

A  
S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE THE

ASSOCIATION,

FOR

DISCOURTENANCING VICE, AND PROMOTING THE  
PRACTICE OF VIRTUE AND RELIGION;

IN

ST. PETER'S CHURCH,

ON FRIDAY 25, APRIL, 1794;

BY THE

REV. RICHARD GRAVES, B. D. F. T. C. D.

---

D U B L I N:

PRINTED FOR W. WATSON AND SON,  
PRINTERS TO THE ASSOCIATION,  
NO. 7, CAPEL-STREET.

---

1794.

---

At an Extraordinary Meeting of the Association for discountenancing Vice and promoting the Practice of Virtue and Religion, held in St. Peter's Vestry-Room 25th April, 1794.

His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin in the Chair,

It was Unanimously Resolved,

On the motion of his Grace the Archbishop of Cashel, seconded by the Rev. Dean of St. Patrick's,

That the Thanks of this Association be presented to the REV. RICHARD GRAVES, F. T. C. D. for his excellent Discourse preached this Day before the Association; and that he be requested to publish the same.

Signed by Order,

WILLIAM WATSON }  
JOHN SKEYS. } Secretaries.

---

---

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED BEFORE

THE ASSOCIATION,

℥c. ℥c. ℥c.

---

DANIEL—xii. 3.

*They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.*

SUCH is the high reward proposed by the Prophet, to those who are zealous and active in the pursuits which true wisdom recommends, even in labouring to turn many to righteousness, and thus most effectually promoting the happiness of their fellow-creatures, and the glory of their God.

B

May

May not we, my Brethren, humbly hope that the purposes for which we are here assembled, are consonant to the dictates of such true wisdom. We have assembled, I trust, with sincere and pious hearts, in this the TEMPLE OF THE MOST HIGH, to declare our resolution of uniting our utmost exertions to discountenance vice, and promote the practice of virtue and religion. We have assembled, that with one voice and one heart we may implore the Divine Blessing to animate our zeal, give wisdom to our deliberations, and to our measures perseverance and success.—On this solemn occasion, 'tis my part to discharge the duty you have assigned me, to the best of my power, by endeavouring to point out the truth and importance of the general principles on which our Association has been formed, as well as the expediency of the particular measures it has pursued, and the plans it has adopted; and by directing our attention to the means which seem most likely to promote the accomplishment of its objects, and the motives which ought most powerfully to encourage the perseverance of its present members, and induce such of my audience as have not yet sufficiently considered the nature of this institution, to unite in its support and extend its influence. Would to God I could discharge this sacred duty as effectually as I feel its importance

ance deserves!—Would to God I could impress on every soul in this assembly, such a deep and practical sense of the necessity of thus uniting to discountenance vice, and promote the interests of virtue and religion, as reason requires, and God would approve!—But, my brethren, remember that whatever arguments may be offered, whatever motives may be suggested to you, their efficacy must almost wholly depend on the attention with which you receive, and the seriousness with which you reflect on them. And may the spirit of wisdom direct every one of you so to receive, and so to reflect, on whatever may be now offered to your consideration, as may most effectually promote the sacred purposes we have here assembled to fulfil.

In attempting to explain and defend the general principles on which our Association is founded, I cannot deem it necessary to enter into any laboured arguments for establishing the great truths of natural religion, or the divine origin of the gospel scheme. No, I address an enlightened and christian assembly, men fully convinced of the existence and perfections of the supreme JEHOVAH! who created all things by his command, and sustains them in existence by the perpetual energy of his providence—I address men convinced that the sacred scriptures

contain the word and the will of God, and alone are able to make us wise unto salvation, thro' faith which is in CHRIST JESUS:—Men, who look forward with firm assurance to that awful hour, when the same CHRIST JESUS shall come in power and great glory to judge the world; and who are therefore fully satisfied of the importance of true christianity to the salvation of every individual to whose acceptance it is proposed.

Assuming therefore these great principles, 'tis my purpose to direct your attention to that consequence arising from them, which, on the present occasion, it is most important to enforce, the necessity of true christianity to secure morals and subordination, public tranquillity and public happiness in every state; a topic which can never be too frequently or too strongly inculcated, because there is perpetual danger of its being forgotten and disregarded, amidst the bustle of public affairs, and the anxiety of political speculation. Men accustomed to effect all their purposes, as they conceive, by human aid, are naturally led to look no farther than mere human agency; engaged in the contemplation of secondary causes, and busied in the adjustment of secondary means, they may not be habituated to consider  
that

that great first cause, the constant sense of whose superintending providence, should controul their conduct and direct their views. The connection of national prosperity with national virtue, and the dependance of national virtue on true religion, may naturally with such men seem principles too abstract, motives too distant and visionary, to influence their measures; with them national wealth will readily be considered as synonymous to national prosperity; and for the attainment of this, their attention will be directed solely to commercial regulations and success. Against external violence, superiority in military strength and public treasure are deemed certain pledges of security; for internal tranquility and good order, wise constitutions of government, the strong hand of power, and strict execution of law are implicitly relied on; and in the constant attention to objects such as these, religion and virtue may be too easily overlooked in the estimate of political means, or attended to as merely subordinate to the purposes of temporary expediency.

So far as opinions such as these lurk in the minds, and influence the conduct of men, so far it is utterly impossible, that such an Association as ours should meet with any active or general support.

support. Disclaiming totally all merely temporary views ;—declining to interfere in any public measure, except so far as such measure is connected with virtue and christianity ;—proposing no reforms, except such as may improve the religious sentiments and moral conduct of men ;—connected with no party, but that of those serious and sober-minded christians, who are anxious to rescue their fellow-creatures from the oppression of misery, or the tyranny of vice ;—and submitting to no influence but the influence of reason, truth, and piety ;—such an Association as this can never be generally supported or extensively useful, unless every man is impressed with a firm conviction that, in supporting the purposes of this Association, he promotes objects essential to the welfare—nay, the existence of his country. Yes, my brethren, as a public institution we rest on the truth of this great fundamental principle, \* *that righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people* ; and in proof, let me call on every man to consult, not refined or subtle deductions, obscure or doubtful facts, but plain reason and experience. Reflect but for a moment, what have been the causes which have introduced corruption and discord, slavery and wretchedness,

ness, into the best constituted governments and most powerful empires of both the ancient and modern world. The superficial observer may perhaps impute the ruin of a state to some incidental or transitory circumstance; to the ambition of some individual, the misconduct of some faction, some unforeseen misfortune or defeat;—but the enlightened historian and the philosophic enquirer, will soon convince him that, though some single and unlooked-for event may have been the apparent and immediate occasion of national calamity, its original source has ever been found in some extensive and deep-rooted depravation of public morals, which led the way to that event, and rendered its consequences irretrievable. And when the principles of the great bulk of any people have been corrupted, when virtue has been generally despised, and vice triumphant in any nation, enquire whether any accumulation of wealth, any superiority in military discipline, numbers or fame, any constitution of government, any wise provisions of law, have ever been able to prevent the final ruin of such a state, or shield a polluted and devoted race from the signal chastisements of an offended God. Assuredly not:—No, they have only served to embitter suffering, by its contrast with those blessings, of which

which nothing remains but the shame of their abuse, and the memory of their loss.—'Tis notorious to a proverb that wealth engenders luxury, extravagance and vice, and these corruption and decay.—That where industry, frugality, and honesty are wanting, commerce will make itself wings and fly away; and that industry, frugality, and honesty can have no sure foundation, where temperance and religion have no place.—If the confidence of any state is founded on the superiority of its arms, let me ask how frequently has such superiority been overpowered, not by external violence, but by the secret progress of luxury and selfishness, debasing the spirit and undermining the strength of the nation, destroying all vigour of mind and body in every rank, rendering the manners effeminate and licentious, banishing every manly and generous sentiment from those who ought to command, and every principle of subordination from those who ought to obey? Or if, notwithstanding the prevalence of vice and corruption, a certain blind ardour and savage ferocity have supplied the want of better principles, and given a temporary triumph to the impetuous efforts of wild fury;—if habitual submission to the dictates of ambitious rulers, and the mechanism of military discipline, has conducted the collected force of mighty nations

to

to the atchievement of extensive conquests ;— alas ! what have been the effects of such atchievements on the happiness even of the conquerors themselves ?—Have not the miseries which have scourged the crimes of the vanquished, been avenged a thousand fold on the heads of those who have inflicted them ?—Have not such successes nourished indolence and security, pride and discord, among the conquerors ; and thus introduced wretchedness and servitude, and entailed ages of misery on their corrupted and debased posterity ?

But if public happiness cannot be purchased by wealth, nor secured by arms, when religion and virtue are despised ; 'tis not less certain, that every argument which evinces the importance of subordination and law, equally establishes the necessity of strengthening religious principles, as their only sure foundation and support ;—for however christianity may have been misrepresented and abused, while some have perverted its sacred authority to support a divine right in monarchs to despotic sway,—and others equally at war with truth and piety, have pretended, that submission to any human power was inconsistent with religious liberty ; 'tis clear, in opposition to both these errors, that true christianity, while it condemns alike that  
flavish

flavish fear which debases, and that turbulence which disturbs society, inculcates with peculiar energy those principles of conduct and duty, which, if uniformly attended to by rulers and subjects, would secure public happiness, whatever form of government may prevail.—Yes, my brethren, \* the gospel while it rises above the fleeting distinctions of human establishments, provides the surest means of redressing the abuses, and extending the utility of every government, by strictly enjoining regard to justice, and order, and peace—humility, and forbearance—mercy, and brotherly love. The Christian is taught to consider human law, not merely as a heavy yoke imposed by the strong hand of power, to which he must submit because he has not strength to resist;—a yoke which he may justly lighten by evading its restraints, whenever with impunity he may;—not merely as the price, at which he purchases the protection of the state, by surrendering a certain portion of his liberty and his rights;—a price, which it is his interest to lower as much as possible, by avoiding the sacrifices it requires, and withholding, wherever he can withhold, his obedience;—no—the christian is taught to regard obedience to law as a sacred duty, enjoined by that supreme ruler who is the guardian of public order

\* Vide Payley's excellent work on the Evidences of christianity, page 373.—Dub. edit, 1794.

order and public happiness, and who will not permit them to be lightly trampled on. \* *Put them in mind*, says the Apostle, *to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work*;—and again, † *render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour, owe no man any thing, but to love one another*;—‡ *fear God, honour the king*. In a word, so long as obedience to established authority, is consistent with the higher obligations of christian purity and piety—with the preservation of virtue, religion, and the public happiness—so long it is plainly enforced by our lord and judge—so long we must be § *subject to the higher powers—not merely for wrath, but for conscience sake*—|| *not as pleasers of men, but as servants of God*. Thus does christianity consecrate the authority of the righteous magistrate, by connecting it with the sanctions of religion; and soften the terrors of legal austerity, by blending them with the pure and ennobling sentiments of piety, the heart-cheering approbation of conscience and of God.

But further reflect, what would become of laws, if oaths lose their force and sacredness?

\* Titus—iii. 1. † Romans—xiii. 7, 8.

‡ 1st Peter—ii. 17. § Romans—xiii. 5. || Ephes.—vi. 6.

sacredness? if men learn to doubt the existence, or trifle with the name of that Supreme Being, to whom they appeal to decide all controversies, to detect crimes, to secure public allegiance and private fidelity? So far as this awful obligation becomes weak and disregarded, must not laws be found ineffectual to protect the innocent, or punish the guilty, and become perpetually liable to be perverted into instruments of injustice and malignity?—Must not every man hold his reputation, his property, and his life, at the mercy of each villain whom gain may allure, or revenge may stimulate to attempt his destruction, secure of attempting it with impunity, if he only possess ingenuity to frame, and hardihood to persist in the tale of falsehood? In such a state, what inextricable confusion and disorder must prevail in every department and intercourse of social life!—Surely this single consideration should induce every man, who values public order or private security, to encourage true religion as their surest safeguard and support.

Thus laws, however perfect they may be supposed, must lose the strongest stay of their authority, and the only pledge of their faithful execution, when unconnected with religious principle.—But how much more ineffectual must their power appear unaided by christianity, when we consider the  
many

many inherent defects, which must necessarily be found in all human laws and governments. So long as legislators and magistrates cannot foresee and prohibit every species of offence,—or in every instance detect the transgressions they have prohibited,—or punish in exact proportion to their guilt the crimes which they detect,—or by the punishment of past effectually prevent the repetition of future offences ;—so long as ignorance may mislead, corruption seduce, or hypocrisy elude human tribunals ;—so long as an apparently promiscuous distribution of good and evil hardens the audacity of guilt, and shakes the steadiness of virtue ;—so long as human nature continues frail and fallible—so long must religion be necessary to supply the defects of human laws, and prevent or remedy the disorders of civil society.—Yes, my brethren, religion is the only sure preventive of crimes in every rank of life. When passions from within, and temptations from without assail us, nothing can avail against them but that heart-felt horror of criminal indulgence which religion only can inspire ; that internal purity and self-correcting vigilance which the BIBLE only can teach, and reverence for an all-seeing God alone sufficiently enforce. This it is, which shuts out or baffles the first temptations of vice, by guarding the issues of the heart, by disco-  
vering

vering and crushing each impure thought before its indulgence can inflame the passions or corrupt the soul: This it is, which subdues each proud and malignant emotion, before it can break out into harsh words or violent actions, and perpetually keeps alive that tenderness of conscience, which feels and obeys the first check of self-reproach.

But if laws without religion can rarely prevent the perpetration of crimes, how entirely do they fail in exciting to the practice of those active virtues, which are most essential to social harmony and public happiness? Oh! let not the governors of the earth forget that there exists in every community, in the great mass of every nation, a latent but resistless power, which, if once roused to action, can overturn from their foundations the mightiest fabricks of government, which the wisdom of ages has reared; and in one paroxysm of rage and desperation level to the earth all power and dignity, law and good order, property, liberty, and peace. And what shall restrain this fury from breaking forth? Fear is often an impracticable, always a dangerous expedient: It may for a short period restrain the immediate action, but never can subdue the vital principle of disorder. The flames of se-  
dition

dition smothered, but not extinguished, spread and strengthen, silent and unseen, till at length they burst forth resistless and unquenchable. Adversity will frequently irritate discontent by the miseries it inflicts, and prosperity inspire haughtiness of spirit, and impatience of controul. The influence of prejudice and habit, frequently so much relied on, fluctuates with the variation of opinion, is perpetually weakened by the progress of enquiry, and often overpowered by the mere thirst of novelty, so often found in men wearied by the sameness of long establishment, and conceiving alteration synonymous to improvement.—On what stable foundation then can tranquillity and subordination rest?—on none but the influence of true religion, pervading every order in the state, and animating all to the exercise of those virtues which blend the various ranks of society in one harmonious union, and direct their exertions to the common good.—This would render governors just and merciful, knowing that they also have a master in Heaven to whom they must render a strict account; this will make the opulent generous and beneficent, the magistrate faithful and diligent, the trader honest and industrious, the poor contented and resigned; knowing that the difference in their situation

ation is merely external and transitory, that they are as truly and as highly objects of the kind favour and the guardian care of Providence as the proudest of the sons of men. This is that true "EQUALITY OF MAN," the equal acceptance of all according to their merits in the sight of the supreme and righteous judge; which, if deeply impressed upon the human heart, instead of disturbing would tranquillise society, would humble the pride of greatness, check the turbulence of ambition, console the miseries of poverty, and sooth the bitterness of discontent. This would impress a deep horror of every measure which tends to introduce discord, violence, and war; for peace, and mercy, and forbearance are the leading virtues of the christian character. Thus undeniably does true religion tend so to regulate the tempers and conduct of men, as will most effectually secure order and good government, social union and public happiness.

Are there any who conceive that reason unassisted by revelation, is sufficient to support the cause of virtue; that the principles of natural religion will, by their plain truth, sufficiently recommend themselves to general assent; and that the tendency of moral conduct to public happiness and private good will alone, enforce its

its observance? Let such remember, that whatever influence these motives possess, christianity preserves it unimpaired, inculcating every principle of natural religion, and recommending with the most persuasive energy the practice of every virtue. But let them also reflect, with what clear proofs christianity supports those great truths of natural religion—the existence of a supreme God, and the certainty of a future life and just retribution; not by the subtlety of abstract reasoning, doubtful to the wisest, and utterly unintelligible to the great bulk of mankind, but by clear and decisive facts, by miracles, by prophecies, by the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, sure pledges of his coming again to judge the world in righteousness. Let them consider, that the practice of virtue is, in the christian scheme, enforced by an authority which no human institution could attain; by sanctions which no human reasoning could adduce; even by the express command of the supreme Lord of heaven and earth, who *\* has given to all who continue patient in well-doing, an assurance of life and immortality, and an equal certainty of tribulation and anguish on every soul of man that doeth evil.* Such a sanction alone can have power, if firmly  
 C believed,

believed, to supply an adequate motive to virtue in every vicissitude of fortune ; to counterbalance every opposing temptation of pleasure, or interest, or fear ; to influence alike whether in the silence or secrecy of solitude, or the agitation and display of public life, in adversity or prosperity, in youth as well as in age, in vigour as well as in infirmity, amidst the crush of misfortune and the pangs of death. But how inadequate a representation is this of the superiority of christianity, to the mere force of reason unenlightened from above ?—Can reason assure us of pardon on repentance ? And without such assurance, can vice be reclaimed ?—Can reason supply us with divine grace to assist ? And unassisted, can human frailty persevere ?—Without a Saviour's example to guide our steps, and a Saviour's merits to atone for our deficiency, how should we wander through life uncertain of our way, and sink into the grave, agitated with doubts or tortured with despair !—

But if you wish for experimental proof of the inefficacy of reason, unassisted by revelation, look to the polished nations of Ægypt, Asia, Greece and Rome. What were its effects for a period of 2000 years ?—Did the efforts of philosophy for all that period reduce a  
single

single nation, or city, or village to rational faith and pure worship ; or establish virtue on its only sure foundation, the divine command, sanctioned by a future retribution ?—No—while philosophers were distracted by doubt and error, the bulk of mankind were debased by the abominations of idolatry, and polluted by the vices which this idolatry sanctioned or required ;—abominations and vices which perpetually multiplied and accumulated, notwithstanding the rapid progress of civilization and learning in the heathen world.

And at this hour, what is the state of religion on the earth ?—In some eastern nations we discover traces of the original patriarchal revelation, though faint and obscure. And we know the religion of Mahomet borrowed from the law and the gospel the great truths of natural religion, which it has corrupted by engrafting on them the monstrous principles of spreading religion by the sword, of a sensual paradise, and a fixed necessity. But, exclusive of these nations, where under the Sun is natural religion maintained, except only where christianity prevails ? And the more this approaches to the simplicity of the gospel, the more it is purified from the corruptions introduced by human pride, folly, and licentiousness, the more does it proclaim

its divine origin and beneficent tendency, exhibiting in its genuine lustre, rational faith and pure morality, proclaiming glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to man.

But are there any who think that, however necessary christianity may have been to instruct the ignorance of antient days, or reform the vices grafted on superstition and idolatry, it is become unnecessary in this enlightened and philosophic age, and that now in the 18th century, we may reject or disregard the gospel, without any danger of relapsing into speculative doubts or errors in religion, or into licentious and corrupt principles of morality?—Let such men consider that the same writers, who have laboured to undermine the authority of the gospel, have in many instances questioned and denied the great truths of natural religion and pure morality; and this gradually more and more, as the secret influence of christian education and christian principles has gradually worn off. Let it be observed, that the perfections and providence of God—the certainty of a future state—the reasonableness of prayer—the obligation to purity and conjugal fidelity—the excellence of self-denial and humility—have all been questioned or denied by various deistical writers. That the same subtle metaphysician,  
who

who has declared miracles incredible, \* has displayed the most extravagant scepticism in all his moral and religious reasoning, pronouncing it impossible to obtain any certainty of the perfection of the deity, or the certainty of a future state. Let it be observed, that Epicurean morals and gross obscenity pollute the pages of the † grave historian, who has misrepresented the origin and magnified the corruptions of christianity, to depreciate its value and authority:—That ‡ novels and poems notoriously impure, have issued from the same pens that have in other works opposed the gospel:—And finally let it be observed, that in one nation, and in one only, have the efforts of such writers been successful enough, to exhibit any public or extensive trial of the effects their opinions produce. And there what have been the principles which, so far as this triumph of philosophy extended, have been substituted in place of our holy religion?—Revenge has been exalted into a virtue of the highest magnitude, and its gratification deemed a recompense for the severest sufferings.—The evangelic precept,

\* Hume, in his Essay on a Providence and a Future State—and the conclusion of his Essay on the Natural History of Religion.

† Mr. Gibbon.

‡ Rousseau, Voltaire, and the late King of Prussia.

cept, that \* *we should not do evil that good may come of it*, has been reversed, and the most atrocious excesses of fury been justified, by the supposed importance of the good they remotely tended to produce.—It has been determined, that a state of future retribution is an idle terror; and it has been proclaimed to the multitude, that death was an *Eternal Sleep*.—The public worship of the Supreme Being has been despised and forbidden; and even his perfections and his existence publicly and fearlessly derided or denied. I am far from accusing the whole nation or all its governors, of the absurdity or the guilt of such principles or such conduct: but so far as christianity has been rejected, so far have such principles and such conduct prevailed; and it is notorious, that the corruptions engrafted on the pure and benign religion of the gospel, with the persecutions and abuses to which those corruptions gave rise, had introduced a very general disregard for its teachers and its truths, which paved the way for the perpetration, and diminished the horror that ought to have checked those atrocious deeds of treachery and blood, which have polluted and chastised that wretched land.

After

\* Romans—iii. 8.

After this shall we require further experiments, to prove the necessity of preserving pure and genuine christianity, from its obvious tendency to promote virtue and order, private happiness and public good?—But if, in addition to this natural utility of true religion, we consider farther, that this, and this only, can secure the protection of the Lord of Hosts, who alone *dispenses peace and war, governs the hearts of kings, and controuls the madness of the people; \* rules in the kingdoms of men, and gives them to whomsoever he will; who has declared that † the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ, but that ‡ those who take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, these he shall vex in his sore displeasure, rule them with a rod of iron, and break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*—If this is indeed the case, it becomes incumbent on every nation to be timely and sincere in their obedience to the Son of God, lest he consume them in his wrath. § *Be wise therefore, oh ye kings! be instructed ye judges of the earth; serve the lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling; kiss (or do homage to) the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way; if his*  
wrath

\* Daniel—iv. 17. † Rev.—xi. 15. ‡ Psalm—ii.

§ Psalm—ii. 10.

*wrath be kindled, yea, but a little, blessed are all they who put their trust in him.*

And can we doubt the certainty of the divine judgments inflicted on national guilt, when we view the prophetic declarations of the fate of all the empires, which have successively acquired power and abused it, to support irreligion and immorality, accurately fulfilled?—When we behold Ægypt, the parent of idolatry, the oppressor of the chosen people of God, remaining in that state of degradation foretold by the prophet—\* *the basest of kingdoms*;—when we contemplate the ruins of Tyre and Sidon, † *the great cities, the crowned cities, whose merchants were princes, whose traffickers were as the honourable of the earth, who triumphed in the calamities of God's chosen people, who exalted themselves as Gods—full of pride, and luxury, and vice*;—when, I say, we behold the strange and almost incredible menace of the prophet fully accomplished, “ ‡ *I will make thee like the top of a rock, thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon, thou shalt be built no more, for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God!*—When we behold Babylon § *swept*  
by

‡ Ezekiel—xxix. 15. † Isaiah—xxiii. 8.

\* Ezekiel—xxvi. 4. § Isaiah—xiv. 23.

*by the besom of destruction!*—\* Greece, which abused its knowledge and refinements by vain philosophy, licentious practice, and groveling idolatry, and its liberty by tyranny and war; plunged into servitude and debased by ignorance!—When we contemplate the fate of antient Rome, first the scourge and then the corrupters of the world; its abuse of freedom punished by the most degrading tyranny that ever cursed a state, and its lawless ambition and warlike fury, overpowered and extirpated by a total and unexampled destruction!—When we behold the Jewish nation fulfilling the † *prophecies*, its capital utterly destroyed, its tribes dispersed,—for 1700 years the hiss and laughing-stock of the world,—preserving its ceremonial law, though unable to comply with its rites; perpetually disappointed in the hope of a Messiah, yet cherishing that hope; mixing with all nations, yet separate from all; every where received, no where settled; and at this moment as ready and as anxious for the promised restoration to their native land, as at the first æra of their dispersion!—Look further to those nations who first received the gospel of Christ, and first corrupted and abused the sacred gift; have they not been scourged by the  
the

† Vide Daniel 7 and 8 chapters on the Fates of Greece and Rome.

\* Vide Matthew—xxiii. 39. Romans—xi. 25.

the loss of religion and liberty together, and do they not at this hour groan under the bondage of Mahometan superstition, and Turkish tyranny?—Shall not all these things convince us of the providence and judgments of God?—Nay, shall we not be roused to vigilance by the awful judgments at this moment abroad upon the earth?—What reflecting and religious mind can contemplate unmoved that rapid succession of unparalleled and awful events, which within a few years have convulsed the whole European world; and the final result of which we yet look for with trembling uncertainty?—Were these events removed from this land by the distance of half the globe, or a period of 1000 years, yet would they not exhibit to us an awful warning to repent and reform?—But when we reflect on their direct connection with our own circumstances and our own fate; when we every where behold suspense and alarm, *\* nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth;* when this our own island stands exposed to the contagion of the same destructive and bloody principles, which have brought down such misery  
on

\* Matthew—xxiv. 7. Luke—xxi. 26.

on a neighbouring unhappy land:—when we are plunged into the vortex of foreign war, and agitated by domestic complaint, and turbulence and discord.—At such a crisis, it is surely incumbent on every one of us to \* *break off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor, if it may be a lengthening to our tranquillity.*

For a series of years had this favoured island been blessed with singular prosperity.—The tumult of war had scarcely reached our ears.—No civil discord, no religious animosity, had disturbed our repose.—We had rapidly improved in constitution and commerce, in agriculture, population, and wealth.—But had our pious gratitude kept pace with the divine mercy?—had a serious and heartfelt reverence for the Supreme Being,—a vigilant attention to his worship and his word, displayed itself with perpetually encreasing power, in the manners and language of every rank? alas, most certainly not!—If we were to fix on the distinguishing character of this age and country, it would be undoubtedly that of levity and indifference in religion, and by consequence a relaxation of moral principle, which allows men to pursue self-gratification

\* Daniel—iv. 27.

gratification and self-interest, with little other controul than such as is imposed by the law of the land, and the law of reputation. While nothing operates to impel them to the practice of active virtue, but a certain refinement of feeling, which some may possess, but multitudes only affect; and a thirst for applause, which varies its objects according to the habits, opinions, and caprice of those with whom each man associates, whose approbation he studies, and whose contempt he fears.

Thus men live without God in the world;—he is not in all their thoughts, his favour is not their object, nor his will their guide.—For favour and applause amongst men form their only objects, human laws and opinions their only guide.—Hence that carnal and worldly spirit, so universally prevalent in every rank;—that notorious indifference or contempt for the revealed will of God;—that disgust or ridicule with which every appearance of more than ordinary seriousness, sobriety, or religion, is generally received.—Hence amongst the upper classes of life, luxury, vanity, dissipation, gambling, and licentiousness, and their consequence, distress, venality, and corruption.—Hence narrow and interested policy, party spirit, turbulence, faction, and intrigue.——And when such is the temper

temper, and such the conduct of many amongst the higher orders, is it to be wondered at, that their example should spread vice and irreligion amongst their inferiors, as far as its influence extends?—While the lower classes are generally neglected, sometimes oppressed;—their education left wholly to chance; no care taken to train them to piety and integrity, industry and subordination.—Hence those habits of idleness which corrupt the individual; that spirit of discontent and violence, contempt of authority, and hardy violation of law, which menaces the safety of the State.—Hence those crowds of wretched females who infest our streets, first the victims and then the instruments of licentiousness; spreading amidst our youth the contagion of disease and pollution.—Hence those multitudes of criminals who throng our prisons, and expire upon our scaffolds; 'till the sight of blood, instead of terrifying, hardens the hearts of the populace, and execution ceases to be a reproach to the criminal, or to awe the spectator; and which in this last year have encreased to a degree, not more distressing to humanity than dangerous to public security,—district vying with district, even to the remotest corners of the land, in the violence of the outrages which law and order have sustained, and  
the

the multitude of victims offended justice demands,

Are these things so, my fellow-christians?—and is there no occasion for any extraordinary exertion in support of virtue; any serious anxiety for the interests of religion?—shall we make no effort to reform till we have filled up the measure of our crimes?—shall we abuse the long-suffering mercy of our God, by persevering in iniquity, 'till we provoke his justice to pour upon our heads the fury of his wrath, and by a signal but necessary chastisement, awake us from this lethargy of guilt?—Or if that is impossible, exhibit in us another dreadful example of public corruption punished by public misery;—another awful warning to the nations of the earth.

To sum up and to conclude this argument—  
if, without virtue and piety, wealth corrupts,  
and arms cannot protect a state;—if religious  
principles alone can support the authority, secure  
the faithful execution, and supply the manifold  
defects of human laws; prevent those crimes  
which disturb, and excite to those virtues which  
harmonise society;—if religious principle can  
have no sure foundation but the gospel of Christ;  
—if when this is rejected and despised, men relapse  
into

into the most tormenting doubts, the most irrational and hideous impiety, the most foul and pernicious crimes;—if true religion alone can secure the protection of the God of Hosts, whose avenging judgments have, from the beginning of the world, by his prophets been denounced, and by his power been executed, on every nation that has polluted itself by such abominations, and sunk into such impiety;—nay, if at this moment the awful judgments of God are abroad upon the earth,—menacing our own safety, impending over our own heads—what is the practical result?—what—but that every one of us should take care to worship the LORD JEHOVAH, in spirit and in truth;—and not only ourselves obey his will and implore his protection, but employ every exertion in our power, to diffuse the same principles of piety and virtue through the whole mass of the community,—and therefore warmly and liberally patronise and firmly co-operate with every institution, which, like this which I now recommend to your protection, is calculated to discountenance vice, and promote the practice of virtue and christianity.

But the vigilance of magistrates, the exertions of the clergy—these, it is said, as they are the natural remedies for these evils, so are they abundantly sufficient. Undoubtedly by their

their exertions must all reform be ultimately achieved.—But surely this association is calculated to assist and invigorate these exertions. It assumes no authority, but what it may derive from the respectability of those characters which support it; and has no means of inducing the execution of the plans it may adopt, but by their evident reasonableness and utility. It attempts not to encroach on the province of any department in church or state; it only labours to assist in promoting the common good, by its friendly council and active co-operation.—But when I behold some, the most eminent in character and situation, at the bar and in the senate, on the ecclesiastical and judicial benches, honouring this Association with their names, and strengthening it by their support, I fear not that its views should be suspected, or its interference misunderstood;—and I proceed with confidence to explain the nature of these views, and the utility of this interference.

In the first place, the very existence of an Association, whose avowed object it is to discountenance vice, and maintain the reverence due to religion, by combining the friends of virtue, tends to increase their influence, and to counteract that perpetual conspiracy, in which the irreligious and the profligate are linked together,

gether, against every thing praise-worthy and venerable.—For whence is it that the friends of piety and rectitude are not uniformly more successful in disseminating the opinions, and recommending the practices they approve, than those who support opinions and practices, hostile to the interests of society and the majesty of God?—This undoubtedly is principally to be attributed to the force of corrupt passions, procuring a ready assent to whatever facilitates their indulgence, and conceals from notice the mischiefs they produce;—but it is also to be imputed, in a considerable degree, to the want of union and activity amongst the pious and the good, who too often conceal their sentiments, lest their avowal should seem ostentatious or hypocritical. Thus they mix in the world, undistinguished from other men; they remain ignorant of each others characters and views, and oppose vice, each single and unaided, and therefore all feebly and ineffectually.—The vicious and profane, on the contrary, are anxious to make proselytes to their opinions, because the suffrage of others shelters their absurdity; and labour to multiply the associates in their crimes, because by degrading the virtuous, they seem to exalt themselves. The features of their characters are prominent and decisive; they immediately discover each other,

D

and

and as readily combine; and, conscious that their practices are condemned by human laws, and the divine command, they resort to a third rule of conduct, even the law of reputation, which it is in a certain degree in their power to controul and to corrupt; they study to varnish over the deformity of their foul deeds, by the glitter of false epithets, and mask licentiousness, selfishness, and impiety, beneath the disguise of affected generosity, false honour and philosophic refinement. Hence pride and revenge, suicide and murder, are, in the duellist, dignified by the appellations of fortitude and spirit. The gambler robs you of your property,—the seducer and adulterer blasts your domestic happiness,—not only without the blush of shame, but with the pride of self-applause;—they insult public decency, and corrupt public morals, by the effrontery with which they parade in open day, and they triumph in the kind reception which awaits them, in the most polite and dignified society. Hence ostentation and luxury are pursued with emulation, as the distinguishing characters of fashionable life; while the trader and the artist, who supplied the materials of this magnificence, are frequently suffered to pine unrequited for their toil, in all the misery of hope deferred, till credit fails, and ruin overwhelms them.

THESE,

THESE, and countless other evils, arise from a depraved law of reputation, corrupted by the vicious and the vain, and tamely, I had almost said wickedly, acquiesced in by the serious and the good.—Against this criminal acquiescence, our Association forms the most prompt remedy, by rearing a standard, under which the virtuous may unite, to combat the licentious opinions and practices that have gained ground, merely because they were never seriously condemned, or actively opposed; and assuredly if all who sincerely, but silently, lament these corruptions, with one voice reprobated, and with one heart opposed them, they would gradually be checked and discountenanced, public opinion and public conduct would soon receive a decided change—virtue and religion would re-assume their rightful dignity, vice and impiety hide their heads with shame.

To effect such a reform is the primary object of our union.—In a word, 'tis the general aim of this Association, to render true christianity not merely the object of speculative assent, or verbal acknowledgement; but the governing principle of our lives: For this purpose this Association has laboured to—DIFFUSE RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE—to RESTORE THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH—to PROMOTE RELIGIOUS

D 2

EDUCATION

EDUCATION, and especially to REFORM THE CRIMINAL POOR.—A few observations on each of these measures, will, I trust, evince their importance, and animate our zeal for their accomplishment.

No one can be at all acquainted with the world, and not observe the extreme inattention of the generality of mankind, to any knowledge not necessary for some temporal purpose;—'tis notorious, that moral and religious books meet with scarcely any purchasers;—that the study of the scriptures is too frequently neglected amongst the upper classes;—and that amongst the lower, there are many thousand families with whom not a single Bible could be found.—Now, where such inattention to the divine precepts and records prevails, what hope can exist that merely human exhortations or instructions, can produce any deep impression or any lasting effect?—No assuredly; all knowledge of true religion must be founded on the knowledge of the Divine Word; all permanent reform supported by a heartfelt reverence for that sacred authority, by which it must ultimately be enforced.—Full of this conviction, this Association early directed its attention, to the SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE in this kingdom, the sole purpose of which is to distribute religious tracts and works amongst the populace.—It was observed with regret, that  
the

the members of this Society were *few*, compared with the numbers of the opulent who ought to contribute to its support, and the multitudes of the poor who required its assistance;—to remedy this as far as was in our power, many of our members individually united with that society, while the Association collectively subscribed to its fund; the entire of which has been this last year applied to purchase, and distribute 1300 QUARTO BIBLES, among those who most wanted such a gift;—while our Association has, on its own account, distributed above 15,000 religious tracts on different subjects.—But by the united efforts of both Societies, while limited to their present numbers and revenues, the great mass of the people can receive but little benefit.—Here then is an ample field for the pious and the liberal, to evince their zeal for the promotion of true religion, and the eternal happiness of their fellow-servants in the Lord, and in no instance is the utility of *Associating* more clear and decided than in this.—Is a useful work to be republished?—an Association can easily defray the expence, which a single individual could not undertake. Does any man observe a weighty duty neglected?—in such an Association he can directly find men capable of informing him, whether any work exists calculated to check this evil; or if not, he may easily procure assistance to compose and administer

administer some antidote to the contagion he laments.—Thus the ingenuity of the speculative and literary may be diverted from the busy trifling of useless research, to works of the highest importance to mankind;—and the good sense, the experience, the piety of a single individual, may excite the activity and direct the exertions of the whole body to diffuse religious knowledge with perseverance and success.—

TO PROMOTE THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH naturally became another of the first objects pursued by our Association; since not only the sacredness of the obligation by which it is enforced is undeniable, but if we even consider the sabbath merely as a human institution, its observance is so essential to the existence of religion, and by consequence to the well-being of society, and the salvation of our fellow-creatures, that to increase or restore a reverential attention to it, is a duty incumbent on every man who claims the name of a CHRISTIAN.—Without this, every idea of religion would soon be lost amongst us, and the gloom of Atheism would overspread the land.—For how could the reverence due to the supreme Lord of Heaven and Earth be maintained, if there were no places consecrated to his worship, no stated period

riod for collecting all ranks of men in his presence to celebrate his mercies, to bow before his majesty, and in the same form of sound words, *make known their common requests unto GOD by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.*—How directly does this sacred institution tend to remind all men of their christian union with all their brethren; and thus excite and preserve courtesy, charity, and brotherly love—teaching the proud to humble themselves in the presence of their GOD,—the worldly-minded to calm that anxiety, and lull that restlessness of spirit which torments, while it debases the soul, and leading them from drudging on this earth, to look up to another and a better world, to *the city not made with hands,—eternal, in the Heavens,*—the natural residence of undegraded man.—How admirably calculated is this sacred institution to check the thoughtless, the gay and the voluptuous, in the incessant career of frivolous engagements and luxurious pleasures, which enervate and degrade the soul,—to open their ears to the voice of soberness, and induce them to cultivate that piety and self-government, which alone can secure internal tranquillity and divine acceptance.—Oh! my fellow christians! what blessed effects would follow, were this sacred day employed for the purpose it is designed to promote,—if to public worship each individual would add sincere private devotion

votion, examining into his past conduct, (particularly during the preceding week) deploring his offences, renewing his resolutions of amendment; perusing devout and practical works, and studying with reverence the sacred scriptures.—Would masters of families never neglect on the evening of this day, at least serious family prayer; would they instruct their children on this day in the proofs and principles of the christian faith and the duties of christian conduct,—would they impress on their servants by such examples a spirit of serious religion,—and on every solemnity pointed out by the church read to them some plain explanation of its origin and design, the temper with which it ought to be observed, and the effect it ought to produce on our hearts and lives.—Were these things done, how rapidly would christian knowledge and principles extend themselves; how quickly would each family become a pure asylum of order, temperance, and piety;—and every head of a family habituated to the performance of such acts of public worship, family instruction and prayer and private devotion and self-enquiry, feel a perpetual check on every irregular desire and every vicious habit, and constantly improve in equanimity of temper, regularity of life, and purity of heart.—But alas! how is this to be expected, while such extreme dissipation,

dissipation, such perpetual levity and irreligion mark the manners of the upper classes—that six days in seven are not deemed sufficient to waste in vain ostentation and unsatisfying pleasure,—when the morning of the sabbath, like every other morning, after perhaps a careless visit to the temple of religion, rather to see and to be seen, to admire and to criticise some popular preacher, than to fulfil the duties of humiliation and prayer,—when, I say, after this, the whole of this, like every other day, is consumed in the parade of ceremonial visits and the display of dress and equipage, and its evening again collects the same light and dissipated crowds as every other evening, to bow and gaze, and to disperse again, to consume their hours, not perhaps round the card-table, some remnant of religious decorum, generally, though not universally, excludes this favourite gratification; but in employments equally unprofitable; in frivolous conversation, unmeaning compliment, or uncharitable censure.—Sometimes the same performers, who, the preceding night were employed to pour forth strains of gaiety and voluptuousness, are commanded now to change them for the graver tones of what is called sacred music, as if this could justify and consecrate the scene; as if a meeting, unactuated by a single  
idea

idea of piety, in which to introduce the very name of prayer or praise to the Supreme Being was a mockery of his majesty,—as if such a meeting could change its nature by the warbling of a sound;—yet meetings such as these are not confined to private circles.—An institution which does honor to humanity; patronised by the most respected characters in the land, has encouraged and adopted such meetings on the evenings of this sacred day,—and throws open its doors to receive vanity and levity, idleness and folly, for the purpose of encreasing its charitable fund; and though intoxication and riot have frequently disgraced those assemblies, though intrigue and prostitution perpetually abuse them; yet are they still retained, and while the giddy fashionable throng pace again and again the same dull round of vanity within,—their attendants remain without, profaning that holy sabbath, which by the example of their masters they are taught to despise, by dissolute or blasphemous conversation, by drunkenness and debauchery.—Gracious God! what shall we say of this? What a satire is it on the nation, to suppose no means can be found to supply the fund of such a charity, but by corrupting public morals and patronizing the violation of the sabbath of the Lord.—Is it to be wondered at, that this sacred day should be despised and profaned by  
the

the lower classes when such examples prevail?—With regard to them, how wise and benignant is the institution of the sabbath even in its lowest point of view;—how admirably is it calculated to procure a salutary respite from the incessant exertions of labour,—to strengthen the weary limbs,—unbend the wrinkled brow, and cheer the drooping soul, that industry may be again resumed with redoubled spirit and chearful activity?—Alas! how often does the return of this holy day bring back with it, *not* refreshment, and tranquility, and domestic enjoyment, but riot and intoxication, wasting in a moment that pittance which ought to have supplied sustenance and comfort to a helpless family?—How often, to remedy this prodigality of intemperance, is fraud, exaction, and combination, resorted to, laws violated, and commerce wounded in its most vital part?—But what is still more dreadful, how inevitably does this profanation of the sabbath produce among the lower classes a secret and silent, but sure and rapid dissolution of all moral ties, and the extinction of all religious principle?—At every other time employed in perpetual labour, confined to the most grovling pursuits; dull, uninformed, unreflecting, their whole soul chained to earth, how is it possible for such men to extricate themselves from the grossest ignorance and error,

error, to acquire the smallest knowledge of the gospel history, to learn the first rudiments of the christian faith, or the leading rules of christian morality, or to retain the slightest trace of piety and devotion, if they forsake the only opportunity afforded them, of receiving public instruction and joining in public prayer?—Thus ignorant, thus careless, what must be the event? Can they practice what they never knew, or believe what they never heard? Christians they may be in name, but surely such word-homage is a mockery of God.—And will not God be avenged of such a nation as this? Doubtless, if we imitate the guilt, we shall share the punishment of that city, which the Lord had chosen from the whole earth:—\* *They despised the holy things of the Most High, and profaned his Sabbaths.*—How dreadful was the consequence! —*Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fury of my wrath; their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord God.*

Deeply impressed with a just horror of the guilt, and the danger attending such profanation of this holy day, this Association early resolved, to check as far as possible those fatal abuses;  
and

\* Ezekiel—xxii. 8, 31.

and to evince the sincerity and practicability of the attempt, they solemnly pledged themselves to each other to observe the Sabbath, and promote its observance amongst their families to the utmost of their power. They unanimously resolved,—I repeat the words of the resolution, to inform others, and to remind ourselves.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY—“ That as the  
“ exertions of this Association in pro-  
“ moting the ends of its institution,  
“ cannot be expected to be of much  
“ avail, unless recommended by the  
“ example of its members, We, who  
“ are members of this Association, do  
“ agree and mutually promise, never  
“ to employ our servants or cattle un-  
“ necessarily on the Lord’s Day; that  
“ we will enforce as much as possible  
“ the attendance of our servants at their  
“ respective places of public worship;  
“ that we will not pay or receive  
“ on that day needless visits; that we  
“ will take pains to instruct our families  
“ in the principles of the christian re-  
“ ligion, either by advice, or by put-  
“ ting into their hands good books for  
“ that purpose, suited to their several  
“ capacities and circumstances; and  
“ that

“ that we will countenance and make  
 “ use of family prayers respectively in  
 “ our houses, if not prevented by un-  
 “ avoidable necessity.”——

To promote amongst others the same sentiments and the same practice, they dispersed a thousand copies of an address on the observance of the Sabbath, composed by a late able and exemplary divine ; and they ventured to suggest to the prelate who presides over this diocese, the propriety of directing his clergy, on one and the same Sunday, to address their respective congregations on this important subject, and rouse the public mind to observe, and to reform these fatal profanations of this sacred ordinance. This idea was adopted with a ready and condescending attention to the objects of this Association, which merited and received its warmest thanks.

The efficacy of this wise and christian measure must have been considerable, and will no doubt increase.—It remains for us to hope that, as the numbers of our Association augment, and its principles are better considered, the example it exhibits will be more generally imitated, and the upper classes induced to keep holy the Sabbath of the God of Hosts.—For the  
 lower

lower orders we humbly confide, that the Legislature will adopt the only measure which seems capable of checking the abuse of the holy festival, by PROHIBITING TOTALLY THE SALE OF SPIRITUOUS LIQUORS ON THE SABBATH;—a regulation which, if supported by the vigilance and authority of all who possess authority, would gradually wean the populace from their intemperance and debauchery, and restore them first to habits of sobriety, and then to the seriousness of religion.—In the mean time all friends to virtue and religion should assuredly exert themselves to forward a reformation so desirable, and if only for this single purpose, unite with and support this Association.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION forms the next subject, to which this Association has directed its attention.—'Tis not necessary in this assembly, minutely to expose the fallacy of that insidious sophistry, which would banish religious instruction from all systems of education; as if it were unreasonable to prejudice the yet immature understanding, in favour of any particular Faith, or form the mind to any habits of devotion, before the proofs of that Faith were clearly understood, and the principles on which devotion is founded fully seen.—You well know that to wait 'till reason, unassisted, were able to  
trace

trace the attributes of the Deity in his works, and compare the different systems of religion to discover his will; would be, in the great bulk of mankind, to wait for ever; and even in the most mature and cultivated minds, to wait 'till the whole soul was so enslaved by passion, and engrossed by worldly pursuits, that all religious enquiry would seem impertinent, and all religious restraint intolerable. You know 'tis impossible to keep the mind neutral and unbiassed in religion. If it is not pre-occupied by true, it will infallibly adopt false principles; if it does not early receive impressions of piety, it will gradually be hardened into negligence and contempt of every thing sacred, familiarised to and polluted by every thing profane.—It is therefore the first duty of every human being, to whom the culture of an infant mind is entrusted, to imprint on it, from the first dawn of reason, the principles, and train it to the practice of genuine piety.—Yes, my fellow-christians, the unpolluted, uncorrupted minds of these little ones, whom Providence has entrusted to our care, are the true soil prepared by God and nature, wherein to plant the seeds of pure religion, that secure, they will bring forth fruit to eternal life.—But can it be necessary to dwell on a topic not more important than plain?—Would to God that every man  
who

who hears me, were so fully convinced of the great, the unspeakable importance of a religious education, and so deeply impressed with the dreadful consequences which attend the neglect of it, that all exhortations on this subject were superfluous. But are these things indeed so?—Have you constantly acted, as you must have done, if such conviction was imprinted on your hearts?—Have you educated your own children religiously?—Have you taken care to imprint upon their tender minds, an awful sense of the existence and perfections of the Supreme God?—Have you habituated them to associate the idea of his goodness, with every blessing they enjoy; to consider every action, word, and thought, as subject to his inspection; and every event as dependent on his power?—Have you laboured to raise their minds gradually from sensible to spiritual objects, from the creature to the Creator, from natural to revealed religion, and from the sense of human guilt and weakness, to a grateful and humble reliance on the mercy of their Redeemer and their Judge?—Have they been taught to study the word of God, not as an irksome task, not as a childish exercise, to be laid aside at the maturity of reason, and the happy æra of manly liberty; but as it is in truth, the charter of their dearest rights, the supreme rule of their conduct, their

E

only

only guide to life and immortality?—Have they seen your instructions on this sacred subject sanctioned by your example; and this part of their education exalted into importance, by being the only one which has never been entirely or principally trusted to others, but which is constantly superintended by your own care, and enforced by your own authority?—Oh! my fellow-christians, if your piety has been thus heartfelt, if such has been your anxiety to communicate the knowledge, and secure the blessings of christianity to your own offspring, you will want no persuasions to actuate that piety to support zealously all schemes for the furtherance of religious education. You have seen the happy effects of your parental vigilance, day by day more fully displayed, in the improvement of your sacred charge in virtue and religion. You have seen them growing in wisdom as in stature, and in favour with God and man. You know, for you have felt, the pure, the exalted, the christian joy, which swells the soul at such a sight as this;—and you will eagerly grasp at every opportunity of multiplying the sources of such joy, of extending such invaluable blessings, and indulging this, the truest luxury of virtuous minds.—But is the reverse of this the truth?—Have your children been taught to consider your transmitting

to

to them the same wealth and rank, yourselves enjoy, undiminished and undegraded, as your first parental duty, and the most decisive proof of your affection?—Have they seen, that to effect this was the object of all your sollicitude, the scope of all your instructions; while for religion, the mother has been too dissipated, and the father too busy to attend to it?—PRAYER—Have they rarely seen you practice it yourselves?—Have you seldom and lightly explained its necessity, or instructed them in its nature and forms; and been still more careless in seeing your precepts, such as they were, attended to?—THE HOLY BIBLE—do they never see it engage your attention?—Is it never read, studied, talked of, scarce so much as seen?—Every other learning is inculcated with care, its importance is magnified, emulation is roused, diligence rewarded, eminence praised. But the knowledge of God's words and God's will is left to chance, or to the ignorance and carelessness of some contemptible mercenary menial; and the piece-meal information, which the public reading of the scriptures in this place, instils into the vacant and thoughtless minds of youth, imperfectly understood and rapidly dismissed. And what is the consequence?—The children of the most wealthy and exalted, are sent into the world most grossly, and shamefully, and fatally

fatally ignorant of the plainest truths, the leading facts, and the main foundations of the gospel of Christ;—professing a religion which they know only in name, and avowing a faith they never felt;—and not only ignorant in their religion, for such might be instructed, but indifferent to it. And what resource then remains for indifference, for contempt?—Where shall we find a remedy?—This is not the fiction of imagination, I solemnly declare to you it is not. Such ignorance and such irreligion have prevailed, I know, for I have seen it, where better things should have been found.

What can be the cause of such neglect?—Either that parents are themselves void of all sense of virtue and piety, or that this sense is overpowered by the cares and the pleasures of the world. 'Tis doubtless impossible, in the constant intercourse of domestic life, to counterfeit a seriousness we do not feel, to inculcate on our children principles which do not actuate our own conduct, or train them to habits, and inspire them with feelings of devotion, directly contrary to our own modes of life, and the sentiments that breath involuntary forth in our own conversation.—Here then let each parent contemplate the effects of his conduct on those whose happiness perhaps he values as dearer than  
than

than his own.—For yourselves possibly you look forward to some late, but radical reform, perhaps to a *death-bed* repentance!—which may restore you, as you hope, to the favour of your GOD.—Now grant for a moment it were reasonable to risk your own eternal happiness on the chance of such a reform, yet, will you expose to the same hazard, the fate of these your little ones?—Oh, no! If it were but for their sakes, labour to form your character and principles to piety, that you may become fit guides of their steps, fit instructors of their tender minds.—But though you feel the importance of religion, you are distracted by the anxiety of worldly business.—And for whom is this anxiety?—Is it not for the welfare of your children?—If this be indeed your object, awake from such fatal negligence; remember nothing can atone to them for such neglect.—Assure yourselves, for parental instruction in religion no adequate substitute can be found.—In vain will any master inculcate the most sacred truths, if the parent will not assist his exertion; the child will never regard that knowledge as the most important, which he perceives they who are most anxious for his welfare utterly neglect.—Thus his reliance on your judgment, his confidence on your affection, which ought to guide him to virtue and to happiness, will betray him into impiety and vice.—What parent

rent will not shudder at the consequence?—For mark the progress of those wretched children who have been thus neglected.—Are they not in youth licentious and debauched?—In manhood, worldly-minded, ambitious, and corrupt.—In prosperity, haughty and violent.—In adversity, cheerless and gloomy.—Life passes without religion, and death comes without hope;—and they are perhaps hurried before the judgment seat of God, while they are even yet engaged in denying his existence and scoffing at his name.—Gracious God! could the parent behold his child writhing in the agonies of death, a death probably hastened by the effects, and embittered by the recollection of his crimes!—His last hours cheered by no prospect of futurity,—unsupported by any sense of a redeemer's love,—trembling at the horrors of expected punishment,—or comforted only by the hope of annihilation.—Could he compare such a death-bed with the dissolution of a christian, bearing his present pains with patient resignation, looking back with confidence and joy on a life marked with innocence, purity, and devotion, resigning his soul into his redeemer's hand, with a sure and certain hope of receiving a crown of glory at the resurrection of the just, exclaiming, “Oh death! where is thy sting?—Oh grave! where is thy victory?”—

Can

Can any parent reflect it is in his power by the principles he instills, and the habits to which he trains the mind of his child, to determine whether he shall lead the life and die the death of the righteous,—or lead a carnal and worldly life, and incur that condemnation which such guilt must receive from that God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and after such a reflection, can a christian neglect this most sacred duty of parental love.—Now, if religiously to educate your own children is thus the first duty of a christian, highly, surely, must we estimate the importance of promoting the religious education of all over whom your influence extends. Are you a clergyman? The most sacred obligation your most sacred profession imposes, is to forward religious education amongst those committed to your care.—Are you possessed of wealth and authority? Never can you employ them for a nobler purpose, than in diffusing the invaluable blessing of religious education.

Conscious of the importance of the subject, this Association early appointed a committee, to discover the manifold defects in the present mode of education, adopted by the various ranks of society in the different periods of life, as they affect religious instruction, discipline, and example;—

example;—to point out the most effectual remedies for these defects, and to devise means for securing the general adoption of these remedies.—That committee is still employed in this enquiry; it has invited, and will, I trust, obtain, the co-operation of the whole Society, to assist its researches, and facilitate the execution of its plans; since, for such a purpose, it is plainly necessary to unite the experience of teachers and parents, who have themselves presided over the education of youth;—the more general knowledge of the world, which men engaged in active life alone attain;—the ingenuity of the speculative reasoner, who has traced the movements of the human mind, and the causes which principally determine the human character;—the pious researches of the divine, who possesses a clear knowledge of the great truths and duties of christianity, the proofs on which they depend, and the means by which they may be most effectually enforced;—the persuasive powers of eloquence, and the commanding influence of authority—all should combine to effect that great reform, which the present state of religious education certainly requires.—But while the Association are employed on this difficult and extensive design, they have not neglected the more obvious expedients for improving the utility of those numerous

merous institutions, which pious munificence has established for the instruction of the poorer classes. They have encouraged the practice of regular catechising in the parochial schools of Dublin, by holding an extraordinary examination for all the children of the different schools, and by distributing premiums amongst the best answerers. The effects of this have been already conspicuous : on the last year only 40 appeared, and but 11 premiums were distributed—on this year the number encreased to 179, and 60 premiums were adjudged. The attention and sagacity displayed by these little ones, on these occasions, prove abundantly the utility of this plan, and must fill the mind of every pious christian with the sincerest exultation, at beholding so many children rescued from the oppression of poverty and ignorance, and exerting their faculties with the cheerfulness of honest emulation, to run the race of virtue, and snatch the crown due to superior proficiency in religious knowledge and religious zeal.—Nor has the Association rested satisfied with enlivening the activity, and encreasing the efficacy of the schools already established ;—it has from its own precarious fund, formed a GARRISON SCHOOL for the CHILDREN of SOLDIERS, who, as they devote their time, and hazard their lives for the defence of the State, surely

surely well deserve that the public should provide for the instruction of their offspring, which they are compelled to neglect ; since their scanty pittance, scarce sufficient to afford the necessaries of life to their helpless little ones, is utterly inadequate to the purchase of instruction ; and their perpetual migration from one quarter to another, as public convenience requires, precludes their children from receiving any permanent aid from the public seminaries, which are generally remote from the temporary residence of the parent. Here therefore this Association has interposed, and provided a master and mistress to instruct these *children of the State*, in such elements of learning as may enable them to become useful members of society ; as well as in the principles and practice of true religion, necessary to secure their virtue and happiness, through all eternity. The benefits of this institution will, it is hoped, become more extensive and effectual, as the funds of the Society improve, from the enlargement of its numbers, and the contribution of its members becoming more ample than they hitherto have been ; an advantage to be looked for with full confidence, as the necessity of increasing their liberality becomes daily more apparent, for promoting the various objects which the principles of the Association require it to support.

port. But another class of children has arrested the attention of the Society, whose misery is most extreme; whose ruin if unattended to, is most certain and irretrievable, the CHILDREN OF THE CRIMINAL POOR; children who have themselves been criminal;—children, whose parents having forfeited their lives to offended justice, or having been banished from their country as pestilential members of society, have left their wretched progeny, if feeble and helpless, to linger out a painful existence, 'till cold, and nakedness, and famine, close their days by the most agonizing death;—if mature in strength and cunning, their fate is still more deplorable; destitute of every honest resource, branded with the stigma of hereditary infamy, and driven from the society of the virtuous and industrious, what remains but to turn to prostitution or plunder, to robbery or murder for support, and after exercising that expertness in villainy they derive from their parents, in multiplying public crimes, and increasing public misery, to sink victims to offended law, execrating that religion and that government, which was vigilant not to reform, but to destroy; and was inexorable in the punishment of guilt, without providing any means to relieve the misery, or remove the ignorance from whence that guilt derived its origin.—But I will not dwell on the necessity or advantages of

of this institution, as its claims to public munificence are soon to be brought forward in a public manner; I mention it for the purpose of evincing the utility of the Association, which first suggested the plan, and many of whose members have contributed liberally to its completion.—A similar spirit is now active in forming another asylum, equally benevolent and necessary—THE WORK-HOUSE AND PENITENTIARY, WHERE PENITENT FEMALES are received, sheltered from the miseries of poverty, and the still more dreadful misery of infamy and vice; their return to virtue and to God encouraged, and the arm of mercy extended to support their trembling steps, 'till these mourners regain the forsaken paths of piety and peace.—May the Divine Blessing give to both these salutary schemes their full efficacy, in restraining the contagion of guilt, and turning many to righteousness!—I mention this last institution, though it did not originate in our Association, because it tends to promote the same general object, and because both equally afford a short and decisive refutation of that shallow pretext, which is sometimes employed to excuse or to conceal that carelessness, which overlooks the miseries of our fellow-creatures; that hardness of heart which closes our ears against their cries, and that avarice which prefers its sordid gratification

tification to the indulgence of benevolence and the dictates of religion.—Yes, these two institutions prove to demonstration, how weak and false it is to assert, that our institutions for the instruction of poverty, and the reformation of vice, are so numerous, so munificent, there can be no occasion for selecting new objects of beneficence.—No—there will ever be room for christian charity to extend the blessings of mercy and religion, and discover new modes of relieving wretchedness and reforming vice.—Nothing, therefore, can be more advisable than such Associations as that I now recommend to public attention, which so directly tend to excite a constant vigilance, and form a constant union amongst the friends of piety and humanity, and thus perpetually multiply and invigorate their exertions in the cause of religion and humanity.

Besides the leading objects I have already pointed out, the Association has endeavoured to prevent the frequency of perjury, by drawing up a brief, but affecting explanation of the nature of oaths and a solemn form of administering them, which when their nature and importance shall have been generally considered, will, it is hoped, meet with a general reception, and produce a considerable effect.—It has

has laboured to revive the custom of preaching sermons in assize towns, and thus impressing on the minds of the populace, a serious sense of the enormous guilt of false witness, as well as the sacredness of those obligations which enforce submission to law, and the preservation of peace.—When the reasonableness of this measure is generally reflected upon, it can scarcely be doubted that those truly respectable characters, who preside on the different circuits, will support this pious effort to restore to religion and to justice, that mutual strength and authoritative sanction which they must derive from its being clearly seen, that human laws and the divine commands are united in one harmonious system, and that both combine to guard private security and public happiness.—The Association has also endeavoured to prevent, or at least as far as possible to diminish the temptations to fraud and gambling, during the period of lottery-drawing, which so perpetually seduce the lower class of inhabitants in this metropolis, to idleness and vice, and they rely on the future aid of the legislature to co-operate in this design.—Further, it has descended to objects, which however minute, are yet highly important, even to check that profusion of obscene pictures and compositions which so frequently infect the minds of their readers

of

of every age, and especially of youth, with the contagion of impurity.—In a word, this Association has endeavoured to direct its attention to every defect in public morals, and every source of public corruption which it has had any opportunity of discovering, or any power to reform.

We have now, my brethern, considered the general principles on which this Association was founded, the effects it has hitherto produced, and the plans in the execution of which it is now engaged,—it only remains to examine our own hearts, and judge whether we shall support such principles,—whether we shall labour to extend such effects,—whether we shall assist in the execution of those plans with christian zeal and manly perseverance, or sink into coldness and inaction, and suffer this salutary, I had almost said this *sacred* institution, to dwindle into insignificance and contempt.—And can this be for a moment a subject of doubt and hesitation in any christian mind?—Are there any who have thought this a merely speculative and talking assembly, unworthy the attention of a man occupied in serious business and important pursuits? Let such consider whether the business of this Association, is not the most serious, and its pursuits the most important, which can occupy the

the human mind. Is it not of importance to alter, if possible, the depraved law of reputation, to check the extravagance of luxury, to shame the audacity of vice?—Is it not important to diffuse religious knowledge, promote religious education, restore the due observation of the sabbath, and guard against the crime of perjury?—Is it not a praise-worthy pursuit to encourage the emulation of those children of poverty, whom public munificence has adopted, in christian knowledge and christian piety?—And above all, is it not a truly beneficent employment to reform the criminal poor, to change them from being the disgrace and pest of society, into useful honest citizens,—from being the slaves and the victims of vice, to transform them into the followers of virtue and the friends of heaven.—If, on the contrary, there are others who confess the importance and utility of these plans, but who conceive them too extensive, too impracticable for any private Association to attempt, and condemn or deride our efforts as chimerical,—let such examine into facts, and learn whether in this capital, a great majority of those asylums, in which poverty, disease, and misery find refuge,—those schools where such multitudes are nurtured in religion and industry; whether almost all of these, did not derive their origin from the voluntary exertions of some Association,

fociation, or even of some individual, whose influence and wealth at first must have seemed more inadequate to the accomplishment of any extensively useful undertaking, than our Association, to any object it pursues.—Have they not risen from small and obscure beginnings to notice and celebrity?—And why, with equal perseverance, should we despair of similar success?—But to appeal to instances still more pertinent,—observe whether those academies and societies, which have been most conspicuously useful in disseminating knowledge over the european world, have not derived their origin from voluntary Association?—And, what is exactly parallel to our institution,—view the rise and progress of the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge in our sister kingdom.—Of the Philanthropic Society, from which we derive the plan of reforming the criminal poor;—and above all the society for propagating the Gospel—the efficacy of whose labours has been at different times felt in almost every region of the habitable globe;—and then reflect, have not all of these originated in voluntary Associations, which, like ours, commenced weak and obscure, but gradually acquired strength, and finally have contributed most materially and extensively to diffuse virtue, piety, and happiness.—And after such examples shall we

F

despair,

despair,—with a cause equally virtuous and sacred;—in a country alive to the impulse of humanity, and blessed with the purest form of the christian faith—at a period when every man of sense and reflection must be deeply struck with the miseries attendant on national corruption, and therefore anxious to promote reformation of manners, and diffuse true religion.—In such a situation and in such a cause, shall we despair?—Nay, does not our past progress encourage the most animating hopes?—Let it be remembered, that only 18 months back, did this Association commence, and that it consisted of only THREE members; and that in that period it has increased to more than THREE HUNDRED, and in this number includes many characters, amongst the foremost in the land, for dignity, opulence, talents, and just reputation.—View the effects it has produced—the general attention it has excited—the utility of the measures it adopts, and shall we not persevere?—May we not expect with confidence that the numbers, the funds, the exertions of this Association will daily extend;—its examples attract daily more followers,—and its efficacy daily increase?—Yes, my brethern, this Association merits, and will assuredly obtain the co-operation of all who acknowledge the truth of the gospel faith, and the beneficial tendency

dency of gospel morality.—Should unhappily the reverse of this take place—should a spirit of trifling and cavilling or dissention intrude—should our serious meetings degenerate into a debating club employed in questions of order, in verbal criticisms, or personal invective—should a temporising and selfish policy check every manly and effective plan of public utility,—alas! how fatal will be the consequence?—How soon would public derision and contempt crush our puny and abortive efforts?—And how would the precedent of our ill success check every future attempt to reform or instruct a licentious and irreligious age?—And against these things, how shall we guard, my brethren? Only by possessing ourselves with a serious and heartfelt sense of the unspeakable importance of true religion,—and the strict obligation incumbent on all who profess the name of Christ, to promote the temporal and eternal happiness of all his fellow-servants in the Lord.

This humble, this pious frame of mind alone, can give gravity to our deliberations, true wisdom to our decisions, and to our measures consistency and effect.—By this alone can we secure the approbation and the aid of the respectable and the virtuous amongst men,

and the favour and blessing of God.—Actuated by this, we will see the strict necessity of exhibiting in our own persons and conduct, examples of that reformation of manners, and reverence to religion, which we labour to recommend.—Yes, my brethren, the scrutinizing eye of public attention, will assuredly be daily fixed more and more, on the characters of those who belong to this Association.—Are we remiss in the education of our children, in family instruction, family prayer, and in the observance of the Sabbath of the Lord? our attempt to induce others to attend to them will be worse than ineffectual, it will operate to discredit all efforts at piety, and all attempts to reform.—\* “*Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?*” is a question which all will ask, and on the answer to which will almost wholly depend the success of every measure you propose.—But while all the individuals who form this Association, are obliged to do every thing in their power to forward the interests of virtue and religion, by the examples they exhibit, and the adoption of every measure that can promote instruction and reformation. There are certain classes of men amongst us, on whom this obligation is the more strict, as their conduct is more conspicuous,

\* Rom.—ii. 21.

conspicuous, and their influence more extensive. To such I would address a few words of sincere and friendly exhortation, before I conclude.

To you, in the first place, I address myself, whom Providence has blessed with WEALTH; wealth, which enables you to relieve the misery of poverty, whenever you hear its complaint, and to supply the means of instruction, wherever you discover that ignorance exists; wealth, which can purchase the co-operation of industry and genius, to execute every plan you approve, and secure the attention of the inferior classes of society, to every scheme you recommend. Oh! my fellow-christians! think how will you answer to your conscience and your God, if you employ this all-powerful instrument of evil or of good, to effect only vain or selfish, or vicious purposes, while you neglect to apply it in support of virtue and christianity. 'Tis yours to purchase and disperse amongst the lower classes, and especially your own dependents and your own tenantry, the sacred Scriptures; to multiply parochial and Sunday schools, to employ the ablest masters to preside in these seminaries, and by rewards and protection encourage emulation amongst the children. Shall the scheme  
for

for reforming the criminal Poor, languish for want of your contributions, and the funds of the Association exhibit a melancholy proof of your frugality, in the indulgence of benevolence, and the support of religion?—No—I am confident these things will not be.—I turn from you to LEGISLATORS AND MAGISTRATES, to all whom the community has entrusted with the guardianship of its welfare, and the execution of its laws. In the most earnest and humble manner, I entreat all who bear this high, this sacred trust, to attend to the principles of this Association; to examine its plans, and if indeed virtue and religion are the basis of public security and public happiness, if law, and order, and peace, can be preserved most permanently and effectually, by inculcating the principles of christianity, and restraining vice and profaneness,—oh! prove you do not bear the sword in vain, but that you are indeed the ministers of God, by being a terror to those who do evil. Let not intoxication and riot profane the Sabbath with impunity. Let not the sacred name of God be mocked by the common swearer, or trampled on by impious perjury. From your pious zeal, virtue and christianity must derive decided and effectual support; you will take care that no public measure shall be adopted, without the most serious attention to its probable effects

fects on the morals and religion of the people, antecedent to its adoption, or persevered in, if it shall be found to corrupt morals, or degrade religion. You will suffer no mode of supplying the exigencies of the State to be resorted to, that exposes the sobriety or the integrity of the lower classes to temptation and hazard. To provide for implanting in the great body of the people religious principles, and training them to virtuous conduct, by a well-digested and faithfully executed plan of national education, will, by your exertions, become a leading object of legislative care. To prevent the perpetration of crimes by salutary discipline, will employ your exertions as magistrates, as much as to chastise them by rigorous punishment; and to reform rather than exterminate criminals, will be the anxious care of justice, tempered by humanity. In a word, amidst the various objects of public vigilance, and the various schemes of public reform, it will be seen that the reformation of manners holds the highest place; and that the attention of the wise and powerful, will not be more actively directed to correct errors in the frame or administration of government, and bring back political institutions to their original design, than to restore to virtue its influence, and to religion its just controul.—But I forbear—only let the precepts of the Gospel be the guide of  
your

your conduct, and public happiness will be assuredly its result.

In the last place, my REVEREND BRETHREN, I address myself to you.—I rejoice to find, that from the very first rise of this Association, you have pressed forward with a zeal becoming your sacred office, to extend its influence, and support its objects. I trust I need not remind you of the strict obligation by which we all solemnly bound ourselves, when we entered into the sacred ministry. I need not remind you of the stupendous importance of right or wrong conduct, to ourselves, to those committed to our charge, to our country, nay, perhaps to the general interest of the christian cause.

At *this awful crisis* these considerations cannot fail to strike you with resistless force.—Yes, my reverend brethren, the present state of religion calls for our most active exertions;—the opposition we have to encounter is most formidable, the conflict must be arduous.—We have to contend with levity and indifference, with dissipation and luxury, with sophistry and scepticism, with debauchery and profaneness.—Our views are ever liable to be mistaken, our actions to be misrepresented, our inadvertencies to be magnified into crimes, and our transgressions  
observed

observed with vigilance, and reported with aggravation.—The nature of the provision which is allotted for our support, tends to expose us to popular odium, and engage us in personal litigation;—and unhappily those who require exhortation and reproof, are least disposed to bear them, and our services are ever most undervalued where they are most necessary.—But though thus surrounded with difficulties, thus obliged to combat such opposition, shall we resign ourselves to indolence, or sink into despair?—God forbid—the Power that supports is stronger than all that ever can oppose us; for if God be for us, who can be against us?—'Tis our's to \* *approve ourselves the ministers of God, in patience, in afflictions, by labours, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness;—we must persevere through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, ever taking care † to give no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed; for ‡ the servant of the Lord must be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging the truth.* Opposition must rouse, not check our activity;

\* 2 Cor.—vi. 4, 5, 6.

† 2 Cor.—vi. 3.

‡ 2 Tim.—ii. 24, 25.

vity; suspicion and hostility must sharpen our vigilance, not irritate our passions. Permit me then, my reverend brethren, to direct your attention to those duties, which, however necessary at all times, such a crisis as this peculiarly requires, and the nature of our Association, directly reminds us of.—In speaking of these duties, I do not speak of constant residence, when some inevitable necessity does not compel your absence, because to suppose you non-resident, is to suppose you abdicate your office, desert and betray your trust, and render all exhortation to a due discharge of your duty useless, by renouncing altogether even the form of discharging your duty at all.—I do not speak of a serious and decorous attention to the rites of the Church, to prayer, preaching, and the administration of the Sacraments, because to neglect these, is not only to expose our profession, but our own persons, to such derision and contempt, as the pious clergyman would indeed shudder at, but few, however irreligious, would have the folly to incur, or the hardihood to sustain.—I do not speak of our guarding against these vices, which, in every rank and situation of life, are odious and contemptible, impurity, intoxication, profaneness, violence, pride, or avarice; because I will not suppose any man would solicit admission

mittance into this sacred profession, or if admitted, retain in it authority or emolument, if capable of vices such as these.—And if unhappily such should intrude into the ministry, utterly improbable is it, they should attend to any merely human exhortation or reproof.—No—thou only, oh! God, most holy! thou only, oh! Lord, most mighty! thou only canst touch and convert a soul thus obdurate!—Oh! if any such should lurk amongst us, let thy grace, oh! God, most merciful! even at this moment, penetrate and soften his heart, and lead him to address thee with humble penitence, “*God be merciful to me a sinner,*” and such prayer; \* *hear, oh Lord! in Heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do and give to every man, according to all his ways whose heart thou knowest, for thou, even thou, only knowest the hearts of all the children of men.*—No, my reverend brethren, I am fully confident you will ever study, and enforce scripture faith and scripture morality, and by your lives adorn and recommend the doctrine you expound.—In truth however, our order has, on some late occasions in this country, been loaded with reproach; no candid mind can examine its general conduct, and not conclude, that such reproach was founded

\* 1 Kings—viii. 39.

founded on misrepresentation, not on truth.— 'Tis notorious that for several years past, the vigilance of several of the most respectable prelates in this kingdom has been successfully employed in multiplying glebe houses, building and repairing churches, and securing the constant residence of the parochial ministers, even in the remotest districts of the land; and, notwithstanding the clamour raised against the clergy, for supposed exaction in the collection of their revenues, they may with confidence appeal to those facts, which the strict scrutiny produced by this clamour, has brought forward into public view, in proof, not merely of the equity, but the almost universal moderation and forbearance which has marked their conduct. The general moral character of the order, I do not believe calumny has ventured to arraign; and I am happy, publicly to declare my full persuasion, that the general attention of the clergy to the duties of their profession, has of late increased, not relaxed. But notwithstanding this, my brethren, much undoubtedly may yet be done to encrease our usefulness, by still increased activity in the discharge of our sacred trust; and therefore it is, that I would at present call your attention to some particular duties, which the authority of our Association, (for I presume

sume not to speak upon my own authority,) has functioned with its recommendation;—duties, which I will barely suggest to you, for their reasonableness precludes the necessity of argument, and your zeal requires not the stimulus of exhortation.

In the first place then I would remind you how highly important is the duty of catechising the children of your parish every sabbath.—On this duty, this Association has deservedly laid the greatest stress,—great indeed are the difficulties which sometimes in this instance impede your zeal, but undoubtedly no difficulties should prevent your commencing, nay, scarce any want of success discourage you from persevering in this sacred duty.—Let all, who at any time wish to receive instruction, be sure on each Lord's day to find it.—The necessity of preparing the younger part of your congregation for confirmation, whenever you shall be called on to present them, should be perpetually urged.—Does but a single child attend your lectures, if you continue to lecture that single child, the number will, at some period, certainly increase,—to increase it, employ private and personal influence, public exhortations, reproof, reward; the plain reasonableness and  
utility

utility of yielding to your zealous applications will ensure your final success; at all events you will have discharged your duty and approved yourselves to your God.—In the next place I would suggest to you, the necessity of frequently visiting the various schools of every rank in your parish, and taking care that religious and moral instruction are sedulously inculcated, and books for that purpose supplied to the poorer schools—equally obvious is the expediency of examining whether such of the lower class of your parishioners as can use the sacred scriptures and other religious works, are provided with them; and for both these purposes, you may rely on it, your applications to our Association, or to the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge, will be carefully attended to.—The last object I would offer to your consideration is, the utility of promoting as much as possible, that extra official intercourse with your parishioners, which may acquaint you with their characters, endear you to their affections, and enable you to use those private admonitions which may be best suited to their peculiar situation and conduct.—This, the most delicate and difficult of all the objects I have ventured to suggest, depends undoubtedly on the temper and co-operation of your parishioners, as well as on  
your

your own exertions; it is however, certain, that since its utility, when practicable, is great and obvious, to try how far it is practicable, is in all cases a duty. The visitations of sickness will frequently render your presence necessary in every family.—Surely such occasions might be improved to lay the foundation of a constant and friendly intercourse.—But I will trouble you now with only one remark:—that to extend the benefits of this Association to every part of the realm, it seems absolutely necessary that the clergy throughout the kingdom should become corresponding members of this our society.—It will be the part of those to whom I now address myself, to use their influence to effect this voluntary union of the whole clerical order for discountenancing vice, and promoting the practice of virtue and religion; nor will our order alone unite in this pious service.—No; all men of every profession, in whose hearts dwell the purity of virtue, the sacred fervor of patriotism, and the sanctity of true religion,—all will unite with this Association.—As citizens, it calls on them to promote public order, and public happiness, which require that virtue should be founded on its only firm basis, religious principle.—As men and christians it appeals to their benevolence and  
rouses

rouses their sympathy, it implores them to regard and to relieve the misery of such of their fellow-creatures and fellow christians as are exposed to the contagion, or have unhappily sunk under the power of irreligion and vice.—As accountable beings, whose eternal happiness must depend on the use they make of the talents committed to their care by the Lord of the universe, it offers to those who are entrusted with wealth, exalted to power, or adorned with wisdom, a new opportunity of improving these talents to the good of man and the glory of God.—By neglecting such an opportunity, they must increase their guilt and embitter their condemnation.—Such are the combined motives by which this institution would engage our attention and support.—Surely they are not light and trivial?—No, they will, I know they will, animate you to activity and perseverance; and may the God of truth and righteousness hasten and prosper the union of all his faithful followers.—May his spirit descend upon us, fix our wavering resolutions, assist our feeble efforts, increase the number of labourers, and give vigour and success to their exertions in this sacred cause.—And at that awful hour, when all mankind shall stand amidst the wreck of nature, trembling before the tribunal of their judge, may his

his mercy pardon our manifold offences and accept our humble service.—Then, my brethren, will the voice of the prophet be fulfilled in all who labour to extend the dominion of virtue and the beneficent influence of true christianity.—Then *shall those that be wise shine as the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*

---

## E R R A T A.

- Page 25. The references to the notes in this page are reversed.
- 37, line 12, for 15,000 read 30,000.
  - 42, line 3, for *was* read *were*.
  - 43, line 4 from the bottom, for *growling* read *groveling*.
  - 46, line 7, for *a thousand* read *five thousand*.
  - 47, line 4, for *the holy* read *this holy*.
  - 48, line 4 from the bottom, for *that secure* read *secure that*.
  - 53, line 3 from the bottom, for *confidence on* read *confidence in*.
  - 57, line 11, for 179 read 254.
  - 58, line 7 from the bottom, for *contribution* read *contributions*

F I N I S.

Receipts and Payments of the Association for discountenancing Vice, &c. from 9th October, 1792, (the day of its institution) to 17th June, 1794.

## RÉCEIPTS.

	£.	s.	d.
Contributions from members	112	18	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
<hr/> persons not members	12	15	8
Donation from a person unknown, by the hands of Robert French, Esq.	20	0	0
Ditto from Edmund Johnston, Esq. of Rock- brook	20	0	0
Annual subscriptions from members	161	10	6
<hr/> persons not members	6	16	6
	<hr/> £. 334	1	6 $\frac{1}{2}$

## PAYMENTS

	£.	s.	d.
For printing at fundry times the following tracts, &c. saleable to annual subscribers at half price	48	6	3½
6000 Serious Exhortation to the Public, Nov. 1792			
3500 Porteus on the Observance of Good-Friday, March, 1793			
10,000 Admonition to Servants, ditto			
700 Prayers for Hospitals, May, 1793			
5000 Law's Address to his Parishioners, ditto			
2000 Adams's Pastoral Advice, ditto			
1000 Finch on Oaths, July, 1793			
500 Hints on Education, ditto			
1000 Gibson's Advice to Sick Persons do.			
2000 Queries to Persons absenting themselves from the Holy Sacrament, August, 1793			
4000 Porteus, on Good-Friday, Ap. 1794			
2000 Exhortation to the Duty of Catechising, May, 1794			
For 350 Quarto Bibles, paid for to Mr. Grierson, at 4s. 2d. each (saleable to annual subscribers at 2s. 8½d.)	72	18	4
Advertisements, printing, stationary, &c.	30	7	4½
Expences incurred by catechetical examinations, and other incidental and petty charges	33	15	2
Contribution to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, Feb. 1793	5	13	9
Contribution to the establishment for reforming the criminal poor, Feb. 1794	50	0	0
Balance in the Treasurer's hands, 17th June, 1794	93	0	7½
	£. 334	1	6½

WM. WATSON, Jun. Treasurer.

N. B. The Association is at present under engagement for a contribution of Twenty Pounds annually, towards the support of a school for the children of poor soldiers, besides other smaller expenditures, and for 300 Bibles more, which will be furnished on the terms abovementioned.

---

L I S T  
OF THE  
MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

---

- His Grace the Archbishop of Armagh  
 His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin  
 His Grace the Archbishop of Cashell  
 His Grace the Archbishop of Tuam
- |   |   |
|---|---|
| THOMAS Aſton, Eſq.                                | Rev. Henry Boyd                             |
| Samuel Adams, Eſq.                                | Lieut. Col. William Brady                   |
| Rev. Dr. Adamſon                                  | Rev. John Brinkley                          |
| Rev. John Alcock                                  | Hon. and Rev. Mr. Broderick                 |
| Rev. George Alcock                                | Rev. Dr. Browne, Dean of<br>Elphin          |
| Rev. Dr. Allot                                    | Rev. Thomas Brownrigg                       |
| Hon. and Rev. William An-<br>neſley, Dean of Down | Mr. Bryanton                                |
| Rev. Henry Anneſley                               | Rev. Edmund Burton, Arch-<br>deacon of Tuam |
| James Arbuckle, Eſq.                              | Rev. Dr. Burrowes, F. T.<br>C. D.           |
| Rev. F. Arbuthnot                                 | Turner Camac, Eſq.                          |
| Rev. William Armſtrong                            | Rev. Robert Cane                            |
| Rev. Wm. Jones Armſtrong                          | Rev. Peter Carleton, Dean of<br>Killaloe    |
| Rev. Jonathan Aſh                                 | Alderman Carleton                           |
| Rev. Iſaac Aſh                                    | Richard Cave, Eſq.                          |
| Rev. Nicholas Aſh                                 | George Chinnery, Eſq.                       |
| Rev. Gilbert Auſten                               | Right Hon. William Burton<br>Conyngham      |
| Counſellor Ball                                   | William Cooke, Eſq.                         |
| Rev. John Ball                                    | William Cope, Eſq.                          |
| Rev. John Barker                                  | Charles Coſtello, Eſq.                      |
| Rev. Thomas Barry                                 | Rev. Jaecob Cramer                          |
| Rev. Leſlie Battersby                             | Rev. Dr. M. Cramer                          |
| Rev. Edward Beattie                               | Rev. Henry Crofton, Found-<br>ling Hoſpital |
| Rev. Dr. Beaufort                                 | Rev. Henry Crofton, Royal<br>Hoſpital       |
| Earl of Belvidere                                 | Morgan Crofton, Eſq.                        |
| Lieut. Col. Betteworth                            | Hon. Juſtice Crookſhank<br>George           |
| Rev. Dr. Blundell, Dean of<br>Kildare             |   |
| Rev. William Blundell                             |   |
| Richard Bolton, Eſq.                              |   |
| Richard Paul Bonham, Eſq.                         |   |
| Rev. Richard Bourne                               |   |

- George Crookshank, Esq.  
 Edward Crosbie, Esq.  
 Mr. John Crosthwaite  
 William Cuthbert, Esq.  
 Rev. Richard Dawson  
 Rev. Richard Despard  
 Dr. Stephen Dickson  
 Simon Digby, Esq.  
 Rev. William Digby, Dean  
 of Clonfert  
 Francis Dobbs, Esq.  
 Rev. Dr. Dobbin  
 Rev. Dr. Drought  
 Rev. Richard Drury  
 John Eccles, Esq.  
 Isaac Ambrose Eccles, Esq.  
 Rev. Thomas Ellifson  
 Rev. Thos. Elrington, F. T.  
 C. D.  
 Rev. Thomas Emerson  
 Counsellor Espinasse  
 Mr. Charles Este  
 George Evans, Esq.  
 Rev. Mr. Evans  
 Thomas Everard, Esq.  
 Rev. William Lynar Fawcett  
 Major Faviere  
 Rev. John Fea  
 Rt. Rev. Lord Bishop of Ferns  
 Rev. Dr. Robert Poole Finch,  
 Secretary to the Society for  
 promoting christian know-  
 ledge, London.  
 Mr. George Forster  
 Rev. Nicholas Forster  
 Counsellor Robert French  
 Rev. Thomas Garble  
 Rev. Samuel Gerard  
 Richard Gladwell, Esq.  
 John Godley, Esq.  
 Joseph Goff, Esq.  
 Rev. Mr. Gorman  
 Rev. John Grant  
 Rev. Richard Graves, F. T.  
 C. D.  
 Rev. George Graydon  
 Richard Griffith, Esq.  
 Rev. Charles Grove  
 Rev. Dr. Grueber  
 Rev. Hosea Guinness  
 Rev. Dr. Hales  
 Rev. Dr. Hall, S. F. T. C. D.  
 Rev. Dr. Hamilton, Dean of  
 Armagh  
 Rev. Alexander Hamilton  
 Rev. Dr. James Archibald  
 Hamilton  
 Rev. William Hamilton  
 Rev. Singleton Harpur  
 Rev. John Isaac Harrifon  
 Rev. James Hastings, Arch-  
 deacon of Glandelagh  
 John Hatch, Esq.  
 Samuel Hayes, Esq.  
 Hugh Henry, Esq.  
 Rev. Edward Herbert  
 Hon. and Rev. John Hewitt,  
 Dean of Cloyne  
 Rev. Ambrose Hickey  
 Thomas Higginbotham, Esq.  
 Edward Hill, Esq.  
 Dr. Edward Hill  
 Peter Holmes, Esq.  
 Dr. Francis Hopkins  
 Francis Hopkins, Esq.  
 Rev. George Horan  
 Robert Howard, Esq.  
 Henry Hunt, Esq.  
 Hon. and Rev. Abraham Hely  
 Hutchinson  
 Sir Francis Hutchinson, Bt.  
 Rev. Jas. Hutchinson, Arch-  
 deacon of Achonry  
 Alexander Jaffray, Esq.  
 Alexander Jaffray, Jun. Esq.  
 Right Hon. William James,  
 Lord Mayor  
 Meredyth Jenkin, Esq.  
 Rev. John Jephson  
 Rev. William Jephson  
 Edmund

- Edmund Johnston, Esq.  
 Rev. Thomas Jones  
 Rev. William Dunkin Jones  
 Bev. Dr. John Kearny, S. F.  
 T. C. D.  
 Rev. Dr. Michael Kearny  
 Rev. Nich. Ward Kennedy  
 Rev. Robert Kenny  
 Right Rev. Lord Bishop of  
 Killala  
 Thomas King, Esq.  
 Rt. Hon. Lord Kingsborough  
 Rev. Thomas Kingsbury  
 Earl of Kingston  
 Alexander Kirkpatrick, Esq.  
 Rev. Walter Blake Kirwan  
 Alexander Knox, Esq.  
 Hon. and Rev. Wm. Knox  
 John Ladaveze, Esq.  
 Rev. Dr. Lamilliere  
 Major William Lane  
 Rev. Edw. Francis Lascelles  
 Right Hon. David Latouche  
 John Latouche, Esq.  
 Peter Latouche, Esq.  
 David Latouche, jun. Esq.  
 Rev. John Leahy  
 Rev. Edward Ledwich  
 Rev. William Ledwich  
 Rev. Giles Lee  
 John Leigh, Esq.  
 Rev. John Letablere  
 Rev. John Lewis  
 Rev. Dr. Little  
 Edward Litton, Esq.  
 Gorges Lowther, Esq.  
 Henry Lyons, Esq.  
 Rev. Dr. Lyfter  
 John Macaulay, Esq.  
 Rev. Dr. Mac Dowell  
 Rev. William McLaughlin  
 Rev. William Magee, F. T.  
 C. D.  
 Mr. William Martley  
 Rev. William Mauleverer  
 Rev. Henry Maxwell  
 Rev. James Maxwell  
 Rev. Richard Meade  
 Rev. Charles Meares  
 Right Hon. and Rev. Lord  
 Bishop of Meath  
 Hon. Baron Metge  
 Rev. G. Miller, F. T. C. D.  
 Rev. Oliver Miller  
 Rev. James Montgomery  
 Rev. Mr. Moor  
 Mrs. Hannah More, Bristol  
 Rev. Allen Morgan  
 Rev. Hamilton Morgan  
 Rev. James Morgan  
 Rev. Charles Mosse  
 Rev. Hector Munro  
 Rev. Dr. Murray, V. P. T.  
 C. D.  
 Rev. Henry Murray  
 Thomas Newenham, Esq.  
 Major Nicolls  
 Rev. Brinsley Nixon  
 Brabazon Noble, Esq.  
 Rev. T. L. O'Beirne  
 Rev. Dr. O'Connor  
 Rev. Hugh O'Neill  
 Rev. Dr. Owen, North Wales  
 Rev. Henry Palmer, Arch-  
 deacon of Offory  
 Rev. Henry Pasley  
 A. N. Pedder, Esq.  
 Rev. Charles Percival  
 Rev. Philip Percival  
 Dr. Robert Percival  
 Rev. Richard Powell  
 William Preston, Esq.  
 Rev. Mr. Prince of London  
 Major General Pringle  
 Counsellor Redford  
 Arthur Rickey, Esq.  
 Jonathan Bruce Roberts, Esq.  
 Rev. Peter Roberts  
 Rev. Dr. Robinson  
 Rev. Thomas Robinson  
 Gustavus Rochfort, Esq.  
 Rev. George Rogers.

Mr.

- Mr. Samuel Rosborough  
 Rev. John Rose  
 Clotworthy Rowley, Esq.  
 Counsellor William Rowley  
 Rev. Robert Ruffell  
 Rev. Dr. Ryan  
 Rev. Dudley Charles Ryder  
 Rev. Christopher Savage  
 Dr. Arthur Saunders  
 Rev. James Saurin  
 Counsellor John Schoales  
 Rev. Dr. George Sealy  
 Rev. Geo. Shaw, of London  
 Robert Shaw, Esq.  
 Hugh Skeys, Esq.  
 John Skeys, Esq. Secretary  
 Rev. Matthew Sleater  
 Rev. Hugh Stewart  
 Rev. Henry Stewart  
 Counsellor John Stewart  
 Rev. Dr. Stock  
 Rev. Gabriel Stokes  
 Rev. Dr. Stokes  
 Rev. James Stopford  
 Rev. Joseph Stopford, F. T.  
 C. D.  
 Hon. and Rev. Thomas Stop-  
 ford, Dean of Ferns  
 Rev. William Stopford  
 Major General Straton  
 Rev. Mr. Strong  
 Rev. James Stubbs  
 Rev. Samuel Synge, Arch-  
 deacon of Killaloe  
 Hon. and Rev. Edw. Taylor  
 Rev. William Tew  
 Rev. Thomas Thompson  
 Richard Thwaites, Esq.  
 Rev. Thomas Tighe  
 John Toler, Esq. Sol. Gen.  
 Dr. Townshend  
 Rev. Power Trench  
 Rev. Thomas Trocke  
 Rev. Robert Truel  
 William Vavasour, Esq.  
 Rev. James Verschoyle, Dean  
 of St. Patrick's  
 Rev. J. Agmondisham Vesey  
 Rev. Robert Vicars  
 Rev. Richard Vincent  
 Rev. Hemsworth Usher  
 Rev. John Usher, F. T. C. D.  
 Rev. John Waddy  
 Robert Watson Wade, Esq.  
 Rev. Chamberlen Walker  
 Rev. John Walker, F. T. C.  
 D.  
 Rev. Raphael Walsh, Dean  
 of Dromore  
 Rev. Charles M. Warburton,  
 Dean of Ardagh  
 Bernard Ward, Esq.  
 Mr. William Watson, Sec.  
 Mr. W. Watson, jun. Treas.  
 Rev. John Webb  
 Commiss. Christmas Weeks  
 Mathew Weld, Esq.  
 Rev. Steuart Weldon  
 Rev. James Whitelaw  
 Geo. Boleyn Whitney, Esq.  
 Rev. Irwin Whitty  
 Rev. John Williamson  
 Rev. Thomas Williamson  
 Rev. Andrew Wilson  
 Rev. David Wilson  
 Rev. Joseph Wilson  
 Right Hon. Arthur Wolfe,  
 Attorney General  
 Benjamin Woodward, Esq.  
 Rev. Richard Woodward  
 Rev. Gustavus Wybrants  
 Stephen Wybrants, Esq.  
 Rev. Henry Wynne  
 Robert Wynne, Esq.  
 William Wynne, Esq.  
 Right Hon. Lord Chief Baron  
 Yelverton  
 Rev. Dr. Young, S. F. T.  
 C. D.

20th June, 1794.

