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SERMONS AND TRACTS OF JOHN GILL
SERMONS ON VARIOUS TOPICS

**An Essay On The Origin Of Funeral
Sermons, Orations, And Odes**

by John Gill

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*Thou hast given a standard to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth*

— Psalm 60:4

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SERMON 93

AN ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF FUNERAL SERMONS, ORATIONS, AND ODES

OCCASIONED BY TWO FUNERAL DISCOURSES,

*Lately Published On The Death Of Dame Mary Page
Relict Of Sir Gregory Page, Bart.*

*The One By Mr. Harrison, With An Oration At Her Interment;
And An Ode Sacred To Her Memory.*

The Other By Mr. Richardson.

With some Observations on each of them.

*Si quid novisti rectius istis,
Candidus imperti : si non, his utere mecum.
Horat. Epist. Lib. 1. Ep. 6.*

Dear Sir,

I have for some time been of opinion, that the custom of preaching Funeral Sermons, and making Orations at the interment of the dead, took its rise from some such practice first in use among the Heathens. Two discourses of this kind having been lately published on the death of the Lady *Page*, both attended with some odd circumstances, which I am sensible you are no stranger to, they have occasioned some fresh thoughts on this subject, the result of which I now send you, together with some few observations on the said discourses, all which I humbly submit to your impartial judgment.

The Egyptians, the posterity of Ham, were the first cultivators of idolatrous worship, and superstition after the Flood; they were the first that gave ^{f1} names to Deities, built temples, erected altars, and set up images for divine adoration. They were the first ^{f2} who asserted the immortality of the soul, its transmigration into all kinds of animals in earth air, and sea, and its return to the human body; which they supposed to be within the term of

three thousand years: Hence proceeded their very great care in embalming of their dead bodies, and their being at such vast expenses, as they were, in building proper repositories for them; for they were more solicitous about their graves than their houses: This gave birth to those wonders of the world, the *Pyramids*, which were built for the burial of their kings, with such vast charges, and almost incredible magnificence, the same whereof has since spread it's spell all the world over. It cannot therefore be foreign to my present design, to inquire after what manner these people performed their funeral obsequies, which, I find, was as follows.

“When the corps was to be buried, the nearest kin gave notice of the day for the funeral to the judges, the relations, and the friends of the deceased; and particularly gave out, that he, naming the name of the deceased, would then pass the lake. The day being come, more than forty of the judges seated themselves in the form of a semicircle by the fide of the lake, where the boat, which is managed by a pilot, whom the *Egyptians* in their language call *Charon*, being first prepared for use, is drawn up in readiness. The vessel being let into the lake, before the deceased's coffin is put into it, every one has a liberty to bring in an accusation against him. If any one can prove he has lived a bad life, the judges pronounce the sentence, and the corps is forbid the usual sepulture; but if it appears, that the accuser is guilty of calumny, he's liable to the severest punishment. When either there is no accuser, or a false one, the relations lay aside their mourning, and praise the deceased. They make no mention of his descent, as the *Grecians* do, because they reckon that all in *Egypt* are equally noble; bur then they rehearse his education and learning in childhood, and his piety, justice, continency, and other virtues in his adult age; beseeching the Gods below to receive him into the society of the pious, while the multitude, in the mean they applaud and proclaim the praises of the deceased, as one that is to spend an eternity with the godly in *Hades*.^{f3}

In this account it is easy to observe the first rudiments of Funeral Orations, and what was the subject of 'em, which were afterwards formed into a more polite and regular manner by other nations, who received this custom from the *Egyptians*. Nor can I omit remarking, that those funeral solemnities were attended, not only with Orations in praise of the deceased, but with prayers for him; which prayers, it seems, were made by

one who personated the deceased: an entire form of one of them is preserved by *Porphyry*,^{f4} and perhaps it may, in some measure, gratify your curiosity to recite it from him.

“When, says he, they, i.e. the *Egyptians*, embalm their deceased nobles, they privately take out the entrails, and lay them up in an ark or chest: moreover, among other things which they do in favor of the deceased, lifting up the ark or chest to the sun, they invoke him; one of the *Li-bitinarii*^{f5} making a prayer for the deceased, which *Eupbantus* has translated out of the *Egyptian* language, and is as follows: O Lord, the Sun, and all the Gods who give life to men, receive me, and admit me into the society of the immortal ones, for as long as I lived in this world, I religiously worshipped the gods whom my parents shewed me, and have always honored those who begat my body: nor have I killed any man, nor have I defrauded any of what has been committed to my trust, nor have I done any thing which is inexpiable. Indeed, whilst I was alive, if I have sinned either by eating or drinking any thing which was not lawful; not through my self have I sinned, but through there, showing the ark and chest were the entrails were. And having thus spoke, he calls it into the river, but the rest of the body he embalms as pure.”

I can't but conclude, that such like practices as there among the Heathens, have given rise to praying for departed saints among the *Papists*.

But to go on: The Grecians received the seeds of superstition and idolatrous worship from the Egyptians, through the coming of *Cecrops*, *Cadmus*, *Danaus*, and *Erechtheus*, into *Greece*.^{f6} The first of these was the first king of *Athens*, from whose coming thither, the *Attic Aera* begins; where he first^{f7} introduced the worship of *Jupiter* and *Minerva*, setting up an altar for the one, and the image of the other; and among the rest of the *Egyptian* customs and laws which he brought alone with him into *Greece*, the burial of the dead bodies in the earth was one. Of this *Cicero* particularly informs us in the following words:

“They report, says he, that from the times of *Cecrops*, it remained a custom at *Athens* to that day, to bury the bodies of their dead in the earth”.^{f8}

which some say were laid with the head towards the *east*^{f9} and others towards the west,^{f10} But what *Cicero* says, as to their manner of interment, is this:

“That the relations, or neighbors of the deceased, laid the body in the ground, and having cast the earth over the corpse, lowed the ground with all manner of grain or fruit; that so the earth might be as the bosom or lap of a mother to the deceased; and yet, being expiated by there fruits, might be restored, or rendered useful, to the living. After the interment, as he further tells us, followed the *epulae* or feasts, at which the company used to appear crowned; when they spoke in praise of the dead, so far as they could go with truth, it being esteemed a notorious wickedness to lie upon such an occasion.”^{f11}

A rule that very well deserves to be observed in making panegyricks or encomiums on the dead in Funeral Sermons and Orations; in many of which, I fear, the bounds of truth are too often exceeded. And not only at those feasts, but^{f12} even before the company departed from the sepulcher, they were sometimes entertained with a panegyrick upon the dead person.

The *Grecian* soldiers, who died in war, had not only their tombs adorned with inscriptions shewing their names, parentage, and exploits, but were also honored with an oration in their praise. Particularly the custom among the *Athenians* in the interment of their soldiers was as follows,^{f13} *viz.*

“They used to place the bodies of their dead in tents three days before the funeral, that all persons might have opportunity to find out their relations, and pay their last respects to them: Upon the fourth day, a coffin of cypress was sent from every tribe, to convey the bones of their own relations; after which went a covered herse, in memory of those whose bodies could not be found. All these, accompanied with the whole body of the people, were carried to the public burying place, called *Ceramicus*, and there interred. One oration was spoken in commendation of them all, and their monuments adorned with pillars, inscriptions, and all other ornaments usual about the tombs of the most honorable persons. The Oration was pronounced by the fathers of the deceased persons, who had behaved themselves most valiantly. Thus after the famous battle at *Marathon*, the fathers of *Callimachus*, and *Cynaegyus*, were appointed to make the Funeral Oration.^{f14} And

upon the return of the day, upon which the solemnity was first held, the same Oration was constantly repeated every year.”^{f15}

From the Egyptians and Grecians, especially from the latter, the Romans received many of their laws and customs, as well as much of their polytheism and idolatrous worship. It is well known that the custom of making funeral orations in praise of the dead obtained among them. The manner in which their funeral services were performed is as follows:^{f16}

“Upon the eighth day, i.e. after the persons decease, a certain cryer, in manner of a bell-man, went about the town to call the people to the solemnization of the funeral, in this form of words,^{f17} *Exequias L. Titio L. Filio quibus est commodum ire. Fam tempus est, ollus ex oedibus essertur.* After the people had assembled themselves together, the bed being covered with purple, or other rich coverings, the last conclamation being ended, a trumpeter went before all the company, certain poor women, called *Praesicae*, following after, and singing songs in the praise of the party deceased. Those that carried this bed, were the next of the kin, so that it fell often among the senators themselves to bear the corpse; and because the poorer sort were not able to undergo the charges of such solemnities, thereupon were they buried commonly in the dusk of the evening and hence a *vespertino tempore*, those that carried the corpse, were termed *vespae* or *vespillones*. In the burial of a senator, or chief officer, certain waxen images of all his predecessors were carried before him upon long poles or spears, together with all the ensigns of honor which he deferred in his life time. Moreover, if any servants had been manumized by him, they accompanied the mourners, lamenting, for their master’s death. After the carps followed the dead man’s children, the next of the kin, and other of his friends, *atrati*, that is s, in mourning apparel. The corpse being thus brought into their great Oratory, called the *Rostra*, the next of the kin^{f18} *laudabat defunctum pro rostris, id est*, made a funeral oration in the commendations principally of the party deceased, but touching the worthy acts also of those his predecessors, whose images were there present.”

The account given by a later^{f19} writer, is in these words:

“In all the funerals of note, says he, especially in the public or *indictive*, the corpse was first brought, with a vast train of

followers, into the *Forum*; here one of the nearest relations ascended the *Rostra*, and obliged the audience with an oration in praise of the deceased. If none of the kindred undertook the office, it was discharged by some of the most eminent persons in the city for learning and eloquence, as *Appian* reports of the funeral of *Sylla*.^{f20} And *Pliny*^{f21} the younger reckons it as the last addition to the happiness of a very great man, that he had the honor to be praised at his funeral by the most eloquent *Tacitus*, then Consul. Which is agreeable to *Quintilian*'s^{f22} account of this matter, *Nam & sunebres, etc. For the funeral orations, says he, depend very often on some public office, and by order of senate, are many times given in charge to the magistrates, to be performed by themselves in person.* The invention of this custom is generally attributed to *Valerius Poplicola*, soon after the expulsion of the regal family. *Plutarch* tells us, that honoring *his colleague's obsequies with a funeral oration, it so pleased the Romans, that it became customary for the best men, to celebrate the funerals of great persons with speeches in their commendations.*"

Thus *Julius Caesar*,^{f23} according to custom, made an oration in the *Rostra*, in praise of his wife *Cornelia*, and his aunt *Julia*, when dead; wherein he shewed, that his aunt's descent, by her mother's side, was from Kings, and by her Father's, from the Gods. *Plutarch* says,^{f24} that

"He approved of the law of the *Romans*, which ordered suitable praises to be given to women as well as to men, after death."

Though by what he lays in another place^{f25} it seems that the old *Roman* law was, that funeral orations should be made only for the elder women; and therefore he lays, that *Caesar* was the first that made one upon his own wife, it not being then usual to take notice of younger women in that way: but by that action, he gained much favor from the populace, who afterwards looked upon him, and loved him as a very mild and good man. The reason why such a law was made in favor of the women, *Livy*^{f26} tells us, was this, That when there was such a scarcity of money in the public treasury, that the sum agreed upon to give the *Gauls*, to break up the siege of the city and *Capitol*, could not be raised, the women collected among themselves, and made it up; who hereupon, had not only thanks given them, but this additional honor, that after death, they should be solemnly

praised as well as the men: which looks as if before this time, only the men had those funeral orations made for them.

But to proceed: This custom of the Romans very early obtained among the Christians. Some of their funeral sermons or orations now extant, as that of *Eusebius* on *Constantine*, and those of *Nazianzen* on *Basil* and *Caesarius*; and of *Ambrose* on *Valentinian*, *Theodosius*, and others. *Gregory*, the Brother of *Basil*,^{f27} made, ἐπικήδειον λόγον, a funeral oration for *Melitus* Bishop of *Antioch*: in which orations, they not only praised the dead, but addressed themselves to ‘em, which seems to have introduced the custom of praying to departed saints. Now there orations were usually made^{f28} before the bodies of the deceased were committed to the ground, which custom has been, more or less, continued ever since, to this day.

And now, Sir, having thus far proceeded in my inquiries on this subject, I cannot but conclude, that those rites and ceremonies among the Heathens, which have been thus delivered from one people to another, are what have given birth to funeral sermons and orations among us Christians; and tho’ the practice, no doubt, is considerably improved, and cleared of many things which would smell too rank of paganism, and is thrown into a method which, perhaps, may be of some service to Christianity, yet notwithstanding this new dress, its original may very easily be discerned. The method in which the characters of deceased persons are given in our funeral sermons, is very much the same with that observed in those pagan Orations, where first an account is given of the parentage of the deceased, then of his education; after that, we hear of his conduct in riper years: then his many virtues are reckoned up, with his generous, noble, and excellent performances.

I would not be understood as tho’ I condemned the practice because of its rise and original; for why mayest the customs of heathens, if just and laudable in themselves, and no ways pernicious to Christianity in their consequences, be followed by us Christians? And seeing we are come into this practice, there’s one thing we should take care to follow them in, and that is, not to make those sermons or orations for every one; but for those only whose characters are distinguishing, who have been eminently useful in the world, and in the church of Christ. The old heathens only honored those with this part of the funeral solemnity, who were men of probity and justice, or renowned for their wisdom and knowledge, or famous for

warlike exploits This, as *Cicero* informs us, being part of the law for burials, which directs, that the praises only of honorable persons shall be mentioned in the Oration. ^{f29} The *Jews* also make Funeral Orations ^{f30} in praise of the party deceased, provided he's a person of note, or a man of worth and value amongst them, such as the minister of the congregation, or the like. It would be much more agreeable, if our funeral discourses were not so common, and if the characters given of the deceased were more just; devoid of that fulsome flattery, with which they too often abound. I would not be understood, as though I thought the deceased Lady, whole funeral sermons have occasioned this essay, was a person undeserving of having her memory perpetuated this way, or that what is there said of her is not just and true.

As for scripture history, I cannot, *Sir*, recollect any passage which gives countenance to our practice, unless that short oration of *David's*, at the grave of *Abner*, may be judged of this sort, ^{<0033>}2 Samuel 3:33,34. *Josephus* ^{f31} seems to have this view of it, when he says, *David* buried him very magnificently, and composed funeral lamentations for him.

And 'tis observable, that *Cocceius*, in his funeral oration on *Maccovius*, after he had remarked, that the practice was agreeable, not only to the ancient custom of that University, before whom he delivered it; but also to the customs of the *Athenians* and *Romans*, who judged it very ornamental and profitable to the Commonwealth, to praise those who had been famous in peace or war: he further directs his auditors to *David's Elogium* on *Saul and Jonathan*, in ^{<0017>}2 Samuel 1:17, etc., and to the anniversary lamentation of the daughters of *Israel* for the daughter of *Jephthah*, in ^{<0710>}Judges 11:40, in favor of this custom, But, with submission, I take it, that there instances will rather justify the use of funeral odes, than of funeral sermons and orations.

And now, *Sir*, If, I thought, I should not trespass too much upon your patience, ***I would briefly inquire into the rise and origin of our funeral elegies and odes***, which are likewise made to perpetuate the memory, and celebrate the praises of the dead. *Who were the inventors of elegy is very uncertain*, for *Horace* tells us it was controverted in his time, and lest undetermined by the critics. ^{f32} As to the original of the name, the *Grecians* ^{f33}

“had a custom of drawling out their words, and repeating the Interjection, *ἔ, ἔ, ἔ, ἔ*, with tears; and hence, if we may credit the

Scholiast upon Aristophanes, ^{f34} funeral lamentations were called *ἔλεγοι*, *Elegies*.

With respect to singing at the interment of the dead, *Macrobius* ^{f35} says,

“It is established by the practice of most nations or countries, who do it upon this persuasion, that after the decease of the body, the soul returns to the original of the sweetness of music, h.e. to heaven”:

And ‘tis no great difficulty to collect some instances of this kind.

Potter says on this head, that the *Graeci arts* ^{f36}

“had mourners and musicians to increase the solemnity: there *Homer* calls *ἔξάρχες, ζήνων*, because they endeavored to excite sorrow in all the company, by beating their breasts, and counterfeiting all the actions of the most real and passionate grief. They are likewise termed, *ᾠοῖδοί, προσωδοί*, etc. from the songs they sung at funerals. Of there, there seem to have been three, one in the procession, another at the funeral pile, a third at the grave.”

The pipes or flutes they made use of at those solemnities were those of the *Carian, Mysian, Lydian*, and *Phrygian* original.

“Those who were killed by Elephants, either in the hunting of them, or in Battle *Aelian* informs us, ^{f37} were buried very honorably, and had certain hymns sung in their honor by the *Lybians*. The argument of these hymns was, That those were valiant men, who engaged with such a beast; and that the best funeral ornament was to die gloriously.”

What was the custom of the ancient *Romans* in the burial of their dead, is sufficiently notorious: It has been already observed, that at the funeral process, certain poor women, called *Praesicae*, sung songs in the praise of the party deceased; these women were hired for this purpose, making a trade of it, and getting their livelihood by it. Besides there, there were also, *Siticines*, and *Tibicines*

“The name *Siticines*, ^{f38} *A. Gellius* ^{f39} derives from *situs* and *cano*, from singing to the dead. They were of two sorts, some founding on the trumpet, others on the flute or pipe. That the trumpets had a

share in this solemnity, we learn from. *Virgil*, in the funeral of Pallas, *Aen. xi.*

“Exoritur clamorque virum, clangorque tubarum.”

And from *Propertius, Lib. 2. Eleg. 7.*

**“Ah! mea turn quales caneret tibi; Cynthia, somnos
Tibia, sunesta tristior ilia tuba.”**

“Suetonius ^{f40} mentions the Tibiae, in the funeral of Julius Caesar, and Seneca in that of Claudius ^{f41} and Ovid says of himself in plain words,

**“Interea nostri quid agant nisi triste libelli?
Tibia suneribus convenit ista meis.”**
Trist. 5. Eleg. 1.

Cicero ^{f42} says, It was the custom, not only that the praises of deserving men should be mentioned in the oration, but also

“that *Tibicines*, or pipers should follow those commendations with longs, called *Naeniae*; which is the name the *Grecians* give to mournful songs.”

There *Naeniae* ^{f43} were the same with the *Nugae* of *Plautus*,

Haec sunt non nugae, non enim mortualia.

Both which may be understood of those songs which were sung in praise of the dead, at the time of their interment; for the word *Nugae* is an *Hebrew* word, ‘tis used in ~~<HB8>~~Zephaniah 3:18. *I will gather ygqñ them that are sorrowful*, which *Jerome* not understanding, imagined it was the latin word *Nugae*, and accordingly rendered it so; whereas it comes from hgy which signifies to *be sorrowful*, and here intends sorrowful persons; and in *Plautus*, mournful songs. Now because a great many weak and foolish things were said in those songs, as there are in many of our elegies, and funeral odes; the words *Nugae* and *Naeniae* are frequently used for silly and trifling things.

So likewise among the *Graecians*,

“Funeral dirges ^{f44} were called **τάλεμοι**, whence **τηλιμίζειν** is expounded in *Hesychius* by **ζρηνεῖν**, to mourn; and **τηλεμίζοιαι**

is another name for mourning women; hence also τα ταλεμάδη signifies empty and worthless things, and τάλήμε ψυχώτερος is proverbially applied to insipid and senseless compositions.

Much the same custom obtained among the Jews, which 'tis highly probable, they received from some of the neighboring nations, for they were a people always fond of following the ceremonious practices of the Heathens; they had their *twnnqm*, or *mourning women*, which were the fame with the *Praesicae* of the *Romans*, and the *τηλεμίσειαι* of the *Grecians*, just now mentioned, who by their disheveled hair, naked breasts, and mournful voice, moved upon the affections, and produced tears from others, as well as set forth the praises of the dead in their songs or funeral odes, being hired by the relations of the deceased for these purposes. *Maimonides* ^{f45} says, That the heirs of the deceased were obliged to give them a reward. The manner in which they performed their doleful ditties was this, ^{f46} First one spoke, and then all the rest answered. Of these mourning women, and what they were to do, we read in ^{<2497>}Jeremiah 9:17,18,19,21,22, where, the Lord by the prophet, not as approving, but deriding the practice, says, *Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, that they may come, etc.*

Besides these mourning women, they also made use of minstrels and pipes, of these we read in ^{<402>}Matthew 9:23. Pipes and such like instruments of music, were used by them at their ^{f47} funerals, as well as at their marriages; and according to their *Rabbins*, ^{f48} even the poorest man in *Israel*, when his wife died, never had less than two pipes, and one mourning woman.

The Christians indeed, instead of these pagan and Jewish customs, have substituted the practice of singing of psalms before the corpse, at the burial of the dead; a practice which prevailed very early, and has been approved of and established by emperors, ^{f49} popes, fathers, and councils, and is continued, in many places, to this day; and I can't but be of opinion, that these last rites and ceremonies among the heathens, have given birth to our elegiac verses, and odes sacred to the memory of the dead. Whether *David's Elogium* on *Saul* and *Jonathan*, and the anniversary celebration of the care of *Jepthbah's* daughter by the daughters of *Israel* before mentioned, together with the lamentations of *Jeremiah*, and those of the singing men and singing women on the death of *Josiah*, give any countenance to these kind of performances, I shall not determine.

But leaving these inquiries, I shall now present you with my thoughts on those two funeral discourses, which have been the occasion of this essay. I shall begin with *Mr. Harrison's sermon*, not only because it was first preached and published to the world, but because another discourse, prepared on the same subject, and for the same purpose, was obliged to give way to it; on which account, one might reasonably have expected, that this would have been a very valuable and excellent performance, if not an extraordinary one; that it would have been filled with solid divinity, judicious thoughts, strong reasoning, and good learning; when, on the contrary, I am bold to say, there's neither law nor gospel, good learning, nor good sense in it; nothing but rant and a meer jingle of words: There appears no more divinity in the sermon, than there does humanity in his conduct; 'tis an empty, jejune, trifling work. "The Apostle *Paul*, he says, ^{f50} had a fine imagination, as well as a solid judgment." Indeed he had, and, I suppose, he means, that they both appear particularly in the ^{f51} text, the subject of this discourse; and so they do, but it will be exceeding difficult to observe any thing like either throughout the whole discourse upon it. One would have thought, that a man insisting on so fruitful a text, could not have failed of expressing himself as fully and largely, both on the nature of the grace and doctrine of faith, had he understood either, as the bounds of a single discourse would admit of.

But here's no notice taken, either of the Apostle's faith, or any others, but a studious concern appears, throughout the whole, even to avoid those descriptions of the people of God, which are taken from their faith: instead of which, we have *the sincerely good, the sincere followers of the lamb, sincere professors, the good man, the virtuous man, etc.* But I had almost forgot that this sermon was calculated for the polite part of the town, to whom those sounds, *believers, converted persons, regenerate one, etc.*, are as disagreeable, as the characters expressed by 'em are unsuitable. He tells us, ^{f52} that by *the faith*, which the Apostle says he had kept, "'tis natural, in this place to understand the doctrine of the Gospel." It would have been well if he had thought fit to have given us some account of it, and not to have run out in those wild excursions another way, which are foreign from his text, and the doctrine of the gospel; for he is not contented silently to pass over the great doctrines of faith, but throws out his indigested crudities to the shame and reproach of em, nay in direct opposition to them, some instances of which I'll just observe to you. I'll give you his entire paragraphs, that I may not in the least injure him, or curtail his sense.

And the first faulty paragraph I shall take notice of, we have p. 17. which is as follows,

“Though the Apostle had described his own conduct, which had something peculiar to his public station, though he had been viewing *a crown, the luster of which was to bear a proportion to his attainments and labors*; yet he intimated, that in some things, there was an agreement between his care, and that of Christians in general, both as to service and reward.”

In what is here said, I am very much mistaken, if he has not obscured the luster of the grace of God, the righteousness of Christ, the purchase of the Redeemer’s blood, and the crown of life it self, as well as put too great a luster upon the attainments and labors of a creature; for what proportion can there be between the crown of life, and the best performances of men? There is a proportion between sin and death, but none between eternal life and works of righteousness which we have done: *The wages, the just wages of sin is death*, (^{<4163>}Romans 6:23) *but eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. The whole of our salvation, from first to last, is wholly owing to the grace of God, exclusive of, and in contradistinction from any sort of works whatever, performed by mortals. The choice of persons to this crown, is an instance of special and distinguishing grace, for which reason ‘tis called an *election of grace*; upon the mentioning of which, the Apostle argues after this nervous manner, (^{<4115>}Romans 11:5, 6)

if it be of grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work.

And in another place: we are *justified freely by his grace*, (^{<4134>}Romans 3:24) *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. The pardon of our sins (^{<4007>}Ephesians 1:7) *is according to the riches of his grace*, so is our regeneration, and final perseverance; and the finishing of the whole work of salvation, will be attended with the shouts of Angels and Saints, (^{<4115>}Zechariah 4:7) *crying, grace, grace unto it*: for ‘tis (^{<4007>}Titus 3:7)

not by works of righteousness which we have done; but according to his mercy, he hath saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost.

The grace of God is a bright and sparkling jewel in this crown of righteousness, the glory of which will appear in it to all eternity, with an amazing and soul-ravishing luster; and therefore to say, that the luster of this crown is to bear a proportion to the attainments and labors of men, without taking any notice of the grace of God, which shines so resplendently in it, is to obscure the luster of this grace.

Again, the luster of this crown, is to bear a proportion to the righteousness of Christ, from whence it takes its name. 'Tis this which gives a person an undoubted right and title to it, (^{418b}Titus 3:5)

being justified by his grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Without this there will be no admission into God's kingdom and glory, let a man's labors and attainments be what they will, for if he's destitute of this he's an unrighteous person, and *the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom God.* (^{416b}1 Corinthians 6:9) Those who are found without this *wedding garment*, though they may have (^{417c}Matthew 7:22, 23)

prophesied in Christ's name, and in his name have cast out devils, and done many wonderful works;

yet the judge will say to them, *I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity;* and will give orders (^{412b}Matthew 22:11, 12, 13) to *bind them hand and foot, and cast them into outer darkness, where will be weeping and gnashing of teeth;* wherefore, to say, that the luster of the crown of righteousness is to bear a proportion to the attainments and labors of a creature, without taking any manner of notice of the righteousness of Christ, which is our only title to this crown, between both which, there is the most just and adequate proportion, is to obscure the luster of this righteousness.

Again, the luster of this crown is to bear a proportion to the purchase of Christ's blood, and not to the attainments and labors of men; for if *righteousness,* (^{412c}Galatians 2:21) life and happiness, came *by the law,* and men's obedience to it, *then Christ is dead in vain.* Mr. Richardson, in his ^{f53} sermon, has well observed, that one reason why this crown is called a crown of righteousness is,

“because Christ has purchased it; and thus God, as a just and righteous God, confers it. There's no degree of happiness, adds he,

to be enjoyed in a future world, but what Christ has paid a valuable price for, therefore heaven is called, (^{<4014>}Ephesians 1:14) *The purchased possession.*”

Now between this valuable price of Christ’s blood, and the luster of the crown of righteousness, there’s a just proportion; but none between that, and the attainments and labors of men; to say then, that the luster of this crown is to bear a proportion to there, without taking any notice of the purchase of Christ’s blood, is to obscure the luster and glory of it. Besides, such a way of speaking must obscure the luster of the crown it self; for what luster can there be in that crown which only bears a proportion to the attainments and labors of men, when their best (^{<2365>}Isaiah 64:6) *righteousness is as filthy rags, and they themselves are as an unclean thing?* But to say, that it bears a proportion to the riches of God’s grace, to the royal robe of Christ’s righteousness, to the invaluable purchase of his blood, is to spread, to increase, and set off in the best manner, the luster of this crown.

Moreover, such an expression as this, puts too great a luster upon the attainments and labors of a creature, tho’ those attainments and labors may be never so great and considerable:

Indeed the apostle Paul’s were of this kind yet. I’m satisfied, he never entertained such an opinion of them as to imagine, that the luster of the crown of righteousness he was viewing, was to be proportioned to them. When he compared himself with the other apostles of Christ, he says, (^{<4650>}1 Corinthians 15:9, 10)

I am the least of the apples, I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God, but by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all:

yet observe how he corrects himself; *yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* And when he was obliged to make mention of his own attainments and labors, in the vindication of himself, against the insults and reproaches of false apostles; yet how often does he call himself a *Fool* (^{<47116>}2 Corinthians 11:16) for it, and his just defense a *speaking foolishly is this confidence of boasting?* He was very well apprized, that the’ he *knew nothing* by himself, (^{<4004>}1 Corinthians 4:4) yet he was *not hereby justified*; that his right and title to the crown of life did not lie in those things. He

accounted that all his attainments and labors, whether before or after conversion, were but *loss and dung*, (^{<5188>}Philippians 3:8) *for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord*. And indeed, there's no more proportion between our best performances and eternal life, than there is between a *crown* and a *dunghill*: Yea, he reckoned, that *his sufferings* (^{<4188>}Romans 8:18) for Christ, which were the greatest as well as the purest part of his service for him, were *not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed*: So little reason had Mr. *Harrison*, from the apostle's mouth to conclude, that *he had been viewing a crown, the luster of which was to bear a proportion to his attainments and labors*. But no more of this.

I go on to consider another faulty paragraph of his, which you'll find in p. 20, it runs thus,

“Should it not then raise our wonder, to the highest pitch, that *he will recompense us for there short services, which are very imperfect, with an incorruptible crown?* That he will send his only begotten Son from his throne in heaven, to meet us, and conduct us to everlasting mansions? well might St. *John* say (^{<6118>}1 John 4:8) *God is love*”.

The same *spirit of error* appears in this as in the former paragraph; but if any thing, it appears here more barefaced: He acknowledges that our services *are short*, and very *imperfect* and yet says, that God will *recompense us for them*, and that *with an incorruptible crown*. Alas, what profit and advantage can our short and imperfect services be to God, that he should recompense us *for them* after this manner! (^{<6134>}Romans 11:34)

Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

(^{<9581>}Psalm 58:11) *Verily, there is a reward for the righteous*; but no for his own righteousness sake, but for the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, which only can truly and properly denominate him a righteous man. (^{<9191>}Psalm 19:11) *In keeping of the commandments of God, there is great reward* even in this world, but not *for* keeping of them; much less in that which is to come. God indeed does reward his own grace which he has bestowed upon his people, and therefore faith, hope, confidence, etc., (^{<5185>}Hebrews 10:35) *have a great recompense of reward* even now, and will be *found unto praise* (^{<6016>}1 Peter 1:6) *and honor and glory at the*

appearing of Christ; but God never rewards his people for their services, tho' he rewards 'em *in his service* for when they have done all they can, they have done but their duty, and must *acknowledge themselves* (^{<270>}Luke 17:10) *unprofitable servants*. Heaven is indeed called (^{<3034>}Colssians 3:24) *the reward of the inheritance*, and (^{<3126>}Hebrews 11:26) *the recompense of the reward*; but as the Apostle Paul says, (^{<4041>}Romans 4:4) *the reward is not reckoned of debt, but of grace*.

Give me leave, Sir, to transcribe one paragraph more, which is in p. 21.

“Let me therefore, says he, recommend this to you with the greatest earnestness, *that you would now secure the favor of your judge*: if you think seriously on the subject, you will confess, that it deserves your belt regards, whatever the language of your practice has been.”

If by *the savor of the judge*, he means the love of Jesus Christ to sinners, that is not to be *secured now*, nor does it need any security from creatures. Christ fixed his love upon his people before the world began: (^{<3034>}Proverbs 8:24, 26-31)

When there was no depth, no fountains abounding with water, while as yet God had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, Christ was rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men;

and there have continued with them ever since; for *having* (^{<6111>}John 13:1)

loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end.

There's no danger of losing his love and favor where it is once fixed, for 'tis like himself, *the same yesterday, to day, and for ever*. (^{<3138>}Hebrews 13:8) There can be no alteration made in it, nor any separation from it, for *who* (^{<6135>}Romans 8:35) or what *shalt separate from the love of Christ*? But if by securing it, he means getting an evidence, a manifestation, a knowledge of interest in his love, why must the spirit of God be neglected as useless? and why is the creature let to work for it alone, without any hint of gracious assistance from him, especially when it is his peculiar work (^{<6165>}John 16:15) to *take of the things of Christ*, and *shew them to us*; the love of Christ, (^{<6135>}Romans 5:5) and *shed it abroad in us*; and so (^{<3138>}2 Thessalonians 3:5) to *direct our hearts into it*, that (^{<4018>}Ephesians 3:18)

we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth

Again, if by *the favor of the judge*, he means the favorable regards of Christ, considered in that character to criminals, and that those favorable regards are to be *secured* by their application to him, 'tis a vile reflection on him, as the judge of the whole earth, who always will do *right*; whose *judgment is*, and ever will be, *according to truth*, not to be governed by favor and affection to any. He is of *quick understanding* (^{231KB} Isaiah 11:3, 4)

in the fear of the Lord, he will not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears, but with righteousness will he judge the poor, and reprove with equity, for the meek of the earth.

He is not to be bribed with any of the gifts, presents, or services, that any of his creatures are capable of bringing him; his favor is not to be secured by any method of theirs: (^{3839B} Job 36:19)

Will he esteem their riches? No, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.

Could they give him *thousands of rams*, or *ten thousands of rivers of oil*, there would not ingratiate 'em into his favor: all their repentings, cries and tears, can never work upon his affections; nor can all their services and performances recommend 'em to his regard: Nothing short of a perfect righteousness, answerable to the righteous law by which all shall be judged, will be taken notice of by him. If he of his own grace and favor, as a *Savior*, does not secure them by clothing 'em with his own righteousness; they can never secure his favor, as a *judge*, by any thing they can do. The saints themselves will be admitted into heaven, not by *the favor of the Judge*, but by the *righteousness of the Redeemer*; their acquittance before men and angels, will not be an *act of favor* but of *righteousness*. The same degree of strict justice will appear in the awful procedure with them, as with others; (^{4751D} 2 Corinthians 5:10)

for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad:

and at this bar, their only security will be the righteousness of the Son of God, which will be sufficient, according to the strict rules of justice, to *answer for* them. If therefore Mr. *Harrison* has any regard to the salvation of the souls of men to whom he preaches, he ought to direct them, not to seek the favor of the judge, but the grace and righteousness of the Redeemer.

I shall not, Sir, trouble you any longer with remarks of this kind. I can't but observe, that this is the usual strain of funeral sermons published to the world; for which reason I cannot have the greatest opinion of them. I must confess there are some exceptions from this observation, and I take **Mr. Richardson's sermon** to be one, which was preached upon the same subject, and for the same purpose as this. There are many things in it, which I persuade my self will be grateful and pleasing to you. I'll just give you some few hints, which show his regard to the doctrines of the Gospel.

In p. 18. he gives a plain intimation of his faith in the doctrine of election; a doctrine that has always been a burdensome stone, an immoveable rock to all its adversaries, where speaking of the glories of heaven, he has these words,

“There, says he, the whole ELECT of *Jesus*, who have lived in the different ages, and dwelt in the several corners of the world, shall make one glorious body, one triumphant assembly.”

In p. 14. he expresses himself on the head of Christ's suretyship, engagements, and undertakings for his people, and his complete performance of them, after this manner:

“As the Redeemer failed not in any part of his undertakings for his people, agreeable to his own *engagements*, so the Father has obliged himself to bestow all the glory and felicity upon *his seed*, which he has purchased for them”

Which is a brief summary of the covenant of grace.

Again, p. 12. speaking of the righteousness of Christ, he has expressed his sentiments very judiciously,

“When, says he, the Christian hath made the greatest advances in holiness, he cannot but reflect upon the whole of his conduct with shame and blushing: 'tis in the righteousness of the Redeemer only,

we can appear apostles at the throne of God; this is the Christian's sole dependence, this his joy, this his comfort, under a view of his own imperfections, even this, that he has a righteousness to trust to, and depend upon, which is equal to all that the law has demanded."

This one single paragraph, I'll venture to say, is worth Mr. *Harrison's* whole sermon.

In p. 22. he ascribes the work of grace in its implantation and exercise, to the Spirit of God, and asserts the absolute necessity of it, to the performance of good works with acceptance; where, speaking of the meetness or fitness of saints for Christ's appearance, he says:

"This, divines call either habitual or actual; by the former, they understand those graces that accompany salvation, and are implanted in the soul by the holy Spirit, whereby they are *turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God*. And by the latter, a lively exercise of those graces implanted by the Spirit; for grace in the soul is an active principle, and the best teacher of good works, without which indeed, none can be performed acceptable unto God."

And in p. 11, he says, that God carries on *this work*, notwithstanding all difficulties and oppositions, with victorious efficacy." He asserts, in p. 10, the necessity of

"receiving strength from Christ for performing the several parts of evangelical obedience."

And in p. 9, gives his thoughts of the final perseverance of the saints, in these words:

"Many snares are laid in the Christian's way to hinder his progress towards heaven, yet is he enabled to walk agreeable to the rules which Christ has prescribed, without being led away with the error of the wicked, or falling from his own steadfastness."

These, Sir, I presume, are the reasons why this discourse was slighted and discouraged, and designed to be stifled in the *Embryo*, never to have seen the light; the above doctrines not being agreeable to the *taste* of the polite part of the town; But sure I am, they are so to every one that has *tasted that the Lord is gracious*: And I am very glad to observe, that they were to

the Lady deceased. I think that part of her character, which Mr. *Richardson* has given, adds a glory to the whole of it, when he tells us: “Her hopes of everlasting life, as she declared to him, were entirely placed on Christ and his righteousness, using these words, “*there we are safe.*”

But, Sir, before I conclude, I must beg leave to return again to Mr. *Harrison*. He has been pleased to favor us with the *Oration* which he delivered at the grave. I shall not trouble you with remarking his unguarded sentences, his low thoughts, and mean compliance to a certain set of men, which are too visible in it: I only think, ‘tis pity he had not published his own prayer, and the Lord’s Prayer, with the benediction at the end of it, which it seems were also delivered at the time of interment, and then we should have had a complete form of service for the burial of the dead. He observes to us, that “the service frequently performed amongst the dissenters at the burial of “the dead,” is in this form, whereas there are but very few dissenters in the nation that use any service at all, at the burial of their dead, but in this city of *London*; where the greater part also make no orations at such times, and some of those that do, make no prayer at all, and still fewer use the Lord’s Prayer: But perhaps, our orator, is in expectation of making this practice, in time, more common by his example.

He has also published an ode, sacred to the memory of the deceased Lady: I confess, Sir, I have but little judgment in poetry, yet I’m ready to conclude, ‘tis the best of these his performances.

In the dedication of his sermon to the worthy Gentleman, and Lady, there addressed, he appeals to their senses, that it was *composed* at their request, tho’ in order to be *preached* by another; and therefore it is very cautiously expressed: *a request*, says he, *which was contrary to my expectation*, and, indeed, an unheard of one, and which a man of any honor, would never have complied with; tho’ he has the vanity to add,

“but founded on reasons which both to you and to me, fine language I appear to be capable of the fullest vindication.”

And pray now, What were these reasons? Why, suspicions of Mr. *Richardson*’s ability to compose, preach, and publish a sermon, which might be acceptable. What little reason there was for those suspicions, the world is now capable of judging, seeing the discourse is made public; and you, Sir, may easily conclude, from the few hints I have extracted out of it. Mr. *Harrison* tells them, *a very small time was allotted him for finishing*

the discourse; time enough, unless it had been better performed. He goes on with compliments upon *Sir* and *Madam*, and concludes with praying for them, that they might long *enjoy together the blessings of an indulgent providence*, that they might be *eminently useful, and extensively happy*; which, by the help of transposition, would make a beautiful sentence; and that *at last*, they might *receive a distinguishing crown*: but whether he means one different from that in the text, I cannot say. I subjoin to this, that I apprehend it would not have been amiss, if he had had the ingenuity to have acknowledged, that the character which he gave in his sermon of the deceased Lady, was drawn up by this Gentleman to whom the dedication is made; whereas, he has published it to the world as his own, without giving the least hint of it.

And now, Sir, I shall detain you no longer; excuse the freedom I have taken with you. If the reading these lines gives you any satisfaction, or the publishing of 'em may be a means to reform this vain man, I shall heartily rejoice. Only I desire you would observe, that *Mr. Richardson* is entirely ignorant of the contents of this Letter, that he knows nothing of my writing to you on this subject, nor of my design to do so; nor has he in the least instigated me to it.

FOOTNOTES

- ^{ft1} Herodot. 1.2. c. 4. & 58. Lactant. de Orig. Error. 1. 2. c. 14.
- ^{ft2} Herodot. 1, 2. c. 123.
- ^{ft3} Diodor. Sicul. I. 1. c. 5.
- ^{ft4} De Abstinencia, 1.4. sect. 10.
- ^{ft5} *These were a sort of men who provided every thing needful for burials, so called from the goddess Libitina, in whose temple all such things were exposed to Sale. Vid. Kennet's Antiq. Par. 2. B. 5. c. 10. p. 340.*
- ^{ft6} Herodot. 1. a. c. 4. & 58.
- ^{ft7} Euseb. de praepar. Evangel. I. 10. c. 9.
- ^{ft8} De legibus, 50:2, prope sinem,
- ^{ft9} Diogen. Laert. in vit. Solon.
- ^{ft10} Aelian Var. Hist. 1.5. c.14. & 7.19.
- ^{ft11} Cicero, *ibid.*
- ^{ft12} Potter's Archaeolog. Graec. Vol. 2. Book 4. Chap. 8.
- ^{ft13} *Ibid.* B. 3. ch. 11, p. 103,105.
- ^{ft14} Polemo in Argumento τῶν ἐπιταφίων λόγων.
- ^{ft15} Cicero de, Oratore.
- ^{ft16} Godwin's Romans Hilt.: Antholog 50, 2. sect. .2. c. 21
- ^{ft17} Rosin. Antiq. 1. 5.
- ^{ft18} Suerono Jul. Caesar. c. 6.
- ^{ft19} Kennet's Antiq. of Rome, Part 2, B. 5. ch. 10. p. 351.
- ^{ft20} "Ἐμφυλ, lib 1.
- ^{ft21} "Lib. 2. Ep. 1.
- ^{ft22} Instit. lib. 3. c. 9.
- ^{ft23} Suet. in Jul. Caesar, c. 6.
- ^{ft24} De mulier, virtut, in principio.
- ^{ft25} In vit. Caesar. in principio.
- ^{ft26} Hist, ab U. C. 1.5. c. 50.

- ft27 Socrat. Eccl. Hist. 1.5. c.9.
- ft28 Onuphrius de sepel. mort. c. 8.
- ft29 Honoratorum virorum laudes in concione memorantor, etc. De legibus, 1. 2. prope sinem.
- ft30 Buxtorf. Jud. Synag. c. 49. Leo. Modena. *Hist. of the rites, customs: etc. of the present Jews*, par. 5. c. 8. sect. 4.
- f31 **ἑπιταφίεις συζγραψάμενος ζρόνες**. Antiq. lib. 7.
- ft32 De arte poetica,
- ft33 Potter's Archeolog. Graec. Vol. 2. par. 4 ch. 5.
- ft34 Ayibus.
- ft35 Somn. Scip. 1. 2. c. 3.
- ft36 Potter's Antiq. Vol. 2.
- ft37 Var. Hist. 1. 12. c. 55.
- ft38 Kennet's Antiq. par. 2. b. 5. p. 345
- ft39 Lib 20, c.3.
- ft40 C. 84.
- ft41 Vid. Apocol.
- ft42 De legibus 1. 2. prope sin
- ft43 Asinaria.
- ft44 Potter's Antiq.
- ft45 Hilchot EbeI. c. 12. s. 1.
- ft46 Moed Katon, c. 3. 9. R. David Kimchi lib. Shorash. rad. **XXX**.
- ft47 Bava Metzia. c. 6. sect. 1. Shabbat. c. 23. sect. 4.
- ft48 Cetubot. c. 4. sect, 4.
- ft49 Vid. Roma subterranea, Tom. 1.50:1. c. 19.
- f50 Sermon, p. 8.
- f51 Which is 2 Timothy 44:7, 8
- ft52 Sermon, p. 11.
- ft53 Page 13. N. B. This is the sermon which was obliged to give way to Mr. *Harrison's* ingenious one