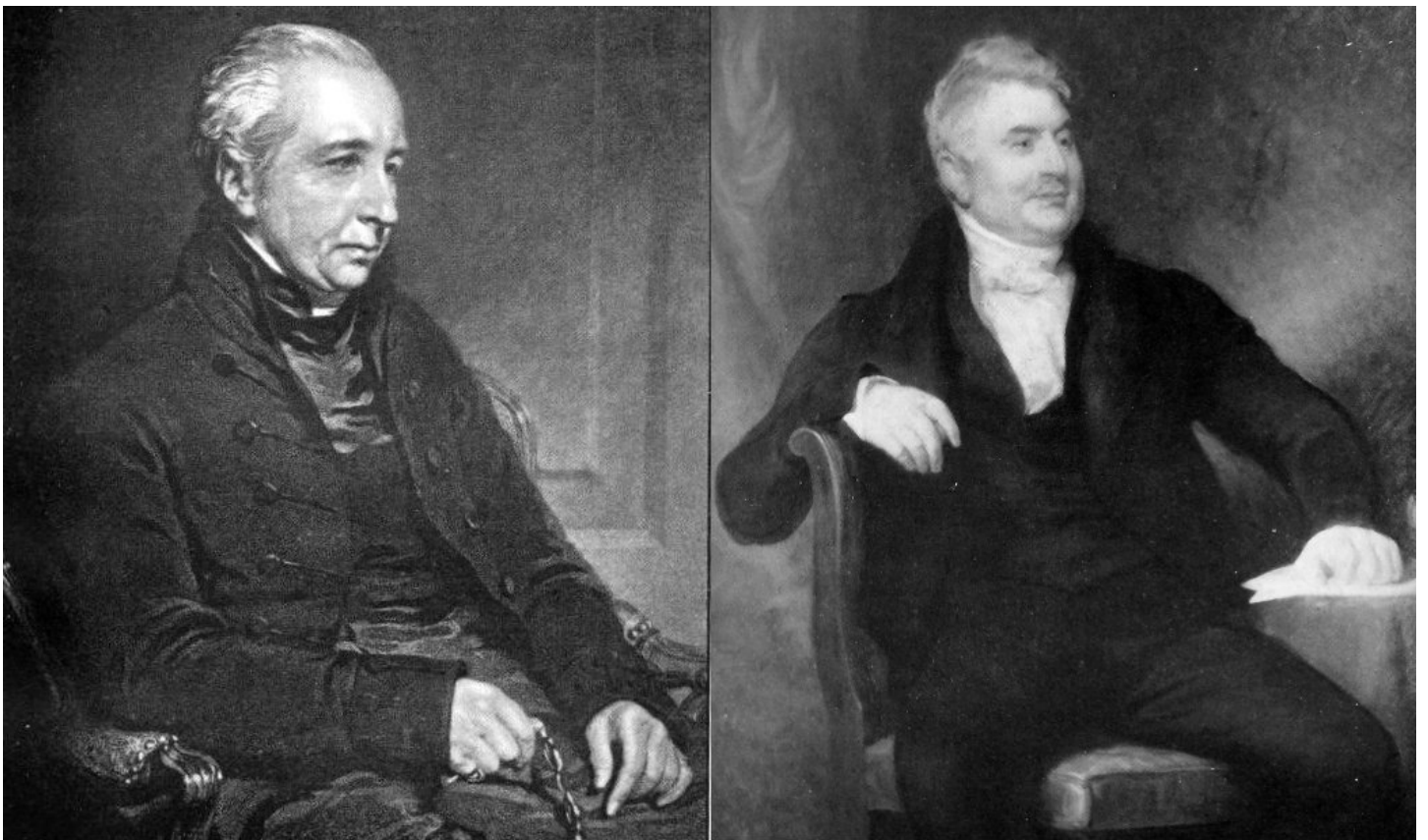


Fervour & Frivolity

A Tale of Two English Gentlemen in Edinburgh



Eleanor Harris

Cover image: Bishop Daniel Sandford, from a portrait in St John's Church; and Sydney Smith, by H.P. Briggs.

Fervour & Frivolity
A Tale of Two English Gentlemen in
Edinburgh

A lecture given on 23 September 2012 by

Eleanor Harris

WITH

Extracts from the Sermons
of Sydney Smith and Daniel Sandford

1800-1802

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Daniel Sandford and Sydney Smith: two ambitious young Oxford clergymen, sharing a passion for Enlightenment and Evensong, and a pulpit in the newest and most fashionable corner of Regency Edinburgh. Sandford was deeply sincere, spiritual, shy, diplomatic; Smith sparkling, witty, confident, quick-tempered. Sandford was accused of dullness and evangelicalism, Smith of frivolity and scepticism. People assumed they hated each other. Yet in their five-year collaboration from 1798 to 1803, both fell in love with Edinburgh and were deep influences on the city in its golden age. This paper explores their story and their relationship.

This event was preceded by *A Regency Choral Matins* by the Choir of St John's, featuring music by William Boyce (1711-1779) and the forgotten Regency composer Peter Fussell (1728-1802).

Peter Fussell followed his father as a chorister in Winchester, in 1774 succeeding James Kent as Director of Music of both the Cathedral and School. His once popular compositions were completely lost due to the scathing attitude of Victorians, such as his successor-but-one S.S. Wesley, to the music of their predecessors. The Chapter began to ask for reports on Fussell's rehearsals, which has been seen as evidence for his unprofessional neglect; yet might rather suggest a renewed interest in music amongst the Cathedral authorities. Fussell was the first organist at Winchester to have an assistant (to whose salary he contributed), and he was active in city's musical life, directing and developing a successful provincial music festival over 40 years. It would not be surprising if he took advantage of the leeway offered by the Chapter, until they, perhaps influenced by the more musical culture he created, began to demand more of him. After all, S.S. Wesley, self-proclaimed church music revivalist, was far more notorious for absenteeism than Fussell.

We have a glimpse of the extra-mural Fussell, leading the celebratory procession which heralded Winchester School summer holidays. He specially orchestrated the school song for an 'Amateur Band' including characters such as the horn-playing miller Stephen Minchin, 'of a florid complexion, with a flaxen curled wig, and a suit of pea-green; while his tight and expanded cheeks, when blowing the horn, resembled the faces of cherubim on a country tombstone.' One of the excited boys frolicking in this procession was Sydney Smith, perhaps formulating his famous irreverence, 'my idea of heaven is eating foie gras to the sound of trumpets'.

Fussell's delightful anthem 'Cantate Domino', which we have edited for this occasion, was the kind of music Daniel Sandford and Sydney Smith would have liked to hear performed in Charlotte Chapel, but despite the congregation's strenuous efforts it is unlikely the Choir of St John's were capable of music like this in Sandford's lifetime. The story of his founding of the Choir is told in another booklet in this series, '*In talent of the first rank; in inclination totally deficient*', John Mather, 1781-1850.

Fervour & Frivolity: Two English Gentlemen in Edinburgh

In August 1792, a notice appeared in the Edinburgh newspapers: 'The Rev. Daniel Sandford, M.A. Late of Christ Church, Oxford, Proposes to receive a few YOUNG GENTLEMEN into his house, whose education in the Classics and other branches of general learning he will superintend, paying particular attention to the Grammar and Pronunciation of the English Language.'¹ Sandford had hoped for an academic career, but he had fallen in love with a Scotch woman at home in Bath, and marriage excluded him from University fellowship. He was a favourite of the Bishop of London, who gave him a curacy, but he lacked the charisma and the connections to become a fashionable London preacher quickly enough to support his family in the expensive metropolis. So with the unexpected courage of the very shy, he moved to a city where he knew no-one, with an alien culture, and a fragile, divided Episcopal Church, but where living was cheap and where men of impeccable English pedigree and classical education were in demand as teachers.

Two years later, he opened a room in West Register Street for worship, and in May 1797 his congregation built themselves a chapel beside the empty space that was intended to become Charlotte Square, although the war with France had delayed its construction, and the New Town Assembly Rooms were used as a drill-hall for volunteer troops.² Yet the new chapel prospered in this half-built, militarised housing estate. By Christmas it raised a collection for the Edinburgh Charity Workhouse only one pound short of the much older and highly respectable English Chapel in the Cowgate, and almost twice as much as the other New Town Chapel St George's.³ Sandford was now thirty-one, with three small children, a house in North Castle Street, and the only place of worship and school in the West End. He brought a deep, quiet faith which was taken aback but refused to be shaken by the cut-and-thrust of metaphysical debate fashionable in Scotland at the end of the eighteenth century.⁴ To the young families moving into new houses around him, Daniel Sandford must have already seemed like the root and heart of the new community, making piety an essential element of New Town fashionability.

Meanwhile, another young clergyman was wondering what direction his career would take. Sydney Smith was five years younger than Sandford and an unmarried curate in Wiltshire. Like Sandford he was an Oxford man, steeped in the thinking of the Enlightenment and a love of Anglican worship, and eager to apply the former to

¹*Caledonian Mercury* 16 August 1792.

²*Caledonian Mercury* 13 April 1794, 8 May 1797; Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time*. (T.N.Foulis, Edinburgh, 1909) p.180.

³*Caledonian Mercury* 23 Dec 1797.

⁴John Sandford, *Remains of the late Right Reverend Daniel Sandford, D.D. Oxon. Bishop of Edinburgh in the Scottish Episcopal Church; including Extracts from his Diary and Correspondance, and a Selection from his Unpublished Sermons. With a Memoir*. Vol. 1. (Waugh and Innes, Edinburgh, 1830) p. 26.

improve the latter – but there the similarity ended. While the boy Sandford showed ‘early clerical propensities’, preaching sermons to his naughty friends, Smith invented a catapult so as to steal a turkey, and wanted to be a barrister.⁵ Whereas Sandford, whose father died when he was young, was nurtured to pursue his calling by a circle of highly intelligent bluestocking ladies, Smith was compelled by an overbearing father to enter the church. Whereas the Sandfords had been gentlemen since the Conquest, the Smiths were merchants. Sandford was a precise linguistic scholar: he won the Christ Church prize for Latin verse composition and regretted that the younger generation were allowed to neglect this discipline which he considered ‘the surest test of scholarship’; Smith’s mind was broad, creative and impatient: to him the ‘ten thousand Latin verses’ he had been forced to compose at school were ‘so much... life and time wasted’.⁶

In the last days of 1797, as Sandford’s congregation congratulated themselves on their Charity Workhouse collection, Sydney Smith wrote to his father that it was ‘definitely settl’d’ that he should take his patron’s son to ‘the university of Neufchatel’, or to Germany if the Swiss political situation deteriorated.⁷ But with Napoleon overrunning Switzerland, the Netherlands, the Papal States and much of the Mediterranean in the first months of 1798, his patron ‘settled that it should be Edinburgh’, shortly before their departure in June.⁸ Smith arrived to find Edinburgh picturesque, deserted, and smelling of poo. ‘I am in a constant balance between admiration and trepidation,’ he wrote. ‘Taste guides my Eye, where e’er new beauties spread/ While prudence whispers, ‘look before you tread’.⁹

Sydney Smith, whose eloquence had been dissipating in the most illiterate backwater of Salisbury Plain, was desperate to try a more fashionable audience; while Daniel Sandford, in the overworked early stages of starting up an ecclesiastical business, was delighted to hand over some of the preaching. So as the residents of the West End returned from their summer holidays they found a new assistant for Sandford, to vary their diet of sermons; although it was all a bit much, what with having to recommence the business of law or banking or trying to get their sons and daughters established in the world – John Lamont of Lamont, owner of the Georgian House, was not the only father whose programme of dinners and balls resulted in the ambiguous success of two daughters married by Sandford at the cost of his own financial ruin. James Maxtone of Cultoquhey, a laird of ancient name with ten children, pushed his family income to the limit to take a house in Edinburgh, resulting in a double wedding for his two daughters in 1797. One of them married an overseer from Jamaica, and they

⁵Saba Holland, *A Memoir of the Reverend Sydney Smith*. Vol. 1. (Longman, London, 1855) p.7; Sandford, *Remains* p.3.

⁶Sandford, *Remains* p.11; Holland, *Sydney Smith* p.7.

⁷Sydney Smith, Netheravon, Amesbury, Wilts, 29 December 1797, to Robert Smith, transcribed by Alan Bell.

⁸Sydney Smith, Netheravon, Spring 1798, to Robert Smith, transcribed by Alan Bell.

⁹Sydney Smith, Edinburgh, to Mrs Hicks Beach, 30 June 1798 in Sydney Smith, *Letters*. Nowell C. Smith (ed.). Vol. 1. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1953) p.20.

lived in Princes Street for much of the nineteenth century watching, and sometimes complaining about, the many changes that took place in the city, until they found their final resting place in St John's graveyard.¹⁰ As for sons, Smith commented that 'as long as [Dundas] is in office the Scotch may beget younger Sons with the most perfect impunity. He sends them by loads to the East Indias... a most important bounty to this country where every lady has 12 or 13 Children.'¹¹ The West End of Edinburgh was in economic take-off, not only for the elite, but also for the businessmen and artisans in the flats and back-streets. Masons, hairdressers, cooks, musicians, grooms, many of them English immigrants bringing new skills, scrambled to take their place in the consumer economy, on the social ladder, in the offices doled out by Dundas, and in the pews of Sandford's chapel.¹²

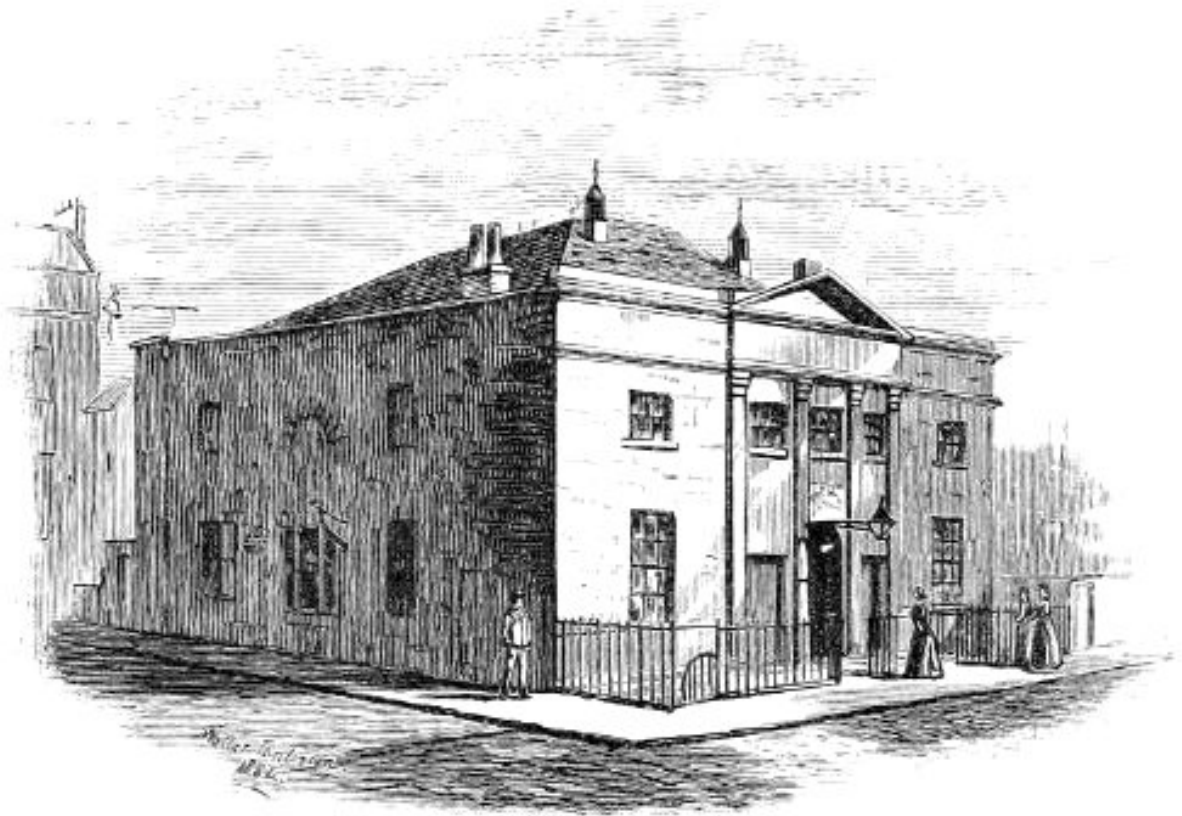


Figure 1: Charlotte Chapel, by Walter Tomlinson, from Stuart Reid, *Sketch of the Life and Times of the Revd Sydney Smith* (New York, 1883) p.48.

¹⁰'Margaret Maxtone' and 'Thomas Ramsay' in Eleanor Harris, *The Episcopal Congregation of Charlotte Chapel*, Website, archive.stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk, 2011).

¹¹Sydney Smith, 19 Queen Street, to Mrs Beach, 20 April 1803 in Smith, *Letters* p.79.

¹²Biographies of many of these people can be found at archive.stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk.

So Smith's first experience of preaching was that by Sunday morning everyone was exhausted, and he took it personally – but he began to understand the dynamic: 'The Queen's Birthday is celebrated, and everybody dances to shew their loyalty, except me; and I shew it by preaching, and have the pleasure of seeing my audience nod approbation as they sleep,' he wrote in 1800.¹³ Working hard and playing hard, eagerly demonstrating political loyalty or challenging the regime, making and spending vast fortunes, people had little attention left for preachers. Smith gave them moral discourses, remarkable amongst Edinburgh sermons for their psychological insights: how the act of visiting the Magdalene Institution changed the worldview of both lady and prostitute, or how our grand and useless ideas of global philanthropy 'mislead us from... sound practical goodness... we may speculate on worlds, we must act in families, in districts, and in kingdoms'.¹⁴ His combination of sound reasoning and humanity gained his congregation's attention: sometimes it moved them to tears.¹⁵

The higher-minded Sandford understood his sleepy congregation not in terms of a slight to himself, but as dangerous to the state of his congregation's souls: 'the tumult of a life spent in the frivolous pursuits of what I will not here call by any harsher name than that of allowable and innocent pleasure, is extremely averse to the performance of such duties as self-examination and prayer,' he advised the young members of his flock.¹⁶ Yet much of the appeal of Sandford's preaching derives from his generous, warm assumption that his flock were 'amiable' and innocent, and that it was his task to prevent them from straying by mistake. The tone was very different from that of the first Presbyterian preacher to arrive in the West End in 1814, the Evangelical Andrew Thomson: 'There prevails among you a very general and melancholy indifference to the spiritual improvement and eternal welfare of your children,' he thundered, in one of his very first sermons. 'This fact... is obvious, from the profane and vicious conduct which they so frequently exhibit, and which, in a great measure at least, must be ascribed to the criminal inattention that they receive from their parents'.¹⁷ Any West End residents who went to hear Thompson in his gargantuan new church of St George's, Charlotte Square after twenty years' diet of Sandford, who himself had a reputation for evangelical leanings, must have had a fright. It was the generous persuasiveness of Sandford's spirituality that struck Archibald Alison, minister of the eclipsed Cowgate Chapel. Alison, also a fine preacher, had held his own, and joined Sandford in the work of reviving Episcopalianism, and it was in friendly competition that they raced to complete their new St John's and St Paul's Chapels in 1818. When Sandford died, Alison preached, 'It was by this humble magnanimity, by this spirit of gentleness and

¹³Sydney Smith, 19 Queen Street, to Mrs Beach, 20 January 1800 in Smith, *Letters* p.54.

¹⁴Sydney Smith, *Six Sermons, Preached in Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh*. (Manners and Miller, Edinburgh, 1800) p. 10.

¹⁵Henry Cockburn, *Journal*. (Edmondston and Douglas, Edinburgh, 1849) p. 245.

¹⁶Daniel Sandford, *Sermons, Chiefly Designed for Young Persons*. (Manners and Miller, Edinburgh, 1802) p. 251.

¹⁷Andrew Thomson, *An Address to Christian Parents on the Religious Education of their Children*. second. (William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1815) pp. 7-9.

moderation, that he conciliated the esteem and affection of the wise and good of every persuasion.¹⁸

Sandford worked terribly hard: 'I am particularly engaged the whole of this week or might have sent you my opinion in more detail,' he wrote at the end of a long letter reviewing a Greek Lexicon for Sir William Forbes, a wealthy layman who in return for being highly active and useful to the clergy pestered them constantly with questions.¹⁹ Sandford deferentially copied out sermons for Sir William, answered his queries and edited drafts of his writings, on top of running a school and a chapel single-handed. Smith, with one pupil and ad-hoc preaching engagements, would have none of it: 'I am extremely pleas'd and flattered,' he wrote to Sir William when he asked for one of his sermons, 'but the fact is I have uniformly... decline[d] similar invitations – Will you allow me to call upon you any hour of the day to *read* my Sermon to you?'²⁰ The two men's strategies for personal success were very different: Sandford laboriously cultivated men like Sir William, who turned out to be instrumental in reuniting the Scottish Episcopal Church and making Sandford Bishop, and whose son was similarly instrumental in building St John's Chapel for Sandford. Smith, more interested in ideas than institutions, and more confident in his own abilities, did not allow demanding men like Sir William to encroach on his valuable time: he guarded his freedom.

Nowhere was this different approach more evident than when they published their first volumes of sermons. Smith, the younger man, launched his *Sermons preached in Charlotte Chapel* into press in Spring 1800, with only just over a year's worth of material. It was only a hundred copies of six sermons, but after this tentative experiment succeeded, he produced a second edition with eight more, and an outspoken preface, suggesting that poor church attendance might be the fault not of the people but of the clergy, for giving them obscure sermons, full of trite quotations, dryly delivered in cold churches. These accusations were received indignantly by the High Anglican *Anti-Jacobin Review*, which reported them to its readers, laden with sarcasm: 'Instead of... moral discourses, light, airy, and fashionable... the mistaken clergy of England notoriously persist in... enlarging on doctrinal topics.' 'We little doubted but that the writer was an episcopal clergyman of the first note and celebrity in Scotland... Our surprize was great on being informed that.. [he is] but a mere novice... [who] finding his wit was admired.. he had "instantly become, to himself, a creature of unlimited importance".'²¹ The reviewer had the measure of Smith: he was a cocky youngster, and he cut him down to size – although the result of the pruning was vigorous new growth.

Sandford waited until 1802, although he did then publish two collections in quick succession: *Sermons, Chiefly Designed for Young Persons* and *Lectures on the Epistles for*

¹⁸Sandford, *Remains*, p. 52.

¹⁹Daniel Sandford, North Castle Street, to William Forbes, 19 December 1798, National Library of Scotland Acc.4796/122.

²⁰Sydney Smith, 46 George Street, to Sir William Forbes, August 1802, transcribed by Alan Bell.

²¹*Anti-Jacobin Review*, Jan-Apr 1801, vol.8 p.374.

Passion-Week. These were intelligent, readable, sincere and heartfelt. They were not controversial or strikingly original, although they included some ingenious examples of biblical criticism. All this was recognised and commended by the reviewers at the *Anti-Jacobin* to whom Sandford came across as a clergyman 'who feels a sincere and deep concern in the eternal welfare of his hearers... When we perceive that a man is *in earnest himself*... we feel that he is in possession of a complete avenue to the heart'.²² They also commended the 'modest and sensible' preface, in which Sandford apologetically admitted that 'there are many imperfections in the following pages... but, at the present time... the slightest endeavours to defend [faith and virtue] will have their share of usefulness'.²³

Both Smith and Sandford wrote to defend religion against the march of a godless regime across Europe, which had pinned them in this corner of Britain with half-built squares and troops drilling in the Assembly Rooms. Both had met with modest success: Smith with sensation and Sandford with commendation. Both might have been expected to go on to write books. Sandford intended to: indeed, he wrote in his preface to the *Passion Week* lectures that 'the following pages contain only a part of a greater work which I am preparing for the press'.²⁴ Yet they were distracted by founding institutions: Smith the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802, Sandford the reunited Bishopric of Edinburgh in 1805, and while they both published many more sermons, lectures and letters, neither man wrote a major work.

This suggests an important characteristic of both men. Both Sandford, for all his shy and sometimes snobbish aloofness, and Smith, despite his self-sufficient and sometimes aggressive wit, were essentially collaborators, recognising their own shortcomings, doing their best work with team-members to supply their deficiencies, and in response to current events. One suspects Sandford did not have the decisive confidence, and Smith did not have the patience, to sit down for hours, alone, writing a book. Yet as the moving spirit of institutions they were tremendous. In spring 1800, as Smith was excitedly publishing his sermons, Sandford was approached by an imposing cabal including Sir William Forbes, the Earl of Kinnoull, and Alexander Fraser Tytler of Woodhouselee, about the possibility that he might reunite the Scottish Episcopal Church by becoming Bishop of Edinburgh, a project which he finally helped bring to success in early 1806.²⁵ In January 1802, as Sandford was publishing *his* sermons, Smith wrote, 'Allen, Thomson, Horner, Murray, Jeffrey, Hamilton and myself intend to undertake a review.' That October, the *Edinburgh Review* launched the New Town onto the literary and political stage, although Charlotte Square still only had half-a-dozen completed houses. Both Englishmen in Edinburgh came to these projects with an air of being outsiders, and it would be easy to dismiss both their contributions on that

²²*Anti-Jacobin Review*, May-Aug 1802 Vol.12, p.14.

²³Sandford, *Sermons for Young Persons*, p. 5.

²⁴Daniel Sandford, *Lectures on the Epistles appointed for the service of the Church of England: on the days of Passion-Week, Easter-Even, and Easter-Sunday*. (Manners and Miller, Edinburgh, 1802) p. 5.

²⁵Daniel Sandford, North Castle Street, to William Forbes, 21 April 1800. NLS Acc.4796/122.

ground: Smith departing for England as soon as the Review had been started, Sandford a clerical pawn in this game of great men. Yet their creativity, commitment and effort were decisive.

Sydney Smith and Daniel Sandford are mentioned only very incidentally in one another's biographies. Yet the nature of their close working relationship is intriguing, because these years in the emergent West End prepared them for a larger stage. Smith was more voluble than the discreet Rector, whose private opinions on this as many subjects remain a matter of some conjecture. The *Anti-Jacobin* – not so high-minded as it liked to make out – assumed it was Sandford that Smith was attacking in his objectionable preface, and used this assumption to enliven their review. In commending that 'truly respectable, and exemplary clergyman', they got Sandford's name and college wrong, and had evidently just done the Regency equivalent of googling him. 'Has he wholly overlooked the ardent, strenuous and "gratuitous" diligence, with which the excellent pastor of Charlotte Chapel, as we are well informed, unweariedly labours?' they asked.²⁶ The word 'gratuitous' had been used by Smith to denote the work clergy ought to be doing over and above the minimal 'formal and exacted duties' required to earn their stipend, but they quoted it out of context to suggest that clergy in the Episcopal Church worked for free. 'What has all this to do with the proverbial dullness of English sermons –' exclaimed Smith in an indignant letter to the reviewer. 'Mr Sandford I believe to be a very worthy, honourable, and religious man and I am sure he has too much good sense, and too much of the Spirit of a gentleman not to spurn this attempt to set at variance two clergymen who have always liv'd together upon the best terms, and without the smallest dispute public or private.'²⁷

Smith's assertiveness might have stemmed from a slightly guilty conscience. He had attempted to give up his tutoring, but the only alternative for his pupil was Sandford, whom he described to Mrs Beach as, 'a worthy, pious man and a good Scholar – but neither himself nor his wife can be considered as very agreeable people to live with, and I think him rather inattentive to the conduct of his young men out of doors.'²⁸ We know very little of Sandford's wife, but we can imagine that Sandford's disagreeableness consisted in a pedantic over-seriousness about religion, scholarship and social rank which would seem very dull after Smith's lively company; and one can well imagine how his 'magnanimous' attitude in the pulpit translated into naivety in managing teenage boys. Smith cautioned Mrs Beach that 'it would be in the highest degree improper' if his free opinions about a man whose 'livelihood depends upon his reputation' were to become public, but the result was Smith knew his continued residence in Edinburgh was because of his harsh report.

The following autumn Smith went out of his way to do Sandford a good turn, in a way which suggests that, despite his faults, he held him in affection and respect. 'There lives in this Town, as you well know, a Clergyman by the name of Sandford,'

²⁶*Anti-Jacobin Review*, Jan-Apr 1801, vol.8 p.377.

²⁷Sydney Smith to the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, 1801, transcribed by Alan Bell.

²⁸Sydney Smith, 79 Queen Street, to Mrs Beach, 2 January 1801, transcribed by Alan Bell.

he wrote to Mr Beach, 'a sensible, religious, learned man, with 7 children who from small beginnings has gained by good sense, good conduct, and good preaching, many friends, and much merited reputation.' Sandford had received a letter from the lawyer of the elderly, wealthy and childless Mr Sandford of Cirencester, who was looking for heirs. Sandford had thought it was a joke, but mentioned the letter to Smith, who happened to know that Mr Beach was acquainted with the old man, and chivvied Daniel into writing back, and then to going down to visit old Sandford. Meanwhile Sydney wrote to Mr Beach explaining the story and urging him, 'to call upon Sandford... turn the conversation upon... Edinburgh and then he might probably himself mention the name of Mr Sandford, to whom you might most conscientiously from report give a very high character.' Mr Beach's testimony 'might be of the most salutary importance,' said Smith, 'to increase the chance that a very worthy Clergyman has of being set at ease for the rest of his life.'²⁹ A month later, despite the 'great affliction' of his mother's death, Smith wrote to Mr Beach again, pressing him to 'interest yourself for a poor respectable clergyman'.³⁰ Characteristically, Sandford liked the old man, 'handsome, good-humoured... and when out of pain... very lively', believed all the lawyer's flattery and was certain that he could look forward to being 'laird' of a 'fine property, in the most lovely county you ever saw'. Smith assessed old Sandford more cynically as 'an old rich humourist' who was 'in the hands of an obscure roguish attorney'.³¹ His scepticism turned out to be justified when at the old man's death the naive Sandford was disappointed with only £700 instead of a landed estate.

There are other hints of friendship between the two men. Smith baptised Sandford's daughter Sarah in 1800, and it seems likely that Sandford baptised Smith's daughter Saba in 1802: this event was recorded in the Edinburgh Parish Register, which Charlotte Chapel was using at the time, but it unfortunately does not list administering clergymen.³² Sandford remembered one of Smith's jokes long enough to pass it on to his curate Ramsay over twenty years later. 'The late Bishop Sandford,' Ramsay reported half a century after the event, 'told me that... Sydney Smith... seeing how almost exclusively congregations were made up of ladies, took for his text the verse from the Psalms, "O that *men* would therefore praise the Lord!"... with that touch of the facetious which marked everything he did.'³³ The censorious word 'facetious' is Ramsay's Victorian one: Sandford, for all his high-mindedness, showed a Regency appreciation for the daft and satirical. 'Dean Swift, a wiser man than I... used to say that nothing was more provoking than the perverseness of inanimate things', he recalled in his diary in old age, then describing the 'sage' he met on the Rothsay Steam Packet who asked him whether he had read the Waverley novels with the comment, 'Ay, – what a

²⁹Sydney Smith, 46 George Street, to Michael Hicks Beach, 8 October 1801, transcribed by Alan Bell.

³⁰Sydney Smith, 46 George Street, to Mr Hicks Beach, 19 November 1801, transcribed by Alan Bell.

³¹Smith to Beach, 8 October 1801.

³²Charlotte Chapel Registers, digital archive, St John's Church, Princes Street, Edinburgh; OPR Edinburgh, 685/1 books 37-40 Edinburgh Libraries Microfilm.

³³Edward Bannerman Ramsay, *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*. (T.N Foulis, Edinburgh, 1857) p. 57.

clever man that Waverley must be!³⁴

There is no direct evidence of how these two young clergymen influenced each other at the start of their long ministries, but this exploration of their relationship allows us to make some educated conjectures. For a high-church man with a keen appreciation of rank and order, Sandford was surprisingly sympathetic to the Edinburgh Whigs, many of whom were members of Charlotte Chapel. Henry Cockburn recalled how in 1810, 'the Lancastrian School was a symptom and a cause of the advance of popular education, and was therefore a vital event, and a bold experiment at this time. It was the achievement of the Whigs and of the pious.' One of the leading 'pious' was Sandford, now Bishop, who actively supported the project from the start in the face of opposition from what Cockburn called 'Episcopal illiberals'.³⁵ Another leading Whig, Francis Jeffrey, proposed a particular toast to the 'liberal and enlightened' Bishop Sandford at the school's second anniversary dinner, at which point the headmaster timidly piped up to add his thanks to Sandford for his 'unremitting attention' to the school, in particular examining the children on their catechism, which was not the one he taught, but that of the Presbyterian Kirk.³⁶ Such collaborative social concern might well trace its influence to Sydney Smith, although Sandford retained his suspicion of popular government, and was appalled by Catholic emancipation.

Did Sandford influence Smith? An impression of Smith based only on his early letters and sermons is not of the universally genial and urbane figure who appears in his biographies.³⁷ He seems a young man very quick to give a confident opinion, to take the resulting criticism personally, or to feel a slight. Examples of this would include his stand-off with the *Anti-Jacobin*, his piqued tone when people snoozed in his sermons or when his pupil was invited to dine with the Earl of Clanricarde without him, and his lengthy sulk when he thought his employer Mrs Beach had snubbed his new wife.³⁸ The middle-aged Smith told his daughter that the spirit of competition in his family made them 'the most intolerable and overbearing set of boys that can well be imagined, till later in life we found our level in the world.'³⁹ When he arrived in Edinburgh he had not quite found his level.

Sandford was not an obvious role model. He was easily led: in 1816 his colleague Bishop Gleig complained that his, 'opinions are those of the last friend with whom he converses'.⁴⁰ Yet the strength and appeal of his character lay in his ability to listen, and in the unshakeable Christian faith which grounded him. These characteristics were described effusively by his son in his memoirs, but also grudgingly acknowledged by Bishop Gleig himself when he thought Sandford was dying and was afraid that if he did, theological dispute would split the church: 'he certainly gave too much counte-

³⁴Sandford, *Remains*, pp. 216,219.

³⁵Cockburn, *Memorials* p.262; *Caledonian Mercury*, 13 October 1810.

³⁶*Caledonian Mercury* 13 April 1812.

³⁷Alan Bell, *Sydney Smith: a Biography*. (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1980) p. 4.

³⁸Smith, *Letters* pp.24, 56; Letter to Mrs Hicks-Beach, Autumn 1800, transcribed by Alan Bell.

³⁹Holland, *Sydney Smith*, p. 5.

⁴⁰George Gleig to Patrick Torry, 29 September 1816 National Archives of Scotland CH12/12/2349.

nance to the follies of evangeli[cal]ism,' he said, 'but he has for some time past seen his errors; and if that torrent, which threatens to overwhelm us, be ever stemmed it must now be by that winning manner, which he possessed in a greater degree than perhaps any of his brethren.'⁴¹ One suspects that Smith, like Gleig, was irritated by Sandford's apparent timidity and gullibility, but grew to respect, and learn his 'level' from, the magnanimous authenticity which grounded him.

Smith left Edinburgh for the same reason Sandford had come to it: he had married, and had a family to support. No evidence of further contact between the two men has come to light, although they must have heard news of one another as their careers progressed, as Charlotte Square was finally completed, the Napoleonic Wars won, and Edinburgh enjoyed its years of greatest fame. Yet for both these English gentlemen in Edinburgh – for the shy, serious, scholarly, spiritual Sandford, and the witty, abrasive, extravert, brilliant, irreverent Smith, these five years were crucially formative, and sharing a pulpit in Charlotte Chapel must have helped shape the eminent public figures whom they became.

⁴¹Sandford, *Remains* pp.27, 82; George Gleig to Patrick Torry, 10 November 1820 CH12/12/2366.

Sydney Smith, *Sermons, preached in Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh (Edinburgh 1800)*

From 'On the love of our country'

Smith often describes truth as the balance between two extremes of error.

If good men are to cherish in secret the ideas, that any theory of duties we owe to our country is romantic and absurd, because bad men and foolish men have made it an engine of crime, or found it a source of error... why then the sentiments of mankind must be in eternal vibration between one error and another and can never rest upon the middle point of truth...

The love of our country has been ridiculed by some modern enthusiasts, as too narrow a field for the benevolence of an enlightened mind' But 'it would be difficult to say, whether complete selfishness, or universal philanthropy, is the most like to mislead us from that sound practical goodness, in which the beauty of Christianity, and the merit of a Christian, consist. Our sphere of thoughts has hardly any limits, our sphere of action hardly any extent; we may speculate on worlds, we must act in families, in districts, and in kingdoms. p.8-11

From 'The Poor Magdalene. Preached before the Scotch Magdalene Society'

This sermon is highly reminiscent of Henry MacKenzie's The Man of Feeling, and demonstrates the faith enlightenment thinkers like Smith and Sandford had in sympathy as a motivational force.

The most atrocious artifices are daily put in practice against the lower class of women, and by men in whom religion, education, and rank in life, ought to have infused far other principles of honour, dignity and compassion; who, besides all other considerations, ought to know, that he who sacrifices the innocence of a woman who looks up to her character, and her labour for honest support, gives up a human creature to want, and to crime, to untimely depravity, and to early death...

You feel less pity for these women, perhaps, because you associate to their former life, riot, extravagance, and mad luxury; rather associate to it the feelings of infamy, of hunger, of remorse, of houselessness, friendless, and unpitied want...

Behold the dying prostitute, so joyous once, and so innocent, and so good, behold her in some dismal recess of a crowded city, slowly yielding up her life to sorrow, and to pain. So lies this poor forgotten creature, without the blessing of parents, or the voice of kinsmen, or the sweet counsel of friends; and when you see her face pale with weakness, and her limbs withered with disease, and her dwelling loathsome from want, forget not that she has yet a sorrow which no human eye can reach...

A young female was received some time since into the Society, who, in consequence of the infamous character she had incurred, had been wholly abandoned by her poor, but respectable parents, for above four years... By the interference of the Society, the father agreed to receive his daughter, and they were brought together... When they

saw each other, there was no shame, there was no dread, there was no anger, there was no contrition; but there were tears, and cries, and loud sobbings, and convulsive embraces, and the father wept over his daughter, and loved her, and they that saw this, bear witness how blessed a thing it is to snatch a human soul from perdition, to show the paths of God to poor sinners, and to shower down the glories of virtue, and religion on the last, and the lowest of mankind...

The most delicate and amiable woman need not blush to countenance with her presence, this school of moral emendation: To be noticed by their superiors in rank, animates the exertions of these women, and lightens the task of reformation; and there is something in the sight of living purity (such as it does often live in gentle, and gracious women), that makes the heart wiser, and better in an instant. p.77-100

From 'Upon the best mode of Charity'

Jane Austen might have approved of this sermon: 'sympathy' must be attended with 'sense' and action, and not merely be a feeling of 'sensibility' to be effective in countering want. This kind of philosophy shaped the social action of Sandford's congregation in years to come, but it is interesting that Smith still thinks in terms of rural society; urban problems, although only a few years in the future, were yet to come.

Mankind can never be too strongly, or too frequently cautioned against self-deception... It is surprising how many men are cheated by flighty sentiments of humanity into a belief that they are humane; how frequently charitable words are mistaken for charitable deeds, and a beautiful picture of misery for an effectual relief of it. There are many who have tears for the chaste, and classical sorrow of the stage, who have never submitted to go into the poor man's cottage to hear his tedious narrative, and to come close at hand with poverty, and its dismal, disgusting attendants. p.138-140

He who is charitable, not from constitutional feelings, but from a wide, strong and imperative sense of duty, will remember, that he owes to the poor, not only that which he gives, but he owes to them the happy application, and judicious distribution of the gift; he owes to them a certain portion of his time, and intelligence, the exercise of that influence which education, wealth and manners always have, and always ought to have, upon the lower orders of mankind. This is the steady, enlightened compassion of an ample mind, and a good heart; this is that vigilant and wise benevolence, which makes happy cottages, and smiling villages, and fills the spirit of a just man with unspeakable delight. p.145

I wish to lay a particular stress upon visiting the poor in person... A want of charity is not always to be attributed to a want of compassion: The seeds of this virtue are too deeply fixed in the human constitution, to be easily eradicated: but the appeal to this class of feelings is not sufficiently strong; men do not put themselves into situations where they are liable to be called forth; they judge of the misfortunes of the poor through the medium of the understanding, not from the lively, and ardent pictures of sensation. we feel, it may be said, the eloquence of description; but what is all the

eloquence of art, to that mighty, and original eloquence with which nature pleads her cause; to the eloquence of paleness, and of hunger, to the eloquence of sickness, and of wounds; to the eloquence of extreme old age, of helpless infancy, of friendless want. p.151-160

From 'On the conversion of St Paul'

Smith defends the truth of the miracle of St Paul's conversion by interpreting as a dramatic instance of Enlightenment, similar to the way his Scottish audience viewed their own recent history.

Observe the singular circumstances of his conversion: he sets out from Damascus, an infidel, bloated with rage, and yearning for blood; his errand of death was a legal one, for he bore with him the credentials of cruelty, which he had eagerly fought for, and easily obtained; he went forth the accredited minister of Jewish revenge, their favourite assassin; he went forth, and the people shouted, and clapped their bloody hands. How did he arrive? With a heart softened by sorrow, and bursting with remorse; lowly, broken and penitent; not the minister, but the object of revenge; preaching Christ, and lamenting with tears and sighs, the infatuation of his past days...

St. Paul, a visionary, and a madman, would have hated the Christians worse, than in his sober mind: if not, I will venture to assert, that it is the only instance on record, where an enthusiastic supposition of intercourse with heaven has cured fanaticism, instead of increasing it ... Is there, moreover, any thing in the character of St. Paul, when he became a Christian, that can warrant this imputation of fanatical derangement? ... St. Paul at Athens makes no mention of the gospel, or the new light, or Christ, or his disciples, or Moses, or the Jewish law; he addresses them in a strain of general, and exalted eloquence; quotes their own poets in confirmation of his opinions; tells them he was come to make them that God, whom they ignorantly worshipped. p.193-199

Daniel Sandford, *Sermons, Chiefly Designed for Young Persons (Edinburgh, 1802)*'

These extracts demonstrate Sandford's high, doctrinal preaching; his optimistic attitude towards his hearers; and his enthusiasm for family and domesticity. The final extract shows Sandford's interest in 'internal evidences' of the scriptures, an idea explored more fully by the theologian Thomas Erskine, who might well have been one of the 'young persons' in Sandford's original audience. Its injunction to 'be perfect' is the conclusion of the book, a fitting exhortation to the rising leaders of Scotland's 'Age of Improvement'.

From 'Scripture the guide of youth'

I am persuaded that, by every ingenuous and amiable young person now before me, I shall be heard with patience, while I endeavour to point out the peculiar dangers of their christian warfare, and the arms with which they are to contend. (p.14)

From 'On the evidences of the Christian Scriptures'

My brethren, in your baptismal vow, when you received the sacred and solemn name of Christians, you promised that steadfastness which is here urged by the apostle (Hebrews 3.14). You have, since, many of you, deliberately vowed it at the Table of the Lord,— by your presence in this religious assembly, you allow us to hope that you have a deep sense of the profession into which you have entered, and an earnest desire of fulfilling the duties which it calls for at your hands. That your stedfastness may rest upon its proper and rational foundation, the attentive study of the evidences of your religion is to be earnestly recommended to you. (p.50-51)

Say to those who would entice you to listen to the suggestions of infidelity, which, alas! is now too prevalent everywhere for the happiness and peace of society,— say to them with the fortitude of Christian virtue,— "We are not careful to "answer you in this matter." Patient and humble enquiry has led us to the acknowledgement of God's word: In that word we find a solution to all our doubts,— a comfort to our souls when dissolved into penitence for our repeated offences,— an assurance of reconciliation with our Maker,— a balm for the calamities and distresses of life,— a support and guide in the perils of prosperity,— a sure refuge from the apprehensions of death,— and the certain prospect of an everlasting life of unutterable happiness. We will not therefore give these up— we will not resign them to the vain counsels of human philosophy,— for what do these offer us in return for our abdication of the faith? a form of virtue without the substance, a system of conduct supported only by human sanction, and therefore infirm and powerless as the broken reed on which it rests. p.61-62.

From 'On the fear of God'

There is in our nature a proneness and inclination to evil; and... in order that we may fulfil our duties in the world, or become worthy of the happiness which our religion promises us in the next, it is necessary for us to have some rule and guide of life to check this inclination... The characters requisite in such a rule and guide of life will appear, upon reflection, to be the following.

I. That it be level to every man's capacity, and suited to every man's circumstances and condition of life.

II. That it comprehend the whole scheme and system of moral duty and virtue, deterring from evil and urging to good.

III. That it regulate and strengthen every other subordinate principle which can be of service to the cause of virtue.

Such a rule will be of easy and general application— it accompanies us every where, and is always at hand to be resorted to for the regulation of our conduct at all times and in all places. And such a rule, the wise man in the text tells us, we shall find in the fear of God. p.67-69

From 'Duty to Parents'

Now, no man, believe me, who has not felt it, can by any means express the exultation, and transport, which a parent experiences in the good and virtuous behaviour of his son... That his beloved son is esteemed, approved, and honoured— that he is an example of goodness and discretion to those of his own age— that he is fulfilling all the hopes that parental affection had formed of him— that he enjoys the greatest bliss of his rational nature, and is treading that path which will lead him through present honour and respect among men, to the happiness of an eternal life: The father of such a son feels the reflected honour which the virtue of his child casts on him. p.96

From 'On the parable of the sower'

We are not commanded by the gospel... morosely to refuse to take our portion, with thankfulness to Him who maketh glad the heart of man, of the pleasures which the present life affords... No, they are not the sober and honest enjoyments of life, they are not the pure and innocent pleasures of society, from which we are restrained, and which the parable condemns as "choking the good seed;" but it is the unceasing toil of worldly men for "the mammon of unrighteousness," which diverts the soul from its proper and nobler pursuits, which chains it to the earth; it is the dissipated, luxurious, and sensual course of the votary of perpetual amusement, which distracts the mind with vanity, and fills the conscience with unavailing and dreadful remorse... The moment we find the desires of wealth, of the honours and advantages of this world, predominate in our hearts over the love of God, the obedience of his commands, our attention to religious duties, and the interests of our immortal souls, the moment that

we find the love of pleasure stealing upon us, and enticing us into the thralldom of levity and folly, we must pluck up all our resolution, we must cast aside the accursed thing, we must flee as it were for our lives. p.141-144.

From 'On the dispositions for receiving the gospel'

Its weakness of body, and its ignorance of mind, are calculated to produce in a child, lowliness and meekness, the sense of want, of dependence, of anxious desire to avail itself of the support, the wisdom, and the instruction of an elder person... And, in this seed-time of instruction, the disposition and the understanding are flexible and facile, easily moulded into any form; and retentive of the impression made. [new para] But, above all, the heart is innocent and pure; no bad passions have hitherto had opportunity to whisper their evil instructions; and whatever be the inherited corruptions of human nature, which may lurk within the breast, their seeds have not yet had time to unfold themselves; temptations have not yet assailed, to warp the mind from what is right and good; the judgement hath not yet been biassed by the false impressions of the world, and the conduct is yet guiltless. p.173-4

From 'The Precept of perfection, a divine commandment'

'Be ye perfect, even as your Father which in heaven is perfect' ... NEVER MAN SPAKE THUS...

He must take heed to the doctrine of the text, and, not listening to the evil passions within him, not yielding to the examples of violence which he may see about him in other men, he must look up to that great and glorious Being whom he is directed to imitate, and not refuse to his fellow-creatures that mercy which is daily bestowed on himself. Is not this, my brethren, a precept of much more than human benevolence? Is it not a decisive testimony of that wisdom from heaven with which He spake to whom 'the Spirit was given without measure.' The words of Christ, therefore, in the text, contain an internal evidence of the divinity of our holy religion, which is irrisistible: let us believe and obey; and, while we acknowledge with thankfulness the mercy of Almighty God, in giving us such grounds of confidence in his word, let us make it our most serious duty, as it is our greatest glory, to endeavour to 'be perfect even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.'

Daniel Sandford, *Lectures on the Epistles appointed for Passion-Week* (Edinburgh 1802)

These extracts show how close Sandford was to evangelical religion: they describe a Christianity rooted in Scripture, focused on the cross, and transformative both in inner conversion and outward mission. It was not until 1816 that the controversy over baptism forced high and evangelical Anglicans to distinguish their positions. At this time, both were preaching against a deist perspective that questioned doctrines like the divinity of Christ. Yet it was also an Enlightenment faith. Like Smith, he made much use of the idea of 'sympathy', although unlike Smith the object of sympathy is the suffering Christ. For Sandford, more distinguished as a linguist than as a theologian, exploring the Bible as a literary and historical document was intrinsic to his devotional approach.

We come not hither, to recount and to lament the sufferings of an earthly benefactor, endured to relieve us from temporal calamity; but to ponder over the atonement made for us by the SON OF GOD, to mention the loving kindness, with which he submitted to sorrow, and shame, and death, to rescue us from eternal misery. p.12

The consideration of the infinite dignity from which our blessed Saviour descended... must naturally raise within us the greatest abhorrence of sin, and the most awful dread of its consequences; and we shall forcibly be urged to the practice of that humility and patience, which, in the words of our excellent Collect, we beseech Almighty God to assist us to attain when we reflect upon the example which this scripture sets before us, of Him who "humbled himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." p.15-16

In every part of this prophecy [of the end of Isaiah], the language is particularly animated and sublime, and full of those striking images which pervade all the oriental poetry. p.33

We are strongly reminded, surely, that holiness in heart and conduct, in thought, and word, and deed, is the 'reasonable' and easy 'service' required of us, as the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith, which we can render to Him who laid down his life, 'that He might redeem us from iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of all good works.' p.95

Further Reading

Alan Bell, *Sydney Smith* (Oxford, 1980)

W.M.Jacob, *The clerical profession in the long eighteenth century, 1680-1840* (Oxford 2007)

Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of His Time* (Edinburgh, 1856)

Eleanor Harris, *The Episcopal Congregation of Charlotte Chapel, Edinburgh, 1794-1818, biographies of everyone listed in the chapel registers*, Website archive.stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk (2011)

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