

**ADVICE TO RELIGIOUS
INQUIRERS RESPECTING SOME
OF THE
DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM
THE PRESENT STATE OF SOCIETY**

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Advice to religious inquirers respecting some of the difficulties arising from the present state of society by James Matheson

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JAMES MATHESON

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RELIGIOUS INQUIRERS,
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THE DIFFICULTIES
ARISING FROM
THE PRESENT STATE OF SOCIETY.

BY JAMES MATHESON,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, DURHAM.

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PREFACE.

MANY excellent and useful volumes have been written, to instruct the ignorant and to direct the inquiring. The Author of the following pages has, notwithstanding this, often found it impossible to procure for religious inquirers, a book fitted to explain the principal difficulties, arising from the present state of society and of the Christian church.

He is aware that in the works already published, this is done incidentally and partially. It appeared, however, to him, that a publication was required, which would bring together the principal external obstacles in the way of a religious inquirer, show their influence on his mind, and the best method of escaping their evil effects. A work which, while it did not present doctrines and precepts in a systematic form, would yet contain a full statement of divine truth, bearing practically on the peculiar circumstances of religious inquirers.

This has been attempted in the following pages. It has been the wish of the Author to encourage the inquirer to persevere in the pursuit of divine truth; and to show the suitableness of the Gospel, in explaining and removing those difficulties which distract and distress the mind. He has also constantly urged upon the reader, the duty and privilege of trying every sentiment and advice presented in these pages, by an appeal to the word of God.

Keeping in view the class of readers for which this book was written, the Author has avoided as much as possible the use of certain modes of expression in explaining religious truth, phrases which are easily understood by Christians, but which present no definite meaning to those who are only commencing religious inquiries. This has obliged him in some instances, to employ a greater number of words than to some might appear necessary; but he trusts the advantage to the inquirer will be so much the greater.

It appears also proper to state, that the Author has avoided referring to the peculiarities of any denomination of Christians; not that he deems these to be of no importance, or that, for the sake of peace, any part of divine truth should be compromised; but, desiring to give advice to religious inquirers in general, in the great doctrines and duties of Christianity, he has kept aloof from points which

would lead to unnecessary distinctions. But, while he is not aware of a single expression on such points, which can justly offend any one who believes the Gospel, he has endeavoured to advocate those truths which all true Christians believe; and to enforce attention to those duties which every Christian will consider it a privilege to perform. He has tried to support the interests of the church of Christ in general, and not those of any section of that church in particular.

The author trusts he can say, without any affectation, that the design of this publication is an attempt to do good to a large and interesting class of the community. Some of these are so discouraged by difficulties on the right hand and on the left, that they hardly dare to move a step farther. While there are others more anxious to go forward, who yet eagerly look around for some one to guide their perplexed and doubtful minds. The Author has, in the sincerity of his heart, attempted to meet these different cases. How far he has succeeded, he must leave those readers to determine, who are in the circumstances described.

If the following pages should, by the blessing of God, extricate one sincere inquirer from error, and enable him sooner to obtain the peace and joys of true religion; or if they should do no more than

encourage one tried and troubled mind, to persevere in the pursuit of divine truth, the Author has not written in vain.

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