

A
SUMMARY
OF THE
LIFE, WRITINGS, AND CHARACTER,
OF THE LATE REVEREND AND LEARNED
JOHN GILL, D.D.

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DR. JOHN GILL was born at *Kettering*, in *Northamptonshire*, Nov. 23, O. S. 1697: his parents were EDWARD GILL, and ELIZABETH his wife, whose maiden name was WALKER. They were religious and pious persons; whose circumstances did not reach affluence, but were above contempt. His father was a Deacon of the *Baptist* church at *Kettering*; and was eminent for his grace, piety, and holy conversation. He *first* became a member of a congregation in the same place, consisting of *Presbyterians*, *Independents*, and *Baptists*: in which congregation, besides the Pastor of it, there was a teaching Elder of the *Baptist* denomination Mr. *William Wallis*, who was the administrator of Baptism by immersion, to such adult persons as desired it. For some time this mixed congregation continued in peace and harmony: but, at length, the *Baptists* were rendered uneasy and uncomfortable in their communion, through the opposition made to them by some particular persons. This obliged them to separate, together with their teacher, Mr. *Wallis*. They soon formed themselves into a church-state, and chose Mr. *Wallis* for their Pastor: which was the rise and foundation of the *Baptist* church at *Kettering*.

About the time of these troubles, Mr. EDWARD GILL, who was one of those that had separated, entered into the marriage-state: and as those dissensions pressed him much, and he was often revolving within himself the condition and circumstances of this little interest and new church-state, lately set up, which had but a small beginning; and what must be the consequence of things; he had strong impressions upon his mind, that the child, his wife now became pregnant with, would be a son, and prove of eminent service in the *Baptist* interest. He was even strongly persuaded, that this child would be a Minister of the word; and he always retained a firm belief of it, when things seemed to be unpromising. He had other impulses, relative to his son, and to

other persons and things which had their exact accomplishment: and this must be acknowledged by all who knew him, that he was not a man of a fanciful and melancholy disposition, nor given to enthusiasm.

The morning this first-born son of his was brought into the world, one *Chambers*, a Woodman, came to his house with a load of faggots for fuel: and, as he was unloading his faggots, Mr. GILL came out of his house to him, and, with a great deal of joy, told him, that he had a son born to him that morning. At that very moment, as the Woodman affirmed, a stranger passed by whom he never saw before, nor since, who added, "*Yes, and he will be a Scholar too, and all the world cannot hinder it.*" This the Woodman, who was reckoned a man of sobriety, honesty, and veracity, constantly and confidently affirmed at different times, without variation: and even years after when inquired of concerning it; nor could he have any sinister end to avail himself of, in contriving such a story, and persisting in it. However, Mr. GILL'S son, as soon as he was capable of instruction, discovered a very great aptitude for learning, and imbibed it in as fast as it could be given: so that he was quickly out of the reach, and in no need of a common teacher of children. He was therefore sent to the grammar school, very early; which he attended with uncommon eagerness and diligence: insomuch that he, soon, not only transcended his co-equals, but distanced even greatly his seniors. Here he continued until he was about *eleven* years of age: during which time, notwithstanding the tedious manner in which grammatical knowledge was then conveyed, and the drudgery boys were put to in learning so many unnecessary rules; he, besides going through the common school-books, read several of the chief *Latin* classics, and made a considerable proficiency in the Greek so that he began to be talked of as a youth of Learning; and was known by several of the neighboring Clergy, by whom he was sometimes examined at a Bookseller's shop (which he constantly frequented on market-days, when only it was opened); to which he so regularly repaired, for the sake of consulting different authors, that it became an usual asseveration with the common people in the town, "such a thing is as sure as JOHN GILL is in the Bookseller's shop."^[1]

He left the grammar school rather early in life. The occasion was this: the school-master insisted, that the children of Dissenting parents, as well as others, should go with him to church, on weekdays, at the hours of prayer: upon which the children of Dissenters were taken away from the school, and

he among the rest. Those Dissenters, who were in affluent circumstances, sent their children to distant parts for their further education: but this was not the case with his parents. This was a very discouraging circumstance. Several ways and means were thought of by his friends; but all proved fruitless. Some efforts were made by ministers, both of other denominations and of his own, to get him upon one or other of the funds in *London*, and that he might be sent to one of their seminaries of learning, To this end specimens of his progress in literature were sent up to town: but the answer returned by way of objection was, that he was too young; and, should he continue, as it might be supposed he would, to make such rapid advances in his studies, he would go through the common circle of learning before he could be capable of taking care of himself, or of being employed in any public service.

If any credit can be given to the story of the Woodman, concerning what the stranger said on the morning of his birth, which seemed to suppose that some difficulties and obstructions would be thrown in the way of his becoming a scholar, they now began to appear. And yet, notwithstanding all this, such was his desire of learning, that he not only retained what knowledge of the *Latin* and *Greek* languages he had acquired, but he improved himself in both, by constantly reading all such books in those languages, as he could obtain. In process of time he studied *Logic*, *Rhetoric*, *Moral* and *Natural Philosophy*. He likewise, *Suo Marte*, learned the *Hebrew* language, without any living assistance, by the help of *Buxtorf's Grammar and Lexicon*. With only these, he surmounted the chief difficulties of that language: and could soon read the *Hebrew* bible with great ease and pleasure. In this language he always took peculiar delight. He read books, in various branches of literature, in the *Latin* tongue, to improve his mind with whatsoever was useful: and particularly Systems of Divinity. For some few years his time was daily divided: part of it was employed in his father's business; and the other part of it in close studying. And thus he went on, till he had nearly attained to the *nineteenth* year of his age.

It is now time to look back, and take some notice of the religious turn of his mind, and of his inquiries after divine and spiritual things. He had slight convictions of sin, and occasional thoughts of a future state, from his childhood. Sometimes he was terrified with the fear of death, hell, and eternity; and strangely elated with thinking on the joys of heaven, the glories of another world, and the happiness of saints made perfect above. But these

impressions were, for some time, both superficial and transitory. When he was about *twelve* years of age, the workings of his mind became more serious, settled, and effectual: and especially after hearing a Sermon of Mr. *William Wallis*, on *Genesis 3:9, And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?* For a while it was, as it were, continually ringing in his ears, "Man, where art thou? What a wretched state and condition art thou in? How miserable wilt thou be, living and dying, in an unconverted state!" Hence he used to call Mr. *Wallis*, if any man, his spiritual father, who died soon after. And now he began clearly to see the depravity of his nature; the exceeding sinfulness of sin; his need of Christ, and salvation by him; and of a better righteousness than his own; even the righteousness of Christ, to be received by faith: and in a short time was favored with a comfortable hope and faith of interest in HIM, from several exceeding great and precious promises, powerfully applied to his soul. It was, moreover, his happy lot, to have his mind early irradiated with the light and knowledge of *evangelic* truths, by means of the ministry of several gospel-preachers in those parts of the country, whom at times he had the opportunity of hearing: and these truths, coming to him with power, failed not of freeing him from the bondage of the Law, and of filling him with *joy and peace in believing*; yet though he early arrived to satisfaction in his mind about his eternal state, he did not make a public profession of religion until he was almost *nineteen* years of age; partly by reason of his youth for some time, and the solemnity of a profession; and chiefly in the latter part of this period of his life, because he perceived the eye of the church was upon him to call him forth to the ministry, as soon as they conveniently could, should he become a member of it; their then present pastor being greatly involved in worldly business, and much needed assistance.

Nov. 1, 1716, he made a public profession of his faith in Christ, by declaring to the church with which he stood connected, the dealings of God with his soul, to their satisfaction: and was the same day baptized by their pastor, Mr. *Thomas Wallis*, who succeeded his father Mr. *William Wallis* in that office. The ordinance of Baptism was administered to him by immersion, in a river, in the sight of many spectators: and the following Hymn, composed by himself, was sung at the same time.

**Was Christ baptiz'd to sanctify
This ordinance he gave?**

And did his sacred body lie
Within the liquid grave?
Did Jesus condescend so low
To leave us an example?
And sha'n't we by this pattern go;
This heavenly rule so ample?
What rich and what amazing grace!
What love beyond degree!
That we the heavenly road should. trace,
And should baptized be.
That we should follow Christ the Lamb,
In owning his commands;
For what we do, he did the same,
Tho' done with purer hands.
And does this offer to my faith,
Wow Christ for me did die;
And how He in the grave was laid,
And rose to justify?
Then how should this engage my heart
To live to Christ that died;
And with my cursed sins to part,
Which pierc'd his side?

The Lord's-day following, Nov. 4th, he was received a member into the church, and partook of the Lord's-supper: In the evening of that day, at a meeting of prayer in a private house, of the members and others, he read the *fifty-third* chapter of *Isaiah*, as suitable to the service of the day, and expounded some passages of it; and, at the close of the meeting, some of the brethren addressed him to this purpose, "*Friend, we take this as a beginning of the exercise of your ministerial gift, which we are persuaded the Lord has bestowed upon you.*" And accordingly. The next Lord's-day, in the evening, at the same place, he delivered a Sermon on 1 *Corinthians* 3:2. *For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.* For a few days he continued preaching in this private manner: the church soon called him to exercise his ministerial gift in public, and sent him forth as a minister of the word.

Quickly after this, at the motion of some of his friends at *London*, who had seen and conversed with him in the country, he removed to *Higham-Ferrers*,

about six or seven computed miles from *Kettering*. His view, and what inclined him to attend to this motion, was to carry on his studies under Mr. *John Davis*, with whom he was to board; a gentleman of learning, and who now taught in that place some branches of literature; being lately come from *Wales*, and settled pastor of a new church just planted at *Higham*. In this view, however, young Mr. GILL was disappointed; but the designs of Mr. GILL'S friends in *London* in this removal of him, was, chiefly to be assisting in this new church, and to the young converts in it, and to preach occasionally in the adjacent villages. Here he continued the year following: and in this time, and at that place, he contracted acquaintance with a young Gentlewoman of great piety and good sense, whose name was ELIZABETH NEGUS; a member of the new gathered church, and whom he married in 1718. The Doctor was always of opinion, that his marriage with this excellent person, was the principal thing for which God in his providence sent him to that place: and he ever considered his marriage to her, as one of the capital blessings of his life, For she proved affectionate, discreet, and careful: and, by her unremitting prudence, took off from his hands all domestic avocations, so that he could, with more leisure, and greater ease of mind, pursue his studies, and devote himself to his ministerial service. This wife of his youth lived with him unto the year 1764^[2] and by her he had many children, all of whom died in their infancy, except three: one of which, whose name was ELIZABETH (a most lovely and desirable child for person, sense, and grace) died *May 30*, 1738, when she had entered into the *thirteenth* year of her age, her Funeral Sermon was preached by her father, from 1 *Thessalonians* 4:13, 14, and was printed, with an account of some of her choice experiences. The other two are still living: (July, 1772) the one, a son, whose name is JOHN, a Goldsmith, who lived in *Grace-church-street, London*; since retired from business. The other, a daughter, whose name is MARY, married to Mr. GEORGE KEITH, a Bookseller, in the same street. Both these children have been a great happiness to their parents; and they have always had reason to be thankful to God for their family comfort, peace, and harmony.

But to return Mr. GILL, during his abode at *Higham-Ferrers*, very frequently preached to the church at *Kettering*; which, as before observed, is but six or seven miles distant. The circumstances of the pastor there requiring assistance, Mr. GILL, quickly after his marriage, wholly removed thither: where his ministry, from beginning, had been blessed, not only to the

comfort, but to the conversion of many: some of which seals of his ministry are yet living. But this continuance here was not long; for, in the beginning of the year 1719, the Church of Christ at *Horsly-down, Southwark, near London*, being deprived of their pastor by the death of Mr. *Benjamin Stinton*, (son in law to the famous Mr. *Benjamin Keach*, and his successor in his office, as pastor of that church) some of the members, hearing of Mr. GILL, desired a friend of his to write to him, and invite him to give them a visit, and preach to them; which he did, in the months of *April* and *May*, the same year; and then returned into the country. About two months after, the church at *Horsly-down* wrote to him, requesting his return to them in the month of *August*; which he complied with, and continued preaching to them, till about *September*: when they made choice of him as their pastor, and called him, young as he was, to the exercise of that office; which, after taking some time for consideration, he accepted of. And now he met with much trouble and great opposition from many; partly on account of his youth (he not being quite *twenty two* years of age), and chiefly because of his evangelical way of preaching. But God was with him, and blessed his ministry to the conversion of many souls; so that large additions were made to the Church, year after year, for a considerable time.

In 1723, when he was between twenty-five and twenty-six years of age, it was the will of God to visit him with an *Hectic* fever, and other disorders of body; which greatly wasted and consumed him, and threatened his life: but it pleased God to bless the means made use of, and to restore him to health again; his time not being come, and he having more work to do for God in his church, and for the interest of religion, as the following account will shew.

In 1724, when he was now twenty-six years of age, he began his *Exposition of the Book of Solomon's Song*; which was delivered, on the Lord's-day morning, to the church under his care, in one hundred and twenty-two sermons, until the whole was finished: of which more hereafter. In this year, he printed a Sermon on the death of Mr. *John Smith*, a Deacon of his church, from *Romans* 5:20, 21, which was the first thing printed by him. And another Sermon, in the following year, entitled, *The Urim and Thummim found with Christ*, from *Deuteronomy* 33:8.

In 1726, a pamphlet was published called, "*The manner of baptizing with water, cleared up from the word of God, and right reason, &c.*" written

dialogue-wise: and it after appeared to have been written by Mr. *Matthias Maurice*, an independent minister, at *Rowel* in *Northamptonshire*. The Baptists in those parts, and especially at *Kettering*, which was but two computed miles, though long ones, from *Rowel*, thought themselves struck at, and their interest affected by this pamphlet; and therefore sent up to Mr. GILL, at *London*, and desired him to write an answer to it. He accordingly undertook it; and soon published his answer, called "*The ancient mode of Baptism by immersion, &c.*" to which Mr. *Maurice* replied in a pamphlet published 1727, and which was answered, the same year, by Mr. GILL in a tract called, "*A defence of the ancient mode, &c.*" One *Cogan*, an Apothecary, and member of Mr. *Maurice's* church, wrote some remarks on Mr. GILL'S rejoinder, in a most virulent and defamatory manner, and which carried its own confutation with it. *Cogan* himself, it seems, was afterwards ashamed of it, and repented of his having written it. Mr. *Maurice* sent several of his pamphlets into *North America*; and the *Baptists* there, hearing of Mr. GILL'S answer to them, wrote for some of them: and accordingly the remainder of the impressions were sent over, at the expense of the Baptist fund; which is one reason of these tracts being so rarely to be met with. On account of this controversy, Mr. GILL received, from *Tilbury-fort* in *Essex*, a very spirited Letter, without a name, animating him to continue in it, and not be intimidated by his puny adversary; concluding with these lines:

*STENNETT at first his furious foe did meet,
Cleanly compell'd him a swift retreat:
Next powerful GALE, by mighty blast made fall
The church's dragon, the gigantic WALL:
May you with like success be victor still,
And give your rude antagonist his fill,
To see that GALE is yet alive in GILL.*

In the year 1727. Mr. GILL finished his *Exposition of the Song of Solomon*: when the church, as well as many others of his hearers, to whom he had delivered it, most earnestly pressed him to make it public: with this he, at length complied; though with great reluctance. What, however, chiefly induced him to compliance, was, a desire of contributing what he could, to vindicate the authority and credit of this part of the sacred writings; which has not only been ridiculed by Deists, but called in question by some who have pretended to be friends to divine revelation.

The year before he entered upon this Exposition, a pamphlet was published by Mr. *Whiston*, called, "*A supplement to Mr. WHISTON'S late Essay towards restoring the true text of the Old Testament*," octavo. 1723, in which he endeavours to discredit the authority of the book of *Solomon's Song*, and to prove it to be a spurious book, and not fit to stand in the canon of scripture. His objections and arguments against the authority of it, are answered by Mr. GILL, in his introduction to this Exposition, or rather in his Exposition of the first verse of the book, which contains the title of it. Whether Mr. *Whiston* ever saw this work, is not certain; it seems as if he had not, by a remarkable and very strange passage in the *Memoirs of his own life and writings, published by himself*; Part II. p. 575, which shows his obstinate and inveterate opposition to this sacred book, to the last: his words are these.

"About *August* this year (1748) I was informed of one Dr. GILL, a particular or Calvinist *Baptist*, of whose skill in the Oriental languages I had heard great character: so I had a mind to hear him preach: but being informed that he had written a folio book on the *Canticles*, I declined to go to hear him."

A very wise reason indeed! The first edition of Mr. GILL'S *Exposition of the Song of Solomon* was published in 1728, with a translation of the *Chaldee* paraphrase, or *Targum* of that book, and with notes upon that. In 1751, a new edition of it was published, in *quarto*, more correct, and with some additions. His worthy, pious, learned and ingenious friend, the Rev. Mr. *James Hervey* (in his *Theron and Aspasio*, vol. III. p. 145. edit. 5.) was pleased to give this high encomium of it;

"it has such a copious vein of sanctified invention running through it, and is interspersed with such a variety of delicate and brilliant images, as cannot but highly entertain a *curious* mind; which presents us also, with such rich and charming displays of the glory of Christ's person, the freeness of his grace to sinners, and the tenderness of his love to the church, as cannot but administer the most exquisite delight to the *believing* soul.—Considered in *both* these views, I think the work resembles the paradisiacal garden described by MILTON, in which,

**"Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue
Appear'd, with gay enamel'd colours mixed."**

This Exposition, when first published, served very much to make Mr. GILL known, and to recommend him to the esteem of spiritual persons, and the true lovers of Jesus Christ; and perhaps, no work he ever published has been more useful to private Christians and families than this has been. Dr. Owen, "on the person of Christ," *chap. XII.* says,

"Blessed is he who understands the sayings of that book (the Canticles) and hath the experience of them in his heart."

A *third* edition of the Exposition was published 1767, with many additions.

In the year 1728, he also published a treatise concerning *The prophecies of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah*. The occasion of which was this: in 1724, a book was published, called, *A discourse of the grounds of the Christian Religion, &c.* well known to be written by *Anthony Collins Esq:* a Deistical writer. Many answers were written to one part or other of this book: to which the author replied, in another book, called, *The scheme of literal Prophecy considered, &c.* published in 1727, which was chiefly pointed at Dr. *Edward Chandler*, Bishop of *Durham*, who had written against the former: it was to this latter book, chiefly, Mr. GILL made answer, and to which he was led by the following incident: A certain Gentleman asserted in conversation, that no *Calvinist* could write in this controversy to any advantage. What his reason was, for so saying, or whether any was assigned by him, is not remembered. Some of Mr. GILL'S friends being present, thought of *Him*; and took an opportunity of moving it to him, and importuned him to engage in this controversy. Upon which he preached a set of sermons on the prophecies relating to the Messiah, in a regular order, suited to a history of the life of Jesus; and then made extracts out of them, which he published under the title of "*The Prophecies of the Old Testament, respecting the Messiah, considered and proved to be literally fulfilled in Jesus*;" in answer to the above book. This work of his met with the approbation of some men of learning and judgment, and even of the very person above mentioned, whose assertion was the occasion of it.

A list and catalogue of the various pieces published and during this controversy, was collected by that most indefatigable Inquirer after books, the learned *Fabritius*, of *Hamburg*, in his *Salularis Lux Evangelii*, &c. c. 9. p. 173, &c. *Hamburg*, 1731.

The ministry of Mr. GILL being acceptable not only to his own people, but

likewise to many in other churches, and of other denominations; some gentlemen moved among themselves to set up a lecture on some day in the week, that they might have the opportunity of hearing him. Accordingly, several met together, and forming themselves into a society, agreed to have a lecture on *Wednesday* evenings, and set on foot a subscription to support it. Upon their invitation, Mr. GILL undertook that lectureship, and continued in it with great constancy, applause, and usefulness, It was set up in the year 1729, and he continued preaching it (very rarely missing) until 1756, near twenty-seven years when he gave it up, by reason of age and multiplicity of work upon his hands; and preached a farewell sermon to the Society, on *Acts* 26:22, 23, which was published that year. This lecture was productive of many of his printed works; not only of single annual sermons on various subjects, but of whole treatises as on *the Trinity*, and *Justification, The Cause of God and Truth*, and of several of his *Commentaries* on some of the books, both of the Old and of the New Testament, of all which more hereafter.

In 1730, a set of gentlemen, chiefly of the *Independent* denomination, thought fit to set up a temporary lecture for the winter and spring seasons following; and chose *nine* ministers to preach in it, on some of the most important doctrines of Christianity: each having his subject allotted to him. The ministers were, Mr. *Robert Bragge*, Mr. *Thomas Bradbury*, Mr. *John Hurrian*, Mr. *Thomas Hall*, Mr. *Peter Goodwin*, Mr. *John Sladen*, Mr. *Abraham Taylor*, Mr. *Samuel Wilson*, and Mr. *John GILL*. These accepted of the invitation given them, and preached two sermons each, on the subject respectively assigned them and when they had finished the course of them, the gentlemen desired the sermons might be printed; which was accordingly done, in two volumes in 1732. Mr. *GILL*'s subject was the *Resurrection of the Dead*. His two sermons upon it have since been printed separately.

An unpleasing incident happened on the printing the above volumes of sermons. Mr. *Taylor*, Mr. *GILL*, and another or two of the lecturers, agreed to read their sermons in private concert with each other, before they were printed; that they might have one another's friendly assistance, in the correction and improvement of them, as might seem necessary. Now Mr. *GILL* had observed some passages in Mr. *Taylor*'s Sermons, when delivered from the pulpit, which he thought injurious to truth, and calculated to offend many worthy persons. He therefore determined, when those sermons should be read at this private and friendly meeting to have pointed out, in the kindest

and most respectful manner, such passages as he wished to see softened or expunged; proposing to give his reasons: but when the sermons were read, these passages did not appear, to the great pleasure and satisfaction of Mr. GILL; who supposed that Mr. *Taylor* had seen reason in his own mind to strike them out. But when the volumes were published, these passages stood, to the great surprise of Mr. GILL, and, as he thought, with additional keenness and severity. This obliged him to send Mr. *Taylor* a printed letter on the subject of *God's everlasting love, eternal Union*, and some other things which Mr. *Taylor* had reproached with great vehemence: having now no other way of doing justice to truth, and vindicating the faithful preachers of it. This letter was written with great respect, temper and candour; without any undue heat, or unbecoming reflections. Nevertheless, this, together with a treatise on *Justification*, which Mr. GILL had published before, put some interested persons on raising an hideous cry of *Antinomianism* against him. The treatise on *Justification* is the substance of some sermons, preached at his Evening-lecture, and which, by the society that supported it, was desired to be printed. The only thing in it objected to when published, was what is said concerning the *date* of justification: and which yet was said in great agreement. with some of the best and most learned divines, whose testimonies were produced by Mr. GILL in favour of his sentiments. But all this could not protect him from the clamour raised against him, by such as did not wish well to him and his ministry. No answer, however, was given to either of these tracts, or to the arguments in them; but a continued torrent of din and noise flowed from some pulpits, for a long time.

Six years after this, Mr. *Taylor* having obtained a degree of Doctor in Divinity, and got himself at the head of an Academy, became still more assuming, imperious and insolent. Continuing to bear Mr. GILL a grudge for what was past; he published what he called *An Address to young Students*: in which he cautioned them to avoid some things as leading to *Antinomianism*. This performance had several very acrimonious flings at some good men, and their writings; particularly, at Mr. GILL, and an expression of his concerning good works, which he represented in the worst light he could, and treated with the most reviling language that could well he made use of: This obliged Mr. GILL to write a small treatise concerning *The Necessity of good works to Salvation*: in which having explained, stated, and defended his sense of that matter; at the close of all, being warmed into a quick sensibility of the

haughty and insulting language used by his insolent and overbearing adversary, some things were forced and drawn from him, in self-vindication, which he afterwards could have wished had not dropped from his pen.

In 1731, Mr. GILL published a *Treatise on the Doctrine of the TRINITY*, which was the substance of several discourses delivered on that subject at the *Wednesday Evening Lecture*, and published at the request of the Society: the occasion of which was, the progress of *Sabellianism* among some of the *Baptist* churches. In particular, one Mr. *Davis*, a Physician, and a Baptist member, wrote a treatise called *The great Concern of Jew and Gentile*; with some other little pamphlets, which had a tendency this way; and which, though very trifling things, having scarce any shew of argument and reasoning in them, yet it seemed expedient they should be taken notice of in the course of these Sermons on the Trinity: the Gentleman being a man of a good moral character, and of a soft, insinuating behaviour: his profession also introduced him into several families, where he might have the opportunity of inculcating and spreading his notions.

A society of young men, who kept up an Exercise of Prayer, on Lord's-day Mornings, at Mr. GILL'S meetinghouse at *Horsly-down*, desired him to preach a Sermon to them, *December 25, 1732*, which he did, on the subject of *Prayer*: and, in the year following, on the same day of the month, he preached another, to the same society, on *singing* of Psalms, from 1 *Corinthians* 14:15, which were successively printed at their request. Both these Sermons were, afterwards, reprinted together. That upon *Singing*, some years after the publication of it, fell into the hands of Mr. *Solomon Lowe*, a learned and celebrated Grammarian of *Hammersmith* who wrote Mr. GILL a Letter upon it, dated *Sept. 1747*, in which he informs him,

"he took pleasure, at his vacant hours, to read every thing that is useful, in order to extract the quintessence of its flowers for the use of a *Supplement to Chambers' Cyclopedia*;"

to the carrying on of which work, he was nominated, to the proprietors, as the properest person, by Mr. *Chambers* himself, a little before his death, and had the offer of it, but declined it, because of his stated business. However, having a great regard to that work, Mr. *Lowe* was willing to help it forward to the best of his power: and therefore continued to digest whatever offered to that purpose. Meeting with the above discourse on *Singing*, he extracted from

that for the article of *Psalmody*; and was pleased to give the following commendation of it:

"I find there is no dealing with you, as with the generality of writers. The afore-mentioned piece is *all* quintessence: so that, instead of extracting, I have been obliged to copy the greatest part of it, to do justice to the article of *Psalmody*, and know not where to find any hints for the improvements of it."^[3]

But Mr. *Lowe* dying quickly after, it does not appear that any use was made of his papers in the Supplement published; at least with respect to any extract from Mr. GILL'S writings.

In 1735, and in the three following years, Mr. GILL published his *Cause of God and Truth*, in four volumes, octavo. In the *first* part of this work, those passages of scripture are considered, which the *Arminians* make use of in favour of their sentiments concerning Election and Reprobation, Original Sin, Redemption, Free-will, and the Perseverance of the Saints; and the true sense of such passages is given, and they are vindicated from the false glosses put upon them. In the *second* part, the passages of Scripture, which are made use of by the *Calvinists* in support of their sense of the above doctrines, are explained, the true meaning of them defended, and the cavils of the *Arminians* answered. The contents of those two parts are extracts from sermons preached on those several texts, at the *Wednesday Evening Lecture*. The *third* part contains the arguments from reason against these doctrines. And the *fourth* part gives the sense of the ancient fathers, before *Austin*, concerning those points. This last part was nibbled at, by one *Heywood*, a pert, worthless man, who translated Dr. *Whitby's* treatise *On Original Sin*: in the introduction to which, he brings some impertinent charges against Mr. GILL, with respect to his translation and sense of some passages in the ancients: to which Mr. GILL replied, in a postscript to his answer to the *second* part of the *Birmingham Dialogue* writer, 1739; which will be taken notice of hereafter. *Heywood*, upon this, published a pamphlet, called, *A Defence of his Introduction, &c.* full of cavils, calumnies, and defamations: which was answered by Mr. GILL, in a tract, entitled, *A Vindication of the Cause of God and Truth, &c.* part 4th, relating to the sense of the ancients about some points in controversy with the *Arminians*, in which more pains are taken, than so paltry an opponent deserved. This was printed in 1740.

In 1736, was published, by an anonymous writer, a pamphlet, called, *Some Doctrines in the Supralapsarian Scheme examined, &c.* the author of it, it seems, was one, *Job Burt*, of *Warwick*: a man very ill qualified for polemical writing; being entirely ignorant of the scheme he undertook to examine, as well as of most other things: however, as this was pointed chiefly at some writings of Mr. GILL, and at the doctrines of God's everlasting Love, eternal Union, Justification, &c. he thought fit to give an answer to him, the same year, in a tract called *Truth Defended, &c.* The stupidity, insolence, and impertinence of the man, sometimes provoked Mr. GILL to use a little more acrimony and severity than perhaps some might think needful.

A new meeting-house being erected by the Baptists, at *Birmingham* in *Warwickshire*; and their interest a little reviving upon it, through the preaching of several ministers who came thither; excited the jealousy, it seems, of one Mr. *Samuel Bourne*, a *Presbyterian* minister of the same place: who, hereupon wrote *A Dialogue between a Baptist and a Churchman*, under the name of *Consistent Christian*, part I. in which he set the *Baptist* ministers, that came to preach at *Birmingham*, in a most ridiculous light, and fell foul on the doctrines of Christ's Divinity, Election, Original Sin, irresistible grace in conversion, imputed Righteousness, Perseverance in grace, and adult Baptism by immersion. The *Baptists* in those parts, thought it was proper that an answer should be returned and, upon application, Mr. GILL undertook to refute it; and the refutation was published in 1737. The author of *the dialogue* then wrote a *second part*, on the same subjects; taking very little notice of what Mr. GILL had written, not so much as mentioning his name. To this also he returned an answer in 1739. But had no reply to either of his answers at that time, except some abusive paragraphs in a newspaper, the *St. James's Evening Post*, December 31, 1737, in the first of these paragraphs, Mr. *Bourne* complains of a false charge of Plagiarism brought against him, or of stealing what he had wrote on the article of election, from Dr. *Whitby*: of which Mr. GILL made proof, in a postscript to a sermon of his called *the doctrine of Grace cleared from the charge of Licentiousness*, preached December 28, 1737, by placing Dr. *Whitby's* words and this author's in parallel columns. In this year he wrote and published *Remarks on Mr. Samuel Chandler's Sermon preached to the societies for the reformation of Manners, relating to the moral nature and fitness of things*.

When Mr. GILL first came to settle in *London*, which was in the year 1719,

he became intimately acquainted, as he had been in some measure before, with that worthy minister of the gospel, Mr. *John Skepp*, author of the *Divine Energy*: the *second* edition of which Book, in 1751, Mr. then Dr. GILL, revised, and divided the work into *chapters*, with contents, for the more easy reading and better understanding it; and prefixed a recommendatory preface to it, the memory of that excellent man being dear to him. This Gentleman, though he had not a liberal education, yet, after he came into the ministry, through great diligence and industry, acquired a large share of knowledge in the languages in which the Bible was originally written: and especially in the *Hebrew* language in which he took immense pains, under the direction of a *Jew* teacher, and even dipped into *Rabbinical Hebrew* and writings pretty deeply. As Mr. GILL had taken great delight in the *Hebrew* language, as before observed, his conversation with this worthy minister rekindled a flame of fervent desire to obtain a more extensive knowledge of it; and especially of *Rabbinical* learning, which he then had but small acquaintance with, and little notion of any usefulness from it, which he now began to perceive, and more fully afterwards. This Gentleman dying in a year or two after Mr. GILL'S fixing in *London*, he purchased most of his *Hebrew* and *Rabbinical* Books; and now went to work with great eagerness, in reading them; and many others, which he afterwards obtained of a Jewish *Rabbi* he became acquainted with. He plainly saw, that as the New Testament was written by men who had all of them been Jews, and who, notwithstanding their being inspired, must needs retain and use many of the idioms of their language, and allude to rites, ceremonies, and customs peculiar to that people; so the writings of the Jews, especially the more ancient ones, who lived nearest the times of the apostles, could not but be of use for the better understanding the phraseology of the New Testament, and the rites and customs to which it frequently alludes. With this view, he set about reading their *Targums*, the *Misnah*, the *Talmuds*, the *Rabbot*, their ancient commentaries, the book of *Zohar*, and whatever else, of this kind, he could meet with: and in a course of between 20 and 30 years acquaintance with those sort of writings, he collected together a large number of observations. Having also gone through, in this time, most part of the New Testament, in a way of *Exposition*, in the course of his ministry; he put all together, and in the year 1745 proposed to publish an *Exposition of the whole NEW TESTAMENT*, in Three Volumes, Folio. And the work meeting with encouragement very quickly it was put to

the press the same year, and was finished, the *First* Volume in 1746, the *Second* in 1747, and the *Third* in 1748.

Towards the close of this work, in 1748, Mr. GILL received a Diploma from the *Marischal* College and University at *Aberdeen*, creating him Doctor in Divinity, on account of his knowledge of the Scriptures, of the *Oriental* languages, and of *Jewish* antiquities, as expressed in the Diploma: along with which, or quickly after, he received two Letters, one from Professor *Osborn*, Principal of the University, declaring to him, that on account of his learned defence of the true sense of the holy Scriptures against Deists and Infidels, and the reputation his other works had procured him in the learned world, as soon as it was moved in their University to confer the degree of Doctor in Divinity on him, it was readily agreed unto: which motion was declared to be without the knowledge of Mr. GILL; and that he [Dr. *Osborn*] as *Primarius* Professor, made a present to him of what was due to him on such a promotion. The other Letter was from Professor *Pollock*, Professor of Divinity in the same University, and afterwards Principal of it: in which he signified to Mr. GILL, that their Society of the *Marischal* College had, with great cheerfulness, created him Doctor in Divinity, on account of that spirit of learning which appeared in his excellent Commentary on the New Testament; and congratulated him upon it.

In 1749, the Doctor wrote a treatise on *The divine Right of Infant-Baptism examined and disproved*; this was occasioned by a pamphlet, printed at *Boston* in *New England*, in 1746, written by Mr. *Jonathan Dickinson*, of *Elizabeth Town* in *New Jersey*, and afterwards President of the College there, which was entitled, *A brief Illustration and Confirmation of the Divine Right of Infant Baptism*. What put this Gentleman on writing it, was, the increase of the Baptist interest in *New England*, and the parts adjacent. This pamphlet being boasted of, and multitudes of them being spread about, it being printed in several places in order to hinder the growth of the Baptist interest; the Baptists sent it over to Dr. GILL, requesting him to write an answer to it: which he did, in the treatise before observed. To this, *Peter Clark*, M. A. pastor of a church in *Salem*, replied, in a book, called, *A Defence of the divine Right of Infant Baptism*; consisting of 450 pages more, stuffed with things impertinent to the controversy, printed at *Boston*, 1752. To this also the Doctor returned an answer, in a Letter to a friend at *Boston*; which was printed there in 1754, with a fourth edition of a Sermon of the Doctor's

preached at *Barbican*, upon Baptism, Nov. 3, 1750.

A pamphlet, boasted of as unanswerable, being published under the title of *The Baptism of Infants a reasonable Service, founded upon Scripture, and undoubted apostolic Tradition*. The Doctor published an answer to it, 1751, entitled, *The Argument from apostolic Tradition in favour of Infant-Baptism, with others, &c. considered*: along with which was published *An answer to a Welch Clergyman's Twenty arguments for Infant-Baptism*; and to the whole were added, *The Dissenter's Reasons for separating from the Church of England*; written chiefly for the use of the Baptist churches in *Wales*; and were therefore translated into the *Welch* language, occasioned by reflections cast upon them by the said Clergyman. On account of the first tract, *The Argument from apostolic Tradition, &c.* the Doctor received two Letters from a *Franciscan* Friar at *Seville* in *Spain*, (who signed himself *James Henry*) dated 1754, and 1756, in the first, he desired to be sent him, by a master of a vessel whom he named, *The Dissertation on the Tradition of the Church concerning Infant-Baptism*: (induced, as it should seem, by the title of the tract) declaring himself a lover of all learned men, of whatsoever profession. The pamphlet was accordingly sent to him. In his second Letter, he owns the receipt of it; says, he had read it with a great deal of pleasure; and purposed to draw up a few observations upon it in a candid and friendly manner: believing, that Dr. GILL would yield to *inspired* apostolic tradition, if clearly made out and proved to him. He concludes with wishing for peaceable times, that he might have the pleasure of a correspondence with him. But the Earthquake at *Seville*, which was at the same time with that at *Lisbon*, obliged him (as the Doctor understood by a master of a vessel) to go up further into the country: and he heard no more of him afterwards.

In 1752^[4], the Doctor wrote an answer to a pamphlet called *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints*; written, as it after appeared, by Mr. *John Wesley*: who, in another pamphlet, shifted the controversy, *from Perseverance to Predestination*. Mr. *Wesley* entitled his piece, *Predestination calmly considered*: in which he mostly contents himself with haranguing on Reprobation. To this the Doctor returned an answer the same year, and to the exceptions Mr. *Wesley* had made to part of his *Treatise on Perseverance*, respecting some passages of scripture brought into the controversy: without attempting, however, to answer one argument advanced by the Doctor in vindication of that doctrine.

In 1753, a pamphlet being published, entitled, *Pedobaptism; or, a Defence of Infant-Baptism in point of antiquity, &c.* by an anonymous letter writer: the Doctor replied to it, in a tract, called, *Antipedobaptism: or, Infant-sprinkling an innovation*: to which the same author made a rejoinder; but there being nothing new advanced, nor the antiquity of Pedobaptism cleared, but mere wrangle and cavil, the Doctor thought fit to take no notice of it.

In 1755 he republished Dr. *Crisp's* works, in two volumes, octavo, with explanatory notes on such passages as had been excepted to in them, or needed any explanation: with some Memoirs of the Doctor's Life.

In 1756 he quitted his *Wednesday-Evening* Lecture, as before related, and published proposals for printing his *Exposition of the prophets, both the larger and smaller*, in two volumes, folio: and which were published in the two following years, 1757, 1758; with an *Introduction* to them on prophecy, and with a *Dissertation* at the close of them concerning the *Apocryphal writings*.

In the year 1759, a new Meeting-house was erected, by the church under his care, in *Carter-lane, St. Olave's-street, Southwark*: which was opened *October 9*, in the same year, when two Sermons were preached by him on *Exodus 20:24*, and afterwards printed, entitled, *Attendance in places of religious worship, where the divine Name is recorded, encouraged*.

In 1761 the Doctor published proposals for printing the remainder of his *Exposition of the Old Testament*; beginning at *Genesis* and ending with *Solomon's Song*: the first Volume of which was published in the beginning of the year 1763; the Second, in the beginning of the year 1764 the Third, in the beginning of the year 1765: and the Fourth, and last, in the beginning of the year 1766.

In the year 1765, some copies of Mr. *Clark's Defence of the Divine right of Infant-Baptism*, being imported from *America*, and published here, occasioned the Doctor to reprint and republish his *Reply* to it. Another treatise also being imported and reprinted here, about the same time, called, *A fair and rational vindication of the right of Infants to the Ordinance of Baptism*, being the substance of several discourses from *Acts 2:29*, by *David Bostwick*, M. A. late minister of the Presbyterian church in the city of *New York*; the Doctor made some strictures on that performance, which are published at the end of the *Reply to Mr. Clark*.

A little after this, the Rev. Mr. *Carmichael*, minister of the gospel in *Edinburgh*, being convinced of the truth of believers' Baptism by immersion, came to *London* to be baptized, and was baptized by the Doctor: at which time, a Sermon was preached from 1 *John* 5:3, which a few days after, was reflected upon in one of the public news-papers. This obliged the Doctor, contrary to his inclination, to publish his Sermon, which he entitled, *Baptism a divine commandment to be observed*: with some marginal notes, vindicating it from the gross abuses, misrepresentations, and cavils of the letter-writer in the news-paper. This affair made a great stir: and many things appeared in the said paper, for and against: until the writer of the newspaper himself put a stop to it, by refusing to publish any more letters on either side.

The Doctor being called upon, in another newspaper, either to expunge, or explain, a paragraph in his *Preface* to his *Reply to Mr. Clark's Defence*; he chose the latter and published a tract, called, *Infant Baptism a part and pillar of Popery*; with a postscript, containing an answer to the Letters of *Candidus*, the other writer before mentioned. This tract gave great offense to some Pedobaptists; but no reply was made to it.

In 1767 the Doctor published a *Dissertation on the Antiquities of the Hebrew Language, Letters, Vowel-points, and Accents*: which was treated with candor and ingenuity by the *Critical Reviewers*: who, though they could not agree with every thing in it, particularly concerning the authority of the Points, yet allowed the work was executed with great industry, sagacity, and learning: and, when they object any thing, give their reasons for it: upon which the Doctor, in some loose papers, has made some curious and learned remarks, especially the following: whereas he observes, that *κεφαία* in *Matthew* 5:18, is no other than the Point *Chirek* made *Greek*, they express their wonder at it; and think he must mistake *רש* for *ורק*: But he observes, the wonder will cease, when the power of the *Hebrew* Letters of which *Chirek* consists, is considered: which obtains in other languages; especially in the *Greek*. So k is pronounced by *κ*. So the City *קט*, Church, or *Karan*, in, *Septuagint* (*Gen.* 11:32.) called *kappav*: and by *Ptolemy*, *Herodian*, and other writers *kappa*; and the point *Chirek* itself is sometimes, in the *Septuagint*, used as an *ε*, or an *η*: as in *Seon*, *Cedius*, *Jesse*, *Jezebel*: yea, the very name of it is *Chirek* with Jewish writers. *Schindler* Lexic. fol 662. So then you have the first and principal syllable in the word, *kap*, and there is only *פ* at the end of the word to be accounted for: and that and *ה*, in some languages, are used

promiscuously: as in *Behek* and *Behab*. Besides, in the *Chaldee* or Syro-Chaldean language, used in Christ's time, and before; the same word, which ends in *פן*, *κα*, has the termination of *ky*, or *αα*, or *aia*. Thus *araka* is read *araa* in the same verse, *Jeremiah* 10:11, and then, put all together, and you have the word *κεραα* or *κεραια*. Now as our Lord refers to the least letter (*Yod*) in the *Hebrew* language, and from which all other letters are derived, as some learned men have observed, this being a part and branch of each of them; so it need not be wondered, that he should refer to the least Point in that language, and from which all the rest come: and, indeed, though the Points are represented as very numerous, yet there is but one Point in the whole language: and that is *Chirek* [...] diversified, or placed in a different position. Thus *Patach* is only *Chirek* diteted; *Kametz* is that in a cluster; *Segol* is three of them set in a triangle; *Tzere* is two of them in a direct line and *Sheva* is two more in a perpendicular one; and *Kibbutz* is three of them placed obliquely, when placed in the middle of *Vau*, or above that, or another letter, it is either an *u* or an *o*. And the like observations may be made on all the corn pound vowels. To derive this word from the *Hebrew* word *ורק*, which signifies an *horn*: as if our Lord referred to some corniculated apices, pricks, or spikes upon the tops of some letters, not in use in his time (as *Capellus* and others); is mere fiction and conceit.^[5] There is such a vein of ignorance, dullness, and ill-nature, runs through the whole of what the *Monthly Reviewers* say, that the Doctor thought them too low for him to make any remarks upon. The very learned Professor of the Oriental languages, in the University of *Edinburgh*, Dr. JAMES ROBERTSON, had another opinion of Dr. GILL'S performance: for in a Dissertation on the antiquity of the points, prefixed to his truly learned and useful *Clavis Pentateuchi*, Dr. Robertson has these words:

"*Vir Doctissimus JOANNES GILL, et qui in Rabbinicis scriptis versatissimus esse videtur, in Dissertatione sua de punctorum vocalium antiquitate, summa cum industria et doctrina, ne vestigium quoddam masoretharum, ut pote punctorum vocalium auctorum, in tota historia Judaica, a nato Christo ad annum 1037, addesse affirmat, probatque.*"

In the same year, Dr. GILL collated the various passages of the Old Testament, quoted in the *Misnah*, in the *Talmuds*, both *Jerusalem* and *Babylonian*, and in the *Rabboth*; and extracted the variations in them, from

the modern printed text; which he sent to Dr. *Kennicott*, at *Oxford*, then collating the several *Hebrew* manuscripts of the Old Testament to be met with in any of the libraries in *Europe*; and which Dr. *Kennicott* thus acknowledged his receipt of, in his state of that collation, published in the year 1767:

"I have been highly obliged by the Reverend and Learned Dr. GILL, who has extracted and sent me the variations from the modern Bibles in the passages quoted in the *Talmuds*, both of *Jerusalem* and *Babylon*, and also in the *Rabboth*: which variations, in these ancient books of the Jews, affect the *Hebrew* text of the *Old Testament*, as the variations in the ancient christian fathers affect the *Greek* text of the *New*."

In the year 1769, he published a *Body of Doctrinal Divinity*, in Two Volumes, Quarto; which contain the substance of what he delivered from the pulpit to the people under his care, for the space of upwards of five years: and gave the public reason to expect a *Third Volume*, then preparing, which would contain a *Body of Practical Divinity*, and which he proposed to do when he began his course of doctrinal Divinity, as his Introduction to that shews.

In the year 1770, his *Body of Practical Divinity* was published: which, with the other Two Volumes, completes his whole scheme of Divinity; which he thought would be the last work published by him. At the end of it, is a *Dissertation concerning the Baptism of Jewish Proselytes*: This the Doctor had upon his mind for many years to write; supposing it not very probable, that any of the Baptist denomination might soon rise up and take the pains in the study of Rabbinical literature he had done, and which yet was necessary for such a performance. He therefore thought proper to draw up the whole compass of the argument, in the above dissertation, and leave it behind him, that any one might make himself master of it, who should choose it, and use it as occasion should offer. It has since been published separately, in octavo.

Having collected together such outlines, as we were able, of the LIFE and WRITINGS of this excellent and learned Divine; ***we shall close these MEMOIRS with giving a short CHARACTER of him.***

IT pleased God to endue Dr. GILL with strong mental powers, and with an eager and intense desire after improvement in knowledge. This appeared very early, in his ardent thirst after learning; which he diligently sought for, and

the best means to obtain it; and with great industry improved every opportunity afforded him: so that, in a few years, he made a considerable progress in the knowledge of the learned languages, and all kind of useful literature.

As he grew up in life, he pursued his studies with indefatigable diligence, and the closest application: by which means, under the blessing of God, he attained to a very superior degree of solid and useful learning, and acquired on established character for it, amongst the learned of all denominations.

His natural and acquired abilities were very considerable. He had a quick and clear understanding, a solid and penetrating judgment, a fertile invention, with a strong, capacious, and uncommonly retentive memory. Blessed with these gifts, he was enabled to improve them to the glory of God, which was the grand object he had in view. But, above all, his *soul* was enriched with a considerable measure of *GRACE*, and the gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT; whereby he was abundantly fitted and qualified for, and made an able Minister of the New Testament. He was favoured with a large experience of the grace of God; great acquaintance with the scriptures; and clear light into the gospel of JESUS CHRIST.

As a minister, his deportment in the pulpit was grave and solemn: his language plain and expressive: his method natural and easy: his reasoning strong and nervous: his addresses affectionate: his matter substantial, clear, and consistent, well digested, and delivered with great fluency and accuracy, which failed not to command and fix the attention of his hearers. In *prayer*, he poured out his soul with great freedom and fervency, with much importunity, familiarity and liberty; and, like another *Apollos*, was mighty in the scriptures, and had the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season.

The great doctrines of the gospel which he espoused, and which he at first set out with in the work of the Lord, and constantly and firmly abode by through life, even unto death; were such as respect a *Trinity* of persons in the godhead—particular and personal *Election*—the everlasting love of God—the *Covenant* of grace—the *Fall* of *Adam*, and the consequences of it—*Particular Redemption*, through the Incarnation, Obedience, Sufferings, Death, Resurrection and Intercession of the Son of God—*Pardon* through his blood—*Justification* by his righteousness—the *Efficacious Grace* of the holy Spirit in Regeneration—the *perseverance* of the Saints in Grace to Glory—

the *Resurrection* of the dead—and *eternal Life*—these truths, with all those doctrines connected with or dependent on them, this faithful servant of Jesus Christ did constantly labour to explain, illustrate, and defend: at the same time, never omitting to recommend and enforce the several *duties* which are enjoined us in the sacred oracles of eternal truth. He did not shun to declare the *whole* counsel of God, and kept back *nothing* that might be profitable to the people; constantly affirming, that those who *believe* should be careful to maintain *good works*. His ministry, by the blessing of God, was very much owned, and greatly succeeded to the awakening, conversion, comfort, instruction, edification, and establishment of many, who enjoyed the opportunity of attending upon it. And it is worthy of notice, that three persons, who had been converted under his ministry, were afterwards called to that important work themselves.^[6]

As a Pastor, he constantly and carefully watched over the flock committed to his charge, and of which he had taken the oversight, with great affection, fidelity and love; and filled up his place in the house of God with honor and usefulness. In which office he continued to his death, *above FIFTY-ONE years*; laboring, with great assiduity, for the good of souls; earnestly contending for the faith once delivered to the saints; and zealously concerned for the honor of the Redeemer, his cause and interest in the world. And nothing more filled him with grief, than, when the deity and divine filiation of the Son of God were denied, or any attempts made to lessen, or sink the dignity of his person, the virtue and efficacy of his blood, and of that full and complete salvation that is alone in him. Nor was he in the least moved from the glorious truths of the gospel, by the subtlety of any of its adversaries. He expressed the comfort he received from those words in *Acts 20:24*, *But none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God*. And through divine grace he was enabled to hold out to the last, and valiantly to contend for the truth on earth.

As an Author, this great man of God discovered uncommon abilities. His numerous publications, all written with his own hand, are, and will be, standing proofs of his indefatigable industry. Indeed, his labours were so numerous, that it may well appear, to posterity, almost incredible, that any *one* person should be author of them. Especially considering the vast variety

of authors he must have read: as appears by the many *criticisms* he has made on the languages in which the scriptures were written. The judicious elucidations of the *historical* parts of scripture, the clear explanation of the *Types* and *Metaphors*, the *Parables* and *Prophecies*; the illustrations of the TRUTHS, *Doctrinal* and *Practical*, to be found in his elaborate and voluminous *Exposition of the OLD and NEW TESTAMENT*; sufficiently shew, that this eminent minister of the gospel had, by an uncommon blessing upon his labours, attained to a large compass of useful knowledge.—Great was his acquaintance with the sacred scriptures; with *Jewish* learning; the *Oriental* tongues; the *Rites* and *Customs* of Eastern nations; *Greek* and *Roman* Poets and Historians; the liberal *Arts* and *Sciences*; *Ecclesiastical History*; the writings of the *Fathers*, and the several *Controversies* carried on in defence of Christianity.

His writings were not only received with great approbation in these kingdoms, but also in various parts of *America*. Many were the Letters he received from the ministers and others in those parts, expressing the high esteem they had for him and his works, and the great benefit they received from his labors. He was much solicited to cultivate an extensive correspondence; but this he was obliged to decline, as it would have proved too great an avocation from his studies.

His controversial tracts abundantly display his consummate ability and skill in pointing out the evil nature and tendency of erroneous principles. The weakness and fallacy of the arguments brought to support them, and the inconclusiveness of the objections raised against the truth: and in clearly stating and solidly defending the gospel, so as to silence its adversaries, and confirm the faithful in their adherence to Christ and his Religion.

The numerous SERMONS published by him, are fraught with rich, solid, evangelical truths; deep christian experience; and the most cogent motives to every good word and work. The *Body of Doctrinal and Practical DIVINITY*, which he lived to see finished and published, shews his profound, clear, and extensive understanding in the mysteries of God; the respective branches of practical religion; the nature, use, and extent of the divine law and the positive institutions of Jesus Christ.

Notwithstanding his exalted attainments, he was *meek* and *humble*, of a *tender* and *sympathizing* spirit; *weeping* with those that *wept*; and *rejoicing*

with them that *rejoiced*: ever ready to acknowledge, that all he had, of parts, learning, and grace, was freely bestowed upon him by that God, from whom comes every good and perfect gift. His conversation quite through life, was honorable and ornamental; such as became the gospel of Christ, which he professed and labored in.

His last labors, among the people of his care, was from that part of the song of *Zechariah*, the first chapter of *Luke*, the latter part of the 77th verse, and former part of the 78th verse. *By the remission of their sins,—through the tender mercy of our God*. This was the last text he preached from. His health had been on the decline for some time; and he himself thought his work was done. The decay of nature was, however, very gradual. His complaint was loss of appetite; and frequently a violent pain in his stomach: his appetite continued to fail more and more, till at last, for some time before his death, it was totally lost. He bore his visitation with great patience, composure, and resignation of mind to the divine will; without uttering the least complaint; without ever saying to God, *What dost thou?*

He could have wished to have finished the song of *Zacharias*; and also the dying song of good old *Simeon*, in which, he thought, there was something similar to his own case. And especially he longed to be at his *nunc dimittis*; *Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace*, with what follows, This was much upon his mind, and he thought, should he live to go through that, it might be, God would then give him his dismissal, and let him also depart in peace.—But his decline increasing daily upon him, he grew weaker and weaker; so that he could not proceed in his delightful work: and yet, notwithstanding he was rendered incapable of appearing in public, he continued to be employed in his study, till within two or three weeks of his death; and always appeared calm, serene, and cheerful. His faith was steady, and his hope firm, to the last.—To a relation he thus expressed himself:

"I depend wholly and alone upon the free, sovereign, eternal, unchangeable and everlasting love of God; the firm and everlasting covenant of grace, and my interest in the persons of the Trinity; for my whole salvation: and not upon any righteousness of my own, nor any thing in me, or done by me under the influences of the holy Spirit; nor upon any services of mine, which I have been assisted to perform for the good of the church; but upon my interest in the

persons of the Trinity, the person, blood and righteousness of Christ, the free grace of God, and the blessings of grace streaming to me through the blood and righteousness of Christ; as the ground of my hope. These are no new things with me; but what I have been long acquainted with; what I can live and die by. And this you may tell to any of my friends. I apprehend I shall not be long here."

He expressed himself nearly in the same manner to other friends. To one that visited him, he said, "*I have nothing to make me uneasy:*" and repeated the following lines from Dr. WATTS,

**He rais'd me from the deeps of sin,
The gates of gaping hell:
And fix'd my standing more secure
Than 'twas before I fell.**

This tranquility of soul, and inward joy and peace of mind, never left him. The last words he was heard to speak were, "*O my Father, my Father.*" And then gently fell asleep in Jesus, without a sigh or groan, on the 14th day of *October*, 1771, at his house in *Camberwell, Surry*; aged seventy-three years, ten months, and ten days.

What follows is drawn by another hand

SUCH were the indefatigable labors, such the exemplary life, and such the comfortable death, of this great and eminent person. If any one man can be supposed to have trod the *whole circle* of human learning, it was Dr. GILL. His attainments, both in abstruse and polite literature, were (what is very uncommon) equally *extensive* and *profound*. Providence had, to this end, endued him with a firmness of constitution, and an unremitting vigor of mind, which rarely fall to the lot of the sedentary and learned. It would, perhaps, try the constitutions of half the *literati* in *England*, only to *read*, with care and attention, the Whole of what he *wrote*.

The Doctor was not one who considered any subject superficially, and by halves. As deeply as human sagacity, enlightened by grace, could penetrate, he went to *the bottom* of every thing he engaged in. With a solidity of judgment, and with an acuteness of discernment, peculiar to few. He *exhausted*, as it were, the very soul and substance of most arguments he undertook.—His *style*, too, resembles himself; it is manly, nervous, plain: conscious, if I may so speak, of the unutterable dignity, value, and

importance of the freight it conveys; it drives, directly and perspicuously, to the point in view, regardless of affected cadence, and superior to the little niceties of professed refinement.

Perhaps, no man, since the days of St. *Austin*, has written so *largely*, in defence of *the system of GRACE*: and, certainly, no man has treated that momentous subject, in all its branches, more *closely, judiciously* and *successfully*. What was said of *Edward* the Black Prince, That he *never fought a Battle, which he did not win*; What has been remarked of the great Duke of *Marlborough*, That he *never undertook a Siege, which he did not carry*; may be justly accommodated to our great Philosopher and Divine: who, *so far as the Distinguishing DOCTRINES of the Gospel are concerned*, never besieged an *Error*, which he did not force from its strong holds; nor ever encountered an *Adversary*, whom he did not baffle and subdue.

His learning and labors, if exceedable, were exceeded only by the invariable *sanctity* of his *life* and *conversation*. From his childhood, to his entrance on the ministry; and, from his entrance on the ministry, to the moment of his dissolution; not one of his most inveterate opposers was ever able to charge him with the least shadow of immorality. HIMSELF, no less than his *writings* DEMONSTRATED, that THE DOCTRINE OF GRACE DOES NOT LEAD TO LICENTIOUSNESS.

Those, who had the honour and happiness of being admitted into the number of his friends, can go still *farther* in their testimony. They know, that his moral demeanor was *more* than blameless: It was, from first to last, consistently *exemplary*. And, indeed, an *undeviating Consistency*, both in his views of evangelical *Truths*; and in his *obedience*, as a servant of GOD; was one of those qualities, by which his cast of character was eminently marked. He was, in *every* respect, *a burning and a shining light*. *Burning*, with love to GOD, to Truth, and to Souls: *Shining*, as "an ensample to Believers, in Word, in Faith, in Purity;" a pattern of good works, and a model of all holy conversation and godliness.

The Doctor has been accused of *Bigotry*, by some, who were unacquainted with his real temper and character. Bigotry may be defined, *Such a BLIND and FURIOUS attachment to any particular principle, or set of principles, as disposes us to WISH ILL to those persons who differ from us in judgment*. Simple Bigotry, therefore, is, *The spirit of persecution, without the power*:

and *persecution* is no other than *Bigotry*, armed with force, and carrying its malevolence into act. Hence it appears, that to be *clearly convinced* of certain propositions, as true; and to be *steadfast* in adhering to them, upon that conviction; nay, to *assert* and *defend* those propositions, to the utmost extent of argument; can no more be called *Bigotry*, than the shining of the Sun can be termed Ostentation. If, in any parts of his Controversial Writings, the Doctor has been warmed into some little neglects of ceremony towards his assailants; it is to be ascribed, not to *Bigotry* (for he possessed a very large share of Benevolence and Candor) but to that complexional sensibility, inseparable, perhaps, from human nature in its present state; and from which, it is certain, the Apostles themselves were not exempt.

His Doctrinal and Practical Writings will live, and be admired, and be a standing blessing to posterity; when their opposers are forgot, or only remembered by the refutations he has given them. While true Religion, and sound Learning, have a single friend remaining in the *British* Empire, the *Works* and Name of GILL will be *precious* and revered.

May the Readers of this inadequate sketch, together with him, who (though of a very different denomination from the Doctor) pays this last and unexaggerated tribute of justice to the honored memory of so excellent a person; participate, on earth, and everlastingly celebrate in heaven, that SOVEREIGN GRACE, which its departed Champion so largely *experienced*—to which He was so distinguished an *ornament*—and of which he was so able a *defender*!

JULY 29, 1772.

The following Latin Inscription is engraved on the DOCTOR'S Tomb in Bunhill-Fields.

IN HOC COEMETERIO

(In this Sepulchre)

CONDVNTVR RELIQVIÆ

(Are deposited the remains)

IOANNIS GILL S. T. P.

(Of John Gill, Professor of sacred Theology;)

VIRI VITÆ INTEGR

(A man of unblemished reputation)

DISCIPVLI IESV INGENVI

(A sincere disciple of Jesus)

PRÆCONIS EVANGELII INSIGNIS

(An excellent preacher of the gospel,)

DEFENSORIS FIDEI CHRISTIANÆ STRENV

(A courageous defender of the Christian faith:)

QVI

(Who,)

INGENIO ERVDITIONE PIETATE ORNATVS

(Adorned with piety, learning, and skill,)

LABORIBVSQVE PERMAGNIS SEMPER INVICTVS

(Was unwearied in works of prodigious labour,)

ANNOS SVPRA QVINQVAGINTA

(For more than fifty years.)

DOMINI MANDATA FACESSERE

(To obey the commands of his great Master,)

ECCLESIAE RES ADIVVARE

(To advance the interests of the church,)

HOMINVM SALVTEM ASSEQVI

(To promote the salvation of men,)

FERVORE PERPETVO ARDENTE

(Impelled with unabated ardour,)

CONTENDIT

(He put fourth all his strength.)

IN CHRISTO PLACIDE OBDORMIVIT

(He placidly fell asleep in Christ,)

PRIDIE ID. OCTOBRIS A. D. MDCCLXXI

(The fourteenth day of October, In the year of our Lord, 1771)

ÆTATIS SVÆ LXXIV.

(In the seventy-fourth year of his age.)

FOOTNOTES:

[1] As the same studious disposition attended him through life, so did nearly the same remark concerning him. Nothing was more frequent, in the mouths of those who knew him, than to use this mode of affirmation, “As surely as Dr. GILL is in his study.”

[2] She died October 10, 1764, aged sixty-seven years and five months, having been married to the Doctor forty-six years, three calendar months and nineteen days.

[3] The chief design of this letter to Mr. GILL was, that her would send him every thing he had published, that he might make a like use of what he judged serviceable to the above work.

[4] In this year, March 15, The Dr. had a very memorable escape from being killed in his Study. That morning there was a violent hurricane of wind, by which much damage was done to many houses both in London and Westminster. Soon after the Doctor had left his Study, to go to preach; a stack of chimneys were blown down, which forced through the roof into his Study, breaking his writing table to pieces, and must have killed him if it had happened a little sooner. Reflecting on which remarkable preservation to a friend, who had some time before mentioned a saying of Dr. Halley, the great Astronomer, “That close study prolonged a man’s life, by keeping him out of harm’s way’;” he said, *What becomes of Dr. Halley’s, words now, since a man may come to danger and harm in his closet, as well as on the highway, if not protected by the special care of God’s providence?*

[5] It is much better to take [κεφαία](#) for the Point *Chirek* itself. Dr. Lightfoot thinks our Lord refers to the least Vowel or Accent, as well as to the least Letter: and Elias Hutter, in his Hebrew version, renders *one tittle* by one *Chirek*: and some, in Dr. Hammond on the place, understood it of *Chirek*.

[6] The Reverend Messieurs John Brine, William Anderson, and James Fall.