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BIOGRAPHY.

LIFE OF BERNARD GILPIN.

(Continued from page 348.)

MR. GILPIN on his return to England, proceeded directly to Durham, where his uncle, bishop Tunstal, then resided; by whom he was cordially received, and from whom he obtained, in no long time, the archdeaconry of Durham, with the rectory of Easington. He immediately repaired to his parish, which he found in a state of deplorable ignorance and disorder. He began his pastoral labors by earnestly reproof, both in public and private, the vices of the people; setting before them, at the same time, in a plain and affecting way, the great doctrines of salvation. This was a conduct which, in those dangerous times, was likely to excite much enmity towards him. The Reformation had advanced far more slowly in the north than in any other part of England. The clergy were sunk in the grossest superstitions of popery; and their vices kept pace with their ignorance. Their pastoral duties were wholly neglected. This, indeed, was too much the case throughout England generally,

though with many bright exceptions. In the north, the representation applied almost universally. While, therefore, a sense of his duty as rector of Easington led him boldly to reprove the evils prevailing among his parishioners, he felt that he should shrink from the performance of his archidiaconal functions, if he omitted to bear his testimony against the corrupt principles and scandalous lives of his clerical brethren. He employed all methods of reclaiming them from their shameful courses; and especially in his charges at visitations, he zealously remonstrated against whatever he judged to be amiss among them. Pluralities and non-residence appearing to him to be great sources of ecclesiastical corruption, he earnestly protested against *them*, both as wrong in themselves, and highly prejudicial to the interests of religion. He was accustomed also to dwell on those irregularities which were known to prevail among the clergy belonging to the diocese. The bishop, fearing his

import, therefore, to every one, is the memorable warning of the Savior: "Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like. He is like a man, who built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock; and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it; for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth and doeth not, is like a man that, without a foundation, built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." SILVANUS.

DEATH OF THOMAS PAINE.

AN argument of great weight in favor of christianity, is derived from the consolations, which it imparts at the hour of death. Let all the other strong and invincible proofs of the truth of Scripture be considered as incompetent to establish the point, for which they are adduced; still this argument will not fail to carry conviction to every sober and reflecting mind. If there is a state of existence, which succeeds the present life; if there are rewards and punishments to be adjudged in the future world according to the characters formed in this; and if the interests of eternity are infinitely greater than those of time; then it is very evident, that a religion, or a system of faith, which at the close of life brings the most solid support, and administers the most cheering hopes, must have the

strongest claims to respect. It is not meant, that an ecstasy of joy, experienced at the moment of dissolution, furnishes incontrovertible evidence of the truth and value of those sentiments, which have produced it; for the visions of imagination in a sick man's brain may be gay and bright, while his reason is shaken from its throne, and his stupified conscience has upon it many a sin unrepented of and unforsaken. What is contended for is this, that when an intelligent and thinking man, who has been accustomed to look into himself and to observe his own imperfections and sins, and whose thoughts have expatiated on eternity, can view the approach of death not only without terror or any misgivings of mind, but with tranquil resignation and cheering and triumphant hope; when he can depart from this life with the full assurance of living again and of living in a better world; his composure and joy under these circumstances, with a correct view of his own character, and with a full belief of the retributions of eternity, brings the highest honor to the religious system, upon which they are founded.

In the controversy between the friends and the enemies of the gospel, the former can point to many expiring mortals, and with unanswerable argument can say, "See how a Christian can die!" But where are the models of composure and triumph among those, who were not Christians? What are the names of the unbelievers, who at the hour of death have exhibited any enviable elevation of soul? In the faded eye of what dying infidel has the

light of eternity kindled a splendor, which has brightened and brightened till the curtain of death has been spread over it?

Thomas Paine, the author of the "Age of Reason," died at New York, June 8, 1809, at the age of seventy two years; and as his name has acquired some distinction by the virulence, with which he has attacked the christian religion, it may not be unprofitable to survey his conduct in the last moments of his life. From a man of the most abject meanness of spirit, whose penuriousness in the midst of comparative wealth made him dishonest and unjust, no one will expect any elevation of mind. Nor will it be thought, that a man, who daily reduced himself by his habits of intemperance to a condition inferior to that of the brutes, would exhibit much of his boasted attribute of "reason." All that could be expected from such a man, if he was true to his principles, is the sullen quietness of presumption and fearlessness, or the dead calm of stupidity.

What then was the conduct of Mr. Paine, as the king of terrors approached? Was he fearless and undisturbed, or insensible? An account of his life, written by Mr. Cheetham of New York, has lately been published, and in that work the undisputed testimony of the physician and of the nurse, who attended him in his last sickness, is brought forward. It appears that Mr. Paine, like Mr. Gibbon, was unwilling to be left alone, as he drew near to the confines of another world. Although in conversation he professed to be perfectly willing to

die; yet if his curtains were at any time closed, he would literally scream till they were opened, and till he could perceive that some fellow-man was nigh him. Was this courageous in a dying man? Did it appal a bold infidel to have living beings withdrawn for a moment from his eye, and to be, as it were, in the sole presence of God? Did a sense of desertion come over him, when his earthly friends were not by his side? Was he unable to repose himself upon the great Creator, in whom he professed to believe? Did this firm Unitarian, who boasted that he "believed in God and God alone," and who had no faith in the atonement of the Son, and no regard to the proffered grace of the Holy Spirit, find himself the victim of terrific fears, when he no longer heard the sound of human footsteps, and when the thought of appearing before God was forced upon him?

Two of the ministers of New York called upon Mr. Paine with the benevolent desire of imparting to him some religious instruction. One of them repeated the words "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." Mr. P. immediately pronounced such representations to be "Popish stuff;" and directed the ministers to leave the room. He afterwards gave orders not to have them again admitted, as their discourse disturbed him. Would the truths of scripture have interrupted his peace, if, in his conscience and from the bottom of his heart, he disbelieved them?

Mr. P. was frequently visited in his sickness by his brethren in infidelity, who were actuated by very different motives from those, which governed the ministers of God? They came to strengthen him in his rejection of the truth; to encourage him manfully to condemn the glad tidings of salvation; to warn him of the disgrace of betraying the least symptom of compunction; and to fortify the dying man in his cheerless faith, if faith it can be called, by appealing to his egregious vanity and to his swollen pride. Was not this an office worthy of demons in human shape? From a man thus situated ought we to expect any intimation of his belief in Jesus Christ? Should we not suppose, that, for the honor of the craft, his lips would be sealed in stubborn silence, whatever sensations there might be in his heart? Yet it is an unquestioned truth, and a truth which ought to be carried to the ears of every man, who has been corrupted by the "Age of Reason," that Mr. Paine in his paroxysms of distress repeatedly and constantly cried out, "O, Lord, help me! God, help me! Jesus Christ, help me!"

Is this the daring infidel, who blasphemed the Savior of the world? Does he in the extremity of his suffering call upon him for aid, and is the secret conviction of his existence and universal agency thus extorted from the expiring unbeliever? It is a poor triumph to boast over this wretched man for his reluctant, or rather involuntary, testimony to a truth, which in the days of his health he had ridiculed; for though he had

never uttered the above exclamation, yet the time is coming when both he and every created and intelligent being will "bow the knee at the name of Jesus, and confess Jesus to be the Lord." When the Son of God shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and when his countenance shall be seen like the sun shining in his strength, it will no longer be a question whether he is a prince and a Savior, or whether he is to be worshipped.

It would afford some relief to the benevolent mind, if Mr. P. had left unextinguished the faint glimmerings of contrition, or of regard to long rejected truth, which the exclamation above recited indicates. But the Christian is compelled to withhold the charitable hope, that the scorner became at length truly penitent. Dr. Manley, the physician of Mr. P. very solemnly asked him, a day or two before his death, whether, from his calling upon the Savior, it would be just to conclude that he was at length convinced of his divinity; and whether he had renounced his former sentiments, and at length assented to the truth of the gospel? To these or similar questions, when first proposed, Mr. P. made no reply. When they were repeated, and he was again asked, whether he believed that Jesus Christ was the Son of God; he answered, "I have no wish to believe upon that subject."

These it is thought, were the last words relating to his religious views, that he uttered, and thus did he persevere in his rejection of the gospel. His conduct seems to justify the assertion, that it was owing to his

pride, that he did not, when thus called upon, explicitly make the acknowledgment, which was extorted from him by suffering. From his address to Jesus Christ, and from the circumstance, that his pious nurse read the Bible to him for hours, without seeing in him any symptoms of displeasure, it is confidently believed, that he at times felt some degree of compunction; but his compunction being generally less powerful than his pride, it was repressed and concealed; except when his extreme pains extinguished within him the thought of his reputation and character. At those moments his lips could not refuse to say, "Lord Jesus, help me!"

Who is there, that possesses a particle of reason, that would for hundreds of worlds die the death of Thomas Paine? Yet it is not necessary to reject the Scriptures and to become a deist, in order to die as hopelessly as he. Let a man contend earnestly for the christian religion, and yet pay no regard to its laws and take no interest in its truths; let him be perfectly moral in his conduct, while yet the spirit of piety has never visited his heart; let him enrol himself among the followers of Christ, while yet he is destitute of the temper of their Master, and his life is but a scene of gay amusement and busy worldliness; let him be serious and contemplative, and think much and habitually upon religion and eternity, while yet he has never been humbled into penitence, and has not renounced his own righteousness and attributed his hopes to the free grace of God through Jesus Christ; let him be correct in his

religious views and zealous for the orthodox faith, while yet his character is not moulded into the christian form; let him anticipate with confidence the felicity of heaven, while yet the love of God does not reign supreme in his breast; notwithstanding all this superiority to the wretched infidel, whose dying conduct has been surveyed, he may be plunged at last into the same abyss of ruin. A.

For the Panoplist.

COMMUNICATED IN A LETTER TO
ONE OF THE EDITORS.

Newark, 25th Jan. 1810.

REV. AND DEAR SIR,

The following is taken, by permission of the worthy author, from a very handsome, appropriate, and consoling discourse, delivered by Rev. James Richards, on the 14th of the present month, and occasioned by the much lamented death of that pious and hopeful student in divinity, Mr. Lewis L. Congar. It has been solicited, for a place in the *Panoplist*, because it is respectful to the memory of one, who was an ornament to the celebrated Seminary, of which he was an alumnus; because it will enrich the pages of that useful publication; and because it will gratify the numerous relatives and friends of the deceased. Yours, etc.

BEN O*****.

FROM the text, *BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD*, the preacher was led to discourse on the nature of resignation, and to offer various considerations, by which this christian virtue is recommended. He then closed his address in this manner:

"But what if the Lord has given us comfortable hopes, that our departed friends have exchanged the sins and sorrows of this miserable world for an eter-