

Scriptural authority for the mitigation of the pains of labour, by chloroform, and other anaesthetic agents / [With appendix by J.Y. Simpson].

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June 1849 -
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SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY

FOR THE

Mitigation of the Pains of Labour,

BY

CHLOROFORM,

AND OTHER ANÆSTHETIC AGENTS,

BY

PROTHEROE SMITH, M.D.,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS;
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ETC. ETC.

LONDON:
PUBLISHED BY S. HIGHLEY, 32, FLEET STREET.

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CHELSEA:
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TO

J. Y. SIMPSON, M.D., F.R.S.E.,

PROFESSOR OF MIDWIFERY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH, AND
PHYSICIAN-ACCOUCHEUR TO HER MAJESTY IN SCOTLAND,

WHOSE UNWEARIED AND SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS

TO ADVANCE MEDICAL SCIENCE, AND TO ALLEVIATE HUMAN SUFFERING,

ENTITLE HIM TO THE ESTEEM OF BOTH THE PROFESSION,

AND THE PUBLIC,


THE FOLLOWING TREATISE IS DEDICATED,

WITH FEELINGS OF SINCERE REGARD,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

London, June 28, 1848.



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SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY,

&c.

It is a law in Ethics, to which there is no exception, that a proposition is valueless in proportion as it deviates from truth, and can only legitimately become a rule of action when it has truth for its foundation. Fully subscribing to this universally received axiom, I would investigate the claims of the subject of this Pamphlet,—the induction of Anæsthesia in Midwifery,—which is now attracting the attention not only of the Medical Profession, but also of the public.

But, first of all comes the enquiry, “what is truth?” The answer is found in the 17th chap. of the Gospel of St. John, “Thy word is truth.” Hence, I would submit the question at issue to the test of Holy writ: “to the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”*

In a treatise which I published in the *Lancet* of May, 1847, setting forth the advantages to be obtained in Midwifery by the employment of the Anæsthetic agent then in use, and also explaining the physiology of its action on the nervous centres,

* Isaiah viii. 20.

and, consequently, the effects produced by it on the function of parturition, I remarked that "the usual nervous concomitants of labour,—consciousness, pain, and spinal reflex action, may be wanting, and yet parturition proceed uninterruptedly. But though they may be absent, can they be artificially abolished without danger? Can this be accomplished by Ether? and if so, as I have frequently been asked, is it justifiable on Christian principles? I will answer the last question before entering upon the consideration of the others, because, if we have reason to believe that an attempt to relieve the pains of labour would be in opposition to the will of God, all discussion of the other questions must at once be abandoned.

I think it is obvious, that the same principle which would lead us to view any attempt to remove the dreadful and dreaded pains of labour as opposed to the Divine will, would induce us to neglect every means of relieving human suffering. Though from different motives we should, like the Turks, passively bear evils easily removable, as disease and suffering are alike dependant on the event which elicited the decree, "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth." In fact, precisely the same objections have successively been made to most of the great discoveries and improvements in medicine. One of the great arguments, it may be remembered, against vaccination, and, in the last century, against inoculation, was, that the practice was a presumptuous contravention of the Divine will. With far more reason might the objection be urged to the practice of

inducing premature labour, and still more strongly against that of destroying, *in utero*, a living foetus. And yet, it is now universally admitted, that, to risk the life of the mother by refraining from these operations, is not only unjustifiable, but highly criminal. Certainly, then, if it is justifiable to attempt the relief of pain, it is especially imperative upon us to do so in the most intense of all pain." To those who conscientiously doubted the propriety of resorting to such expedients to mitigate the pain of parturition, these observations, too concise and incomplete in themselves to prove the case, were addressed in the hope that they would be sufficient to lead the enquiring mind to the only source capable of solving such doubts. In this expectation I have been disappointed. Notwithstanding, moreover, the efforts of Professor Simpson to decide this *questio vexata*, by a reference to those passages in Scripture which have raised the objection; and, although he has clearly shown that the Hebrew word, translated "sorrow," in Gen. iii. 16, not only in its primitive sense, but also in its derivatives from the original root, does not primarily bear the signification which the rendering of our English version gives, yet, the objection still appears to exist; and it is urged by some persons against the abolition of the pains of labour, "that what God ordained at the fall as woman's curse, is an established rule, with the operation of which it is not lawful for man to meddle."* From Dr. Simpson's Pamphlet, it

* "Not a few medical men have, I know, joined in this same objection, and have refused to relieve their Patients from the

appears that the Hebrew word rendered sorrow, Gen. iii. 16, (when traced to its root, the verb 'etzebh) means "to labour, form, or fashion,"* therefore it correctly signifies "*labour or travail.*" Thus the peculiar erect position of the human body, the different axes of the pelvis, and the obstruction offered by the soft structures, and the strong and powerful organ of the uterus in woman, evince a striking adaptation to the provision that she should bring forth with effort or labour. This is also confirmed by reference to those passages of Scripture in which this word occurs, and where it will be seen to bear the same signification. I subjoin, first, these passages, printing in Italics the different renderings which our translators have

agonies of child-birth, on the allegation that they believed that their employment of suitable Anæsthetic means for such a purpose would be unscriptural and irreligious."—*Answer to the Religious Objections, &c., by Prof. Simpson.*

"Several communications have lately appeared, advocating, upon theological grounds, the total disuse of Ether and Chloroform in Obstetric cases, and disparaging their value in all cases. 'Because the penalty upon the sex is severe,' says one, 'don't prevent their feeling the full weight of it.' Why, what is Ergot of Rye given for, but to abridge its duration? and what essential difference is there between an abridgment of duration and a privation of pain."—*On Professional Prejudice against the use of Anæsthetic agents, &c. By S. Gower, Esq. Lancet, May 13, 1848, page 521.*

I have received so many communications, from both Professional and non-Professional correspondents, advocating "Religious Objections" to the use of Chloroform vapour in Midwifery, that I have been induced to publish my views on the subject, in order to furnish a reply to each.

* Tregelles' Translation of Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, page mexlvi.

adopted of the word in the authorized version ; and, secondly, those texts in which the suffering of the parturient mother is clearly referred to, and for which the two Hebrew words *hhil* and *hhebhel*,* are employed as designating the actual pain of parturition, and as contra-distinguished from *'etzebh*, which literally signifies muscular effort or labour.

1. " In sorrow (*'etzebh*) thou shalt bring forth children." Gen. iii. 16.

" In all labour (*'etzebh*) there is profit." Prov. xiv. 23.

" Lest thy labours (*'etzebh*) be in the house of a stranger." Prov. v. 10.

" Grievous words (*'etzebh*) stir up anger." Prov. xv. 1.

" The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow (*'etzebh*) with it." Prov. x. 22.

" It is vain for you to rise up early, and sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrow (*'etzebh*)." † Psalm cxxvii. 2.

" Is this man Coniah a despised broken *idol* (*'etzebh*)?" Jer. xxii. 28.

2. " Fear took hold upon them there, and pain (*hhil*), as of a woman in travail." Ps. xlviii. 6.

" Anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain (*hhil*), as of a woman in travail." Jer. vi. 24.

* The Hebrew word *Zeer* is also employed to express parturient pain, in Isaiah xiii. 8. Whilst *'Etzebh* rather signifies "labour or travail." *Hhil*, *hhebhel*, and *zeer*, primarily denoting passive endurance ; *etzebh*, active effort.

† Gesenius translates it, "bread obtained by toilsome labour."

- “ When *pangs* (*hhebhel*) come upon thee, the *pain* (*hhil*) as of a woman in travail.” Jer. xxii. 23.
- “ Anguish took hold of him, and *pangs* (*hhil*) as of a woman in travail.” Jer. l. 43.
- “ For *pangs* (*hhil*) have taken thee as a woman in travail.” Mic. iv. 9.
- “ *Pangs* and *sorrow* (*zeer*) shall take hold of them, *they shall be in pain* (*hhil*) as a woman that travaileth, their faces shall be as flames.” Isaiah xiii. 8.
- “ Like as a woman with child that draweth near the time of her delivery *is in pain* (*hhil*), and crieth out in her *pangs* (*hhebhel*).” Isaiah xxvi. 17.
- “ Before *she travailed* (*hhil*) she brought forth; before her *pain* (*hhebhel*) came she was delivered of a man child.” Isaiah lxvi. 7.
- “ Shall not *sorrows* (*hhebhel*) take thee as a woman in travail?” Jer. xiii. 21.
- “ The *sorrows* (*hhebhel*) of a travailing woman shall come upon him.” Hos. xiii. 13.*

Professor Simpson justly infers that the Hebrew word rendered “sorrow” in our English version, thus signifies rather the severe efforts and struggles of human parturition; whilst the feelings or sensations of the excruciating pain of labour is designated by two Hebrew words, entirely and essentially different from the terms translated “sorrow.” Thus it is evident that the idea that

* See the Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance.—*Longman*.

woman was *adjudged* to the miseries of pure physical pain in parturition, is contrary to the plain teaching and words of the Bible.

Notwithstanding, however, the conclusive philological proof afforded by the foregoing remarks, I believe the precise definition of the terms of the curse does not so materially interest the opponents to the induction of Anæsthesia in Midwifery, as does the enquiry, whether the post-transgression denunciations consequent upon Adam's disobedience are still in force; or, whether they have not been modified by the perfect obedience and vicarious sacrifice of "the last Adam:"* since it has frequently been urged upon me, of late, that more or less of actual physical suffering is necessarily incidental to the parturient efforts; that it consequently formed an element in the denunciations in question; and that, therefore, as such, it would be presumptuous and irreligious to interrupt or nullify it. I am prepared to show, however, that such objection has no legitimate foundation in the present era of Redemption. On the contrary, we have indisputable evidence, that, since the death of Christ, there has been a progressive advance in such knowledge as is especially designed to ameliorate the curse, and to sustain the character of the Christian dispensation:—viz. "good will towards men; mercy and not sacrifice."†

* See 1 Cor. xv. 45, 47; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Col. i. 13; Rom. v. 19; x. 4; Gal. iii. 13; iv. 4, 5; Eph. ii. 15.

† Luke ii. 14. Hos. vi. 6; Num. xiv. 18; 1 Chron. xvi. 34, 41; 2 Chron. v. 13; vii. 3—6; xx. 21; Ezra iii. 11; Psalm xxv. 10;

Thus, while statistics prove that human life is lengthened, science has not only aided to postpone the hour of death, but also to remedy the barren earth, and to obviate the necessity for manual labour, and the sweat of the brow. And as it were inversely in the order in which the curse was pronounced, do we find the three visible agents of the fall relieved from the weight of their penalty. First, by husbandry the thorns and thistles were lessened; then, man was eased of his yoke by the use of machinery, &c.; and now, woman seems destined to reap her share of that knowledge which was predicted should be increased in "the time of the end."* And who is "He that teacheth man knowledge?"† and "giveth wisdom,"§ but "Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."|| This principle of development of the benefits of Redemption is seen, not only in the physical world, but in spiritual things. As, when "the night is far spent, the day is at hand;"‡ so "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day,"** even "the day of his coming," when "they

Ps. lxii. 12; lxxxvi. 5; c. 5; ciii. 11; cvi. 1; cvii. 1; cxviii. 1; cxxxvi. 1; cxlv. 8; Jer. xxxiii. 11; Mic. vii. 18; Eph. ii. 4; James v. 11.

* Dan. xii. 4. † Psalm xciv. 10. § Prov. ii. 6.

|| Col. ii. 2, 3. See also Isaiah xxviii. 24—29, where, in reference to the arts of husbandry, God declares himself to be man's teacher, and that such knowledge "cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." And in Job xxxii. 8: "There is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

‡ Rom. xiii. 12. ** Prov. iv. 18.

shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble.”* Many instances might be cited in illustration of this principle, did the limits of my Pamphlet admit of it. To return, however, to the question at issue, I shall first endeavour to show upon what grounds woman was doomed to bring forth in sorrow ; secondly, that such grounds do not necessarily now exist ; and thirdly, I hope to prove, that the employment of means for annulling the pains of labour is not only legitimate, but strictly in accordance with the mind of Him who “went about doing good” † to the bodies as well as to the souls of his creatures ; and whose “tender mercies are over *all His works*.” § Some preliminary observations, however, are necessary to the introduction of the subject.

The naturalist who regards only external distinctions and peculiarities, finds no difficulty in adopting a classification, which separates the products of the two kingdoms of organic nature into the various genera and orders of Zoology, Botany, &c. Notwithstanding which, however, Anatomists and Physiologists have shown, with the aid of the Microscope and Chemistry, that, between the species of the animal and vegetable world there exists a striking analogy, and that their difference results from the degree of their respective organization. Both are influenced by the same laws ; and life in each is sustained by corresponding functions, as, imbibition, digestion, assimilation,

* Isaiah lxv. 23 ; Mal. iii. 2 ; Phil. i. 6 ; Heb. x. 25 ; Isaiah xiii. 6 ; Joel i. 15, and ii. 1 ; Zeph. i. 7 ; Zech. xiv. 1.

† Acts, x. 38. § Psalm cxlv. 9.

circulation, respiration, secretion, and excretion. So that each function of organic life in the animal economy, including that of procreation, meets with its analogue in the vegetable. We find, also, an evident correspondence as regards organic life, between the different races, both of the animal and vegetable kingdoms; so that in the inferior orders of each may be traced incomplete types of those organs which are more perfectly developed in the higher classes. "In all, the same general objects are aimed at; the same general plans devised for their accomplishment; and similar means and agencies employed for their execution."* So that, as physiologists have observed, although the different conformation of quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, and fishes, is very apparent at the period of their maturity, it is scarcely distinguishable in their embryonic state; and their early development proceeds for some time in the same manner. But, whilst comparative anatomy discovers that the distinct peculiarities which divide and sub-divide the animal and vegetable worlds into separate families, are chiefly superficial, Analytical Chemistry has demonstrated that the frame of man, "the paragon of animals," as well as that of the beast and creeping thing, with the forest tree and the lowly herb, may all be reduced to the same elements, and that they alike result from the same simple bodies, variously and disproportionately united. Thus, even science, in unveiling the truth, shows that "all flesh is

* *Animal and Vegetable Physiology, &c. P. M. Roget, M.D.*

grass.”* So in Revelation do we find a unity of design, which yields to the diligent student of Scripture a satisfactory evidence of its Divine origin. This, however, does not appear more on the surface of the Bible than it does on the exterior of animated nature. The Microscope may be used here as well as in the physical world. And as, by its aid, are unveiled the hidden mysteries of a drop of water,† or the exquisite perfection which crowns the most insignificant leaflet, or the meanest insect,‡ we are led, not only to contemplate the

* Isaiah xl. 6 ; 1 Peter i. 24.

“ The inquiries on animal and vegetable physiology,” observes the Author of the Fifth Bridgewater Treatise, “ lead to the general conclusion that unity of design and identity of operation pervade the whole of nature ; and they clearly point to one Great and Only Cause of all things, arrayed in the attributes of infinite power, wisdom, and benevolence, whose mighty works extend through the boundless regions of space, and whose comprehensive plans embrace eternity ; so that the races which nature has united in the same group, though possessed of features individually different, may easily be recognised by their family likeness, as the offspring of a common parent.

“ *Facies non omnibus una ;*

Nec diversa tamen ; qualem decet esse sororum.”

† The existence of *Monads* was discovered by Prof. Ehrenberg, who ascertained their diameter to be about the 24,000th part of an inch ; and so thickly crowded were they in the fluid, that he computed a drop contained 500,000,000, which almost equals the number of human beings existing on the surface of the earth. Great numbers of infusorial animalculus are met with in snow, as the *Podura Nivalis*, &c. Sir J. Ross also discovered in Baffin’s Bay minute fungi, or Microscopic Mushrooms (*Protococcus Nivalis*), vegetating on the surface of snow, and giving it a red colour. And on the granular snow (*Firn*) of Switzerland, the *Palmella Nivalis*, another microscopic plant, is found.—*Phil. Tran.*, 1820, p. 165. *Mag. Nat. Hist.* v. i., p. 30.

‡ “ Si l’on applique à chacune de ces espèces, par la pensée,

wisdom of the Creator, but also to recognise a unity of purpose, and an unvarying design throughout, which marks all creaturehood as the work of Him “who doeth all things well.”* So is there displayed to him who searches diligently in the Inspired Word, a striking resemblance to His work in creation. Just as in creation, one leading idea is throughout presented to the view, which testifies to the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Creator—a testimony, which the partial and apparent contradiction of tempests and earthquakes does not alter or disannul; so has all Scripture one great thought stamped on it, which, though often hid beneath the surface in type and parable, is, nevertheless, shown in every act and history, and is displayed in every dispensation, however apparently dissimilar; and that thought is the grace of the Redeemer. There is neither speech nor language, but in all we hear the

ce qu'il seroit bien impossible qu'un homme entreprit, de vérifier en effet pour toutes, une organisation à-peu-près égale en complication à celle qui a été décrite dans le chenille par Lyonet, et tout récemment dans le hanneton par M. Straus; et cependant plus ou moins différente dans chaque insecte, l'imagination commencera à concevoir quelque chose de cette richesse effrayante, et de ces millions de millions de parties de parties, toujours corrélatives, toujours en harmonie, qui constituent le grand ouvrage de la nature.”—*Hist. des Progrès des Sciences Naturelles*, Cuvier. Tom. iv, p. 145.

* “Thus, to whatever department of Physical Science our researches have extended, we everywhere meet with the same regularity in the phenomena; the same simplicity in the laws; and the same uniformity in the results. All is strictly defined and subjected to rigid rule: all is subordinate to one pervading principle of order.”—*Animal and Vegetable Physiology, &c.* P. M. Roget, M.D. p. 7.

wondrous tale. Christ is throughout the key to Scripture—the one great idea of the Bible. A modern writer, who thus ably advocates these views, also quaintly remarks, “Know Christ; understand God’s thoughts about Him, and then you will understand the Bible.”* Indeed, were this generally apprehended, there would be but little need for my present undertaking; for, I believe “the religious objections” to the abolition of pain in labour have chiefly originated from confounding the dispensations, and mingling the ordinances of one with those of another. It has not been clearly seen, that the very words which in one dispensation, and to one people, conveyed a literal command, to be obeyed literally; in another age and dispensation, supplies simply a type of some part of God’s work or purpose, though often, at the same time, yielding to the believer of every age matter of comfort or warning, according to his need. If proof of these assertions be required, the New Testament affords it in abundance. But, as the mere superficial observer does not know, and can scarcely credit the assertions of the scientific Anatomist, Physiologist, or Chemist; so, also, in spiritual matters, a certain amount of apprehension is needed in those to whom the proof is submitted. And as all have not intelligence enough to grasp the proofs of mathematics or astronomy, though they are unanswerable to

* Juke “On the Law of the Offerings,” a work which I thankfully acknowledge as the source from which the preceding observations, as well as the subsequent remarks of a dispensational character, are chiefly drawn.

those who have; so those will be found best qualified to pass sentence on the amount of proof about to be adduced, who are spiritually minded, for "he that is spiritual discerneth all things."*

Believing, then, that a knowledge of the *dispensational* character of God's dealing with man is essential to the clear perception of my argument, I shall venture here to enlarge a little on this subject, although, in doing so, I may advance much that is already familiar to many of my readers. Since the Fall two purposes have been evident in God's dealing with man: first, to reveal what *He* is; secondly, and in order to the former, to shew what *man* is. And these two great objects have been developed in different ways, and under various and repeated trials; in different degrees of relationship, and, in a certain sense also, on different principles. In this manner has God in his dispensations revealed himself, and, at the same time, proved man's inability to recover himself, and to return to his allegiance to his Maker. Thus we find man first without law, and the result was "the earth was filled with violence."† Power was then delegated to Noah, and in this instance human authority was seen to be insufficient to restrain the aptitude for sin, from the open and wide spread idolatry which quickly followed.§ In these two first or patriarchal dispensations, "the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men"

* 1 Cor. ii 15, marginal rendering: read also from the 6th verse, to the end of this chapter.

† Gen. vi. 11. § Gen. ix. & xi. chapters.

was proved. "They did not like to retain God in their knowledge."* In the two dispensations which succeeded, God came manifestly into relationship with man. One was the dispensation of the Law, introduced, as it were, parenthetically,† after God had disclosed to Abraham his covenant and purpose of grace, apparent in the Sacred History of all who, from Abel onwards, "obtained a good report through faith."‡ The second is that of the Gospel. In the first, Abraham's family was elected as its subjects, and to them was delivered a perfect law, which they agreed to observe.§ The failure of Israel to keep the law again shewed the insufficiency of man in the flesh to restore himself, by a perfect obedience, to the position he had forfeited by sin. The prophets, sent by God to seek for fruits in this vineyard, were "beaten, stoned, and shamefully treated;" and when, last of all, He sent his Son, Him they cast out and

* Rom. i. 18—32.

† "The law, as answering this temporary purpose, in the Sinai Covenant, is said by St. Paul to have entered *incidentally*, ΠΑΡ εἰσῆλθεν (Rom. v. 20). The force of the preposition is altogether lost in our English version."—*Goode's Better Covenant*, p. 333.

"I consider the sense of it to be that when sin had entered, the *direct* and *obvious* method would have been to introduce the Gospel, as its great counteraction and remedy; instead of which the law came first, to answer a *collateral* end, viz. to aggravate the evil, and make it more manifest and desperate, that men might be most effectually prepared to welcome the blessing. Thus it was an *indirect step* towards the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose."—*Professor Scholfield's Hints for an Improved Translation of the New Testament*, p. 41.

‡ See whole of Heb. xi.; Gal. iii. 17. § Exodus xix. 8.

crucified.* So that, "by the deeds of the law was no flesh justified in His sight."†

A new dispensation was therefore established, in which man in the flesh was no longer recognised, and those only who were quickened by a new and heavenly life were acknowledged. Thus another "people for His name"‡ were "begotten again by the resurrection of Christ,"§ and are become the subjects of the Christian Dispensation, or Dispensation of Resurrection, in which they are called upon to witness and declare what Christ was, and is, and what they were by nature and are by grace. Circumcision and Baptism strikingly represent the characteristics, and clearly shew the contrast between the present dispensation and the past. Whilst circumcision signified "the putting away the filth of the flesh,"|| and shewed that flesh was taken into covenant in the Legal dispensation; baptism, on the contrary, represents *the death and burial of the flesh*,¶ on the ground it was incurable, and that man can only come to God as a new creature, quickened by the Spirit and risen with Christ.** Thus Scripture speaks of the Church as dead, buried, and risen with Christ.

Keeping in view these preliminary remarks, I would again resume the consideration of the

* Matt. xxi. 33—39. † Rom. iii. 10—23. ‡ Acts xv. 14.

§ 1 Pet. i. 3; John xi. 25; Rom. 1. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 25.

|| 1 Pet. iii. 21.

¶ See Stratten's "Book of the Priesthood," pp. 198, 205, 208. Rom vi; Col. ii; 1 Pet. iii.

** Eph. i. 18—23; ii. 4—7.

three points which I have assumed as a division of my argument, viz. :—

I. The grounds on which woman was doomed to bring forth in sorrow.

II. The proof that such do not now necessarily exist.

III. The conclusion, that the abolition of the pains of labour is strictly in accordance with the will of God.

1. Man, originally formed in the image of God, and consequently faultless, was neither liable to death,* nor to the sufferings which herald its approach. Though thus sinless, his insufficiency, as an independent creature, to stand upon his own responsibility and in his own strength, was shewn by his failure to keep the one simple law which was given to test his obedience to God. He listened to the Tempter, and became obnoxious to that law which he had broken, and so was subject to death, the predicted “wages of sin,”† with its black category of ills, diseases, pains, and sorrows: “For in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,” or “dying thou shalt die.”‡

The four agents which united to effect this sad change from a state in which every thing was “very good,” were Satan, woman, man, and the ground “out of which made the Lord God to grow every tree;” and consequently we find that as the accredited agents of the Fall, and in addition to the *primal* decree, “thou shalt surely die,” predi-

* Rom. v. 12. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Gen. ii. 17.

cated before the act of transgression, they severally received a curse suited to the peculiarities of their respective conditions. To the Serpent it was said, "On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat." To the woman, "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth." To the man, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground, and in sorrow shalt thou eat of it." To the ground, "Cursed is the ground, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth."* Thus the fair face of nature was marred—"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."†

In referring to the above-mentioned texts, it will be seen that God decreed, *in the day* man should eat of the forbidden fruit he should "surely die;" yet, notwithstanding, we find, as it might at first have appeared, a confirmation of the Serpent's assertion, "Ye shall not surely die," for "Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years."‡ This seeming modification of the curse pronounced against the first transgression has been variously explained by commentators. Thus, that man instantly became spiritually "dead in trespasses and sin," for "to be carnally-minded is death."§ That death of the body was established, though not consummated, in the day in which he ate of the forbidden fruit, and so "dying thou shalt die," was literally fulfilled in the day of his transgression:|| but by

* Gen. iii. 14—18.

† Rom. 5. 12.

‡ Gen. v. 5.

§ Rom. viii. 6.

|| "With the germs of life in all organized structures are conjoined the seeds of decay and of death; and, however great

reference to the written Word it will be found (making Scripture its own interpreter) that, as “in Adam all die,” so man, that is to say flesh, then became of the “earth, earthy,” and “corrupt,”* and will remain, even in the Christian, “the body of death,” in which he “groans,” “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” Thus, “the body is dead because of sin,”† and “in the midst of life we are in death.”‡ The spiritual man, then, as I have before remarked, is regarded in Scripture as “dead,”§ “buried,”|| and risen with Christ;¶ though not “absent from the body,” a condition, which, in conventional terms, is death; but which, in New Testament language, is called sleep.**

may be the powers of their vitality, we know that those powers are finite, and that a time must come when they will be expended, and when their renewal in that individual is no longer possible.”—*Roget's Bridgewater Treatise*, vol. ii., p. 521.

* 1 Cor. xv. 47, 50, 53, 54.

† Rom. viii. 10.

‡ *Hieron. Quæst. in Gen. In quacunque autem die comederis ex eo morte morieris. Melius interpretatus est Symmachus, dicens, mortalis eris. Quare melius? nam verba Hebræa hoc non significant. Quid igitur? Moriendo morieris, hoc est, certò et indubitanter morieris. Ita est profectò: mortuus est simul ac peccavit, si non morte naturalis, quæ post secuta est, at morte peccatorum et calamitatum. Vita enim misera, qualis hæc nostra est, non vita est sed mors, et tunc incipit homo mori quando nascitur. Scitè vir doctus, Incipimus enim, si forte nescis, tum mori cum primum desinimus mori cum à corpore mortis hujus per carnis mortem absolvimur. Picus Mirandula de Ente et uno.—Critici Sacri. Edit. Amstel., tom. i., p. 1, f. 86.*

§ Col. iii. 3. || Rom. vi. 4. ¶ Col. iii. 1; Rom. vi. 13; Eph. ii. 6.

** Matt. xxvii. 52; John xi. 11; Acts vii. 60; 1 Cor. xi. 30, xv. 20, 31; 1 Thess. iv. 13—15; Dan. xii. 2. Since writing the above, I have met with the following observations by the Rev. R. W. Dibdin. “Eve, and then Adam, *did* eat of the

The Bible, however, offers, I believe, a still more satisfactory solution of this difficulty. Having vaguely hinted at* “the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest;” † it declares, also, that offended Deity had found a Surety for His creatures in Him who was promised to bruise the serpent’s head, ‡ or in other words, “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” § Thus, Christ was “set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was,” || as He who “in due time died for the ungodly,” ¶ and “who gave Himself a ransom for all.” ** “Therefore, as by one offence death came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by one righteousness the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.” ††

The conclusion, therefore, necessarily follows, that our gracious Lord “now once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself;” ‡‡ and that, “by His one

forbidden fruit, and the curse *immediately* took effect: Adam and Eve became dead in trespasses and sins: dead both in body and soul. St. Paul, speaking of this death, says, ‘by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so *death passed upon all men*, for that all have sinned.’ Rom. v. 12. Here no mention is made of that separation of soul and body, which is now commonly called death, for that did *not* pass upon all men; Enoch never died in that sense, nor Elijah; neither will multitudes die who shall be living at the Coming of the Lord.”—*Lectures on Subjects connected with the Second Coming, &c.*, B. Wertheim, Paternoster Row.

* Gen. iii. 15. † Col. i. 26. ‡ Gen. iii. 15; Rom. xvi. 20.

§ Heb. ii. 9, 14. || Prov. viii. 23. ¶ Rom. v. 6.

** 1 Tim. ii. 6. †† Rom. v. 18, marginal reading. ‡‡ Heb. ix. 26.

oblation of Himself once offered, He made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.* That, as the "Man of sorrows," He not only "bare our sins in His own body on the tree,"† when "He poured out His soul unto death;"‡ but He "found trouble and sorrow;"§ for, "surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: and with His stripes we are healed."|| Now this truth, so precious to all who have faith to receive it, is that on which, for the sake of my argument, I would mainly dwell. Thus, in reference to the fulfillment of Gen. ii. 17, we have explained the bane and the antidote; and how the anticipated benefits of the sin-offering operated in modifying the penalty of sin.¶

* Communion Service, Church of England.

"Jesus Christ has made his one offering on the cross, a sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and atonement for the sins of the whole world; and his gracious spirit strives with and enlightens all men; thus putting them into a salvable state; therefore, every human soul may be saved, if it be not his own fault."—*Life of Dr. A. Clarke*, vol. i. p. 176. See Michaelis Introd. N. T., by Marsh, vol. iii., ch. 30. Also 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 19; John iii. 17; 1 John ii. 1, 2; Heb. ii. 9; Rom. v. 18—21.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24. ‡ Isa. liii. 12. § Psalm cxvi. 3. || Isa. liii. 5.

¶ "The complete parallel here (Rom. v. 18—21.) maintained, between the effects of Adam's transgressions, on the one part, and those of the righteousness of Christ on the other, appears to afford a satisfactory evidence of the comprehensive nature of the plan of Christian Redemption. The two things are described as being in their operation upon mankind absolutely co-extensive. Between the effects of Adam's sin and those of the obedience of Christ, there is, in various respects, a perfect coincidence. The universality of the plan of Redemption has already been deduced, on the authority of the apostle Paul, from the universality of the Fall; and it appears to have been provided by the mercy and

Whilst some might be found to object to the assertion, that the benefits of Christ's sacrifice were anticipated before the Christian era, I presume no one, who acknowledges the authority of Scripture, will assert that they are inoperative now that "He hath put away sin,"* and "carried our sorrows;"† and "hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God;"‡ of whom it is written, "He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied."§ And here I would quote from Dr. Simpson's Pamphlet the pertinent and pithy remarks of Matthew Henry, extracted from his exposition of the Books of Moses. "How admirably the satisfaction our Lord Jesus Christ made by His death and sufferings, answered the sentence here passed upon our first parents. 1. Did travailing pains come in with sin? We read of 'the travail of Christ's soul;'|| and the pains of death He was held by, are called the 'pains of a woman in travail.'¶ 2. Did subjection come in with sin? Christ was 'made under the law;*** 3. Did the curse come in with sin? Christ was made 'a curse for us;' died a 'cursed death;'†† 4. Did thorns come in with

equity of God, that in both the *extent* and the manner of their operation, there should still be a correspondence between the disease and the remedy."—*Observations on the Distinguishing Views and Practices of the Society of Friends*, by Joseph John Gurney. Ninth Edition, p. 25, 27. See Ex. xxxiv. 6; Psalm ciii. 22; Acts xvii. 24—28; 2 Pet. iii. 9; Isaiah lv. 7; Titus ii. 11; 1 Tim. ii. 4; Isaiah xlv. 22. Also Augustine, de Peccatorum Meritis et Remiss. lib. i., § 38.

* Heb. ix. 26.

† Isaiah liii. 4.

‡ Eph. v. 2.

§ Isaiah liii. 11.

|| Isa. liii. 11. ¶ Acts ii. 24. *** Gal. iv. 4. †† Gal. iii. 13.

sin? He was crowned with 'thorns' for us. 5. Did sweat come in with sin? He sweat for us, 'as it had been great drops of blood.' 6. Did sorrow come in with sin? He was a 'man of sorrows;' His soul was in His agony 'exceeding sorrowful.' 7. Did death come in with sin? He became 'obedient unto death.' Thus is the plaister as wide as the wound. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ." What a key does this offer to the inspired language of the Psalmist. "Bless the Lord O my soul; and forget not all his benefits; Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."*

Having thus been made our *sin*,[†] and our *curse*,[‡] Christ now occupies the place of what otherwise must have continued insurmountable barriers between the creature and the Creator. No longer, however, as an obstacle to our approach to God, but as the Mediator between God and man. § It follows, then, from these premises, that *sin* is the ground on which the *curse* existed; and that, to the spiritual man, *both* are judicially abolished in Christ. || Thus, though the body may ¶ "return

* See whole of Psalm ciii.

† Isaiah liii. 10; 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. ix. 26; 1 John i. 7.

‡ Gal. iii. 13. § 1 Tim. ii. 5.

|| 1 John i. 7; iii. 9, 10; John i. 29; 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. ix. 26, x. 12, 14, 17, 18; xii. 10, 11; 2 Tim. ii. 10.

¶ Enoch and Elijah are exceptions to this law, and at "the coming of the Lord," the saints then living will not die (sleep). 1 Thes. iv. 15, 17; 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

unto the ground ;” and to accomplish this destiny, death often brings in its train disease and pain ; yet, freed from the power of sin and the curse—“ the works of the Devil,”—the employment of means for annulling pain, or in any other way modifying the curse, is not only legitimate, but strictly in accordance with the example of our Lord, who “ was manifested that He might destroy the works of the Devil.”* Even the primal curse † has been, in a measure, deprived of its terrors by that “ one Sacrifice for sins for ever,” which, having as it were extracted the venom of “ the last enemy,” enables the Christian exultingly to exclaim, “ Oh ! death where is thy sting !” How strikingly is this illustrated in “ the last scene of all,” when, unattended by any of those numerous ills, which result from disobedience to the moral law, ‡ man goes to his long home full of years. No pain or sorrow disturbs the moment when “ the silver cord is loosed.” The benign influence of Redeeming love is apparent in the unconscious sleep, or anæsthetic state, in which the beneficent Creator suffers man to undergo the separation of soul and body. And thus He again manifests that principle of mercy which is so evident in all that His providence has ordered. § This

* 1 John iii. 8.

† 2 Tim. i. 10.

‡ “ Already we see the dawning of a better era. Man is beginning to learn how much of mental and physical suffering is the consequence of the infringement of some natural or moral law, and from this germ will spring up results fruitful with blessing and happiness to humanity.”—*Mr. Crichton's Introductory Lecture at the London Hospital.*

§ Dr. Simpson deduces a similar inference from Gen. ii. 21,

sentiment is admirably expressed by Dr. Roget, who observes,* “ It is an important consideration, with reference to final causes, that, generally long before the commencement of this

‘ Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history ;’

the power of feeling has wholly ceased, and the physical struggle is carried on by the vital powers alone, in the absence of all consciousness of the sentient being, whose death may be said to precede, for some time, that of the body. In this, as well as in the gradual decline of the sensorial faculties, and the consequent diminution of both mental and physical sensibility in advanced age, we cannot fail to recognise the wise ordinances of a superintending and beneficent Providence, kindly smoothing the path along which we descend the vale of life ; spreading a narcotic mantle over the bed of death ; and giving to the last moments of departing sensation the tranquility of approaching sleep.”

If, therefore, the Lord has “ carried our sorrows,” why should we desire to retain them ? If He has “ borne our sins ” and “ curse,” wherefore should any one be anxious to bear them himself ? Yet these cases are identical. Whilst he believes “ there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” “ being free from the law of sin and death ;” † whilst he admits he is “ not under the law,” he

where it is declared, “ the Lord God caused a *deep sleep* to fall upon Adam,” when “ He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof.”

* Animal and Vegetable Physiology, vol. ii. p. 559. † Rom. viii. 2.

would still retain, in all its primeval force, the punishment due to "the transgression of the law." To such I would apply the observations of Matthew Henry.* "Let us not, by inordinate care and labour, make our punishments heavier than God has made it; but rather study to lighten our burthen, and wipe off our sweat by observing Providence in all, and expecting rest shortly."

I trust that I have advanced sufficient in the above remarks to prove to those who "are made free from sin,"† and "free from the law of sin and death;"‡ that being "redeemed from the curse of the law,"§ it is not only legitimate to avoid it when practicable, but that it is also in strict accordance with the will of Him who has declared that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving;"|| and has also enjoined His Church to "do good to all."¶ "Therefore, to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."**

It remains, however, for me to shew that the curse pronounced on the actors in the first transgression, was not given as a law in which man's obedience should be tested, but, that, like the primal curse of death, it was a positive decree, not only binding upon all on whom it was pronounced, but unalterable in its operations on all who were to be the subjects of it. "For the Lord of Hosts

* Exposition of the Old and New Testament. Commentary on Gen. iii. 17.

† Rom. vi. 18.

‡ Rom. viii. 2.

§ Gal. iii. 13.

|| 1 Tim. iv. 4.

¶ Gal. vi. 10.

** James iv. 17.

hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? The Lord of Hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I had thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.”* If “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,”† meant that all women should henceforth suffer pain in the act of parturition, there never *could* have been such a thing as a painless labour. But there have been such, both naturally as well as by the aid of Anæsthetic agents, therefore “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth” cannot mean that women shall suffer physical pain at the time of childbirth. It follows that there is no attempt to set aside Gen. iii. 16, when means are used to prevent parturient suffering. Whatever is the meaning of Gen. iii. 16, it is expressed not like a command which may, or may not, be complied with, but as a sentence which cannot be evaded. To suppose, then, that the use of Chloroform removes the “sorrow” entailed upon woman in bringing forth children, is to suppose that the efforts of man can frustrate the purpose of God. Therefore, without dwelling on the error of supposing the creature has power to abrogate the decree of the Creator,‡ it would be contrary to

* Isaiah xiv. 24, 27. † Gen. iii. 16.

‡ “To suppose for an instant, that we could interfere with the designs of an all-wise Providence, or abrogate a single tittle of the penalty which it is His pleasure to inflict on us, and that too by the march of intellect, would be to assume imperfection in the intelligence and foreknowledge of the Deity. Besides, if such an objection were at all valid, it must be so in its entire extent—no attempt of any kind should be made to lessen the sorrows of childbirth.”—*Chloroform in the Practice of Midwifery. By E. W. Murphy, M.D.*

what God has declared of "the immutability of his counsel,"* to suppose He would make any exception to his ordinance, had he refused man's substitute as the propitiation for sin, and purposed that the sentence pronounced against our first parents should be instant in operation, and borne in unmitigated rigour by all who should partake of their Adam nature. But, in proof that such was not the case, I would briefly observe that the curse on the Serpent is not yet fulfilled as regards the reptile itself, but is to be enforced in that day of which it is written, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth."† Again, man does not always eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and in sorrow. By the arts of husbandry, the ground is often freed from the curse of thorns and thistles. And few persons object to employ medical skill to postpone the hour of death, or to try to mitigate its sorrows. Many, I think, will be found thus to make void the sentence, whilst they insist that poor woman shall drink to the dregs her cup of unmixed sorrow.

But should these facts, universally admitted, be thought insufficient to prove the truth of my proposition, that the sentence passed on woman at the Fall is not now necessarily binding on all her race as regards the actual pain of parturition, I would further shew that instances have occurred in which women, unaided by artificial means, have borne children without suffering, and consequently they

* Heb. vi. 17.

† Isaiah lxxv. 17—25

may be fairly quoted as incontrovertible evidence that to imitate what God, in his Providence, has permitted, cannot be in opposition to his Sovereign decree.

In my own practice, I once witnessed an instance of painless labour, unaided by artificial means. The subject of it was a young lady, who gave birth to her first born, and during the dilatation of the os uteri, the passage of the child through the pelvis and soft parts, the distension of the perineum, and the final expulsion of the contents of the uterus, there was not only no complaint, but, in answer to my repeated enquiry whether she did not suffer, she as often assured me that she felt no pain of any kind. This patient was in good health at the time, nor could I detect any peculiarity of constitution or condition which would satisfactorily account for her immunity from the ordinary "sorrows" of childbirth.

My friend, Mr. H. Callaway, has also favoured me with the history of a similar case. It has, moreover, been stated that the females of the uncivilized tribes of Abyssinia, Asia, Africa, and the West Indies, &c.,* are generally free from much suffering in their labours, and many instances are on record in which they have borne children whilst engaged in laborious occupations, interrupted only by the parturient effort, which was not apparently productive of more inconvenience than the act of defæcation. It would, however, be easy

* See Dr. Conquest's New Edition of "Letters to a Mother." p. 46—48.

to multiply instances* in which God has permitted deviations from His decrees and laws, to be explained, I believe, only from their vicarious fulfilment in Christ, in whose obedience and sacrifice is met every demand which Divine justice has ever claimed from man. Thus Jesus, born under the law, touched a leper contrary to the law, without necessarily, as the law provided, becoming unclean. Again, when His disciples were accused of breaking the Sabbath, the Lord commended the example of David, who, contrary to the law, ate the shewbread "when he was an hungred."

Thus a principle was enunciated by Him who came "not to destroy the law," which offers at once a solution to the apparent discrepancy between the requirements of the law and its practice, and also supplies a satisfactory declaration of the exemption from its demands on the part of Christians. To such it may be said, in addition to the foregoing remarks, "If Christ be in you the body is dead because of sin,"† and "he that is dead is freed from sin,"‡ and consequently from its penalties too. "Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth."§ "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ,"|| "for ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God."¶ The result of the authorities to which

* See Deut. vii. 13 ; xxviii. 4, 11 ; Isaiah xxviii. 23, 25, &c.

† Rom. viii. 10.

‡ Rom. vi. 7.

§ Rom. vii. 1.

|| Rom. vii. 1, 4.

¶ Col. iii. 3.

I have adverted, leads to the following conclusions : That the word "sorrow," in Genesis iii. 16, does not mean physical pain ; but, supposing it in any way to bear that signification, then that it is as lawful and justifiable to assuage the sorrow of woman in childbirth as it is to relieve man from eating bread in the sweat of his brow and in sorrow, or by medical aid to alleviate other human sufferings, and to postpone the hour of death. And, lastly, if it is to be granted that Christ's sacrifice has redeemed the curse, then the whole ground on which the objection rests entirely fails the opponents of the system I have advocated.

Having thus, I trust, satisfactorily established that it is not only allowable but commendable, as agreeable to God's will, the example of Christ, and the plain teaching of the Bible, to mitigate the sorrows of the mothers of our race, in conclusion, I shall offer a few brief observations, with the view to shew that, as a therapeutic means, the induction of Anæsthesia is not only admissible in parturition, but that it offers to the Profession the means of diminishing both the pains and perils of childbirth, when it is employed with those cautions which experience has pointed out. In speaking of Dr. Simpson's *Observations on Chloroform in Midwifery Practice*, Dr. Conquest remarks,* " My own experience fully substantiates all his statements and confirms the accuracy of all his

* " Letters to a Mother," pp. 50—60, in which Dr. Conquest has ably combated " the religious objections" to the employment of Chloroform in Midwifery.

deductions," and "it has hitherto been found to be a safe and invaluable agent in many hundred cases in which it has been used in Midwifery,* and so far as I know without any recorded mischief having resulted from giving it, in a single instance." He judiciously condemns, however, its indiscriminate and incautious employment, when contraindicated by constitutional idiosyncrasy or disease. There can be no question that Chloroform and Ether, like Opium, Arsenic, Digitalis, Mercury, and other equally valuable remedies in medicine, are agents of vast power, and, as experiments in animals† plainly show, may produce death when administered in improper quantities. Nevertheless, it would be as unreasonable to oppose the judicious use of Chloroform from its abuse, as it would be to reject medicines which are universally admitted

* Dr. Henry Bennet remarks, in his Report "On the Use of Chloroform," &c., "In all these cases the soothing, quieting effects produced by the Chloroform were most marked; not only at the time it was administered, but for many hours afterwards. In no instance was I obliged to give any opiate subsequently to the confinement, the parties falling into a quiet slumber, and being all but free from after pains. In these instances, although a considerable quantity of Chloroform was inhaled, I did not remark any appreciable morbid symptoms. The impression produced on my mind, by the attentive study of these cases, is so favourable to Chloroform, as a most powerful, and, when carefully exhibited, safe means of quieting the system, and regulating the action of labour, that I shall not hesitate henceforth to use it even in natural parturition, if the labour is prolonged, and the sufferings of the patient are intense."—*Lancet*, Feb. 19, 1848, p. 206.

† See Mr. Thomas Wakley's Experiments with Chloroform, &c. —*Lancet*, vol. i., 1848, p. 19.

to be both safe and advantageous, because they may destroy life when administered by the ignorant, and given in excess. I fully concur with Mr. Curling,* that "powerful as are these remedies, all who are experienced in their use agree that they are on the whole safe and manageable; so that, whatever risk may be incurred by their rash, careless, and unnecessary use, scarcely any apprehension need be entertained from their skilful and cautious administration.† As in using other active remedies, so no one should give Ether or Chloroform vapour without having carefully studied its effect on the human body." And, again, "The administration of Anæsthetic agents

* An Address to the Hunterian Society on the Advantages of Ether and Chloroform in Operative Surgery.—*Highley, Fleet Street.*

† In reference to the success of Chloroform vapour in operative Surgery, "Professor Miller observed," at the Medico-Chirurgical Society of Edinburgh, for June, "that in the hospital and elsewhere, the Surgeons of Edinburgh had used Chloroform in all their operations, with the exception, perhaps, of any such within the cavity of the mouth, as were expected to be attended with much hemorrhage. And he could speak of its perfect success, and perfect certainty, and perfect safety, in the most unequivocal terms! There had been no misadventures, no failures; and now, no fears of those spasms and other preliminary symptoms, to which Dr. Simpson had alluded. In saying all this, he believed he was simply stating the opinion and experience of all his Surgical brethren here; and that no one amongst them would deem himself justified, morally or professionally, in now cutting and operating upon a patient in a waking and sensitive state. Every professional principle, nay, the common principles of humanity, forbid it, seeing that Surgery was now happily possessed of sure and safe means by which it could avoid the necessity of such cruelty. These were strong opinions, strongly expressed, but, in answer to Dr. Simpson's question, it was impossible for him to say less."—*The Monthly Journal of Medical Science*, July, 1848, p. 55.

should, if possible, be intrusted to a person, who, by practice, has acquired a nice perception of their action and a full knowledge of their powers and varying effects." In the communications which I made to *The Lancet*, in May and November, 1847, "On the Employment of Ether by Inhalation in Obstetric Cases," and "On the Use of Chloroform in Midwifery Practice," as well as in other additional papers on Anæsthetic agents, I stated that they would "suspend consciousness, special sensation, common sensation, pain (which is certainly something different from common sensation—*i. e.* tact), power of muscular combination, spinal reflex action, and respiration; and that if the medulla oblongata is completely etherized, and consequently the movements of respiration stopped, the action of the heart is speedily arrested also, and life becomes extinct. It is obvious, assuming the power of Ether, &c., to produce these effects, that unless we can regulate the dose, or other circumstances which modify their effects, so as to limit the action to the cerebrum, pons varolii, cerebellum, and medulla spinalis, they would be dangerous agents. Fortunately, there is no reason to doubt that, with proper apparatus and common observation of the symptoms induced, we may invariably prevent the medulla oblongata from being involved." In *The Lancet*, of Nov. 27, 1847, I published an account of the Inhaler* I employ, by means of

* The Inhaler is manufactured by Mr. Ferguson, Instrument Maker to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, 21, Giltspur St., Smithfield.

Dr. Snow, to whom the Profession is indebted for much valuable information on the subject of Anæsthetic agents, has also invented an ingenious apparatus for administering them.

which the exact quantity of Chloroform, &c., used may be readily ascertained at every stage of the inhalation.

I have now been in the constant practice of employing Anæsthetic agents in Midwifery for more than a year, in all cases in which there has existed no contra-indication from disease or constitutional idiosyncrasy, and when their use has not been objected to by my patients. I have kept up their influence consecutively in individuals from half-an-hour to four, eight, fifteen, and in one instance for twenty-eight hours (in which latter cases I occasionally interrupted the process to give nourishment, &c.) In none could there be fairly attributed to these agents any injurious result, although “ amongst the cases which I published were placenta prævia (four), severe floodings, turning, perforation, cases requiring both the long and short forceps, adherent placenta,—in short, some of the most formidable exigencies which the obsteric practitioner is called upon to meet.”* In fact, my own experience fully bears out the result which Dr. Simpson deduces from his own, “ The mothers, instead of crying and suffering under the strong agonies and throes of labour, have lain in a state of quiet, placid slumber, made more or less deep at the will of the medical attendant, and, if disturbed at all, disturbed only unconsciously from time to time by the recurring

* “ On the Use of Chloroform in Midwifery Practice.—*The Lancet*, November, 1847.

uterine contractions, producing some reflex or automatic movements on the part of the patient,—like those of a person moving under any irritation of the surface, or from the touch of another,—though still in a state of sleep; nor have the ultimate consequences and results been less happy. I never saw mothers recover more satisfactorily or rapidly,—or children that looked more viable. And the practice is not a great blessing to the patient merely; it is a great boon, also, to the practitioner. For, whilst it relieves the former from the dread and endurance of agony and pain, it both relieves the latter from the disagreeable necessity of witnessing such agony and pain in a fellow-creature, and imparts to him the proud power of being able to cancel and remove pangs and torture that would otherwise be inevitable. It transforms a work of physical anguish into one of painless muscular effort, and changes into a scene of sleep and comparative repose, that anxious hour of female existence, which has ever been proverbially cited as the hour of the greatest of mortal suffering.” Dr. Simpson observes again, “I never had the pleasure of watching over a series of more perfect or more rapid recoveries; nor have I once witnessed any disagreeable result to either mother or child. I have kept up the Anæsthetic state during periods varying from a few minutes to three, four, five, and six hours. I do not remember a single patient to have taken it who has not afterwards declared her sincere gratitude for its employment, and her

determination to have recourse again to similar means under similar circumstances. All who happened to have formerly entertained any dread respecting the inhalation, or its effects, have afterwards looked back, both amazed at and amused with their previous absurd fears and groundless terrors. Most, indeed, have subsequently set out, like zealous missionaries, to persuade other friends to avail themselves of the same measure of relief in their hour of trial and travail; and a number of my most esteemed professional brethren, in Edinburgh, have adopted it with success and results equal to my own. All of us, I most sincerely believe, are called upon to employ it by every principle of true humanity as well as by every principle of true religion."

Since the completion of my pamphlet, I have received the following interesting communication from Dr. Simpson, which I publish, with his permission, as an Appendix.

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APPENDIX.

Edinburgh, 8th July, 1848.

MY DEAR SIR,

According to promise, I sit down to write you a few hurried notes on the subject of the avowed religious objections to the adoption of Anæsthesia in Human Parturition.

I regret to hear from you that, in London, the progress of Anæsthetic Midwifery is impeded by any groundless allegations as to its unscriptural character; and I can sincerely sympathise with you in your exertions to annihilate these scruples. Here, in Edinburgh, I never now meet with any objections on this point, for the religious, like the other forms of opposition to Chloroform, have ceased among us.

But in Edinburgh matters were very different at first. I found many patients with strong religious scruples on the propriety of the practice. Some consulted their clergyman. One day, on meeting the Rev. Dr. H——, he stopped me to say that he was just returning from absolving a patient's conscience on the subject, for she had taken Chloroform during labour (and so avoided suffering), but she had felt unhappy ever since, under the idea that she had done something very wrong and very sinful. A few among the clergy themselves, for a time, joined in the cry against the new practice. I have just looked up a letter which a clergyman wrote to a medical friend, in which he declares that Chloroform is (I quote his own words) "a decoy of Satan, apparently offering itself to bless woman; but, in the end (he continues), it will harden society, and rob God of the deep earnest cries which arise in time of trouble for help." And you are aware how earnestly some medical men attempted to preach, and, as you state, still preach against

it on religious grounds. The medical friend, who sent me the note from which I have quoted, himself read a wild and fanatical paper before the Medical Society of — on the subject; and, I am told, it met with no small favour from the Society. I have enclosed a copy of this paper for your perusal. Some Lecturers on Midwifery, in London and Dublin, publicly adopted the same line of opposition and argument.

With the view of meeting, if possible, these strange and extraordinary objections, I wrote, in December last, a pamphlet on the subject of the so-called Religious Reasons against the Employment of Anæsthetic Agents in Midwifery and Surgery. After its publication, I received a variety of written and verbal communications from some of the best Theologians and most esteemed Clergymen here and elsewhere, and of all churches, Presbyterian, Independent, Episcopalian, &c., approving of the views which I had taken. I have letters of the same kind from some men of high rank in your Church; and a note in approval was brought to me, emanating from one of your most exalted and most esteemed Episcopal Dignitaries.

The pamphlet itself, however, was no doubt imperfect. It was principally written during a day's confinement to my room, when convalescing from the prevailing influenza. I do not know what views you intend to take in your forthcoming publication, but there are some points on which, if I had had time, I would perhaps have more insisted on in mine; and, if you will bear with me, I will briefly state them.

1. In the whole inquiry nothing appeared to me more satisfactory or striking than the philosophic precision of the language of the Bible upon the point; and I did not sufficiently insist upon this, as an evidence of the fact that the primal curse on woman did *not* refer to the pure physical sufferings and agonies of parturition. Each so-called labour-pain consists, as you well know, of two distinct and separate elements; viz. *first*, of contraction of the uterus and other assistant muscles; and, *secondly*, of sensations of pain, more or less agonizing, accompanying these contractions, and directly resulting from them. Now, I have been often struck, as you must have been, in Chloroform labours, with the fact that, in the Anæsthetic state, not only does the uterus contract powerfully, but that the abdominal muscles often do so also, and even the face of the patient will sometimes betoken strong expulsive muscular action, while all accompanying suffering is quite annulled. We abrogate the second element of

the so-called labour-pain, without destroying the first. We leave intact the expulsive muscular efforts, but remove the sense and feeling of pain accompanying these efforts. It is only of late that these two elements or constituents of labour pains have been recognised and studied by the Profession as *two* separate objects. But it is surely, as I have above stated, worthy of remark and wonder, that the language of the Bible is, on this as on other points, strictly and scientifically correct, and long ago made, with perfect precision, the very distinction which we are now-a-days only recognising. For the Hebrew noun, *'etzebh*, distinctly signifies the muscular contraction or effort, and the nouns, *hhil* and *hhebbhel*, as distinctly signify the sensations of pain accompanying these efforts; and as you are aware (as I have elsewhere fully shewn), it is not the latter but the former of these nouns that is used in the language of the primary curse:—"In sorrow (*'etzebh*) shalt thou bring forth." Now, I repeat, the efforts or muscular contractions (the *'etzebh* of the curse) are, as I have just stated, left in their full and complete integrity under the state of Anæsthesia; while the pangs or sufferings (or *hhil*), against which the language of the curse does *not* bear, are alone annulled and abrogated.

2. Some of your London medical divines, however, argue, I hear, that *'etzebh* must mean pain,—and that, as meaning such, the curse *must* be taken *literally*; and hence that woman *must* be allowed to go on suffering. In the pamphlet referred to, I have attempted to answer this by shewing that then we, of the sex of Adam, must adhere literally also to the words of the curse, as far as they apply to us, and hence must earn our bread by the "sweat of our face," and by that only. Nay, the very physicians who thus insist on reading and acting upon this and other texts literally—and literally only—forget, I fear, that (according to their own doctrines) in practising physic, they are really and truly practising a profession of sin and iniquity, in so far as man in the primæval curse was doomed to die, and yet they daily and hourly persist in attempting to make him live. An esteemed clerical friend, in writing to me on the matter, stated that he was afraid *his* cloth was perhaps even more sinful than ours—if this outrageous view were true;—for the introduction of sin was the consequence of the Fall, and the Church, in labouring to banish and abrogate that effect—in trying to turn mankind from sin—were actually trying to cancel the greatest and most undoubted effects of the first curse upon the human race.

3. But the Accoucheurs and Surgeons among you who object to the use of Chloroform, on the ground that it goes, in their opinion, against the object and end of the primæval curse upon woman, strangely forget that the whole science and whole art and practice of Midwifery is, in its essence and object, one continuous effort to mitigate and remove the effects of that curse. By warm baths, aperients, regulated diet, &c., they attempt to destroy the intensity of the approaching pains and penalties of childbirth ;—during labour, they use counter-pressure on the back, to relieve the intense pains there ; they use unguents, perineal support, venesection, &c., &c., to ease the pains and insure the safety of the mother. By these means they succeeded partially, in times past, in mitigating the sufferings and effects of parturition, and thought they committed no sin. But a means is discovered by which the sufferings of the mother may be relieved far more effectually ; and then they immediately denounce this higher amount of relief as a high sin. Gaining your end, according to their religious views, imperfectly, was no sin—gaining your end more fully and perfectly is, they argue, an undiluted and unmitigated piece of iniquity. To relieve our patients, however, by our interference, a little and a little only, is assuredly, in a moral and religious point of view, just as sinful as if we succeeded in affording them complete relief from suffering. The *principle* of interference is not altered by the *degree* of relief afforded being more or less, greater or smaller. “ For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” If, on religious grounds, your obstetric friends object to relieving entirely a woman of her worst pains (now that they have the means of doing so), they must, on the very same grounds, refuse to relieve her imperfectly and partially of these or any other pains and sorrows connected with parturition ; they must, or at least ought to abstain, in fact, from all obstetric practices whatsoever ; they should, in short, give up their present profession, as a profession of sin—and “ in the sweat of their face ” eat bread. I can see no other possible alternative for them, provided (that is to say) they choose to reduce actually their theory into practice. If, on the other hand, they think it not sinful to relieve their female patients, to a small amount, from the alleged sufferings entailed upon them by the first curse, then surely it is not sinful in them to relieve their patients from their sufferings to a far greater amount, now that they have the

power of doing so—nay, is it not sinful in them obstinately to withhold that relief? For, “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is *Sin*.”

These remarks apply to medical practitioners. And if any of your female patients hold the same groundless doctrine—(a doctrine far more in accordance with the blindness and fatalism of Mahommedanism, than with the spirit and genius of Christianity)—if they hold that it is improper, for Scriptural reasons, to abrogate the pains and sufferings of childbirth, then such mothers cannot conscientiously content themselves with rejecting merely the use of Chloroform in annulling the pangs of parturition; they must reject all kind of medical assistance in their hour of travail; they must give up, indeed, all assistance whatever. If the supposed pains and perils of the primæval curse are to be submitted to, on the ground that they are Divinely appointed, and unavoidable ordeals,—then they must be submitted to in all their unmitigated power and plenitude; no doctor must sinfully dare to stay the ebbing stream of life, if a fatal flooding suddenly supervene during labour; no nurse must venture, as heretofore, to relieve and mitigate the agonies of the shrieking mother by counter-pressure to her back, &c.; “for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he (she) is guilty of all.”

4. Those who object to the adoption of Anæsthesia in Midwifery, on religious grounds, entirely forget, that, if God had really willed the pains of labour to be irremovable, no possible device of man could ever have removed them. I have elsewhere attempted to state this argument, but it is so much better and more clearly given in a letter in my possession, from the pen of a clergyman, Dr. ———, who is acknowledged to be one of the ripest Biblical scholars, and most profound theological critics and writers of the present day, that I will cite his letter at length to you. I received it a few days after the publication of the pamphlet I have referred to.

“I have just finished the perusal of your pamphlet, entitled, *Answer to the Religious Objections advanced against the Employment of Anæsthetic Agents in Midwifery and Surgery*; and I cannot refrain from expressing to you, though almost a stranger to you, the gratification which I have derived from it. I think your argument irrefragable, both as respects the question of philology and as respects the moral question; and, as a theologian, I feel very grateful to you for so ably wiping away the reproach

from the Bible, of discouraging any attempt to mitigate the sufferings of mankind. I am very sure the Word of God, the revelation of His Love and Grace to man, has no such aspect ;— and that it is only injudicious and ignorant zeal that leads any of its professed disciples to speak as if it had.

“ The objection which you so ably expose is not, as you observe, novel—though now, for the first time, adduced in the special application of it to the relieving of the pains of childbirth. I remember when many pious people had great scruples about endeavouring to emancipate the negroes, on the ground that they were the descendants of Ham, on whom the curse of perpetual slavery had been pronounced. I should not be surprised, in the course of the Debates upon the Emancipation of the Jews, to find some Members pleading, as some have pleaded in former times, that to give a Jew a legitimation in any Commonwealth is a plain contravention of the will and Word of God concerning that people.

“ It has strongly appeared to me, for many years, that there are two principles laid down in Scripture, a due regard to which would preserve good people from those hasty applications of Scripture predictions—whether minatory or otherwise. The one is the Apostle Peter’s course for the understanding of predictions, that “ no prophecy is self-interpreting (*ἰδίας ἐπιλυσεως*),” from which it follows that in the case of a prediction threatening we are to get at its meaning not from the words themselves in which it is couched as from those in connection with the events or circumstances by which the Almighty and Allwise fulfils his own declarations. The other is the obvious truth that God’s blessing and God’s curse no one can reverse ; so that if any class enjoying God’s blessing meet with pains, or any class exposed to his curse enjoy relief or advantage, the first inference is that the pain was not excluded by the blessing, nor the benefit by the curse. Applying these principles to the case you have so ably discussed, I came speedily to the conclusion that as you could not by Chloroform, or any thing else, set aside God’s curse, and as the primary threatening is like all predictions to be interpreted by events in God’s providence, the mere fact that by the adhibition of that agent you could relieve women from the agonies of childbirth, was to me proof sufficient that these mere agonies were not designed to form any essential part of that curse. The justice of this conclusion *a priori* your pamphlet amply substantiates by inductive reasoning.”

5. The employment of Anæsthesia in obstetric and medical practice is in strict consonance with the whole glorious spirit and beneficent arrangements of the Christian dispensation—for, all our greatest divines are agreed, I believe, on one point, viz., that this dispensation, in the application of its principles and precepts, is intended and calculated not only to regenerate and advance our moral condition, but more and more to ameliorate the physical sufferings and state of mankind. Witness, for example, the mighty power and resistless influence by which it has gradually acted, and is acting (through the developement of its rules and doctrines) in the extirmination from this earth of the curse of human slavery.

6. Some thoughtlessly argue that the employment of Anæsthetic means and the abrogation of pain in labour must be irreligious, because it is "unnatural." They seem to think that it looks as if we fancied that nature, or rather that the God of Nature had made the function of parturition in some respects imperfect or improper in its mechanism. These same individuals strangely forget that they themselves do not think it "unnatural" to assist and supplement other physiological functions of the body. They wear clothes to assist the protecting influence of the skin, and do not think that "unnatural." They use cookery and condiments to aid the functions of mastication and digestion. Is this because they think that nature has left the functions of mastication and digestion imperfect in their formation or mechanism? They constantly ride in coaches, &c. Is the function of progression imperfect in man? "How unnatural," exclaimed an Irish lady to me lately, "how unnatural it is for you doctors in Edinburgh to take away the pains of your patients when in labour." "How unnatural (said I) is it for you to have swam over from Ireland to Scotland against wind and tide in a steam boat." Many habits and practices,—in fact, almost all the habits and practices of civilized life are really and fundamentally as "unnatural" as assisting the function of parturition by inducing Anæsthesia during it. But we do not look upon them as such, simply because they are already passed into acknowledged and universal adoption. Those who lived at the time when each separate infringement and improvement took place, could perhaps tell a story of doubt and opposition not unlike that which we can now do with regard to Anæsthetic Midwifery. And those who have taken up this ground of opposition, in the present as in other

cases, always seem, for the time being, to forget that it is God who has endowed man with mental powers calculated gradually to enable him to extend his knowledge and improve his earthly condition, and that this extension and this improvement are so far evidently allowed and willed by God himself.

7. An additional argument is suggested in a letter lying before me, from a gentleman of high name in the literary world, to his son, who was a pupil of mine during the last winter. To understand its applicability, however, let me premise one or two words.

Some months ago, I published an extensive and carefully collected series of statistical returns from various British Hospitals, shewing the operations of Surgery were much less fatal in their results, when patients were operated on under the condition of Anæsthesia, and consequently without any attendant suffering, than when, formerly, they were submitted to all the horrors and agonies of the Surgeon's knife in their usual waking and sensitive state. Thus, I found that, while, before the introduction of Anæsthesia, in every 100 cases of amputation of the thigh performed in our Hospitals, from 40 to 45 of the patients died; the same amputation when performed upon Anæsthetized patients, did not prove fatal to more than 25 in the 100 cases; or in other words, out of every 100 such operations, the previous induction of Anæsthesia was the means of preserving 15 or 20 human lives. So much are all our Surgeons here impressed with the fact that the state of Anæsthesia saves their patients alike from pain, and from the subsequent hazards and dangers of pain, that I believe not one among them would deem himself justified in submitting a fellow-being to the tortures of the operating table, without the previous employment of Chloroform. And, I believe, you are aware that we also use it here, in Edinburgh, constantly in Midwifery—its omission being the exception, and a rare exception, to the general rule of its employment. By thus shielding our patients against the more severe portion of the pains of parturition, we not only save them from much immediate suffering, but we save their constitutions also from the effects and consequences of that suffering; and, as a general rule, they assuredly make both more rapid and more perfect recoveries. I most sincerely believe, that, in thus cancelling the pains of labour, we also, to a great extent, cancel the perils of it; for all our highest authorities in Pathology, admit that pain, when either great in excess, or great in duration, is in itself, and by itself, deleterious and destructive:

and the mortality accompanying parturition is regulated principally by the law of the length and degree of the patient's struggles and sufferings. In the Dublin Lying-in Hospital, when under Dr. Collin's able care, out of all the women, 7050 in number, who were delivered within *two* hours from the commencement of labour, 22 died; or *one in every* 320. In 452 of his cases, the labour was prolonged above *twenty* hours, and out of these 452 mothers, 42 died; or *one in every* 11; a difference enormous in amount, and one strongly calculated to force us all to think seriously and dispassionately of the effects of severe suffering upon the maternal constitution.

Now the writer of the letter to which I have alluded, is the author of one of the most eloquent Essays in the English language, on the Holy Character and Genuineness of the Bible. He is not a physician, though deeply read in medical, as in all other forms of knowledge; and, aware of the dangerous and destructive properties of severe pain, when unmitigated and unrestrained, he reasons thus: "If pain when carried—as in parturition—to the stage which we call agony, or intense struggle amongst the vital functions, brings with it some danger to life, as I presume no one can deny *must* be the case, then it will follow, that, knowingly to reject a means of mitigating, or wholly cancelling the attendant suffering and its dangers, (now that such a means has been discovered) travels, in my opinion, on the road towards suicide. If I am right in believing that danger to life lies in this direction, then, clearly, the act of rejecting the remedy against it, being wilful, lies in a suicidal direction. It is even worse than an ordinary movement in that direction, because it affects to make God an accomplice through the Scriptures in this suicidal movement, nay, the primal instigator to it, by means of a supposed curse interdicting the use of any means whatever, though revealed by Himself, for annulling that curse." The same argument which is here brought against the wilful rejection of Anæsthetic measures by the patient, necessarily applies with the same spirit, but with some changes in the terms, against the wilful rejection of the same means by the medical attendant.

But I must be done; for I fear I have exhausted your patience as well as my own time. Let me merely add that I am sure you deeply regret and grieve with me that the interests of genuine religion should ever and anon be endangered and damaged by weak but well-meaning men believing and urging

that this or that new improvement in medical knowledge, or in general science, is against the words or spirit of Scripture. We may always rest fully and perfectly assured that whatever is true in point of fact, or humane and merciful in point of practice, will find no condemnation in the Word of God.

With many apologies for the unexpected length to which these remarks have extended,

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Very faithfully yours,

J. Y. SIMPSON.

*To Dr. Protheroe Smith,
25, Park Street, Grosvenor Square.*