

“How pleasing, at least, how alleviating and mollifying are the reflections which rise out of the doctrine of the sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, under the misfortunes to which we often hear our brave countrymen are exposed. I sometimes fancy I see an old British sailor, having spent his days in the service of his country, sinking under the weight of age and infirmities; and, during a voyage, sickening, and hastening to die. Alone in his hammock he reviews his life; and Conscience condemns it as ‘evil, only evil continually.’ God, who till now, had not been in all his thoughts, seems to summon him to an impartial judgment. He feels he cannot live, and he knows he is not fit to die. Great is his misery upon him. The pains of dissolving nature are aggravated by the agonies of his mind, oppressed with an intolerable load of guilt. Recollections of blasphemies, debaucheries, and cruelties, cleave his soul asunder. In this moment an honest messmate comes, with pity in his heart, and frankness in his eye, bringing in his hand the Holy Scriptures, the message of Almighty God to the wretched, communicated by your charity to the ship; and reads him these words, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, he shall not die; none of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; for God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. Come now, let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Instantly a new world opens to his view.

God is no longer the inexorable Judge; he speaks the language of a compassionate parent, vehemently concerned for the welfare of his child. This rebellious son melts at his voice, repents, and believes the gospel: throws himself into the arms of divine clemency, and with his last breath mixes his adoration of God with blessings on you his benefactors, by whose means the Scriptures made him wise unto salvation. All this is possible. I ask no more. The possibility of administering such relief to a fellow-creature in such distress, is enough for me.

“I sometimes fancy I see a shipwreck, all the crew, except one, lost; and he thrown upon a desolate island, the waters casting up along with him one of your Bibles upon the beach. What can the Bible do for this poor man? Let us pause. After his first excesses have subsided, after he hath found what at first he could not comprehend, that he could live on the fruits, and sleep in the shade, which the island affords,—let us suppose him sitting under a bush, and reading ‘The Most High doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou? The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.’ Would not such information as this put into his heart, if not a joy unspeakable and full of glory, yet a calm resignation to the will of Providence, which, in his condition, would be of more value than the whole world. Were such a man to enter into the spirit of the Holy Scriptures