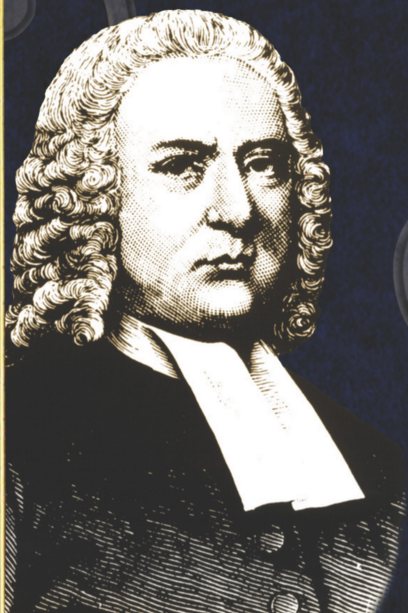


A COMPLETE  
BODY OF  
DOCTRINAL  
& PRACTICAL  
DIVINITY

John Gill, D.D.



**A**  
**COMPLETE BODY**  
**OF**  
**DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL**  
**DIVINITY**



*Chamberlin print*

*Freeman Sculp!*

## **JOHN GILL, D. D.**

*-London- Published by Mathews & Leigh, 1809*

A  
COMPLETE BODY  
OF  
DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL  
DIVINITY:

OR  
A SYSTEM OF EVANGELICAL TRUTHS,

DEDUCED FROM THE

*Sacred Scriptures.*

BY JOHN GILL, D.D.

A NEW EDITION



**The Baptist Standard Bearer**

NUMBER ONE IRON OAKS DRIVE • PARIS, ARKANSAS 72855

Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;  
that it may be displayed because of the truth.  
— *Psalm 60:4*



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London, June 1839.

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**THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM**

*lux lucet in tenebris*

"The Light Shineth in the Darkness"

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## PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

This edition of Dr. John Gill's "**Complete Body of Doctrinal & Practical Divinity**" is the first volume to be published of a projected open-end set of Baptist publications entitled: "THE BAPTIST FAITH SERIES". This set will represent an exposition and defense of the "Historically Distinctive" doctrines and practices of the Strict Baptists. The publishers are unashamedly Strict Old School Baptists. We do not, however, believe that there is any power or soul-saving virtue in that name. That title is no magic amulet to be worn to ward off evil spirits nor does it insure salvation or infallibility. But, that name is a name of distinction, or so it ought to be. The name "Baptist" has been Historically and Scripturally identified with certain particular doctrines and practices. Baptists believe that an acceptance of their "Historically Distinctive" doctrines and practices is absolutely necessary to a **consistent** recognition of the Kingship of Christ as the only Head and Lawgiver of the New Testament Church. The reason the Baptist people have been willing to suffer (and die if necessary) for their distinctive beliefs is because they are convinced that loyalty to the Supremacy of Christ demands it. If we Baptists have no distinctively Scriptural beliefs and practices that are worthy of proclamation and perpetuation, then in all due honor to God and honesty to the souls of men, let us denounce our name, disband our assemblies, affiliate with the most consistently Scriptural religious organization we can find and quit adding to the "Babel and Confusion of Sectarianism", because we have no justification for our existence. If, on the other hand, we have Scriptural, Theological and Historical precedents for our beliefs and practices, let us defend them at all cost and forsake them at no cost. Some justification for this projected work, (if any be called for), is found in the five following considerations:

**I. CLARITY & HONESTY DEMAND THIS RE-PUBLICATION WORK-. . .**Strict Baptists agree, generally, with those Independent and Protestant groups that preach the Sovereignty of God and the Doctrines of Discriminating Grace, but there are some other areas of definite disagreement. These differences are no minor differences for they deal with such vital issues as the Decrees, the Covenant of Grace, the time of Justification, the utility of the Gospel, the origin, nature, government and officers of the New Testament Church, and the subjects, mode and purpose of Baptism, to name just a few disagreements. It would not be honoring to Christ, nor honest with men's souls, to cover-up or stand silent about these vitally important and extremely divisive issues. Lev. 10:9-11 states: ". . .it shall be a statute forever. . .that ye may put difference between holy' and unholy, unclean and clean". Ezek. 44:23 says ". . .they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.", (see Isa. 40:1-6; 57:14; 62:10). These verses teach us that the servant of God is to remove obstacles that impede the saints' progress. They are to make the issues plain for the people to see. In fact, condemnation is pronounced upon those who confuse or refuse to expose the Spiritual issues and make it difficult for God's people to discern truth from error. (Isa. 5:20) "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." The same condemnation was pronounced by Christ in Matt. 18:6 and Mark 9:42.

For the sake of Clarity, the Strict Baptists view the current religious scene the same way they always have, as aptly described in Song of Solomon 6:8,9, “There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines and virgins without number, (said the Lord Jesus Christ), but my dove, my undefiled is but one.” Isaiah the prophet gave further light on the religious scene of the last days in Isa. 4:1, “In that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, we will eat our own bread, (i.e., we will live by our own doctrine) and we will wear our own apparel, (i.e., we will be covered by a robe of our own creating), only let us be called by thy name, (i.e., recognized as belonging to Christ), to take away our reproach.” The religious assemblies of all denominations claim to be the true New Testament Church. The Catholics claim this. The Episcopalians claim this, as do Presbyterians, the various Reformed groups, the Pentacostals, the Methodists and the various Arminian and Calvinistic Baptists. All the various groups make their claims and counter-claims to being the true New Testament Church, as the verses just quoted, (Song of Sol. 6:8,9; Isa. 4:1) may be used to exemplify. But, with different doctrines, different practices, different gospels, different Gods, different Christs, different origins and founders, different officers, different governments, different goals and purposes, it ought to be apparent to every thinking mind that they cannot **all** be right. Surely, “. . .an enemy hath done this.”, (Matt. 13:24-30). They can **all** be wrong, but they cannot **all** be right, and only a false and spurious charity and liberality would even attempt to think them so! (Isa. 8:20).

It is a well-known and much-attested fact, that Strict Old School Baptists make the claim of being of New Testament Church origin and New Testament Church order. Their claim is based upon their concept of salvation and of baptism. Simply stated we believe that:

1. Any religious assembly that preaches a false gospel and/or practices a false baptism cannot be recognized as a true New Testament Church of gospel order. All such assemblies who fundamentally, characteristically and permanently preach a false gospel come under the indictment of Gal. 1:6-9.
2. Salvation and a profession of faith are undeniably prerequisite to baptism. Salvation is not by means of baptism. True believing disciples are the only proper subjects for baptism. Immersion is the only proper mode of baptism.
3. Scriptural baptism is absolutely necessary to church constitution, organization and existence, so much so, that where there is no Scriptural baptism there is no Scriptural church. No baptism, no church.
4. There is an intimate and inevitable connection between the true doctrine of salvation and the proper administration of baptism. Scriptural baptism is the representation of and the identification with the Scriptural plan of salvation.
5. According to the commands of Christ, the practice of the early churches of the New Testament, the Epistles of Paul, and the Confessions of Faith of all evangelical religious denominations. . . .baptism as an ordinance, was delivered to the New Testament Church to be administered by it according to Christ’s commands until He returns.
6. All the aspects of baptism, (the mode, subject, purpose and administrator) are irrevocably fixed and prescribed by Christ’s example and commands. These are to remain permanent and unchanged. A consistent recognition of Christ’s Kingship over the soul demands that these things be so, (Mal. 1:6; Luke 6:46), for Christ only has the authority to make, give or alter the doctrines and practices of the New Testament Church.

7. Only churches of New Testament origin and New Testament order can give Scriptural baptism. Therefore, any religious society that preaches a false gospel cannot give Scriptural baptism.

What are the **ramifications** of these concepts? Consider:

1. Strict Baptists have always believed that Catholicism is a false religion that preaches a false gospel, described no doubt in Rev. 17:1-18:24. Catholic assemblies cannot, therefore, give Scriptural baptism. Many others have taken this same position as to the invalidity of Catholic baptism. The Presbyterians, for example, took the same position at the Presbyterian General Assembly (Old School), May, 1845. This is recorded in **“The Collected Writings of J.H. Thornwell”** Vol. 3, pp. 277-413, Banner of Truth Edition, 1974. We state again, Catholic baptism is unscriptural, invalid, null and void.
2. Any person with Catholic baptism has no baptism. Any denomination founded upon Catholic baptism has no baptism and therefore no church validity. The reason? . . . Number 3 above: “No baptism, no church.” (See R. L. Dabney’s **“Lectures in Systematic Theology”**, lecture 64, pp. 774-775, for the same conclusion, i.e., “No baptism means no church”).

These concepts are the reasons for the “historic” Baptist practice of baptizing all those who came over to them from any religious society that is not of “like faith and order”. This is why Baptists will not accept Protestant rantism. All Protestant denominations are founded upon Catholic and infant rantism.

Dr. John Gill, the author of the following book, was a consistent Strict Baptist. He was not a Puritan from the Episcopalians, not a Presbyterian, not a Congregationalist, not a Protestant. He was a Strict and Particular Baptist. In fact, he was not just “a Baptist,” but one of their main spokesmen for over half a century. According to Dr. Richard B. Cook, pastor of the Second Baptist Church, Wilmington, Delaware, “Dr. John Gill and Rev. John Brine were for nearly half a century the chief men in the Baptist denomination”, **“The Story of the Baptists in All Ages and Countries”**, 1884, Chpt. 17, p. 189. Dr. Henry C. Vedder, professor of Church History, Crozer Theological Seminary, quoted that: “Dr. John Gill was the ablest and most learned of the Baptists of his time”, **“A Short History of the Baptists”**, 1907, Chpt. 16, p. 240. Dr. William Cathcart, pastor of the Second Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Penn., for 28 years, said: “. . .for 51 years Dr. John Gill was a power in London and a religious authority all over Great Britain and America. . . his ‘Body of Divinity’, published in 1769, is a work without which no Theological library is complete”, **“The Baptist Encyclopedia”**, 1881, pp. 452-454. The first Baptist association in America, the old Philadelphia Baptist Association, Philadelphia, Penn., esteemed Dr. Gill so highly as a sound exponent of Baptist Theology, that in their official minutes, October, 1807, they recommended that each member church of the association “subscribe for a copy of Dr. Gill’s incomparable ‘Exposition of the Old & New Testaments’ for the use of their minister and urged all sister associations to aid in the accomplishment of this desirable object,” **“The Minutes of the Philadelphia Association”**, Oct., 1807; American Baptist Publication Society, 1851, p. 439. Certainly we can say then, that Dr.



John Gill was considered to be a theologically sound Baptist by the Baptists on both sides of the Atlantic. He was esteemed to be one of the leading spokesmen, (if not “the leading spokesman”), of Baptist principles from 1726 to as late as 1807.

Clarity & Honesty demand now that we consider some of the practical conclusions of the above-mentioned facts and concepts:

1. If Dr. John Gill’s theology was held in such high regard among the English and American Baptists from 1726 to as late as 1807, why is it not so today? Obviously, the majority of English and American Baptists and the Philadelphia Association were, what is “contemptuously” called today, “Gillite” Baptists, as late as 1807. What does this say for the modern Reformed or Arminian Baptists (?) who repudiate John Gill’s Supralapsarian and High-Church Theology? If those who were Strict Baptists then believed like John Gill, ought not those who are really Strict Baptists believe the same today? This conclusion is inevitable, unless you take the position that the majority of Baptists then were unscriptural in their theology or that what was true then is not true now, i. e., the mutability of Divine truth. The modern Reformed, Arminian and Universal-Church Baptists (?), like the American Baptist Churches of United States, the Southern Baptist Convention and the American Baptist Association, are faced with a dilemma: (1) they must either confess that their forefathers, (the Strict and Particular Baptists of England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales and early America, the Philadelphia Baptist Association and all her sister associations), believed and preached a “false gospel” in their advocating Dr. John Gill’s theology or (2) they must confess that today, they themselves preach a “new gospel” and have departed from “the faith once delivered”, in repudiating Dr. John Gill’s theology. Have the modern “New School” Baptists forsaken the “Old Paths”? We think so.
2. The modern Calvinistic Protestants and Independents who have “rejoiced in Dr. Gill’s light for a season” must also face some pertinent questions: How can they **consistently** accept Gill’s Soteriology without seriously considering his Ecclesiology? How will they answer Dr. Gill’s refutation of the Protestant view of the Covenant of Grace in, “**The Divine Right of Infant-Baptism Examined and Disproved**”, 1749 or his “**Infant-Baptism a Part and Pillar of Popery**,” 1766?
3. The practical ramifications of whole-heartedly accepting Dr. Gill’s principles are earth-shaking for both the modern Baptists and Protestants. No doubt, some among both groups will voice the same opinion about John Gill - “Bury the dead out of my sight”. We believe, that as far as the opponents of the writings of the Strict Baptists are concerned, a conscientious effort has been made to do just that. But we also believe that there are some, (Rom. 11:5), among both groups who esteem God’s Word “more than their necessary food”. It is for these we are concerned.

Therefore, Clarity and Honesty about these vital and divisive issues demand that the publications which best explain those “Historically Distinctive” doctrines and practices of the Strict Baptists be made available once again to the public.

**II. HISTORY DEMANDS THIS RE-PUBLICATION WORK.** . . . “A people not conscious of their own past are adrift without purpose.” This can be amplified by saying: “A

people not conscious of their own past have no purpose for the present and therefore no plans for the future!" This idea relates to us the importance of knowing our history.

As far as I can judge by the light of Scripture and personal observation, there has never been a time when, generally speaking, the Baptist people were, on the one hand, more doctrinally uncertain and on the other hand, more dogmatically unscriptural than they are today. There exists among most "contemporary" Baptist people basically 3 attitudes towards their own history and doctrines: (1) apathy (2) ignorance and confusion and (3) arrogance. How has this situation come about? (Isa. 9:16) ". . .the leaders of this people cause them to err." There has been a failure on the part of leaders to speak-up and speak-out against sin. Either intentionally or ignorantly, spiritual leaders have been hesitant and lazy about properly labeling truth and error in the light of God's Word. This cowardly "soft-peddling" with sins and doctrinal defections has helped create a situation of doctrinal and theological fogs and ethical and moral twilights. It has desensitized consciences, darkened hearts and disconcerted minds to the extent that unbelief and rebellion, humanism and pragmatism have become the prevailing methodology of most Baptist Congregations. The unregenerate, in wholesale numbers, have entered our pews and our pulpits thereby subverting the spiritual nature of Christ's Kingdom and its spiritual work.

Now, a sanctified knowledge of Baptist history will go a long way in preventing and correcting this deplorable situation. Consider:

1. A knowledge of history is **commanded**, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father and he will shew thee; thy elders and they will teach thee", (Deut. 32:7-9). . . .
2. A knowledge of history is **comforting**; David said, "I remembered Thy judgments of old, O Lord: and have comforted myself.", (Psalms 119:52).
3. A knowledge of history is **conducive** to growth in the knowledge of God Himself, so much so, that we can say that our knowledge of God is going to be hindered by our lack of knowledge about history, "The Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.", (Psalms 9:16).
4. A knowledge of history is **convicting**; David said unto the Levites: "Sanctify yourselves. . .that ye may bring up the ark of the Lord God. . .for because ye did it not at the first, the Lord God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him not after the due order.", (I Chron. 15:12,13). "Ask for the Old Paths where is the good way, and walk therein and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, we will not walk therein," (Jer. 6:16). . .(I Cor. 14:40). A study of Baptist history will make it very plain what Baptist forefathers believed and practiced. From this we can observe how far "contemporary" Baptists have departed from the "Old Paths". Surely, it is convicting. . .in the light of the history of our Baptist forefathers, to consider Isaac Watts' words:

"Must I be carried to the skies  
On flow'ry beds of ease,  
While others fought to win the prize,  
and sailed thro' bloody seas?"

All this leads us to see that where there is an absence of knowledge about Baptist history generally, and the “Historically Distinctive” Baptist doctrines and practices specifically, there is sure to follow:

1. a **loss** of identity
2. a **lack** of purpose and mission
3. a **looseness** and **laxity** in doctrine and practice.

There is a certain sacredness, a certain self-examination, a certain sense of responsibility that goes along with the study of history. Therefore, the solemnity, utility, and responsibility of the knowledge of Baptist history demand that those publications which best explain the history and the “Historically Distinctive” Strict Baptist doctrines and practices be made available once again to the public.

**III. DUTY DEMANDS THIS RE-PUBLICATION WORK.** . . . There is an inseparable connection between doctrine and duty. When the great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel are held in contempt and disregard, practical godliness will be at a low ebb. When the full moon of Gospel truth is brilliantly apparent, then the high tide of Gospel godliness will also be. Our convictions mold our conversation, (Prov. 23:7). The relationship between sound doctrine and godly deportment is like that which exists between a tree and the fruit it bears. It is out of the tree of sound doctrine that the fruit of godliness develops. The tree of sound doctrine is like its counterpart, the tree of the regenerated soul. . . . **both** are “of the Lord’s planting”, (Deut. 32:2; Psa. 1:1-3; 104:16; 92:12-14; Isa. 61:1-3; Jer. 17:7-8) and **both** inevitably have “their fruit”, (Psa. 1:3; Matt. 3:10; 7:18-20; 12:33; Luke 6:43-45; John 15:1-16; I Tim. 6:3-5). Every system of false doctrine is like every unregenerate soul, it **cannot** “bring forth good fruit”, (Matt. 7:18-20; Luke 6:43-45; Rom. 8:8); in the end, it **shall** be “rooted up”, (Prov. 2:22; Matt. 15:13; John 15:2).

I Tim. 6:3 speaks of the “doctrine which is according to godliness.” This verse defines the nature and purpose of true doctrine, which is the bringing about of a right temper of mind and a godly deportment of life; it is pure and purifying. There is no doctrine revealed in Scripture for a merely speculative, intellectual consideration, but all is to exert a potent influence upon conduct. Those who have doctrine without practice are “vainly puffed up” in their fleshly minds, (Col. 2:18). Observe in I Tim. 1:9-10 all those despicable characters listed. They are said to be among the things “which are contrary to sound doctrine,” i.e., they are contrary to the conduct which sound doctrine produces.

Most “Contemporary” Baptists have not learned this concept. They have not realized the necessity for instruction “in the way of God more perfectly”, (Acts 18:26). If we ever hope to see practical godliness and Christ-honoring holiness in our life and in the lives of the saints, there must be exposure to sound doctrines of discriminating grace, baptism and the true New Testament Church, and all practical duties as well, (John 17:17). Dr. John Gill believed and taught this concept of sound doctrine. Contrary to accusation, Dr. Gill was not an Antinomian, as a consideration of his printed works will prove: 1738 - “The Doctrine of Grace Cleared From the Charge of Licentiousness.”

1739 - "The Law Established by the Gospel."

1739 - "The Necessity of Good Works unto Salvation."

1754 - "Neglect of Fervent Prayer Complained of."

1761 - "The Law in the Hand of Christ."

1770 - "A Body of Practical Divinity". . . As clear proof Dr. Gill was no Antinomian, listen to his own words: "I abhor the thoughts of setting the law of God aside as the rule of walk and conversation; and constantly affirm (according to Scripture) that all who believe in Christ for righteousness should be careful to maintain good works for necessary uses."

**Remarks on Mr. Samuel Chandler's Sermon, Relating to the Moral Nature and Fitness of Things**, published in 1738.

It is with full purpose in mind that we re-publish the Old Strict Baptist works. We wish to promote holy living and separation from the world by exposing our readers to the sound doctrine of our forefathers. We wish to "stop the mouths of the gainsayers" who repeatedly charge Strict Baptist with Antinomianism. We hope to lay "the axe to the root of the trees", (Matt. 3:10) by revealing the cause for the lack of good works among "Modern" Baptists of all factions, i.e., there is a lack of sound doctrine.

Therefore, the obligation, purpose and means of Christian Duty and the over-all lack of "good works" among professing saints, demand that those publications which are best suited to promote holiness be made available once again to the public.

**IV. POSTERITY DEMANDS THIS RE-PUBLICATION WORK. . . .** Surely, there are many who read this and many more who ought to, who have little children, sons and daughters, in their homes. Surely, common **sympathy** and parental **charity** towards our children, demand that we make every effort to acquaint them with "the Faith of their Fathers." Christian **duty** (Deut. 4:1-13; 6:5-7; 31:9-13; Psa. 48:12-14; 79:13; 145:4; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:2), demands this effort towards our posterity. A faithful **conformity** to the example of our fathers (Prov. 17:6; Psa. 44:1-8; Psa. 78:1-9) demands that we make it possible for this generation and the next to see what their forefathers believed. Practical **sagacity** and obvious **necessity** combine together to obligate us to make this effort. We can look ahead and see that the future existence, prosperity and peace of our Baptist Zion demand that we instruct our children in the "Historically Distinctive" doctrines and practices of our faith. If they are not "rooted and grounded" in the faith and "established in grace," they will be easily "tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;" (Eph. 4:14, 15).

As every generation must be **evangelized**, (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16; Lk. 24:44-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:4-8), so every generation must be **educated**, (Matt. 28:20; Lev. 10:1-11; Deut. 4:1-13; 6:5-7; Psa. 48:12-14; 79:13; 145:4; Eph. 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:3).

An acquaintance with the author of the following book will go a long way toward accomplishing this goal. A knowledge of the writings of Dr. John Gill will certainly strengthen the foundations of our future Baptist Zion. Therefore, Posterity, from which ever point of view you consider it, demands that the publications, (explaining our

“Historically Distinctive” doctrines and practices), which are best adapted to the sound instruction of our children, be made available once again.

**V. LOYALTY DEMANDS THIS RE-PUBLICATION WORK.** . . . “the Love of Christ constraineth us,” (2 Cor. 5:9-16). We have saved this reason for the last, not because it is least important, but because it is most important; not to gloss over, or cancel out anything we have already said, but to state the compelling reason for all. We have found in Christ the pre-eminent object of glory, honor, virtue, goodness, love and truth. If we know our own hearts, we love Him above all things. We have read in His own Word that our love for Him should be manifested in:

1. faithful service to Christ’s **Commands**, (John 14:15, 23; 15:14; I John 2:3)
2. faithful service to Christ’s **Children**, (John 21:15-17); and
3. faithful service in Christ’s **Church**, (Eph. 5:25; I Cor. 11:22)

The glory and honor of God is the ultimate purpose and goal for all things, (I Cor. 6:20; I Cor. 10:31; Psa. 22:23; Matt. 5:16; John 15:8; Rom. 15:6; Eph. 3:21). The Lord Jesus Christ is to be honored as his Father is honored, (John 5:23). Therefore, we believe that loyalty to Him “Whom our soul loveth”, (Song of Sol. 3:1-4), demands that we make every effort to make His glory known. We believe that the “Historically Distinctive” doctrines and practices of the Strict Baptists are those doctrines which most glorify Christ as “King of the Saints”. Therefore, loyalty and love combine together to demand that those publications which exalt Christ in fact, as well as name, as the only Head and Lawgiver of the New Testament Church be made available once again to the public.

**IN CONCLUSION**, we want our readers to be mindful of two things:

1. We would not leave you with the impression that we worship Dr. Gill. We do not think him infallible. In fact, we at this point in time feel like we cannot agree completely with Dr. Gill’s statements in three areas:
  - a. in his **Practical Divinity**, book three, Chpt. 1, pp. 896-915, his introductory remarks about baptism are confusing. If that were all he had ever said relative to this subject, it would have been, and no doubt is, a stumbling block. But, for those who have trouble with this particular passage we suggest they reserve their final opinion about Dr. Gill’s views of baptism until they have read his 12 other works on this subject, which, D.V., we intend to re-publish in the not too distant future.
  - b. in his **Practical Divinity**, book two, Chpt. 6, pp. 886-895, on Church discipline. . . . we feel that his interpretation of some of the key passages on this subject are unsound and not in line with the majority of scholarly opinion.
  - c. in his **Doctrinal Divinity**, book seven, Chpt. 8, pp. 643-667, on the Millennium . . . . we wish we had more of his opinion on this subject before we make a final statement, but we are decidedly Amillennial.Other than these few items we esteem this work the clearest setting forth of Strict Baptist views available today.
2. We do not court controversy, (2 Cor. 4:13), but neither are we intimidated by it. If our views can be shown to be erroneous, let them be. Our instructors have only done us a



great favor thereby. We will be wiser after we are instructed in “the way of God more perfectly.” If we know our own minds, we seek the prosperity and unanimity of all who believe the truth. But if our views cannot be refuted, then let them be accepted. The writings of the following author, are no exception to that statement. He will be more easily denounced than disproved.

The Baptist Standard Bearer  
(Psa. 60:4,5; Isa. 59:19; 62:10-12)

Stonehaven  
Paris, Arkansas  
October 20, 1984

# CONTENTS.

MEMOIR..... V	INTRODUCTION..... xxiii
---------------	-------------------------

## A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY.

### BOOK I.

#### OF GOD, HIS WORD, NAMES, NATURE, PERFECTIONS, AND PERSONS.

CHAP.		PAGE.
1	Of the Being of God.....	1
2	Of the Holy Scriptures.....	11
3	Of the Names of God.....	25
4	Of the Nature of God.....	30
	Of the Spirituality of God.....	31
	Of the Simplicity of God.....	33
5	Of the Attributes of God.....	34
	Of the Immutability of God.....	35
6	Of the Infinity of God.....	41
	Of the Omnipresence of God.....	42
	Of the Eternity of God.....	45
7	Of the Life of God.....	50
8	Of the Omnipotence of God.....	53
9	Of the Omniscience of God.....	58
10	Of the Wisdom of God.....	64
11	Of the Will of God, and its Sovereignty..	70
12	Of the Love of God.....	78
13	Of the Grace of God.....	81
14	Of the Mercy of God.....	85
15	Of the Long-suffering of God.....	89
16	Of the Goodness of God.....	91
17	Of the Anger of God.....	95
	Of the Wrath of God.....	97
18	Of the Hatred of God.....	99
19	Of the Joy of God.....	102
20	Of the Holiness of God.....	103
21	Of the Justice of God.....	106
22	Of the Veracity of God.....	110
23	Of the Faithfulness of God.....	113
24	Of the Sufficiency and Perfection of God	119
25	Of the Blessedness of God.....	122
26	Of the Unity of God.....	125
27	Of a Plurality in the Godhead.....	130
28	Of the Personal Relations in Deity....	140
29	Of the Distinct Personality and Deity of the Father.....	160
30	Of the Distinct Personality and Deity of the Son.....	162
31	Of the Distinct Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit.....	167

### BOOK II.

#### OF THE ACTS AND WORKS OF GOD.

1	Of the Internal Acts of God, and of his Decrees in general.....	172
2	Of the Special Decrees of God, particularly of Election.....	176
3	Of the Rejection of some Angels, and some Men.....	192
4	Of the Union of the Elect to God.....	198
5	Of Adoption as an Immanent Act.....	201
	Of Justification as an Immanent Act....	203
6	Of the Everlasting Council.....	209
7	Of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace ..	214
8	Of the Part which the Father takes in the Covenant.....	219

### CHAP. PAGE.

9	Of the Part which the Son takes in the Covenant.....	226
10	Of Christ as the Covenant Head of the Elect.....	227
11	Of Christ the Mediator of the Covenant..	229
12	Of Christ the Surety of the Covenant....	237
13	Of Christ the Testator of the Covenant ..	241
14	Of the Concern which the Spirit has in the Covenant.....	244
15	Of the Properties of the Covenant.....	247
16	Of the Complacency and Delight which the Divine Persons had in each other from Eternity.....	250

### BOOK III.

#### OF THE EXTERNAL WORKS OF GOD.

1	Of Creation in General.....	256
2	Of the Creation of Angels.....	262
3	Of the Creation of Man.....	268
4	Of the Providence of God.....	277
5	Of the Confirmation of the Elect Angels, and Fall of the Non-elect.....	304
6	Of the Honour and Happiness of Man in Innocence.....	309
7	Of the Law given to Adam, and Covenant made with him.....	311
8	Of the Sin and Fall of our First Parents	317
9	Of the Nature, Aggravations, and Sad Effects of the sin of Man.....	321
10	Of the Imputation of Adam's sin to all his Posterity.....	324
11	Of the Corruption of Human Nature.....	330
12	Of Actual Sins, and Transgressions....	337
13	Of the Punishment of Sin.....	341

### BOOK IV.

#### OF THE ACTS OF THE GRACE OF GOD, TOWARDS, AND UPON HIS ELECT IN TIME.

1	Of the Manifestation, and Administration of the Covenant of Grace.....	345
2	Of the Covenant of Grace in the Patriarchal State.....	348
3	Of the Covenant of Grace under the Mosaic Dispensation.....	354
4	Of the Covenant of Grace in the times of David and the Prophets.....	357
5	Of the Abrogation of the Old Covenant..	360
6	Of the Law of God.....	367
7	Of the Gospel.....	372

### BOOK V.

#### OF THE GRACE OF CHRIST IN HIS STATES OF HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION, AND IN THE OFFICES EXERCISED BY HIM IN THEM.

1	Of the Incarnation of Christ.....	378
2	Of Christ's State of Humiliation.....	390
3	Of the Active Obedience of Christ.....	396
4	Of the Passive Obedience of Christ....	401

CHAP.	PAGE.
5 Of the Burial of Christ.....	406
6 Of the Resurrection of Christ.....	410
7 Of the Ascension of Christ.....	415
8 Of the Session of Christ at the Right Hand of God.....	420
9 Of the Prophetic Office of Christ.....	424
10 Of the Priestly Office of Christ.....	427
11 Of the Intercession of Christ.....	431
12 Of Christ's Blessing his People as a Priest.....	435
13 Of the Kingly Office of Christ.....	439
14 Of the Spiritual Reign of Christ.....	448

## BOOK VI.

OF THE BLESSINGS OF GRACE, AND THE DOCTRINES  
OF IT.

1 Of Redemption by Christ.....	454
2 Of the Causes of Redemption.....	457
3 Of the Objects of Redemption.....	461
4 Of Scriptures which seem to Favour Universal Redemption.....	467
5 Of the Satisfaction of Christ.....	475
6 Of Propitiation, Atonement, and Recon- ciliation.....	488
7 Of Pardon of Sin.....	493
8 Of Justification.....	501

## A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY.

## BOOK I.

## ON THE WORSHIP OF GOD.

1 Of the Object of Worship.....	697
2 Of Internal Worship, or Godliness.....	700
3 Of the Knowledge of God.....	705
4 Of Repentance towards God.....	713
5 Of the Fear of God.....	722
6 Of Faith in God.....	730
7 Of Trust and Confidence in God.....	746
8 Of the Grace of Hope.....	753
9 Of the Grace of Love.....	762
10 Of Spiritual Joy.....	774
11 Of Peace and Tranquillity of Mind.....	782
12 Of Contentment of Mind.....	786
13 Of Thankfulness to God.....	794
14 Of Humility.....	801
15 Of Self-denial.....	805
16 Of Resignation to the Will of God.....	810
17 Of Patience.....	815
18 Of Christian Fortitude.....	819
19 Of Zeal.....	824
20 Of Wisdom and Prudence.....	829
21 Of Godly Sincerity.....	833
22 Of Spiritual Mindedness.....	838
23 Of a good Conscience.....	842
24 Of Communion with God.....	846

## BOOK II.

## OF EXTERNAL WORSHIP, AS PUBLIC.

1 Of a Gospel Church, the Seat of Public Worship.....	852
2 Of the Duties of Church-members to each other.....	859
3 Of Church-officers, particularly Pastors..	862
4 Of the Duties of Members to their Pastors.....	876

CHAP.	PAGE.
9 Of Adoption.....	518
10 Of the Liberty of the Sons of God.....	525
11 Of Regeneration.....	528
12 Of Effectual Calling.....	538
13 Of Conversion.....	545
14 Of Sanctification.....	552
15 Of the Perseverance of the Saints.....	559

## BOOK VII.

## OF THE FINAL STATE OF MAN.

1 Of the Death of the Body.....	579
2 Of the Immortality of the Soul.....	585
3 Of the Separate State of the Soul.....	593
4 Of the Resurrection of the Body.....	602
5 Of the Second Coming and Personal Appearance of Christ.....	615
6 Of the Conflagration of the Universe.....	625
7 Of the New Heavens and Earth, and their Inhabitants.....	636
8 Of the Millennium, or Personal Reign of Christ.....	643
9 Of the Last and General Judgment.....	667
10 Of the Final State of the Wicked.....	676
11 Of the Final State of the Saints in Heaven	686

5 Of the Office of Deacons.....	881
6 Of Church Discipline.....	886

## BOOK III.

## OF THE PUBLIC ORDINANCES OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

1 Of Baptism.....	896
2 Of the Lord's Supper.....	915
3 Of the Public Ministry of the Word.....	924
4 Of Public Hearing of the Word.....	932
5 Of Public Prayer.....	939
6 Of the Lord's Prayer.....	948
7 Of Singing Psalms.....	957
8 Of the Place and Time of Public Worship	964

## BOOK IV.

OF PRIVATE WORSHIP, OR OF VARIOUS DUTIES,  
DOMESTIC, CIVIL, AND MORAL.

1 Of the Duties of Husband and Wife... ..	973
2 Of the Duties of Parents and Children..	977
3 Of the Duties of Masters and Servants..	980
4 Of the Duties of Magistrates and Sub- jects.....	983
5 Of Good Works in General.....	988
6 A Compendium of the Ten Commands..	991

A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE BAPTISM OF  
JEWISH PROSELYTES.

1 Of the Various Sorts of Proselytes.....	995
2 The Occasion of the Dissertation.....	999
3 The Proof of the Baptism of Jewish Pro- selytes inquired into.....	1001
4 The Proof of this custom only from the Talmuds.....	1009
5 Christian Baptism not founded on Pro- selyte Baptism.....	1014

A BRIEF  
MEMOIR  
OF  
THE LIFE, LABOURS, AND CHARACTER  
OF THE  
REVEREND AND LEARNED  
JOHN GILL, D. D.

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THERE is in the human mind a natural anxiety to trace the source of its enjoyments ; hence it is we are generally concerned to know the name, and something of the character of the Preacher, or Author, from whom we have received either pleasure or instruction. Perhaps too, on the subject of Theology, we are apt to attach too much importance to the instrument, and too little to that sacred Agent by whom he was fitted for his work, and who also renders his labours profitable to us. Here however we feel pleasure in saying, we cannot contemplate the life and character of JOHN GILL, without pronouncing him one of the greatest and best of men. He was born at Kettering, in Northamptonshire, Nov. 23, 1697, of amiable and pious parents, Edward Gill, and Elizabeth his wife, whose maiden name was Walker. By an indulgent providence they were equally saved from the trials of poverty, and the snares of affluence, and spent their days pleasantly and profitably, in the pious circle where a covenant God assigned their lot.

The father, Mr. Edward Gill, first became a member of the dissenting congregation in that town, then consisting of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists. Besides their pastor, they had a teaching elder of the Baptist denomination, Mr. William Wallis, who was the administrator of Baptism by immersion, to such persons among them as desired it. At length the Baptists, having been rendered uncomfortable in their communion, by some particular persons, they were obliged to separate, with Mr. Wallis their teacher, and soon formed themselves into a distinct church, of the *Particular Baptist* denomination. Of this number was Mr. Edward Gill, who was in due time chosen to the office of Deacon among them, and to the last obtained a good report, for his grace, his piety, and holy conversation.

His young Son, with the dawn of reason, discovered a fine capacity for instruction ; and being soon out of the reach of common teachers, was very early sent to the grammar school in his native town, which he attended with uncommon diligence, and unwearied application ; quickly surpassing those of his own age, and others who were far his seniors. Here he continued till he was about *eleven* years old, by which time he had mastered

the principal Latin Classics, and made such a proficiency in the Greek, as obtained for him marks of distinction from several of the neighbouring Clergy, who condescended occasionally to examine and encourage his progress, when they met him at a bookseller's shop on market-days, when only it was open. This shop he so regularly attended, for the sake of consulting different Authors, that it became an usual asseveration with the people in the neighbourhood, when they desired to express a certainty,—“It is as sure, as that JOHN GILL is in the bookseller's shop.” And as the same studious disposition attended him through life, so did nearly the same remark; those who knew him usually employing this mode of affirmation,—“As surely as DR. GILL is in his study.”

But he was obliged to leave the grammar school, thus *early*, because the *Master* of it insisted that all the children (those of *Dissenters*, as well as others) should learn the *Church* Catechism, and go with him to the *Parish* Church, &c. As his *parents* could not violate their consciences, they were *obliged* to take him from school at a time when he was making a rapid progress in human literature. Still he kept on studying, and improving his mind, in the Latin and Greek, which he had acquired; and also learned Hebrew, without any living assistance, by the help of Buxtorf's grammar and lexicon; and soon was able to read with great ease and pleasure.

About twelve years of age, his mind was seriously impressed with divine things, especially after hearing Mr. Wallis preach a sermon on Gen. iii. 9. *And the Lord God called unto Adam and said unto him, where art thou?* These interrogations sounded in his ears, and pierced his very soul; “Sinner where art thou? what a wretched condition art thou in! what will be thy state eternally? art thou able to endure everlasting burnings?”

He now began to see and feel, the depravity of his nature, the exceeding sinfulness of sin; his need of salvation, and a better righteousness than his own, even the righteousness of Christ, in order to escape the damnation of hell, and obtain the kingdom of God. It does not however appear, that this distress of soul was of long continuance; God was soon graciously pleased to reveal his Son in him, and afford him joy, and peace in believing. Soon after this event, Mr. Wallis died, but young GILL to whom the Lord had blessed his labours, survived him many years, and still lives in his valuable writings, to edify and bless the church of God. On the 1st of November, 1716, Mr. GILL was publicly baptized in a river, by Mr. Thomas Wallis, who succeeded Mr. W. Wallis in the pastoral office. Mr. GILL used to remark, “that many spectators beheld the solemn scene, which was truly imposing.” The following Lord's day, Nov. 4th, he was received a member of the church, and sat down at the Lord's table. The same evening, at a meeting for prayer in a private house, he read and expounded the 53rd chapter of Isaiah; and the friends present estimated the services, as a favourable specimen of the ministerial talents, which the great Head of the church had conferred upon him, and encouraged him to proceed in the exercise of his gifts. Accordingly, the next Lord's day evening, in the same place, he delivered a discourse upon 1 Cor. ii. 2. *For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.\** This, his first discourse, was heard with great pleasure; and the godly people who heard

\* It is not a little singular, that one person who heard him deliver his *first* sermon at Kettering; nearly *fifty five years after*, heard him also deliver his *last*, in Carter Lane, London.



it, said they had a charming season. Soon after this, at the instance of some of his London friends, who had conversed with him at Kettering, he removed to Higham-Ferrers, about seven miles from Kettering; his own design was, to pursue his studies under the Rev. John Davis of that place, with whom he was to board; the design of his friends was, that he might preach occasionally in the adjacent villages, and thus be useful to the young interest at Higham-Ferrers. Here he continued the year following, and contracted an acquaintance with a young lady, who was a member of the newly gathered church, whom he married in 1718. His marriage with this excellent woman, he always considered the principal object for which God sent him to that place, for she proved herself a careful, discreet, and affectionate wife; and was continued to him upwards of forty-six years. His sermon on her death, has been esteemed one of the best of his funeral discourses. It is founded upon Heb. xi. 16. *But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly, &c.* By this amiable woman, he had many children, all of whom died in their infancy, except three:—Elizabeth, who departed this life, May 30, 1738, in the *thirteenth* year of her age. The funeral sermon which her father preached for her, was published, and contains a pleasing account of her dying experience. Mary, was a member of her father's church, who married Mr. George Keith, bookseller in Gracechurch Street. John, was a goldsmith, and lived many years in the same street. These children were a great happiness to their parents. During Mr. GILL's stay at Higham-Ferrers, he frequently preached to the church at Kettering, and as their pastor needed assistance, he wholly removed thither soon after his marriage. Here his ministry from the first had been blessed, not only to the conversion, but to the comfort of many, who long continued to adorn their profession, and will, we doubt not, be the crown of his rejoicing, when the Master comes. Yet here his stay was short, for early in the year 1719, the church meeting at Fair Street, Horselydown, Southwark, London, having by death lost their pastor, Mr. Benjamin Stinton, (son-in-law of the famous Benjamin Keach, and his successor in the pastoral office,) invited Mr. GILL to come up and preach to them, which he did in the months of April and May, and then returned into the country. About two months after, the church requested him to return, which he did, and preached to them till the beginning of September. On Thursday evening, September 10th, the question was put to the church, whether they should on the next Lord's day evening proceed to the election of Mr. GILL to the Pastoral office. The question was carried in the affirmative by the whole, except 12 or 13 persons. On the following Lord's day evening, the same question passed in the affirmative, by a *large majority*.

Mr. GILL accepted the call; but owing to trouble arising out of his election, he was not ordained till March 22nd, 1720. Here we have the gratification of shewing the order of our Ordination services, one hundred and thirty-nine years ago. "The early part of the meeting being intended chiefly for the members, and serious hearers; they spent some time in prayer among themselves, and when they had sung a hymn, paused. This was felt to be a pleasant preparation for the more public work before them. Accordingly, as soon as the pastors of the churches who had been invited to be present on the occasion, came in; the Rev. John Skepp, author of that valuable book, entitled "Divine Energy," proposed several questions to the church; which were answered by Mr. Thomas Crosby, a deacon, afterwards author of the 'History of the Baptists;' who stated, in the course of what he said, that on the day which had

been previously appointed by the church, to proceed to the election of a pastor, Mr. GILL was chosen by a *great majority*. The Rev. Messrs. Matthews and Ridgeway now prayed, when the Rev. Mr. Noble desired the members of the church to recognize their choice of Mr. GILL to the pastoral office. He then requested Mr. GILL to confirm his acceptance of the call, which he did, with a full and solemn declaration. The Rev. Mr. Curtis, and the aged and Rev. Mark Key, of Devonshire Square, were appointed to take the lead in the distinctive part of Ordination; and the excellent man was ordained by the laying on of hands. Three brethren were also ordained and set apart to the office of deacons, Mr. GILL joining with the other elders in the imposition of hands. Mr. Noble then went into the pulpit and delivered an exhortation to the pastor and deacons, from Acts xx. 23. *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, &c.* The church records say, ‘The sermons were suitable to the occasion, and excellent.’ Mr. GILL then went up and called upon the Lord; they then sung the 133rd psalm, (Patrick’s version) and Mr. GILL dismissed the assembly, with one of the apostolical benedictions.”

Thus we have traced the life of Mr. GILL, up to his public settlement in the pastoral office, over one of the oldest churches of our denomination in the Metropolis; we now see him standing in the place of the justly celebrated Benjamin Keach, who was a frequent sufferer for his principles, by fines, imprisonments, and pillory; henceforward, it will be our business to trace his career through the several departments of public life, in which he stood prominent.

First, we shall view him as a man of letters. Here he shone as a star of no ordinary lustre, of which it might be sufficient to note, the many and learned works which he has left behind are the best proof. Among these; his dissertation concerning the “Antiquity of the Hebrew language, letters, vowel-points, and accents.” This masterly effort of profound research, would have shewn our author to be a prodigy of reading and literature, had he never published a syllable upon any other subject. Scholars of the first class have expressed themselves astonished at the erudition every where so conspicuous in this book. We have before noticed his very early acquiring a knowledge of the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages. To these he afterwards added the Arabic, Syriac, Chaldaic, Persiac, and other oriental languages, together with an extensive acquaintance with the languages of modern Europe; the knowledge of which induced that sensible and learned man, the Rev. Augustus Toplady, to say of him, “If any one man can be said to have trodden the whole circle of human learning, it was Dr. GILL.” As it relates to the extent of his reading, let the following statement which was forced from him in self-vindication in the year 1736, when he was forty-two years of age, testify.—That he had read the Classics and Virgil at nine years of age.—That he had read Logic, Rhetoric, Ethics, Physics, and Metaphysics. The Ethnic Philosophers, Platcnists and Stoics. The Greek and Roman Historians, Herodotus, Pausanias, Livy, Sallust, &c. The Greek and Latin Fathers of the christianChurch, and church history.—That he had also read the Jewish-Targums, the Misnah, the two Talmuds, Babylonian, and Jerusalem; the Rabbot, Midrashim, Zohar, with other writings of the Jews, ancient and modern.

One thing however we desire the reader to keep in mind, lest he should charge the good man with egotism; he had been called a *botcher in Divinity*, by one who was

considered far his inferior, and who represented him as one out of only *two* or *three* who had even the smatterings of learning.

He then added, "I am not now too old to learn, and through divine goodness do not want industry, diligence and application." Of this last sentence he gave full proof, for after he had penned the above section, he published his Exposition of the whole Bible ; his Body of Divinity ; with many other of his excellent works.

If any thing more is needed upon this head, we would refer to his deep acquaintance with *Rabbinical* literature, of which he has made such copious use in his Exposition ; his dissertation upon the vowel-points, and Jewish Proselyte Baptism. Entirely on these grounds, Mr. Gill was in the year 1748 presented with a Diploma from the Marischal College, Aberdeen, creating him D. D. which was sent him gratuitously. The following is a short extract from that document.—"Whereas we have discovered, that the Rev. John Gill, A. M. Pastor of a church in London, has made a very distinguished progress in sacred literature, the oriental languages, and Jewish Antiquities ; and is endowed with those manners which become a pious and upright man : Know ye, that we have created and constituted him Doctor of Sacred Divinity, and we do hereby earnestly recommend him to the cultivators of science and virtue, wherever they be."

When his friends complimented him upon the honour which had been conferred upon him, the good man jocosely and quaintly replied, "I neither *sought* it, nor *thought* it, nor *bought* it."

We now take a view of Dr. GILL in the character of a Preacher of the Gospel. Here he sustained no ordinary reputation. In his early days, few persons were more animated, or preached with greater fluency and ease to themselves, or profit to their hearers, than he did. He came at times into the pulpit, evidently from the mount of secret communion with God ; his face shining with a heavenly lustre, his heart warm with the fire of love, and really in the fulness of the gospel of Christ ; enriched, and generally enriching. He usually wrote a very short outline of his sermon, which served to impress the substance of it upon his memory, and rendered his subject familiar to him while preaching ; but he never resorted to the servile method of delivering his sermons, *memoriter*, as it is called. Of him it cannot be said—

"He toil'd and stow'd his lumber in his brain,  
He toil'd, and then he dragg'd it out again."

His heart was full, and out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth freely spake.

When the fervour of youth had abated, his public services sustained great reputation by his expressive language, his perspicuous method, his accurate delivery, but above all by the solidity, fulness, and preciousness of the matter, with which they were fraught.

Whatever was his subject, the leading doctrines of Salvation ran through it from beginning to end ; so that his hearers could always perceive he was encircled in everlasting love, resting upon the atonement of Jesus, and animated by the Holy Ghost. If any one man who has ever appeared in the character of a minister of Christ, deserved to be called a clear, faithful, discriminating, and consistent preacher, Dr. GILL was that man.

Hence it was, that in the year 1729, many members of other churches, being anxious to hear him, united themselves into a society, and invited him to undertake a lecture on a

Wednesday evening, in "Great East Cheap;"\* to this he assented, and commenced by preaching on Psalm lxxi. 16. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only.* He tells his hearers, he selected these words, partly to shew he did not undertake the lecture in his own strength, but in the strength of Christ; and partly to shew that his resolutions were to preach the great and glorious doctrine of a sinner's justification before God, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him; which he considered to be the centre arch of that bridge, by which the believer passes out of time into a blissful eternity.

This lecture, which he preached more than 26 years, was productive, not only of many of his excellent sermons, but also of whole treatises,—on the Trinity, Justification, Cause of God and Truth, and also many of his Commentaries.

This service, however, he declined in 1756, and upon March 24th, preached his farewell sermon from Acts xxvi. 22, 23. *Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue until this day, &c.* Here he tells his audience, "I have nothing to complain of, the lecture was never in better circumstances than it is now; but I find my natural strength will not admit me to preach so frequently, being now in the *fortieth* year of my ministry, so that it is time for me to have done with extra service. But a more principal reason is, that I may have a little more time to attend to, and finish, an arduous work upon my hands, 'An Exposition of the whole Old Testament;' and I have no other way of easing myself, but by dropping this lecture. These, and these only, are my reasons for so doing."†

Another proof of Dr. GILL's popularity as a preacher, is, that he was so frequently employed in preaching ordination and funeral sermons, together with other public services, amongst the Dissenters generally, and his own denomination in particular.

Again, we contemplate Dr. GILL as the *consistent and unflinching advocate of Evangelical Truth*. In this department, he shone as a star of the very first magnitude. This trait in his character, shines throughout all his voluminous writings, and imparts to them an excellency seldom to be met with in other Authors. Hence his "Cause of God and Truth," in 4 vols. 8vo. published in 1735, and three following years, occasioned by the reprinting of Dr. Whitby's book upon the *five points*,‡ which was boasted of as unanswerable, insomuch, that the Arminians used to say, "Why not answer Dr. Whitby?" To this book, GILL did reply, and to his reply no answer has ever been given, nor *can* be, while the word of God continues the standard of faith; and reason exists, to judge between truth and error. But why do we select this work, apart from others, seeing all his writings are not only illustrative of the great doctrines and precepts of the gospel, but most of them were published in direct defence of the truths which they illustrate. It is also worthy of observation, that GILL's controversial works, were generally, if not exclusively, on the *defensive* side of the question. His own retired, quiet, and peace-

\* This meeting-house has since been pulled down.

† Farewell Sermon at Great East-Cheap Lecture.

‡ The *five points*.—It may not be amiss to enumerate those five points, which were originally disputed between the Arminians and Calvinists. 1. Election. 2. Particular redemption. 3. Original sin. 4. Efficacious grace. 5. Final perseverance. These were the five *main* points, but there were many others.

able disposition, would never have allowed him to become an aggressive polemic ; but whenever he perceived the honour of his master assailed, or any branch of divine truth reviled, his soul was always roused into thought, his tongue was prepared to speak, and his hand ready to seize his pen, regardless of what men might say, or even timid friends suggest. Hence when Dr. Abraham Taylor attacked the doctrines of Eternal union and justification, in a sermon which Dr. GILL heard, and which was read to several ministers for their approbation, before being sent to the Press ; the Doctor went prepared to offer his reasons, in a kind manner, why those passages should be left out ; but to his great pleasure he found the sentences *were* omitted, therefore of course he said nothing, hoping Dr. Taylor had altered his mind respecting them. But when the sermon issued from the press, with those objectionable sentences in it, our friend felt it his duty publicly to remonstrate with Dr. Taylor ; he therefore wrote and printed a letter, entitled “ The doctrine of God’s everlasting love to his elect, and their eternal union with Christ ; together with some other truths stated and defended, in a letter to Dr. Abraham Taylor.” This letter has by some been thought to be the *very best* production of his pen ; every sentence being replete with precious truth, so encouraging to the timid, so establishing to the wavering, and so rich with the unction of the Holy Ghost. When the Doctor was preparing this publication for the press, some of his people waited upon him, and dissuaded him from going on ; urging among other things, that he would lose the esteem, and of course the subscriptions of some wealthy persons, who were Taylor’s friends. To this he in a moment replied,—“ Dont tell me of losing, I value nothing in comparison of gospel truths. I am not afraid to be poor. I have chosen to suffer reproach, the loss of good name and reputation, to forego popularity, wealth, and friends ; yea, to be traduced as an antinomian, rather than to *drop or conceal one branch of truth respecting Christ and free grace.*”

At the commencement of his spiritual campaign, he buckled on his Armour, and never unloosed it but to put on his Shroud. Hence we find him vindicating the divine authority of Solomon’s Song ; in a series of 122 discourses ; forming a folio volume. Concerning which, that excellent judge of men and books, the Rev. James Hervey, has passed the following encomium :\*—“ It has such a copious view of sanctified invention running through it, and is interspersed with such a variety of delicate and brilliant images, as cannot but highly entertain a curious mind. It presents us also with such rich and charming displays of the glory of Christ’s person, the freeness of his grace to sinners, and the tenderness of his love to the church, as cannot but administer the most exquisite delight to the believing soul. Considered in *both* these views, I think the work resembles the Paradaisical garden described by MILTON the poet, in which

Blossoms, and fruits, at once of golden  
Hue appeared, with gay enamell’d colors mixed.’”

The Messiahship of Christ also, from the prophecies of the Old Testament ; the doctrine of the Trinity ; the whole Calvinistic scheme of Truths, in his defence of the Cause of God and Truth ; shewing those doctrines to be based upon the scriptures, in harmony with reason ; and in agreement with the christian writers of the first four centuries.

\* Theron and Aspasio, letter 9th.



Also, his EXPOSITION OF THE BIBLE, in nine vols. folio. This is a most wonderful production, in every view we can take of it; as a work of labour it is Herculean; and as the production of *one* man, certainly is a prodigy. It must not be lost sight of, that in Dr. GILL's Exposition, you have *every verse included*. It is not a running paraphrase of a section, nor a brief comment upon a paragraph, in which you frequently discover the ingenuity of the author by his getting over a difficult verse, with a short maxim or pretty saying, shewing how expert he is in leaving a perplexity behind: but he *meets* the difficulty, examines it on every side; and, if he does not remove it, he generally *illuminates* the subject for us. We see that he has laboured his point, and seldom rise from the perusal of his criticisms, without deriving some benefit from his labours.

"In short," says Dr. Rippon, "his Exposition is of unquestionable celebrity, in the republic of letters, as well for its unparalleled learning, as for its profound research: and has obtained the affluence of fame among all the evangelical denominations, at home and abroad. It yields to no theological publication whatever, in decision of character, and in a manly avowal of the grand fundamental doctrines of the gospel, considered in their native dignity and in their practical influence. It is also the only Exposition of the Old and New Testament, which the Baptists can, at present, claim as their own, either in Great Britain, or in America." That great man, John Ryland, Senr., has recorded the following commendation:—"Dr. Gill's Exposition of the Old and New Testament, is an *ocean of sound* divinity. The remarkable excellences of this great work, are, *a consistency with his truly evangelical principles throughout the whole*. Not to mention the vast treasures of learning in the Jewish Targums and Talmuds, which that man possessed *above all* the divines of our age."

But perhaps, amidst all the ten thousand folio pages of Dr. GILL, the Work which crowns the whole is, his BODY OF DIVINITY. This was his last work, and contains the substance of what he delivered to his people through the space of five or six years. Here you see his whole heart, in stating, illustrating, and defending the truth as it is in Jesus. Here you perceive his system; the harmony of one truth with another, and each and all with the sacred oracles of God. We cannot but congratulate the student in divinity, and the christian world at large, upon the reprinting of the present edition of this matchless work; so admirably calculated to assist the humble enquirer after truth, and counteract that spurious calvinism so rife in the present day. Indeed we venture to assert, respecting the leading Doctrinal sentiments of Dr. GILL; that they are in harmony with the *Scriptures*, and with *themselves*.

GILL was neither an antinomian, nor an arminian. Not an antinomian, for he maintained the law as the rule of the believer's conduct; not an arminian, for no man more fully defended the five calvinistic points, than himself. Yea, so uniformly consistent was his creed considered, that his name, in connection with Theology, indicated harmonious truth. Hence the following lines from the pen of that admirer of consistent divinity, the late Mr. Thos. Gurney, short-hand writer, at the conclusion of his poem called the "Mongrel Calvinist."\*

"Whenever I hear, if I might have my will;  
I'd have it all of a piece, either *Whitby* or *Gill*."

\* Lately reprinted, sold by Highams, Chiswell Street.

Ryland says, "Dr. GILL is the only systematic writer in our language who has treated wisely on the divine perfections. His discourses are clear, judicious, and very correct."\* Indeed, so highly was his judgment appreciated, that the elegant and ingenious James Hervey, whose name has already been mentioned, desired he would "run over Theron and Aspasio, with his pen in his hand, and minute down whatever he saw unevangelical in doctrine, inconclusive in argument, obscure, ambiguous, or improper in expression." In this letter Mr. Hervey says, "I owe you thanks for your sermons on the ransom, on faith, and on good Mr. Seward's death; they are all sweet to my taste, and I trust have been a blessing to my soul." Concluding as follows—"Your affectionate though very weak brother in Christ. James Hervey."

We now return to trace the character of Dr. GILL, as the uniform Dissenter, and consistent Baptist. We have shewn at the beginning of this memoir, that his parents were Baptists, and that early in life he was himself baptized, and cast in his lot with that body of christians; and we feel pleasure in recording the fact, that from these principles he never swerved in the slightest degree.

Directly upon the subject of *Dissent* he wrote but little, but his Tract called, "The Dissenters reasons for separating from the Church of England," is clear, and concise; and shews in every line the hand of a master; it were devoutly to be wished this little book could be put into the hand of every man, woman, and child, in the kingdom.

Our author was first called into the field of controversy upon the baptismal question in the year 1726, in reply to a dialogue, written by a Mr. Maurice, at Rowel, Northamptonshire. The baptists in those parts, especially at Kettering, about two miles off, considered themselves struck at by this pamphlet, and therefore sent it up to him, and requested he would reply to it; he accordingly soon gratified them by publishing a piece called "*The ancient mode of baptism by immersion.*" To this Mr. Maurice replied in 1727. This GILL answered in the same year, in a tract which he designated "A defence of the ancient mode," &c.

Mr. Maurice sent several of his pamphlets into North America, and the baptists there, hearing of Mr. GILL's answer, wrote for some of them, and the remaining part of the impression was sent over, at the expense of the baptist fund.

On account of this controversy, GILL received from Tilbury Fort, in Essex, a very spirited anonymous letter; animating him to continue in it, and not to be intimidated by his puny adversary; concluding with the following lines:—

Stennett, † at first, his furious foe did meet,  
Cleanly compell'd him to a swift retreat :  
Next powerful *Gale*, ‡ by mighty blast made fall.  
The church's Dagon, the gigantic *Wall* : §  
May you with like success be victor still, }  
And give your rude antagonist his fill, }  
To see that *Gale* is yet alive in *Gill*.

\* *Contemplations*, vol. 2. 412.

† Mr. Joseph Stennett, a very learned baptist minister, who died July 11th, 1713. He wrote a triumphant reply to David Russen's book, entitled "Fundamentals without a foundation, or a true picture of the anabaptists."

‡ Dr. Gale, a learned general baptist; author of "*Reflections on Dr. Wall's history of Infant Baptism.*"

§ Dr. Wall, who wrote the history of Infant Baptism: but it is not a little singular, that he advocated *immersion* as the mode. See Ivimey, p. 563. vol. 1.

Our author having once commenced writing on the subject of Baptism, and being determined in the strength of the Lord to contend for the whole range of truth *ritually*, as well as *doctrinally*, found plenty of work cut out for him, nor did he flinch from the performance of it; but whenever the authority of the Redeemer was impugned, he was always found at his post, and his numerous pieces upon the subject, all clearly shew, how well he was qualified for the part he took in the controversy. One, out of the nine or ten Tracts upon this point, has so singular a title, and so fully justifies the startling designation which he has given it, that it deserves more than barely to be mentioned :

In the preface to one of his books, the Doctor used the following language,—“The pædobaptists are ever restless and uneasy, endeavouring to support, if possible, their unscriptural practice of Infant Baptism; though it is no other than a pillar of Popery; that by which Antichrist has spread his baneful influence over many nations; is the basis of national churches, and worldly establishments; that which unites the church and the world, and keeps them together; nor can there be a full separation of the one from the other, nor a thorough reformation in religion, until it is wholly removed. And though it has so long and so largely obtained, and still does obtain, I believe with a firm and unshaken faith, that the time is hastening on, when Infant Baptism will be no more practised in the world; when churches will be formed on the same plan they were in the times of the apostles; when gospel-doctrine and discipline, will be restored to their primitive lustre and purity; when the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper will be administered as they were first delivered, clear of all present corruption and superstition; all which will be accomplished when the Lord shall be king over all the earth, and there shall be one Lord, and his name one.”

When this paragraph appeared in print, he was called upon, either to expunge, or prove it; he chose the *latter*; and wrote a book entitled, “*Infant Baptism, a part and pillar of Popery.*” It is an easy task to make assertions, though much more difficult to prove them; but whoever has read with an unbiassed mind, the nineteen quarto pages referred to, must feel convinced that not only did the good Dr. justify his assertion, but triumphantly established his premises; by shewing that “*Infant Baptism is in reality a part and pillar of Popery.*”

We cannot, however, in justice to DR. GILL, close our remarks upon this part of his memoir, without noticing the fact of his having razed one of the foundations upon which Infant Baptism is built, completely to the ground: (*viz.*) “*Jewish Proselyte Baptism.*” It had been asserted by some pædobaptists of literary eminence;—“That it was a custom among the Jews before the time of Christ, to receive proselytes into their church by baptism, as well as by circumcision; and these both adults and infants; that John and Christ took up the ordinance of baptism from them, practised it, and directed to the continued use of it; and that this circumstance accounts for the silence about Infant Baptism in the New Testament:” it being as they say, no new practice. Dr. Hammond had said, “*this was the basis of Infant Baptism;*” and Sir Richard Ellys had declared, “*he knew not of any stronger argument in favour of Infant Baptism, than this.*” Assertions like these, determined GILL to examine the point fully and carefully for himself. Therefore he waded through all the labyrinths of rabbinical literature; and arrived at the perfect satisfaction, that not a single instance can be given, from any rabbinical work *before* the time of Christ, of any one proselyte being baptized. Such being the case,

he triumphantly concludes ; “ If this is the basis of Infant Baptism, it is built upon the sand ; and will ere long fall, and be no more.”

One thing more deserves to be mentioned, before we quit this view of the Doctor's character. That he uniformly advocated and practised, what is now sinking into disrepute ; (viz.) Baptism upon a profession of faith, as a pre-requisite to the Lord's table.

Our lot is cast in an age remarkable for accommodation : if simple truth offends, the parties must be accommodated, by softening down, or explaining away, that part of it which appears most objectionable ; and if the baptism of believers in order to church-fellowship, be considered too troublesome, the door must be thrown open wide enough to receive those who cannot see baptism to be an act of personal religion, enjoined upon every follower of the Lamb, by him who said, *Go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Now upon this subject no less than others, was our good Doctor at a point.

To justify these remarks, we subjoin the two following quotations. The first is an article which he drew up himself, and inserted in the Church book with his own hand.—“ We believe that baptism and the Lord's supper are ordinances of Christ, to be continued until his second coming ; and that the former is absolutely requisite to the latter : that is to say, that those only are to be admitted into the communion of the church, and to participate of all ordinances in it, who, upon a profession of their faith, have been baptized by immersion, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

The other extract is from a Sermon entitled, “ The Scriptures, the only guide in matters of religion.”—

Speaking of Baptism he says,—“ This is a way of duty, but not of life and salvation ; it is a command of Christ to be obeyed by all believers in him, but not to be trusted in and depended on ; it is ESSENTIAL TO CHURCH COMMUNION, but not to salvation. It is indeed no indifferent thing whether it is performed or no ; this ought not to be said or thought, of any ordinance of Christ ; or whether in this or the other manner, or administered to this or the other subject. It ought to be done as Christ has directed it should ; but when it is best done, it is no saving ordinance : this, I the rather mention, to remove from us a wicked and foolish imputation, that we make an idol of this ordinance, and place our confidence and dependence on it, and put it in the room of the Saviour. I call it wicked, because false ; and foolish, because contrary to an avowed and well-known principle on which we proceed ; namely, that faith in Christ alone for salvation, is a pre-requisite to baptism. Can any man in his senses think that we depend on this ordinance for salvation, when we require that a person should believe in Christ, and profess that he believes in Christ alone for salvation, before he is baptized ; or otherwise we judge he is not a fit subject ? But, on the other hand, those that insinuate such a notion as this, would do well to consider, if their own conduct does not bespeak something of this kind ; or otherwise, what means the stir and bustle that is made when a child is ill, and not yet sprinkled, &c. What means such language as this, ‘ Run, fetch the minister to baptize the child, the child is dying ! ’ Does it not look as if this was thought to be a saving business, or as if a child could not be saved unless it is sprinkled ; and which, when done, they are quite easy and satisfied about its state.”\*

\* Scriptures the only guide in matters of religion, vol. 2. p. 493. 4to.

The above quotation exhibits, what we conceive to be, a just and scriptural view of the importance of believer's baptism; shewing the position it occupies in relation to the church of Christ, and its binding obligation upon all believers; not in order to secure their salvation, but as an act of *personal religion*, and *spiritual worship*, arising out of their relationship to him who *loved them and gave himself for them*. They are therefore baptized, because, when he condescended to set them the example in Jordan, he said, *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*.

We now return to review our author as a christian Pastor. Here we are supplied with very scanty materials; but these were in his day sufficient to weave for him a wreath of honour, which will not soon fade away. In his heart he was sympathetic; in his prayers for his people he was copious, pointed, and ardent; and in his carriage conciliating and kind, especially when he saw weakness blended with christian sincerity. An anecdote illustrative of this part of his character is recorded, and deserves a place here. A godly woman visited him one day in great trouble about the singing; for the clerk in about *three years*, had introduced *two new* tunes. With this improvement, the young people were pleased, but the good woman was distressed. After patiently listening to her doleful tale, the Doctor asked her, whether she understood singing? No, she said. What! cannot you sing? "No, she was no singer, nor her aged father before her; and though they had had about a hundred years between them to learn the Old Hundredth tune, they could not sing either that, or any other tune." The Doctor did not wound her feelings by telling her, that people who did not understand singing were the last who should complain; but kindly said, "Sister, what tunes should you like us to sing?" "Why, sir," she replied, "I should very much like *David's tunes!*" "Well, (said he) if you will get David's tunes for us, we can then try to sing them."

In fine, he was not only respected, but beloved by his members generally, for his prayers and preaching, as well as for his amiable and upright conduct in the church. Dr. Rippon says of those that survived him, "They gladly made him the subject of their conversation, and were always happy to hear any one speak of him, with his merited respect."

His ministerial and pastoral labours, by the blessing of God, were much owned for the awakening, conversion, comfort, edification and establishment of many. Several persons, who had been converted under his ministry, were afterwards called to the important work themselves. The Rev. Messrs. John Brine, William Anderson, and James Fall: these *three* he thought of with pleasure and gratitude. *Mr. Brine* is a well-known writer of the superior cast, belonging to the *old* school; he was for many years Pastor of the Baptist Church in Currier's Hall, Cripplegate. And *Mr. Anderson*, who settled at Grafton Street, Soho; as well as *Mr. Fall*, who was pastor of the Baptist Church at Watford, maintained respectable characters; they died before Dr. GILL, and for each of them he printed a funeral sermon, from which they appear in an honourable light.

It ought also to be recorded, that a Son of the last mentioned minister, became a member of Dr. GILL's church; was called to the work of the ministry, and upon the death of Mr. Wilson, of Prescott Street, preached on probation to that church for nearly eleven months; at the expiration of which period, he was chosen by a small majority, to the pastoral office. Unhappily, however, the deacons, trustees, and

principal part of the influence, being on the side of the minority, Mr. Fall's friends were obliged to withdraw, in order to retain the minister of their choice. This painful event, led to the erection of the chapel in *Little Alie Street*, which was opened for public worship, June 26th, 1754. There the ministry of Mr. Fall was much blessed, till death terminated his labours, Oct. 1756. Thus we see the separation which the enemy of souls intended for evil, has been overruled for great good; for the all-wise head of the church, has, till this day, not only maintained the existence of the church in Little Alie Street, but abundantly blessed the gospel there, to the ingathering of the scattered objects of redeeming love to the friend of sinners.

It remains now for us to take one more glance at our worthy author, and divine; in that most of all important character; the humble, holy, and happy christian.

Of his conversion to God in early life, we have already given some account; it might therefore be sufficient to add, *that* character he sustained, holily, and unblamably, throughout a long life. He walked with God, until the time came that he was not, for God took him. Respecting his health, the Lord was very merciful to him, being seldom interrupted in his work by affliction. In his sight also, he was much favoured, for although it was what is usually termed a short sight, yet it was so strong, that he could, till within a few weeks of his death, read the smallest print without glasses, *which he never used*. His last labours among his people, were the sermons which he preached from Luke i. 77, 78. *To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us*. This was the last text he ever preached from.

His health had for some time been on the decline, and he thought his work was done. Still, he more than once expressed a desire to finish the song of Zacharias, proceed as far as good old Simeon, and then "depart in peace." But this desire his heavenly Father did not see fit to grant. The decay of nature however was very gradual, attended with much pain, and loss of appetite. This visitation of his gracious God, he was enabled to bear with patient composure, and sweet resignation, never uttering a single complaint; and although he was unable to preach, he employed himself in his study till within two or three weeks of his decease; and while so employed, was seized for death: yet his faith was unshaken, and his hope firm to the last. Writing to his nephew, Mr. John Gill, of St. Albans,\* he thus expresses himself:—"I depend wholly, and alone, upon the free, sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love of God; the firm and everlasting covenant of grace, and my interest in the Persons of the Trinity, for my whole salvation; and not upon any righteousness of my own; or on anything in me, or done by me under the influences of the Holy Spirit." And then, as confirming what he had written, added, "Not upon any services of mine, which I have been assisted to perform for the good of the church, but, upon my interest in the Persons of the Trinity, the free grace of God, and the blessings of grace streaming to me through the blood and righteousness of Christ, as the ground of my hope. These are no new things to me, but what I have long been acquainted with; what I can live and die by. I apprehend I shall not be here long, but this you may tell to any of my friends."

\* This worthy minister departed this life March 8th, 1809, aged 79 years.

He expressed himself in a similar manner to other friends ; to one he said, " I have nothing to make me uneasy ;" adding, in honour of the glorious Redeemer, the following lines of the pious Watts.

He rais'd me from the deeps of sin,  
The gates of gaping hell ;  
And fix'd my standing more secure,  
Than 'twas before I fell.

This holy calmness, and heavenly peace of mind, never left him. That Jesus, whom he had extolled as a Lawgiver, a King, and a Saviour, continued precious to him ; and that Holy Spirit, whose distinct personality, office-character, and agency, he had uniformly advocated, lifted up a standard against the enemy, and imparted to his soul, " while stretched for the flight, and ready to be gone," those sacred prelibations of glory which enabled him joyfully to exclaim with his dying breath, " O my Father, my Father !" which were the last words he was heard to utter.

Thus honourably, peaceably, and happily, terminated the mortal career of the *great John Gill*, on the 14th of October, 1771, aged seventy-three years, ten months, and ten days.

His mortal remains were interred in Bunhill Fields, whither they were followed by a vast train of mourning coaches, and weeping friends. His friend and admirer, the Rev. Augustus Toplady, earnestly desired he might officiate at his grave. This affectionate respect was suitably acknowledged ; but, as he finished his course most intimately united to his own denomination, without even the semblance of a dereliction either of principle or practice, the church very courteously declined the offer ; and chose the Rev. Benjamin Wallin, M. A. of Maze Pond, to perform that last token of respect. Dr. Samuel Stennett preached his funeral sermon ; besides which, the number of others which were preached all through Great Britain, and in various parts of America, when the providence became known, exceeded, probably, all that had ever been known before or since, respecting an individual ; proclaiming, as with the voice of unusual lamentation, " A GREAT MAN IS FALLEN IN ISRAEL."

Great GILL to dust ! how dreadful is the sound !  
How vast the stroke is, and how wide the wound !  
The muse that mourns a nation's fall,  
Should wait at Gill's sad funeral.  
Should mingle Majesty and groans,  
Such as she sings to sinking thrones ;  
And, in deep sounding numbers, tell  
How Sion trembled, when this Pillar fell.

His *Tomb*, according to the division of the ground in Bunhill-fields, is situated 19 east and west, and 65 and 66 north and south. The following is a *translation* of the Latin inscription upon the Stone, which was drawn up by his friend, the Rev. Dr. Stennett.\*

In this Sepulchre  
Are deposited the remains  
Of JOHN GILL,  
Professor of sacred Theology ;  
A man of unblemished reputation,  
A sincere disciple of Jesus,  
An excellent preacher of the gospel,  
A courageous defender of the Christian faith :  
Who,  
Adorned with piety, learning, and skill,  
Was unwearied in works of prodigious labour,  
For more than fifty years.  
To obey the commands of his great Master,  
To advance the interests of the church,  
To promote the salvation of men,  
Impelled with unabated ardour,  
He put forth all his strength.  
He placidly fell asleep in Christ,  
The fourteenth day of October,  
In the year of our Lord, 1771,  
In the seventy-fourth year of his age.

Had the whole works of this pre-eminently great man, been published in uniform *folio*, they would have amounted to the amazing aggregate, of **MORE THAN TEN THOUSAND PAGES**. All written with his own hand, and all corrected, as they passed through the press, by himself alone. They comprise,

1. An **EXPOSITION** of the **OLD and NEW TESTAMENT**, in nine vols. folio. This matchless work was republished by Matthews and Leigh, in 1810, in nine vols. quarto ; it is now getting scarce.

2. **DISCOURSES** upon the **BOOK of CANTICLES**, folio. This work has been several times reprinted ; but is now scarce.

3. The **CAUSE of GOD and TRUTH**. Originally published in four vols. octavo. This also has passed through several editions ; the last of which has just issued from the press, in one vol. octavo, it is beautiful, and cheap.

4. **SERMONS and TRACTS**, published at different times. These were principally republished after the Doctor's death, by his son-in-law, Mr. Keith of Gracechurch Street, in three beautiful quarto vols. These are now scarce, and fetch a high price.

5. A **BODY of DOCTRINAL and PRACTICAL DIVINITY**. This was first given to the public in three vols. quarto, in the years 1769, and 1770 ; was reprinted in 1795, in three vols.



royal octavo; but the paper was bad, and the whole of the getting up was unworthy the character of such a valuable and standard work. In 1815 another edition was published, in one vol. quarto; this was neat and handsome; but, before the commencement of the present reprint, was very scarce. Besides, it wanted a *portrait* of the author, and a *memoir* of his life, which had never before accompanied this work.

In addition to all the above works, Dr. GILL republished Dr. CRISP'S *Sermons*, in 2 vols. octavo, with *explanatory notes* on such passages in them as had been considered *exceptionable*. To which he prefixed, brief memoirs of Crisp. He also wrote a commendatory preface to SKEPP'S most excellent posthumous work on DIVINE ENERGY.

It is a subject much to be lamented, that a complete and uniform edition of GILL'S WORKS, has never been presented to the public. It was, we believe, once attempted by Keith; but he finished his course, before he had completed his design; leaving only the Exposition from the 132nd Psalm, to the end of the Prophets, incomplete. Had the life of Mr. Keith been spared a little longer, we should then have had the whole of Dr. GILL'S works, in *twenty-two* vols. 4to. in a style of perfection seldom excelled. Surely while the press is teeming with the frothy and flimsy productions of the present day; and the Arminian and Semi-Arminian books of the past century; it is rather a reflection upon the zeal of the friends of TRUTH, that sixty-seven years should have been suffered to run out, without an uniform edition of Dr. GILL'S writings.

“So heav'n-taught GILL! shone thy transparent breast  
 With light divine! imbib'd from the sole fount  
 Of ev'ngelic and celestial Truth.  
 Deep did'st thou dig in *Revelation's* mine  
 For soul-adorning truths! which far excel  
 The glowing rubies of the Persian court;  
 And shine transparent through thy golden page.  
 Close was thy converse, intimate and sweet,  
 For half a Century, with the men of God,  
 Apostles, prophets, patriarchs, priests, and kings;  
 Who, from the mouth of *Inspiration*, wrote  
 The *Sacred Volume!* Thy *industrious* pen  
 With arduous toil, and skill profound *explain'd*.  
 The awful wonders of the mystic *cross*,  
 And the vast joys of the *celestial* world,  
 Were thy exalted and thy darling theme.  
 Thy nervous pen describ'd th' *eternal hills*,  
 Where the clear stream of full salvation *springs*;  
 And how that stream of full salvation *flows*  
 In vast meanders down to earth and time.  
 Thy radiant page *harmonious* Truth displays;  
 Deep penetration, and seraphic love.  
 Nor will it cease to shine, from age to age,  
 Till, the bright dawn of everlasting Day!”

B. FRANCIS.

We close this imperfect Memoir, with the following brilliant sketch, written by that *elegant and extraordinary* man, the REV. AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY.

“Such were the indefatigable labours, such the exemplary life, and such the comfortable death, of this great and eminent person. If any one man can be supposed to have trod the *whole circle* of human learning, it was Dr. GILL.” His attainments, both in abstruse and polite literature, were, what is very uncommon, equally extensive and profound. Providence had, to this end, endued him with a firmness of constitution, and an unremitting vigour of mind, which rarely fall to the lot of the sedentary and learned. It would, perhaps, try the constitutions of half the *literati in England*, only to *read*, with care and attention, the whole of what he wrote.

The Doctor considered not any subject superficially, or by halves. As deeply as human sagacity, enlightened by grace, could penetrate, he went to the bottom of every thing he engaged in. With a solidity of judgment, and with an acuteness of discernment, peculiar to few, he exhausted as it were, the very soul and substance of most arguments he undertook. His *style* too, resembles himself; it is manly, nervous, plain; conscious, if I may so speak, of the unutterable dignity, value, and importance of the freight it conveys; it drives, directly and perspicuously, to the point in view, regardless of affected cadence, and superior to the little niceties of professed refinement.

Perhaps no man, since the days of St. Austin, has written so largely in defence of the *system of Grace*; and certainly, no man has treated that momentous subject, in all its branches, more closely, judiciously, and successfully. What was said of *Edward the Black Prince*, that he *never fought a battle, which he did not win*; what has been remarked of the Duke of *Marlborough*, that he *never undertook a siege, which he did not carry*; may be justly accommodated to our great Philosopher and Divine: who, *so far as the distinguishing DOCTRINES of the gospel are concerned*, never besieged an *Error*, which he did not force from its strong holds; nor ever encountered an Adversary, whom *he* did not baffle and subdue.

His learning and labours, if exceedable, were exceeded only by the invariable sanctity of his life and conversation. From his childhood to his entrance on the ministry, and from his entrance on the ministry, to the moment of his dissolution, not one of his most inveterate opposers, was ever able to charge him with the least shadow of immorality. HIMSELF, no less than his writings, DEMONSTRATED, THAT THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE DOES NOT LEAD TO LICENTIOUSNESS. Those who had the honour and happiness of being admitted into the number of his friends, can go still *further* in their testimony. They know that his moral demeanour was more than blameless; it was from first to last consistently *exemplary*. And, indeed, an *undeviating consistency*, both in his views of evangelical *truths*, and in his *obedience* as a servant of God, was one of those qualities, by which his cast of character was eminently marked. He was, in *every* respect, *a burning and a shining light*;—*Burning*, with love to God, to Truth, and to Souls;—*Shining*, “as an ensample to Believers, in word, in faith, in purity:” a pattern of good works, and a model of all holy conversation and godliness.

The Doctor has been accused of *Bigotry*, by some who were unacquainted with his real temper and character. Bigotry may be defined, *such a BLIND and FURIOUS attachment to any particular principle, or set of principles, as disposes us to WISH ILL to those persons who differ from us in judgment*. Simple bigotry, therefore, is, *the spirit of*

*persecution without the power* ; and *persecution* is no other than *bigotry armed with force, and carrying its malevolence into act*. Hence it appears, that to be *clearly convinced* of certain propositions, as true ; and to be *steadfast* in adhering to them, upon that conviction ; nay, to *assent* and *defend* those propositions, to the utmost extent of argument ; can no more be called *bigotry*, than the shining of the Sun can be termed ostentation. If in any parts of his Controversial Writings, the Doctor has been warned into some little neglects of ceremony towards his assailants ; it is to be ascribed, not to *Bigotry*, (for he possessed a very large share of benevolence and candour,) but to that complexional sensibility, inseparable, perhaps, from human nature in its present state ; and from which, it is certain the apostles themselves were not exempt.

His Doctrinal and Practical Writings will live, and be admired, and be a standing blessing to posterity, when their opposers are forgotten, or only remembered by the refutations he has given them. While true Religion, and sound Learning, have a single friend remaining in the British Empire, the *Works* and Name of GILL will be *precious* and revered.

May the readers of this inadequate sketch, together with him, who (though of a very different denomination from the Doctor,) pays this last and unexaggerated tribute of justice to the honoured memory of so excellent a person, participate on earth, and everlastingly celebrate in heaven, that SOVEREIGN GRACE, which its departed Champion so largely *experienced*,—to which he was so distinguished an *ornament*,—and of which he was so able a *defender* !”

If, from *good works*, could rise our last relief,  
 Who *more* could boast than this renowned Chief ?  
 But, these afforded not the least delight ;  
 They vanish'd, like a vapour, out of sight.—  
 Not on his *character*, which stood renown'd,  
 Not on his *labours*, which Jehovah crown'd,  
 He placed the *least* dependance ; from his soul  
 He did most steadily *renounce the whole* :  
 And, for *salvation*, fix'd on the rich *blood*  
 And *righteousness*, of his incarnate God.  
 There were his hopes, his rest, his joy, his crown ;  
 And, at *His* feet, he laid his *labours* down.  
 Clear was his prospect of the *promised land*,  
 Where in full view he saw his Saviour stand ;  
 He on his everlasting *love* rely'd,  
 Sunk in his arms, and, IN FULL GLORY died.

# INTRODUCTION.

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HAVING completed an Exposition of the whole Bible, the Books both of the Old and of the New Testament; I considered with myself what would be best next to engage in for the further instruction of the people under my care; and my thoughts led me to enter upon a Scheme of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity, first the former and then the latter; the one being the foundation of the other, and both having a close connection with each other. Doctrine has an influence upon practice, especially evangelical doctrine, spiritually understood, affectionately embraced, and powerfully and feelingly experienced; so true is what the Apostle asserts, that the *Grace of God*, that is, the Doctrine of the Grace of God, *that bringeth Salvation*, the good news, the glad tidings of salvation by Christ, which is peculiar to Gospel Doctrine, *hath appeared to all men*, Gentiles as well as Jews, in the external ministry of the word; *teaching us*, to whom it comes with power and efficacy in the demonstration of the Spirit, *that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*, Tit. ii. 11, 12. Where there is not the doctrine of faith, the obedience of faith cannot be expected. Where there is not the doctrine of the Gospel, and men have not learned Christ, they live for the most part as if there was no God in the world, and give themselves up to work all sin with greediness. And on the other hand, doctrine without practice, or a mere theory and speculative knowledge of things, unless reduced to practice, is of no avail; such are only "vainly puffed up in their fleshly minds, profess to know God in word, but in works deny him, have a form of godliness without the power of it, a name to live but are dead." Doctrine and practice should go together; and in order both to know and do the will of God, instruction in doctrine and practice is necessary; and the one being first taught will lead on to the other. This method of instruction the Apostle Paul has pointed out to us in some of his Epistles, especially in the Epistle to the Ephesians; in which he first treats of Election, Predestination, Adoption, Acceptance in Christ, Redemption and Pardon of Sin, Regeneration and other doctrines of grace, and of the privileges of the Saints under the Gospel dispensation; and then enforces the several duties incumbent on them as men and Christians, respecting them in their several stations, in the church, in their families, and in the world. So the Apostle instructed Timothy, first to *teach* the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus, the doctrine that is according to godliness and productive of it, and then to *exhort* and press men to the duties of religion from evangelical motives and principles. And he also enjoined Titus to affirm the doctrines of the Gospel with constancy and certainty, to this end, "that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." 1. Tim. vi. 2, 3. Tit. iii. 8.

And now having finished my Scheme of Doctrinal Divinity, at the importunity of my friends I have been prevailed upon to publish it.

Systematical Divinity, I am sensible, is now become very unpopular. Formulas and articles of faith, creeds, confessions, catechisms, and summaries of divine truths, are greatly decried in our age; and yet, what art or science soever but has been reduced to a system? phisic, metaphysic, logic, rhetoric, &c. Philosophy in general has had its several systems: not to take notice of the various sects and systems of philosophy in ancient times; in the last age, the Cartesian system of philosophy greatly obtained, as the Newtonian system now does. Astronomy in particular has been considered as a system; sometimes called the System of the Universe, and sometimes the Solar or Planetary System: the first that is known is what was brought by Pythagoras into Greece and Italy, and from him called the Pythagorean System; and which was followed by many of the first and ancient philosophers, though for many years it lay

neglected ; but has been of late ages revived, and now much in vogue : the next is the Ptolemaic System, advanced by Ptolemy ; which places the earth in the centre of the universe, and makes the heavens, with the sun, moon, and stars, to revolve about it ; and which was universally embraced for many hundred years, till the Pythagorean System was revived by Copernicus, two or three hundred years ago, called, from him, the Copernican System. In short, medicine, jurisprudence or law, and every art and science, are reduced to a system or body ; which is no other than an assemblage or composition of the several doctrines or parts of a science ; and why should Divinity, the most noble science,<sup>1</sup> be without a system ? Evangelical truths are spread and scattered about in the sacred Scriptures ; and to gather them together, and dispose of them in a regular orderly method, surely cannot be disagreeable ; but must be useful, for the more clear and perspicuous understanding them, for the better retaining them in memory, and to shew the connection, harmony, and agreement of them. Accordingly, we find that Christian writers, in ancient times, attempted something of this nature ; as the several formulas of faith, symbols, or creeds, made in the first three or four centuries of Christianity ; the *Stromata* of Clemens of Alexandria ; the four books of Principles, by Origen ; the divine Institutions of Lactantius ; the large Catechism of Gregory Nyssene ; the Theology of Gregory Nazianzen ; the Exposition of the Apostles' Symbol, by Rufinus ; and the Enchiridion of Austin, with many others that followed : and since the Reformation, we have had bodies or systems of divinity, and confessions of faith, better digested, and drawn up with greater accuracy and consistence ; and which have been very serviceable to lead men into the knowledge of evangelical doctrine, and confirm them in it ; as well as to shew the agreement and harmony of sound divines and churches, in the more principal parts of it : and even those who now cry out against systems, confessions, and creeds, their predecessors had those of their own ; Arius had his creed ; and the Socinians have their catechism, the Racovian Catechism ; and the Remonstrants have published their confession of faith ; not to take notice of the several Bodies of Divinity, published by Episcopius, Limborch, Curcellæus, and others. The Jews in imitation of the Christians, have reduced their theology to certain heads or articles of faith ; the chief, if not the first that took this method, was the famous Maimonides, who comprised their religious tenets in *thirteen* articles : after him R. Joseph Alba reduced them to *three* classes, the Existence of God, the Law of Moses, and the Doctrine of Rewards and Punishments.

But what makes most for our purpose, and is worthy of our example, are the Scripture Compendiums or Systems of Doctrine and Duty. What a compendium or body of laws is the *Decalogue* or *Ten Commands*, drawn up and calculated more especially for the use of the Jews, and suited to their circumstances ! a body of laws not to be equalled by the wisest legislators of Greece and Rome, Minos, Lycurgus, Zaleucus, and Numa ; nor by the laws of the Twelve Roman Tables, for order and regularity, for clearness and perspicuity, for comprehensiveness and brevity ; being divided into two tables, in the most perfect order ; the first respecting the worship of God and the duties owing to him, and the other respecting men and the mutual duties they owe to each other. As prayer is a very principal and incumbent duty on men with respect to God, our Lord has given a very compendious directory, as to the matter of it, in what is commonly called the *Lord's Prayer* ; which consists of petitions the most full, proper, and pertinent, and in the most regular order. And as to articles of faith or things to be believed, we have a creed, made mention of in Heb. vi. 1, 2. consisting of six articles ; repentance from dead works, faith towards God, the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. These are commonly thought to be so many articles of the Christian faith ; but I rather think<sup>2</sup> they are so many articles of the Jewish Creed, embraced and professed by believers under the Jewish dispensation ; since the Christian Hebrews are directed to consider them as the principles of the doctrine of Christ, as an introduction, and as leading on to it, and which were in some sense to be *left* and not *laid again* ; they were not to stick and stop here, but to go on to perfection, by searching into and embracing doctrines more sublime and perfect, revealed in

<sup>1</sup> Quo enim et nobilior cæteris omnibus disciplinis est theologia, eo magis accurate sunt ejus dogmata noscenda, ac methodice etiam percipienda : Amesii Paramesis ad Studios. Theolog.

<sup>2</sup> See my Exposition of Heb. vi. 1. 2.

the Gospel; at least they were not to be any longer instructed in the above articles in the manner they had been, but in a clearer manner, unattended with legal ceremonies, to view them and make use of them. Thus for instance, they, the believers, Christian Hebrews, were not to learn the doctrine of *repentance* from slain beasts or to signify it by them, as they had been used to do; for every sacrifice brought for sin, which they were no longer obliged to, was a tacit confession and an acknowledgment of sin, and that they repented of it, and deserved to die as the creature did; but now they were to exercise evangelical repentance in the view of a crucified Christ, and remission of sin by his blood: and whereas they had been taught to have *faith towards God*, as the God of Israel, they were now moreover to believe in Christ as the Son of God, the true Messiah, the Saviour of lost sinners, without the intervention of sacrifices. See John xiv. 1. The *doctrine of baptisms*, is to be understood of the divers baptisms, or bathings among the Jews, spoken of in Heb. ix. 10. which had a doctrine in them, teaching the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ to wash in for sin and for uncleanness; which they were no more to learn in this way, but to apply immediately to the blood of Christ for it. And the doctrine of *laying on of hands* respects the laying on of the hands of the priests and people on the head of the sacrifices, which instructed in that great and evangelical truth, the transfer and imputation of sin to Christ, offered up in the room and stead of his people; and which was to be taught and learnt no longer in that manner, since Christ was now made sin for his people, and had had their sins imputed to him, which he had borne in his own body on the tree: and as for the doctrines of the *resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment*, they were such as distinguished Jews and Gentiles, which latter were greatly strangers to a future state; and though they were common to Jews and Christians, yet the believing Hebrews were not to rest in the knowledge they had of these, as enjoyed under the former dispensation; but to go on to perfection; and press forward towards a greater share of knowledge of them and of other more sublime doctrines; since life and immortality were brought to light by Christ in a clearer and brighter manner through the Gospel. But all that I mean by this is, that the principal doctrines of faith under the Jewish dispensation are reduced to a system, though to be improved and perfected under the gospel dispensation. Those articles were but few; though Gregory<sup>3</sup> observes, that according to the increase of times, the knowledge of saints increased, and the nearer they were to the coming of the Saviour the more fully they perceived the mysteries of salvation: and so the articles in the formulas and symbols of the first Christians were but few, suitable to the times in which they lived, and as opposite to the errors then broached; and which were increased by new errors that sprung up, which made an increase of articles necessary; otherwise the same articles of faith were believed by the ancients as by later posterity, as Aquinas concludes:<sup>4</sup> "Articles of faith," says he, "have increased by succession of times, not indeed, as to the substance, but as to the explanation and express profession of them; for what are explicitly and under a greater number believed by posterity, all the same were believed by the fathers before them, implicitly and under a lesser number." It is easy to observe, that the first summaries of faith recorded by the most ancient writers, went no further than the doctrine of the Trinity, or what concerns the Three Divine Persons; the doctrines of the heretics of the first ages being opposed to one or other of them: but when other heresies sprung up and other false doctrines were taught, it became necessary to add new articles, both to explain, defend, and secure truth, and to distinguish those who were sound in the faith of the Gospel from those that were not.

Mention is made in the New Testament of a *form of doctrine delivered*, and a *form of sound words* that had been heard and was to be held fast, and of a *proportion or analogy of faith*, according to which ministers were to prophesy or preach; the first of these is spoken of in Rom. vi. 17.—*But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you*; which is not to be understood of the Scriptures or written word delivered unto them; but of the Gospel and the doctrines of it preached by the apostle in the ministry of the word to the Romans, which they had yielded the obedience of faith unto, and which was *τυπος*, a *type*, or pattern, as the word is rendered, Heb. viii. 5. and an *example*, 1 Tim. iv. 12. according to which they were to conform

<sup>3</sup> Homil. 16. in Ezek. apud Aquin.

<sup>4</sup> Summa Theolog. Sec. sec. qu. i. artic. 7.

their faith and practice ; and which in the next place referred to, 2 Tim. i. 13. is called *υποτυπωσις*, translated a *pattern*, 1 Eph. i. 16. a form exactly expressed, always to be had in view, to be attended to, and followed ; and a delineation, such as a picture or the outlines of a portrait given by painters to their learners, always to be looked unto and imitated ; and such a form the apostle proposed to Timothy, carefully to respect and give information of to others as a rule of faith and practice ;<sup>5</sup> which cannot be understood of the Scriptures, though of what is agreeable to them ; since it is what Timothy had heard of the apostle, either in his private conversation, or in his public ministry, even a set of Gospel doctrines collected out of the scriptures and confirmed by them, reduced into a system ; and thus the apostle himself reduces his ministry to these two heads, *repentance towards God*, and *faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21. And a rich summary and glorious compendium and chain of Gospel truths does he deliver, Rom. viii. 30. worthy, as a form and pattern, to gospel ministers to attend unto, and according to it to regulate their ministrations. Once more, the apostle speaks of a *proportion* or an *analogy of faith*, in Rom. xii. 6. *Whether prophesy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith* ; by which *faith* Calvin, on the text observes, are meant the first axioms of religion, to which whatsoever doctrine is not found to answer is convicted of falsehood. And so Piscator, upon the words, according to the *analogy of faith*, that is, so as that the interpretation of Scripture we bring is analogous to the articles of faith, that is, agreeing with them and consenting to them, and not repugnant ; and Paræus on the text is more express : “*Analogy*,” he says, “is not the same as *measure* (ver. 3.) for measure is of one thing measured, but analogy is between two things that are analogous ; but the apostle seems to describe something more, namely, to prescribe a rule by which all prophesying is to be directed ; therefore by *faith* others understand the rule of Scripture, and the axioms of faith, such as are comprehended in the Symbol of the Apostolic faith (or the Apostles’ Creed) which have in them a manifest truth from the Scriptures. *Analogy* is the evident harmony of faith and consent of the heads (or articles) of faith, to which whatever agrees is true, and whatsoever disagrees is false and adulterate. This is the rule of all prophesying (or preaching ; ) therefore, according to the rule of the sacred Scripture and the Apostles’ Creed, all interpretations, disputations, questions, and opinions in the church, are to be examined, that they may be conformable thereunto.” And though what is now called the Apostles’ Creed might not be composed by them, nor so early as their time ; yet the substance of it was agreeable to their doctrine, and therefore called theirs ; and there was a *regula fidei*, a rule of faith, very near it in words, received, embraced, and professed very early in the Christian church ; which Tertullian<sup>6</sup> gives in these words, “The rule of faith is truly one, solely immoveable and irreformable (not to be corrected and mended ; ) namely, of believing in the only God Almighty, the maker of the world, and in his Son Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, crucified under Pontius Pilate, raised from the dead on the third day, received into heaven, sitting now at the right hand of the Father, who will come to judge the quick and dead by or at the resurrection of the dead.” And such a set of principles these, as or what are similar to them and accord with the word of God, may be called the analogy of faith. And a late writer<sup>7</sup> observes on the word *analogy* ; “The analogy of faith, our divines call the sum of heavenly doctrine concerning articles of faith, taken out of such passages of Scripture, where, as in their proper place, they are treated of in clear and plain words.” Upon the whole, it seems no ways incongruous with the sacred writings, but perfectly agreeable to them, that articles and heads of faith, or a summary of gospel truths, may be collected from them, to declare explicitly our belief of them, to strengthen the faith of others in them, to shew our agreement in them with other Christians in the principal

<sup>5</sup> Calvin on the passage has these words, “The apostle seems to me to command Timothy that he be tenacious of the doctrine he had learned, not only as to the substance, but as to the figure of the oration, (or form of speech or set of words used) for *υποτυπωσις*, the word used, is a lively expression of things as if presented to the eye. Paul knew how easy is a lapse or defection from the pure doctrine, and therefore solicitously cautioned Timothy not to decline from the form of teaching he had received.”

<sup>6</sup> De virgin. veland. c. l. vid. præscript. hæret. c. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Analogiam fidei nostrates dicunt summam cœlestis doctrinæ de articulis fidei e talibus scripturæ petitam locis, ubi claris et perspicuis verbis ac, seu in propria sede, de iis agitur, Stockii Clavis Ling. s. Nov. Test. p. 627.

parts of them, and to distinguish ourselves from those who oppose the faith once delivered to the saints.

It is strongly pleaded, that articles and confessions of faith, in which men are to agree, should be expressed in the bare words of the sacred Scriptures, and that nothing should be considered as a fundamental article that is matter of controversy : as to the latter, if that was admitted, there would be scarce any article left us at all to believe ; for what is there almost that is believed, but what is controverted by some, nor any passage of Scripture brought in support of it, but the sense of it is called in question, or perverted ? for as Clemens of Alexandria<sup>b</sup> says, “ I do not think there is any scripture so happy as to be contradicted by none.” As to the former, that we are to be tied up to the bare words of Scripture concerning any doctrine of faith delivered in them ; though we ought to entertain the highest esteem of the words of Scripture, and have the greatest value for them, as being clothed with such majesty, and having such an energy in them, which the words that man’s wisdom teacheth have not ; yet our sense of them cannot be expressed but in words literally varying from them : and it should be settled what is meant by bare words of scripture, whether of the original text, Hebrew and Greek, or of any translation, as English, &c. ; if the words of a translation, a man cannot be sure that this always does express the sense of scripture, especially in passages difficult and controverted ; if of the original, then both he that makes the confession, and they to whom it is made, ought to understand Hebrew and Greek ; and even every member of a church where a confession of faith is required in order to communion ; and if this is to be made in the bare words of Scripture, be it in the words of a translation, without an explanation of their sense of them in other words, it might introduce into a Christian community all sorts of errors that can be named, which would be utterly inconsistent with its peace, concord, harmony, and union : moreover, to be obliged to express ourselves only in the words of Scripture, would be—1. To destroy all exposition and interpretation of Scripture ; for without words different from, though agreeable to, the sacred Scriptures, we can never express our sense of them, nor explain them to others according to the sense we have entertained of them ; and though no scripture is of private interpretation, or a man’s own interpretation, so as to be obliging on others, yet by this means it will become of no interpretation at all, private or public, of a man’s own or of others. It is indeed sometimes said that *Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture*, and which in some respects is true ; as when for the better understanding of a passage of Scripture, another more clear and explicit is set unto it and compared with it, and which serves to throw light on it and give a clearer discernment of it, and of its true sense ; but then that light, discernment and sense, cannot be expressed but in words literally different from them both.—2. To be obliged to express ourselves about divine things in the bare words of Scripture, must tend to make the ministry and preaching of the word in a great measure useless ; for then a minister of the word would have nothing else to do but to repeat or read some select passages of Scripture relating to any particular subject, or collect a string of them, which refer to the same subject, and deliver them without attempting any illustration of them, or making use of any reasonings from them, to explain or strengthen any point of doctrine contained in them ; so that the people in common may as well, in a manner, stay at home and read the Scriptures in their private houses. AS to attend on public ministrations. Surely the apostle Paul, when he “ reasoned out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he preached was Christ,” (Acts xvii. 2, 3.) must in these his reasonings, explanations, and allegations, use his own words ; which though they accorded with the Scriptures, must literally vary from them out of which he reasoned, and by which he elucidated and confirmed his arguments concerning the Messiahship of Jesus, his suffering of death, and resurrection from the dead : and though he said no other as to substance than what Moses and the prophets said concerning Christ, yet in words different from theirs. According to this scheme all public ministrations must be at an end, as well as all writing in defence of truth and for the confutation of errors ; yea—3. This must in a great measure cramp all religious conversation about divine things, if not destroy it. To what purpose is it for them that fear God to meet frequently and speak often one to another about the

<sup>b</sup> Stromat. l. 1. p. 277.



things of God, and truths of the Gospel, if they are not to make use of their own words to express their sense of these things by them? and how in this way can their Christian conferences be to mutual edification? how can they build up one another in their most holy faith? how can weaker and less experienced Christians receive any advantage from more knowing and stronger ones, if only they are to declare their sense of things in the bare words of Scripture?—4. Indeed, as Dr. Owen says,<sup>9</sup> if this is the case, as it would be unlawful to speak or write, otherwise than in the words of Scripture, so it would be unlawful to think or conceive in the mind any other than what the Scripture expresses: the whole of what he says on this subject is worth repeating; “To deny the liberty, yea, the necessity hereof, (that is, of making use of such words and expressions, as it may be, are not literally and formally contained in Scripture, but only are unto our conceptions and apprehensions expository of what is so contained) is to deny all interpretation of the Scripture, all endeavours to express the sense of the words of it unto the understandings of one another, which is in a word, to render the Scripture itself altogether useless; if it is unlawful for me to *speak* or *write*, what I conceive to be the sense of the words of Scripture and the nature of the thing signified and expressed by them, it is unlawful for me also to *think* or conceive in my mind, what is the sense of the words or nature of the things; which to say, is to make *brutes* of ourselves, and to frustrate the whole design of God in giving unto us the great privilege of his word.”—5. In this way, the sentiments of one man in any point of religion cannot be distinguished from those of another, though diametrically opposite; so an Arian cannot be known from an Athanasian, both will say, in the words of Scripture, that Christ is the *great God*, the *true God*, and *over all God blessed for ever*; but without expressing themselves in their own words, their different sentiments will not be discerned; the one holding that Christ is a created God, of a like but not of the same substance with his Father; the other, that he is equal with him, of the same nature, substance, and glory: and he that believes the latter, surely it cannot be unlawful to express his belief of it in such words which declare the true sense of his mind. So a Sabellian or Unitarian, and a Trinitarian, will neither of them scruple to say in Scripture-terms what Christ says of himself and his Father, *I and my Father are one*; and yet the former holds, they are one in person or but one person; whereas the latter affirms, that they are one in nature and essence, but two distinct persons; and surely it must be lawful so to express himself, if this is the real sentiment of his mind. A Socinian and an Anti-socinian will join in saying that Christ the *Word is God*, and that he is the *only begotten of the Father*, and the *only begotten Son of God*; and yet the one maintains that he is only God by office, not by nature, and that he is the only begotten Son of God by office or by adoption; when the other believes that Christ is God by nature, and that he is the Son of the Father by natural and eternal generation, being begotten by him. It is necessary therefore they should make use of their own words to express their sentiments by, or how otherwise should it be known that they differ from one another? And indeed this seems to be the grand reason why it is urged with so much vehemence, by some, that only Scripture words and phrases should be made use of, that their erroneous tenets may not be detected and exposed; for, as a learned man has observed,<sup>10</sup> such as cavil at the formulas (of sound doctrine used by the orthodox) and plead they should be very short, and composed in the bare words of Scripture *eos aliquid monstri alere*, these nourish and cherish some monstrous notion, as the experience of all ages testify. And sometimes such persons take detached passages of Scripture from different places, and join them together, though they have no connection and agreement with each other; and such a method Irenæus<sup>11</sup> observes the ancient heretics took, who made use of passages of Scripture “that their figments might not seem to be without a testimony; but passed over the order and connection of the Scriptures, and loosened the parts of truth as much as in them lay;” and who fitly compares such to one who should take the effigy of a king made of jewels and precious stones by a skilful artificer and loosen and separate them, and of them make the form of a dog or a fox.—6. It does not appear that those men who are so strenuous for the use of

<sup>9</sup> The Doctrine of the Trinity vindicated, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Witsius in Symbol. Exercitat. 2. s. 21. p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Adv. Hæres. l. 1. c. 1. p. 33.

Scripture phrases only in articles of religion, have a greater value for the Scriptures than others; nay, not so much; for if we are to form a judgment of them by their sermons and writings, one would think they never read the Scriptures at all, or very little, since they make such an infrequent use of them; you shall scarcely hear a passage of Scripture quoted by them in a sermon, or produced by them in their writings; more frequently Seneca, Cicero, and others; and it looks as if they thought it very unpolite, and what might serve to disgrace their more refined writings, to fill their performances with them: and after all, it is easy to observe that these men, as the Arians formerly, and the Socinians more lately, carry on their cause, and endeavour to support it by making use of unscriptural words and phrases; and therefore it is not with a very good grace that such men, or those of the same cast with them, object to the use of words and phrases not syllabically expressed in Scripture; and the rather since the Arians were the first that began to make use of unscriptural phrases, as Athanasius affirms.<sup>12</sup> The Athanasians had as good a right to use the word *ομοιοσιος*, as the Arians *ομοιοθεσιος*, and thereby explain their sense and defend their doctrine concerning the person of Christ, and his equality with God, against the latter, who introduced a phrase subversive of it; and the Calvinists have as good authority to make use of the word *satisfaction* in the doctrine of expiation of sin and atonement for it, as the Socinians and Remonstrants have for the use of the word *acceptilation*, whereby they seek to obscure and weaken it. Words and phrases though not literally expressed in scripture, yet if what is meant by them is to be found there, they may be lawfully made use of; as some respecting the doctrine of the Trinity; of these some are plainly expressed, which are used in treating of that doctrine, as *nature*, Gal. iv. 8. *Godhead*, Col. ii. 9. *Person*, the person of the Father, and the person of Christ, Heb. i. 3. 2 Cor. ii. 10. and iv. 6. and others clearly signified, as *essence*, by the name of God, *I am that I am*, Exod. iii. 14. the *unity* of divine persons in it, John x. 30. a *Trinity* of Persons in the unity of Essence, 1 John v. 7. the *generation* of the Son by and of the Father, Psalm ii. 7. John i. 14, 18. and others respecting some peculiar doctrines of revelation, concerning the state of men and the grace of Christ; as the *imputation of Adam's sin* to his posterity, Rom. v. 19. and the *imputation of righteousness*, i. e. of Christ's to them that believe, which is nearly syllabically expressed in Rom. iv. 6. and the *imputation* of sin to Christ, who *was made sin*, i. e. by imputation, 2 Cor. v. 21. And the *satisfaction* of Christ for sin, in all those places where it is signified that what Christ has done and suffered in the room and stead of his people is to the content of law and justice, and God is well pleased with it: and these are the principal words and phrases objected to, and which we shall not be prevailed upon to part with easily. And indeed, words and phrases, the use of which have long obtained in the churches of Christ, and the sense of them, is well known, and serve aptly to convey the sense of those that use them; it is unreasonable to require them to part with them, unless others, and those better words and phrases, are substituted in their room; and such as are proposed should not be easily admitted without strict examination; for there is oftentimes a good deal of truth in that saying, *qui fingit nova verba, nova gignit dogmata*; he that coins new words, coins new doctrines; which is notorious in the case of Arius; for not only Alexander,<sup>13</sup> his Bishop charged him with saying, without Scripture, and what was never said before, that God was not always a Father, but there was a time when he was not a Father; and that the Word was not always, but was made out of things that were not; and that there was a time when he was not a Son: but Eusebius,<sup>14</sup> a favourer of his, also owns that the inspired writings never used such phrases, *το εξ ουτων, και το, η ποτε οτε ουκ ην*, that Christ was *from non-entities*, from things that are not, i. e. was made out of nothing; and that *there was a time when he was not*; phrases, he says, they had never been used to.

The subject of the following Work being *Theology*, or what we call *Divinity*, it may be proper to consider the signification and use of the word, and from whence it has its rise. I say, what we call *Divinity*; for it seems to be a word, as to the use of it in this subject, peculiar to us; foreign writers never entitle their works of this kind, *Corpus vel systema vel medulla Divinitatis*, a body or system or marrow of Divinity; but *Corpus vel*

<sup>12</sup> Synod. Nicen. contr. hæres. Ariau. decret. p. 417.

<sup>13</sup> Apud Socrat. Hist. l. 1. c. 6. vid. Sozomen. Hist. l. 1. c. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Apud Theodoret. Hist. l. 1. c. 12.

*systema vel medulla Theologiæ*, a body or system or marrow of Theology. The word *Divinitas*, from whence our word *Divinity* comes, is only used by Latin writers for Deity or Godhead; but since custom and use have long fixed the sense of the word among us, to signify, when used on this subject, a Treatise on the science of divine things, sacred truths, and christian doctrines, taken out of the scriptures; we need not scruple the use of it. The *Jeus* seem to come nearest to us in the phrase which they use concerning it, calling it,<sup>15</sup> האלהיה vel חכמת האלהות a *Science of Divinity*, or a *divine Science*; that is, a Science or doctrine concerning divine things; concerning God; concerning his divinity and things belonging to him; and which, in the main, is the same as to sense with the word *Theology*, as will be seen hereafter; and here, before we proceed any further, it may not be improper to observe, the distinction of the Jewish Theology, or the two parts into which they divide it. The first they call מעשה בראשית the work of Bereshith or the creation; for Bereshith being the first word in Gen. i. 1. *In the beginning God created*, they frequently use it to signify the whole work of the creation; so that this part of their Theology respects the creatures God has made, and the nature of them; whereby the invisible things of God, as the apostle says, are discerned, even his eternal power and Godhead; and this is their *physics* or *natural Theology*. The other branch is called מעשה מרכבה the work of the chariot,<sup>16</sup> which appellation is taken from the vision in Ezek. i. of the four living creatures in the form of a chariot, which is the more abstruse and mysterious part of their Theology; and may be called their *metaphysics* or *supernatural Theology*; and which treats of God, and of his divine attributes; of the Messiah; of Angels, and the souls of men; as in the Book of Zohar, and other cabalistic writings. But to go on.

*Theology* is a Greek word, and signifies a discourse concerning God and things belonging to him; it was first in use among the heathen poets and philosophers, and so the word *Theologue*. Lantartius says,<sup>17</sup> the most ancient writers of Greece were called *Theologues*; these were their poets who wrote of their Deities, and of the genealogies of them; Pherecydes is said to be the first that wrote of divine things; so Thales says,<sup>18</sup> in his letter to him, hence he had the name of *Theologue*; <sup>19</sup> though some make Museus the son of Eumolphus, the first of this sort; <sup>20</sup> others give the title to Orpheus. Pythagoras, the disciple of Pherecydes, has also this character; and Porphyry,<sup>21</sup> by way of eminence, calls him *the Theologue*; and who often in his writings speaks of the *Theologues*; <sup>22</sup> and this character was given to Plato; also Aristotle<sup>23</sup> makes mention of the *Theologues*, as distinct from naturalists, or the natural philosophers; and Cicero<sup>24</sup> also speaks of them, and seems to design by them the poets or the authors of mystic Theology. The Egyptians had their Theology,<sup>25</sup> which they communicated to Darius, the father of Xerxes; and so had the Magi and the Chaldeans; of whom Democritus is said to learn Theology and Astrology.<sup>26</sup> The priests of Delphos are called by Plutarch,<sup>27</sup> the *Theologues* of Delphos. It is from hence now that these words *Theology* and *Theologues* have been borrowed, and made use of by christian writers; and I see no impropriety in the use of them; nor should they be thought the worse of for their original, no more than other words which come from the same source; for though these words are used of false deities, and of persons that treat of them; it follows not but that they may be used, with great propriety, of discourses concerning the true God, and things belonging to him, and of those that discourse of them. The first among Christians that has the title of *Theologue*, or *Divine*, is St. John, the writer of the book of the Revelation; for so the inscription of the book runs "the Revelation of St. John the

<sup>15</sup> Vid. Buxtorf. Talmud. Lex. Col. 752.

<sup>16</sup> Vid. Maimon. præfat. ad More Nevochim, par. 1.

<sup>17</sup> De Ira c. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Apud. Laert. l. 1. in vita ejus.

<sup>19</sup> Ib. in vita Pherecydis.

<sup>20</sup> Ib. Proœm.

<sup>21</sup> De Abstinentia, l. 2. c. 36. et de antro Nympharum.

<sup>22</sup> De Abstinentia, l. 2. s. 43, 44, 47. et de antro Nympharum.

<sup>23</sup> Metaphysic. l. 12. c. 6. 10.

<sup>24</sup> De Divinatione, l. 3. c. 21. vid. Plato de Repub. l. 2. p. 605.

<sup>25</sup> Diodorus Sic. l. 1. p. 85.

<sup>26</sup> Laert. l. 9. in vita ejus.

<sup>27</sup> De defect. Orac. p. 417. vid. ib. 410, 436.

Divine." In the Complutensian edition, and so in the King of Spain's Bible, it is "the Revelation of the holy Apostle and Evangelist, John the Divine." Whether this word *Theologue* or *Divine*, was originally in the inscription of this book, I will not say; but this may be said, that Origen,<sup>28</sup> a very early christian writer, gives to John the title of the Divine, as it should seem from hence; and Athanasius,<sup>29</sup> in his account of the sacred writings, calls the book of the Revelation, "the Revelation of John the Divine;" and who also styles him, "John the Evangelist and Divine." These words *Theologue* and *Theology*, are to be met with frequently in the ancient Fathers, in following ages, and in all christian writers to the present times. Upon the whole, it appears that *Theology* or *Divinity*, as we call it, is no other than a science or doctrine concerning God, or a discoursing and treating of things relating to him; and that a *Theologue*, or a *Divine*, is one that understands, discourses, and treats of divine things; and perhaps the Evangelist John might have this title eminently given to him by the ancients, because of his writing concerning, and the record he bore to Christ, the *λογος*, the essential Word of God, to his proper Deity, divine Sonship, and distinct personality. Suidas<sup>30</sup> not only calls him the Divine and the Evangelist, but says, that he wrote *Theology*; by which he seems to mean the book of the Revelation, which book some have observed contains a complete body of Divinity. Here we are taught the divine authority and excellency of the sacred scriptures; that there is but one God, and that he only is to be worshipped, and not angels; that God is the Triune God; that there are three Persons in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that God is eternal, the Creator, and Preserver of all things; that Christ is truly God and truly man; that he is Prophet, Priest and King; that men are by nature wretched, blind, naked, poor, and miserable; that some of all nations are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; and that they are justified and washed from their sins in his blood; the articles of the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment, the sad estate of the wicked, and the happiness of the saints may be observed in it.

And as we are upon this subject, it may not be amiss if we take a brief compendious view of the state of Theology; or if you please, Divinity, from the beginning of it to the present time. Theology may be considered either as *natural*, which is from the light of nature, and is attained unto through the use and exercise of it, or *supernatural*, which is come at by divine Revelation.

*Natural* Theology may be considered either as it was in Adam before the fall, or as in him and his posterity since the fall. Adam before the fall, had great knowledge of things divine as well as natural, moral and civil; he was created in the image of God, which image lay in knowledge, as well as in righteousness and holiness; before he came short of this glory, and lost this image, or at least was greatly impaired and obliterated in him by sin; he knew much of God, of his nature and attributes, of his mind and will, and the worship of him; he had knowledge of the persons in God, of a Trinity of persons who were concerned in the creation of all things, and in his own; and without which he could have had no true knowledge of God, nor have yielded the worship due to each divine person: not that all the knowledge he had was innate, or sprung from the light of nature within himself; but in it he was assisted, and it was capable of being increased by things without, as by symbols, the tree of life in the midst of the garden, &c. by positive precepts relating to the worship of God, and obedience to his will, as the prohibition to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the institution of marriage, &c. and through a constant and diligent contemplation of the works of creation: nor can we suppose him to be altogether without the benefit and advantage of divine Revelation; since he had such a near and immediate intercourse and converse with God himself: and some things he could not have known without it; as the creation of the world, the order and manner of it; his own formation out of the dust of the earth; and the formation of Eve from him, that she was flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, and was designed of God to be his wife, and an help-meet to him, and who should be the mother of all living; with other things respecting the worship of God, and the manner of it, and the covenant made with him as a federal head to all his posterity that

<sup>28</sup> Homil. 2. in Evangel. Joan. l. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Synops. s. Script. p. 65, 132.

<sup>30</sup> In voce *Λαζαρος* et in voce *Νομμος*.

should spring from him. These, with many other things, no doubt, Adam had immediate knowledge of from God himself.

But this kind of Theology appeared with a different aspect in Adam after his fall, and in his posterity; by sin his mind was greatly beclouded, and his understanding darkened; he lost much of his knowledge of God, and of his perfections, or he could never have imagined that going among the trees of the garden would hide him from the presence of God, and secure him from his justice. What a notion must he have of the omnipresence of God? and what also of his omniscience, when he attempted to palliate and cover his sin by the excuse he made? And he immediately lost his familiar intercourse with God, and communion with him, being drove out of the garden: and as for his posterity, descending from him by ordinary generation, they appear to be in the same case and circumstances, without God in the world, without any true knowledge of him, and fellowship with him; they appear to be in the image of the earthly and sinful Adam, and not to have the image of God upon them; they are alienated from the life of God, and their understandings darkened as to the knowledge of divine and spiritual things; and though there are some remains of the light of nature in them, by which something of God may be known by them, even his eternal power and Godhead, by considering the works of creation, or else be inexcusable; yet whatever they know of him in theory, which does not amount to a true knowledge of God, they are without a practical knowledge of him; they glorify him not as God, and serve the creature more than the Creator; yea, what knowledge they have of God is very dim and obscure; they are like persons in the dark, who grope about, if haply they may feel after him, and find him; and what ridiculous notions have they entertained of Deity? and what gods have they feigned for themselves? and have fallen into impiety and idolatry, polytheism and atheism: being without a divine Revelation, they are without the true knowledge of the worship of God; and therefore have introduced strange and absurd modes of worship; as well as are at a loss what methods to take to reconcile God, offended with them for their sins, when at any time sensible thereof; and what means and ways to make use of to recommend themselves to him; and therefore have gone into practices the most shocking and detestable. Being destitute of a divine Revelation, they can have no assurance that God will pardon sin and sinners; nor have they any knowledge of his way of justifying sinners by the righteousness of his Son; which are doctrines of pure Revelation: they can have no knowledge of Christ as Mediator, and of the way of peace and reconciliation, of life and salvation by him, and so can have no true knowledge of God in Christ; *for this is life eternal, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.* There is no saving knowledge of God without Christ; wherefore the light of nature is insufficient to salvation; for though by it men may arrive to the knowledge of a God as the Creator of all things, yet not to the knowledge of Christ as the Saviour of men; and without faith in him there can be no salvation: and though men may by means of it know in some instances what is displeasing to God, and what agreeable to him, what to be avoided, and what to be performed; in which knowledge they are yet deficient; reckoning such things to be no sins which are grievous ones, as fornication, polygamy, suicide, &c. yet even in the things they do know, they do not in their practice answer to their knowledge of them; and did they, they could not be saved by them; for if by obedience to the law of Moses none are justified and saved, then certainly not by obedience to the law and light of nature; none can be saved without faith in Christ, and his righteousness; there is no pardon but by his blood; no acceptance with God but through him: things that the light of nature leaves men strangers to. But of the weakness and insufficiency of natural Theology to instruct men in the knowledge of divine things, destitute of a divine revelation, perhaps more may be said hereafter, when the Theology of the Pagans may be observed.

*Supernatural* Theology, or what is by pure Revelation, may be next considered, in its original rise and progress; and as it has been improved and increased, or has met with checks and obstructions.

The state of this Theology may be considered as it was from the first appearance of it, after the fall of Adam, to the flood in the times of Noah, or throughout the old world. What gave rise unto it, and is the foundation of it, is what God pronounced to the serpent; *It (the seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel:* these words contain the principal articles of Christian Theology; as the incarnation

of the Messiah, the Saviour of men ; who should be *the seed of the woman*, made of a woman, made flesh, and become a partaker of the flesh and blood of those he was to save : and this seems to be understood by our first parents ; hence it is thought that Eve imagined that this illustrious person was born of her, when she brought forth her first-born, saying, *I have gotten a man the Lord*, as some choose to render the word ; as Enos, the son of Seth, afterwards was expected to be the Redeemer of the world, according to the Cabalists ;<sup>31</sup> and therefore was called *Enos, the man*, the famous excellent man ; as they say. Likewise the sufferings and death of Christ in the human nature, by means of the serpent Satan ; treading on whom, he, like a serpent, would turn himself, and bite his heel ; wound him in his human nature, his inferior nature, called his heel, and so bring him to the dust of death. When the Messiah, by his sufferings and death, would *bruise his head*, confound his schemes, destroy his works ; yea, destroy him himself, the devil, who had the power of death ; and abolish that, and make an end of sin, the cause of it, by giving full satisfaction for it ; and so save and deliver his people from all the sad effects of it, eternal wrath, ruin, and damnation. This kind of Theology received some further improvement, from the coats of skin the Lord God made and clothed our first parents with, an emblem of the justifying righteousness of Christ, and of the garments of salvation wrought out by his obedience, sufferings, and death ; signified by slain beasts ; and which God puts upon his people, and clothes them with, through his gracious act of imputation ; and hence they are said to be *justified by blood* : and to which may be added the hieroglyphic of the cherubim and flaming sword, placed at the end of the garden, to observe or point at the tree of life ; representing the prophets of the Old, and the apostles and ministers of the New Testament, being placed and appointed to shew unto men the way of salvation by Christ the tree of life. And what serves to throw more light on this evangelical Theology, are the sacrifices ordered to be offered up ; and which were types of the sacrifice of Christ ; and particularly that which was offered up by Abel, who, *by faith* in the sacrifice of Christ, *offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain* ; which also was a lamb, the firstling of his flock, and pointed at the Lamb of God, who by his sacrifice takes away the sins of his people. Within this period of time, men seem to have increased in light, as to the worship of God, especially public worship ; for in the times of Enos, the grandson of Adam, men *began to call upon the name of the Lord*. Prayer to God, and invocation of his name, were, no doubt, used before ; but men increasing, and families becoming more numerous, they now met and joined together in carrying on social and public worship : and though there were corruptions in practice, within this period of time ; wicked Cain, whose works were evil, and who set a bad example to his posterity, he and they lived together, separate from the posterity of Seth, indulging themselves in the gratification of sinful pleasures ; and it is said, that in the times of Jared, some descended from the holy mountain, as it is called, to the company of Cain, in the valley, and mixed themselves with them, and took of their daughters for wives ; from whence sprung a race of giants and wicked men, who were the cause of the flood. Lamech gave into the practice of bigamy ; and Pseudo-Berosus says,<sup>32</sup> that Ham lived a very vicious and profligate life before the flood ; yet there does not appear to have been any corruption in doctrine and worship, or any idolatry exercised. Some indeed have pretended<sup>33</sup> that in the days of Enos images were invented, to excite the minds of creatures to pray to God by them as mediators ; but this is said without any foundation.

The next period of time in which supernatural Theology may be traced, is from the flood, in the times of Noah, to the giving of the law to Israel, in the times of Moses. Noah was instructed in it by his Father Lamech, who expected<sup>34</sup> great comfort from him ; and, as some think, in spiritual as well as in civil things, Gen. v. 29. however, he instructed him in the true religion, as it was received from the first man, Adam ; and it was taught by Noah, and the knowledge of it conveyed to his posterity, partly in the ministry of the word by him ; for he was a *preacher of righteousness*, even of evangelical righteousness, *of the righteousness of faith* ; of which he was an heir, and therefore no doubt preached the

<sup>31</sup> Reuchlin, Cabalæ. l. 1. p. 740.

<sup>32</sup> Antiq. l. 3. p. 25.

<sup>33</sup> Juchasin, fol. 134. 2. Shalshalet Hakabala, fol. 71. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Reuchlin. lb.

same to others : and partly by the sacrifices he offered, which were of clean creatures he had knowledge of the distinction of ; and which sacrifices were of a sweet savour to God, and were typical of the purity of Christ's sacrifice for sin, and of the acceptance of it to God, which is to him of a sweet smelling savour. Moreover, the waters of the flood, and the ark in which Noah and his family were preserved, were a type of an evangelical ordinance, the ordinance of baptism ; which is an emblem of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ ; by which men are saved : for Noah and his family going into the ark, where, when the fountains of the great deep were broken up below, and the windows of heaven opened above, they were like persons covered in water, and immersed in it, and as persons buried ; and when they came out of it, the water being carried off, it was like a resurrection, and as life from the dead ; the *like figure*, or antitype *whereunto*, the Apostle says, *even baptism, doth also now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ* signified thereby, 1 Pet. iii. 21. likewise the rainbow, the token of the covenant ; which, though not the covenant of grace, yet of kindness and preservation ; was an emblem of peace and reconciliation by Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace ; and may assure of the everlasting love of God to his people, and of the immoveableness of the covenant of his peace with them, Isa. liv. 9, 10. In the line of Shem, the son of Noah, the knowledge of this kind of Theology was continued : Noah's blessing of him is thought by the Cabalists,<sup>35</sup> to contain his earnest desire that he might be the Redeemer of men. However, God was the Lord of Shem, known, owned, and professed by him ; and he was the father of all the children of Eber. According to the Jews<sup>36</sup> Shem had a divinity-school, where the sons of Japhet, becoming proselytes, dwelt ; and which continued to the times of Isaac ; for he is reported to go thither to pray for Rebecca.<sup>37</sup> Eber also, according to them, had such a school ; where Jacob<sup>38</sup> was a minister, servant, or disciple ; and so had Abraham in the land of Canaan ; and his three hundred trained servants are supposed to be his catechumens ; and also in Haran, where Abraham, it is said,<sup>39</sup> taught and proselyted the men, and Sarah the women : however, this we are sure of, that he instructed and " commanded his children, and his household after him, to keep the way of the Lord, and to do justice and judgment," Gen. xviii. 19. Moreover, as the gospel was preached unto Abraham, Gal. iii. 8. there is no doubt but that he preached it to others ; and as he had knowledge of the Messiah, who should spring from him, in whom all nations of the earth would be blessed, and who saw his day and was glad ; so his grandson Jacob had a more clear and distinct view of him, as God's salvation, as the Shiloh, the peace-maker and prosperous one, who should come, before civil government was removed from the Jews ; and when come, multitudes should be gathered to him, Gen. xlix. 10—18. Idolatry within this period first began among the builders of Babel : some say in the days of Serug ;<sup>40</sup> it was embraced by the Zabians in Chaldea, and obtained in the family of Terah, the father of Abraham. The worship of the sun and moon prevailed in the times of Job, in Arabia ; who lived about the time of the children of Israel being in Egypt, and a little before their coming out of it ; who do not appear to have given into the idolatry of that people. As for Job and his three friends, it is plain they had great knowledge of God and divine things ; of the perfections of God ; of the impurity of human nature ; of the insufficiency of man's righteousness to justify him before God ; and of the doctrine of redemption and salvation by Christ, Job xiv. 4. and xxv. 4, 5. and xix. 25, 26. and xxxiii. 23, 24.

The next period is from the giving of the law to Israel, by the hand of Moses, to the times of David and the prophets ; in which supernatural Theology was taught by types ; as the passover, the manna, the brazen serpent, and other things ; which were emblems of Christ and his grace, and salvation by him : and by the sacrifices instituted, particularly the daily sacrifice morning and evening, and the annual sacrifices on the day of atonement ; which besides all others, were typical of, and led the faith of men to the expiation of sins, to be made by the sacrifice of Christ : the whole ceremonial law, all that related to the priests, their garments, and their work and office, had an

<sup>35</sup> Reuchlin. ut supra.

<sup>36</sup> Targum Jon. in Gen. ix. 27.

<sup>37</sup> Targ. Jerus. et Jon. in Gen. xxv. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Targ. Onk. et Jon. in Gen. xxv. 27.

<sup>39</sup> Bereshit Rabba, s. 39. fol. 35. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Suidas in voce ΑΒρααμ et in voce Σερυχ.

evangelical signification ; it was the Jews' gospel, and which led them to Christ, and to an acquaintance with the things of Christ ; and to what make him, his grace and righteousness, necessary to salvation ; as the evil nature of sin ; the insufficiency of men to make atonement for it ; to fulfil the law, and bring in a righteousness answerable to it : Moses wrote of Christ, of his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, either by type or prophecy : the song of Moses in Deut. xxxii. and of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. very clearly speak of the perfections of God, of his works of providence and grace, and of the Messiah. According to the Jews, there was a divinity-school in the times of Samuel. Naioth in Ramah is interpreted<sup>41</sup> an house of doctrine, or school of instruction, of which Samuel was president ; where he stood over the prophets, teaching and instructing them, 1 Sam. xix. 18, 19. Such schools there were in after-times, at Bethel, and Jericho and Gilgal ; even in the times of Elijah and Elisha ; where the sons or disciples of the prophets were trained up in the knowledge of divine things, 2 Kings ii. 3, 5. and iv. 38. in such a college or house of instruction, as the Targum, Huldah the prophetess dwelt at Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxii. 14. There were within this time some checks to the true knowledge and worship of God, by the idolatry of the calf at Sinai ; of Baal-peor, on the borders of Moab ; and of Baalim and Ashtaroth and other deities, after the death of Joshua, and in the times of the Judges.

The period from the times of David including them, to the Babylonish captivity, abounds with evangelic truths, and doctrines of supernatural Theology. The Psalms of David are full of spiritual and evangelic knowledge ; many intimations are given of the sufferings and death of Christ, of his burial, resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God ; and on which many blessings of grace depend, which could never have been known but by divine revelation. And the prophets which followed him speak out still more clearly of the incarnation of Christ ; point out the very place where he was to be born, and the country where he would preach the gospel, to the illumination of those that sat in darkness. They plainly describe him in his person, and offices, the sufferings he should undergo, and the circumstances of them, and benefits arising from them ; they bear witness to the doctrines of pardon of sin through him, and justification by him ; and of his bearing sin, and making satisfaction for it : in short, a scheme of evangelic truths may be deduced from the prophetic writings ; and, indeed, the great apostle Paul himself said no other things than what the prophets did. There were some sad revolts from the true God, and his worship, within this compass of time, in the reigns of some of the kings of Israel and Judah ; as the idolatry of the calves in the reign of Jeroboam, and others of the kings of Israel ; and the idolatries committed in the times of Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, kings of Judah, which issued in the captivities of both people.

The period from the Babylonish captivity to the times of Christ, finish the Old Testament-dispensation. At the return of the Jews from captivity, who brought no idolatrous worship with them, there was a reformation made by Ezra and Nehemiah, with the prophets of their time ; or who quickly followed, as Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi ; who all prophesied of Christ the Saviour, and of the salvation that should come by him ; with the several blessings of it ; and speak of his near approach, and point at the time of his coming, and the work he should do when come. But after the death of these prophets, and the Holy Spirit departed, and there was no more prophecy, supernatural Theology began greatly to decline ; and the truths of revelation were neglected and despised ; and the doctrines and traditions of men were preferred to the word of God, that was made of none effect by them. The sect of the Sadducees, a sort of free-thinkers, rose up ; who said there was no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit : and the sect of the Pharisees, a sort of free-willers, who set up traditions as the rule of men's worship, and which rose to an enormous bigness in the times of Christ, who severely inveighed against them ; and which in after-times were compiled and put together in a volume, called, the *Misnah*, their *Traditional*, or *Body of Traditions* : and this, in course of time, occasioned a large work finished in Babylon and from thence called the *Babylonian Talmud* ; which is their *Doctrinal*, or *Body of Doctrine* ; full of fables, false glosses and interpretations of scriptures ; and which is the foundation of the erroneous doctrines and practices of the Jews to this day.

<sup>41</sup> Targum in 1 Sam. xix. 19, 20.



And here I shall take leave to transcribe the interpretation of the vision in Zech. v. 6—11. given by that learned man George Eliezer Edzard,<sup>42</sup> it being very ingenious and uncommon, and much to our present purpose. This learned man observes that the preceding vision of the *flying roll*, describes the sad corruption of manners among the Jews, in the three or four former ages of the second temple; doctrine remaining pretty sound among them; which corruption of manners was punished by the incursions of the Lagidæ and Seleucidæ, kings of Egypt and Syria, into Judea, as the vision represents. The following vision of a woman sitting in an Ephah, and shut up in it, and then transported by two other women into the land of Shinah; he thus interprets: by the *woman*, who, by way of eminency, is called *wickedness*; is to be understood the impious and false doctrine devised by the Pharisees and Sadducees; and other corrupt doctors of the Jews in the latter times of the second temple, and handed down to posterity; compared to a woman, because it had nothing manly, nothing true, nothing solid in it; and moreover, caused its followers to commit spiritual fornication, and allured to it by its paints, flatteries, and prittle-prattle: and it is called *wickedness* because not only the less fundamentals, but the grand fundamentals, and principal articles of faith, concerning the mystery of the Trinity, the Deity of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, the person and office of the Messiah, were sadly defiled by it; and in the room of them were substituted, traditions, precepts, and inventions of men; than which greater impiety cannot be thought of; and which issued in the contempt and rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah, sent as the Saviour of the world; and in the persecution of the preachers of the gospel, and putting a stop to the course of it, as much as could be; and which drew with it a train of other sins. The Ephah, he thinks, designs the whole body of the people of the Jews, throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; which Ephah was first seen as *empty*, ver. 6. and this being a dry measure, with which wheat and such like things were measured, the food of the body, a proper type of the heavenly doctrine, the food of the soul: by the emptiness of the Ephah, is intimated, that sound doctrine, about the time of the Messiah's coming, would be banished out of Judea, and the neighbouring parts; and most of the inhabitants thereof would be destitute of the knowledge of the pure faith. And the wicked woman *sitting in the midst of the Ephah*, and filling it, not a corner of it, but the whole; and is represented not as lying prostrate, but sitting; denotes the total corruption of doctrine, its power and prevalence, throughout Judea, Samaria, and Galilee; obtaining in all places, synagogues, schools, and seats, and pulpits, and among all sorts of inhabitants; the few being crushed who professed the sound doctrine of the Trinity, and of the person and office of the Messiah. And whereas a *talent of lead* was seen *lifted up*; this signifies the divine decree concerning the destruction of the Jews and their polity by the Romans; which should be most surely executed on them, for their corruption of doctrine, and for sins that flowed from thence. The *lifting up* of the talent not only prefigured the near approach of the judgment, but the setting it before the eyes of the people, to be beheld through the ministry of Christ, and his apostles, before it was executed; that while there was hope, if it might be, some might be brought to repentance, and to the acknowledgment of the true Messiah; but this failing of success, the talent was *cast into the ephah*, and upon the woman in it, signifying the destruction of the Jews; of which the angel that talked with Zechariah the prophet, and who was no other than the Son of God, was the principal author; Vespasian, and the Roman army under him, being only ministers and instruments. Not that hereby the woman, or the corrupt doctrine, was wholly extinguished; but it was depressed, and weakened, and reduced, and was among a few only, great numbers of the doctors and disciples of it being slain, and many of both classes being exiled; the temple and city burnt, heretofore the chief seat of it, and the schools throughout Judea destroyed, in which it was propagated. But in process of time the Jews restored some schools in Palestine, as at Jabneh, Zippore, Cæsarea, and Tiberias, in the last of which R. Judah Hakkadosh compiled the *Misnah*, about *A. D.* 150. and after that came out the *Jerusalem Talmud*, *A. D.* 230. and after the death of the above Rabbi, his chief disciples went into Babylon, and carried with them the greatest part of the doctors and their scholars out of Palestine: so that doctrine by little and little disappeared in Judea, and entirely about the year 340, when R. Hillel died, the last

<sup>42</sup> Præfat. ad Annoat. in Tract. Beracot.

of those promoted doctors in the land of Israel: and after this, scarce any thing was heard of the schools and wise men of Palestine; but schools continued in Babylon for many ages; and this is what is meant in the last part of the symbolic vision of Zechariah, by the Ephah being carried by two women into the land of Shinar, that is, Babylon. By these *two women* are meant the Misnic and Gemaristic doctors; the two heads of which were Raf and Samuel, who went into Babylon a little after the death of R. Judah, the saint, and carried the woman, false doctrine, along with them; these are said to have *wings like storks*, fit for long journeys, to fly with on high, and with swiftness, into remote parts; and fitly describes the above persons transporting their false doctrine into the remote parts of Babylon, far from Palestine; carrying great numbers from thence, which they did without weariness, and with as much celerity as they could: and *the wind being in their wings*, denotes the cheerfulness with which the Jewish Rabbins pursued their studies till they had finished their design, the Talmud, which they could not perfect without the impulse and help of an evil spirit, signified by the wind. And here in Babylon they *built an house* for their false doctrine, erected various schools, in which it was taught and propagated; and so it was *established* and *set on its own base*, and continued for 820 years or more. This is the sense which this learned man gives of the vision; on which I shall make no more remarks than I have done, by saying it is ingenious and uncommon, and suits with the subject I am upon, which introduced it, and opens the source of the corruption of doctrine among the Jews, and shews the continuance of it, and the means thereof.

Having traced supernatural theology, or divinity, to the times of Christ; let us a little look back upon the theology of the Pagans, before we proceed any further. At, or a little after, the building of Babel, and the dispersion of the people, idolatry began to appear; the knowledge of the true God was greatly lost, and the worship of him neglected. Some say this began in the days of Serug, but perhaps it might be earlier: the first objects of it seem to be the sun and moon; which it is certain obtained in the times of Job; and then their kings and heroes, whom they deified after death; and which at length issued in a multiplicity of gods throughout the several nations of the earth; and what of truth remained among them was disguised with fables; or, to use the apostle's phrase, they *changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator*; their foolish hearts being darkened. The Theology of the Pagans, according to themselves, as Scævola<sup>43</sup> and Varro,<sup>44</sup> was of three sorts.—1. Mystic, or Fabulous, which belonged to the poets, and was sung by them.—2. Phisic, or Natural; which belonged to the philosophers, and were studied by them.—3. Politic, or Civil, which belonged to princes, priests, and people; being instituted by the one, exercised by the other, and enjoined the people. The *first* of these may well be called Fabulous, as treating of the theogony and genealogy of their deities; in which they say such things as are unworthy of deity; ascribing to them thefts, murders, adulteries, and all manner of crimes; and therefore this kind of Theology is condemned by the wiser sort of heathens, as nugatory and scandalous; the writers of this sort of Theology were Sanchoniatho, the Phœnician; and of the Grecians, Orpheus, Hesiod, Pherecydes, &c. The *second* sort, called Phisic, or Natural, was studied and taught by the philosophers; who, rejecting the multiplicity of gods introduced by the poets, brought their Theology to a more natural and rational form; and supposed that there was but one supreme God, which they commonly make to be the sun; at least as an emblem of him; but at too great a distance to mind the affairs of the world, and therefore devised certain demons, which they considered as mediators between the supreme God and man: and the doctrines of these demons to which the apostle is thought to allude in 1 Tim. iv. 1. were what the philosophers had a concern with, and who treat of their nature, office, and regard to men; as did Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, and the Stoics. The *third* part, called Politic, or Civil, was instituted by legislators, statesmen, and politicians: the first among the Romans was Numa Pompilius; this chiefly respected their gods, temples, altars, sacrifices, and rites of worship, and was properly their idolatry; the care of which belonged to the priests; and this was enjoined the common people, to keep them in obedience to the civil state. Thus things continued in the Gentile world, until the light of the

<sup>43</sup> Apud. Augustin. de Civ. Dei, l. 4. c. 27.

<sup>44</sup> Apud. Ib. l. 6. c. 5.

Gospel was sent among them : the times before that, were *times of ignorance*, as the apostle calls them ; they were ignorant of the true God, and of the worship of him ; and of the Messiah, and salvation by him : their state is truly described, Eph. ii. 12. that they were then *without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.* And consequently, their Theology was insufficient for the salvation of them.

But to return to supernatural Theology, where we left it, having traced it to the times of Christ ; at whose coming, and through whose ministry, and that of his forerunner, and of his apostles, it revived, and lift up its head, and appeared in all its purity, splendour, and glory. John, was a man sent from God to bear witness to the light that was just rising, even the Sun of righteousness, the Day-spring from on high ; the great Light, that should lighten those that sat in darkness, with a supernatural light ; he declared the kingdom of heaven, or Gospel dispensation, was at hand, and just ushering in ; and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin, and administered that Gospel ordinance. " God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, now spoke to men by his Son : " Christ, his only begotten Son, who lay in his bosom, came and declared him ; who and what he was, and what was his mind and will. He brought the doctrines of grace and truth with him ; and spoken such words of grace, truth and wisdom, as never man spake ; his doctrine was not human, but divine ; it was not his own as man, he received it from his Father, and delivered it to his apostles ; who having a commission from him to preach it, and being qualified for it, with the gifts and graces of his Spirit in great abundance, they went into all the world, and preached the Gospel to every creature ; and diffused the savour of his knowledge in every place ; they had the deep things of God revealed unto them ; things which could never have been discovered by the light of nature ; nor were revealed in the law of Moses ; things " which eye had not seen nor ear heard, nor ever entered into the heart of man ; " which the reason of men could never have described ; " they spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. " In the books of the New Testament are written, as with a sunbeam, those truths of pure revelation, the doctrines of a Trinity of divine Persons in the Godhead ; of the eternal Sonship, distinct Personality and Deity of Christ, and of his several offices as Mediator ; and of the distinct Personality and Deity of the Holy Spirit ; and of his operations of grace upon the souls of men ; of the everlasting and unchangeable love of the Three divine Persons to the elect ; of the predestination of them to the adoption of children ; and of their eternal election in Christ to grace and glory ; of the covenant of grace made with them in Christ, and the blessings of it ; of redemption by Christ, full pardon of sin through his blood, free justification from sin by his righteousness, and plenary satisfaction for it by his atoning sacrifice ; of regeneration, or the new birth ; effectual calling ; conversion, and sanctification, by the efficacious grace of the Spirit ; of the saints' final perseverance in grace to glory, of the resurrection from the dead, and of a future state of immortal life and happiness : all which are brought to light by the Gospel of Christ. And these are the sum and substance of supernatural Theology, and the glory of it. And whilst the apostles continued, and other ministers of the word raised up in their times, these doctrines were held fast, and held forth with great clearness and perspicuity ; but, as the historian says,<sup>45</sup> after the holy company of the apostles had ended their lives, and that generation was gone, which was worthy to hear the divine wisdom, then a system of impious error took place, through the deceit of false teachers ; false doctrine was attempted to be introduced, in opposition to the truth of the Gospel, which had been preached ; not one of the apostles remaining to oppose it. The doctrines of divine revelation, Satan, by his emissaries, set himself against to undermine and destroy, were the doctrines of the Trinity ; the Incarnation of Christ of a virgin ; his proper Deity, as by some, and his real Humanity, as by others ; his eternal Sonship, or his being begotten of the Father before all worlds. The school at Alexandria, from whence came several of the Christian doctors, as Pantæus, Clemens, Origen, &c. served very much to corrupt the simplicity of the Gospel ; for though it mended the Platonic philosophy, it marred the Christian doctrine ; and laid the foundation for Arianism and

Pelagianism, which in aftertimes so greatly disturbed the church of God. As many of the fathers of the Christian Church were originally Pagans, they were better skilled in demolishing Paganism than in building up Christianity; and indeed they set themselves more to destroy the one than to illustrate and confirm the other: there was a purity in their lives, but a want of clearness, accuracy, and consistence in their doctrines; it would be endless to relate how much the Christian doctrine was obscured by the heretics that rose up in the latter part of the first century; and in the second, as well as after, by Sabellians, Photinians, Samosatensians, Arians, Eutychians, Nestorians, Macedonians, Pelagians, &c. though God was pleased to raise up instruments to stop their progress, and preserve the truth, and sometimes very eminent ones; as Athanasius against the Arians, and Austin against the Pelagians. The Gospel in its simplicity, through the power of divine grace attending it, made its way into the Gentile world, in these first centuries, with great success; and Paganism decreased before it; and which in the times of Constantine received a fatal blow in the Roman empire; and yet by degrees Pagan rites and ceremonies were introduced into the Christian church; and what with them, and errors in doctrine, and other things concurring, made way for the man of sin to appear; and that mystery of iniquity, which had been secretly working from the times of the apostles, to shew its head openly; and brought in the darkness of Popery upon almost all that bore the Christian name.

In the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, flourished a set of men called *Schoolmen*; these framed a new sort of divinity, called from them *Scholastic Theology*; the first founder of which some make to be Damascene, among the Greeks; and others Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, among the Latins; though generally Peter Lombard is reckoned the father of these men; who was followed by our countryman Alexander Hales; and after him were Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas; and after them Duns Scotus, Durandus, and others; their divinity was founded upon and confirmed by the philosophy of Aristotle; and that not understood by them, and wrongly interpreted to them; for as they could not read Aristotle in his own language, the Greek, they were beholden to the Arabic interpreters of him, who led them wrong. Their theology lay in contentious and litigious disputations; in thorny questions, and subtle distinctions; and their whole scheme was chiefly directed to support antichristianism, and the tenets of it; so that by their means popish darkness was the more increased, and Christian divinity was banished almost out of the world; and was only to be found among a few, among the Waldenses and Albigenses, and the inhabitants of the valleys of Piedmont, and some particular persons and their followers, as Wickliffe, John Huss, and Jerome of Prague; and so things continued till the reformation begun by Zuinglius and Luther, and carried on by others; by whose means evangelical light was spread through many nations in Europe; the doctrines of the apostles were revived, and supernatural Theology once more lift up its head; the reformed churches published their confessions of faith, and many eminent men wrote common places, and systems of divinity; in which they all agreed in the main, to support the doctrines of revelation; as of the Trinity, and the Deity of the divine Persons in it; those of predestination and eternal election in Christ, of redemption by him, pardon of sin by his blood, and justification by his righteousness.

But Satan, who envied the increasing light of the Gospel, soon began to bestir himself, and to play his old game which he had done with so much success in the first ages of Christianity; having been for a long time otherwise engaged, to nurse up the man of sin, and to bring him to the height of his impiety and tyranny, and to support him in it: and now as his kingdom was like to be shook, if not subverted, by the doctrines of the Reformation; he, I say, goes to his old work again; and revives the Sabellian and Photinian errors, by the Socinians in Poland; and the Pelagian errors, by the Arminians and Remonstrants in Holland; the pernicious influence of which has been spread in other countries; and, indeed, has drawn a veil over the glory of the Reformation, and the doctrines of it. And the doctrines of pure revelation are almost exploded; and some are endeavouring to bring us as fast as they can, into a state of paganism, only somewhat refined. It is a day of darkness and gloominess; a day of clouds and of thick darkness; the darkness is growing upon us, and night may be expected; though for our relief it is declared, "that at evening time it shall be light." Almost all the old heresies are revived, under a foud and foolish notion of new light;

when they are no other than what have been confuted over and over ; and men please themselves that they are their own inventions, when they are the devices of Satan, with which he has deceived men once and again ; and when men leave the sure Word, the only rule of faith and practice, and follow their own fancies, and the dictates of their carnal minds, they must needs go wrong, and fall into labyrinths, out of which they cannot find their way : “ to the law, and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Let us therefore search the Scriptures, to see whether doctrines advanced are according to them or not ; which I fear are little attended to.

Upon the whole, as I suggested at the beginning of this Introduction, I have but little reason to think the following Work will meet with a favourable reception in general ; yet, if it may be a means of preserving sacred Truths, of enlightening the minds of any into them, or of establishing them in them, I shall not be concerned at what evil treatment I may meet with from the adversaries of them ; and be it as it may, I shall have the satisfaction of having done the best I can for the promoting TRUTH ; and of bearing a testimony to it.



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*The Baptist Encyclopaedia*. (Philadelphia: Louis H. Everts, 1881).  
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John Rippon, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late John Gill*, D.D. (London: John Bennett, 1838). Pages 139-140.

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