

upper chamber where the Pentecost began. And whether it be the field where Isaac went to mediate, or the rocky knoll where Jacob lay down to sleep, or the brook where Israel wrestled, or the den where Daniel gazed on the hungry lions and the lions gazed on him, or the hill-sides where the man of sorrows prayed all night, we should still discern the prints of the ladder's feet let down from heaven—the landing place of mercies because the starting-point of prayer.—*Hamilton.*

That He hath withdrawn himself, and left this His temple desolate, we have many sad and plain proofs before us. The stately ruins are visible to every eye, that bear in their front (yet extant) this doleful inscription—*HERE GOD ONCE DWELT.* Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to show the divine presence did sometime reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct, the altar overturned; the light and love are now vanished, which did the one shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with so pious fervour; the golden candlestick is displaced, and thrown away as a useless thing, to make room for the throne of the prince of darkness; the sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous, hellish vapour, and there is, “instead of a sweet savour, a stench.” The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion; “the beauties of holiness” into noisome impurities, the “house of prayer to a den of thieves,” and that the worst and most horrid kind, for every lust is a thief, and every theft sacrilege: continual rapine and robbery is committed upon holy things. The noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed into vilest in-tinctions and embraces; to behold and admire lying vanities, to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness. What have not the enemies done wickedly in the sanctuary? How have they broken down the carved work thereof, and that too with axes and hammers, the noise whereof was not to be heard in building, much less in the demolishing this sacred frame! Look upon the fragments of that curious sculpture which once adorned the palace of that great King; the relics of common nations; the lively prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things; the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold! with what accuracy the broken pieces show these to have been engraven by the finger of God, and how they now lie torn and scattered, one in the dark corner, another in that, buried in heaps of dirt and rubbish! There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness, but some shivered parcels. And if any, with great toil and labour, apply themselves to draw out here one piece, and there another, and set them together, they serve rather to show how exquisite the divine workmanship was in the original composition, than for present use to the excellent purposes for which the whole was first designed. Some pieces agree, and own one another; but how soon are our enquiries and endeavours non-pluse and superseded! How many attempts have been made, since that fearful fall and ruin of this fabric, to compose again the truths of so many several kinds into their distinct orders, and make up frames of science, or useful knowledge; and after so many ages, nothing is finished in any one kind! Sometimes truths are misplaced, and what belongs to one kind is transferred to another, where it will not fitly match; sometimes falsehood inserted, which shatters and disturbs the whole frame. And what is with much fruitless pains done by one hand, is dashed in pieces by another; and it is the work of the following age to sweep away the fine-spun cobwebs of a former. And those truths which are of greatest use, though not most out of sight, are least regarded; their tendency and design are overlooked; or they are so loosed and torn off, that they cannot be wrought in so as to take hold of the soul, but hover as faint ineffectual notions that signify nothing. Its very fundamental powers are shaken and disjointed, and their order towards one another confounded and broken: so that what is judged considerable is not considered what is recommended as eligible and lovely is not loved and chosen. Yea the truth which is after godliness is not so much disbelieved, as hated, held in unrighteousness; and shines as too feeble a light in that malignant darkness which comprehends it not. You come amidst all this confusion, as into the ruined palace of some great prince, in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying neglected and useless among heaps of dirt. He that invites you to take a view of the soul of man, gives you but such another prospect, and doth but say to you,—“Behold the desolation; all things rude and waste. So that should there be any presence to the Divine presence, it might be said, If God be here, why is it thus? The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of this temple too plainly show the great inhabitant is gone.”—*John Howe.*