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A Representation of the Nature of True Religion.....

First American ... Edition.

Utica, Seward & Williams, 1807. 24 pp.

MWA copy.

A
REPRESENTATION
OF THE NATURE OF
TRUE RELIGION.

ADDRESSED TO A LADY.

FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE YEAR 1697.

TO WHICH IS ADDED A

SHORT EXPLANATION

OF THE END AND DESIGN OF THE

Lord's Supper.

TAKEN FROM A TREATISE ON THAT SUBJECT,
PRINTED AT LONDON, FOR W. JOHNSTON, 1760.

This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

1 John v. 3.

*He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it
is that loveth me.*

John xiv. 21.

FIRST AMERICAN, FROM THE LONDON EDITION OF 1793.

UTICA,

PRINTED BY SEWARD AND WILLIAMS.

1807.

TO THE READER.

WHEN the following small Tract first appeared, it was entitled, "A LADY'S RELIGION." It was originally drawn up by a Divine of the Church of England, for the use, it has been supposed, of the honorable Lady Howard, and has not only been reprinted more than once at home, but translated into several modern languages. The second edition of it came out in the year 1704, when another letter upon the same subject was added to it; and in the year 1748, a third edition of it was published by the Rev. Ferdinando Warner, who, besides a preface, in which some account is given of the design and merits of the performance, prefixed to it a large extract from the preface to the French translation, and annexed to it a letter of his own, to a lady under a very painful domestic affliction.

The first of the abovementioned letters, appearing to be the whole of what the author intended when he began to write upon this important subject, and having no necessary connection with any thing which has been since joined with it, is here published by itself, with a view to its being rendered more extensively useful.— The edition, from which it is copied, is that of 1748, which has been carefully adhered to, excepting in the title, which perhaps was not the most happily chosen, and an expression or two relating to devotion, of which some might have made an use which the author certainly never designed.

It is only needful to say, further, that the republication of this small Tract, and what is added to it, proceeds from no other principle than a desire to assist those, into whose hands it may come, to form just apprehensions of that Religion which is pure and undefiled before God; to set before them, in an easy view, the wisdom of the doctrine of our Savior, and to remove those groundless apprehensions concerning the nature of any of his institutions, by which persons are, either totally kept from them, or led to attend on them, with a terror, for which no upright mind can ever have the least occasion, and which, if they were able to view the services of the Gospel in a juster light, would be exchanged for satisfaction and joy.

A REPRESENTATION, &c.

MADAM,

SINCE God has been pleased to incline your heart to an early and serious enquiry after religion, so that you are sincerely desirous to know the will of God, in order to do it, I heartily wish you had laid your commands upon one more able to assist you than I am; who, being bred up in an age of speculation and controversy, have addicted myself to the study of divinity, more perhaps than to the practice of religion; and have been (I pray God forgive me) more desirous to furnish my head with notions, than my heart with good inclinations. I thought myself, by my profession, chiefly engaged in a study, how to defend the church, by law established; against all dissenters, rather than to promote the common cause of serious piety; and whilst by the strange unaccountable genius of this age, I have been led aside to mix the study of politics with that of religion, I have been busily assisting the office of a minister of state, rather than doing the good work of a minister of JESUS CHRIST.

Now altho it has pleased God to make me in some measure sensible of those bye paths, in which I have sometimes walked; to the hinderance of that duty unto which I ought entirely to have devoted myself; yet I am apt to fear lest those prejudices and undue prepossessions of mind may still remain within me, by which I shall be prevented from giving your ladyship such an idea of religion, as is short, plain, and pure, free from superstitious appendages, and separate from every bye interest.

But, without doubt, such as this is the true spirit of the christian religion; every line whereof directly tends to make us easy within ourselves, kind and comfortable to one another here, and happy with God hereafter.

That our holy religion is a wise institution, will be evident to any one who considers that God is its author, whose wisdom appears in all his works: Thus the frame of visible nature being agreeably set together, and having each part of it

sued to useful and proper ends, demonstrates it to be the work of divine wisdom : In like manner the whole plan of pure religion, having also its parts suitable to each other, and every one of them agreeably set to the same good and great design of the whole, does thereby prove itself to be the contrivance of an all wise God.

And hereby the wisdom of the christian religion will particularly appear, because every part of it tends to promote the universal good of mankind ; for which reason, the divine founder thereof was named *Jesus*, that is, *Savior* ; because his only design was to save us from the prevailing power of sin, and from those miseries which that evil power would involve us in.

Thus temperance promotes our health ; justice in our dealings, prevents us from sustaining the revenges of the injured, and gains us trust among men, with all the benefits which arise from thence. Charity, by promoting the common good of others, draws back their love and affection to ourselves ; while patience preserves quiet within our own breasts, and self denial, by restraining our extravagant appetites, establishes the just power of reason over us, thereby fitting us for all conditions of life. And thus the law of Christ answers to the character of wisdom, by its agreeableness to the best design of man ; and upon this account Solomon characterized the idea of religion, under the name of wisdom.

Besides these moral duties, there are several threats of God's judgements, and promises of his favor, contained in Christ's institution ; the former were wisely designed to restrain us from immoralities, which are our greatest follies ; and the latter to engage us in the practice of virtue, which is our greatest wisdom ; The threatnings prepare the way for the promises, and qualify us to receive them ; inasmuch as they shake off our affections from ill objects, in order for the promises to fix them upon good ones. We must needs cease to do evil, before we can learn to do well.

Now altho a due consideration of the divine nature, will carry us on to the belief of a future state, in which he, who is in perfection the best of all beings, will distinguish the good from the bad by ample rewards and just punishments ; yet because every one's capacity may not be sufficient to make this wise reflection, therefore Jesus Christ was pleased (as the gospel phrases it) to bring life and immortality to light ; that is, to give the world full assurance of a future state, in which the just God will distinguish men hereafter, in such a manner as they shall

