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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
INHABITANTS
OF
GREAT BRITAIN,
ON THE
ABSURDITY AND DANGER
OF ENCOURAGING
LAY PREACHERS.

BY A CLERGYMAN.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
BY WILLIAM TURNBULL, ANCHOR CLOSE.

1801.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE,
THE
LORD DUNSINNAN,
ONE OF THE
SENATORS OF THE COLLEGE OF
JUSTICE.

MY LORD,

HAVING had the honour of preaching before your Lordship, and having been fortunate enough to obtain your Lordship's approbation, I conceived that I could not better express the high sense I entertained of your flattering suffrage, than by gracing the present performance with your Lordship's name. Your predilection for men of letters, and decided disapprobation of interlopers, quacks, and itinerants,

itinerants, especially in the interesting department of Theology, gave the author of these sheets additional encouragement to dedicate them to your Lordship. He disdains the fulsome stile of adulation, convinced that men of unexceptionable reputation neither need nor desire the assistance of his pen. They are proof against calumny, and they despise the attempts of a sycophant to establish their fame. The exalted rank your Lordship supports in one of the most interesting and dignified departments of society, and in a particular manner the unshaken zeal you have ever exhibited for the prosperity of the church, pointed out your Lordship as the most proper person for countenancing the present undertaking. It is an attempt to expose theological interlopers, or persons totally unqualified to preach the gospel. To evince the absurdity and danger of encouraging quacks in divinity, is not always sufficient to secure the approbation of the public, let the arguments made use of be ever so

conclusive

conclusive and incontrovertible, without the sanction of a name at once dignified and venerable. This the author of the following pages has presumed to aspire after, and to hope that your Lordship will look upon the present performance with a propitious eye, will be a source of unspeakable satisfaction to him who has the honour of subscribing himself,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

And most humble servant,

T. M.

AN

A D D R E S S, &c.

RELIGION is, above all other considerations, of the last importance to the human race. Every thing else is circumscribed by the period of our existence upon earth, but religion follows a man beyond the mansions of the grave, and proves his friend or his enemy as long as God endures. Of what vast moment, then, is it to be rightly informed as to the requisitions of revealed religion, and nicely to discriminate between real conversion and constitutional tenderness of soul ;— genuine repentance, and pharisaical sufficiency ;— the operations of the spirit, and the delusions of the devil ? Deeply penetrated by these considerations ;— convinced that it is at once an act of justice

tice and philanthropy, to guard mankind against deception in their most important concerns ; I have formed the resolution of addressing the inhabitants of this highly favoured empire on a subject of the first magnitude.

It is astonishing to consider the rapid progress of quackery in almost every department of life. Ignorance seems determined to bear away the palm from science and investigation, especially in the two important branches of divinity and medicine. A fellow who can make a pill of the most potent, purging ingredients, but who is utterly unacquainted with the prognostics and diagnostics of almost every distemper incident to the human body, has the assurance to obtrude himself upon the public as a perfect connoisseur in physic, and the Legislature allows him to murder with impunity. How have I been shocked to hear phlebotomy recommended in the last stage of a consumption, or a patient in a slow fever desired to take cold water, while the total absence of inflammatory symptoms, and a plethoric habit, rendered an opposite treatment absolutely necessary ! By such a mode of procedure was an aunt of mine *systematically* dispatched. I remonstrated against the treatment she met with, but as I did not make physic my employment, my remarks were disregarded, and the sweet voice of

Sangrado

Sangrado overpowered all my complaints. Bleeding and water for ever!

But while I exclaim against medical quackery, which has brought a respectable profession into unmerited contempt, I am no less concerned for the honour of my own. Quacks in divinity are still more dangerous, if it be admitted that the soul is infinitely more valuable than the body. Yet these are now almost as numerous as the locusts of Egypt, so that more unqualified clergymen might be found in the kingdom, than would man a dozen frigates of thirty-six guns each! Can any one imagine, that the increase of such illiterate, blundering fools, can add any thing to the spread of genuine Christianity, or diminish the growing numbers of infidels and deists? Certainly not. While it has been said, and no doubt with propriety, that the immoral lives of many professing Christians have injured the cause of revealed religion in the world, I may confidently assert in my turn, that the gospel can never be expected to spread with its predicted rapidity, while pedlars, blacksmiths, cobblers, and chimney-sweepers, are allowed to retail it to the public. I, as an individual, may exclaim, why have I spent so much time and money in literary pursuits, in order to qualify me for a public expositor, if I am ever to be outdone by an ignorant
 B mechanic?

méchanic? Shall I have only one to attend me for his twenty, and not feel indignant at the stupidity of mankind, or devoutly wish that the legislature would lay an everlasting embargo on theological quackery? Yes, I repeat it again,—no man should be allowed to preach who is destitute of a liberal education, because men of literature can alone be supposed capable of being edifying instructors of mankind. The sacred Scriptures can be read with most advantage in their native language, and consequently every minister should be a critic in the original tongues. They also abound with allusions to ancient customs, manners, and usages, unknown to the ignorant, and without an acquaintance with which the beauty of numberless passages must be totally lost, and their import continue ambiguous. What is a discourse without argument and coherency of parts, but a piece of unmeaning declamation? and therefore the convincing preacher *must* be a logician.

It is an old thread-bare observation of theological quacks, that the fishermen of Galilee were extremely illiterate; but I deny the fact. No man can read the epistles of Peter and James without perceiving a most beautiful chain of reasoning run through the whole; and certainly they were greater linguists than the world ever beheld. It matters not to my present purpose how they came by it,
since

since the fact is undeniable that they did possess it ; and therefore, if any pedlar in divinity can exhibit a tenth part of their abilities, I shall not quarrel with him for the want of an university education. I do not allude to inspiration, but to such of their abilities as are within the reach of industry, altho' in the case of the apostles they were purely supernatural, being instantaneously conferred. This extraordinary interference of heaven was absolutely necessary in the apostolic age, while the endowments which ministers now find it requisite to possess are only to be expected from laborious study.

I cannot tell by what strange fatality it is that ignorant uncultivated men take it into their heads to preach, for I should conceive that a man would feel the greatest diffidence in standing up to address a numerous audience on the important concerns of eternity, even after he had acquired a very competent share of literary endowments. Yet so it is, that when a shoemaker, a weaver, or a taylor, grows weary of his proper occupation, he abandons the hammer, the shuttle, or the bodkin, and thumps his head against a pulpit. He fondly hopes to acquire more honour, to be at less trouble, and reap more advantage, from mangling and abusing the word of God, than from any manual employment whatever. To me this is matter of wonder.

der and astonishment, for while no individual would venture to construct a piece of nice machinery who had never been previously taught, an illiterate fool will mount a rostrum to promulgate the gospel without a single blush, although as unqualified for it as for creating a world*. It would be an interesting inquiry to discover the physical causes of this interesting phenomenon—why a sense of shame, so inseparable from humanity, when men are ignorant of trifles, seems to have no influence over them when they attempt things manifestly beyond their reach ?

But the advocates for illiterate lay-preachers may ask, Does the most extensive literature make a good man ? or does it necessarily follow, that, because a man is a consummate scholar, therefore he is a real christian ? I answer, by no means, for there is no inseparable connexion between piety and
 erudition.

* I knew a blacksmith who used frequently to tell his audience (for you must know that he commenced preacher) that God called him to the ministry thus : “ John—I say, John, lay down the *hammer*, and take up the *Bible*.” Had he afterwards been called to lay down the *Bible* and take up the *hammer*, I strongly suspect he would have continued refractory.

erudition. The one may be enjoyed where the other does not exist. Dr Young, indeed, says,

“ An undevout astronomer is mad.”

Yet such madmen there have been in the world, and the greatest profligate under the sun may be acquainted with the most intricate minutiae of the solar system. The same thing may be said of many theologians; but what a monstrous inference is it, that because some learned clergymen have been bad men, therefore all who take upon them to preach the gospel should beware of the least tincture of education! Prodigious, what a leap! As well might I say,—because some have been epicures and bacchanalians, destroying themselves by the very means which were intended to protract their existence, all men should be careful, as they value the preservation of life and health, never to eat nor drink any more! Education, let it be abused in particular instances as it may, is a *sine qua non*,—an essential prerequisite of the clerical character, while it no doubt derives its most amiable traits from piety and virtue. A man may be a good private Christian without learning, but a good, instructive, and interesting preacher he can never be. He may indeed make grossly ignorant people

people like himself turn up the white of their eyes, because neither he nor they know what he is saying ; but his incoherent rhapsody must set the discerning few a smiling, and confirm the Deist in his aversion to Christianity.

But says one, ‘ I have a huge desire to preach, and mayhap, as I takes a delight in it, d’ye see, I may come in time to do monstrous well.’ It may be so, friend, but your diction promises nothing superexcellent, and I am afraid that your *huge* desire will never be able to compensate for your *huge* deficiency. It will be much more eligible,—it will bring more credit to yourself, and advantage to society, to continue by your proper employment. *Ne futor ultra crepidam.*

Intelligent men, from whom better things might be expected, frequently encourage lay preachers, both by their presence and pockets; and when their good sense cannot vindicate the speakers they often hear, nor conscientiously defend their sermons, (pardon the expression) they generally reply to a solid objection,—True, but still Mr Such-a-one said a number of good things! So will a man in bedlam, and yet the very next moment the straw in his hand shall be converted, by the magic

magic power of fancy, into a sceptre to crush his rebellious subjects ; and his ideal munificence relieves the wants of millions whom he never heard of ! To judge of the merits of a discourse, or infer that a man is fully qualified to be a minister of the gospel, from a number of *good things*, is as ridiculous as to assert, that, if a fishwife can make a shift to read Pope's Essay on Man, therefore she could compose a poem equally excellent !

There is a complaint frequently made against ministers who are regularly bred to that sacred office, and authorised to preach by those who are fully qualified to judge of their abilities, that vast multitudes of them do not preach the gospel. Admitting this to be a fact for the sake of argument, it is no less certain that multitudes of them do preach it, and that too in its native purity and simplicity, and with such a native flow of eloquence as would have done no discredit to the famous Cicero. But *the gospel* is a cant phrase in the mouth of every enthusiast, which has no precise or definite signification. It means (if any thing) the ebullitions of his own distempered imagination, fostered by ignorance and the love of singularity. Ask one highflier in what the gospel consists ? His answer is faith,—faith forever, without

but the smallest reference to the rectitude of his moral deportment. Put the same question to another, and lo! it consists of certain mystical influences of the spirit; of particular frames and feelings, which neither he nor any one else can explain or comprehend. Common honesty must therefore acknowledge, that such men can give no rational, consistent, or systematical account of the gospel;—how its various parts are beautifully dependent upon, and connected with each other; so that when a mountebank preacher brings such a charge against regular clergymen, I trust it will not be said that he is a competent judge. He may be right in particular instances, but the probability is that he may also be wrong, for the accuracy of his judgment is only a lottery.

‘But regular clergymen, as you call them, are frequently very negligent and remiss in the discharge of the duties of their office, and therefore we wish to encourage those who are more laborious and diligent.’ To the framers of this objection I would say, Whether is the negligence you complain of the cause or effect of that encouragement which you give to preachers who were never intended for the pulpit? If it is the cause, still your conduct is reprehensible, since you go from those
whom

Whom you charge with deficiencies, and you cleave to such as cannot reasonably be deemed qualified to supply the defect. If learned men *may* commit blunders and mistakes, it is certain that ignorant men *must* do so. Besides, would it not, think you, be a more rational, consistent, and Christian-like deportment, to remind your pastors of their neglects and deficiencies,—not in a dictatorial manner, but in the spirit of humility, pure religion, and from a sense of inferiority? Hints tendered in such a manner as this will never offend those who have the spirit of Christ. But be well assured that you have reason to find fault before you do so, and for this end study to acquire a pretty competent knowledge of what the gospel really is. Take it not from this or that fanatic, but from the law and from the testimony. Do not sit as judges and critics in the house of God, but as people who come there to be instructed. I know no country in the universe so faulty in this particular as Scotland. Every paltry, insignificant creature who can make a shift to read the catechism, with the assistance of spelling a long word now and then, can pretend to sit in judgment on the most rational, evangelical, and elegant discourse, that ever came from the pulpit. I grant that every man should so far judge for himself as not to be imposed upon by

egregious error ; but there is a vast difference between this and taking a sermon to pieces over a tankard of ale, without one single desire to receive benefit from it.

But if the negligence of learned ministers formerly complained of (admitting its existence) be the *effect* of your own conduct,—if they grow careless, only after they see their churches deserted by one-third, perhaps one-half of their audience, in order to run after an upstart cobbler or wig-maker, is it matter of astonishment to see them lose heart? I beseech you, therefore, to consider, that all the lukewarmness and indifference of the clergy must, upon this hypothesis, be charged in a great measure to your account at the divine tribunal. Make the case your own. If any one of you is a perfect master of his business, what must be his feelings to behold a downright ignoramus running away with all his wonted employment, who is infinitely his inferior, both in contrivance and execution? This is an everlasting barrier in the way of improvement, and under all these discouraging circumstances it is less wonderful to see him desist from all exertion, than to persevere. His calling is transferred to an idiot, in so far as respects himself; and he has the mortification to find, that genuine

genuine merit is not the road to applause. How many able ministers in the church of Scotland have been deserted by multitudes of their people, as if infected by the pestilence, merely because they could not allow themselves to utter ideas so wild, so extravagant, or so blasphemous, as a canting itinerant!

I trust I am warranted in saying, that multitudes of lay preachers, who pretend they have a call from God, were first induced to attempt speaking in public from a spirit of laziness, and an aversion to manual labour. Their public exhibitions cost them no trouble, for it would be impossible to study them; and it is not half so wonderful that they should speak long, as that they ever give over while their lungs are able to expand, since no three sentences almost have any relation to one and the same subject. Their expatiating so much on their own conversion—what great things God has done for their souls, is an admirable expedient for working on the passions of the ignorant and credulous. Ostentation, however, is by no means a criterion of genuine goodness, and it frequently happens that they who have most to say about their own conversion, are least acquainted with it in reality. Both before I was a student and since, I
 have

have heard the most pious clergymen for a series of years, who never once mentioned their own piety and goodness in any of their discourses. No! this favoured too much of vanity and self-conceit for their christian diffidence and self-denial. Men who are admired by the ignorant multitude for this religious cant, endeavour to sweeten its nauseous taste by ascribing all the glory to God; but this attempt to make it palatable cannot delude the intelligent. If a preacher is really a Christian, it will readily be discovered without the assistance of his own tongue; and if he is not, all that he can possibly assert will never establish it as a fact. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works—but not a syllable about stunning their ears with any noisy declamation respecting what you are.

Paine's writings against the Bible are an outrage on the common sense of all mankind. Who can repeat the very words *Age of Reason* without feeling indignant, as if the whole human race had been lunatics or madmen before he made his appearance? Daring impudence indeed, at which every man, whether Christian or Deist, ought to be offended, because it is indirectly to say that an hundred pages or upwards, spun from his prolific noddle,

noddle, contain more rationality than mankind ever heard of before ! But is it not equally an insult offered to some thousands of learned, respectable characters, to talk of a *society for propagating the gospel at home* ? What, the gospel at home ? Strange ! has the gospel never been propagated in Scotland or England till the close of the eighteenth century ? O ye shades of Boston, Durham, Willifon, Erskine, Hervey, Sherlock, and Tillotson, appear, I beseech you, and vindicate your injured reputation. Nay, ye *living* witnesses for Christ, ye faithful watchmen on Zion's tower, who are every week employed in proclaiming the glad tidings of great joy, can you patiently bear such a sly condemnation ? When personally injured, it is noble to forgive, but to be silent when you hear that you never preach the gospel—that the gospel was not propagated *at home* till of late, is to disregard the honour of Jesus himself. There may be, and no doubt there are places in the principality of Wales, and the Highlands of Scotland, in which it would be an act of mercy and goodness to preach the gospel ; but to assert in a round about manner that it is not propagated at home, meaning the whole empire, in opposition to savage places abroad, is a more horrid accusation than some are willing to perceive.

Lay preaching is fraught with more serious consequences than can be perceived by a single glance. We have partly seen already that it is a powerful discouragement to men of solid literature, and must naturally dispose them to grow negligent about many branches of their duty, and nearly callous to the wonted power of emulation. This may, in time, effectually deter a rising generation from treading in the once delectable paths of literature and science, as they have the lamentable experience of their ancestors to convince them, that no honour, emolument, or respect are to be looked for from the cultivation of the understanding, especially in the otherwise honourable employment of a minister of the gospel. Suppose these effects already produced, which are neither whimsical nor impossible, and you must admit that a powerful barrier against the inroads of stupidity and ignorance is entirely removed. Again, if we allow the force of imitation to be as great in this as in other respects, the same torpor and inactivity may seize all the other departments of life, and gradually conduct us to the verge of barbarism—to the very state, perhaps, in which the inhabitants of Britain were found at its invasion by Julius Caesar ! These are not mere speculations, the gloomy ideas of a timid, superstitious mind, but what may reasonably

ably be dreaded from such a concurrence of circumstances, although a superficial observer cannot see it at first.

Lay preachers, and their adherents, by affecting to despise human learning, as they call it, give encouragement to multitudes of ignorant men to espouse their cause, in the hope that they too, in their turn, will likewise be nominated preachers; for the *rabies loquendi* has seized the whole of them from the pulpit to the outer gate—from the priest to the sexton. But their avowed contempt of literature is pure affectation, because every regular clergyman, who is weak and inconsiderate enough to give them his countenance and support, they deem a valuable acquisition, and speak of him in terms of the highest respect. The great Mr or Dr Such-a-one is to preach to-day! This I have heard repeated with an air of triumph, while by their common conduct and expressions they declare, that the most uncultivated cobbler may preach the gospel. If we attentively peruse the history of the rise and progress of religious sectaries, I believe it will be found that almost nine tenths of their founders were men of learning, notwithstanding their pious posterity have set education aside, and now view it in general as an incumbrance to the
sublime

sublime flights of the spiritual orator. But all whining and cant, all ridiculous abstraction from the world, and that unmeaning jargon called a *light within*, are in direct opposition to the spirit of the gospel. Common sense may teach any person disposed to think for himself, that if man be a rational creature, no revelation from that God who made him rational can ever be calculated to unman him, either by its doctrines or precepts. Preachers, therefore, who wish to convert mankind into wild enthusiasts or mere faith-mongers, inculcate a something upon them, which no revelation ever did, or ever can contain. What mysticism and jargon have I heard uttered in explaining what such men were pleased to call the gospel, so that it was physically impossible to determine, from their rhapsodies, what it really is. Now, its peculiar doctrine is faith in Jesus Christ as the ground of our acceptance with God, and its moral requisitions differ in nothing almost from what has ever been termed morality, but in the motives by which the Christian is actuated;—faith and love, acting from the possession of spiritual life, not in order to procure it.

It is said that this momentous question has of late been agitated in the city of Edinburgh by
 respectable

respectable bodies of clergymen,—“ whether the civil magistrate ought, or ought not to interpose his authority for the suppression of religious error ?” To me it seems as obvious as any deduction of Euclid, that no power upon earth can persecuté me with impunity in the sight of God, should I even worship the sun, or rear deities in a garden as fast as cucumbers ; because, if ever I am reclaimed from such an error, I must previously be convinced that I am wrong, and this can only be effected by arguments drawn from reason and scripture addressed to my understanding. The weapons of truth must not be carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. But the civil magistrate may lawfully strike at the root of error, which I conceive might be successfully done by prohibiting all men from becoming preachers of the gospel who are not properly qualified for it. The most ignorant ranter—the most extravagant enthusiast, if permitted to vend his poison, will never want the countenance of an ignorant multitude. This may be considered by some as too great a degree of interference on the part of the magistrate, but it answers all the purposes which the above question could possibly have in view, while it pretends not to invade the prerogative of the Almighty, by becoming the umpire

of conscience. Mankind will not employ a stupid mechanic when convinced of his egregious deficiency; but the ignorant will entrust the most illiterate quack with the care of their souls. I flatter myself that if such a measure was adopted and carried into effect, every species of *dangerous* error would die of a consumption, and the civil magistrate might rejoice with the ministers of Christ in beholding the gradual decline of the enemy of truth, without any such interference upon his part as is the undoubted prerogative of the great ETERNAL. Check the evil at the fountain-head, and its numerous rivulets disappear.

But is not this totally incompatible with liberty of conscience, the undoubted, the unalienable right of the whole human race? In order to ascertain the fallacy with which this objection is fraught, let it be distinctly observed, that the phrase *liberty of conscience*, in which the framers of it seem to exult, is so extremely equivocal, that in the hands of an expert sophist it may mean almost any thing. If I should conceive it my duty to believe that devils and wicked men will finally be delivered from the place of torment, and declare my sentiments to the world in the integrity of my heart, whether would it be equitable or cruel to punish me on account

count of them? It would be the height of injustice to inflict upon me either incarceration, banishment, or persecution of any description, however contrary my sentiments might be to those generally received. Religion, let it be as extravagant as it will, is a something between God and man, not between man and man, and consequently no power upon earth can be said to tolerate it with any propriety, nor can its votaries be punished without manifest injustice. But let the advocates for any system of religious opinions breed commotions in society;—let them assert that no faith is to be kept with those they call heretics, upon pain of eternal damnation, or that absolute dominion is founded in grace, and then tell me if it would not be egregiously impolitic in any protestant government under heaven to grant them unbounded liberty, or unrestricted sway? Mr Paine has a number of striking ideas on *toleration* in his Rights of Man, but, like most of his political arguments, they are totally misapplied. He thinks that *toleration* itself is *intolerance*, because it implies a power in man to permit or prohibit the Almighty from accepting the worship of his creatures. To a certain extent he is unquestionably right, for when I speak of *tolerating* another, I propose to confer a privilege which I do not possess. But when the religious
sentiments

sentiments of a people are subversive of social order, and fraught with cruelty and persecution, government may justly take away what it cannot otherwise confer, because a lesser evil should always be sacrificed to a greater good. “*Salus populi suprema lex.*”

Let it not be imagined that I mean this reasoning to extend to lay preachers and their adherents in its utmost latitude. Far from it. My design is simply to prove, that certain regulations in matters of religion may be made by any state, and that in particular circumstances it becomes an imperious duty, dictated by necessity and self-preservation. But what mischief is it not in the power of enthusiasm and ignorance to effectuate? Let misguided zeal and fanatical stupidity have their full swing, and I question much if the most penetrating judgment can foresee all the fatal consequences. It were in vain to instance the infatuated conduct which once disgraced the inhabitants of Cambuſang, for all climates and all ages will exhibit the mournful traces of zeal and ignorance when combined together. Had my lady Buchan been possessed of solid intellect, she never would have vended those dreadful and damnable sentiments which, I fear, have transmitted both herself and many others to the regions
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of wo. She had knowledge sufficient to convince her that she was playing the cheat, but not enough to deter her from such a blasphemous undertaking. There are different degrees of this religious madness, and the nearer any one of them approaches to what is fit and proper, it certainly bids fairest to delude with facility. The absurdity becomes more refined, and therefore the obtuse faculties of the multitude are not so easily hurt by it. They are in general extremely ignorant every where, and yet, by following uncultivated lay preachers, they hug the very men who, instead of procuring their emancipation, can only rivet their chains. Men of this description know not the very import of the word *preaching*, and can only entertain their gaping audience with fulsome details of what wonders they have done in the preaching *line*—what a prodigious number they have converted—huddle together a vast number of ridiculous anecdotes and old wives fables, and employ a diction at once wild, ungrammatical, and utterly incompatible with the dignified simplicity of pulpit language. The effects they generally produce are, either a discordant practice without a genuine theory, and which is only remarkable for its eccentricity, or an unintelligible theory, which is seldom if ever accompanied with any moral or religious practice, properly
fo

to called. In short, they carry every thing to extremes, for with such unqualified declaimers, the love of God is fond partiality and absolute dotage, while his displeasure is represented as almighty tyranny. They disgust discernment by their accounts of the divine clemency, not seldom delivered in expressions which are highly indelicate, and their delineations of the wrath of God are sufficient to terrify the ignorant out of their senses.

How easy a matter would it be to cure this itch for absurdity and extravagance, by putting a stop to the wild career of its promoters, and rendering a classical, a liberal education, essential to a public speaker—an instructor of mankind in the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. What a world of mischief would this prevent! What innumerable prejudices and misconceptions would it gradually remove! What heroic exertions would it induce regular clergymen to make, and what copious streams of divine knowledge and important information would it soon diffuse through the earth! As things are at present, I dare not entertain such flattering expectations, for illiterate ranters are rapidly preponderating, and without such an interference on the part of the legislature, as is by no means inconsistent with liberty of conscience, (con-

fining

fining the office of a public speaker to men of literature as well as piety), I can perceive what the fate of real religion will instantly be :

“ Per varios casus per tot discrimina rerum,
 “ Tendimus in Latium.”——

This grand desideratum might be acquired with less trouble, and it would produce less grumbling, in a short time at least, than an attempt to fix the *maximum* or *minimum* of the price of grain. It would only disoblige a few lazy, ignorant individuals, who will neither dig nor beg, but the community at large would soon come to see the propriety of the measure, and frankly confess that they had been miserably deluded.

Perhaps some advocate for the opposite side may rise up and say ; If you allude to the itinerants who lately made their appearance in Scotland, let me ask you, what supereminent qualifications did the established clergy possess before that period ? What zeal did they discover for the glory of God, or the salvation of men, and what remarkable effects accompanied their labours ? Let me ask, in my turn ; What period of the church will you fix upon in which the clergy did not meet with similar opposition

position to damp their exertions, and in which the credulity and attachment of the multitude to enthusiasm and extravagance were not equally conspicuous? Condescend on this, and I will allow that you give a keen edge to your objection; but if this is not in your power, (and certain I am it is not), it must fall pointless to the ground.

I have pointed out an easy, safe, and efficacious method of destroying an evil of the first magnitude, and if it is not adopted by those who have the power of doing so, I cannot help it; but I can still console myself with the untainted rectitude of the design which produced the present Essay.

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