

**A letter to the Right Reverend Samuel, Lord Bishop of St. David's :  
occasioned by his sermon on the principle of vitality in man, &c.; preached  
on Sunday, March 22, 1789, for the benefit of the Humane Society.**

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A

L E T T E R

TO THE

BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S, &c.





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A  
L E T T E R

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

S A M U E L,  
LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S;

OCCASIONED BY HIS

S E R M O N

O N

*THE PRINCIPLE OF VITALITY IN MAN, &c.*

PREACHED ON SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 1789,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

H U M A N E S O C I E T Y.

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ΑΕΖΕΩΝ ΜΕΝ ΠΟΤΑΜΟΣ, ΝΟΤ ΔΕ ΣΤΑΛΑΓΜΟΣ.

HARDER BESET,  
AND MORE INDANGER'D, THAN WHEN ARGO PASSED  
THROUGH BOSPHORUS, BETWIXT THE JUSTLING ROCKS;  
OR WHEN ULYSSES ON THE LARBOARD SHUNN'D  
CHARYBDIS, AND BY TH' OTHER WHIRLPOOL STEER'D.  
SO HE WITH DIFFICULTY AND LABOUR HARD  
MOV'D ON, WITH DIFFICULTY AND LABOUR HE.

MILTON.

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L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.LXXXIX.





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A  
L E T T E R  
TO THE  
RIGHT REVEREND,  
S A M U E L,  
LORD BISHOP OF ST. DAVID'S.

---

MY LORD,

WHEN your Lordship's late sermon on  
*The Principle of VITALITY in Man,*  
was announced to the public, my curiosity was  
raised in no small degree. The subject of this  
discourse, one of the most interesting in physics,  
or theology; the object of it, to assist one of  
the most benevolent institutions, that has done  
honour to our country or common nature;  
and your Lordship's high rank and character,  
all concurred to enforce a close attention to  
this performance. How I have been affected



in the perusal of it, the following remarks will sufficiently explain. In delivering them, I shall aim at no other arrangement than that which your Lordship's own method naturally suggests ; and for the freedom I shall use, no apology can be necessary to one, who, by his own practice, has given a sanction to far greater liberties than I shall presume to take.

Having introduced your subject, by lamenting “ the unnatural war between faith and  
“ reason, between human science and divine,” to which the mistaken zeal of some has given occasion, your Lordship proceeds (p. 6—8.) as follows :—

“ It is most certain that a Divine Revelation,  
“ if any be extant in the world ; a Divine  
“ Revelation, which is, in other words, a  
“ discovery of some part of God's own know-  
“ ledge, made by God himself, notwithstand-  
“ ing that fallible men have been made the in-  
“ struments of the communication, must be  
“ perfectly free from all mixture of human  
“ ignorance and error, in the particular sub-  
“ ject in which the discovery is made. The  
“ discovery may, and unless the powers of the  
“ human mind were infinite, it cannot but be  
“ limited



“ limited and partial : but as far as it extends,  
 “ it must be accurate. For a false proposition,  
 “ or a mistake, is certainly the very reverse of  
 “ a discovery.—In whatever relates therefore  
 “ to religion, either in theory or practice, the  
 “ knowledge of the sacred writers was infalli-  
 “ ble, as far as it extended, or their inspira-  
 “ tion had been a mere pretence. And in the  
 “ whole extent of that subject, faith must be  
 “ renounced, or reason must submit implicitly  
 “ to their oracular decisions. But in other  
 “ subjects, not immediately connected with  
 “ theology or morals, it is by no means cer-  
 “ tain, that their minds were equally en-  
 “ lightened, or that they were even preserved  
 “ from gross errors. It is certain, on the  
 “ contrary, that the Prophets and Apostles  
 “ might be sufficiently qualified for the task  
 “ assigned them, to be teachers of that wis-  
 “ dom which “ maketh wise unto salvation,”  
 “ although in the structure and mechanism of  
 “ the material world, they were less informed  
 “ than Copernicus, or Newton, and were less  
 “ knowing than Harvey in the animal œco-  
 “ nomy. Want of information, and error of  
 “ opinion in the profane sciences, may, for any



“ thing that appears to the contrary, be per-  
 “ fectly consistent with the plenary inspira-  
 “ tion of a religious teacher ; since it is not  
 “ all knowledge, but religious knowledge  
 “ only, that such a teacher is sent to propa-  
 “ gate and improve.” It was a long time,  
 my Lord, before I could persuade myself that  
 these sentences had really dropped from your  
 pen. Nothing less than the authority of your  
 name in the title-page, could convince me that  
 I was not imbibing the most malignant poi-  
 son yet prepared by your heretical adversary.  
 The page seems plucked from that volume of  
 perdition, *The Theological Repository*. What,  
 my Lord, is not *all Scripture given by the in-  
 spiration of God ?* And were not the writers  
 of it led by the Holy Spirit into *all Truth ?*  
 If, with your Lordship, we limit their infal-  
 libility on any points, (which is somewhat like  
 limiting infinity,) where shall we stop ? To  
 contend that the knowledge of the Sacred Wri-  
 ters was infallible, as far as it extended, is only  
 saying, that they knew what they were not  
 ignorant of. If the *whole* scheme of Revela-  
 tion was not understood by them, it will be  
 difficult to shew how they could avoid mis-  
 taking



taking several parts of it ; *all* the parts having a necessary connection and mutual dependance. It is in vain to make an exception of subjects unconnected with religion. We do not certainly know what those subjects are. They are different according to the apprehensions of different men : and assuredly, in the opinion of many serious Christians, as well as in that of your Lordship, *the principle of VITALITY in man*, and *the nature of death*, are not included in the number. My Lord, I would willingly draw you from the precipice on the brink of which you stand. I would exhort you, by a timely retraction, to avoid being compelled by an immediate deduction from your own positions, to join the party of *the Heresiarch*, and to own with him, that “ No  
 “ messenger from God is to be considered as  
 “ inspired by him, any further than he him-  
 “ self pretends to be so, or than the object of  
 “ his mission required. In other things, if he  
 “ was a mere man, he must have been as fal-  
 “ lible as other men, who had enjoyed advan-  
 “ tages for knowledge equal to his.” \*

\* *Theol. Reposit.* vol. iv. p. 18.

Your



Your Lordship goes on, (p. 9, 10.) “ But  
 “ though I admit the possibility of an Inspired  
 “ Teacher’s error of opinion, in subjects  
 “ which he is not sent to teach, (because In-  
 “ spiration is not omniscience, and some things  
 “ there must be which it will leave untaught) ;  
 “ though I stand in this point for my own  
 “ and every man’s liberty ; and protest against  
 “ any obligation on the believer’s conscience,  
 “ to assent to a philosophical opinion inciden-  
 “ tally expressed by Moses, by David, or by  
 “ St. Paul, upon the authority of their infal-  
 “ libility in divine knowledge ; though I think  
 “ it highly for the honour and the interest of  
 “ Religion, that this liberty of philosophising  
 “ (*except upon religious subjects !!!*) \*, should

\* This is excellent from a Divine who repeatedly [see *Traacts in Controv. with Dr. P.* p. 68, 70, 235.] recommends the study of the *Platonic Philosophy* as peculiarly useful in illustrating what he supposes to be the doctrines of the Christian scriptures. What an edifying discussion of this *Alliance of Platonism with Christianity* might be imagined in a dialogue between the *Bp. of St. David’s*, *Lord Monboddo*, and *Mr. Thomas Taylor*, the late *Translator of Proclus* ! These philosophic heroes, though a little out of date in the end of the eighteenth century,

Καριςτοι μιν εσαν, και καριςτοις εμαχοντο,  
 ————— και ενπαλως απολεσαν.

“ be



“ be openly asserted, and most pertinaciously  
 “ maintained ; yet I confess, it appears to me  
 “ no very probable supposition, and it is, as I  
 “ conceive, a mere supposition, not yet con-  
 “ firmed by any one clear instance, that an  
 “ Inspired Writer should be permitted in his  
 “ religious discourses, to affirm a false propo-  
 “ sition in *any* subject, or in *any* history to  
 “ misrepresent a fact ; so that I would not  
 “ easily, nor indeed without the conviction of  
 “ the most cogent proof, embrace any notion  
 “ in philosophy, or attend to any historical re-  
 “ lation, which should be evidently, and in  
 “ itself, repugnant to an explicit assertion  
 “ of any of the sacred writers.” — Perhaps  
 your Lordship here intends to give some spe-  
 cimen of the retractation I have recommended.  
 The general inconsistency of this passage with  
 that which precedes it, is sufficiently obvi-  
 ous ; but every contradiction is not a recanta-  
 tion. I must, however, confess myself unable  
 to discover any essential difference between that  
 divine superintendence which prevents a wri-  
 ter in his religious discourses from affirming  
 “ a false proposition in *any* subject ;” or mis-  
 representing “ a fact in *any* history,” and that  
 plenary inspiration which leads *into all truth*  
 on



on every topic of human investigation or discussion. If your Lordship had condescended to point out the difference between these ideas, I should have known on what ground to meet the arguments you afterwards deduce from the letter of holy writ. As the case stands, I shall briefly review those arguments on your last supposition that the sacred writers were *not* permitted to affirm a false proposition in *any* subject. At the same time I acknowledge, that I entirely accede to your Lordship's former philosophical, though somewhat heretical concessions, " that the prophets and apostles  
 " might be sufficiently qualified for the task  
 " assigned them, although in the structure and  
 " mechanism of the material world they were  
 " less informed than Copernicus or Newton,  
 " and were less knowing than Harvey in the  
 " animal œconomy. \*"

Your

\* This, however, so far as relates to Solomon, the *Bp. of St. D.* will not allow. [See *Sermon*, p. 20, 21.] On this matter I beg to offer his Lordship the following remark of the late *Baron HALLER*, who is thought by some to have been a tolerable judge of such subjects. " Sunt qui SALOMONI circuitum fan-  
 " guinis non ignotum fuisse scripserint. Uti sunt, ad hanc lau-  
 " dem vetustissimo regi vindicandam, *rotæ* vocabulo, quo aliquid  
 " circumeuns intelligi credunt. Verum nihil aliud certe hic vo-  
 " luit *Divus* ille, præter aquæ defectum, quæ ex fonte hauriri  
 " nequeat,



Your Lordship having compared the words of your text (*Eccles. xii. 7. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it;*) with the account given of the creation of man by Moses (*Gen. xi. 7. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*), proceeds (p. 17), “ It is the  
 “ explicit assertion therefore both of Moses  
 “ and of Solomon, that man is a compound  
 “ of body and soul; and that the union of  
 “ the immaterial soul with the body, is the  
 “ true principle of vitality in the human species. And this account of man is solemnly  
 “ delivered by them both, as a branch of their  
 “ religious doctrine.” I do not stay to ask your Lordship how you know this account to be a branch of their religious doctrine: it is my present business to suppose it such. On the same authority I must suppose the union of the immaterial soul with the body to be the

“ nequeat, quod ea rota confracta sit, qua in Ægypto et Palæstina  
 “ ad aquam putealem hauriendam utuntur, a nuperis itinerum  
 “ scriptoribus descripta.” *El. Physiol.* tom. i. p. 243. See  
 HARMER’S *Observ.* in *loc.* vol. iv.

true



true principle of vitality in the brute creation. Gen. vii. 15. *Two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.* 22, 23. *All in whose nostrils was the breath of life—and every living substance was destroyed—both man, and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of heaven.* Eccles. iii. 19. *For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts—yea they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.* v. 21. *Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?*

Your Lordship thinks that the words which we render “the breath of life,” might more properly be translated “the breath of immortality,” it being the same expression which in Job xxxii. 8. is rendered “the *inspiration* of “the Almighty.” I should be sorry to push your Lordship into those difficulties to which your literal acceptance of the last mentioned figurative text would render you liable. I shall be content with observing, that St. Paul appears to have thought differently, and to have supposed that to the first created man there did not belong any inherent immortality. 1 Cor. xv. 47. *The first man is of the earth, earthy.*



*earthly. 45. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.*

Not for your sake, my Lord, who move in a sphere far above the inferior writers I am going to cite, but for that of the reader, I shall transcribe some observations on the expressions and texts above mentioned, suggested by a mode of interpretation very different from that which your Lordship has thought proper to adopt. On which side simplicity, clearness, and accommodation to the general language of scripture appear to lie, is a question I willingly leave to the decision of competent judges.

\* \* \* \*

“ The history of the creation of man is  
 “ succinctly delivered in Gen. ii. 7. *And the*  
 “ *Lord God formed man of the dust of the*  
 “ *ground, and breathed into his nostrils the*  
 “ *breath of life, and man became a living soul.*  
 “ We see here, that the *whole man* (for nothing  
 “ is said of his *body* in particular) was made of  
 “ the dust of the ground. No part of him is  
 “ said to have had a higher or different original;  
 “ and surely so very important a circumstance  
 “ as



“ as that of an *immaterial principle*, which  
 “ could not be from the *dust*, would not have  
 “ been omitted, if there had been any such  
 “ thing in the composition.

“ When the whole man was completely  
 “ formed, and not before, we are next in-  
 “ formed, that God made this man, who was  
 “ *lifeless* at first, to *breathe* and *live*. For it  
 “ evidently follows from the text, that nothing  
 “ but the circumstance of *breathing*, made the  
 “ difference between the *unanimated earth*,  
 “ and the *living soul*. It is not said that  
 “ when one constituent part of the man was  
 “ made, another necessary constituent part of a  
 “ very different nature, was superadded to it ;  
 “ and that those two united, constituted the  
 “ man ; but only that that substance which  
 “ was formed of *the dust of the earth* became  
 “ a *living soul*, that is, became *alive*, by be-  
 “ ing made to *breathe*”.

“ That no stress is to be laid upon the  
 “ word נַפֶּשׁ, which we translate *soul* (though  
 “ it would be most of all absurd to suppose,  
 “ as we must have done, from a fair construc-  
 “ tion of this passage, that the *dust of the earth*  
 “ could be converted into an *immaterial soul*)  
 “ is evident from the use of the same term  
 “ in



“ in other places, in which it is used as sy-  
 “ nonymous to *man*, *the whole man*, and in  
 “ some manifestly signifies nothing more than  
 “ the *corporeal*, or *mortal part of man*.” See  
 Gen. xlv. 26. Levit. vii. 20, 21. Ps. vii. 2.

“ Besides, whatever principles we may be  
 “ led to ascribe to *man* from this account of  
 “ his formation in Gen. ii. 7. the very same  
 “ we ought to ascribe to the *brutes*; because  
 “ the very same words are used in the account  
 “ of them by the same writer, both in the  
 “ Hebrew and in the Septuagint, though they  
 “ are differently rendered in our translation. For  
 “ Gen. i. 24. we read, *and God said let the*  
 “ *earth bring forth the living creature* [נפש  
 “ חיה] [living soul] and again, Gen. ii. 19.  
 “ *And whatsoever Adam called every living*  
 “ *creature* [living soul] *that was the name*  
 “ *thereof* \*.”

\* \* \* \*

“ Multa itaque Græca sunt in novo fœdere  
 “ vocabula quæ ex usu Græcæ linguæ intelligi

\* PRIESTLEY'S *Disquis. on Matter*, &c. p. 154. & sequ.



“ non possunt, ex collatione autem cum He-  
 “ bræâ, et ex usu LXX interpretum facile in-  
 “ telliguntur. Quid σαρκί, quid πνεύμα, apud  
 “ Græcos scriptores denotet, nemo nescit; at  
 “ si omnes in universum sensus, quibus his  
 “ vocabulis Græci usi sunt recenseantur, nul-  
 “ lus omnino invenietur, qui mentem aposto-  
 “ lorum attinget. Cum enim בשר *carnem* pro-  
 “ prie significet, eadem tamen vox ab Hebræis  
 “ nonnunquam pro *homine* ipso, aliquando  
 “ pro *humana natura*, sæpe pro ejusdem na-  
 “ turæ *imbecillitate*, aut etiam *vitiositate* usur-  
 “ petur, et in hac sensuum varietate unica  
 “ voce σαρκός a LXX reddatur; hinc evenire  
 “ necesse est ut quoties apostoli eo sensu usur-  
 “ pent, quem Græci veteres haud agnoverunt,  
 “ ex Hebræo idiomate et versione LXX expli-  
 “ cetur . . . . Ita cum מן satis proprie πνεύμα,  
 “ qualiter a veteribus Græcis usurpatur, deno-  
 “ tet, et præterea etiam apud Hebræos multa  
 “ alia significata contineat, quæ apud Græcos  
 “ haud comparent, cum apostoli eo sensu usur-  
 “ parunt, quem Græci veteres haud agnove-  
 “ runt, ex Hebræo idiomate, et versione LXX  
 “ explicandi sunt \*.”

\* PEARSON *Præfat. parænet.* before FIELD's *Septuagint.*  
*Cant.* 1665.



\* \* \* \*

“ Some of the same words” (viz. נפש, נשמה, and רוּחַ, in the Old Testament, which are in our version generally translated *soul*, or *spirit*; as well as those of the same import in the New, πνεῦμα and ψυχή;) “ stand for the LIFE  
“ both of man and beast, and often are so rendered in our version.

“ Gen. vi. 3. My spirit shall not always  
“ strive with man, (Heb. the *soul* which I  
“ give to man shall not continue. Vid. *Cleric*.  
“ in loc.) vii. 22. All in whose nostrils was  
“ the *breath of life* (Heb. breath of the *spirit*  
“ of life) died. ix. 5. Your blood of your  
“ lives will I require (Heb. blood in your  
“ *souls* \*.)”

Among the “ OBJECTIONS, or texts usually  
“ alledged to prove the contrary” (i. e. the  
BP. of St. DAVID’S) “ doctrine,” are, “ Gen.  
“ ii. 7. man became a *living soul*. *Answ.*  
“ i. e. a living person. Gen. vii. 22. All in  
“ whose nostrils was the *breath* of life, of all  
“ that was in the dry land died. 1 Cor. xv.

\* *Append. to BP. of CARLISLE’S Confiderat.* p. 380.



“ 47. The first man is of the earth, *earthly*  
 “ . . . . . Ecclef. iii. 21. Who knoweth the  
 “ spirit of man that goeth upward; and the  
 “ spirit of the beast that goeth downward to  
 “ the earth? 1. *Who knows* the difference  
 “ between them? *Anfw.* No body. For  
 “ ver. 19.—that which befalleth the sons of  
 “ men, befalleth beasts; even one thing be-  
 “ falleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the  
 “ other; yea, they have all one breath. Ver.  
 “ 20. All go unto one place, all are of the  
 “ dust, and all turn to dust again. Or 2. If  
 “ the two foregoing verses be the objection of  
 “ an Atheist——then——these words con-  
 “ tain the answer, and imply, *Who knows*  
 “ *this? How can any man be sure of that?*  
 “ It is evident, *the spirit of man is ascend-*  
 “ *ing upwards* (is fitted for, and has a ten-  
 “ dency towards things which are above the  
 “ earth; and therefore must be designed by  
 “ its Creator for things superior to the mere  
 “ animal life) *but the spirit of a beast is de-*  
 “ *scending downwards*; namely, to the earth;  
 “ (grovels upon the earth, and is wholly  
 “ confined to the low, animal sensitive life;)  
 “ it



“ it is therefore evident, man must have pre-  
 “ eminence over a beast.

“ Eccles. xii. 7. Then shall the dust, &c.  
 “ and the spirit, &c. *Answ.* By *Spirit*, the  
 “ preacher can only mean *life*, in allusion to  
 “ Gen. iii. 19.—unless we make him con-  
 “ tradict all that he had said before, iii. 19,  
 “ 20. as also ix. 5.—the dead know not any  
 “ thing, neither have they any more reward.  
 “ —10. there is no work, nor device, nor  
 “ knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, &c.  
 “ That such words mean no more in other  
 “ writers, vid. *Cleric. in loc.* and *Job xxxiv.*  
 “ 14.\* ”

\* \* \* \*

Eccles. xii. 7. [“ *Revertaturque spiritus*  
 “ *ad Deum*] vulgò putant hisce verbis Salo-  
 “ monem fatis ostendere à se creditam immor-  
 “ talitatem animi. Sed mirum esset, si ita res  
 “ haberet, antea dubitationem hac de re a Salo-  
 “ mone perspicuè propositam, et quidem sæ-  
 “ pius cap. iii. 19. & seq. ix. 2, 5, 10. ver-

\* BP. of CARLISLE's *Append.* p. 417, 420.



“ bulo uno et altero, quasi metueret, ne res  
 “ intelligeretur, solutam; cum nulla res fit  
 “ majoris momenti, neque sæpius inculcanda  
 “ immortalitate animi. Atqui ut corpus re-  
 “ versum in terram, definit esse corpus huma-  
 “ num, et dissolvitur: ita *spiritus* rediens ad  
 “ Deum eam pati mutationem, credere po-  
 “ tuit Salomo, quâ definebat esse spiritus hu-  
 “ manus.\*”

\* \* \* \*

“ Now when it is said, *the dust shall return*  
 “ *to the earth as it was*, this plainly alludes  
 “ to the formation of the body; and when it  
 “ is said, *and the spirit shall return to God*  
 “ *that gave it*, the preacher as plainly alludes  
 “ to God’s forming man a living soul. What  
 “ is it then that God gave man?—Why, this  
 “ breath, רוּחַ, the same word which is trans-  
 “ lated in our text, *spirit*. As at death the  
 “ earth receives her dust again, so is God re-  
 “ presented as taking again that breath of *life*  
 “ which he breathed into man. This is the  
 “ obvious sense of the words, and it is forced  
 “ and unnatural to suppose the other; not to  
 “ insist upon another consideration — *viz.*

\* CLERIC. in la

“ the



“ the preacher is speaking here of mankind in  
 “ general, of the wicked as well as the right-  
 “ eous; and can we imagine, that he would  
 “ assert this of the former, that their spirits re-  
 “ turn after death to God ?\* ”

\* \* \* \*

——“ That they, who in their interpreta-  
 “ tions of scripture, pretend to the aid of im-  
 “ mediate inspiration, or go by the rules of  
 “ different kinds of *cabbalism*, should hold  
 “ these rational criticisms in contempt, is not  
 “ marvellous. But that they who pretend to  
 “ read and explain the scriptures by the help  
 “ of grammatical and philological literature  
 “ should overlook these necessary distinctions,  
 “ is unaccountable. To some of these, there-  
 “ fore, would I humbly recommend the  
 “ deliberate consideration of the remarks of  
 “ *Gataker, Pearson*, and some others, upon  
 “ the style of the sacred writings, before they  
 “ conclude from similar, or even the same ex-  
 “ pressions, that *Moses, David, Solomon*, and

\* DAWSON'S *Remarks on Steffe*, p. 261.



“ *Paul* had precisely the same ideas of the hu-  
 “ man soul, with *Hesiod*, *Homer*, *Pythago-*  
 “ *ras*, *Cicero*, and other worthies of the Pa-  
 “ gan ages.\*”

\* \* \* \*

But I crave your Lordship's pardon for quit-  
 ting you so long, and shall conclude this part  
 of the subject with two observations.

1. If (as your Lordship affirms) it be the ex-  
 plicit assertion of *Moses* that the union of the  
 immaterial soul with the body is the true  
 principle of vitality in the human species; and  
 if I be not mistaken in my conclusion that on  
 this supposition brute animals owe their vitality  
 to the same principle, we shall encounter with  
*another true principle* of vitality delivered in the  
 writings of *Moses* in language no less explicit  
 than that on which your Lordship's argument  
 is founded. This other principle is nothing  
 more or less than *the Blood* †—Gen. ix. 4. *But*  
*flesh*

\* *Histor. View of the Controversy*, &c. Prefat. Disc. p. lxiv.  
 & seq.

† “ *Empedocles* animum esse censet cordi suffusum sangui-  
 “ nem.” [CICERO, *Tusc. Disput.* i. 9.] “ *Eadem* fuisse videtur  
 “ *Hebræorum*



*flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof shall ye not eat.* Levit. xvii. 11. *For the life of the flesh is in the blood.* 14. *For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof.* Compare Isaiah liii. 12. Lament. ii. 12. Jerem. ii. 34.

2. I perceive that your Lordship has not referred your hearers to any passage in the *New Testament* containing an explicit assertion “ that  
 “ man is a compound of body and soul, and  
 “ that the union of the immaterial soul with  
 “ the body is the true principle of vitality in  
 “ the human species.” Whether your Lordship’s main argument is the better or the worse for this instance of reserve, it is not to my present purpose to inquire; but I think I may draw from it the probable conclusion that your Lordship could not find in the books of the New

“ Hebræorum veterum sententia, quibus הוּא הַנֶּפֶשׁ ut lo-  
 “ quitur *Moses* Deuter. xii. 23. quod de hominum non minus  
 “ quam brutorum animis statuerunt quemadmodum patet ex  
 “ *Genes.* ix. 5.” DAVIS. *in loc.* It is a circumstance deserving the reader’s attention, that this opinion of the principle of life, belonging especially to *the blood*, appears to have been entertained by our great countryman, HARVEY, as it is by some of the most enlightened physiologists of the present time; viz. Mr. HUNTER, Dr. G. FORDYCE, &c. &c.

Testament



Testament any passage that you judged to contain such an assertion.

---

I now proceed to offer some remarks on the physiological part of your Lordship's discourse; and, as before, must begin with a long quotation; for no language but your own can do justice to the thoughts.

“ Although we *must* believe, if we believe  
 “ our Bible, that the union of the soul and  
 “ body is the first principle of animation  
 “ in the human subject; it is by no means a  
 “ necessary consequence, that the life of man  
 “ is in no degree and in no part mechanical.  
 “ Since man is declared to be a compound, the  
 “ natural presumption seems to be, that the  
 “ life of this compounded being is itself a  
 “ compound. And this experience and ob-  
 “ servation prove to be indeed the case. Man's  
 “ life is compounded of the life of the intel-  
 “ lect and the animal life. The life of the  
 “ intellect is simply intelligence, or the ener-  
 “ gy of the intelligent principle. The ani-  
 “ mal life is itself a compound, consisting of  
 “ the



“ the vegetable life combined with the prin-  
 “ ciple of perception. Human life therefore  
 “ is an aggregate of at least three ingredients :  
 “ intelligence, perception and vegetation. The  
 “ lowest and the last of these, the vegetable  
 “ life, is wholly in the body, and is mere me-  
 “ chanism ; not a mechanism which any hu-  
 “ man ingenuity may imitate, or even to any  
 “ good degree explore ; but the exquisite me-  
 “ chanism of a divine artificer. Still it is me-  
 “ chanism ; consisting in a symmetry and sym-  
 “ pathy of parts, and a correspondence of mo-  
 “ tions conducive, by mechanical laws, esta-  
 “ blished by the Creator’s wisdom, to the  
 “ growth, nourishment, and conservation of  
 “ the whole. The wheels of this wonderful  
 “ machine are set a-going, as the scriptures  
 “ teach us, by the presence of the immaterial  
 “ soul ; which is therefore not only the seat of  
 “ intelligence, but the source and center of  
 “ the man’s entire animation.” (*Sermon*, p.  
 18, 19.)

Here I see with concern your Lordship strug-  
 gling amidst innumerable difficulties, commit-  
 ted with innumerable adversaries of the medi-  
 cal profession, Heathen and Christian, orthodox  
 and



and heterodox, and contradicted even by the motto you have prefixed to your discourse. As this last circumstance is the most remarkable, and argues no common degree of inattention in your Lordship, I shall begin with it. The vegetable life of the body according to your Lordship, is “mere mechanism, consisting in  
 “a correspondence of motions conducive to  
 “the growth, nourishment and conservation  
 “of the whole”—“It is in this circumstance  
 “only, namely, that the immaterial mover is  
 “itself attached to the machine, that the vegetable life of the body, considered as a distinct thing, as in itself it is, from the two  
 “principles of intelligence and perception,  
 “differs in kind from mere clock-work.” (p. 19.) Your Lordship therefore must believe that where the functions of intelligence and perception are not concerned, (and they certainly are not concerned in many of the motions conducive to the growth, nourishment, and conservation of the body, inasmuch as we have not the smallest consciousness of them,) the life of the body does not differ from mere clock-work. How this is to be reconciled with your motto from Dr. NICHOLLS, which,  
 for



for the reader's convenience, I transcribe below \*, I leave to your Lordship to discover.

Your Lordship needs not to be informed, that Dr. NICHOLLS was of the *Stahlian* sect of physicians, and, according to the distinguishing tenets of that sect, attributed the motions conducive to the growth, nourishment, and conservation of the body, to the influence and volitions of *the rational soul*; the same thing, I suppose, with your Lordship's *principle of intelligence*.

Now, of the various principles or terms invented to explain the phænomena of animal life, from the *τα εννοηματα* of HIPPOCRATES, the *πνευμα* of ARETÆUS, and the *φύσις* of GALEN, down to the *Anima Medica* of NICHOLLS, the *vis insita* of HALLER, and the *original motion* ascribed to the muscular fibre by Dr. G. FORDYCE, though some of these have a closer relation to the principle of intelligence

\* “ Nostris rebus sufficiat antiquissimos medicos, qui ex collatis sibi invicem observationibus opinionem omnem deducebant, credidisse principium quoddam, ab *elementis* et *materia* diversum animalibus inesse; quod eorum corpora gubernaret atque conservaret, cujusque imperio et *energix* *motus omnes* animalium essent referendi.” NICHOLLS *de Animâ Medicâ*.

than



than others, each disclaims any even the most remote alliance with your Lordship's clock-mechanism \*.

\* “ In any system of bodies, or particles of matter, affecting  
 “ one another only by the motions already existing in them be-  
 “ ing communicated to one another, they may diminish their  
 “ motion, or bring one another to rest ; but they never can in-  
 “ crease the motion existing in the whole. It happens fre-  
 “ quently, that the motions in the animal body are increased,  
 “ without any alteration of external applications to it : the  
 “ cases are so numerous, that it is hardly worth bringing an ex-  
 “ ample : we might mention the increase at times, of the circu-  
 “ lation, and all the motions of the fluids, without the least new  
 “ motion in the surrounding bodies, or interference, or even  
 “ knowledge of the mind. This motion must therefore be ori-  
 “ ginal, and not communicated.

“ In communicated motion, if one body be at rest, and a  
 “ motion be communicated to it by another, the power of the  
 “ whole motion shall not be greater than that in the communi-  
 “ cating body at the time of the communication. If I take out  
 “ the heart of an animal, cut off the auricles, it will in many  
 “ cases continue to contract and dilate for some time. If it be  
 “ left to come to rest, and if soon after a needle be introduced  
 “ into the ventricle, placed transversely, and if the interior sur-  
 “ face of the ventricle be pricked gently by the needle, the ven-  
 “ tricle will contract with such power as to force the needle deep  
 “ into it : in this case, the force of the contraction of the ven-  
 “ tricle is much greater than the power with which it was  
 “ pricked by the needle ; this contraction was therefore not  
 “ communicated to it by the moving needle, but was generated,  
 “ and therefore an original motion.” Dr. G. FORDYCE, *Phil.*  
*Trans.* vol. LXXVIII. p. 24.—I suppose it will be allowed, that  
 the motion of clock-work is *communicated motion*.

But



But I may have misrepresented your meaning ; (not, I can assure you, through design, but from a misfortune, which I believe I shall share in common with many of your Lordship's readers ;) for to this mechanism you say, " the immaterial mover is attached, and it is " in this circumstance only that the vegetable " life of the body, considered as a distinct " thing, as in itself it is, from the two " principles of intelligence and perception, " differs in kind from mere clock-work." (p. 19.)

I wish I had skill enough to unravel this curious web of argument, and to present its separate filaments to the reader's eye : but this I find impossible. In what respect, my Lord, does the union of the immaterial mover with the material machine, make the latter different from what it would be independently of such union, except that in one case it would have motion, and in the other it would be motionless ? If the wheels of this exquisite machine be set in motion by the presence of the immaterial soul, of what use or consequence is the vegetable life ? Or in what respect would the human



human body be worfe provided than it is, were there no fuch thing ?

Does the vegetable life derive its energies from the immaterial foul ? If it do not thence derive them, it muft either be deftitute of any energies, and confequently be nothing ; or it muft have energies of its own, and confequently ftand in no need of the affiftance of the immaterial principle. I conclude, therefore, that, according to your Lordship, the vegetable life is a compound resulting from the union of mechanifm with the immaterial principle. But, on the other hand, this fupposition makes the vegetable life encroach fomewhat on the principles of animal life ; and your Lordship fays explicitly, that the vegetable life is a diftinct thing from the two principles of intelligence and perception—on which fide foever we turn, all is inextricable confufion, or impenetrable darknefs ;

——— *caliginis Aër*

*Crassior infequitur, qui cuneta foramina complet.*

Further ; of the animal life your Lordship's opinion is, (I beg pardon, my Lord ; it is  
impossible



impossible to know what your opinion is on these subjects, but you say,) that it “ is itself  
 “ a compound, consisting of the vegetable life  
 “ combined with the principle of perception.”  
 This last is, of course, an immaterial principle. Pray, my Lord, is it the same with the principle of intelligence (the “ breath of life” and “ of immortality” [p. 15.]), or is it different? If it be different, we have an hypostatic union of two immaterial principles or souls in one human body. I have no doubt that your Lordship’s philosophy is equal to this : I am surprised at its not mounting higher. Your own favourite PLATO would have supplied you with a *triad* of principles ;\* and this number I should judge to be peculiarly suited to your Lordship’s taste.† If, my Lord, you determine the  
 intelligent

\* “ Plato triplicem finxit animum, &c.” CICERO. *Tusc. Disp.* i. 10.

† But why stop here ? why not receive the five-fold denomination (θεητικόν, αισθητικόν, ορετικόν, κινητικόν κατὰ τόπον, διανοητικόν) of ARISTOTLE, or the still more numerous one of GALEN ? each of the functions enumerated by these sages, having as good a claim to the title and individuality of *immaterial principles* as the BISHOP of ST. DAVID’S two leading ones of *intelligence* and *perception*. To atone for this jargon, I beg the reader to accept of the following passage.—“ Nihil esse omnino



intelligent and perceptive principle to be one and the same thing ; I cannot give the medical reader a clearer notion of your system of physiology, than by comparing your *animal life* to a compound salt, consisting of the *vegetable life* supersaturated (in the language of the chemists) with the *principle of intelligence*.

As I mean to follow your Lordship's steps as closely as I can, I find myself obliged again to advert to your interpretation of scripture, before I examine the application which you have made of your physiology to the theory of the re-animation of human bodies apparently dead.

The 20th page of your Lordship's sermon begins as follows. " This mechanism of life, " in that part which belongs to the body, so " evident to the anatomist and physician, and

" animum, et hoc esse nomen totum inane, frustra que animalia  
 " et animantis appellari ; neque in homine inesse animum vel  
 " animam, nec in bestia ; vimque omnem eam, qua vel agamus  
 " quid, vel sentiamus, in omnibus corporibus vivis æquabiliter  
 " esse fusam, nec separabilem a corpore esse ; quippe quæ nulla  
 " fit : nec fit quicquam nisi corpus unum et simplex, ita figuratum  
 " ut temperatione naturæ vigeat et sentiat." CICERO.  
*loc. citat.*

" so



“ so obvious indeed to common observation, is  
 “ so little repugnant to holy writ, that it is  
 “ clearly implied in many passages. It is im-  
 “ plied in the expressions in which Moses de-  
 “ scribes the animation of the first man ;  
 “ which, though it be referred to the union  
 “ of soul and body as a principle, is described,  
 “ however, in expressions which allude to the  
 “ mechanical action of the air, entering at the  
 “ nostrils, upon the pulmonary coats.” “ *Im-  
 “ plied !*” “ *referred to !*” “ *allude to !*” These,  
 my Lord, are cold, sceptical, unsatisfactory ex-  
 pressions ; quite void of your Lordship’s wonted  
 energy, which I am persuaded nothing would  
 have restrained on a subject like this, but the  
 consciousness of infirmity and doubt. In the  
 passage referred to, does the sacred historian de-  
 scribe one thing, or the other, or both ? Or  
 does he only conceal the higher sense under  
 the familiar expression ? Or, (which I think as  
 reasonable a supposition as any of your Lord-  
 ship’s) did the historian’s *principle of intelli-  
 gence* contemplate the sublime and eternal  
 truths which your Lordship has since more  
 C 2 fully



fully revealed, while his lower *principle of perception* rested on the gross and palpable image of respiration? But, my Lord, I wish, if possible, to be serious through the remainder of this address, in which I shall briefly consider how far your Lordship's theory will go to explain some of the facts connected with suspended and restored life,

Here again I must transcribe from your Lordship. “ Since human life is undeniably  
 “ a compound of the three principles of Intelligence, Perception, and Vegetation ;  
 “ notwithstanding that the vegetable life be in  
 “ itself mechanical, it will by no means be a  
 “ necessary conclusion, that a man must be  
 “ truly and irrecoverably dead, so soon as the  
 “ signs of this vegetable life are no longer  
 “ discernible in his body. Here Solomon's  
 “ opinion demands great attention. He makes  
 “ death consist in nothing less than the dissolution of that union of soul and body,  
 “ which Moses makes the principle of vitality. And he speaks of this disunion as a  
 “ thing



“ thing subsequent,\* in the natural and com-  
 “ mon cause of things, to the cessation of the  
 “ mechanical life of the body. Some space,  
 “ therefore, may intervene ; what the utmost  
 “ length of the interval in any case may be is not  
 “ determined, but some space of time it seems  
 “ may intervene between the stopping of the  
 “ clockwork of the body’s life, and the finished  
 “ death of the man, by the departure of the  
 “ immortal spirit. Now in all that interval,  
 “ since the union of the spirit to the body first  
 “ set the machine at work, if the stop pro-  
 “ ceed only from some external force, some  
 “ restraint upon the motion of any principal  
 “ part, without derangement, damage or de-  
 “ cay of the organization itself, the presence  
 “ of the soul in the body will be a sufficient

\* Why *subsequent* ? No better reason can, I believe, be as-  
 signed for this, than what is founded on the unavoidable circum-  
 stance of the latter member of the sentence coming after the  
 former. If we press the Royal Preacher’s language so closely,  
 we must suppose him to mean that the soul does not quit the  
 body till the latter be entirely dissolved and broken down into  
 its original dust. “ Then shall the dust return to the earth as  
 “ it was.”



“ cause to restore the motion, if the impediment only can be removed.” (*Serm.* p. 22, 23.)

I feel no small mortification at being obliged to return to your Lordship's three principles, of which the reader by this time must have had enough: he will, I trust, have the candour to believe that it is not to gratify my own inclination that I plunge again into this dark abyfs.

If (according to your Lordship) the union of the immortal spirit to the body first set the machine in motion; and if (as you must allow) it be in consequence of the continuance of that union that the motion is continued, what imaginable restraint or impediment shall put a stop to the motion while the union lasts? The infusion of the immaterial principle, you say, first gave life and motion to the before motionless and inanimate clay; and shall it not preserve life and motion, so long as that immaterial principle remains? But it happens, that in drowned persons the essential motions of life, respiration and the circulation  
of



of the blood are stopped, while yet (according to your Lordship's hypothesis) the soul remains in the body.

You will say, I know, that these motions belong only to the vegetable life, which is mechanical ; and, indeed, I readily grant that in persons re-animated, the mechanism is often set in motion a considerable time before the principle of intelligence, or even that of perception, shews any signs of activity. But here, my Lord, you will meet with equal, or still greater difficulties ; for you will be compelled to acknowledge either that the energies of what you call the vegetable life, are sufficient for the support of the vital motions of the body, or that the immaterial principle is insufficient for that support. I leave it to your Lordship to chuse which side of this dilemma you will take.

“ Some space,” your Lordship says, “ may  
 “ intervene between the stopping of the clock-  
 “ work of the body's life, and the departure  
 “ of the immortal spirit.” Of this space then  
 your Lordship thinks there is a *maximum*.  
 The *reports* of the HUMANE SOCIETY will  
 shew



shew you, my Lord, that to all appearance  
 this *maximum* in different persons differs most  
 remarkably. Some have been restored to life  
 after a long interval of apparent death, while  
 others, after a very short interval, have been  
 found irrecoverable. The attachment then of  
 the immortal spirit to the mortal machine,  
 must in different cases differ extremely. I wish  
 I knew whether your Lordship would allow  
 some portion of an immaterial principle, some  
 spark of that ætherial fire to the lower ani-  
 mals ; for, assuredly, the vegetable or mecha-  
 nical life in quadrupeds, may be suspended and  
 restored by the same means as in the human  
 species. Your Lordship, perhaps, can tell us  
 in what degree the presence of an immaterial  
 soul is more requisite in one case than in the  
 other. If the presence of an immaterial prin-  
 ciple constitute the state of life in man and  
 quadrupeds, the same will hold good, I sup-  
 pose, in amphibious animals. These have  
 cold blood, and are remarkably tenacious of  
 life. And your Lordship will allow it to be  
 the effect of a taste somewhat grovelling in  
 the immaterial principle, that it should remain  
 more



more closely and intimately attached to the clock-mechanism of a toad or viper, than to that of an archdeacon, bishop, or cardinal.

Some other phenomena attending this (as it has been perhaps improperly called) middle state between life and death, are extremely puzzling on the hypothesis, which, according to your Lordship, “ demands the implicit assent of every true believer,” and is so well established, that “ no philosophy is to be heard that would teach the contrary.”

It has happened to men and other animals, whose vital functions have been suspended in consequence of drowning, of the application of cold, or of other causes, that evident signs of life, and sometimes of vigorous life have followed the application of means for their recovery, and have subsisted for a short time, and then sudden and absolute death has taken place. In these cases, my Lord, your immaterial principle plays fast and loose in a very extraordinary and capricious manner, and indeed shews such a disposition that I would recommend it to your Lordship not to place much dependance on her.

I have



I have now, I fear, tired the reader, and I am sure I have tired myself in pursuing your Lordship through the dark and perplexed path you have chosen to tread. Nothing but a spirit of enterprize far greater than your prudence could have impelled you to enter it: for amid the various subjects of human enquiry, this of “*the difference between TRUE and APPARENT death*” appears, even at first sight, to be peculiarly and invincibly hostile to your main purpose of establishing the notion of two or more distinct principles, as subservient to *the life of man*.

I am at a loss, my Lord, to account for your temerity. Was your ambition inflamed by the “*lucky discoveries* \*” of an adversary, over whom in another field, though suffering all the disgrace of defeat, you had displayed all the insolence of triumph? That adversary, your Lordship knows, is thought to have made

\* “*Which the fame of certain lucky discoveries, in the prosecution of physical experiments, had set high in the popular esteem.*”  
Bp. of St. DAVID’S Preface to TRACTS, in Controversy with Dr. PRIESTLEY, p. iv.



some considerable steps† towards explaining the nature of the connexion between respiration and life. He has proceeded slowly and cautiously on the sure ground of fact and experiment. Your Lordship disdaining this method, has aimed at higher honours. In your pursuit of these, the dictates of common sense have been forgotten; the most palpable contradictions have been suffered to pass; the aids of science which you may be allowed to possess, and the impediments of ignorance which you cannot but have felt, have been alike disregarded.

Comparing your theological lucubrations with your operations on *the principle of VITALITY in man*, I perceive features of a very resembling character; the same violent and imprudent desire of superiority; the same confusion and perplexity; the same laboured and involved style; the same embarrassed and unintelligible arguments. But for these things your Lordship will speedily “*be brought into*

† These steps have been followed with great success by Dr. GOODWYN, in a very ingenious specimen of experimental enquiry, entitled *The Connexion of Life with Respiration*.

“*judgment.*”



"*judgment.*" Chastisement awaits you from  
a hand stronger than mine: to that hand I  
leave you, with the wish (fruitless, alas! but  
yet sincere,) that it might prove not only the  
instrument of correction, but the occasion of  
repentance.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

&c. &c.

Sept. 30, 1789.