Clarke, rector of St James’s, and the celebrated Dean Berke­ley, afterwards bishop of Cloyne, with whom he every day became more delighted and more closely connected. He paid frequent visits of gratitude and friendship to Mrs Tal bot, widow of Mr Edward Talbot, by whom she had a daugh­ter five months after his decease. With her lived Mrs Ca­tharine Benson, sister of Bishop Benson, whom in many respects she greatly resembled. She had been for several years Mrs Talbot’s inseparable companion, and was of un­speakable service to her at the time of her husband’s death, by exerting all her courage, activity, and good sense, of which she possessed a large share, to support her friend under so great an affliction, and by afterwards attending her sickly infant with the utmost care and tenderness.

Bishop Talbot being in 1721 appointed to the see of Durham, Mr Secker was in 1722 ordained deacon by him in St James’s church, and not long afterwards priest in the same place, where he preached his first sermon on 28th of March 1723. The bishop's domestic chaplain was at that time Dr Rundle, a man of warm fancy and very brilliant con­versation, but apt sometimes to be carried, by the vivacity of his wit, into indiscreet and ludicrous expressions, which created him enemies, and, upon one occasion, produced dis­agreeable consequences. With him Mr Secker was soon afterwards associated in the bishop’s family, and both were taken down by his lordship to Durham in July 1723.

In the following year the bishop gave Mr Secker the rectory of Houghton-le-Spring. This preferment putting it in his power to fix himself in the world in a manner agreeable to his inclinations, he soon afterwards made a proposal of marriage to Mrs Benson, which being accepted, they were married by Bishop Talbot in 1725. At the ear­nest request of both, Mrs Talbot and her daughter consent­ed to live with them, and the two families from that time became one.

About this time Bishop Talbot also gave preferments to Mr Butler and Mr Benson, whose rise and progress in the church are here interwoven with the history of Mr Secker. In the winter of 1725-26, Mr Butler first published his in­comparable sermons ; of which, as Dr Beilby Porteous and Dr Stinton inform us, Mr Secker took pains to render the style more familiar, and the author’s meaning more obvious ; yet they were by many called obscure. Mr Secker gave his friend the same assistance in that noble work the Analogy of Religion Natural and Revealed.

He now gave up all the time he possibly could to his re­sidence at Houghton, applying himself with alacrity to all the duties of a country clergyman, and supporting an use­ful and respectable character throughout. Here he would have been content to live and die ; here, as he has often been heard to declare, he spent some of the happiest hours of his life ; and it was no thought or choice of his own that removed him to a higher and more conspicuous situation. But Mrs Secker's health, which now began to decline, and was thought to be injured by the dampness of the situation, obliged him to think of exchanging it for a more healthy one. Accordingly, an exchange was made through the friendly interposition of Mr Benson, with Dr Finney, pre­bendary of Durham, and rector of Ryton ; and Mr Secker was instituted to Ryton and the prebend on the 3d of June 1727. For the two following years he lived chiefly at Dur­ham, going every week to officiate at Ryton, and spending there two or three months together in the summer.

In July 1732 he was appointed chaplain to the king ; for which favour he was indebted to Dr Sherlock, who having heard hi m preach at Bath, had conceived the highest opi­nion of his abilities, and had thought them well worthy of being brought forward into public notice. From that time an intimacy commenced between them, and he received from that great prelate many solid proofs of esteem and **friendship.**

His month of waiting at St James’s happened to be Au­gust, and on Sunday the 27th of that month he preached before the queen, the king being then abroad. A few days afterwards, her majesty sent for him into her closet, and held a long conversation with him, in the course of which he took an opportunity of mentioning to her his friend Mr Butler. He also, not long after this, on Mr Talbot’s being made lord chancellor, found means to have Mr Butler ef­fectually recommended to him for his chaplain. The queen likewise appointed him clerk of her closet ; and from this situation he rose, as his talents became more known, to those high dignities which he afterwards attained.

Mr Secker now began to have a public character, and to stand high in the estimation of those who were allowed to be the best judges of merit. He had already given proofs of abilities that plainly indicated the eminence to which he must one day rise as a preacher and a divine ; and it was not long before an opportunity offered of placing him in an advantageous point of view. Dr Tyrrwhit, who succeeded Dr Clarke as rector of St James’s in 1729, found that preaching in so large a church endangered his health. Bi­shop Gibson, his father-in-law, therefore proposed to the crown that he should be made residentiary of St Paul’s, and that Mr Secker should succeed him in the rectory. This arrangement was so acceptable to those in power, that it was entered into without any difficulty. Mr Secker was in­stituted rector on the 18th of May 1733; and in the be­ginning of July went to Oxford to take his degree of doc­tor of laws, not being of sufficient standing for that of divi­nity. On this occasion it was that he preached his cele­brated Act Sermon, on the advantages and duties of aca­demical education, which was universally allowed to be a masterpiece of sound reasoning and just composition. It was printed at the desire of the heads of houses, quickly passed through several editions, and is now to be found in the second collection of Occasional Sermons, published by himself in 1766.

It was thought that the reputation he acquired by this sermon contributed not a little towards that promotion which very soon followed its publication. For in Decem­ber 1734, he received a very unexpected notice from Bi­shop Gibson, that the king had fixed on him for the see of Bristol. Dr Benson was about the same time appointed to the see of Gloucester, as was Dr Fleming to that of Car­lisle ; and the three new bishops were all consecrated to­gether in Lambeth chapel, on the 19th of January 1734— 1735, the consecration sermon being preached by Dr Tho­mas, afterwards bishop of Winchester.

The honours to which Dr Secker was thus raised in the prime of life did not in the least abate his diligence and at­tention. He drew up, for the use of his parishioners, an admirable course of Lectures on the Church Catechism, and not only read them once every week on the usual days, but also every Sunday evening, either at the church or one of the chapels belonging to it.

The sermons which he, at the same time, composed, were truly excellent and original. His faculties were now in their full vigour, and he had an audience to speak be­fore which rendered the utmost exertion of them neces­sary. In 1737, he succeeded to the see of Oxford, on the promotion of Dr Potter to that of Canterbury, then va­cant by the death of Archbishop Wake. In 1750, he was installed dean of St Paul’s, for which he gave in exchange the rectory of St James’s and his prebend of Durham. Having now more leisure both to prosecute his own studies and to encourage those of others, he gave Dr Church con­siderable assistance in his First and Second Vindication of the Miraculous Powers, against Mr Middleton ; and he was of equal use to him in his Analysis of Lord Bolingbroke,s Works. About the same time began Archdeacon Sharp’s controversy with the followers of Mr Hutchinson, which