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body of flesh and bones, which they had seen crucified and laid in the sepulchre; and *secondly*, that our Lord himself took special pains to impress this very belief upon their minds.[1] No candid inquirer can call in question the completeness of the evidence on these two points. If then our Lord was not thus in his human body, it follows that he took special pains to deceive his disciples, and that they were actually deceived. This then is the tremendous result;—I shudder while I write;—our holy and blessed Redeemer was a deceiver; the holy apostles were false witnesses of God; and our holy religion, the sacred fabric of Christianity, with all its blessed and wide-spread influences, is the most stupendous delusion the world ever saw. From such a consummation may God deliver us!

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## ARTICLE V.

### SOUTH'S SERMONS.

*Sermons preached upon several occasions. By Robert South, D. D. Prebendary of Westminster, and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. A New Edition, in Four Volumes.*—Philadelphia: 1844.

By Leonard Withington, Newbury, Mass.

THERE cannot be a greater proof of the triumph of genius over all its obstacles than the republication of these Sermons, in this country, one century and more than three quarters of another after their delivery; this bitter, this sarcastic, this snarly churchman, who never spared his foes and was dreaded even by his friends, here appears in this land of the Puritans, with all his abominations on his head. We, Dissenters, have every reason to hate him; and the heart sometimes influences the taste; and makes us slow to admire the abilities which we find it impossible to love. But Dryden has remarked, that, "if a poem have genius it will force its own reception in the world. For there's a sweetness in good verse which tickles while it hurts; and no man can be heartily angry with him, who pleases him against his

[1] See p. 304 above.

will."[1] Dr. South has forced us to dig up the buried scourge with which he has so unmercifully lashed our fathers.

The truth is, the charm of mental raciness is eternal; independent of all times and factions, and this charm South had almost to perfection. We cannot think he made the most of himself. He seems to have been born for better things than ever he accomplished. He has been charged with approaching the buffoon; he is supposed to have introduced into the pulpit the cant phrases of a licentious court; he certainly wasted much of his strength on temporary topics; he was ill-natured, morose and severe; but with all his faults, we consider him as one of the first names in English Literature. He had one excellence of surpassing worth. He was not a formalist; not a conventional man. However bitter, however bad; he was in earnest and dipped his pen in the centre of his heart.

Of all writings, it must be confessed, (though it is a mortifying truth) sermons are the most dull—certainly the least readible. We consider it as the hardest task, in the whole compass of literature, to produce a living sermon. One reason is, that a written and a spoken style are so very different that it is hard to unite them. The animation; the pathos,—the awakened interrogation; the verbosity; the interjections, which please in extemporaneous delivery when prompted by the occasion, are apt to be inflated when they appear fixed in print and sanctioned by the press. Then the preacher is bound down by a cumbrous load of formalities. Some would bind him to a technical orthodoxy; some impose on him laws of an artificial decorum. Whatever may be his native character, or the turn of his genius, he must never make the least approach to the playful or the humorous. *That* would be profane. The theological student is often rocked in the cradle of restraint. He writes and speaks with the ghost of criticism staring him in the face and frightening away every spark of nature. He is put into cramping irons in his intellectual infancy; and the little foot of a Chinese lady is not further from the fulness of nature than is the progeny of an overhewn mind from the simplicity of feeling and the energy of truth. Thus our sermons become a collection of proprieties. The individual is lost in the mould. We avoid eccentricities and fall into stupidity.

As South was remarkable for his wit and sarcasm; and as his style, though always fertile enough to command attention, has

[1] Preface to Absalom and Achitophel.

been comic enough to provoke censure, his example may be an occasion to say a few words on the lawfulness of making the pulpit the place for *sacred satire.*

Now the opponents of this practice hold, that religion is too sacred a theme to be recommended by such means; as we heard a venerable professor once say, "*it is all wrong,*" and the authority of Cowper was of course brought in to confirm the sentiment.

> 'Tis pitiful
> To court a grin, when you should woo a soul,
> To break a jest when pity would inspire
> Pathetic exhortation; and t'address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart!
> So did not Paul. Direct me to a quip,
> Or merry-turn in all he ever wrote,
> And I consent you take it for your text,
> Your only one till sides and benches fail.

These remarks are supported by much reason and sanctioned by high authority. It is certain that few men have wit; it is also clear that there is a wit which, united with levity, is out of its place not only in the pulpit but in every decorous assembly.[1] But if the meaning of these remarks is—to cramp the individual—whatever be his mental turn under laws imposed by the artificial lords of criticism—we must modestly enter our protest. We are pretty sure whatever may be the intentions of these grave gentlemen, their words have been misunderstood.

In the first place, it cannot be doubted that a sense of the ridiculous is one of the donations of our Heavenly Father, and why he should bestow this gift in vain we never yet could understand. There must be something very peculiar in religion, if it discards a faculty so deeply ingrained in our nature and such a shining proof of the wisdom of God. In the other departments of moral agency, we see and acknowledge its use. Go to the bar, the market, the halls of legislation, the private circle, we find a powerful application of this most powerful propensity; and it always may be used on the side of truth and virtue. It was the very aim of Addison and has always been accounted his praise that he united the long dissevered powers of humor and wisdom in the cause of virtue. Now religion and morality stand on the same ground. They need, they demand all the powers which nature has im-

[1] Hear Cicero.—After distinguishing wit into three kinds, he shows what the orator should choose and what reject.—See the De Oratore, Lib. II. § 62.

parted to man, in order to embellish their beauties and to support their rights. To this we must add that the infidel will always endeavour to enlist the power of wit and ridicule on his side. He will touch by these instruments an important string in human nature. He will claim an eternal alliance between these finer developments and his own opinion. Shall we leave him to this advantage-ground? John Wesley thought, that the Devil should not have all the good music there was in the world; and we would vindicate the laws of God; and contend for those ministering powers, which, in their legitimate application, may "give ardor to virtue and confidence to truth."

> "Thus was beauty sent from Heaven,
> The lovely ministress of truth and good
> In this dark world; for truth and good are one,
> And beauty dwells in them and they in her,
> With like participation; wherefore then
> O sons of Earth! would ye dissolve the tie?"

In the second place, there are certain errors in the moral world so supremely ridiculous that they hardly merit a sober argument against them. A man might as well drag up a forty-two pounder to overthrow a *lodge in a garden of cucumbers*. By bringing a grave syllogism against a supreme absurdity, we make it more respectable than it can be by its native merits. The best thing you can do is to knock it over by ridicule. Thus when the Papists allege their foolish miracles, the wit of Swift is a much more proper weapon to overthrow them, than the dialectics of Aristotle. Tillemont tells us very gravely, that the wood of the true cross found by St. Helena, permits itself to be multiplied; and the milk of the Virgin has been in some ages, of great account in healing the maladies of man. To all this, we oppose the words of My Lord Peter, who swore that his father had an old sign-post which yielded wood enough to make sixteen large ships of war, besides a cow, which gave milk sufficient to fill three thousand churches. Surely, such ineffable nonsense merits nothing better. It should be remembered also, that some opinions are so ridiculous that they provoke the severest minds to ridicule. John Gilpin, riding on his horse with the bottles at his side, and his hat and wig flying away, is not more laughable than some grave doctrines in theology, which have commanded the assent of thousands, and have been handed down by a hoary antiquity. Nay, even the gravest minds are compelled to feel this principle. We hardly know a man more uniformly solemn than John Knox.

His temperament was grave; and he lived in persecuting times, with the prison and the stake always before him; his very love-letters are curious specimens of the most solemn gravity. Yet John Knox when he was aboard the French gallies, and they were pestering him with a little wooden image of the virgin, his patience was exhausted, he threw it into the river and said, *Let our Ladie now save hirself: sche is lycht enoughe, bat hir leirn to bwyme.* Such is the power of ridicule; it refuted the Papists and taught even John Knox, for once in his life, *to grin horribly a ghastly smile.*

Perhaps no science is further from satire than metaphysics; and few minds were more uniformly severe and sober than was our illustrious Edwards. He appears to have paid little attention to the fine writers; and we do not remember that once in his voluminous writings he ever quotes Shakspeare, Milton, Pope, or gave the least indication that he knew such men ever existed. He had a powerful fancy, it is true; yet it was always chained down to the subtleties of metaphysics, and the solemnities of religion. If he ever read Swift or South, he probably regarded them as miserable buffoons, laughing at the expense of conscience and of truth. Yet this very Edwards was once allured to offer us a piece of wit which would have been no disgrace to Swift himself. When he viewed the doctrine of the Arminians, respecting the power of the will over its own motives, as impossible and ridiculous, he thus expressed it. The parallel is complete, and the argument (according to the conceded terminology of that day) unanswerable. But mark the scorching ridicule; the sardonic grin on features seldom guilty of such a sin. "If some learned philosopher, who had been abroad, in giving an account of the various observations he had made in his travels, should say—'He had been in *Terra del Fuego*, and there had seen an animal, which he calls by a certain name, that begat and brought forth itself, and yet had a sire and dam distinct from itself; that it had an appetite, and was hungry before it had a being, that his master who led and governed him at his pleasure, was always governed by him and driven by him where he pleased; that when he moved he always took a step before the first step; that he went with his head first, and yet always went tail foremost and this, though he had neither head nor tail;'—it would be no impudence at all, to tell such a traveller, though a learned man, that he himself had no notion or idea of such an animal, as he gave an account of, and never had nor would have."

In the third place, ridicule is of immense power in promoting the cause of truth. It is not indeed the test of truth; though we have often thought that truth is made ridiculous by false satire, just as Christ was made absurd by the purple rags, the thorny crown and the reed of straw which his enemies put upon him, and which were as extraneous to his person as their reproaches were to his character. But as truth has two qualities, its rectitude and its beauty; so error has two qualities, its falsehood and its deformity; logic showing the one, and satire the other. If you exclude the latter power, you do not occupy the whole ground; you do not exert all the given strength to overthrow it. At least this is true, of the minds whose gift it is to sway mankind by the power which, though few possess, all can feel. What would Brougham be without his sarcasm? What would Luther have done in the Reformation, if he had left untouched this powerful string? Even Whitefield had his smiles as well as his tears; and while mankind dread to be ridiculous, while the absurd deformity of error is one of the legitimate motives which should lead us to avoid it, we must not cramp the peculiarities of nature by the impositions of art. We must remember that every man received his diploma in God Almighty's seminary before he took an academic degree;[1] that there are some gifts of nature which it is dangerous even to *improve*; and that the very thorns on the mental bush, are connected with its flowers and often guard them from decadence and destruction.

In the last place, we are not so sure that satire is allied to levity, as we are, that it is sanctioned in the solemn pages of the Bible itself. The Bible is a free book, which luckily before its publication, never passed the ordeal of modern criticism. Even inspiration itself did not crush the impulses of nature; nor was the soul of the prophet lost in the great Spirit which moved him. Cowper, we are aware, is often quoted against us. But we are willing to take Mr. Poet at his word, and hold him to his own dilemma. *So did not Paul.* But what was it that Paul did not do? It is true he was serious in a serious cause; but that seriousness never kept him from jingling with words, or adopting the most biting sarcasm whenever it served his turn. Did he not tell the Corinthians that if they must have their petty lawsuits, they might as well set the greatest simpletons in the church to adjust them? Does he not add, explicitly that he speaks ironically?[2] Did he not tell the Galatians, when pestered with those

[1] Domina natura est, says Cicero.

[2] Πρὸς ἐντροπήν.

of the circumscision, that he wished those cutters would cut themselves off, instead of troubling the church? Did he not caution the Philippians to beware of the concision, a word which does not translate the original, but which is both a satire and a sarcasm in itself? If we pass to the Old Testament, the matter is still more clear; and ancient wit as well as wisdom, sparkles on every page. Where was there a more laughable satire on idolatry, than is found in the forty-fourth chapter of Isaiah?' Indeed South himself seems to have caught his fire from the Scripture; and the man and the prophet play their coruscations with a congenial light. "*A man hews him down a tree in the wood, and part of it he burns*, in the 16th verse, and in the 17th verse, *with the residue thereof he maketh a Lord.* With one part he furnishes his chimney, and the other his chapel. A strange thing that the fire must first consume this part, and then burn incense to that. As if there were more divinity in one end of a stick than in the other." *Sermon II.* We will remind then all who are too grave for satire, that they have also a wisdom too high for God.

But it will be said perhaps by a sturdy disputant that religion is a peculiar subject; that the awful importance of its doctrines rejects those aids which even truth itself may admit in a lighter cause. We are far from urging that wit and ridicule should always be employed. We know that they are dangerous weapons in unskilful hands. We fully accord with Swift in his advice to a young clergyman. "I cannot forbear warning you," says this powerful authority, "in the most earnest manner against endeavoring at wit in your sermons; because by the strictest computation, it is very near a million to one that you have none; and because too many of your calling have consequently made themselves everlastingly ridiculous by attempting it. I remember several young men in this town who could never leave the pulpit under half a dozen conceits; and this faculty adhered to these gentlemen a longer or shorter time, exactly in proportion to their several degrees of dulness; accordingly, I am told that some of them retain it to this day. I heartily wish the brood at an end."

"Endeavoring at wit" is always bad; and equally true is it that the pulpit is the place seldom for wit and never for levity. All that we contend for is, that we must leave the mind to the exercise of its spontaneous powers and that no weapon, which may powerfully and lawfully defeat the foes of Christianity, should ever be rejected. Leave the streamlet to flow in all its

bubblings and windings. What would Latimer, South, Daniel Burgess, Toplady, Rowland Hill, Beecher have been, had they avoided all that criticism could censure or pursued all that decorum might approve ?[1]

Dr. South is one of those whom a conventional opinion has kept from his proper place. The world has been very unjust to Swift and him; both of them unlovely men we confess; but certainly their genius stands on its own merits and ought not to suffer by the contiguous character. To Swift most of the critics, since Lord Orrery and his cousin Swift, his immediate editors, seem disposed to be very unjust; Johnson, Scott, the Edinburgh Reviewers depreciate him; Johnson even affects to doubt whether the Tale of the Tub was written by him. "It exhibits," says the great critic, "a richness of mind, a copiousness of images, and a vivacity of diction, such as he afterward never possessed or never exerted. It is of a mode so distinct and peculiar that it must be considered by itself; what is true of that is not true of anything else which he has written."—*Lives of the Poets*, Vol. II. p. 199. Absurd! There never was an anonymous production which bore such marks of identity. It may be more rich in allusion than his other works, as it evidently was written with great labor; but it has all the impress of the hand of its sarcastic but indelicate author; and though Swift has an arrogance, a coarseness, an indelicacy which is apt to make his readers his enemies, yet surely his invention, his strength, his originality, his matchless power of seizing the most absurd side of an object, of exaggerating without losing sight of truth and of forcing laughter while so sober himself, place him in the front rank of satirical writers, and give him a claim to a kind of humor in which he had none to precede him and will be likely to have none to follow him. He stands sullenly scowling alone.

South had some of the characteristics of Swift and injustice has been done him in the same way. Both of them were con-

[1] If it be necessary to produce authority, we have the following from Cicero. "Est autem, ut ad illud tertium veniam, est plane oratoris movere risum; vel quod ipsa hilaritas benevolentiam conciliat ei, per quem excitata est: vel quod admirantur omnes acumen, uno saepe in verbo positum, maxime respondentis, nonnumquam etiam lacessentis; vel quod frangit adversarium, quod impedit, quod elevat, quod deterret, quod refutat: vel quod ipsum oratorem, politum esse hominem significat, quod eruditum, quod urbanum, maximeque quo d tristitiam ac severitatem mitigat, et relaxat, odiosasque res saepe, quas argumentis dilui non facile est, joco risuque dissolvit.—*De Oratore*, Lib. II. sect. 58.

verts from an opposite party, were men of genius, had immense powers of sarcasm and ridicule, were terrible to their enemies and suspected by their friends, were not promoted according to their fancied merits, suffered their resentment to boil over in sullen censures and the murmurings of discontent; were morose, censorious, misanthropical and severe; hence all parties but one, cordially detested them; and that one party did not cordially receive them. Hence the influence of their personal character has affected the estimation of their works. However, it must be conceded that Swift's enormous indelicacies must ever prevent his works from finding their intellectual level. But whenever, owing to the changes of society, South's terrible lash shall cease to be dreaded, we shall begin to feel his eloquence though we may never perfectly approve his character.

We have already alluded to South's sincerity; all his periods being an outburst from the heart. He was no cautious and conventional writer, like Blair, walking among the eggs which scholastic criticism had placed in his path, at equal distances; and careful so to step as not to break one of them. If his heart had been one with which our best feelings could sympathize, he would have been the most eloquent writer that ever lived. Every reader must have melted and the whole world would have followed him. But alas! it was not so. His most beautiful impulses, impressed on the most natural yet energetic language, are the ejections of the volcano, throwing out sparks and cinders and rolling the burning lava down its sides. It is nature but it is fiery nature; it is truth but sometimes truth with an infernal aspect. He resembles those actors, on the stage, who are only at home in Macbeth and Richard the Third. He convulses us, but touches none of the soothing strings in our composition. His wit is never playful and—

> Where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
> Hope withering fled and Mercy sighed farewell.

He not only kills his victims but, as the Levite did, in the Bible, he cuts the carcass into parts and strews the bleeding fragments through the land. When a Puritan crosses his way—But let us hear him—

"Let us now according to the same consider also the way of praying, so much used and applauded by such, as have renounced the communion and liturgy of our church; and it is but reason, that they should bring in something better in the room of what they so disdain-

fully cast off. But, on the contrary, are not all their prayers exactly after the *heathenish* and Pharisaical copy? always notable for these two things length and tautology? Two whole hours for one prayer, at a fast, used to be reckoned but a moderate dose; and that, for the most part fraught with such irreverant, blasphemous expressions, that, to repeat them would profane the place which I am speaking in; and indeed they seldom *carried on the work of such a day* (as the phrase was) but they left the church in need of a new consecration. Add to this, the incoherence and confusion, the endless repetitions and the insufferable nonsense, that never failed to hold out, even with their outmost prolixity; so that in all their *long fasts* from first to last, from *seven* in the morning to *seven* in the evening (which was their measure) the pulpit was always the emptiest thing in the church: and I never knew such a *fast* kept by them, but their hearers had cause to begin a *thanksgiving*, as soon as they had done. And, the truth is, when I consider, the matter of their prayers, so full of ramble and inconsequence, and in every respect so very like the language of a dream; and compare it, with their carriage of themselves in prayer, with their eyes for the most part, shut, and their arms stretched out, in a yawning posture, a man that should hear any of them pray might, by a very pardonable error, be induced to think, that he was all the time hearing one *talk in his sleep:* besides the strange virtue, which their prayers had to procure sleep in others too. So that he who should be present at all their long oant, would show a greater ability in *watching* than even they could pretend to in *praying*, if he could forbear sleeping, having so strong a provocation to it. In a word, such were their prayers, both for matter and expression, that could any one truly and exactly write them out, it would be the shrewdest and most effectual way of writing against them, that could possibly be thought of."—*Sermon II. on Eccles.* 5: 2. *Vol. II.*

Again—"What says David in Psalm 77: 13. *Thy way O God is in the sanctuary.* It is no doubt but that holy person continued a strict and most pious communication with God, during his wanderings upon the mounts and in the wilderness; but still he found in himself, that he had not those kindly, warm meltings upon his heart, those rapturous and ravishing transports of affection, that he used to have in the fixed and solemn place of God's worship. See the first two verses of the 63d Psalm, entitled a *Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.* How emphatically and divinely does every word proclaim the truth that I have been speaking of! *O God*, says he, *thou art my God, early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen them in the sanctuary.* Much different was his wish from that of our non-conforming zealots now-a-days, which expresses itself in another kind of dialect, as *when shall I enjoy God as I used to do at a conventicle? When shall I meet with those blessed breathings, those heavenly hummings and havings that I used to hear at a private meeting and at the end of a table.*"—Sermon preached at the consecration of a chapel, Vol. I. p. 360, 361.

South may be remarked as the first author that reduced the English language to a Ciceronean rhythmus, a sounding period supported by a happy condensation of meaning. We should always recollect the age in which he wrote. The dedication to his third sermon is dated May 25, 1660. Charles II. was just restored. Paradise Lost was not yet written. English prose was in the state in which it is exhibited in the political tracts of the great poet; in the ornamented and over-finical style of Jeremy Taylor.[1] What a leap now do we find from these rude specimens of strength and irregularity to the sounding flow exhibited in the noble paragraphs of South. Majestic without bombast, regular without constraint, measured like Johnson without his uniformity, melodious but not empty; and graceful, though possessing immense strength. Indeed in his happiest efforts he carried our diction to its highest perfection. Nothing can surpass it. The following paragraph seems to us surpassingly energetic.

"Reputation is power; and consequently to despise is to weaken. For where there is contempt, there can be no awe; and where there is no awe there will be no subjection; and if there is no subjection, it is impossible without the help of the former distinction of a politic capacity, to imagine how a prince can be a governor. He that makes his prince despised and undervalued, blows a trumpet in men's breasts, beats him out of his subject's hearts, and fights him out of their affections; and after this, he may easily strip him of his other garrisons, having already dispossessed him of his strongest, by dismantling him of his honor and seizing his reputation."—*Sermon on Titus II. ult. Vol. I.*

There are few writers from whom you may select so many pithy aphorisms. As the following: "A corrupt governor is nothing else but reigning sin." "In such a world as this, it is hard to maintain the truth but still harder to be maintained by it." "The Puritans had as little reason to father their *prayers* as their *practices* on the divine Spirit." "Thy superfluities must give place to thy neighbor's great convenience; thy convenience must veil to thy neighbor's necessity: And lastly thy very necessities

[1] To Jeremy Taylor we never could vote for the wreath of renown which traditional criticism seems disposed to award him. If it be the definition of a good style that it is like the crystal of a watch attracting attention, not to itself, but to what is beneath it, it is certain that Taylor's style is not a good one. It is like figures on stained glass always diverting our attention and often misleading the fancy. It is profusion; but a profusion of weeds as well as flowers. South, without naming him, speaks of him with contempt.

must yield to thy neighbor's extremity." Examples might be multiplied.

The following passage is as solemn as it is forcible. It is from the discourse on denying Christ,—third Sermon in Vol. I.

"Christ's denying us is otherwise expressed in Luke 13: 27, *I know you not.* To *know* in Scripture language is to approve; and so, not to know, is to reject and condemn. Now, who knows how many woes are crowded into this one sentence, *I will deny him.* It is (to say no more) a compendious expression of hell, an eternity of torments compressed in a word; it is condemnation itself, and what is most of all, it is condemnation from the mouth of the Saviour. O the inexpressible horror that will seize upon a poor sinner when he shall stand arraigned at the bar of divine justice! When he shall look about and see his accuser, his Judge and his witnesses, all of them his remorseless adversaries: the law impleading, mercy and the Gospel upbraiding him, the devil his grand accuser, drawing up his indictment; numbering his sins with the greatest exactness, and aggravating them with the cruelest bitterness; and conscience, like a thousand witnesses, attesting every article, flying in his face, and rending his very heart. And then after all, Christ, from whom only mercy could be expected, owning the accusation. It will be hell enough to hear the sentence; the promulgation of the punishment, will be part of the punishment and anticipate the execution. If Peter was so abashed when Christ gave him a look after his denial; if there be so much dread in his looks when he stood as a prisoner, how much greater will it be when he sits as a judge? If it was so fearful when he looked his denier into repentance, what will it be when he shall look him into destruction? Believe it, when he shall hear an accusation from an advocate, our eternal doom from our intercessor, it will convince us that a denial of Christ is something more than a few transitory words: what trembling, what outcries, what astonishment will there be upon the pronouncing this sentence! Every word will come upon the sinner like an arrow, striking through his reins; like thunder that is heard and consumes at the same instant. Yea, it will be a denial with scorn, with taunting exprobations; and to be miserable without commiseration is the height of misery. He that falls below pity, can fall no lower. Could I give you a lively representation of guilt and horror on this hand, and paint out eternal wrath and decipher eternal vengeance on the other, then might I show the condition of a sinner hearing himself denied by Christ: and for those whom Christ has denied, it will be in vain to appeal to the Father, unless he imagine, that those whom mercy has condemned, justice will absolve."

His affluence of mind, his power of assembling illustrations and images from all the stores of learning and all the regions of nature, was a quality he partook with many of the great writers of his age—Taylor, Barrow, Baxter, Stillingfleet, Dryden and Sir

Thomas Brown. It was an agitating age, great principles were at stake, and the human mind was in a ferment; and we have often thonght that the general fertility of so many writers must have been owing to some common cause. Wit in that age had a meaning different from the modern use of the word. "Wit" says Dryden, "is a spaniel which beats over the ground, starts all resemblance and combines them to adorn and enforce the writer's sentiments." In this sense, South was a wit. His teeming mind pours out its profusion of leaves, never to conceal, but always to adorn and enrich the fruit, which bends the branches of his mental tree. His profusion is the profusion of nature; his similitudes come without labor, and are used without constraint. This consummate naturalness is the charm. They are the very images and pictures of his mind in its spontaneous operation. He wears his decorated robes, rich but not gaudy, as an Indian princess wears her cymar and her feathers, in the shades of her spicy forests. To quote examples would be endless. To find a similitude to illustrate the purposes of God in the apparent contingency of human events would not be easy. But the elastic mind of South is never at a loss.

"Let it suffice us in general to acknowledge and adore the vast compass of God's omniscience: that it is a light shining into every dark corner, ripping up all secrets and steadfastly grasping the greatest and most slippery uncertainties. As when we see the sun shine upon a river, though the waves of it move and roll this way and that way by the wind, yet for all their unsettledness, the sun strikes them with a direct and certain beam."—*Sermon VIII. Vol. I.*

Again—

"The Episcopal dignity, added to a good-preaching faculty, is like the erecting of a stately fountain upon a spring, which still for all that, remains as much a spring as it was before, and flows as plentifully, only it flows with the circumstance of greater state and magnificence."—*Sermon V. Vol. I.*

Again, on human merit—

"As apt as we are to flatter ourselves, and to think and speak big on this subject, yet in truth by all we do or can do, we do but *return* God something of his own. Much like the rivers which come rolling with a mighty noise, and pour themselves into the sea, and yet as high as they swell and loud as they roar, they only restore the sea her own waters; that which flows into her in one place, having been drawn from her in another. In a word, can the earth repay the heavens for their influences and the clouds for that verdure and fertility

which they bestow upon it? or can dirt and dunghills requite the sun and the light for shining upon them? No certainly; and yet what poor shadows and faint representations are these of that infinitely greater inability, even of the noblest of God's creatures to present him with anything which they were not first beholden to him for. It is clear therefore that, since man, in all his duties and services, never had anything of his own to set up with, but has trafficked all along upon a borrowed stock, the fourth and last condition required to make his performances meritorious utterly fails him."—*Serm. I. Vol. III. on Job* 22: 2, *Can a man be profitable to God?*

In philosophical and classical allusions he is equally fertile as in those taken from nature, as in the following, by no means obvious. He is showing how true pleasure derives its existence from its conformity to our relish.

"For as those who discourse of atoms affirm that there are atoms of all forms, some round, some triangular, some square, and the like; all which are continually in motion and never settle till they fall into a fit circumscription or place of the same figure: So there are the like great diversities of mind and objects; whence it is, that this object striking upon a mind thus or thus disposed, flies off and rebounds without making any impression; but the same luckily happening upon another of a disposition as it were framed for it, is presently catched at and greedily clasped into the nearest unions and embraces."—*Sermon I. Vol. I.*

But we will not multiply examples. Though the great distinction of South has generally been regarded as sarcasm and ridicule, yet the same exuberance marks his other combinations. Nor are his terrible invectives confined to the republicans; they sometimes fall on his own party. Like other renegades, he was over zealous, and was not therefore promoted as he thought he merited; hence his political friends come in for a large share of his scorching fires. The 9th sermon in the first volume, On the Wisdom of the World, is one of the keenest satires on the corrupt politics of the restoration that can be imagined. The Shaftsburys and the Buckinghams of the day must have withered under it. The 10th is scarcely inferior. In short, South was as honest a man as it was possible for one to be, so proud and arrogant; so misanthropic and sectarian. He could see the sun; but he always saw it through green spectacles.

This leads to another remark which involves one of his greatest excellences. For our peculiar selves we must say that no sight is more interesting to us, than an honest mind, heaving up a load of prejudices; emitting the reluctant light, like lightning

through a cloud; and telling the truth in spite of itself. We once heard a gentleman remark, that the Life of Watts by Johnson was a disgrace to its author. It struck us precisely different. It delights us to see the sour old tory and churchman compelled in spite of his teeth to grumble out his notes of approbation to a genius whom all his prejudices compelled him to hate. Something like this is exhibited in South. On the surface of his character, it was his disposition to see nothing good in the motives or sound in the reasoning of an adversary. He gives no measure to his disdain when he tramples on a foe. There is a curious advertisement at the end of the volume in our edition, put in by the bookseller but which must have been written by South himself, in which his indignation and contempt boil over against Sherlock. Even this trifle marks the man.

"Newly printed for *Randall Taylor*—Animadversions upon Dr. Sherlock's Book, entitled, *A vindication of the Holy and ever Blessed Trinity*, etc. together with a more necessary vindication of that sacred and prime article of the Christian faith, from his new notions and false explications of it. Humbly dedicated to his admirers and to himself the chief of them. By a Divine of the church of England." Just as if Sherlock was not a divine of that church. What an exquisite specimen! And yet no man ever felt the pressure of a difficulty more than South, or knew better how to register the weight of an objection. Let our readers peruse his sermon *On Mysteries in Religion*—Serm. VI. Vol. III. It is strong reasoning opposed to objections strongly stated. If he walks in a smoke of prejudices he carries a powerful lantern in his hands to dissipate them. Indeed we wish that some of the other Calvinists of the day had possessed some portion of his reluctant impartiality. The chief impediment to the pleasure with which we read the writings of Owen, Goodwin and Calvin himself—is—their impervious dogmatism. Every objection seems to have been *barked out*[1] by some spiritual dog and to have been inspired by Satan himself. However, after the days of Bayle and Hobbes, theological speculation assumed another aspect. The skeptical objections of the one, taught her to fortify her passes; the opposing dogmatism of the other made her ashamed of her own.

There is another interest which sometimes attends works of supereminent genius of which South is a strong example. When a racy mind has a peculiar character, is tinctured with violent

[1] *Canes* and *latrant* are frequent expressions in Calvin.

prejudices and pours out its personal opinions in vehement expressions, such a man derives a new force from our curiosity—we want to know what such a man will say on various subjects; and the match that lights him into flame amuses us. It is the same interest which attends a marked character in a drama. Such a man is always acting a part in human life; and we smile to see his perpetual consistency with himself on all occasions. This is not always the proof of genius; but it is the effervescence of strong character. No body cares what Virgil thinks on politics and religion; we are charmed with his poetry and are reckless of his opinions. But the earnest South, the morose Swift, the surly Johnson—we are amused to see them always support their parts.

We are somewhat suspicious that our personal impressions may be peculiar; and that the public sentiment will hardly respond to us in the high estimation we have given to an author so bitterly inimical to all our institutions. We are not blind to his faults. He certainly lacks unction; his overflowing gall would certainly better become the bar or the parliament than the pulpit. His jests are sometimes coarse, though always powerful; and he did not always know the art which Horace insinuates that he himself learned so lately—*inurbanum lepido seponere dicto.* Here we must remember his age. Compare him with the other writers of Charles's day. Compare him even with our own Davies. Addison himself was a writer of female scrupulosity in his own age; though now it is impossible to read the Spectator, in a promiscuous company.

He had other faults. He aimed too much to say striking things. He deals out his aphorisms with too constant a profusion; and his antitheses return too often. In such a pungent style, the mind longs for some periods of simplicity and repose. Though his fancy predominated, he was not a weak reasoner; nor had he the sweep of Hooker or the acuteness of Clark or Edwards. As a biblical critic he was inferior to Tillotson; and his piety perhaps (though it is not for us to judge him) was a theory in his head rather than a fire in his heart.

He has been called a semi-Calvinist and a semi-buffoon. This is much too severe. We see no proofs of his defective Calvinism; on the contrary original sin, irresistible grace, the perseverance of the saints, he pushes to their highest conclusions. In the decrees of God, he is a supra-lapsarian.[1] His mind is everywhere the

[1] "Those that suspend the purposes of God, and the resolves of an eternal

singular compound of scorn to the Puritans with deepest reverence for their sentiments. He not only loves orthodoxy, but he hates all heretics. He pours his vengeance on Tillotson for speaking respectfully of the *Fratres Poloni;* the Arminians of Holland he suspects of something worse; and even the learned Grotius cannot escape his sharp rebukes. Surely this man is no semi-Calvinist. And as to his buffoonry, we confess, for our personal selves (though the confession perhaps may injure our reputation for refinement), should such a buffoon rise again in society, we would walk forty miles to hear him. Anything—O anything but this conventional insipidity; this *pious* decorum which shocks no taste and touches no heart!

But this powerful champion, this bitter polemic, whose arguments were so strong and whose sarcasms were so scorching and whose tread shook the ground as he passed along, is now at rest. His enemies are at rest with him; and their personal opposition has ceased to agitate the world. They none of them murdered each other's character, nor destroyed each other's influence. We can now see the faults of Tillotson without regarding him as *a knave in lawn sleeves;* and we can enjoy the powers of South without beholding Puritanism as dead at his feet. They all of them now stand before the tribunal of a new generation. We strew the flowers on the graves which deserved them and pluck the thorn from the heart which it agonized. So it was with them and so it will be with us. Yet a little while and the mouldering earth will be heaped on our pert loquacity; and these venerable doctors who now agitate the little world around them by their limited wisdom, may rest assured that the progress of truth will be much more certain than the establishment of their several systems. The writer of this review had never much ambition to be a polemic; but when he stands on the tomb of the past and sees the piles of paper that have been wasted in this holy warfare; the strength that has been exerted and is now forgotten;

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mind upon the actions of the creature and make God first wait and expect what the creature will do, and then frame his decrees and counsels accordingly, forget that He is the *First Cause* of all things, and discourse most unphilosophically, absurdly and unsuitably to the nature of an infinite Being; whose influence in every motion must set the first wheel a-going. He must still be the *First Agent*, and what he does he must will and intend to do, before he does it, and what he wills and intends once, he willed and intended from eternity; it being grossly contrary to the first notions we have of the infinite perfections of the Divine Nature, to state or suppose any new immanent act in God."—*Sermon on Prov.* 16: 33. *Vol. I.*

and finds that even the charm of their best writers is independent of their sectional purposes, he confesses, that he has been reluctantly forced to this mortifying conclusion, *that great men as often instruct us by their negative example as by their most brilliant precepts, or their most confident conclusions.*

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## ARTICLE VI.

### LIFE OF JOHN CALVIN.[1]

By R. D. C. Robbins, Librarian Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass.

*Reasons for writing a Life of Calvin.*

No apology is deemed necessary for making the Life of John Calvin, the great Reformer, a topic of discussion in this Journal. He is acknowledged, even by those who dislike him most, to have been a man of no ordinary endowments, and familiarity with the feelings and conduct of the great and the good is always profitable. Their lives benefit us not so much by reminding us, that we in our humble sphere "may make our lives sublime," as by assimilating us to themselves. They attract us upward. By ac-

[1] The work which has been most relied upon in the preparation of this Article is, Das Leben Johann Calvins des grossen Reformators; von Paul Henry, Prediger an der Französisch-Friedrichstadtischen Kirche zu Berlin. The first volume was published in 1835, the second in 1838. The third volume, issued during the last year, has not yet been received. The work shows diligent research into the original sources, discrimination in the choice of materials, and good religious feeling in the author. There are 554 letters of Calvin in the Library at Geneva which have never been published. Many of these from the domestic and personal nature of the contents, are especially valuable as throwing new light upon some of the most interesting traits in the character of the great Reformer, and may be considered as the best picture of the every day life of the man, in connection with his friends and associates, which can be found. Mr. Henry had free access to all of these and many other letters which have been collected in different parts of Germany, as well as to manuscript sermons and other writings contained in the Geneva Library. We have made free use of the materials found in Mr. Henry's Work whenever we have thought them to our purpose, and shall not during the course of this Article deem it necessary to refer in every case, to the page from which we have taken, or make any other acknowledgement than this general statement of our great obligation to that work. Other works consulted will be referred to in the course of the discussion.