

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY
AND
THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

APRIL, 1831.

ART. I.—REVIEW OF DR. MATTHEWS' LETTERS.

The Divine Purpose displayed in the works of Providence and Grace; in a series of Twenty Letters, addressed to an Inquiring Mind. By Rev. John Matthews, D. D., [late of] Shepherdstown, Virginia. Lexington, Ky.
Printed and published by Thomas T. Skillman, 1828. pp. 221.

WE are so much accustomed to receive our literature from Great Britain, that we are prone to overlook valuable compositions produced in our own country; especially, if they proceed from a section of the United States not famous for book making; or from the pen of an author but little known. Notwithstanding the national pride, in relation to American literature, so disgustingly displayed in some of our popular journals, it is a fact, that our booksellers are in the habit of reprinting British works, on particular subjects, much inferior to writings of home-production, which lie in utter neglect. Perhaps the Eastern States ought to be considered as an exception from this remark; where, from the first settlement of the country, authorship has not been uncommon; and where almost every preacher, at some time in his life, has the pleasure of seeing something of his own composition, in print. Still it may be observed, that

maintain. For if God formed man with the full certainty of all his sins, then the purpose to create such a being with a foresight of such acts, is virtually decreeing the future existence of such acts. If, when the purpose was formed to create Adam, his fall was distinctly foreseen, then the determination to give Adam existence, involved the purpose that such an act as his transgression should also exist. Not that God intended or needed to do any thing to cause man to sin; this we reject, as much as the Arminian: but he resolved to *permit* this event. And here is the true ground of distinction between effective and permissive decrees; in the execution of the first, God acts himself; but in the execution of the last, other agents act, and act freely, and without constraint.

It does appear, therefore, that there is a ground on which the sober Arminian and moderate Calvinist can meet; and on which, even their views of the divine decrees can be made to harmonize.

ART. II.—WORKS OF JOHN HOWE.

The Works of the Reverend and learned John Howe, M. A. sometime fellow of Magdalen College, Oxon. London.

A STRIKING evidence of the prevalence of evangelical piety in England, is found in the great currency which is given, at the present time, to the works of the old Non-conformists. The massy volumes which were prized in the seventeenth century had become repulsive to modern readers, and the great productions of these excellent men needed a garb more consonant with the pampered taste of the age. The enterprise, therefore, is highly laudable which has presented us with the labours of Owen and Baxter and Bates and Flavel and Charnock and Howe, in an elegant and convenient form, and divested of that uncouth and peculiar orthography which characterizes the ancient folios.

The writings of the last mentioned theologian have been less perused by the majority of Christian readers than many other contemporary works; not so much from any want of interest in the subjects which he treats, still less from any defect in his matter or style, as from the more subtle and philosophical nature of his reasoning. The principal performances of Howe must ever continue to be most prized by men accustomed to

patient reflection, and by such he will be considered inferior to none of his age. We do not find in him that laboured and prolonged discussion of the doctrines of grace, and those searching investigations of Christian experience, which abound in Owen; nor the pungent, convictive, and almost irresistible appeals to the conscience which appear in Baxter; nor the silver current of figured language and brilliant thought of Bates; nor the melting, persuasive, descriptive eloquence of Flavel—at once plain and florid; but there is in Howe a majestic strength, a grave and stately bearing of mind, which looks down on the quaint antitheses and foreign images of his contemporaries; a philosophical view of all subjects, which reminds us of the ancient converts from Platonism; a power of demonstration, adroitness of invention, ingenuity of ratiocination, and native, easy grace of eloquence which are found in a similar, but inferior form in the discourses of More and Barrow.

John Howe was born May 17, 1630, at Loughborough, in the county of Leicester. His father was an exemplary clergyman of the Church of England, who was driven from his native country in consequence of the disposition which he manifested to befriend the Puritans. His academical education was received at Christ College, Cambridge, where he enjoyed the friendship and instructions of the celebrated Cudworth and Henry More. This intimacy is supposed to account for the strong tincture of refined Platonism which appears in his later writings. After having taken his bachelor's degree at Cambridge, he removed to Oxford and was admitted to the same at that seat of learning, Jan. 18, 1649. When, in 1652, he took his second degree in the arts, he is said to have gone through a course of philosophy, become acquainted with ancient ethics, scholastic theology, and the systems of the Reformers, and above all to have applied to the Holy Scriptures themselves, and thence deduced a system which no one ever ventured to say was founded on any human authority.

Mr. Howe was ordained, soon after, by Mr. Charles Herle, at Winwicke in Lancashire. "He would often say," says Dr. Calamy "that this Mr. Herle was a primitive Bishop; and the assistants in his several chapels were his clergy; and they joining in laying on hands upon him, he thought few in modern times had so truly primitive an ordination as he." He became the pastor of a church in Great Torrington, Devonshire, as the successor of the pious and noted independent Lewis Stukely. The ordinary labours of a minister in those days

were such as would alarm both pastor and people at present, however we may be disposed to glory in our increase of zeal. The statement of one of his biographers, in speaking of the manner in which he was accustomed to observe their very frequent fasts, will illustrate this remark. "Mr. Howe told me, it was upon those occasions his common way to begin about nine in the morning, with a prayer, for about a quarter of an hour, in which he begged a blessing upon the work of the day; he afterwards read and expounded a chapter or psalm, in which he spent about three quarters; then prayed for about an hour, preached for another hour, and prayed for about half an hour. After this, he retired, and took some little refreshment for about a quarter of an hour or more, (the people singing all the while) and then came again into the pulpit, and prayed for another hour, and gave them another sermon of about an hour's length; and so concluded the service of the day, at about four of the clock in the evening, with about half an hour or more in prayer."

At a certain time after the year 1654, a remarkable change took place in the circumstances of our author. Being detained by business in the metropolis, he was on the Lord's day sitting among the congregation at Whitehall Chapel, when the eagle eye of Oliver Cromwell alighted on him; and he received a message immediately after service, summoning him to an interview with this extraordinary man. Cromwell requested him to preach on the next Lord's day, and overruling the various and sincere excuses of Mr. Howe, actually wrote a letter to the people of his charge, accounting for their pastor's absence. The result of the whole was, that he was constrained to become the domestic chaplain of the Protector, in which office there is every reason to believe that he was faithful and conscientious. A remark of Cromwell is recorded, which shows at once the readiness of Mr. Howe to assist those who were in distress, and his exemption from all designs of self-aggrandizement. "You have obtained many favours for others," said the Lord Protector, "but I wonder when the time is to come, that you will move for any thing for yourself, or your family." The faithfulness of the Christian preacher was, however, not altogether promotive of his advancement as a court favourite. On a certain occasion he boldly inveighed against a doctrine which Cromwell maintained, with regard to special impressions on the mind that certain particular requests in prayer will be answered—declaring this "particular

faith, in prayer" to be unfounded in Scripture—and from that moment he ceased to be noticed with any cordiality.

Upon the restoration of the Stuarts, he returned to his former charge at Torrington; whence he was in 1660 summoned to answer to a charge of seditious and treasonable preaching. From this difficulty, he was, however, speedily delivered.

The year 1662 was signalized by the *Act of Uniformity*, which took place August 24. On that day Mr. Howe, with a decision which was characteristic, took a solemn and affectionate leave of his charge. Although one of the most liberal of the Non-conformists, and by no means disposed to pare to the quick the ceremonial excrescences of the establishment, he found the terms of conformity altogether intolerable. At the same time many of his brethren, who had been accustomed to admit far less latitude in externals, bowed their necks to the yoke. No man ever acted more thoroughly upon the golden maxim of Augustine, *In necessariis unitas, in non necessariis libertas, in omnibus charitas*. His language upon this subject is always the same. He was for the union and communion of all visible Christians; and for making nothing necessary to Christian communion, but what Christ hath made necessary, or what is indeed necessary to one's being a Christian. And he maintained "that such a union must be effected, not by mere human endeavour, but by an Almighty Spirit poured forth, which" he adds "after we have suffered a while shall *καταρτισαι*, put us into joint, and make every joint know its place in the body, 1 Pet. 5, 10. Shall conquer private interests and inclinations, and overawe men's hearts, by the authority of the divine law, which now, how express soever it is, little availeth against such prepossessions. Till then, Christianity will be among us a languishing, withering thing. When the season comes of such an effusion of the Spirit from on high, there will be no parties. And amidst the wilderness desolation that cannot but be, till that season comes, it matters little, and signifies to me scarce one straw what party of us is uppermost."

This pious and laborious man could not entirely neglect the gift that was in him, and accordingly preached at the houses of his friends in Devonshire, and was soon followed by a citation from the bishop's court. He pursued a manly course, and placed himself in the way of the prelate, who received him with much courtesy, as an old acquaintnace, and pressed him to state his objections to conformity. Mr. Howe, though

no less a lover of peace than Archbishop Leighton, was more a lover of order, and could not, like the latter, submit to the indignity of abdicating his own ministerial character. He stated to the bishop that he could never consent to re-ordination. "Why, pray, sir," said the bishop to him, "what hurt is there in being twice ordained?" "Hurt! my lord," replied Mr. Howe, "the thought is shocking; it hurts my understanding; it is an absurdity. For nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure," said he, "I am a minister of Christ, and am ready to debate that matter with your Lordship, if you please, and I can't begin again to be a minister." His Lordship knew his man, and was discreetly pleased to drop the subject.

In 1665 Mr. Howe, Dr. Bates, and others, incurred the heavy censure of the more rigid non-conformists, by taking the oath that it was not lawful, upon any pretence whatever, to take arms against the king. His first publication was the sermon entitled, "On Man's creation in a holy, but mutable state." In 1671 he accepted an invitation to Ireland, where he became the chaplain of lord Massarene, in the parish of Antrim. Here he published a discourse which, for originality of thought and ingenuity of reasoning, is inferior to no production of his pen—"The vanity of man as mortal." The proposition which the preacher unfolds is this, "that the short time of man on earth, limited by a certain unavoidable death, carries with it that aspect and appearance, as if God had made all men in vain; if we consider it by itself, without respect to a future state." Ps. lxxxix. 47, 48. It would be difficult to select from the relics of that age, a more noble specimen of exalted pulpit eloquence. The author here leads us into depths where all is new and awakening, and the veins of rich and brilliant thought which are laid open, reveal masses of weighty truth, which the reader is ready to imagine have lain hitherto unexplored. Howe was possessed of a satiric faculty, which sometimes enlivens his most elaborate discussions. The poignant remarks which follow, may serve as a specimen of the manner in which he castigates the irreligion and debauchery of the age.

"Can we, in sober reason, think we were made only for such ends as the most only pursue?—Would not men be ashamed to profess such a belief, or to have it written in their foreheads, these are the only ends they are capable of? Then might one read—such a man born to put others in mind of his predecessor's name, and only lest such a family should want an heir. Such a one to consume such an estate, and de-

vour the provenue of so many farms and manors. Such a one to fill so many bags and coffers to sustain the riot of him that succeeds. Some created to see and make sport, to run after hawks and dogs, or spend the time which their weariness redeems from converse with brutes, in making themselves such, by drinking away the little wit and reason they have left; mixing with this genteel exercise, their impure and scurrilous drolleries, that they may befriend one another with the kind occasion of proving themselves to be yet of the human race, by this only demonstration remaining to them, that they can *laugh*.—Others made to blaspheme their Maker, to rend the sacred name of God, and make proof of their high valour and the gallantry of their brave spirits, by bidding a defiance to heaven, and proclaiming their heroic contempt of the Deity and of all religion—the ancient religious sentiments of all former ages, are dreams and follies to their admired new light. Their wise and rare discoveries, that they and all things came by chance; that this world hath no owner or Lord, are reason enough with them, to mock at the eternal Being, and attempt to jeer religion out of the world, and all other men out of their reason and wits—as they have themselves.”

But how strikingly does the preacher change his key, when he speaks of the indifference with which the man of God looks upon the transient trifles of this world! The passage which we subjoin, it would be difficult to surpass by any thing of its kind:

“He hath still the image before his eye, of this world vanishing and passing away; of the other, with the everlasting affairs and concerns of it, even now ready to take place, and fill up all the stage. He can represent to himself the vision—not from a melancholic fancy or crazed brain, but a rational faith, and a sober, well-instructed mind—of the world dissolving, monarchies and kingdoms breaking up, thrones tumbling, crowns and sceptres lying as neglected things. He hath a telescope through which he can behold the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge; the solemn state of his majestic person; the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue; the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal king; the swift flight of his royal guards, sent forth to the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings. The universal, silent attention of all to that loud-sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds from every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and tending upwards, to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host; the judgment set; the books opened; the frightful amazed looks of surprised wretches, the equal administration of the final judgment; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; the heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up.”

The treatise “Of delighting in God,” which is so well known, and has been so frequently published in a separate form, appeared first in the year 1674. In the year following he returned to London, and took charge of a congregation there. It was at this period that he gave to the world the first

part of his great work, *The Living Temple*, in which he brings all the resources of his strong and fruitful mind to bear upon the controversy with the atheists of the Epicurean school.

In the year 1680, Mr. Howe was drawn into a controversy with the celebrated Stillingfleet, who, like many other attendants on courts, found his former opinions concerning dissent, not a little inconvenient, and amidst the glare of noble society received a singular illumination on the point of non-conformity. During the excitement produced by the expectation of a Popish succession to the throne, he preached and published a sermon entitled, *The Mischiefs of Separation*; in which, notwithstanding his well known arguments on the other side, he represented the dissenters as schismatical, seditious, and dangerous men. This discourse was answered by Owen, Baxter, and Howe; and the letter of the last of these was so remarkable for its mildness, that the Dean himself, acknowledged in a subsequent publication, that "he discourses gravely and piously, without bitterness or rancour, or any sharp reflections, and sometimes with a great mixture of kindness towards him, for which and his prayers, he heartily thanks him." Yet there is no want of boldness in the argument, nor the slightest disposition manifested by the author to make undue concessions. Dr. Stillingfleet, in order to forestall any reproaches on account of what he had formerly written, acknowledges that there were some things in his *Irenicum* which evinced youthful inexperience. To which Howe replies—"this retractation, however, cannot make that which was true before become false. The reason of things is sullen, and will not alter to serve men's conveniences:"—"let him answer his own reasons. To say the truth, the gravity and seriousness wherewith that book was written, appears to have so little of the *youth* in it, in comparison of the jocular and sportful humour of some of his latter writings, when he hath been discussing the most weighty and important cases of conscience, that it seems as a prodigy in nature, and that he began his life at the wrong end; that he was old in his youth, and reserved his puerility to his more grown age."

For a number of years subsequent to this, the persecution of the non-conformists was most violent, and Mr. Howe, who tenderly felt all that regarded them, as his own personal interest, used his pen and his influence to save them from internal animosities, and the virulent attacks of their enemies. A number of excellent sermons comprised in these volumes were

published during this period. Strange as it might appear to an unprejudiced lover of religious freedom, there are many in our own land, who accuse the dissenters of unprovoked, and therefore, schismatical separation from the Church of England. It is hard to conceive by what means intelligent men can so blind their eyes to the facts in which all histories of those times concur. True, they went out from a Church which desired them to remain,—and this is the sum of the argument against them: but the conditions upon which they might have adhered to the hierarchy were such as were intolerable to their consciences. They went out indeed; but it was as the Israelites went out from Egypt. Among other tyrannical acts, they were prosecuted, not only for attending their own *conventicles*, but for absenting themselves from the sacrament of the Church. A letter written in the year 1684, by Howe, to the Bishop of Lincoln, contains a warm and triumphant defence of his brethren. Among other things he says:

“I 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 intellects, as not to be able to understand all the punctilios upon which a right judgment of such a matter may depend? 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 sauce 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?—I cannot but be well persuaded, not only of the mere sincerity, but eminent sanctity of divers, who would sooner die at a stake, than I or any man can prevail on them 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 which 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 mine own appointments, or which I was directed to urge and impose upon them?”

As the prospects of the Dissenters became daily more and more gloomy, Mr. Howe accepted, in 1685, an invitation from lord Wharton to accompany him in his travels upon the continent. After a tour of some months, he took up his residence at Utrecht, where he regularly preached to the English refugees, and communicated theological instruction to a number of youth. Upon King James' Declaration for liberty of Conscience, in 1687, he was recalled to his former charge in London, where, in 1688, had the satisfaction of addressing William III. in the name of the Dissenting ministers; and in 1689 the still higher satisfaction of witnessing the successful attempt to free the non-conformists, by the "Act for exempting their Majestys' Protestant subjects, dissenting from the Church of England from the penalties of certain laws." Still he was not satisfied that all evils would be done away by the mere enactment of laws for toleration. On the one hand, the dissenters in their exultation at the results of the "glorious revolution," were naturally in danger of acquiring an arrogant and even intolerant spirit. On the other, the High Church party, of which Sacheverel was in some sort the organ, greatly regretted the grant of immunities to the non-conformists, and alleged "that this toleration granted by law, was unreasonable, and the allowance of it unwarrantable." In order to promote harmony and peace, Mr. Howe issued from the press a letter of "Humble requests both to Conformists and Dissenters, touching their temper and behaviour towards each other, upon the lately passed indulgence;" in which, with truly Christian meekness and in the spirit of a peace-maker, he earnestly deprecates all magnifying of their differences, harsh and uncharitable judgments, pharisaical arrogance and controversial acrimony.

No attempts, however, of the friends of peace could repress that overheated zeal which had been too long fostered among the dissenters; and the very means used for uniting the various parties, proved in the end the occasion of discord. One of the most desirable changes was, that the Congregationalists and the Presbyterians might drop their disputes, and coalesce upon that wide field of doctrine which they occupied in common. To further a pacification of this kind, *Heads of Agreement* were drawn up, and extensively adopted; and, with every indication of harmony, the united brethren exchanged professions of good-will, and joined weekly in religious services. This took place in the year 1691. Scarcely, however, had these tokens of reconciliation been manifested, when a painful

separation took place, upon grounds chiefly doctrinal; and their joint assemblies were dissolved. Mutual charges were heard, of Antinomianism on the one hand, and Arminianism on the other, and the gentle voice of peace was drowned amidst the clamours of vehement debate. The lesson which is taught by such ruptures, is as plain as it is important, and may be enforced by an extract from the life of our Author:

“Several papers were hereupon drawn up and subscribed, in order to an accommodation. There was a first, a second, and a third paper of this sort; and these very papers created new altercations and debates, that were carried on with no small heat and pettishness; and a number that stood by, could hardly tell what it was they contended about. Several new creeds were framed, and still objected against by some or other, either as too large or too strait; too full or too empty. The world was wearied out with pamphlets and creed-making, and the Bishop of Worcester and Dr. Edwards were appealed to, and gave their judgment; and yet the jealousies that were on foot were so strong, that they did not of a long time abate or decrease.”

An anecdote is quoted from Stillingfleet, which is applicable, not only to this controversy, but to many which have been agitated in the Reformed Church. “There is,” says he, “a remarkable story in the History of the Synod of Dort, which may not be improper in this place. There were, in one of the universities of that country, two professors, both very warm and extremely zealous for that which they accounted the most orthodox doctrine; but it happened that one of them accused the other before the synod, for no fewer than fifty errors, tending to Socinianism, Pelagianism, &c.; and wonderful heat there was on both sides. At last, a committee was appointed to examine this dreadful charge; and, upon examination, they found no ground for the charge of Socinianism, or any other heresy, but only that he had affected too much the use of ambiguous and scholastic terms, and endeavoured to bring in the way of the schoolmen in his writings; and, therefore, the synod dismissed him with that prudent advice, ‘rather to keep to the language of the Scripture, than of the schools.’”

It was at this juncture, that Mr. Howe published two discourses on the “Carnality of Christian Contention.” In the preface to these discourses, no less than in the sermons themselves, there is displayed that body of pacific principles, upon which the whole conduct of this eminent servant of God was a

living commentary. At this day, when the attempt is made, in various parts of our land, to erect terms of communion unknown in any previous age, and to exclude from the pale of the visible church, all who do not adopt pledges or resolutions which are deduced from the Scripture only by tedious inference, it may not be inappropriate to quote the following pointed remarks from these discourses:

“Christianity itself should measure the communion of Christians, as such; and visible Christianity their visible communion. Christianity must be estimated principally by its end; which refers not to this world, but to the world to come, and a happy state there.—If any society of men, professedly Christian, make limits of their communion, admitting those that Christ excludes, and excluding those whom he would admit, they break Christ’s constitution, and set up another.—If they be little things only that we add; the less they are, the greater the sin, to make them necessary, and hang so great things upon them; break the church’s peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new gospel, new terms of life and death, and a new way to heaven! And is in effect to say, if you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be Christians; you shall have no Christian ordinances, no Christian worship.”

All exhortations, however, prove fruitless with those who are led away by a zeal which attains its height prior to consideration, and which cannot be repressed by any subsequent representations. At such a time, those who plead for moderation and peace, are stigmatized as lukewarm and suspicious brethren, who have not yet arrived at sufficient warmth of temperature to be capable of just impressions. The attempts at visible union ceased with the year 1694, and some time elapsed before any thing like cordiality was restored.

About this time, Mr. Howe published a treatise, entitled, “A Calm and Sober Inquiry concerning the possibility of a Trinity in the Godhead,” which, with the pamphlets to which it gave rise, occasioned great excitement and warm disputation. Of this bold and intricate treatise, very different estimates have been formed. Here, as on other points, the author with his characteristic independence, forsook the beaten track, advanced original speculations, and used terms which seemed to some sober believers to be unguarded and dangerous. Yet many were convinced that while the difficulties of this mysterious subject were not relieved by his philosophical researches, he was still consistent with himself and with the catholic doctrine. Mr. Howe is not the first instance of a man remarkable for charity and liberality, who has, nevertheless, been often drawn into controversy. Indeed, it was this very temper which

generally led him to take the field. At the commencement of the eighteenth century, it 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?" The pen of Howe was, therefore, demanded in the defence of the dissenters against their oppressors, and likewise of the occasional conformists against the attacks of their more unrelenting brethren. This occasional communion, however, is generally thought to have injured the cause of dissent, and was undoubtedly misinterpreted in a gross manner by the party in power; although it had its origin in a spirit of concession and charity.

During the remaining years of Mr. Howe's life, his principal publications were sermons, some of which were commemorative of his pious brethren departed. Such are his funeral discourses on occasion of the death of Dr. Bates, Mr. Baxter, and Mr. Mead. One great labour of his life was completed in the year 1702, when he published the second part of the *Living Temple*; a work no less remarkable for its profundity and force of argument, than astonishing as the production of a septuagenarian. And we take this occasion to offer a few remarks upon these volumes, containing as they do the sober and well digested conclusions of many thoughtful years.

The *Living Temple* is intended as an expanded view of the precious truth, that the good man is the temple of God; and this is, in the first part, defended against the objections of Epicurean atheists. The two great truths involved in this discussion, are, first, that there is a God; and secondly, "that he is conversable with men." And in treating of these the author expatiates over the whole domain of natural religion, establishing very much in the same manner as Dr. Henry More, the being and attributes of God, from the light of nature. The argument is extended through a number of chapters, and we can only give such an outline as may furnish materials for a comparison with those of other celebrated theologians.

1. Something there is which has been from all eternity, necessarily, and of itself, without dependence upon any thing else. Otherwise nothing could ever have come into being. That something has ever been of itself is plain; for if we say that all things that are, or ever have been, without exception, were from another, we contradict ourselves; since *besides* all things that are, or ever have been, there is not another from

whom they could be. Now, that which exists eternally of itself, exists *necessarily*; is of so excellent a nature, as that it could never be out of being. It depends upon no one's choice or power, whether that which is of itself shall be, or shall not be. 2. Whatsoever is not necessarily and of itself, is from and by that which is necessarily and of itself, as the first Author and Cause thereof. 3. Neither this visible world, nor any thing of it, is necessarily or of itself, without depending upon any thing else; and was therefore created, and made by some more excellent Being, that was so, and is quite distinct and diverse from it. In proof of this, it is observed, that whatever exists necessarily and independently must have *at once* all that can be predicated of it; for whence can any addition or change supervene? Now this world is constantly changing and imperfect, and, therefore, had a Maker distinct from itself. It is self-evident that independent and necessary Being is more excellent than all others, and, therefore, this visible world has a Maker more excellent than itself. 4. The things which are plainly not independent but created or deduced, manifest the excellence of their Maker's power, wisdom, and goodness: The greatness of his works shows his mighty power; their nature, exactness, and order, his admirable wisdom; and his own self-sufficiency, and independency on the things made, show his rich and vast goodness in making them.

Such is a faint outline of the principal argument, but to acquire any adequate notion of the close and logical reasoning, the varied illustration, and the bold originality of the author, the reader must be referred to the work itself. Having arrived at the idea of a necessary and eternal Being, it is shown at great length and with singular cogency, that we cannot but attribute to him all perfection. "When we turn our inquiry and contemplation more entirely upon the cause, and bethink ourselves, how came he to exist and be what he is,—finding this cannot be refunded upon any *superior cause*, and our utmost inquiry can admit of no other result but this, that *he is of himself what he is*,—we will surely say then, *he is all in all*. And that perfection, which before we judged vastly great, we will now conclude altogether absolute, and such beyond which no greater can be thought."

The second part of the *Living Temple*, which was published nearly forty years after the first, commences with a laborious and very ingenious refutation of Spinozism, in which the Pantheism of that remarkable man is examined, article by article,

and shown to be self-contradictory, unintelligible, and absurd. The author then proceeds to what may be considered the most important, as it is certainly the most interesting part of his subject, viz. to prove the possibility of a friendly intercourse between God and man; to show that this intercourse, once begun, has been interrupted, and that man has been justly forsaken; and to explain the glorious method of restitution through a Redeemer.

The following description of the human temple of God, in its present ruined state, may be taken as a specimen of the author's happy style, and as a remarkable instance of vigour in a writer of three score years and ten.

“The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front, (yet extant,) this doleful inscription: **HERE GOD ONCE DWELT.** Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to show the Divine Presence did sometime reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned; the light and love are now vanished; which did the one shine, with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour. The golden candlestick is displaced, and thrown away as a useless thing, to make room for the throne of the prince of darkness. The sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous hellish vapour; and here is *instead of a sweet savour, a stench.*—What have not the enemies *done wickedly in the sanctuary!* *How have they broken down the carved work thereof,* and that too *with axes and hammers;* the noise whereof was not to be heard in building, much less in demolishing this sacred frame. Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture, which once adorned the palace of that great King, the relics of common notions, the lively prints of some undefaced truth, the fair ideas of things, the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold! with what accuracy the broken pieces show these to have been engraven by the finger of God; and how they lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish. There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels. And if any, with great toil and labour, apply themselves to draw out here one piece, and there another, and set them together, they serve rather to show how exquisite the Divine workmanship was in the original composition, than for present use, to the excellent purpose for which the whole was first designed. You come, amidst all this confusion, as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery; and all lying neglected and useless amongst heaps of dirt. He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect, and doth but say to you, **BEHOLD THE DESOLATION,** all things rude and waste. So that, should there be any pretence to the Divine Presence, it might be said, *If God be here, why is it thus?* The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state, in all respects, of this temple, too plainly show the great Inhabitant is gone.”

The departure of this aged servant of God was now approaching, and in the expectation of death, he exemplified what he had published as his last work "Christian patience in view of future blessedness." With every expression of joy in the hope of being taken to rest, he expired upon the second of April, 1705.

"In person," says his biographer, "he was very tall and exceedingly graceful. He had a good presence, and a piercing, but pleasant eye; and in his looks and carriage there was an indication of something truly great and venerable." Accustomed as he was to the society of the first men of his age, he was, although a Puritan, mild and courteous, "and never could be of the mind of those who reckon religion and piety inconsistent with good breeding." His deportment is represented as having been far removed from any thing like servility to those in power, or harshness to such as were his inferiors. That vivacity and wit of which his written works afford specimens, made his conversation universally agreeable, and at the same time afforded him frequent opportunities of conveying wholesome reproof. As an instance of this we may quote an anecdote, which, though after told, deserves to be repeated in this connexion. Being present on a certain occasion with a number of fashionable persons, he observed with pain, that one of the company, in expatiating upon the excellencies of Charles the First, mingled with his discourse many profane expressions. When Mr. Howe found an opportunity of speaking, he remarked to the gentleman, that he had omitted one very admirable trait of the prince whom he extolled; and upon being pressed to explain himself, he at length told him that it was this: that he was never heard to swear an oath in common conversation. The gentleman who had offended, seriously promised to avoid the sin in time to come.

The Rev. Mr. Spademan, who preached his funeral sermon, and who was familiarly acquainted with his character, and well fitted to estimate it, represents him as one "who had received from the Father of lights, so great a variety, both of natural and Christian perfections, that he was not only a shining light and ornament of his age, but an inviting example of universal goodness." He had received "an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness, and had peculiar advantages for understanding the oracles of God; a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the Scriptures; a rich treasure of human learning, particularly a

thorough knowledge of Pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason, which faculty he well understood to use in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mystery he was able to free from the objection of cavillers. He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of divine communications. And to these he added unwearied diligence, humility, and prayer, which was the delight and solace of his whole life."

Even from the slender account which we have given of his life, the reader will perceive that he was pacific and liberal in his feelings, and that he laboured for the peace as well as the purity of the Church. In this particular he has been well compared to the "moderate Reformer," Martin Bucer. The most bitter high churchmen acknowledged, that he was "a person of neat and polite parts, and moderate and calm in the smaller matters that were under debate between the Church and his party."* Most earnestly did he strive, throughout his whole life, to prevent the admission of any terms of communion which were not, as such, founded "in plain reason or express revelation."

As a preacher, it was generally granted that he stood in the first rank. He was master of a copious flow of language as well as thought, which exempted him from slavery to written notes; and a large proportion of his published discourses were committed to writing, not *before*, but *after* their delivery. As a writer, he is remarkably free from the attachment to vulgar and excessive comparisons, quaint aphorisms and epigrammatic turns, which blemished the great majority of the Puritan writers. The use which he makes of similitudes is very sparing, and then only when they are forced upon him; and his figures of this kind are strikingly apt and illustrative. This cultivated taste seems to have led him, not so much like Bates, to adorn his style with ornaments free from the reigning defects, as to avoid every thing of the kind. It is not a richly figured manner which suits the higher kinds of eloquence, and the reader of his works is not permitted to pause for the examination of sparkling beauties, but hurried onward by the majestic and accumulating torrent of irresistible argument. The more recondite parts of his writings require, sometimes, very patient and deliberate examination; and the use of long periods, with frequent parenthesis, give an air of awkwardness, which is

* *Wood. Athen. Oxon. II. 1014.*

at first repulsive, to many passages. Yet, in his more practical treatises, no man can be more plain or perspicuous. And in all his works, the thought will amply repay us for the attention which we may bestow.

The masculine vigour of style, the copiousness of argument without repetition, and the exalted piety which characterize these volumes, render them worthy of the perusal of every clergyman. Living as Howe did, at a time when great stress was laid upon the distinctive tenets of Calvinism, it is remarkable that his works contain very little discussion of these doctrines. He has been charged with defection from the truth upon these particular points; but as far as we are able to gather, there is no real divergence from the standards of the reformed Church. He was indeed accustomed to explain the truths of Scripture in a way which was all his own; to reject terms which he thought exceptionable, and to frame new ones; but his originality was far remote from that unholy spirit of speculation which would sacrifice truth, for the sake of striking out new paths, and would forsake every tried way, in order to assert a manly independence on prescribed forms.

These volumes contain a Christian library of rich instruction in practical and experimental religion. Feeling that important truth which is expressed in our formularies, "that truth is in order to goodness, and the great touchstone of truth its tendency to promote holiness,"—it would seem that Howe was never willing to take a merely speculative view of Christian doctrine. His most able and lucid expositions of contested truths are mingled with application to the heart; and leaving the debates of the schools, he often rises to tracts of heavenly contemplation; so that the influence upon the reader's affections bears a due proportion to his mental illumination. The treatises on *Self-dedication*, *Delighting in God*, and the *Blessedness of the Righteous*, are marked with a deep insight into the workings of the heart, and an elevation of true piety, which are characteristic of the age of Baxter, and Owen, and Flavel.

Again we say, it is a happy token for England and America, that the works of the Puritans are coming into favour. It is the height of folly to turn our backs upon all the Christian researches and improvements of those holy men. Our own age, rich as it is in sermons on special occasions, controversial pamphlets, essays on speculative theology, and defences of the outworks of Christianity, is barren in extended treatises which

enter into the minute particulars, and traverse the whole field of vital piety. To convince any impartial man of this, let him be invited to compare volume with volume in any great public library, of the books of the 17th and 19th centuries, respectively. Where we have a tract our fathers had a treatise; where we have an essay in twelves, they had a folio, upon practical and constitutional theology. It is common to attribute this to the *cacoethes scribendi* then prevalent, and the passion for ponderous tomes. We are told that the extent of these works is occasioned by repetition, tedious diffuseness, and unmeaning verbiage. Far from this—it owes its origin to the able and profound discussion of a thousand points, which are at this day left absolutely untouched. The private Christian—to give an instance in one department—is now left to struggle with his own temptations, and resolve, as he may, his own cases of conscience. In that day, eminent theologians spent years in digesting and elucidating the various points of casuistry which occurred or might occur during their ministry—witness a whole folio of Baxter, upon this single subject. We have, it is true, many able essays upon practical subjects, in an easy and popular style; which may be perused in a day, and which, as far as they go, are highly useful, by such writers as James, and Douglas, and Hall; but who can point to such books as Howe on the *Blessedness of the Righteous*, Baxter's *Saint's Rest*, Owen on *Spiritual Mindedness*, Flavel's *Fountain of Life*, and Bates on *Spiritual Perfection*?

If any are so grossly ignorant as to charge the great non-conformist divines with a want of learning, we can only raise our hands, and remand them to the study of Church history. We have no fear of contradiction when we say, that for acquaintance with classical antiquity, with the theology of preceding ages, including that which may be called patristical, and (new as it may be to some who have been taught to believe that the principles of interpretation have been revealed only in Germany) with the original languages of the Scripture—their leading men may rank with any whom the world has ever seen.

There is, at this day, a morbid dread of whatever is ancient in theology; as if each race of men was to receive some new inspiration with regard to divine truth. Because a path has been long trodden, it must *for that very reason* be forsaken; and if any man is so blinded by the dust of antiquity as to prefer the theology of the reformers, he is forthwith pitied as a slave of

authority, who has not sufficient ingenuity or daring to frame a creed for himself. Nay, the venerable persons of whom we have been speaking are set aside as men whose souls were fettered with prejudice, and who, destitute of all adventurous originality, tamely followed their predecessors. Such a conclusion as this betrays a strange misconception of the age of the Puritans. It was a period when the very watchword was *The Bible is the Religion of Protestants*: in which authority in matters of faith was indignantly cast off as a galling yoke, and trampled under foot, while independence of thought so far prevailed as in too many instances to result in the wildest excesses.

It was an age in which every layman was bold in the investigation and discussion of Scriptural doctrine, and in which scarcely two eminent theologians were found to symbolize upon all points. True, they did, in a remarkable manner, concur in the great, distinguishing tenets of our Church; but what does this evince? Not, surely, that those who framed our formularies slavishly cast themselves into a given mould; but that there must be some wonderful power in the arguments for a system which could thus unite so many of the most independent, learned, and pious men. And what, we would ask, could we expect the result to be, supposing that system to be demonstrably true? Are the evidences of truth so rare or so abstruse, that the very coincidence and harmony of men upon the presentation of them, furnish suspicion of want of reflection, or even of collusion? In opposition to all this, we avow, that the fact of such unanimity is to us, *ex facie*, the ground of a strong presumption in their favour: just as the concurrence of the Westminster Assembly of Divines (men, who, with a few trifling exceptions, had all received episcopal ordination) in the platform of Church Government which we have received from them, is to every impartial mind a cogent argument for the soundness of these conclusions.

Perhaps it may not be out of place to add, that the interpretation of the Scriptures was pursued with a degree of zeal, learning, and pious caution, which have been surpassed in no other age or country. It cannot be denied, that the modern exegesis was not yet revealed; and in saying this, we do, in the estimation of many, pronounce sentence of condemnation upon the Puritans. We scarcely know whether to be more provoked or amused, when men who can, with difficulty, read a paragraph of the Hebrew Bible, with all the aid of the recent apparatus, gravely sit in judgment upon scholars like those whom

we have named. There are certain theologians who banish from their libraries, with great contempt, the labours of Poole and Owen, and Ainsworth, and Meade, and Henry; while they cannot too highly laud Rosenmüller, and Paulus, and Ammon, and Kuinoel, and Eichhorn, and De Wette. Should any one suggest a doubt as to the wisdom of communing with men who are Pelagian, Arian, Socinian, or Deistical, he is contemptuously smiled upon, as far behind the age, and uninitiated into the mysterious art of transmuting poison into nourishment, in a word, a slave to old and exploded systems. Until within a few years, interpreters of the Scriptures, like all other men, were judged by their fruits; but now, it has been discovered, that, although the *results* at which German critics arrive, are false and often impious, the *principles* which they teach are the only safe and true ones. Upon the same grounds an astronomer must prefer an instrument which, at every celestial observation, conducts him to false conclusions, but which is new and glittering, to the old, and perhaps, rusty sextant of his father, which never yet betrayed him into error. To speak plainly and soberly, we deprecate the indiscriminate introduction of the modern Socinianism of Germany. Let us gladly avail ourselves of the philology, especially the lexicography and the mere criticism of their scholars; their archaeological, geographical, and historical labour; but let us not blindly accustom our minds even to *contemplate* with calmness and complacency, enormous errors, dangerous to the souls of men, and abominable in the sight of God. Let us select and use such of their productions as contain the results of philological research, but let us not vainly expect in the *commentaries* or extended expositions of neologists, to find any substitute for the pious labours of our forefathers. Happy should we be to see our youth, and especially, candidates for the holy ministry, turning from these dangerous pursuits, to the wholesome instructions of the seventeenth century.

ART. III.—WHAT CONSTITUTES A CALL TO THE GOSPEL MINISTRY?

THIS question has often perplexed and distressed candid and pious minds. Many a man has anxiously examined the interrogatory in its direct application to himself, without being able