

and raised to the highest heavens, the seat of thy glory. No proportionable returns can ever be made to thee for such immense favours: we are drowned in debt, and lost in wonder. All we can possibly do, is to give ourselves intirely to thee, to be for ever thine: we are not our own: we will not be our own, we will be thine; thy purchase, thy property, and wholly at thy disposal. Conscious of our utter incapacity to make adequate returns for thy grace, we would call on the archangels, and the whole hierarchy of heaven, to lend us hearts to love thee and tongues to celebrate thy perfections: we would summon all creation, in the vast extent of thy universal empire, to praise thy glorious majesty for thy kindness to lost man.

GRATITUDE TO GOD the HOLY SPIRIT, for inspiring the penmen of the sacred Scriptures

The true scripture doctrine of the Holy Spirit was never less regarded since the reformation from popery, than it is now: and every wise man sees the awful consequences. The godhead, personality and agency of the holy Spirit shine with a most conspicuous light all through the Bible: all the works of creation, providence, miracles, inspiration, prophecy, regeneration, and the resurrection of the dead, are ascribed to him in the book of God: and all the beautiful gifts and graces which adorn the minds of true christians,

are derived from his agency on the soul. To be ignorant of his person, as a divine and intelligent agent, is a foul disgrace: to be unmindful of his glorious works is an evidence of black ingratitude, and great insensibility of heart. He deserves our utmost esteem, our most grateful attention. If we are not stupid, with respect to our true interest, we shall desire his vital presence, and feel the strongest benevolence to him, and delight in his presence: we shall consider ourselves under the most mighty obligations to love and adore him as the author of the sacred books of the old and new Testament. The Spirit of God spake by the writers, and his word was on their tongues. His word was in my tongue: the God of Israel spake to me. 2 Sam. xxiii. 2. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost. 2 Pet. i. 21. The Spirit of God gave to the sacred writers a clear conception of their subject: he impressed the mind and conscience with a lively sense of the truth and importance of the matter of the Scripture: he gave them lively sensations of beauty and truth, while they were meditating on their subject: he displayed before their eyes the grand motives which stirred them up to write, addressed to their esteem and fear; their hope, gratitude, godly ambition, interest and pleasure: he freed their minds from all those prejudices which

which are the springs of error within us: and he helped them to write down the truth, the whole truth, that God designed to communicate to the church. Thus he presided over the whole Bible, and finished the CANON OF SCRIPTURE with all the DIGNITY, GRACE, and INFALLIBILITY of a God.

Now, my reader, what gratitude is due to this divine and glorious person for his unutterable goodness to dark lost mankind! what esteem should we have for him? what good will should we bear to him? with what pleasure and attention should we read the doctrines, laws, promises, histories, and prophecies, which he has inspired! and how dutifully ought we to obey the dictates of his word! 'Tis by his agency that we understand the true sense of Scripture: and by his aid we obey the laws of Scripture. O! how unspeakable are our obligations to him for help against our pride, our enmity, our infidelity, and impurity. The vilest lusts would rage within us and reign over us every hour, if he was to refuse to suppress the cursed emotions of our polluted nature: he assists us in a seasonable recollection of the infinite evil of sin, and he helps us to call into memory the striking portions of God's word, which forbid our crimes: he gives us an awful sense of the omnipresence of God, and serious impressions of his majesty, holiness, dominion,

dominion, and omnipotence : he aids us to form resolute determinations against sin, and he enables us to fix our will for the worship and service of God. All the light, strength, and beauty of our minds : all the divine elevation and generous fermentation of our devout passions, are owing to his rational, attractive, and godlike agency.

Eternal Spirit, we confess,
 And sing the wonders of thy grace ;
 Thine inward teachings make us know
 Our duty and our dangers too.

Glorious God ! whilst infidels insult thee, and pretended christians despise thine influence : whilst wild enthusiasts disgrace thy character, by laying claim to thine aids, and yet neglect thy sacred word : we, being greatly sensible of our infinite obligations to thee for all the wisdom, integrity, purity, peace, and strength of our minds, prostrate our hearts at the foot-stool of thy majesty ; and, together with the sacred Father and Son, would give thee the highest affection and praises ; longing for that happy moment when, being released from the body, our souls shall evolve, with a divine spring, into all the light and glory of thy presence for ever.

As gratitude to God for a divine revelation is the noblest passion in a christian's heart, it will be pleasing and profitable to carry our thoughts
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farther upon this subject: it cannot be too often displayed, nor set in too many points of light: we will therefore shew the believer's gratitude to God, as it respects the Bible in seven views of it, as inspired—perfected—preserved—purchased—translated—printed—and now expounded by the most excellent divines in the world.

GRATITUDE is due to GOD for a Bible INSPIRED. The Inspiration of the Scriptures is not now to be proved; it is done already beyond all rational contradiction or doubt: and what a satisfaction must this give to every honest and serious mind. We have now introduced it afresh for the sake of the connexion with the other views of the Bible: and how thankful ought we to be to GOD, that he has not left us at a loss in this grand fundamental of all true religion. What would it avail us, in point of salvation, if we had no good ground to believe that the Bible was given by an infallible Inspiration of GOD. This book preserved, printed, translated, and explained, but not inspired, would never bring us to eternal life in perception and fruition of GOD. It is its full and perfect Inspiration that gives the Bible its complete dignity, perfection, glory, and usefulness; and for which we are bound to render GOD the most fervent gratitude and immortal praises.

GRATITUDE

GRATITUDE is due for a Bible **PERFECTED**.—How grateful was David for the word of God, although he had no more of it than the five books of Moses; the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, and Samuel, with his own inspired Psalms. What ardent affection does he express through that admirable piece of experimental religion, the **cxix** Psalm! Now, what abundant advantages do we enjoy above the psalmist, and all the believers in the old Testament. We have the glorious writings of Isaiah and the other prophets: we have the still more wonderful and divine volume of the new Testament, completed by that most astonishing book of the Revelations: so that our canon of Scripture will have no addition to it to the end of the world: 'tis a most complete revelation from God; nothing can be taken from it, nothing can be added to it. We have in this god-breathed book a definitive rule of faith, worship, and morals; for which, let all true christians on earth bless and praise God in the highest strains for ever and ever!

GRATITUDE for a Bible **PRESERVED**.—The Bible has had more enemies than any other book in the world ever had: it has been in ten thousand perils, in many ages, from bitter enemies and false friends. But there have been two tremendous times in which, to speak after the manner
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of men, the Bible has been in danger of being utterly lost.

The FIRST CRITICAL SITUATION of the holy Bible was in the time of that cruel and bloody tyrant ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES, who violated the temple in the year of the world 3834 ; and before Christ, 170. This desperate man had, by his perpetual and violent wars, almost ruined the whole Jewish nation : he profaned the temple in the most daring manner : he set up the image of Jupiter in the temple of God, and ordered a swine to be boiled, and the broth to be sprinkled about the holy of holies itself. But his malice and outrage against the sacred books of the old Testament was beyond all his other wickedness. He searched up all the Hebrew copies he was able, and burnt them. Yea, he went farther than that : he issued out proclamations through Judea, that every Jew who had a copy of the Bible should deliver it up to be destroyed, upon pain of death : and cowards and traitors to God's book there have been in all ages, who feared man's anger above God's wrath and damning curse. But, blessed be God, there have been brave and resolute servants of Christ, who valued their Bibles above their blood : and so there were in the time of cruel Antiochus. Those blessed heroes preserved the Bible at the hazard of their lives : they feared not the wrath of this proud and cruel tyrant.

And God's justice pursued this desperate man with a singular vengeance : worms bred in his bowels : his flesh rotted off from his bones : there issued from his putrid body such an intolerable stench, that his physicians could not bear the room : and hell took possession of his guilty soul before it was rent from his perishing flesh. A fearful monument of God's dreadful wrath to all men who shall dare to despise, oppose, or persecute the word of God to the end of the world. I hope my young readers will have an active curiosity to read the accounts of this horrid man, in the books of the Apocrypha, 1 Macc. i. and 2 Macc. v. in Usher's Annals p. 317. latin Paris edit. English edit. p. 417. Prideaux's Connexion, vol. 3. p. 237, 258, 284. And Rollin's Ancient History, vol. 6. p. 248. 8vo. edit. of 1768.

The SECOND CRITICAL TIME OF DANGER with the HOLY SCRIPTURES was in the reign of the emperor *Dioclesian*. I tremble and adore whilst I write. In the year of our Lord 303, and on the 18th day of April, according to Valesius's notes on Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, book 8. chap. 2. p. 141 : on this day Dioclesian, by the instigation of his partner * in empire, set on foot the tenth pagan persecution. † In this FIRST of their three edicts against the christians, the sacred
Scriptures

* Maximian Galerius, who married Dioclesian's daughter.

† Dr. Lardner says this tenth persecution began Feb. 23, 303. See vol. 3. of his Testimonies, p. 285.

Scriptures were ordered to be burnt; and Eusebius says, he saw with his own eyes the divine and sacred Scriptures burnt in the market-place. The persecution raged for ten years; and these bloody persecutors imagined they had utterly destroyed the christian religion, and had the insolence to set up pillars and plates of brass, with these inscriptions on them: "In the times of DIOCLESIAN and MAXIMIAN HERCULIUS, and GALERIUS, the NAME of the CHRISTIANS was extirpated." And another inscription ran thus: "That the SUPERSTITION of the CHRISTIANS was every where rooted up, and the WORSHIP of the gods restored." It is with great difficulty that I forbear running on for many pages together, to describe the characters and actions of these cruel and bloody persecutors, the vast extent and horrors of the persecution, and its awful duration, for it lasted ten years; with the terrible deaths of Galerius, in 311, and of Dioclesian, who died at Salone, in Dalmatia, in the year of our Lord 313: but I must stop my hand, for there is no end to these astonishing things. Yet, for the sake of my pious and inquisitive young readers, I will set down some select books, where their laudable curiosity may have a sweet and awful information concerning the victory of the holy Scriptures over their most bloody enemies. I will mention the authors in the order I would

read them if they were all before me at the same time. (1.) Bossuet's Universal History, vol. 1. 12mo. p. 134. who says of Dioclesian's persecution: "The strictest search was made for the SACRED BOOKS, in order to abolish the very memory of them; and the christians durst not have them in their houses, nor almost presume to read them. (2.) Lampe's Ecclesiastical History, book 2. chap. 4. sect. 16. (3.) Millar's Propagation of Christianity, vol. 1. edit. 3. 1731. p. 369. (4.) Crevier's History of the Roman Emperors, 8vo, vol. 9. p. 252. (5.) Dr. John Gillies's Historical Collections, vol. 1. 8vo. p. 16. (6.) Dr. Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History, 4to. p. 516. (7.) Dr. Lardner's Collection of ancient Heathen Testimonies to the Truth of the Christian Religion, vol. 3. 4to. 1766. chap. 40. p. 277—327. of Dioclesian's persecution of the christians. (8.) Dr. Cave's Primitive Christianity, 8vo. edit. 5. 1698. p. 335—339, 368. (9.) Spanheim's Ecclesiastical History, p. 812—814. fol. edit. 1701. (10.) Dr. Newton's Dissertations, vol. 3. 8vo. p. 54, 55. with Lowman on the Revelations, 8vo. edit. 1773. p. 72, 73. (11.) Fox's Acts and Monuments of the Church, vol. 1. p. 85. fol. edit. 1684. (12.) Lastly, I mention the original fountain from whence these great and good men drew their knowledge. Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, folio edit. 1709, with
Valesius's

Valesius's notes. See book 8. chap. 2. book 9. chap. 7.—I will affirm of Eusebius's *History*, what Dr. Doddrige used to express to his friends concerning Josephus : “ If I had but six books in my library, Eusebius should be one of them.”* And I will farther observe, for the benefit of young divines, that, next to the holy Scriptures, the *History of the Church of Christ*, in her doctrines, worship, morals, and the great and good divines, who have, in all ages, defended those doctrines by reason, argument, and by their blood ; with the history of the principal errors, deceivers, tyrants, and persecutors, who have attempted to corrupt and exterminate the church : I say, this history of the two kingdoms of Christ and Satan ought to be the grand object of our study and attention all through life.

I will close this particular with a concise and striking view of the horrid cruelties of the Dioclesian persecution, in the words of a learned historian, of the three first centuries of the church, who has well abridged the larger accounts in Eusebius and others.

“ As this was the last persecution, so it was the most severe of all others, like the last efforts of an expiring enemy, who uses his utmost rage and strength to give a parting blow. It were
endless

* I ought, in justice, to inform my young readers, that the index to the *Universal History*, vol. 21. 8vo. is an admirable introduction to all studies of this kind, and may be bought separate.

endless and almost incredible to enumerate the variety of sufferers and torments : it must be sufficient to observe in this place, that they were scourged to death—had their flesh torn off with pincers, and mangled and scraped with shells and broken pots—were cast to lions, tygers, and other wild beasts—were burned—beheaded—crucified—thrown into the sea—torn in pieces by the distorted boughs of trees, and by the force of horses—roasted alive over gentle fires—their bowels torn out whilst living—melted lead poured into their bowels—with innumerable other torments, as may be seen in Fox's Martyrology, vol. 1. p. 36—87.

“ This persecution lasted ten years under Dioclesian, and some of his successors. The incredible number of christians that suffered death and punishment, made them conclude that they had completed their work : and in an ancient inscription, they tell the world, that they had effaced the name and superstition of the christians, and had restored and propagated the worship of the gods. But they were so much deceived, that this hastened the destruction of paganism ; and shortly after CHRISTIANITY became VICTORIOUS and triumphant over all the powers of darkness, and the artifices and cruelty of mankind.”—Eachard's Roman History, vol. 2. with some small additions ; and his Ecc. History, p. 451.

Thus

Thus you see, my dear reader, what reason you have to esteem the precious book of God, which has been preserved through such dreadful dangers, and comes down to your hands in the streams of christian blood. But you have an higher motive to love the Bible than this: you owe —

GRATITUDE for a Bible PURCHASED; a Bible purchased with the blood of God. The blood of martyrs was polluted with sin, but the blood of Christ was that of a lamb, without blemish, and without spot or taint of treason and rebellion; it was pure blood, and the blood of him who is Jehovah LORD and God, the true, the great and mighty God, who is over all, blessed for evermore. None but Socinians, and men who verge towards their horrid principles, will deny that the Bible is the purchase of the blood of God. Holiness, justice, and truth, would never have suffered one line of a gracious revelation to come to us, if there had not been a full provision made for the honour of those most adorable and tremendous attributes of God. And what can more endear the Scriptures to us, than to consider, that now every perfection in God pleads on the footing of Christ's SATISFACTION for our enjoyment of all the eternal blessings of the glorious gospel.

GRATITUDE for a Bible TRANSLATED.—The Bible was translated many hundred years before
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the art of printing was invented. The **FIRST** man in England that translated some parts of the Bible into our language, which was then Saxon, was the **VENERABLE BEDE**,* who flourished about the year of Christ 700.

The **SECOND** was the great and good **JOHN WICKLIFFE**,† who flourished from 1360 to 1380; and who is deservedly stiled the **MORNING STAR** of the **REFORMATION**.

The **THIRD** worthy man was **JOHN TREVISA**, a divine in Cornwall, who is reported to have set forth the whole Bible in English: but an exact account I cannot yet procure.

The **FOURTH** was the excellent **WILLIAM TINDAL**,‡ who translated the five books of Moses, and the new Testament, in the year 1527: afterwards he and Miles Coverdale joined in the work and finished the translation of the whole Bible. I speak nothing of all subsequent translations, as they are generally known. And now, my reader, if the old Testament were always to remain only in the original Hebrew, and the new Testament in Greek, what man in ten thousand through all Britain could ever read or understand one page!

And

* Bede was an English monk, born about the year 672, and died on the 26th of May, 735, aged 63.

† Wickliffe was born near Richmond, in Yorkshire, about the year 1324, and died at Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, in the year 1384.

‡ Tindal was born near Wales, and burnt in the Netherlands in the year 1536.

And how thankful ought we to be, that GOD has raised up men of strong sense, and sound learning, to translate these sacred books into our own language! Here we see the necessity, dignity, and excellence of a clear knowledge of the sacred languages; and how exceedingly do those good men mistake, who speak in an unguarded and contemptuous manner of learning and learned men: they ought, in truth and justice, to distinguish between the use and the abuse of learning; and whilst bad men, who misapply their talents, should be held in abhorrence, holy and wise men, who use their learning for GOD, should be had in everlasting honour.

GRATITUDE for a Bible PRINTED.—Before the art of printing was found out, in 1440, a Bible, written on vellum or parchment, would cost one hundred pounds sterling: and if this was the case now, not one person in ten thousand, through all England, could ever have a Bible: and what a deplorable state would you be in without this precious book of GOD! How ought you and I to bless GOD for ever and ever, who taught man this happy and most glorious art of printing! Now the copies of the Bible are multiplied to so many millions, that I trust the papists can never be able to burn them all: and a Bible is rendered so very cheap as to come almost within
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the power of the poorest person to purchase * a book that was originally bought for us with the infinitely-precious blood of the Son of God.

GRATITUDE for a Bible EXPOUNDED by the most excellent men in the world.—It is a true remark of the amiable Mr. Matthew Henry, “ That as preachers would not be believed without Bibles to back them, so Bibles would not be understood without ministers to explain them.” (Pref. to Exposit. vol. 1.) Wise and serious christians will avoid all foolish extremes: they will neither idolize expositions, nor vilify them: they will not set up the works of good men to a neglect of the Bible: nor will they despise the excellent productions of long study and ardent devotion. They will say with the modest and humble lord-treasurer to Philip, How can I understand the Scriptures without some man to guide me? Acts viii. 31. And this is fully consistent, with the use of our own best judgment, to form a final determination concerning the true sense of Scripture for the direction of our faith, worship, and moral conduct. Fully convinced of the propriety of these sentiments, I go on to observe, for the benefit of my young readers,

* I can never enough esteem and recommend the society for promoting religious knowledge among the poor; by which, above nine hundred pounds worth of Bibles, and other good books, are annually given away: and let it never be forgotten, that this society began, in 1750, with the sum of twenty-six shillings, laid down by those excellent men, now in heaven, messrs. Joseph and Benjamin Forfitt.

readers, and especially those of a certain character and office in the church of Christ, that one of the most able expositors of our nation, and the first in point of time, is that great and excellent man, Dr. Simon Patrick. This eminent man possessed a very strong and sound natural understanding : his learning was immense and well digested : his religion was deep, and matured by long experience, and under the direction of clear masculine reason. In a word, I know not any expositor, at the age of more than seventy years, that ever wrote with such perspicuity of thought and strength of mind ; and what is still better, with such a divine favour, and in the spirit of the gospel, as the Paraphrase on the Psalms and the Song of Solomon fully evince.

Mr. Matthew Henry's Exposition is peculiarly excellent for the sweet notes and sprightly turns of thought which every where abound : 'tis impossible for a person of piety and taste to read him without wishing to be shut out from all the world to read him through, without one moment's interruption.

Dr. John Guise's Exposition of the new Testament evinces that he was a great and solid divine, of a truly evangelical heart, and well digested learning : every page has an high tendency to instruct the mind, and make us steady and substantial christians.

Dr. Doddridge's Family Expositor has three distinguishing excellencies — his improvements breathe a genuine, lively, and elevated devotion — his critical notes lead us more fully into the spirit, energy, and beauty of the sacred original — his new translation and paraphrase oftentimes discover the penetration and elegant sagacity of his mind to observe the various movements of good and bad hearts, displayed in the sacred writings : in this point of view the doctor shines above all other expositors.

Dr. Gill's Exposition of the old and new Testament is an ocean of sound divinity. The remarkable excellencies of this great work are consistency with his truly evangelical principles throughout the whole — immense reading and vast researches into all the principal books * of antiquity and history, which may any ways elucidate the sacred writings.

Vitringa, the Expositor of Isaiah, in 2 vols. folio, 1709, is a man of astonishing erudition and evangelical favour : he is above all my commendation ; and, therefore, I can only say what I know to be fact ; that he was the favourite of the late Mr. James Hervey, whose genius for sacred and devotional criticism is undoubtedly
above

* I do not mention the vast treasures of learning in the Jewish Targums and Talmuds, which this great man possessed above all the divines of our age.