tabernacle so easily, I reckon, would to me be a merciful dispensation, who am more afraid of sharp pains than of death. I think I should joyfully embrace those waves which should land me on an undesigned shore, and when I intended Liverpool, should land me in heaven.

After such a display of purity of motive and solicitude to glorify God in his ministry, Mr. Howe's satisfaction in settling with the congregation that had invited him, and the success of his labours in the metropolis, will not be surprising. King Charles's indulgence at this time afforded Mr. Howe a better opportunity of exercising his ministry than could have been expected; for his congregation was considerable, both in numbers and talents; and he was held in high esteem by several of the dignitaries of the establishment, as well as by his brethren among the dissenting ministers.

That the care of a new charge, and the distractions of London, did not withdraw him from study, may be seen by the publication of the first part of his most elaborate work, "The Living Temple," which came out as soon as Mr. Howe was settled in the metropolis, though it was projected under the hospitable roof of Lord Massarene, to whom it was dedicated. As it was designed to shew that a good man is the temple of God, the author first labours to prove the existence of a Deity, to whom such a temple should be reared.

In the year 1677, Mr. Howe was drawn into controversy by the publication of a letter to the Hon. Robert Boyle, on a difficult point in Theology, "the reconcileableness of God's prescience of the sins of men, with the wisdom and sincerity of his counsels and exhortations." While some highly admired this piece, by others it was as much condemned. Theophilus Gale, his old fellow student, inserted some animadversions on it, in the fourth

part of his "Court of the Gentiles," which appeared about this time. Mr. Howe defended himself against Mr. Gale, in a postscript to his letter. Mr. Danson also wrote against Mr. Howe; though it is said that he was answered, not by Mr. Howe himself, but by a witty and entertaining piece from the pen of Andrew Marvel. This, however, is not to be found among the works of that satirical, but incorruptible patriot.

While the Popish plot, and the Bill of Exclusion, were the grand objects that occupied the public mind, Mr. Howe was much consulted by all parties. At the request of Bishop Lloyd, he went to meet that prelate, at the house of Dr. Tillotson, then Dean of Canterbury. To the enquiry concerning what would satisfy the Dissenters, Mr. Howe said, he conceived the grand thing they wished for was, to be able to promote parochial reformation. "For that reason," said the bishop, "I am for taking the lay Chancellors quite away, as they are the great hindrance to reformation." It was at length agreed that they should have another meeting, the next evening, at seven o'clock, at Dr. Stillingfleet's, the Dean of St. Paul's. Mr. Howe took with him, according to agreement, Dr. Bates; but they found not the company that was expected; and though they waited till ten o'clock, the Bishop neither came, nor took any farther notice of the affair. The next day, they heard that the Bill of Exclusion was thrown out of the House of Lords, by a majority, fourteen of which were bishops.

Dean Stillingfleet at this time made an attack on the Dissenters, which Mr. Howe joined with Dr. Owen, Mr. Baxter, and others, to repel. Tillotson also preached a sermon at Court, in 1680, in which he asserted, that no man is obliged to preach against the religion of a country, though a false one, unless he has the power of working miracles. King Charles, the "most religious king," for whose edification this sermon was preached, happening to be asleep most of the time, a nobleman said to him afterwards, "It is a pity your Majesty slept, for we had the finest piece of Hobbism you ever heard in your life." Ods fish, said the king, he shall print it then; and immediately sent his commands to the preacher. When it came out, the Dean sent it, according to his usual practice, to Mr. Howe, who drew up a letter in reply, which he read to him as they rode in the carriage of the Dean, who was so ashamed of what he had asserted, that he wept and bewailed it bitterly, apologising for himself, however, by saying, that he was suddenly called upon to preach, instead of another person who had been taken ill.

In the years 1681 and the two following, Mr. Howe published several of his minor pieces; and when the noble patriot, William Lord Russel, was beheaded, he addressed to his widow a Letter full of devout consolation. Though it was anonymous, her Ladyship discovered the writer, and sent him her thanks, assuring him that she would endeavour to follow his advice. This epistle is published in the Collection of Lady Russel's Letters, and was fol-

lowed by many tokens of mutual friendship between Mr. Howe and the family of the noble martyr to liberty. It is hoped, says the first biographer of Howe, that the remaining branches of this noble family will adhere to his principles and imitate his glorious example.

As the fire which now raged against Dissenters was furnished with fuel by a Letter from Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln, Mr. Howe sent his Lordship a Letter replete with dignified argument and faithful expostulation.

But the voice of reason and religion were too feeble to be heard amidst the clamour of wrath and bitterness that now raged against Non-conformity, and Mr. Howe's opportunities of usefulness were so abridged, that he gladly accepted an invitation from Lord Wharton, to travel with him on the continent. Not having had an opportunity of taking leave of his friends, he wrote a letter to them, as soon as he arrived on the other side of the sea. The following extracts from it will throw light on the history of the writer.

“ It added to my trouble, that I could not so much as bid farewell to persons to whom I had so great endearments, which solemnity, you know, our circumstances would not admit. He who knoweth all things, knoweth that I am not designing for myself. I love not this world, nor do I covet an abode in it, upon any other account than doing some service for him and the souls of men. It has, therefore, been my settled sentiment a long time, to desire peace and quiet, with some tolerable health, more than life. Nor have I found any thing more destructive to my health than confinement to a room, a few days, in the city air. The city was more healthful to me formerly, than since the anger

and jealousies of such as I never had a disposition to offend, have occasioned persons of my circumstances very seldom to walk the streets.

“ But my hope is, that God will, in his good time, incline the hearts of rulers more to favour us, and that my absence from you will be for no long time ; it being my design, in dependence on his gracious providence and pleasure, in whose hands our times are, if I hear of any door open for service with you, to spend the health and strength which God shall vouchsafe me (and which I find through his mercy much improved since I left you,) in his work among you.”

He then proceeds to give them such counsels concerning watchfulness over their spirit, that they may not indulge a wish to treat others as they were treated, and such exhortations to all that is benevolent and exalted in religion, that we cannot help exclaiming ; And is this the man that “ could very seldom walk the streets of London, on account of the anger and jealousies” of some of its ruling inhabitants ! “ Of him the world was not worthy !”

After visiting other celebrated places, Mr. Howe took up his residence at Utrecht, attracted by the pleasantness of the situation, and by the society which he there enjoyed with Mr. Matthew Mead and other distinguished Englishmen. He took his turn in preaching at the English Church in the city, as did also Dr. Gilbert Burnet, afterwards Bishop of Salisbury. This celebrated prelate one day conversing freely on the subject of Non-conformity, told Mr. Howe, I think it cannot subsist long ; but when you and Mr. Baxter, and Dr. Bates, and a few more, are laid in your graves, it will sink and come to nothing. Mr. Howe replied, “ That must be left to God ; but

I reckon it depends not on persons, but on principle. As some pass off the stage, others will rise up, and fill their places, acting upon the same principles; though, I hope, with due moderation towards those of different sentiments."

Several years after, Dr. Calamy was informed by Burnet, at his episcopal palace in Sarum, that he and the dignitaries of the establishment had thought that dissent would have been *res unius ætatis*, but as it was otherwise, he was happy to see the amiable spirit of the new generation of dissenting ministers that was rising up.

While in Holland, Mr. Howe was admitted to interviews with William, who was afterwards seated on the throne of Britain, and who was fond of hearing anecdotes of Cromwell, whom he called Mr. Howe's old master.

The pangs inflicted on Mr. Howe and his little company of refugees, by the news they received of the rapid advances which the English government was making towards Popery and despotism, were, at length, alleviated by information concerning King James's declaration for liberty of conscience, which encouraged Mr. Howe's congregation to invite his return. Having resolved to comply, he waited on the Stadtholder, who received him kindly, wished him a good voyage, but advised him to resist all proposals for addressing the King by way of sanctioning his dispensing power.

Joyfully received as Mr. Howe was by his flock, he was deeply affected by the critical circumstances

of his country. Frequent meetings were held, to consider what course the dissenting ministers should pursue; when Mr. Howe always declared against any such addresses to the King as the court was earnestly seeking, in order to sanction its schemes. At one meeting, which was held in Mr. Howe's own house, two persons attended from Court, and declared that the King was waiting in his closet, and would not depart till he received their decision. To the proposal made by one minister to gratify his majesty, another replied, that all their previous sufferings were not so much on account of their religious sentiments, as for their determination to maintain the civil privileges of their country, in opposition to tory measures; and if, therefore, the King expected that they should requite his indulgence by abandoning their principles, he had better take their liberty back again. In summing up, Mr. Howe declared that he himself, and the majority, were of this mind; and the report was accordingly carried to the King.

At length the storm which had long shaken the realm subsided into a calm, by the landing of William the Third, and the complete success of his arms. On this occasion Mr. Howe addressed him, in behalf of the dissenting ministers, in the following terms:

“ We declare our grateful sense of your Highness's hazardous and heroical expedition, which the favour of heaven has made so surprizingly prosperous.

“ We esteem it a common felicity that the worthy Patriots of the nobility and gentry of this kingdom, have unanimously concurred to your Highness's design, by whose most prudent advice

the administration of public affairs is devolved, in this difficult conjuncture, into hands which the nation and the world know to be apt for the greatest undertakings.

“We promise the utmost endeavours which in our station we are capable of affording, for promoting the excellent and most desirable ends for which your highness has declared.

“Our continual and fervent prayers are offered to the Almighty for the preservation of your highness’s person, and the success of your future endeavours for the defence and propagation of the Protestant interest throughout the Christian world.”

It was now warmly debated whether the Non-conformists should be comprehended within the establishment, by altering the terms of conformity, or should have such indulgences granted as would set them at ease from the penalties they formerly endured. Mr. Howe finding, to his surprise and mortification, that many of the dignitaries of the establishment were hostile to the granting of any favours to his friends, after the court that had been so recently paid to them, when the church was in distress, drew up a piece entitled, “The Case of the Protestant Dissenters represented and argued.”

At length the Act of Uniformity gave to the Dissenters a great part of that privilege, which nothing but bigotry and tyranny could ever have denied them. To improve to the utmost this happy event, Mr. Howe published an Address to Conformists and Dissenters, in which the dignity, benevolence, and wisdom of his mind were displayed in all their force.

New contests now called for the interposition of Mr. Howe’s peaceful and catholic spirit. The differences among the Dissenters themselves arose from

what may be termed an amiable cause; for the Presbyterians and Independents wishing to act as one body, drew up Heads of agreement assented to by the body of United Ministers, which were published in 1691, a great part of which was from Mr. Howe's pen. But as there was perhaps in this union a greater sacrifice of sentiment than was strictly proper, so one of the first measures of the body was a declaration against Mr. Davis, of Rothwell, whose apostolical zeal demanded not only praise, but imitation; and the final result was, that what was intended for peace proved the firebrand of strife.

The strictest Independents drew off from the United Ministers; and a controversy arising about the publication of Dr. Crisp's works, one party charged the other with verging towards Arminianism, and even Socinianism, and was accused, in its turn, of favouring the Antinomian error.

Mr. Howe, as usual, laboured to promote charity and peace, but almost laboured in vain; for, Mr. Williams being excluded from the Lecture that was held at Pinner's Hall, 1694, another was set up at Salters' Hall, in which Dr. Bates, Mr. Howe, and Mr. Alsop, were united with Mr. Williams.

In the contests that rose, about this time, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, Mr. Howe took a part by the publication of a tract, in 1694, entitled, "A calm and sober enquiry concerning the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead." In this letter he waves the question about three persons in the Deity, though he pronounces that term neither inde-

feasible nor blameable, and merely enquires whether the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, cannot admit of sufficient distinction from each other to answer the purposes assigned them by the Scriptures, and yet each of them be God, consistently with the unquestionable truth that there can be but one God. This he asserts to be neither a contradiction nor an absurdity. That Mr. Howe failed to reconcile the contending parties, or even to escape the imputation of heresy, will excite no surprise.

Occasional Conformity was the next subject of debate on which Mr. Howe employed his pen. Sir Thomas Abney, who was a member of his flock, going publicly both to his own place of worship and to the parochial place, during the year of his mayoralty, was severely animadverted upon by some, who were jealous of this honour put upon Dissenters, and was defended by his pastor Mr. Howe.

By this time, says Dr. Calamy, when that little charity we had among us, was just expiring, Mr. Howe began to be weary of living. He had seen enough of the world to be convinced how unfit a place it was to continue to dwell in. He wanted to breathe in nobler air and inhabit better regions, and we shall soon see how he fled thither.

His latter publications were chiefly Funeral Sermons, for several of his best friends, the excellent of the earth; and last of all, he gave to the world, in 1705, a Discourse on Patience in expectation of future blessedness, with an Appendix. Of this patience he had now much need; for he was tried by

several complaints ; but while he still thought that to serve Christ was worth living for, he shewed that to depart and be with Christ was in his esteem well worth dying for. Sometimes he seemed to be already in heaven. His original biographer says, “ that some of his flock to this day remember, that in his last illness, when he had been declining for some time, he was once in a most affecting, melting, heavenly frame, at the Communion, and carried out into such a ravishing and transporting celebration of the love of Christ, that both he himself and they who communicated with him, were apprehensive he would have expired in that service.”

In his last sickness he conversed pleasantly with persons of all ranks, who came to see him. Among the rest, Richard Cromwell, to whom he formerly was chaplain, and who had now grown old in retirement from the world, hearing of Mr. Howe’s decline, came to pay him a last farewell visit. Many tears were mingled with their serious discourses ; and one who was present, gave an affecting account of this solemn parting, between two distinguished men, who had each, though in different ways, acted an important part on the stage of this world.

Having been exceedingly ill, one evening, and finding himself unexpectedly revived, next morning, his friends expressed to Mr. Howe their surprise at finding that he was pleased with this. He replied, that, while he liked to feel himself alive, he was most willing to lay aside this clog, the body. He once observed to his wife, “ Though I think I love you as

well as is fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to my choice, whether to die this moment, or live through this night, and living this night would secure the continuance of life for seven years longer, I would choose to die this moment." At length on April 2, 1765, he was translated to the blessedness of the righteous, to which he has taught many to aspire.

He was interred at St. Allhallows, Bread Street, and his Funeral Sermon was preached by his fellow-labourer, Mr. Spademan, from 2 Tim. iii. 14.

In answer to enquiries after his papers, his eldest son, Dr. George Howe, said that his father industriously concealed the large memorials which he had collected of his own life and times, and in his last illness ordered them all to be destroyed. Nothing, therefore, was left but some short notes of Sermons, and some Latin Memoranda in the blank pages of his study Bible, of which the following is a translation :

Dec. 26, 1689. After I had long and seriously reflected, that in addition to a full and undoubted assent to the objects of faith, it is necessary to have a lively taste and relish of them, that they may penetrate to the inmost recesses of the heart, with greater power and efficacy, and there being more deeply fixed, may more mightily govern the life; and that there could be no other way of coming to a just conclusion concerning the safety of our state towards God; and after I had been largely discoursing on 2 Cor. i. 12, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience," &c. this very morning I awoke out of a most delightful dream, of this kind: a wonderful stream of celestial rays from the sovereign throne of the Divine Majesty seemed to be poured into my opened, panting breast. Very often have I, from that remarkable day, revolved in my grateful mind, that memorable pledge of the Divine favour, and have tasted over again and again its sweetness.

But the experience I had of the same kind of bliss, on October 22, 1704, through the wonderful kindness of my God, and the most delightful operation of the Holy Spirit, far surpassed all the powers of language I can command. I felt the most delightful melting of heart, attended by profuse tears of joy, that the love of God should be shed abroad in the hearts of men; and that his Spirit should be shed on mine for that blessed-end. Rom. v. 5.

To review the life and character of such a man as John Howe, is as arduous as it is edifying and delightful. In him we behold our nature exalted by Divine influence to such heights, that few can follow him closely enough to mark his movements, or measure his form. That he had his faults, we may be sure, not only from what we know of human nature in its best state, but from his own deliberate confession; though it is difficult at this distance of time, to discover them with such distinctness as to show to others how they may avoid the rocks on which he split.

But the excellence which presents itself to view in almost every page of his writings, and in every record of his life, is the devotional spirit. He was evidently of that royal priesthood, whose whole business is religion, and who "whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, do all to the glory of God." He not only exhibited in himself a proof of the position, unfolded in his great work, that a good man is the temple of God, but, viewing the universe as one vast temple to Jehovah's praise, he trod as on sacred ground, and breathed the air of heaven.

After this, it may seem surprising to mention his inflexible integrity. He that lives under the eye of God will, indeed, be just in all his dealings with man;

but few have been placed in circumstances that could put integrity to so severe a test, and fewer still have come out of the fiery ordeal with a reputation so unspotted and exalted. That an angry world could not frown him into cowardly compliance with its will, is the least part of his praise ; for he was proof against a far more alarming temptation, that of following those we love, and sacrificing some portion of stern principle to please those who have gained the preference of our heart. But neither the coarse vulgar who prevented him from walking the streets of London, nor the Prince who held the seat of power, could bend the soul of Howe from the straight path of duty ; and when he judged that truth or holiness were at stake, he was alike immoveable, whether a dominant hierarchy threatened, or the brethren with whom he had suffered attempted to argue or persuade.

Yet seldom has such independence of thought and action been allied with charity so genuine or benevolence so warm. In him was seen the full import of the expression, which if it had been found in classic, instead of inspired writings, would have been extolled to the skies, "Charity rejoiceth in the truth." Superficial observers of his candid temper supposed that he held his creed with a loose hand ; but when the Act of Uniformity put him to the test, the decision with which he sacrificed his gain to his convictions, compelled them to acknowledge with surprise, that what they had mistaken for laxity of sentiment was kindness of heart.

Were we, however, to be called upon to select that which was most characteristic of John Howe, we should without hesitation exhibit his elevation of mind. It is not often that his writings display what would be termed the sublime in composition; but the nobility of his soul raises him above every thing that is little or coarse, and his touch exalts and dignifies common subjects to such a degree, that we feel ourselves rising with him till we wonder that we did not before see the objects of our former acquaintance in the golden light which he pours on every thing he presents to view.

To those who think that some portion of obscurity is essential to the sublime, it may appear an unnecessary deduction from his praise, to mention the injury which he has done to his more finished productions by so crowding his sentences with thought, and inlaying them with parentheses, that it is difficult to grasp or retain their full import. But when repeated perusals have rendered his style familiar, it so fills the mind with mighty and elevated thoughts, that most other writings appear trite or vapid.

The originality of Howe is of that peculiar and superior kind that becomes infectious, and compels the reader, departing from beaten routes, to draw from the Scriptures and the doctrines of theology, reflections that surprise by their novelty, improve by their sanctity, and agitate by their force. But to display all the excellencies of the author or his works would require a volume.

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ADDENDA TO THE MEMOIR.



Letter to Lady RUSSEL, on the Execution of Lord RUSSEL.

MADAM,

IT can avail you nothing, to let your honour know, from what hand this paper comes; and my own design in it is abundantly answered, if what it contains proves useful to you. Your affliction hath been great, unspeakably beyond what it is in my power or design to represent; and your supports (in the paroxysm of your affliction) have been very extraordinary; and such as wherein all that have observed or heard, could not but acknowledge a divine hand.

But your affliction was not limited and enclosed within the limits of one black day, nor is like those more common ones, the sense whereof abates and wears off by time; but is continued, and probably more felt, as time runs on: which therefore makes you need continued help from heaven every day.

Yet there is here a great difference between what expectations we may have of divine assistance, in the beginning or first violence of some great affliction; and in the continued course of it afterwards. At first we are apt to be astonished, a consternation seizes our thinking faculty, especially as to that exercise of it, whereby it should minister to our relief. In this case the merciful God doth more extraordinarily assist such as sincerely trust and resign themselves to him; unto these, as his more peculiar favourites, his sustaining influences are more immediate, and more efficacious, so as even (in the present exigency) to prevent and supersede any endeavour of theirs, whereof they are, then, less capable. And of the largeness and bounty of his goodness, in such a case, few have had greater experience than your ladyship; which was eminently seen, in that magnanimity, that composure and presentness of mind, much admired by your friends, and no doubt by the special favour of heaven afforded you in the needful season: so that while that amazing calamity was approaching, and stood in nearer view, nothing that was fit or wise or great was omitted; nothing indecent done. Which is not now said, God knows, to flatter your ladyship, (whereof the progress will farther vindicate me:) for I ascribe it to God, as I trust your ladyship, with unfeigned gratitude, will also do. And I mention it, as that whereby you are under obligation to endeavour, your continued temper and deportment may be agreeable to such beginnings.

For now (which is the other thing, whereof a distinct observation

ought to be had) in the continuance and settled state of the affliction, when the fury of the first assault is over, and we have had leisure to recollect ourselves, and recover our dissipated spirits, though we are then more sensible of pain and smart, yet also the power of using our own thoughts is restored. And being so, although we are too apt to use them to our greater hurt, and prejudice, we are really put again into a capacity of using them to our advantage, which our good God doth in much wisdom and righteousness require we should do. Whereupon we are to expect his continual assistance for our support under continued affliction, in the way of concurrence and co-operation with our due use of our own thoughts, aptly chosen, as much as in us is, and designed by ourselves, for our own comfort and support.

Now as for thoughts suitable to your honour's case, I have reason to be conscious that what I shall write can make but little accession, I will not say to a closet, but to a mind so well furnished, as you are owner of: yet I know it is remote from you to slight a well-intended offer and essay, that really proceeds only from a very compassionate sense of your sorrows, and unfeigned desire to contribute something (if the Father of mercys, and the God of all comforts and consolations will please to favour the endeavour) to your relief.

And the thoughts which I shall most humbly offer, will have that first and more immediate design, but to persuade your making use of your own; that is, that you would please to turn and apply them to subjects more apt to serve this purpose, the moderating your own grief, and the attaining an habitual well-tempered cheerfulness, for your remaining time in this world. For I consider how incident it is to the afflicted, to indulge to themselves an unlimited liberty in their sorrows, to give themselves up to them, to make them meat and drink, to justify them in all their excesses, as that (otherwise) good and holy man of God did his anger, and say, "they do well to be sorrowful even to the death," and (as another) to "refuse to be comforted." And I also consider that our own thoughts must, and will always be the immediate ministers either of our trouble or comfort, though as to the latter, God only is the supreme author; and we altogether insufficient to think any thing that good is, as of ourselves. It is God that comforts those that are cast down, but by our own thoughts employed to that purpose, not without them.

I do not doubt, Madam, but if you once fixedly apprehend that there is sin in an over-abounding sorrow, you will soon endeavour its restraint: for I cannot think you would more earnestly set yourself to avoid any thing, than what you apprehend will offend God, especially the doing that in a continued course. Is there any time when joy in God is a duty? 'Tis very plain the sorrow that excludes it is a sin. How the former may appear to be a duty, and how far, let it be considered.

It is not to be doubted but that he that made us hath a right to rule us; he that gave us being, to give us law: nor again, that the Divine government reaches our minds, and that they are the prime

and first seat of his empire. "His kingdom is within us." We are not then, to exercise our thoughts, desires, love, joy, or sorrow, according to our own will but his; not as we please, or find ourselves inclined, but suitably to his precepts and purposes, his rules and ends.

It is evident that withal, the earthly state is mixed, intermediate between the perfect felicity of heaven, and the total misery of hell: and farther, that the temper of our spirits ought to have in it a mixture of joy and sorrow, proportionable to our state, or what there is in it of the just occasions or causes of both.

Where Christianity obtains, and the gospel of our Saviour is preached, there is much greater cause of joy than elsewhere. The visible aspect of it imports a design to form men's minds to gladness, in as much as, wheresoever it comes, it proclaims peace to the world, and represents the offended Majesty of heaven willing to be reconciled to his offending creatures on earth. So the angel pre-faced the gospel, when our Lord was born into the world, Luke ii. "I tell you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." And so the multitude of accompanying angels sum it up; "Glory be to God in the highest, Peace on earth, good will towards men."

To them that truly receive the gospel, and with whom it hath its effect, the cause of rejoicing riseth much higher. For if the offer and hope of reconciliation be a just ground of joy, how much more actual agreement with God, upon the terms of the gospel, and reconciliation itself! "We rejoice in God through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement," Rom. v. 11. To such there are express precepts given to "rejoice in the Lord always," Phil. iv. 4. And lest that should be thought to have been spoken hastily, and that it might have its full weight, that great apostle immediately adds, "and again I say to you rejoice." And elsewhere, "rejoice evermore," 1 Thess. v. 16.

Hence therefore the genuine right temper and frame of a truly Christian mind and spirit may be evidently concluded to be this, (for such precepts do not signify nothing, nor can they be understood to signify less) viz. an habitual joyfulness, prevailing over all the temporary occasions of sorrow, that occur to them. For none can be thought of that can pre-ponderate, or be equal to the just and great causes of their joy. This is the true frame, model, and constitution of the kingdom of God, which ought to have place in us; herein it consists, viz. "in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Rom. xiv. 17.

Nor is this a theory only, or the idea and notion of an excellent temper of spirit, which we may contemplate indeed, but can never attain to. For we find it also to have been the attainment, and usual temper of Christians heretofore, that "being justified by faith, and having peace with God, they have rejoiced in hope of the glory of God," unto that degree, as even to "glory in their tribulations also," Rom. v. 1, 2, 3. And that in the confidence they should

“ be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation,” they have hereupon “ greatly rejoiced,” though with some mixture of heaviness (whereof there was need) from their manifold trials. But that their joy did surmount and prevail over their heaviness is manifest; for this is spoken of with much diminution, whereas they are said to “ rejoice greatly,” and “ with a joy unspeakable and full of glory,” 1 Pet. i. 5, 6, 8.

Yea, and such care hath the great God taken for the preserving of this temper of spirit among his people more anciently, that even their sorrow for sin itself (the most justifiable of all other) hath had restraints put upon it, lest it should too long exclude or intermit the exercise of this joy. For when a great assembly of them were universally in tears, “ upon hearing the Law read, and the sense given,” they were forbidden to weep or mourn, or be sorry, because “ the joy of the Lord was their strength,” Nehem. viii. 8, 9, 10. That most just sorrow had been unjust, had it been continued, so as to exclude the seasonable turn and alternation of this joy. For even such sorrow itself is not required, or necessary for itself. 'Tis remote from the goodness and benignity of God's ever-blessed nature, to take pleasure in the sorrows of his people, as they are such, or that they should sorrow for sorrow's sake; but only as a means and preparative to their following joy. And nothing can be more unreasonable, than that the means should exclude the end, or be used against the purpose they should serve.

It is then upon the whole most manifest, that no temporary affliction whatsoever, upon one who stands in special relation to God, as a reconciled (and which is consequent, an adopted) person, though attended with the most aggravating circumstances, can justify such a sorrow (so deep or so continued) as shall prevail against, and shut out a religious holy joy, or hinder it from being the prevailing principle in such a one. What can make that sorrow allowable, or innocent, (what event of Providence, that can, whatever it is, be no other than an accident to our Christian state) that shall resist the most natural design and end of Christianity itself! that shall deprave and debase the truly Christian temper, and disobey and violate most express Christian precepts! subvert the constitution of Christ's kingdom among men! and turn this earth (the place of God's treaty with the inhabitants of it, in order to their reconciliation to himself, and to the reconciled the portal and gate of heaven, yea and where the state of the very worst and most miserable has some mixture of good in it, that makes the evil of it less than that of hell) into a mere hell to themselves, of sorrow without mixture, and wherein shall be nothing but weeping and wailing.

The cause of your sorrow, Madam, is exceeding great. The causes of your joy are inexpressibly greater. You have infinitely more left than you have lost. Doth it need to be disputed whether God be better and greater than man? or more to be valued, loved, and delighted in? and whether an eternal relation be more considerable than a temporary one? Was it not your constant sense in

your best outward state, "Whom have I in heaven but thee O God, and whom can I desire on earth, in comparison of thee!" Psal. lxxiii. 25. Herein the state of your Ladyship's case is still the same (if you cannot rather with greater clearness, and with less hesitation pronounce those latter words.) The principal causes of your joy are immutable, such as no supervening thing can alter. You have lost a most pleasant, delectable, earthly relative. Doth the blessed God hereby cease to be the best and most excellent good? Is his nature changed! his everlasting covenant reversed and annulled! which is "ordered in all things and sure," and is to be "all your salvation and all your desire," whether he make your house on earth to grow or not to grow, 2 Sam. xxiii. 4. That sorrow which exceeds the proportion of its cause, compared with the remaining true and real causes of rejoicing, is in that excess causeless; i. e. that excess of it wants a cause, such as can justify or afford defence unto it.

We are required, in reference to our nearest relations in this world, (when we lose them) "to weep as if we wept not," as well as (when we enjoy them) to "rejoice as if we rejoiced not," because our time here is short, and the fashion of this world passeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. We are finite beings, and so are they. Our passions in reference to them, must not be infinite, and without limit, or be limited only by the limited capacity of our nature, so as to work to the utmost extent of that, as the fire burns, and the winds blow, as much as they can: but they are to be limited by the power, design, and endeavour of our reason and grace (not only by the mere impotency of our nature) in reference to all created objects. Whereas in reference to the infinite uncreated good, towards which there is no danger or possibility of exceeding in our affection, we are never to design to ourselves any limits at all; for that would suppose we had loved God enough, or as much as he deserved, which were not only to limit ourselves, but him too; and were a constructive denial of his infinite immense goodness, and consequently of his very Godhead. Of so great concernment it is to us, that in the liberty we give our affections, we observe the just difference which ought to be in their exercise, towards God, and towards creatures.

It is also to be considered, that the great God is pleased so to condescend, as himself to bear the name, and sustain the capacity of our nearest earthly relations; which implies that what they were to us, in this or that kind, he will be in a transcendent, and far more noble kind. I doubt not but your Ladyship hath good right to apply to yourself those words of the prophet, Isa. lvi. 5. "Thy Maker is thy husband," &c. Whereupon, as he infinitely transcends all that is delectable in the most excellent earthly relation, it ought to be endeavoured, that the affection placed on him should proportionably excel. I cannot think any person in the world would be a more severe or impartial judge of a criminal affection than your Ladyship: or that it would look worse unto any eye, if any one should so deeply take to heart the death of an unrelated person,

as never to take pleasure more, in the life, presence, and conversation of one most nearly related. And you do well know that such an height (or that supremacy) of affection, as is due to the ever-blessed God, cannot without great injury, be placed any where else. As we are to have none other God before him; so him alone we are to love with all our heart and soul, and might and mind.

And it ought farther to be remembered, that whatsoever interest we have or had in any the nearest relative on earth, his interest who made both is far superior. He made us and all things primarily for himself, to serve great and important ends of his own: so that our satisfaction in any creature, is but secondary and collateral to the principal design of its creation.

Which consideration would prevent a practical error and mistake that is too usual with pious persons, afflicted with the loss of any near relation, that they think the chief intention of such a providence is their punishment. And hereupon they are apt to justify the utmost excesses of their sorrow, upon such an occasion, accounting they can never be sensible enough of the Divine displeasure appearing in it; and make it their whole business, (or employ their time and thoughts beyond a due proportion) to find out and fasten upon some particular sin of theirs, which they may judge God was offended with them for, and designed now to punish upon them. It is indeed the part of filial ingenuity, deeply to apprehend the displeasure of our Father, and an argument of great sincerity, to be very inquisitive after any sin for which we may suppose him displeased with us, and apt to charge ourselves severely with it, though perhaps upon utmost inquiry, there is nothing particularly to be reflected on, other than common infirmity incident to the best, (and it is well when at length we can make that judgment, because there really is no more, not for that we did not enquire) and perhaps also God intended no more in such a dispensation, (as to what concerned us in it) than only, in the general, to take off our minds and hearts more from this world, and draw them more intirely to himself. For if we were never so innocent, must therefore such a relative of ours have been immortal? But the error in practice as to this case, lies here; not that our thoughts are *much* exercised this way, but *too much*. We ought to consider in every case, principally, that which is principal. God did not create this or that excellent person, and place him for a while in the world, principally to please us; nor therefore doth he take him away, principally to displease or punish us; but for much nobler and greater ends which he hath proposed to himself concerning him. Nor are we to reckon ourselves so little interested in the great and sovereign Lord of all, whom we have taken to be our God, and to whom we have absolutely resigned and devoted ourselves, as not to be obliged to consider and satisfy ourselves, in his pleasure, purposes, and ends, more than our own, apart from his.

Such as he hath pardoned, accepted, and prepared for himself, are to serve and glorify him in an higher and more excellent capa-

city, than they ever could in this wretched world of ours, and wherein they have themselves the highest satisfaction. When the blessed God is pleased in having attained and accomplished the end and intendments of his own boundless love, (too great to be satisfied with the conferring of only temporary favours in this imperfect state) and they are pleased in partaking the full effects of that love; who are we, that we should be displeas'd? or that we should oppose our satisfaction, to that of the glorious God, and his glorified creature?

Therefore, Madam, whereas you cannot avoid to think much on this subject, and to have the removal of that incomparable person, for a great theme of your thoughts, I do only propose most humbly to your honour, that you would not confine them to the sadder and darker part of that theme. It hath also a bright side; and it equally belongs to it, to consider whither he is gone, and to whom, as whence and from whom. Let, I beseech you, your mind be more exercised in contemplating the glories of that state your blessed consort is translated unto, which will mingle pleasure and sweetness with the bitterness of your afflicting loss, by giving you a daily intellectual participation (through the exercise of faith and hope) in his enjoyments. He cannot descend to share with you in your sorrows; you may thus every day ascend, and partake with him in his joys. He is a pleasant subject to consider. A prepared spirit made meet for an inheritance with them that are sanctified, and with the saints in light, now entered into a state so connatural, and wherein it finds every thing most agreeable to itself. How highly grateful is it to be united with the true centre, and come home to the Father of Spirits! To consider how pleasant a welcome, how joyful an entertainment he hath met with above! How delighted an associate he is with the general assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the "spirits of just men made perfect!" How joyful an homage he continually pays to the throne of the Celestial King!

Will your Ladyship think that an hard saying of our departing Lord to his mournful disciples, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, that I said I go to the Father; for my Father is greater than I?" As if he had said, he sits enthroned in higher glory than you can frame any conception of, by beholding me in so mean a condition on earth. We are as remote, and as much short in our thoughts as to the conceiving the glory of the Supreme King, as a peasant, who never saw any thing better than his own cottage, from conceiving the splendour of the most glorious prince's court. But if that "faith, (which) is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen," be much accustomed to its proper work and business, the daily delightful visiting and viewing the glorious invisible regions; if it be often conversant in those vast and spacious tracts of pure and brightest light, and amongst the holy inhabitants that replenish them; if it frequently employ itself in contemplating their comely order, perfect harmony, sublime wisdom,

unspotted purity, most fervent mutual love, delicious conversation with one another, and perpetual pleasant consent in their adoration and observance of their eternal King! who is there to whom it would not be a solace to think I have such and such friends and relatives (some perhaps as dear as my own life) perfectly well pleased, and happy among them! How can your love, Madam, (so generous a love towards so deserving an object!) how can it but more fervently sparkle in joy, for his sake, than dissolve in tears for your own?

Nor should such thoughts excite over-hasty impatient desires of following presently into heaven, but to the endeavours of serving God more cheerfully on earth, for our appointed time: which I earnestly desire your Ladyship would apply yourself to, as you would not displease God, who is your only hope, nor be cruel to yourself, nor dishonour the religion of Christians, as if they had no other consolations than this earth can give, and earthly power take from them. Your Ladyship (if any one) would be loth to do any thing unworthy your family and parentage. Your highest alliance is to that Father and family above, whose dignity and honour are I doubt not of highest account with you.

I multiply words, being loth to lose my design. And shall only add that consideration, which cannot but be valuable with you, upon his first proposal, who had all the advantages imaginable to give it its full weight; I mean that of those dear pledges left behind: my own heart even bleeds to think of the case of those sweet babes, should they be bereaved of their other parent too. And even your continued visible dejection would be their unspeakable disadvantage. You will always naturally create in them a reverence of you; and I cannot but apprehend how the constant mien, aspect and deportment of such a parent will insensibly influence the temper of dutiful children; and (if that be sad and despondent) depress their spirits, blunt and take off the edge and quickness, upon which their future usefulness and comfort will much depend. Were it possible their (now glorious) father should visit and inspect you, would you not be troubled to behold a frown in that bright serene face? You are to please a more penetrating eye, which you will best do, by putting on a temper and deportment suitable to your weighty charge and duty; and to the great purposes for which God continues you in the world, by giving over unnecessary solitude and retirement, which (though it pleases) doth really prejudice you, and is more than you can bear. Nor can any rules of decency require more. Nothing that is necessary and truly Christian, ought to be reckoned unbecoming. David's example, 2 Sam. xii. 20. is of too great authority to be counted a pattern of indecency. The God of heaven lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and thereby put gladness into your heart; and give you to apprehend him saying to you, "Arise and walk in the light of the Lord."

That I have used so much freedom in this paper, I make no apology for; but do therefore hide myself in the dark, not judging

it consistent with that plainness which I thought the case might require, to give any other account of myself, than that I am one deeply sensible of your, and your noble relatives great affliction, and who scarce ever bow the knee before the mercy-seat without remembering it: and who shall ever be,

MADAM,

Your Ladyship's

Most sincere honourer, and

Most humble devoted Servant.

Mr. Howe's Answer to the Letter of Bishop Barlow of Lincoln, wherein the Bishop countenanced the execution of the rigorous Laws against Dissenters. (1684.)

RIGHT REVEREND,

As I must confess myself surprized by your late published directions to your Clergy of the County of *Bedford*, so nor will I dissemble, that I did read them with some trouble of mind, which I sincerely profess was more upon your Lordship's account than my own, (who for myself am little concerned) or any other particular person's whatsoever. It was such as it had not been very difficult for me to have concealed in my own breast, or only to have expressed it to God in my prayers for you, (which through his grace I have not altogether omitted to do) if I had not apprehended it not utterly impossible, (as I trust I might, without arrogating unduly to myself) that some or other of those thoughts, which I have revolved in my own mind upon this occasion, being only hinted to your Lordship, might appear to your very sagacious judgment, (for which I have had long, and have still a continuing veneration) some way capable of being cultivated by your own mature and second thoughts, so as not to be wholly unuseful to your Lordship.

My own judgment, such as it is, inclines me not to oppose any thing, either, 1. To the lawfulness of the things themselves which you so much desire should obtain in the practice of the people under your Lordship's pastoral inspection: or 2. To the desirable comeliness of an uniformity in the public and solemn worship of God: or 3. To the fitness of making laws for the effecting of such uniformity: or 4. To the execution of such laws, upon some such persons as may possibly be found among so numerous a people as are under your Lordship's care.

But the things which I humbly conceive are to be deliberated on, are 1. Whether all the laws that are in being about matters of that nature, ought now to be executed upon all the persons which any way transgress them, without distinction of either? 2. Whether it was so well, that your Lordship should advise and press that indistinct execution, which the order (to which the subjoined directions of your Lordship do succenturiate) seems to intend; supposing that designed execution were fit in itself.

I shall not need to speak severally to these heads: your Lordship will sufficiently distinguish what is applicable the one way or the other. But I humbly offer to your Lordship's further consideration, whether it be not a supposable thing, that some persons sound in the faith, strictly orthodox in all the articles of it taught by our Lord Jesus or his Apostles, resolutely loyal, and subject to the authority of their governors in church and state, of pious, sober, peaceable, just, charitable dispositions and deportments; may yet (while they agree with your Lordship in that evident principle, both by the law of nature and scripture, that their prince and inferior rulers ought to be actively obeyed in all lawful things) have a formed fixed judgment, (for what were to be done in the case of a mere doubt, that hath not arrived to a settled preponderation this way or that, is not hard to determine) of the unlawfulness of some or other of the rites and modes of worship enjoined to be observed in this church? For my own part, though perhaps I should not be found to differ much from your Lordship in most of the things here referred unto, I do yet think that few metaphysical questions are disputed with nicer subtlety, than the matter of the ceremonies has been by Archbishop Whitgift, Cartwright, Hooker, Parker, Dr. Burgess, Dr. Ames, Gillespy, Jeanes, Calderwood, Dr. Owen, Baxter, &c. Now is it impossible that a sincere and sober Christian may, with an honest heart, have so weak intellectuals, as not to be able to understand all the punctilios upon which a right judgment of such a matter may depend? And is it not possible there may be such a thing, as a mental as well as a merely sensitive antipathy, not vincible by ordinary methods? Is there no difference to be put between things *essential* to our religion, and things confessed *indifferent* on the one hand, and on the other judged *unlawful*; on both hands but *accidental*? (though they that think them *unlawful*, dare not allow themselves a liberty of sinning, even in *accidentals*.) If your Lordship were the *Paterfamilias* to a numerous family of children and servants, among whom one or other very dutiful child takes offence, not at the sort of food you have thought fit should be provided, but somewhat in the sance or way of dressing, which thereupon he forbears; you try all the means which your paternal wisdom and severity thinks fit, to overcome that aversion, but in vain; would you finally famish this child, rather than yield to his inclination in so small a thing?

My Lord, your Lordship well knows the severity of some of those laws which you press for the execution of is such, as being executed, they must infer the utter ruin of them who observe them not, in their temporal concernments; and not that only, but their deprivation of the comfortable advantages appointed by our blessed Lord, for promoting their spiritual and eternal well-being. I cannot but be well persuaded not only of the mere sincerity, but eminent sanctity of divers, upon my own knowledge and experience of them, who would sooner die at a stake, than I or any man can prevail with them (notwithstanding our rubrick, or whatever can

... said to facilitate the matter) to kneel before the consecrated elements at the Lord's Table. Would your Lordship necessitate such, *perdere substantiam propter accidentia*? What if there be considerable numbers of such in your Lordship's vastly numerous flock; will it be comfortable to you, when an account is demanded of your Lordship by the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls concerning them, only to be able to say, Though Lord I did believe the provisions of thine house purchased for them, necessary and highly useful for their salvation, I drove them away as dogs and swine from thy table, and stirred up such other agents as I could influence against them, by whose means I reduced many of them to beggary, ruined many families, banished them into strange countries, where they might (for me) serve other gods; and this not for disobeying any immediate ordinance or law of thine, but because for fear of offending thee, they did not in every thing comport with my own appointments, or which I was directed to urge and impose upon them? How well would this practice agree with that apostolical precept, 'him that is weak in the faith receive, but not to doubtful disputations?' I know not how your Lordship would relieve yourself in this case, but by saying they were not weak, nor conscientious, but wilful and humoursome. But what shall then be said to the subjoined expostulation, 'Who art thou that judgest thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.' What if they have appeared conscientious, and of a very unblameable conversation in all things else! What if better qualified for Christian communion in all other respects, than thousands you admitted? If you say you know of none such under your charge so severely dealt with, it will be said, why did you use such severity towards them you did not know? or urge and animate them to use it, whom you knew never likely to distinguish! A very noted Divine of the Church of England, said to me in discourse not very long ago, upon mention of the ceremonies, 'Come, come, the Christian church and religion is in a consumption; and it ought to be done as in the case of consumptive persons, shave off the hair to save the life.' Another (a dignified person) present, replied, 'I doubt not it will be so, in the Philadelphian state.' I long thought few had been in the temper of their minds nearer it than your Lordship, and am grieved, not that I so judged, but that I am mistaken; and to see your Lordship the first public example to the rest of your order in such a course. Blessed Lord! How strange is it that so long experience will not let us see, that little, and so very disputable matters can never be the terms of union so much to be desired in the Christian church; and that in such a case as ours is, nothing will satisfy, but the destruction of them, whose union upon so nice terms we cannot obtain; and then to call *Solitudinem, Pacem!* But we must, it seems, understand all this rigour your Lordship shews, to proceed from love, and that you are for destroying the Dissenters, only to mend their understandings, and because *Afflictio dat intellectum*. I hope indeed God will sanctify the affliction which you give and

procure them, to blessed purposes ; and perhaps *perissent nisi perissent* : but for the purposes your Lordship seems to aim at, I wonder what you can expect ! Can you by undoing men, change the judgment of their consciences ? Or if they should tell you, we do indeed in our consciences judge, we shall greatly offend God, by complying with your injunctions, but yet to save being undone, we will do it : will this qualify them for your communion ? If your Lordship think still, you have judged and advised well in this matter, you have the judgment of our Sovereign, upon twelve years experience, lying against you : you have as to one of the laws you would have executed, the judgment of both Houses of Parliament against you, who passed a bill (to which perhaps you consented) for taking it away.* You have (as to all of them) the judgment of the last House of Commons sitting at Westminster, so far as to the season then, of executing those laws. It may be your Lordship thinks it now a fitter season : but if you have misjudged, or misdona against your judgment, I pray God to rectify your error by gentler methods, and by less affliction than you have designed to your brethren : and do not for all this doubt, (any more for your part than my own) to meet you there one day, where *Luther* and *Zuinglius* are well agreed. If I did think that would contribute any thing to the honest and truly charitable design of this letter, I should freely and at large tell you my name : and do however tell you, I am,

A sincere honourer of your Lordship,

And your very faithful, humble Servant.

Mr. Howe's Letter to his Friends, on setting out to travel with Lord Wharton. (August 1685.)

To such in and about London, among whom I have laboured in the work of the Gospel.

My most dearly beloved in our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, grace, mercy, and peace, be thro' him multiply'd unto you.

That I am at this time at this distance from you, is I am persuaded (upon the experience I have had of your great love and value of my poor labours) not pleasant to you, and I do assure you it is grievous to me, though I murmur not at the wise and holy Pro-

* The complete History of England, vol. 3. page 393, tells us, that the Commons in 1680, prepared a Bill 'for exempting His Majesty's Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the penalties imposed upon the Papists, by repealing the Act of 35. Eliz.' This Bill passed the Commons, and was agreed to by the Lords, and lay ready for His Majesty's assent. But when His Majesty came to the throne, to pass this among other Bills, this was taken from the table, and never heard of after. Which no man durst have done, without the King's command, or at least his privacy and connivance at it. The loss of this Bill was complained of, in the next parliament at Oxford, but without satisfaction or redress.

vidence that hath ordered things thus, in reference to you and me : but it added to my trouble, that I could not so much as bid farewell to persons to whom I had so great indearments, the solemnity whereof you know our circumstances would not admit. Nor could I have opportunity to communicate to you the grounds of my taking this long journey, being under promise while the matter was under consideration, not to speak of it to any one that was not concerned immediately about it : neither could I think that imprudent in itself, where acquaintance was so numerous ; silence towards dearest friends in such cases usually being designed for an apology to all others. And after the resolution was taken, my motion depending on another, I had not time for that or any such purposes. And should I yet communicate them, as they lie particularly in my own thoughts, it would lose time that I may more profitably employ, for both you and myself, while I do it not. You will, I may be confident, be more prudent and equal, than to judge of what you do not know : but so much I shall in the general say, that the providence of God gave me the prospect of a present quiet abode, with some opportunity of being serviceable ; (and I hope, as it may prove through his help and blessing unto you, if I have life and health to finish what I have been much pressed by some of yourselves to go on with ;) which opportunity I could not hope to have nearer you, at least without being unreasonably burdensome to some, while I was designing service as much as in me lay to all. It much satisfies me that I have a record above, I am not designing for myself ; that He who knoweth all things knows, I love not this present world, and I covet not an abode in it, (nor have I when it was most friendly to me) upon any other account, than upon doing some service to Him, and the souls of men. It therefore has been my settled habitual sense and sentiment a long time, to value and desire (with submission to sovereign good pleasure) peace and quiet, with some tolerable health, more than life. Nor have I found any thing more destructive to my health, than confinement to a room a few days in the city air, which was much better and more healthful to me formerly, than since the anger and jealousies of such as I never had a disposition to offend, have of later times occasioned persons of my circumstances very seldom to walk the streets.

But my hope is, God will in his good time incline the hearts of rulers more to favour such as cannot be satisfied with the public constitutions in the matters of God's worship, and that are innocent and peaceable in the land ; and that my absence from you will be for no long time, it being my design, with dependence upon his gracious providence and pleasure, in whose hands our times are, if I hear of any door open for service with you, to spend the health and strength which God shall vouchsafe me, (and which I find through his mercy much improved since I left you) in his work with and among you. In the mean time, I believe it will not be unacceptable to you, that I offer you some of my thoughts and counsels for your present help, such as are not new to me, nor as you will find to

yourselves, who are my witnesses, that I have often inculcated such things to you; but they may be useful to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance.

I. I beseech you more earnestly endeavour to reduce the things you know (and have been by many hands instructed in out of the gospel of our Lord) to practice. Nothing can be more absurd than to content ourselves with only a notional knowledge of practical matters. We should think so in other cases. As if any man should satisfy himself to know the use of food, but famish himself by never eating any, when he hath it at hand: or that he understands the virtues of this or that cordial, but languishes away to death in the neglect of using it, when it might cheer his spirits and save his life. And the neglect of applying the great things of the Gospel to the proper uses and purposes of the Christian life, is not more foolish, (only as the concerns they serve for are more important) but much more sinful and provoking to God. For we are to consider whence the Revelation comes. They are things which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken; uttered by the breath of the eternal God, as all Scriptures are said to be. God breathed, as that expression may be literally rendered, 2 Tim. iii. 16. And how high a contempt and provocation is it of the great God, so totally to pervert and disappoint the whole design of that Revelation he hath made to us, to know the great things contained therein, only for knowing sake, which he hath made known that we might live by them! And oh, what holy and pleasant lives should we lead in this world, if the temper and complexion of our souls did answer and correspond to the things we know! The design of preaching has been greatly mistaken, when it has been thought, it must still acquaint them who live (and especially who have long lived) under it, with some new thing. Its much greater and more important design is the impressing of known things (but too little considered) upon the hearts of hearers, that they may be delivered up into the mould and form of the doctrine taught them, as Rom. vi. 12: And may so learn Christ as more and more to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put off the old man and put on the new, Eph. iv. 20. The digesting our food is what God now eminently calls for.

II. More particularly labour to have your apprehensions of the future state of the unseen world, and eternal things, made more lively and efficacious daily, and that your faith of them may be such as may truly admit to be called the very *substance* and *evidence* of those things. Shall that glorious everlasting state of things be always as a dark shadow with us, or as the images we have of things in a dream, ineffectual and vanishing, only because we have not seen with our eyes, where God himself hath by his express word made the representations of them to us, who never deceived us, as our own eyes and treacherous senses have done? Why do we not live as just now entering into the eternal state, and as if we now beheld the glorious appearing of the great God our Saviour,

when we are as much assured of them as if we beheld them! Why do we not oftener view the representation of the heavens vanishing, the elements melting, the earth flaming, the angels every where dispersed to gather the elect, and them ascending, caught up to meet the Redeemer in the air, ever to be with the Lord! What a trifle will the world be to us then!

III. Let the doctrine of the Redeemer be more studied, and of his mighty undertaking, with the immediate design of it, not merely to satisfy for sin by the sacrifice he once for all made of himself, and so to procure our pardon and justification, without effecting any thing upon us, but to redeem us from all iniquity, to purify us to himself, &c. and to form us after his own holy likeness, and for such purposes to give his Holy Spirit to us. Consider that our Redeemer is mighty, who hath such kind designs upon us; and that as they shall not therefore finally fail of accomplishment, so will they be carried on without interruption, and with discernible success, if we fail not as to what part in subordination to him belongs to us. How cheerfully should the redeemed of the Lord go on in their course under such conduct!

IV. Endeavour your faith may be stronger, more efficacious and practical, concerning the doctrine of Providence, and that the workings and events of it lie all under the management, and in the hand of the Redeemer, who is 'head over all things to the church:' That therefore how grievous and bitter soever be his people's lot and portion at any time, there cannot but be kindness at the bottom; and that not only designing the best end, but taking the fittest way to it. For can Love itself be unkind, so as not to design well! or Wisdom itself err so, as to take an improper course in order thereto! Hereupon let not your spirits be embittered by the present dispensation of Providence you are under, whereby you are in so great a part deprived of the helps and means of your spiritual advantage, which you like and relish most. And to this purpose consider,

1. Our wise and merciful Lord (though perhaps such means might be in some measure useful to us) doth for the present judge, that his rebuking our undue use of them will be more useful; either overvaluing or undervaluing his instruments, turning his Ordinances into mere formalities, preferring the means of grace (as they are fitly called) before the end, grace itself.

2. Consider whether there be no disposition of spirit, to treat others as you are treated. The inward temper of our minds and spirits is so much the more narrowly to be inspected, by how much the less there is opportunity to discover it by outward acts. As to such as differ from us about the forms and ceremonies that are now required in the worship of God, would we not be glad if they were as much restrained from using them in their worship, as we from worshipping without them! And do not we think that that would as much grieve them, as our restraint doth us! And why should we suppose that their way should not as much suit their spirits, and be

as grateful to them, as ours to us ? But we are in the right way, some will say, and they in the wrong : And why cannot any man say the same thing with as much confidence as we ? Or do we think there is no difference to be put between controversies about matter of circumstance, and about the essentials of Christianity ? Undoubtedly till those that affect the name of the Reformed, and count it more their glory to be called *Protestants* than to be good Christians, have learned to mingle more justice with their religion, and how better to apply that great advice of our Lord's, ' Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do that to them,' &c. and till they become studious of excelling other men, in substantial goodness, abstractedness from the world, meekness, humility, sobriety, self-denial and charity, and to lay a greater stress hereon, than on being of one or other denomination, God's controversy will not cease.

I reckon it much to be considered, and I pray you consider it deeply, that after that great precept, Eph. iv. 30. ' Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' it immediately follows, ver. 31. ' Let all bitterness and anger and wrath and clamour and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice :' plainly implying that the Spirit of God, that Spirit of all love, goodness, sweetness, and benignity, is grieved by nothing more than by our bitterness, wrathfulness, &c. And it appears that the discernible restraint and departure of that blessed Spirit from the church of Christ in so great a measure, for many foregoing generations, in comparison of the plentiful effusion of it in the first age, hath ensued upon the growth of that wrathful contentious spirit which shewed itself early in the *Gnostick*, but much more in the after *Arian* persecution, which was not in some places less bloody than the Pagan persecution had been before. Oh the gentleness, kindness, tenderness, and compassionate-ness of the evangelical truly Christian spirit, as it most eminently appeared in our Lord Jesus Christ himself ! And we are told, ' If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he has none of his,' Rom. viii. 9. And how easy and pleasant is it to one's own self, to be void of all wrathfulness and vindictive designs or inclinations towards any other man. For my own part, I should not have that peace and consolation in a suffering condition (as my being so many years under restraint from that pleasant work of pleading with sinners that they might be saved, is the greatest suffering I was liable to in this world) as through the goodness of God I have found, and do find in being conscious to myself of no other than kind and benign thoughts towards them I have suffered by, and that my heart tells me I desire not the least hurt to them that would do me the greatest ; and that I feel within myself an unfeigned love and high estimation of divers, accounting them pious worthy persons, and hoping to meet them in the all-reconciling world, that are yet (through some mistake) too harsh towards us who dissent from them : And in things of this nature I pray that you and I may abound more and more.

But again, as I would not have your spirits embittered, so I

would not have your spirits discouraged, or sunk in dejection. 'The Lord will not cast off his people, because it hath pleased him to make them his people,' 1 Sam. xii. 22. I do not mean those of this or that party, but who fear God and work righteousness, be they of what party soever. As I often think of that saying of an antient (*Clem. Alex.*) that he counted not that philosophy, which was peculiar to this or that sect, but whatsoever of truth was to be found in any of them; so I say of christianity, it is not that which is appropriate to this or that party, but whatsoever of sincere religion shall be found common to them all. Such will value and love his favour and presence, and shall have it; and he will yet have such a people in the world, and I doubt not more numerous than ever. And as the bitterness of christians one towards another chased away his spirit, his spirit shall vanquish and drive away all that bitterness, and consume our other dross. And as the apostacy long ago foretold, and of so long continuance in the christian church, hath been begun and continued by constant war against the Spirit of Christ, the restitution and recovery of the church, and the reduction of christianity to its antient self, and primitive state, will be by the victory of the Spirit of Christ over that so contrary spirit. Then shall all the enmity, pride, wrathfulness and cruelty, which have rent the church of Christ and made it so little itself, be melted down; and with all their great impurities, besides earthliness, carnality, love of this present world, and prevalence of sensual lusts, be purged more generally away, and his repairing work be done in a way grievous to no one, whereby those that are most absolutely conquered will be most highly pleased; 'not by might or by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord.'

In the mean time let us draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to us. Let us more study the exercising ourselves to godliness, and take heed of turning the religion of our closets into spiritless uncomfortable formalities. 'Their hearts shall live that seek God.'

To that blessed, and faithful, and covenant keeping God I commit you; and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up farther, and give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified. And as I hope I shall without ceasing remember you in mine, so I hope you will remember too in your prayers,

Your sincerely affectionate,

Though too unprofitable

Servant in Christ,

JOHN HOWE.

The Case of the Protestant Dissenters represented and argued.

THEY are under one common obligation with the rest of mankind, by the universal law of nature, to worship God in assemblies.

Men of all sorts of religions, that have ever obtained in the world,

Jews, Pagans, Mahometans, Christians, have in their practice acknowledged this obligation. Nor can it be understood, how such a practice should be so universal, otherwise than from the dictate and impression of the universal law.

Whereas the religion professed in England, is that of reformed Christianity, some things are annexed to the allowed public worship, which are acknowledged to be no parts thereof, nor in themselves necessary; but which the Dissenters judge to be in some part sinful.

They cannot therefore with good conscience towards God, attend wholly and solely upon the public worship which the laws do appoint.

The same laws do strictly forbid their assembling to worship God otherwise.

Which is in effect the same thing, as if they who made, or shall continue such laws, should plainly say, If you will not consent with us in our superadded rites and modes against your consciences, you shall not worship God; or if you will not accept of our additions to the Christian religion, you shall not be Christians: and manifestly tends to reduce to Paganism, a great part of a Christian nation.

They have been wont therefore to meet however in distinct assemblies, and to worship God in a way which their consciences could approve; and have many years continued so to do, otherwise than as they have been hindered by violence.

It is therefore upon the whole fit to enquire,

Q. 1. Whether they are to be blamed for their holding distinct meetings for the worship of God?

For answer to this, it cannot be expected that all the controversies should be here determined, which have been agitated about the lawfulness of each of those things which have been added to the Christian religion and worship, by the present constitution of the Church of England.

But supposing they were none of them simply unlawful, while yet the misinformed minds of the Dissenters could not judge them lawful, though they have made it much their business to enquire and search; being urged also by severe sufferings, which through a long tract of time they have undergone, not to refuse any means that might tend to their satisfaction; they could have nothing else left them to do, than to meet and worship distinctly as they have.

For they could not but esteem the obligation of the universal, natural, divine law, by which they were bound solemnly to worship God, less questionable than that of a law, which was only positive, topical, and humane, requiring such and such additaments to their worship, and prohibiting their worship without them.

The Church of England (as that part affects to be called) distinguished from the rest by those additional to Christian religion, (pretended to be indifferent, and so confessed unnecessary) hath not only sought to ingross to itself the ordinances of divine worship, but all civil power. So that the privileges that belong either to Christian or humane society are inclosed, and made peculiar to

such as are distinguished by things that in themselves can signify nothing to the making of persons either better Christians, or better men.

Q. 2. Whether the laws enjoining such additions to our religion, as the exclusive terms of Christian worship and communion, ought to have been made, when it is acknowledged on all hands, the things to be added were before not necessary; and when it is known a great number judge them sinful, and must thereby be restrained from worshipping the true and living God?

Ans. The question to any of common sense, answers itself. For it is not put concerning such as dissent from any part of the substance of worship which God hath commanded, but concerning such additions as he never commanded. And there are sufficient tests to distinguish such Dissenters, from those that deny any substantial part of religion, or assert any thing contrary thereto. Wherefore to forbid such to worship that God that made them, because they cannot receive your devised additions, is to exclude that which is necessary, for the mere want of that which is unnecessary.

And where is that man that will adventure to stand forth, and avow the hindering of such persons from paying their homage to the God that made them, if we thus expostulate the matter on God's behalf and their own? Will you cut off from God his right in the creatures he hath made? Will you cut off from them the means of their salvation upon these terms? What reply can the matter admit?

'Tis commonly alledged that great deference is to be paid to the laws, and that we ought to have forbore our assemblies, till the public authority recalled the laws against them: and we will say the same thing, when it is well proved, that they who made such laws, made the world too.

And by whose authority were such laws made? Is there any that is not from God? and hath God given any man authority to make laws against himself, and to deprive him of his just rights from his own creatures?

Nor if the matter be well searched into, could there be so much as a pretence of authority derived for such purposes from the people, whom every one now acknowledges the first receptacle of derived governing power. God can, 'tis true, lay indisputable obligations by his known laws, upon every conscience of man about religion, or any thing else. And such as represent any people, can according to the constitution of the Government, make laws for them, about the things they entrust them with: but if the people of England be asked man by man, will they say they did entrust to their representatives, their religion, and their consciences, to do with them what they please? When it is your own turn to be represented by others, is this part of the trust you commit? What Dr. Sherlock * worthily says concerning a Bishop, he might (and particu-

* Vindication of some Protestant Principles, &c. p. 52.

larly after, doth) say concerning every other man, 'he can be no more represented in a council, than at the day of judgment: every man's soul and conscience must be in his own keeping; and can be represented by no man.'

It ought to be considered that Christianity, wherein it superadds to the law of nature, is all matter of revelation. And 'tis well known that even among Pagans in the settling rites and institutes of religion †, revelation was pretended at least, upon an implied principle, that in such matters humane power could not oblige the people's consciences.

We must be excused therefore, if we have in our practice expressed less reverence for laws made by no authority received either from God or man.

We are therefore injuriously reflected on, when it is imputed to us, that we have by the use of our liberty, acknowledged an illegal dispensing power. We have done no other thing herein, than we did when no dispensation was given or pretended, in conscience of duty to him that gave us our breath: nor did therefore practise otherwise, because we thought these laws dispensed with, but because we thought them not laws. Whereupon little need remains of enquiring farther.

Q. 3. Whether such laws should be continued? Against which, besides what may be collected from that which hath been said, it is to be considered, that what is most principally grievous to us, was enacted by that Parliament, that as we have too much reason to believe, suffered itself to be dealt with, to enslave the nation, in other respects as well as this; and which (to his immortal honour) the noble Earl of Danby procured to be dissolved, as the first step towards our national deliverance.

And let the tenour be considered of that horrid law, by which our *Magna Charta* was torn in pieces; the worst and most infamous of mankind, at our own expence, hired to accuse us; multitudes of perjuries committed, convictions made without a jury, and without any hearing of the persons accused; penalties inflicted, goods rifled, estates seized and embezzled, houses broken up, families disturbed, often at unseasonable hours of the night, without any cause, or shadow of a cause, if only a malicious villain would pretend to suspect a meeting there! No law in any other case like this! As if to worship God without those additions, which were confessed unnecessary, were a greater crime than theft, felony, murder, or treason! Is it for our reputation to posterity, that the memory of such a law should be continued?

And are we not yet awakened, and our eyes opened enough to see, that the making and execution of the laws, by which we have suffered so deeply for many by-past years, was only, that Protestants might destroy Protestants, and the easier work be made for the introduction of popery, that was to destroy the residue?

† As by Numa from his Egeria. And their Priests, to whom the regulation of such matters was left, were generally believed to be inspired.

Nor can any malice deny, or ignorance of observing Englishmen overlook, this plain matter of fact: after the dissolution of that before-mentioned Parliament, Dissenters were much caressed, and endeavoured to be drawn into a subserviency to the Court designs, especially in the election of after Parliaments. Notwithstanding which, they every where so entirely and unanimously fell in with the sober part of the nation, in the choice of such persons for the three Parliaments that next succeeded (two held at Westminster, and that at Oxford,) as it was known would, and who did most generously assert the liberties of the nation, and the Protestant religion. Which alone (and not our mere dissent from the Church of England, in matters of religion, wherein Charles II. was sufficiently known to be a Prince of great indifferency) drew upon us, soon after the dissolution of the last of those Parliaments, that dreadful storm of persecution, that destroyed not a small number of lives in goals, and ruined multitudes of families.

Let English freemen remember, what they cannot but know, that it was for our firm adherence to the civil interests of the nation, (not for our different modes of religion from the legal way, though the laws gave that advantage against us, which they did not against others) that we endured the calamities of so many years.

When by the late King some relaxation was given us, what arts and insinuations have been used with us, to draw us into a concurrence to designs tending to the prejudice of the nation? And with how little effect upon the generality of us, it must be great ignorance not to know, and great injustice to deny.

But he that knoweth all things, knoweth that though in such circumstances, there was no opportunity for our receiving public and authorized promises, when we were all under the eye of watchful jealousy; yet as great assurances as were possible, were given us by some that we hope will now remember it, of a future established security from our former pressures. We were told over and over, when the excellent Heer Fagel's Letter came to be privately communicated from hand to hand, how easily better things would be had for us, than *that* encouraged Papists to expect, if ever that happy change should be brought about, which none have now beheld with greater joy than we.

We are loth to injure those who have made us hope for better, by admitting a suspicion that we shall now be disappointed and deceived, (as we have formerly been, and we know by whom) or that we shall suffer from them a religious slavery, for whose sakes we have suffered so grievous things, rather than do the least thing that might tend to the bringing upon them a civil slavery.

We cannot but expect from Englishmen that they be just and true. We hope not to be the only instances, whereby the *Anglica Fides* and the *Punica* shall be thought all one.

But if we, who have constantly desired, and as we have had opportunity, endeavoured the saving of the nation, must however be ruined, not to greaten (one hair) the wealth and dignity of it,

but only to gratify the humour of them who would yet destroy it ; we who are competently inured to sufferings, shall through God's mercy be again enabled to endure: but He that sits in the heavens will in his own time judge our cause, and we will wait his pleasure ; and we hope suffer all that can be inflicted, rather than betray the cause of reformed Christianity in the world.

But our affairs are in the hands of men of worth and honour, who apprehend how little grateful a name they should leave to posterity, or obtain now with good men of any persuasion, if under a pretence of kindness to us, they should now repeat the arts of ill men, in an ill time. Great minds will think it beneath them to sport themselves with their own cunning, in deceiving other men, which were really in the present case too thin not to be seen through, and may be the easy attainment of any man, that hath enough of opportunity, and integrity little enough for such purposes. And it is as much too gross to endeavour to abuse the authority of a nation, by going about to make that stoop to so mean a thing, as to make a shew of intending what they resolve to their utmost shall never be.

But some may think, by concessions to us, the Church of England will be ruined, and a great advantage given to the bringing in of Popery.

To which we say, the generality of the Dissenters differ from the Church of England, in no substantials of doctrine and worship, no nor of government, provided it be so managed, as to attain its true acknowledged end: the favouring of us therefore will as much ruin the church, as its enlargement and additional strength will signify to its ruin.

And doth not the world know, that wherein we differ from them, we differ from the Papists too ? And that for the most part, wherein they differ from us, they seem to agree with them ?

We acknowledge their strong, brave, and prosperous opposition to Popery: but they have opposed it by the things wherein they agree with us. Their differences from us, are no more a fence against Popery, than an inclosure of straw is against a flame of fire.

But it is wont to be said, we agree not among ourselves, and know not what we would have.

And do all that go under the name of the Church of England agree among themselves ? We can shew more considerable disagreements among them, than any can between the most of us, and a considerable part of them. They all agree, 'tis true, in conformity: and we all agree in nonconformity. And is not this merely accidental to Christianity and Protestantism ? And herein is it not well known that the far greater part of reformed Christendom do more agree with us ?

An arbitrary line of uniformity in some little accidents, severs a small part of the Christian world from all the rest. How unreasonably is it expected that therefore all the rest must in every thing

else agree among themselves? Suppose any imaginary line to cut off a little segment from any part of the terrestrial globe; it is as justly expected that all the rest should be of one mind. If one part of England be taylor, they might as well expect that all the people besides should agree to be of one profession.

Perhaps some imagine it dishonourable to such as have gone before them in the same ecclesiastical stations and dignities, if now any thing should be altered, which their judgment did before approve and think fit.

But we hope that temptation will not prove invincible, viz. of so excessive a modesty as to be afraid of seeming wiser, or better natured, or of a more Christian temper than their predecessors.

But the most of us do agree not only with one another, but in the great things above-mentioned, with the Church of England *too*: and in short, that the reproach may cease for ever with those that count it one, they will find with us, when they please to try, a very extensive agreement on the terms of King Charles II.'s Declaration about ecclesiastical affairs, in 1660.

Q. 4. Whether it be reasonable to exclude all that in every thing conform not to the Church of England, from any part or share of the civil power?

Ans. The difference or nonconformity of many is so minute, that it would be as reasonable to exclude all whose hair is not of this or that colour. And what if we should make a determination, by the decision this way or that of any other disputed question, that may be of as small concernment to religion? Suppose it be that of *eating blood*, for the decision whereof one way, there is more preference from God's word, than for any point of the disputed conformity: would it not be a wise constitution, that whosoever thinks it lawful to eat black-pudding, shall be capable of no office? &c.

But we tremble to think of the Exclusive Sacramental Test, brought down as low as to the keeper of an alehouse. Are all fit to approach the sacred table, whom the fear of ruin, or hope of gain may bring thither? We cannot but often remember with horror, what happened three or four years ago: a man that led an ill life, but frequented the church, was observed not to come to the Sacrament; and pressed by the officers to come, he yet declined, knowing himself unfit: at length being threatened and terrified, he came; but said to some present at the time of the solemn action, that he came only to avoid being undone, and took them to witness that what he there received, he took only as common bread and wine, not daring to receive them as the body and blood of Christ. It is amazing, that among Christians, so venerable an institution should be prostituted to the serving of so mean purposes, and so foreign to its true end! And that doing it after the manner of the Church of England must be the qualification! As if England were another Christendom; or it were a greater thing to conform in every punctilio to the rules of this church, than of Christ himself!

But we would fain know whose is that holy table? Is it the table

of this-or that party, or the Lord's table? If the Lord's, are not persons to be admitted or excluded upon his terms? Never can there be union or peace in the Christian world till we take down our arbitrary inclosures, and content ourselves with those which our common Lord hath set. If he falls under a curse that alters a man's landmark, to alter God's is not likely to infer a blessing.

The matter is clear as the light of the sun, that as many persons of excellent worth, sobriety and godliness, are entirely in the communion of the Church of England, so there are too many of a worse character, that are of it too; and divers prudent, pious, and sober-minded persons that are not of it. Let common reason be consulted in this case. Suppose the tables turned, and that the rule were to be made the contrary way, viz. that to do this thing, but not by any means after the manner of the Church of England, were to be the qualification; and now suppose one of meaner endowments, as a man and a Christian, do what is required, and not in the way of the Church of England; and another that is of much better, does the same thing in that way; were it suitable to prudence or justice, that because it is done after the way of the Church of England, a fitter man should be reckoned unqualified? and one of less value be taken for qualified, because he does it a different way? Then is all that solid weight of wisdom, diligence, sobriety, and goodness, to be weighed down by a feather.

It must surely be thought the prudence of any government, to comprehend as many useful persons as it can, and no more to deprive itself of the service of such, for any thing less considerable than those qualifications are, by which they are useful, than a man would tear off from himself the limbs of his body, for a spot on the skin.

And really if in our circumstances, we thus narrow our interest, all the rest of the world will say, that they who would destroy us, do yet find a way to be our instructors, and our common enemies do teach us our politics.

P. S. The names of Mr. Hale of Eaton College, and of a later most renowned Bishop of the Church of England, who asserted this principle, that 'if things be imposed under the notion of indifferent, which many think sinful, and a schism follow thereupon, the imposers are the schismatics,' will be great in England, as long as their writings shall live, and good sense can be understood in them.

*Humble Requests both to Conformists and Dissenters touching their Temper and Behaviour toward each other, upon the lately passed Indulgence.**

" 1. THAT we do not over-magnify our differences, or count them greater than they really are. I speak now (says Mr. Howe)

* Mr. Matthew Henry in his short Account of the Life of Mr. Richard Stretton, that is subjoined to his Funeral Sermon for him, ascribes this

of the proper differences, which the rule itself makes, to which the one sort conforms, and the other conforms not. Remember that there are differences on both parts, *among themselves* incomparably greater than these, by which the one sort differs from the other. There are differences in doctrinal sentiments that are much greater. How unconceivably greater is the difference between good men and bad!—between being a lover of the blessed God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and an enemy!—a real subject of Christ, and of the devil! Have we not reason to apprehend there are of both these, on each side? Let us take heed of having our minds tinctured with a wrong notion of this matter, as if this Indulgence divided England into two Christendoms, or distinguished rather between Christians and Mahometans, as some men's Cyclopic fancies have an unlucky art to represent things; creating ordinary men and things into monsters and prodigious shapes at their own pleasure. It has been an usual saying on both sides, that they were (in comparison) but little things we differed about, or circumstantial things. Let us not unsay it, or suffer an habit of mind to slide into us, that consists not with it. Though we must not go against a judgment of conscience in the least thing, yet let us not confound the true differences of things, but what are really lesser things, let them go for such.

“2. Let us hereupon carefully abstain from judging each other's state Godward upon these differences: for hereby we shall both contradict our common rule, and ourselves. When men make conscience of small and doubtful things on the one hand, and the other, about which they differ, blessed God, how little conscience is made of the plainest and most important rule, not to ‘judge one another’ for such differences!—Rom. xiv. 3, 13. Why of all the parts of that holy book, is this chapter only thought no part of God's word! or this precept, so variously enforced in this chapter, and so awfully, ver. 10, 11. ‘But why dost thou judge thy brother? or, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to me!’ Is it a light matter to usurp the throne of Christ, the judgment seat of God? Yet how common has it been to say, Such an one conforms, he hath nothing of God in him; such an one conforms not, it is not conscience, but humour. God forgive both. Had they blotted Rom. xiv. out of their Bibles! It is plain by the whole series of discourse, that it is the judging of men's states, and that by such small matters of difference, that is the thing here for-

paper to Mr. Stretton, and intimates that he had it from a near relation of his, that he was the author of it: but this I have good reason to believe to have been a mistake. Few that have any taste of styles, can question it to have been Mr. Howe's, when once they have read it. But I can add in this case, that I have had full assurance from Mr. Howe's family, that he was the real author of it.—E. C.

bidden. Some few things contained in this chapter, as to *receive one another* (as Christians, or such whom God receives) notwithstanding remaining doubts about small matters, and not determining such doubted things in bar to the doubter, ver. 1, 2, 3; and not to lay stumbling blocks in each other's way, ver. 13; not to do the doubted thing with a mind still unsatisfied, ver. 5, 23; not to *censure*, either him that does or forbears; not admitting an hard thought of him, or less favourable, than that what such an one *does*, he does to the Lord, and what the other *forbears*, he forbears to the Lord, ver. 6. These few things I say put in practice, had taken away all differences (that we are now considering) or the inconvenience of them long ago. And we shall still need them as much as ever.

“ 3. Let us not value ourselves upon being of this or that side of the severing line. It is Jewish, yea, Pharisaical, to be conceited, and boast ourselves upon externals, and small matters, especially if arbitrarily taken up; and is itself an argument of a light mind, and incomprehensive of true worth. Though I cannot sincerely be of this or that way, but I must think myself in the right, and others in the wrong that differ from me, yet I ought to consider, this is but a small minute thing, a point compared with the vast orb of knowables, and of things needful, and that ought to be known. Perhaps divers that differ from me, are men of greater and more comprehensive minds, and have been more employed about greater matters; and many, in things of more importance, have much more of valuable and useful knowledge than I. Yea, and since these are not matters of salvation we differ about, so that any on either side dare considerably say, he cannot be saved, that is not in these respects of my mind and way; he may have more of sanctifying savoury knowledge, more of solid goodness, more of grace and real sanctity than I; the course of his thoughts and studies having been by converse and other accidents led more off from these things, and perhaps by a good principle been more deeply engaged about higher matters: for no man's mind is able equally to consider all things fit to be considered; and greater things are of themselves more apt to beget holy and good impressions upon our spirits, than the minuter and more circumstantial things, though relating to religion, can be.

“ 4. Let us not despise one another for our differing in these lesser matters. This is too common, and most natural to that temper that offends against the foregoing caution. Little spirited creatures valuing themselves for small matters, must consequently have them in contempt that want what they count their own only excellency. He that hath nothing wherein he places worth belonging to him, besides a flaunting peruke and a laced suit, must at all adventures think very meanly of one in a plain garb. Where we are taught not to *judge*, we are forbidden to *despise* or set at nought one another upon these little differences.

“ 5. Nor let us wonder that we differ. Unto this we are too apt,

i. e. to think it strange, (especially upon some arguing of the difference) that such a man should conform, or such an one not conform. There is some fault in this, but which proceeds from more faulty causes. Pride too often, and an opinion that we understand so well, that a wrong is done us, if our judgment be not made a standard and measure to another man's. And again, ignorance of human nature, or inconsiderateness rather, how mysterious it is, and how little can be known of it; how secret and latent little springs there are that move this engine to our own mind this way or that; and what bars (which perhaps he discerns not himself) may obstruct and shut up towards us another man's. Have we not frequent instances in other common cases, how difficult it is to speak to another man's understanding! Speech is too penurious, not expressive enough. Frequently between men of sense, much more time is taken up in explaining each other's notions, than in proving or disproving them. Nature and our present state, have in some respects left us open to God only, and made us inaccessible to one another. Why then should it be strange to me, that I cannot convey my thought into another's mind? It is unchristian to censure, as before, and say, Such an one has not my conscience, therefore he has no conscience at all: And it is also unreasonable and rude to say, Such a one sees not with my eyes, therefore he is stark blind. Besides, the real obscurity of the matter is not enough considered. I am very confident an impartial and competent judge, upon the view of books, later and more ancient, upon such subjects, would say, there are few metaphysical questions disputed with more subtlety, than the controversies about conformity and nonconformity. Blessed be God that things necessary to the salvation of souls, and that are of *true necessity* even to the peace and order of the Christian church, are in comparison so very plain.

“ Moreover, there is besides understanding and judgment, and diverse from that heavenly gift which in the Scriptures is called *Grace*, such a thing as gust and relish belonging to the mind of man, and I doubt not, to all men, if they observe themselves; and this is as unaccountable and as various as the relishes and disgusts of sense. This they only wonder at, that either understand not themselves, or will consider nobody but themselves. To bring it down to the present case. As to those parts of worship which are of most frequent use in our assemblies, (whether conforming or nonconforming) *prayer, and preaching, and hearing God's word*, our differences about them, cannot but in part arise from the diversity of this principle, both on the one hand and the other. One sort do more savour prayer by a foreknown form; another that which hath more of surprize, by a grateful variety of unexpected expressions. And it can neither be universally said, it is a better judgment, or more grace, that determines men the one way or the other; but somewhat in the temper of their minds distinct from both, which I know not how better to express than by *mental taste*,

the acts whereof (as the objects are suitable or unsuitable) are relishing or disrelishing, liking or disliking. And this hath no more of mystery in it, than that there is such a thing belonging to our natures, as complacency or displicency in reference to the objects of the mind. And this, in the kind of it, is as common to men, as human nature, but as much diversified in individuals, as men's other inclinations are, that are most fixed, and least apt to admit of change. Now in the mentioned case, men cannot be universally determined either way, by their having better judgment; for no sober man can be so little modest, as not to acknowledge, that there are some of each sentiment, that are less judicious, than some that are of the contrary sentiment in this thing. And to say that to be more determined this way or that, is the certain sign or effect, of a greater measure of grace and sanctity, were a great violation both of modesty and charity. I have not met with any that have appeared to live in more entire communion with God, in higher admiration of him, in a pleasanter sense of his love, or in a more joyful expectation of eternal life, than some that have been wont with great delight publicly to worship God in the use of our *Common Prayer*: and others I have known, as highly excelling in the same respects, that could by no means relish it, but have always counted it insipid and nauseous. The like may be said of relishing or disrelishing sermons preached in a digested set of words, or with a more flowing freedom of speech. It were endless and odious to vie either better judgments, or more pious inclinations, that should universally determine men either the one way or the other in these matters. And we are no more to wonder at these peculiarities in the temper of men's minds, than at their different tastes of meats and drinks; much less to fall out with them, that their minds and notions are not just formed as ours are: for we should remember, they no more differ from us, than we do from them; and if we think we have the clearer light, it is like they also think they have clearer. And it is in vain to say, who shall be judge? For every man will at length judge of his own notions for himself, and cannot help it: for no man's judgment (or relish of things, which influences his judgment, though he know it not) is at the command of his will; and much less of another man's. And therefore,

“ 6. Let us not be offended mutually with one another, for our different choice of this or that way, wherein we find most of real advantage and edification. Our greatest concern in this world, and which is common to us all, is the bettering of our spirits, and preparing them for a better world. Let no man be displeased, (especially of those who agree in all the substantials of the same holy religion) that another uses the same liberty, in choosing the way most conducing in his experience to his great end, that he himself also uses, expecting to do it without another man's offence.

“ 7. But above all, let us with sincere minds, more earnestly endeavour the promoting the interest of religion itself, of true reformed

Christianity, than of this or that party. Let us long to see the religion of Christians become simple, primitive, agreeable to its lovely original state, and again *itself*; and each in our own stations contribute thereto all that we are able, labouring that the internal principle of it may live and flourish in our own souls, and be to our utmost diffused and spread unto other men's. And for its externals, as the ducture of our rule will guide us, so gradually bend towards one common course, that there may at length cease to be any divided parties at all.

“ In the mean time, while there are, let it be remembered, that the difference lies among Christians and Protestants, not between such and Pagans. Let us therefore carry it accordingly towards each other; and consider our assemblies are all Christian and Protestant assemblies, differing in their administrations, for the most part, not in the things prayed for, or deprecated, or taught, but in certain modes of expression: and differing really, and in the substance of things, less by mere conformity or nonconformity to the public rule of the law, than many of them that are under it do from one another, and than divers that are not under it. For instance, go into one congregation, that is a conforming one, and you have the public prayers read in the desk, and afterwards a form of prayer perhaps used by the preacher in the pulpit, of his own composition, before he begins his sermon. Go into another congregation, and prayer is performed without either sort of form; and perhaps the difference in this is not so great. It may be the conformist uses no preconceived form of his own, and the nonconformist may. Both instruct the people out of the same holy book of God's word. But now suppose one of the former sort, reads the public prayers gravely, with the appearance of great reverence, fervency, and pious devotion; and one of the latter sort that uses them not, does however pray for the same things, with judgment and with like gravity and affection, and they both instruct their hearers fitly and profitably; nothing is more evident than that the worship in these two assemblies doth much less considerably differ to a pious and judicious mind, than if in the latter the prayers were also read, but carelessly, sleepily, or scenically, flauntingly, and with manifest irreverence, and the sermon like the rest; or than if in the former, all the performance were inept, rude, or very offensively drowsy or sluggish.

“ Now let us shew ourselves men, and manly Christians, not swayed by trifles and little things, as children by this or that dress or mode, or form of our religion, which may perhaps please some the more for its real indecency: but know, that if we continue picquering about forms, the life be lost, and we come to bear the character of that church, ‘ thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead,’ we may ere long (after all the wonders God hath wrought for us) expect to hear of our candlesticks being removed, and that our sun shall go down at noon-day.

“ The true serious spirit and power of religion and godliness,

will act no man against his conscience, or his rule understood, but will oblige him in all acts of worship (as well as of his whole conversation) to keep close to gospel-prescription, so far as he can discern it. And that he will find requires, that in subordination to the divine glory, he seriously design the working out the salvation of his own soul, and take that course in order thereto, put himself under such a ministry, and such a way of using God's ordinances, as he finds most profitable and conducing to that great end, and that doth his soul most real good. If you are religious, or of this or that mode or way of religion, to serve a carnal design for yourself or your party, not to save your soul, you commit the most detestable sacrilege, and alienate the most sacred thing in the world, *religion*, from its true end; which will not only lose that end, but infer an heavy vengeance. Yea, and it is too possible to transgress dangerously, by preferring that which is less, though never so confidently thought to be divine, before that which is greater, or separately from its true end. You greatly prevaricate, if you are more zealously intent to promote independency than christianity, presbytery than christianity, prelacy than christianity, as any of these are the interest of a party, and not considered in subserviency to the Christian interest, nor designed for promoting the edification and salvation of your own soul. But that being your design, living religion will keep your eye upon your end, and make you steady, and constantly true to that, and to your rule, without which you can never hope to reach your end.

“ Now hereupon such as conform to the public establishment, and they that dissent from it, may differ from each other upon a two-fold account: either (1) as judging the contrary way to be simply unlawful; or (2) as judging it to be only less edifying. It is not the business of this paper to discuss, who herein judge aright, and who wrong: But supposing their judgment to remain as it is (which they themselves however should examine, and if it be wrong rectify;) I shall say somewhat to each of these cases.

“ To the former, while your judgment continues as it is, it is true you cannot join in worship with the contrary minded: But nothing forbids, but you can be kind, conversable, courteous towards them; and your common Christian profession (besides the rules of humanity) obliges you so to be: Yea, and even to converse with them as occasion invites, more intimately as Christians, the visible marks of serious christianity appearing in them.

“ To the latter sort it is acknowledged, you cannot constantly join in worship with those of the contrary way, because you ought ordinarily to worship God in that way which you judge to be best, and most agreeable to the divine rule, (though you are not obliged utterly to abandon any for its imperfections or corruptions, that is not corrupt in the very essentials;) and you ought most frequently to attend on that which you find to be most edifying to your own soul; as that should be your more ordinary diet that best agrees with you. That way therefore you must most constantly adhere to,

which is most grateful and savoury to you; because you cannot so much edify by what you less relish. But your judgment and latitude will well allow you, sometimes to frequent the assemblies with which you hold not constant communion. And if it will allow, it will also direct you thereto for a valuable end; as that you may signify, you ordinarily decline them not as no Christians, or their worship as no worship, but as more defective, or less edifying, and that you may maintain love, and both express and beget a disposition to nearer union. And if our rulers shall judge such intercourses conducing to so desirable an end, they may perhaps in due time think it reasonable, to put things into that state, that ministers of both sorts may be capable of inviting one another occasionally, to the brotherly offices of mutual assistance in each other's congregations. For which, and all things that tend to make us an happy people, we must wait upon Him in whose hands their hearts are."

Letter from Mr. Howe to Mr. Spilsbury.

"London, April 20, 1695.

"MY DEAR BROTHER,

"YOU strangely forget yourself, when you say I gave you no account of the Pinner's-Hall business, of which I sent you a large narrative, when the business was recent; which if it miscarried, tell me so, and I promise you I will never do the like again: for it is a very discouraging thing, when it is so hard a matter to get time to write such long letters, to have them lost by the way; or it is not better, if when they are received, they are taken *pro non scriptis*. God knows how I strove against that division. Almost all my friends that called me to bear a part in that lecture, perceiving the violence of the other party, agreed to remove to a much more convenient place; and they were, so far as I can learn, the greatest part of the *ancient subscribers*, who were grave, sober citizens. They invited Mr. Mead as well as me. If he would not go, I could not help that. His acquaintance lay more among the other, as mine did with these. He and they all know the many meetings we have had to prevent the breach; he and I with divers of them on both sides. And they (who are now of Pinner's-Hall) ran against his advice and mine, when they had desired us to meet purposely to advise them. He hath been since as weary of them as others, as he hath owned to me. They avowed it for a principle before we parted, they would lay any of us aside at their pleasure, without giving a reason: and were told thereupon, we would lay down without giving them a reason; though I think that itself was a sufficient reason. They know too, how often, since the lecture was broken into two, and it appeared now there were two congregations, which no one place could receive, I have urged both publicly and privately, that the same Lecturers might alternate in both

places, which would take away all appearance of disunion; and who they were only that opposed it. Upon these terms I had preached with them still; but I will not be tied to them, nor any party, so as to abandon all others. My frequent insisting in sermons among them, when I saw whither things tended, that these were tokens of what was coming, (just as thou writest) will be thought on it may be hereafter, though then it was not. Above all, that which determined me was, that when I solemnly proposed to them in a sermon, the keeping a Fast, before they went on to that fatal rupture; and it was as solemnly promised by the chief of them, there should be no step farther made without a Fast; it should be declined afterwards. Herenpon I told them in my last sermon there, I should be afraid of confining myself to such as were afraid of fasting and prayer in so important a case, (repeating their own good resolution to that purpose;) and began my course in the other place with a Fast, to lament what we could not prevent. These things will be recollected another day.

“ In the mean time there never was greater intimacy or endear- edness between Mr. Mead and me, than now. Last week, he desired me only, without any other, to join with him in keeping a Fast at his house, about some private affairs of his own, which we did. I was to have preached at his place to-morrow, after my own work at home, but present indisposition prevents me as to both. We have however, agreed to exchange sometimes; but this cannot last long. The things that threaten us make haste. Only let us be found among the mourners in Zion; comforts will come, in this or the better world. I just now heard from Mr. Porter out of Sussex, who inquires after thee.

In the Lord, farewell:

To thee and thine, from me and mine,
with most entire and undecaying affection.

J. H.”

A Letter to a Person of Honour, partly representing the rise of occasional Conformity, and partly the sense of the present Non-conformists, about their yet continuing Differences from the Established Church.

MY LORD,

IT is well known to such as have understood the state of religion in this kingdom, since the beginning of the Reformation, that there have been very different sentiments about the degrees of that Reformation itself. Some have judged the church with us so insufficiently reformed, as to want as yet the very being of a true Christian church; and wherewith they therefore thought it unlawful to have any communion at all. Of whom many thereupon in the

several successive reigns, withdrew themselves into foreign parts, for the enjoyment of the liberty of such worship, as they judged more agreeable to the word of God.

There have been also no inconsiderable numbers, in former and later times, that though not intirely satisfied with our Reformation, were less severe in their judgment concerning the constitution and practice of the established Church; that is, did not judge its reformation so defective, that they might not communicate at all with it, nor so compleat, but that they ought to covet a communion more strictly agreeable to the Holy Scripture; and accordingly apprehended themselves to lie under a twofold obligation of conscience in reference hereto.

1. Not by any means, totally to cut themselves off on the one hand from the communion of the established Church, in which they found greater and more momentous things to be approved of and embraced with great reverence and complacency, (viz. all the true noble essentials of Christian religion, not subverted as among the Romanists by any contrary doctrines or practices) than could be pretended to remain the matter of their disapprobation and dislike.

2. Nor on the other hand, to decline other communion, which to the judgment of their conscience appeared, in some considerable circumstances, more agreeable to the Christian rule, and to their experience more conducing to their spiritual advantage and edification.

Which latter judgment of theirs (whether itself justifiable or no, we are not now considering) hath been with many so fixed and inflexible, that in several successive reigns, great numbers of such persons, who we had no reason to apprehend had any thought totally to abandon the established Church, yet thought themselves obliged besides, to seek and procure opportunities for such other communions, even with extreme peril not only to their estates and liberties, but to their very lives themselves.

They could not therefore but think both these sorts of communions lawful, viz. whereto they might adjoin, but not confine themselves.

And though to that former sort of communion, there hath for many years by past, been superadded the accidental consideration of a place or office attainable hereby, no man can allow himself to think, that what he before counted lawful, is by this supervening consideration become unlawful: especially if the office were such, as was in no manner of way to be an emolument, but rather an occasion of greater expence to the undertaker of it; that is, only enabled him to serve God, the government and his country, being regularly called hereto, in the condition of a justice of peace, or otherwise. In which capacity it is notorious that divers persons of eminent note of this persuasion, (and some in higher stations) have within the space of forty years past and upwards, been serviceable to the public in divers parts of the nation.

It is not indeed to be thought that the judgment and practice of

such men, can be throughout approved by our reverend fathers and brethren of the established Church, as neither can we pretend it to be so universally by ourselves. But we are remote from any the least suspicion, that persons of so excellent worth and Christian temper, as now preside over the established Church, can suffer themselves to judge or censure men of this sentiment, as being for this single reason, men of hypocritical and insincere minds; but that they will rather think it possible their understandings may be imposed upon, so as this may be the judgment, in the whole, of a sincere though misinformed conscience.

For when they apprehend this church, having all the essential parts of Christian religion, has not, by adding some much disputed things, that are not pretended to be any parts thereof (but that are become as necessary to communion with it, as any the most essential part) thereby unchurched itself, but that they may hold communion with it; yet they do not see that they ought to appropriate their communion to it, so as to refuse all other communion, where the same essentials of Christian religion are to be found, without those additions which really belong not to it; they are apt to think such sentiments of theirs, not to be altogether destitute of some plausible ground.

However, among those that are not intirely in every punctilio of this Church, it hath not any so firm friends, or that are so nearly united in judgment and affection with it, as men of this sentiment.

We for our parts (who because in some things we conform not, are called Nonconformists, whereas no man conforms in every thing) are not allowed to be counted members of this Church, by those that take denominations, not from the intimate essentials of things (as sameness of doctrine, and the institutions of Christian worship) but from loose and very separable accidents: yet thanks be to God, we are not so stupid, as not to apprehend we are under stricter and much more sacred obligations, than can be carried under the sound of a name, to adhere to those our Reverend Fathers and brethren of the established Church, who are most united among themselves, in duty to God and our Redeemer, in loyalty to our Sovereign, and in fidelity to the Protestant religion, as with whom in this dubious state of things we are to run all hazards, and to live and die together. Whether they can have the same assurance, both from interest and inclination of mind, concerning all that are of the same external denomination with themselves, they need not us to advise with.

We have our yet depending lesser differences, about which we have (notwithstanding whatsoever provocation) been generally, and for the most part silent; and see not in reference to them, what can farther remain, than that we for our part, do consider, that all minds are not turned the same way; that such from whom we dissent, no farther differ from us, than we do from them; and we are therefore no more to wonder at them, than ourselves.

And we cannot disallow ourselves to hope, that our Reverend

Fathers and brethren will conceive of us as humbly dissenting from them, without diminution of that great reverence which their real worth claims from us, and without arrogating anything unduly to ourselves on that account. For though we cannot avoid thinking we are in the right, in those particular things wherein we differ, yet at the same time we know ourselves to be far excelled by them, in much greater and more important things.

My honoured Lord,
 Your Lordship's
 Most obedient humble Servant,
 J. H.

[But after this, some gave themselves a strange liberty of inveighing against this practice of *occasional Communion*, as irrational, unchristian, and altogether unaccountable, and self-condemning. And it at length became a question, whether they that could at all and in any case worship God with the Church of England, should not be obliged to do it for a constancy, or else be incapacitated from holding any place either of profit or trust? And when things were come to this pass, and the Occasional Bill was first brought into the House of Commons in 1702, Mr. Howe committed his thoughts to writing in the following paper:]

A CASE.

Two sorts of Christian Assemblies are wont to meet, severally, for the worship of God, which both hold all the same articles of doctrine taught by Christ or his apostles; and use the same institutions of worship appointed by them: only they differ in this, that the one sort use also some rites, not so appointed, which the other use not.

Two Gentlemen, Sir T—— and Sir J——, are of equal estates: but Sir T—— lives not so regularly, more seldom comes to the worship of God in any Christian assembly; yet when he doth, resorts only to one of the former sort.

Sir J—— is a sober virtuous person, of approved piety, prudence, justice, fortitude, and who publickly worships God, sometimes in the one sort of assembly, and sometimes in the other.

The question is not, whether some lewd and vicious persons may not frequent both sorts of assemblies; nor whether some sober and pious persons may not frequent those of the former sort only.

But whether Sir J—— ought to be rendered incapable of serving the Government, (to which he hath constantly expressed himself well affected) in any station civil or military, for this single reason, because he sometimes worships God in assemblies of the latter sort; (whether it be his infelicity, ill-humour, or mistake whereof yet he is not convinced:) while Sir T—— (who is as little convinced of his ill life) is left capable? At least if the one be incapable, should not both?

But if the question be determined the other way, monstrous! How will that determination of an English Parliament stand in the

annals of future time! How will wiser posterity blush they had such progenitors! For can it be supposed, a nation will be always drunk? Or if ever it be sober, will it not be amazed, there ever was a time, when a few ceremonies, of which the best thing that ever was said was that they were indifferent, have enough in them to outweigh all religion, all morality, all intellectual endowments, natural or acquired, which may happen in some instances to be on the wrong side, (as it must now be reckoned) when on the other, is the height of profaneness, and scorn at religion; the depth of debauchery and brutality, with half a wit, hanging between sense and nonsense: only to cast the balance the more creditable way, there is the skill to make a leg, to dance to a fiddle, nimbly to change gestures, and give a loud response, which contain the answer for the villanies of an impure life!

If those little pieces of church-modishness have so much in them of real value, in all these are they not well enough paid by the whole church-revenues of England, without stigmatizing every body that so much admires them not?

And while divers of real worth live upon charity, some with difficulty getting, others (educated to modesty) with greater difficulty begging their bread!

But do those who are not contented to ingross all the legal emoluments, think there is no God in heaven, that knows their large promises, at the beginning of this Revolution, of great abatements in their church constitution; when now, without abating one hair, they must have all conformed to it in every punctilio, or be (as much as in them is) made infamous, and the scorn of the nation!

But I draw a veil, and am not for dilating upon this matter.

I shall only add, that as the Dissenters have been considerable losers, as to their interest as a party, by this *occasional conformity*, and might easily from the first foresee that they should be so, they appear to me to have acted a very generous part in practising and defending it: and yet they have met with most unbrotherly treatment on this account from those to whom they were willing to approach as near as they could, while some have run them down upon this account as perfect hypocrites; and others have represented this *occasional conformity* as no commendable charity, as long as they did not come up to constant conformity, and yield the cause to them entirely. If this is doing as men would be done unto, it is very strange! Posterity it is to be hoped will judge more favourably. However after such treatment, so oft repeated, and so long continued, if the Dissenters should for the future be more sparing in this way of shewing their charity, which they to whom they would express it, seem so resolved to misinterpret, I think it cannot be very surprising: and if it should be attended with any ill consequences, I doubt these Gentlemen will find they must lie at their doors at last.

Mr. Howe's Introduction or Preface to his last Will and Testament.

I, JOHN HOWE, minister of the Gospel of Christ, in serious consideration (though through God's mercy in present health) of my frail and mortal state, and cheerfully waiting (blessed be God) for a seasonable unfeared dissolution of this my earthly tabernacle, and translation of the inhabiting spirit, into the merciful hands of the great God, Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, whom I have taken to be my God, in and with his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, who is also over all God blessed for ever, and my dear and glorious Redeemer and Lord: With and by the Holy Spirit of grace, my light, life, and joy; relying entirely and alone, upon the free and rich mercy of the Father, vouchsafed on the account of the most invaluable sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Son, applied unto me according to the Gospel covenant by the Spirit, for the pardon of the many seriously repented sins of a very faulty fruitless life, and the acceptance of my person, with my sincere, though weak desires and endeavours to do him service in this world, especially as my calling, wherewith he graciously honoured me, did more particularly require, in promoting the welfare and salvation of the precious souls of men.



ERRATA.

- Vol. ii. p. 30. l. 3. (head of Chap. II.) *for correct read corrupt.*
 — iii. p. 12. l. ult. *for given being had read had given being.*
 — vii. p. 551. *dele the last line.*