

To the Anti Jacobin reviewer.-

Sr

On matters of opinion I should never think of calling in question the decisions of a reviewer. When the case is fairly stated, the public are to decide between the opposite judgements of an author & his critic: On matters of fact I think myself entitl'd to a little more latitude, & expect from your known facility of recantation, the correction of a few mistatements which have crept into your review of my sermons.-

You say that I object in general to the introduction of scripture language into Sermons & and that I consider such language as capable of inspiring no other sentiments but those of ridicule & disgust.-The passage of my preface to which you allude, & which you partly quote is this "There is bad taste in the language of Sermons evinc'd by a constant repetition of the same scriptural phrases, which perhaps were us'd with great judgment 200 years ago- but are now become so trite that they may without great inconvenience be exchang'd for others - Putting off the old man -& putting on the new man- The one thing needful- The Lord hath set up his Candlestick- the armor of righteousness etc etc- The sacred scriptures are surely abundant enough, to afford the same idea with some novelty of language; one can never be driven from the penury of these sacred writings to wear & fritter their holy language into a perfect cant, - which passes thro' the ear without leaving any sensations but those of ridicule and disgust."- Now is this passage a satire upon the introduction of scriptural language in general, or is it a satire upon the lazy introduction of the same scriptural language?- does it deny there is any charm in antient, holy words- or does it guard against the destruction of that charm by the tedious severity of eternal repetition? - I think you should have been more cautious than usual in such an accusation, because it is of a very serious nature, & if true affects my character as a Clergyman-

I was surpris'd to learn from yr review that there is scarcely a single expression borrow'd from the sacred writings in my whole book.- In the very first Sermon- there happen to be 13 or 14 Scriptural phrases.- In my 6th Sermon there are 11- the two first pages of my 3rd Sermon- consist wholly of Scripture. I have not taken the trouble of looking at any others in my first volume- and of my second I have no copy at hand- I am not I hope an ill natur'd man & am willing to beleive that the press of business in a review is so great that a critic cannot be expected to ~~measure~~ proportion his assertions, ~~by an examination~~ to facts.- I am convinc'd however these exaggerated statements are mere mistakes.- I respect every man of character too much to tell him that he intentionally perverts the truth.- Such imputations are reserv'd for the very out casts of society - for those unhappy men who have publicly confess'd themselves wilful & corrupt liars.- Your observation upon my little slips of language & my inaccurate punctuation is perfectly just, I am oblig'd to you for publicly shaming me into a more strict ~~obser~~ attention to these necessary trifles.- but at the same time that I acknowledge my inaccuracy- I am at a loss to know how you discover'd it: As the majority of instances adduc'd in support of the assertion are very unfortunately selected- consider again If it be wrong to use a plural very with World a noun of number?- If ~~Euclid would ha~~ we say the compound ratio of B & C or to B & C.- If amongst be not sometimes more harmonious than among. - but after all I submit to yr superior intelligence on these points.- from your private knowledge of the town of Edinburgh- you are probably a Scotchman- If so- English is to you a foreign language which you neither speak nor write - you therefore have in all probability, studied its minutiae more critically than I have done - [page turns]

If I have written presumptuous, petulant preface tell me so fairly, nothing more probable- nothing I should read with more tranquillity than your rebuke- with tranquillity if it were dull, - delight if it were witty, respect if it were dignified & temperate, - but whether the Rev'd Daniel Sandford serve his chapel gratuitously, or whether as is usual in private chapels the Clerk take the measure of every sitter, & charge according to latitude; whether I live in

fashionable circles, whether the pastor of Charlotte Chapel has long edified the metropolis of Scotland by his learning, what has all this to do with the proverbial dulness of English Sermons- Mr Sandford I believe to be a very worthy, honorable, & religious man & I am sure he has too much good sense , & 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 on the best of terms, & without the smallest dispute, public or private- May I be allowed in the words of the beautiful plaintive & anonymous writer in the monthly magazine¹ to express my surprise "that you are not deeply & intimately penetrated with compunction for having been thus hurried on by unmerited resentment against a single individual, to prostitute y'r pen & misapply y'r talents to the unworthy purpose of exciting prejudices amongst the innocent living (& to wonder that you do not see) the complicated mischief of such conduct in colors as strong as those in which it can be view'd by the parties themselves"

Do you mean to say because Mr Sandford is extremely attentive to his duties,- that the whole body of the English Clergy are so?- to shew the fallacy of such reasoning- allow me to put a case-, which tho' purely fictitious may serve to illustrate my argument- would it be a fair refutation of a panegyric upon the Scotch Episcopalian Clergy to say that there is one man among them of the most degraded & immoral character, who has ungratefully calumniated his benefactor and freind, whose personal infamy is only screen'd by his political violence, & who if he were not the tool of faction, would be the object of universal contempt?- I am sure you have candor enough to admit the force of this argument.- & to allow that the exception rather proves than falsifies the rule.- As for criticism and Satire I expect them as a matter of course. I did not write that preface, without knowing it was too true to be forgiven & being well aware that I should make every common place thinker my foe.- my cheek is prepared for the scratches of irascible anility- my back for the rod of wrathful dulness. - I perfectly agree with you- that a young man detected in the act of thinking for

¹ See *Monthly Magazine* May 1800. Letter concerning the Royal clan Alpine Regiment- or McGregor fencibles

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himself is a fair object for punishment, Lash me well- I know I deserve it.- but
review my works not me.- for it may perhaps be good policy in you not to provoke
me to review you-

I remain Sr with the respect that all respectable men feel for you - Yrs
etc

Sydney Smith

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MS. D.R. Bentham