

SERMONS
ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS

SECOND SERIES

CONSISTING OF FIFTY-FIVE DISCOURSES

MOST OF WHICH WERE FIRST INSERTED IN THE ARMINIAN
MAGAZINE, AND AFTERWARDS REVISED, AND PUBLISHED IN FOUR
VOLUMES, DUODECIMO, IN THE YEAR 1788.

P R E F A C E.

1. A GENTLEMAN in the west of England informed me a few days ago, that a Clergyman in his neighbourhood designed to print, in two or three volumes, the Sermons which had been published in the ten volumes of the Arminian Magazine. I had been frequently solicited to do this myself, and had as often answered, "I leave this for my executors." But if it must be done before I go hence, methinks I am the properest person to do it.

2. I intend, therefore, to set about it without delay: And if it pleases God to continue to me a little longer the use of my understanding and memory, I know not that I can employ them better. And perhaps I may be better able than another to revise my own writings; in order either to retrench what is redundant, to supply what is wanting, or to make any farther alterations which shall appear needful.

3. To make these plain Discourses more useful, I purpose now to range them in proper order; placing those first which are intended to throw light on some important Christian doctrines; and afterwards those which more directly relate to some branch of Christian practice: And I shall endeavour to place them all in such an order that one may

illustrate and confirm the other. There may be the greater need of this, because they were occasionally written, during a course of years, without any order or connexion at all; just as this or the other subject either occurred to my own mind, or was suggested to me at various times by one or another friend.

4. To complete the number of twelve Sermons in every volume, I have added six Sermons to those printed in the Magazines; and I did this the rather, because the subjects were important, and cannot be too much insisted on.

5. Is there need to apologize to sensible persons for the plainness of my style? A gentleman, whom I much love and respect, lately informed me, with much tenderness and courtesy, that men of candour made great allowance for the decay of my faculties; and did not expect me to write now, either with regard to sentiment or language, as I did thirty or forty years ago. Perhaps they are decayed; though I am not conscious of it. But is not this a fit occasion to explain myself concerning the style I use from choice, not necessity? I *could* even now write as floridly and rhetorically as even the admired Dr. B——; but I dare not; because I seek the honour that cometh of God only. What is the praise of man to *me*, that have one foot in the grave, and am stepping into the land whence I shall not return? Therefore, I dare no more write in a *fine style* than wear a fine coat. But were it otherwise, had I time to spare, I should still write just as I do. I should purposely decline,

what many admire, an highly ornamental style. I cannot admire French oratory: I despise it from my heart. Let those that please be in raptures at the pretty, elegant sentences of Massillon or Bourdaloue; but give me the plain, nervous style of Dr. South, Dr. Bates, or Mr. John Howe: And for elegance, show me any French writer who exceeds Dean Young, or Mr. Seed. Let who will admire the French frippery, I am still for plain, sound English.

6. I think a preacher or a writer of Sermons has lost his way when he imitates any of the French orators; even the most famous of them; even Massillon, or Bourdaloue. Only let his language be plain, proper, and clear, and it is enough. God himself has told us how to speak, both as to the matter and the manner: "If any man speak," in the name of God, "let him speak as the oracles of God;" and if he would imitate any part of these above the rest, let it be the First Epistle of St. John. This is the style, the most excellent style, for every gospel preacher. And let him aim at no more ornament than he finds in that sentence, which is the sum of the whole gospel, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

LONDON,

January 1, 1788.