

*Scottish Society in Scotland for
propagating Christian knowledge*

ISATAH LV. 13.

IN STEAD OF THE THORN SHALL COME
UP THE FIR-TREE, AND IN STEAD OF
THE BRIER SHALL COME UP THE MYR-
TLE-TREE—

THE verses preceeding our text contain a prophecy of the rapid triumphs of Christianity, when first it appeared in the world, and when difficulties stood in the way of its progress, which no power, less than divine, could have enabled it to surmount: a circumstance, highly honourable to the religion of Jesus, and no inconsiderable proof of its heavenly origin. But the argument appears in full force, when, to the miraculous propagation of the gospel, we add, its miraculous effects on the hearts and lives of them that believe. Of these, the words I have read in your hearing, give us a beautiful and lively picture, “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree.” The word of grace, accompanied by the influences of the blessed Spirit, shall work a change on the tempers and inclinations of men, as thorough and entire, as if the thorn was transformed into a fir, or the brier into a myrtle-tree. And in consequence of this inward change, those who before were pricking briers or grieving thorns (a), mischievous, or, at best, unprofitable; shall now resemble the fir, which affords a refreshing shade to the weary traveller, or the myrtle-tree, which yields a fragrant and odoriferous fruit. Hateful, and hating one another, was once their

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(a) Ezek. ii. 6. xxviii. 24. Micah vii. 4.

character: but now they are taught of God to love one another. Formerly, they were the plagues, and disturbers: now, they become the ornament, the delight, the defence of society. Once, they were fierce and savage, rough and barbarous, malicious and revengeful: now, they are kind and gentle, courteous and humane, meek and forgiving. Instead of biting and devouring one another: like brethren they dwell together in unity. By fruitfulness in works of righteousness and charity, they are blessings to mankind. They live beloved. They die lamented.

Such are the native fruits, not of a name to live, not of a form of godliness, but of inward vital religion. But, in all ages, there have been too many, who falsely call themselves Christians, and who instead of regarding these weightier matters of the law, righteousness and judgment, mercy and goodness, truth and uprightness; can allow themselves in cruelty and oppression, deceit and injustice, treachery and double-dealing, artifice and chicane. They profess a mighty veneration for religion: but, by a conduct in civil life, the reverse of what religion would dictate, they give occasion to her open enemies, to insult and reproach her, as causing, or, at least, as not preventing, these enormities.

Hard indeed is the fate of religion, if she is condemned and suffers, for the faults of those, over whom she has no influence, and who never once asked her counsel, or submitted to her reproofs! Is the nature and tendency of religion, of so difficult investigation, that we can discover it no where save in the conduct of men, who, while they wear the garb of her friends, are in truth her dangerous and deadly foes?

Religion, my brethren, did it indeed rule in the heart, would effectually prevent these disorders, and restrain from thus disturbing the public peace. Nay, it would power-

fully instigate to promote the happiness of mankind. This I shall now attempt to prove, and for that purpose have read to you the words of our text. They would naturally lead me to unfold, the astonishing nature, the powerful and extensive operation, and the salutary consequences of regenerating grace. But, I must greatly trespass on your time and patience, did I attempt, in a single discourse, to lead you through so wide a field. I shall therefore confine myself to one branch of the subject, the benign influence of vital piety on national happiness. And, to give you a prospect of this in a way level to the meanest capacity, I shall briefly illustrate the temper and behaviour of the religious man, in some of the more important stations and characters in life, by a right or wrong conduct in which, the prosperity of nations is most deeply affected.

Has the most high God given to the man that fears him, a kingdom, and majesty, and honour, and glory? Uncontrollable, unlimited power, he knows is the prerogative of God only. None can justly claim it, but he who made and upholds all things. None is qualified for it, but he who can never act amiss, being infinitely wise, and just, and good. The power, even of God, is limited in its exercise, by his wisdom and equity: and power, without such limits, is weakness, not perfection. As therefore, the pious prince feels not the inclination, so he desires not the power, of sporting himself at the expence of the fortunes, the ease, the liberties, the lives of his subjects. A right to make the innocent miserable, he justly deems as palpable a contradiction, as a right to do wrong, or, as authority to rebel against God. He detests the absurd and impious doctrine, that the common Parent of mankind has subjected millions, to the pride, ambition, frolic, caprice, and arbitrary will, of an imperfect fellow mortal. He views the meanest of his subjects as creatures formed

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by the same God, as endued with the same faculties and sensations, with the same desire of happiness and love of liberty, that he himself is ; yea, as redeemed by the same precious blood, and as candidates for the same immortal glory. He views himself, as advanced to superior dignity, not to enslave and oppress, not to fleece and plunder his subjects ; but that every one, protected by his authority, might enjoy, without disturbance, his just rights, and innocent pleasures, and lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. The highest light in which he regards himself, is, as the father of his people, the guardian of their privileges, the minister of God to them for good, bound by a burdensome, though honourable office, to attend continually on this very thing (b.) Such were the sentiments of the man according to God's own heart, 2 Sam. v. 12. " And David perceived that the Lord had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake." A passage, which plainly implies, that government is a divine ordinance, not for the ease and grandeur of the prince, but for the security and welfare of the people.

From any earthly tribunal, the prince may have little, or nothing to fear. But God, who intrusted him with such superior advantages for extensive usefulness, he knows, will ere long call him to an account how he has improved these advantages. Princes may be Gods in the eyes of men, but they are but men in the eyes of God. Death will strip them of their royalty, and level them with the meanest of the people. The prince as well as the peasant must appear at his bar, who is king of kings and lord of lords. If the mightiest monarch has dishonoured God, and injured his subjects, he shall then receive for the wrong which he has done, for with God there is no respect of persons. The great offender shall be great,

(b) Rom. xiii. 4, 6.

ly punished ; and the exalted character he once bore, will only expose him to the more dreadful vengeance.

In the mean time, views of the awful doom which awaits the wicked ruler, are to the pious prince, no uneasy restraint. The practice of his duty is his pleasure and delight. His subjects he looks upon as his neighbours, and he loves his neighbours as himself. Full of fatherly affection for every one of them, and of unfeigned concern for their welfare, he employs all his influence and authority to preserve order and peace, to secure property, to prevent injuries, to redress wrong, to punish offenders, to suppress sedition, to guard his dominions against foreign invasion, to encourage honest industry, and to promote religion and virtue, these surest props of national happiness. He is vigilant to espy, active to prevent, whatever may hazard the public well ! careful to discover, and forward to apply the best means to advance it !

The wisdom, the justice, the mercy, which shine with so bright a lustre in all the administrations of the supreme ruler, are the pattern he copies after. He will not do wrong himself : he will not suffer wrong to be done by others. He intrusts the execution of the laws to men fearing God and hating covetousness, that justice may run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. But mercy, as well as righteousness, upholds his throne (c). His mercy, tempers the rigour of justice : his humanity, softens rebellion itself, into loyalty and gratitude. In every case, except, when indulgence to the criminal would prove cruelty to the public, he forgives his offending subjects, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him. And when the safety of individuals, or the bleeding wounds of a state, require severe and painful remedies, he applies these remedies with a reluctant hand, and with a tender and compassionate heart.

Convinced, that the good or bad success of every enterprise, depends on the smiles or frowns of heaven, he implores the divine guidance and blessing on his councils and government. As a Man, as a Christian, as a Prince, he squares his behaviour, by that unerring rule, the word of God. He does not indulge and cherish in himself, these irregularities and vices, which he punishes in his subjects: but restrains his own passions and appetites, by the laws of reason and religion; and learns to rule others, by having learned in the first place, through the teachings of the Spirit, to rule himself.

Happy the nation, which God has blessed, with such a sovereign! Like the sun in the firmament, he spreads his salutary rays, and dispenses his refreshing influences, to all around him. The force of his example, avails more, than even the awe of his authority. He scatters wickedness with his eye (d). He puts to silence the lips of flattery with his frown. But he searches out and encourages modest worth. Distinguish'd abilities, distinguish'd integrity, distinguish'd services to the public, never solicit his favours in vain. The greatest fitness for an office, is the surest and most effectual recommendation. His eyes are upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with him: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve him (e).

Let us now descend from the throne, and survey the influence of genuine Christianity, on great men, and on men in public offices.

True piety and virtue brighten and dignify every other distinction. Religion animates the great man, with such noble principles of action, as carry him above the mercenary views, that govern earthly unsanctified minds. He disdains the mean and little arts of acquiring and preserving riches, to which men of a narrow, selfish, interest-

(d) Prov. xx. 8. (e) Psal. ci. 6.

ed spirit, can easily stoop. Spiritual and heavenly blessings, he ardently breathes after, he vigorously strives to obtain. But to the good things of a present life his affections are moderate. He will not sacrifice the pleasures of conscious goodness, to obtain the best of them. Inspired with a generous disinterested concern, for the happiness of his country, and for the prosperity of the church of God; whatever endangers these, affects him in the most deep and sensible manner. For these, he is willing to spend, and to be spent: and wealth, and power, and dignity, appear to him base and contemptible, when not improved to promote these excellent purposes. He loves to be useful. Yet, he would rather be useful in the lowest sphere, than adopt the unchristian maxim, of doing evil that good may come. He is well apprized, that places of honour and profit, are weighty and burdensome. And, tho' the station, which providence allots him, may be inferior, to what his rank and abilities seem to entitle him: he believes, it is the best and fittest for him; and he bends all his endeavours, to do honour to his Christian profession, by faithfully discharging the duties of that station.

Does the sincere Christian sit in council, and is his advice asked in the important concerns of war and peace? His eye is single, and therefore full of light. Integrity and uprightness preserve him, from devising schemes, which may aggrandize himself and his family, at the hazard of the public good. His lips shall not speak wickedness, nor his tongue utter deceit. Till he die, he will not remove his integrity from him. His righteousness he holds fast, and will not let it go. His heart shall not reproach him, so long as he lives (f). And as self-interest, does not blind his councils, so neither do obstinacy and pride pervert them. He loves his own sentiments, not because they are his own, but because they appear to him

(f) Job xxvii. 4,—6,

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just and right. He is open to light, and so soon as he is convinced, that his sentiments were wrong, he cheerfully renounces them. Let a wise scheme for the public good, be planned by his fiercest opposer, he rejoices in the success of that scheme. Conscious of the purity of his intentions, he fears not the exactest scrutiny, the minutest survey of his conduct: he feels not the gloomy suspicions and jealousies, to which the dark designs of corrupt Politicians, continually expose them. To such a statesman, none but the weak or wicked can be an enemy: none but the foolish or the unrighteous can rise up against him (g).

Is the Christian chosen, to represent his fellow subjects, in Parliament? he will not sacrifice to friendship, or to party, his steady resolution, to seek the good of his king and country. He is not greatly solicitous, whom his votes may please, or whom they may disoblige. But tho' the court should neglect him, or his constituents frown upon him, with freedom and courage, he speaks, what duty demands. With a watchful eye, he observes; with an honest warmth, he opposes, every attack on the constitution. He is studious in devising good laws, and active in promoting them. And when, he has contributed to enact them, he pays them a becoming deference in his own behaviour, and does not, as is too common, expose them to the contempt of others, by transgressing them himself. His interest may often be hurt, and sometimes even his character may suffer, by his well-meant attempts, to serve an ungrateful prince, or an ungrateful people. But tho' he values a good name, he will not purchase it, at the expence, of what he values more, a good conscience. He would rather be honest, than be thought so. His record is in heaven, and his witness on high. And it appears to him a light and little thing,

to be judged of man's judgment, since he that judgeth him, since he that approveth him, is the Lord.

Is one, in whom the religious principle bears rule, advanced to the important office of a judge? Thro' his uprightness, which can neither be brib'd, nor byass'd, justice has its free course, and righteous laws are impartially executed. Under realizing impressions, that all his sentences shall be review'd at a higher tribunal, he attends minutely to every cause, he hears the small as well as the great, and judges without respect of persons, between every man, and his brother, and the stranger that is with him (h). He despises the gain of oppression, and shakes his hands from holding of bribes (i). When severity is needful, he will not be sooth'd by ill-placed pity, nor daunted by the number, or rank, or power of transgressors, to relax that severity. He puts on righteousness, and it clothes him: his judgment is as a robe and a diadem. He is eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: he is a father to the poor, and the cause which he knows not, he searches it out. He shields the persons, the characters, the possessions of his fellow subjects, against the encroachments of fraud and violence. He breaks the jaws of the wicked, and plucks the spoil out of his teeth. He delivereth the needy, when he cryeth, the oppressed also, and him that hath no helper. When the ear hears him, then it blesses him: and when the eye sees him, it gives witness to him (j). Some such, our country hath seen, some such, she still sees in the highest seats of judicature. Such, not to derogate from others, was Sir Matthew Hale in the days of our fathers: such was Lord Newhall in our own days. Men, whose distinguish'd abilities did them less honour, than their inflexible integrity, and their distinguish'd regard to the sacred in-

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(h) Deut. i. 16, 17. (i) Isaiah xxxiii. 15. (j) Job xxix. 11, --- 17.

stitutions, of the despised religion of Jesus. And we dare challenge the most determined infidel, to say, if a principle of devotion, diminished any of their qualifications natural or acquired, and even in the smallest degree, impaired their inclination or ability, to be a terror to evil doers, and a comfort to the honest, the quiet, the peaceable.

No, my brethren. As religion animates to the right improvement of our natural talents, so, it even tends to secure their activity and vigour. Wise sentiments, and prudent schemes, are not to be expected, where the mind agitated by unruly appetite, is, as the troubled sea, whose waves continually cast forth mire and dirt. A mind, that enjoys inward serenity, is in least danger of committing important oversights : for such a mind is fittest to examine objects calmly, and to view them in every varying point of light. But can his mind be serene, who doubts, whether there is or is not a God : while of this he is certain, that, if there is a God, that almighty God is his enemy?

If men of genius embrace principles subversive of natural or of reveal'd religion : this cannot flow from attention to common sense and to matter of fact ; but must be occasioned by some absurd refined system of metaphysics, which, they have some how or other unhappily imbibed. And, is there no danger, lest, however honestly disposed they may otherwise be, the same spirit of refinement, should follow them from religious disquisitions, to the ordinary affairs of life, and pervert their judgment of the one, as it has already done of the other?

Hitherto, I have viewed the wisdom and goodness of the prince, the counsellor, the parliament man, and the judge, as advancing, in their various spheres, the public welfare. No less important to the security of a nation, is the fortitude of the soldier. Is then regard to religion

friendly, or is it hurtful, to martial valour? In Solomon's days it was deem'd friendly. Prov. xxviii. 1. "The wicked fly, when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion." If bad men, rush upon death, without terror: their hardiness, has no nobler source, than blindness and stupidity. Did they duly consider the wrath and fiery indignation which is ready to devour them: fear would take hold upon them, and terror would overwhelm them. Possibly, however, natural courage may bear them out for a while. But permit me to add, what fatal experience has often taught us, possibly it may forsake them, in the critical hour, when it would have stood them, and their country too, in the greatest stead. One day, they despise their enemies, they dream of nothing save victories and triumphs, and when girding on the harness, boast, as tho' they were putting it off (k). And lo! the next day, a sudden panic seizes them, they start at the shaking of a leaf, and basely turn their back, at the appearance of an enemy.——But is he, whose heart is fixed trusting in God, called upon to hazard his life, in the public cause? Convinced, that a sparrow does not fall to the ground without our heavenly Father, and that by him, the very hairs of our head are numbered (l): he is not slavishly afraid of ten thousands of people, that set themselves against him round about (m). Tho' thousands should fall at his right hand, and ten thousands at his left, he knows, that, so long as life is a blessing, the deadly stroke shall not come nigh to him (n). In the midst of confusion, and horror, and garments rolled in blood, he remains serene and intrepid. The thoughts of dying for his country, and living in a better world, with his Saviour, and his God, animate him to the most difficult and hazardous enterprizes. He is strong,

(k) 1 Kings xx. 11. (l) Matth. x. 29, 30. (m) Psal. iii. 6.
(n) Psal. xci. 7.

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and plays the man for his people, and for the cities of his God (o). By faith, he boldly encounters dangers, waxes valiant in fight, escapes the edge of the sword, yea, turns to flight the armies of the aliens (p). So true is the observation of a celebrated sceptic (q), that religious motives inspire a courage unfurmountable by any human obstacle. We need not go back for instances of this, to the times of the Maccabees, nor to the bold and heroic exploits of the persecuted Waldenses. Who were the men, and what their characters, who, in the late war, with courage, with conduct, and with success, carried on the siege of Louisbourg, that strong, and well fortified city? were they drunkards? were they sabbath-breakers? were they profaners of the name of God? were they despisers of the blessed Redeemer? No, my brethren. They were heroes, led forth to battle, from their shops and farms, by a warm love to religion, and to their native land. They were men unexperienced in war, who had many of them, never till then seen a siege, or even a battle: but, who, committing to God the success of their hazardous undertaking, and resigning their lives to his disposal, were inspired, in a manner next to miraculous, with such undaunted resolution, and indefatigable activity, as struck their enemies with terror and surprize. It was God that girded them with strength, and made their way perfect. He made their feet like hinds feet, and set them safe on their high places. He taught their hands to war, so that a bow of steel was broken by their arms (r). Happy the people! for whom the Spirit of God raiseth up such a banner (s).

It is now time, to consider the temper and behaviour of private Christians, and to show, that this also is calculated to promote national peace and prosperity.

(o) 2 Sam. x. 12. (p) Heb. xi. 34. (q) Mr David Hume's history of Britain, Vol. I. p. 81. (r) Psal. xviii. 32,—34. (s) Isaiah lix. 19.

That mind being in them, which was also in Christ, they look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others also (t). They are generous, public-spirited, and bent to promote the good of society, not only by their own orderly and discreet behaviour, but by opening their purse, and hazarding their persons, when duty requires. By their eminent and exemplary virtue, and by their fervent supplications at a throne of grace, they are the chariots and horsemen of Israel (u), the beauty, the strength, the security of their native land.

The follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, will not revile the Gods, nor curse the ruler of the people (v). He renders to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. He is subject to the lawful commands of superiors, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake (w). Whether the sovereign power is in the hands of one, or in the hands of many; whether the prince is absolute, or limited; whether he came to the throne, by election, by succession, or by conquest: the Christian esteems obedience a just and reasonable return for protection. When nothing is required of him, inconsistent with the fundamental laws of his country, or with the more unchangeable laws of God, this his obedience is without reserve. If, indeed, any thing is injoin'd him, contrary to the dictates of his conscience, he has learned to obey God, rather than man (x). But no wise prince will insist on such commands. Force cannot enlighten conscience, tho' it may tempt men to run counter to her dictates. If it does the last, the sovereign is a loser. For the subject, having in one instance prefer'd his imaginary interest to his real duty, and shak'd off the restraints of religion, this prepares him for doing so in other instances,

(t) Phil. ii. 4, 5. (u) 2 Kings xiii. 14. (v) Exod. xxii. 28.
(w) Rom. xiii. 5, 7. (x) Acts iv. 19.

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and emboldens him, to commit perjury, treason, or any other wickedness, when a temptation presents itself sufficiently strong. Wisely therefore has the apostle Peter link'd together the precepts of fearing God and honouring the king (y): because, if men revere not the laws of the sovereign of heaven; the laws of the greatest earthly sovereign will not command their inward respect.

The good man, full of gratitude, for the blessings he enjoys under lawful rulers, puts up prayers, and supplications, and intercessions, and givings of thanks, for kings and all that are in authority (z). Deeply sensible of his own short-comings, he makes every candid allowance for human frailty, and will not murmur and complain at lesser imprudences in the conduct of governors. Far less, will he attempt, to form parties against an administration, or to raise rebellion against a government, because his covetousness is not satiated, or his ambition gratified. Feeling, what cares, and difficulties, and embarrassments attend the direction of a single family: he rather pities, than envies those, who are burdened with the weightier charge, of watching over populous states. He blesses God, there are any such friends of mankind, who can cheerfully sacrifice their own ease and pleasure, to diffuse happiness to others. By every mark of gratitude and esteem, he endeavours to sweeten to his rulers the fatigues of government: and his most ardent addresses ascend daily to heaven, for the preservation of lives so precious and important.

Such is the conduct of the private Christian, with regard to his rulers. Let us now view his behaviour to his fellow-subjects.

True religion will teach him to renounce the hidden works of darkness and dishonesty, and to abhor equivocations, ambiguous expressions, and every other sneaking

(y) 1 Pet. ii. 17. (z) 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

method of over-reaching and deceit. On all occasions, he speaks what he means, and sincerely intends to perform what he promises. The strictest forms of law are no security, superior to his bare word. He is true to his trusts, faithful to his engagements, plain and upright in his professions, fair and honest in his dealings. He studies to be quiet, and to do his own business (a), without molesting other people in theirs. If it be possible, as much as lyeth in him, he lives peaceably with all men (b). And, in the various relations of life, in which providence has placed him, as a father, a son, a husband, a master, a servant, he adorns the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things (c).

But religion teaches him to love mercy, as well as to do justly (d). With a pleasant admiration he contemplates the blessed Redeemer, as delighting to exercise goodness and mercy and loving-kindness on the earth. And beholding these glories of the Lord, he is gradually changed into the same image from glory to glory. He rejoices with them that rejoice, and weeps with them that weep (e). He does to others, as he would wish that they, if in his circumstances, should do to him (f). As he has opportunity, he does good to all men, especially to the household of faith (g): that is, to adopt the explication of these words given by an eminently great man on a like occasion (h), chiefly to those, who are most nearly related to him, who most need his help, and who best deserve it. Yet, he confines not, to these, his good offices. He repays even injuries with kindness, and thus overcomes evil with good (i). And tho' too often his friendly offices may meet with ungrateful returns, he is not

(a) 1 Thess. iv. 11. (b) Rom. xii. 18. (c) Tit. ii. 10.
 (d) Mic. vi. 8. (e) Rom. xii. 15. (f) Matth. vii. 12. (g)
 Gal. vi. 10. (h) The late Dr Wislart in his sermon before
 the society. It is pity the public has not been favoured with
 that excellent discourse. (i) Rom. xii. 21.

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weary in well doing, knowing, that, in due season, he shall reap, if he faint not (j). Yea already he reaps a glorious reward, in the generous pleasure he feels, from relieving, or at least mitigating the distresses of his fellow-mortals.

His fund for charity is not impaired by rioting and drunkenness, by chambering and wantonness, by luxury and prodigality: but increased by the blessing of God on his honest industry. Idleness, and sloth, and extravagance, he justly views as the bane of society. Instead of diminishing the national wealth by these, he labours diligently in his secular calling, working with his hands the thing which is good (k), that thus he may in some measure recompense society for the blessings he derives from it.

Thrice happy period! when Christian principles, deeply rooted in the heart, shall thus influence all ranks, from the king on the throne, to the meanest peasant: when the Lord of hosts, shall be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty to the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to them that sit in judgment, and for strength to them that turn the battle to the gate (l).

Say, ye sons of infidelity, do not the precepts of Christianity injoin, and do not the doctrines of Christianity tend to promote such a temper and conduct? And is such a temper and conduct noxious to social happiness? would it be profitable to society, that every one should make his own particular interest, the standard by which to measure the good of the community: or should pursue his own selfish schemes when evidently destructive of the public welfare? and is the world indeed the less happy, for the public spirit and disinterested benevolence, which still remains in it?

No, will the infidel reply, we love these amiable virtues, and would feel the sincerest joy, could we discern

(j) Gal. vi. 9. (k) Eph. iv. 28. (l) Isa. xxviii. 5, 6.

their influence on all ranks and degrees of men. I shall not arraign your sincerity. The gospel teaches me, never to pass a harsh judgment on any, without the clearest evidence. But if you indeed are lovers of mankind; bethink yourselves a little, if zeal for infidelity, if opposition to religion, is a wise and proper method of testifying your love.

What mighty advantage will the world reap, from the increase of your proselytes? Is the pious man, the worse prince; or, is he the worse subject, because he is pious? does religion promote oppression and tyranny in the prince, or does it excite sedition and rebellion in the subject? when the wicked is in authority, do the people rejoice? and when the righteous bear rule, do they mourn? will the subject, who has learned of his Saviour, to be meek and humble: perplex and embarrass the state, or sacrifice the peace of his neighbour, to caprice and frolic? whence come wars, and fightings, and strife, and debate? come they not from pride and avarice, and unruly passion? is then that principle of grace, which teaches us to mortify our corrupt passions and appetites, an enemy to the tranquillity of mankind? will high and honourable thoughts, of him, who is the perfection of beauty, blind us, to that beauty in creatures, which is all derived from him as its source, and which reflects, tho' but obscurely and imperfectly, his superior lustre? will thankfulness to the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift, promote ingratitude to our fellow-creatures, whom he employs as instruments, in conveying to us his benefits? where is the connexion, between loving God, even the Father; and hating man, which was made after the similitude of God? is our attaining, what is more rare and difficult, the love of God, whom we have not seen: any hindrance to our attaining what is more common and easy, the love of our brother, whom we have seen? When we esteem and love

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the Deity, we esteem and love justice and truth, and goodness, and mercy : and will esteem of these moral perfections, inspire us, with the opposite qualities, of injustice, deceit, malice, and cruelty ? — Consult experience. Are those, most active and diligent, most generous and public-spirited, who are lovers of ease and of pleasure, more than lovers of God ? — But, possibly, you would indulge men in the love of the Deity, if you could extinguish the uneasy apprehensions of his wrath. Fatal and destructive benefit ! which emboldens the knave to perpetrate the most base and atrocious crime, if he has subtilty enough to conceal it from mortal eye. Is there, think you, no danger, lest this prove the unhappy consequence of your so much boasted friendly intentions ? does he, who fears not God, bid fairest, for regarding, his duty to man ? will he be strictest in practising virtue, who entertains the loosest sentiments, as to the obligations of virtue ? will he, who neither hopes nor dreads a hereafter, be peculiarly scrupulous of violating the rules of justice and equity, of meekness and forgiveness, of benevolence and charity ? will contempt of the supreme lawgiver, secure respect and obedience to his laws ? There are men, whose understandings are too delicate, to relish the mysteries of the gospel, or the miracles that attest them, who can swallow, without reluctance, these shocking absurdities.

In the days of our fathers, the most celebrated sceptics retained so much modesty, as only to plead, that atheism was innocent, and religion unnecessary. But our modern sceptics, with a more hardy boldness, pronounce, the religious principle malignant and hurtful. That species of devotion, which is suitable to the discoveries, the supreme Being has made of himself to the understanding, occasions, (if we may believe these gentlemen) the most enormous ravages in the human breast, and subverts every rea-

sonable principle of conduct and behaviour (m). Every elegant pleasure or amusement it utterly annihilates, each

(m) Mr David Hume's history of Great Britain, Vol. I. page 62. As I did not in the sermon, repeat the whole of that remarkable passage, I shall here transcribe it.

“ The fire of devotion, excited by novelty, and inflamed by
 “ opposition, had so possessed the minds of the Scottish reformers,
 “ that all rites and ornaments, and even order of worship, were
 “ disdainfully rejected as useless burdens, retarding the imagi-
 “ nation in its rapturous ecstasies, and stinting the opera-
 “ tions of that divine Spirit, by which they supposed them-
 “ selves to be animated. A mode of worship was established,
 “ the most naked and most simple imaginable; one that bor-
 “ rowed nothing from the senses; but reposed itself intirely
 “ on the contemplation of that divine Essence, which discovers
 “ itself to the understanding only. This species of devotion,
 “ so suitable to the supreme Being, but so little suitable to hu-
 “ man frailty, was observed to occasion the most enormous ra-
 “ vages in the breast, and to subvert every rational principle
 “ of conduct and behaviour. The mind straining for these ex-
 “ traordinary raptures, reaching them by short glances, suc-
 “ cumbing again under its own weakness, rejecting all exterior
 “ aid of pomp and ceremony, was so occupied in this inward
 “ life, that it fled from every intercourse of society, and from
 “ every sweet or chearful amusement, which could soften or
 “ humanize the character. It was obvious to all discerning
 “ eyes, and had not escaped the king's, that by the prevalence
 “ of fanaticism, a gloomy and sullen disposition established it-
 “ self among the people; a spirit obstinate and dangerous; in-
 “ dependent and disorderly; animated equally with a contempt
 “ of authority, and a hatred to every other mode of religion,
 “ particularly to the Catholic. In order to mellow these hu-
 “ mours, king James endeavoured to infuse a small tincture of
 “ superstition into the national worship, &c.”

Fond, as our author here seems, of the superstitious species of devotion, there is little reason to doubt, that, had a more pompous ritual been established among us, his wit and humour would have been employed in dressing it in a fool's-coat. He has given us a specimen, of his inclination and abilities for such a task, page 64, in his polite and pious reflection on king

vice or corruption of mind it promotes (n). Such is the picture a modern historian gives us, of the hideous effects of what he terms, the Protestant fanaticism (o); especially as it operated on the Scottish reformers, in the reign of king James (p); and on the Presbyterians, and other Puritans, in the reign of his successor king Charles I. (q). A little attention, however, may convince us, that the charge, tho' artfully enough disguised, is not mainly levelled against any doctrine or practice, peculiar to dissenters, peculiar to Protestants, or even peculiar to Christians: but against that first and great command of nature's law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and soul, and mind, and strength." An open attack on that precept, must have alarmed the religious principle, to a vigorous self-defence. But by blending together, in one common description, the opposite properties and effects, of rational devotion, and of enthusiastic fervour; there was room to hope, that the unthinking reader, might apply to rational devotion, the reproach due only to enthusiastic fervour. Let us, however, strip from his insinuations of the evil tendency of devotion, the ornaments of eloquence and sophistry: and the naked argument will amount to no more than this; "Enthusiasm, false religion, and wrong notions of God, promoted in times of public confusion, every vice and corruption of mind; therefore the species of devotion, most suitable to the supreme Being, and most agreeable to reason, subverts every reasonable principle of conduct and behaviour. The ef-

James; "He regarded that posture (kneeling at the sacrament) as the most respectful, because the most uneasy." With what admirable propriety and decorum does so genteel a writer, find fault, page 9th, with the rustic severity of the Scottish clergy to king James!

(n) Hume's hist. vol. I. p. 303. (o) Ib. p. 60. (p) Ib. p. 62. (q) Ib. p. 303.

fects of falshood, have been pernicious : therefore, the effects of the reverse of falshood, are also pernicious."

But all is not fanaticism, which some men stile so. And, there was much of true religion, as well, as much of false religion, in that period. To that period, therefore, I appeal, as a proof of the happy effects of the religious principle, on the temper and conduct of a nation. My evidence is no other than the historian himself: speaking of the English in the reign of king Charles I. (r). "Never was there a people, less corrupted by vice, and more acted by principle, than the English, during that period: never did the nation possess more capacity, more courage, more public spirit, more disinterested zeal." It is true, the elegant writer's antipathy to Protestant fanaticism awakes in the next sentence, where he tells us, "The infusion of one ingredient in too large a proportion, had corrupted all these noble principles, and perverted them into the most virulent poison." But, instead of supporting this dreadful charge, he kindly supplies us, with facts, sufficient to invalidate it. "To determine, (says he,) his choice, in the approaching contests, every man hearkened with avidity to the reasons proposed on both sides."——And in another place (t), "Fierce however and inflamed as were the dispositions of men, by a war both civil and religious, that great destroyer of humanity: all the events of this period are less distinguished, by atrocious deeds either of treachery or of cruelty, than were ever any intestine disorders, which had so long a continuance. A circumstance, which, if duly weighed, will be found to imply great praise of the national character of that people, now so unhappily rous'd to arms." The enemies of religion must be immoderately sceptical, if they question these

(r) Hume's history, vol. I. p. 330. (s) Ibid. (t) Ibid. p. 348.

22 INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

facts, after the testimony of so penetrating an observer, and, in a cause too, where every motive would have led him to be silent, had not the force of truth extorted the confession. It must then be allowed, that in an age, more celebrated for piety and devotion, than any succeeding period has been : a candid impartial regard to evidence, and a gentle humane spirit, prevailed in the nation, when under circumstances, which usually destroy these amiable virtues. A fact, which, if duly weighed, will be found to imply great praise of that religious principle, which, in so unfavourable a season, could produce so abundantly such lovely fruits, and mitigate the ferocity of a nation, then so unhappily rous'd to arms. It might have been expected, that these fruits of Protestant fanaticism would have procured it a milder censure (u).

(u) After the uncommon freedom, with which Mr Hume has insulted the religion of his country, both in his essays and history : I am struck with surprize at his encomium on Queen Elisabeth. *History*, page 8. " That renowned princefs, whose good taste gave her a sense of order and decorum, and whose sound judgment taught her to abhor innovations, endeavoured by a steady severity to curb this obstinate enthusiasm, which, from the beginning, look'd with an evil aspect both on the church and monarchy. By an act of parliament in 1593, all persons above the age of 16, who were absent from church a month, or who, by word or writing, declared their sentiments against the established religion, were to be imprisoned till they made an open declaration of their conformity." Would it evidence sound judgment in our government, to curb the growth of infidelity by a like steady severity ? does our author long to suffer persecution in the cause of scepticism ? or secure that our present rulers will not adopt these intolerant principles ; does he intend them as a directory for more favourable times, when a religion may happen to be established, whose genius will admit of defending itself, and annoying its enemies, by calling in the aid of the secular power ? what account can be given of the manner in which our historian has varnished not only the superstitions, but the cruelties of the church of Rome ? or, of

Old cavils may be repeated in a new dress. But after all, my brethren, religion will still appear to the fair and candid enquirer, the best and surest friend of social happiness. A virtuous education, a regard to character, or the sword of the magistrate, may restrain outward acts of wickedness: but the gospel of Christ, accompanied by the influence of his grace, does more; it reforms the heart, and gradually weakens these evil inclinations, from which outward disorders flow. Other principles, may produce occasional acts, that look like virtue: but Christianity only, can inspire men with an uniform love to their duty, and render them steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in every good thought, word and work.

But the inspiring all ranks, with a spirit suited to their various stations, is not the only way, in which righteousness exalteth a nation. The seeming tendencies of things may be defeated, and providence may so over-rule events, that their consequences may prove vastly different from probable appearances. The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor favour to men of skill, nor bread to men of understanding, but time and chance happen to all men (v). The wisest, know, but in part, and have sometimes stumbled into the grossest solecisms. Politicians of the quickest foresight may yet be over-reached. The best state physicians may prescribe amiss, or apply improper remedies, and thus increase, rather than abate the diseases of a state. God can destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nought the understanding of the prudent (w). He can cause their sagacity and penetration suddenly to forsake them, and

what he says, of archbishop Laud, p. 200. "He was in this respect happy, that all his enemies were also declared enemies to loyalty and true piety, and that every exercise of his revenge by that means became a merit and a virtue."

(v) Eccles. ix. 11. (w) 1 Cor. i. 19.

that in circumstances, when they, and the public needed them most. Permit me, therefore, tho' my subject does not lead me to consider it at large, to remind you of another way in which religion promotes the peace and prosperity of nations. It secures to us the favour and protection of that God, who doth according to his will, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth (x). Here, wisdom, and riches, and honour, and strength, are of no avail. The LORD delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy. He strengthneth to his people the bars of their gates, he blesteth their children within them. He maketh peace in their borders, and filleth them with the finest of the wheat (y). He can cause their light to arise in obscurity, and their darkness to become as the noon day (z). If they lack wisdom, and ask of him, he gives unto them liberally, and upbraids not (a). The wonderful Counsellor (b), leads them, when blind, in a way they know not, and in paths which they have not known (c). Thro' the strength of the Almighty, one of them has chased a thousand, and ten put ten thousand to flight (d). Yea, when their ways please the Lord, he has sometimes made even their enemies to be at peace with them (e).

Enough has been said on the tendency of religion to promote social happiness and national prosperity. And can we then view, without tender feelings of pain and distress, the ignorance and impiety of the greater part of our brethren of mankind? is there the least spark of patriotism and benevolence in his breast, who prefers the

(x) Dan. iv. 35. (y) Psal. cxlvii. 10,—14. (z) Isaiah lviii. 10. (a) James i. 5. (b) Isa. ix. 6. (c) Isa. xlii. 16. (d) Lev. xxvi. 8. Deut. xxxii. 30. Josh. xxiii. 10. (e) Prov. xvi. 7.

low grovelling pleasures of sense, to the heavenly delight, of diffusing through the world, righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy Ghost? can genius, wealth, influence, example, be exerted in a more noble and worthy cause, than the promoting in men just sentiments, and pious dispositions, and thus correcting their manners, and reforming their lives? We were born, my brethren, not for ourselves, or our families only: but for our friends; for our neighbours, for our country, for mankind. And he is unworthy of life, who lives only to himself. — But if generous motives move you not; if your narrow souls are utterly unaffected with the happiness or misery of others: at least, let me intreat you, for your own sakes, to seek the peace and welfare of your country and her colonies, by promoting the knowledge and practice of religion; because in their peace and welfare, you also shall have peace. None can plead an entire want of ability, or of opportunity, to lend a helping hand to this work. The poor may do much by their prayers and example: Masters of families may do much, by training up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And as many of our neighbours, and acquaintances, both in high, and in low life, are shamefully ignorant even of the first principles of the oracles of God, or stupidly inattentive to the weight and importance of those truths, which they know: the lending, or giving, to such, books calculated to instruct or alarm, might be a charity, productive of extensive good (f).

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(f) Many worthy ministers and private Christians in London, of different denominations, deeply affected with the gross ignorance of multitudes in this land of gospel light: form'd themselves into a society, August 1750, for promoting religious knowledge among the poor, by distributing bibles and other useful books. The printed accounts of their success, have occasioned the erecting a society at Edinburgh on a like plan, 1st January 1756.

To propagate religion, to places wholly destitute of gospel light, is indeed, a more difficult undertaking. Yet, even for this, sufficient funds might be raised, if every private Christian, would contribute, according as God has prospered him.

That all might have access thus to honour God with their substance, a society has been erected among us, many years ago, for receiving such charities, and employing them to the best advantage. The propagating genuine Christianity, and promoting loyalty and industry, in those remote parts of Scotland, where multitudes are prepared, by false religion, ignorance, or idleness, to disturb the public peace, is their first and chief care. For this purpose, they have erected 170 schools, at which, as appears by the latest reports, no less than 6659 children, are taught the principles of religion; and some of them also maintained at the charge of the society (g). How important a service this is to the public, I need not say. What success has, thro' the divine blessing, attended the catechists and school-masters, employed by the society in these parts, many of you in some measure know. What have been the happy effects of that success, in lengthning out our tranquillity, and in preventing the most dreadful national calamities, we cannot fully know, till the mystery of God is finished. Great things, it must be allowed, have been done for instructing and reforming the Highlands and islands of Scotland, both by the society, and by the managers of the generous annual bounty, given by his majesty for the same ends. Yet, much remains undone, and must remain so, till further contributions, enable the society, to carry on so glorious a design. What blood and treasure might have been saved to the nation, had charities been timely

(g) Besides these 170 schools, the society have two schools, one at Lochcarron, and another at Glenmoriston, for instructing children and others, in husbandry and manufactures.

given, proportioned, to that needful, but arduous work. If, my brethren, we continue to withhold more than is meet, it may tend to something worse than poverty. The men, who by the smiles of heaven, on your charities, might have become the bulwark and defence of the nation; may prove the instruments, of wresting from us, our valuable liberties, civil and sacred, and of entailing popery and slavery on generations yet unborn.

But the society for propagating Christian knowledge, have not confined their pious, and charitable endeavours to our own country. They have extended them also, to the Indians, who border on our North America colonies. The success of their missionaries, in these dark places of the earth full of the habitations of cruelty, is a proof what glorious things might be expected, from an increase of funds so wisely and usefully applied: applied, not to proselyte men to a party, not to maintain ministers in a country, where faithful and able ministers already abound; but, applied to impart the gospel to places, hitherto ignorant of the way of salvation.

It is true, concern for the interests of religion in foreign parts, has been sneered at by our new British historian, as a low and odious bigotry, not to be justified by any maxims of sound politics (h). Had the historian, viewed religion, as an useless, but still as an harmless and innocent thing; the censure, though unjust, would have been in character. But that a gentleman of compassion and humanity, should feel himself unaffected, when a principle, which he apprehends malignant, diffuses itself thro' populous kingdoms, is a mystery of scepticism, which my reason, is, as yet, too shallow to comprehend. The historian, had, I believe, no thoughts of the natives of North America; his remark being occasioned by the sym-

(h) See Mr Hume's history, vol. I. pag. 76, 77, 85, & 150.

pathy of the English with their distressed Protestant brethren in Germany and in France. But as some of his sage admirers, may possibly apply it, to attempts for Christianizing the Indians, I hope I may be permitted to ask; Is it low and odious bigotry, to wish the happiness of all mankind, to grieve for their distresses, and if providence give us opportunity, to contribute to their relief? If mutual charity, sympathy, and kindness are amiable in individuals: what should render them ugly or contemptible, in the largest societies? or, is it low bigotry, to believe, that the miseries of mankind would be lessened, if the humane gentle spirit of the 'gospel, prevailed among these savages, who can sport themselves with torturing a disarmed enemy, nay, who can butcher whole families in cold blood? Let me further enquire, would it it be contrary to sound politics, to expend a few thousand pounds in proper endeavours, to propagate genuine Christianity, among the five Indian nations, and other numerous and powerful tribes, if this expence might save to the nation as many millions, in armies and navies, for protecting our colonies from their ambitious and treacherous neighbours? That this is the case, is more than probable. None who know the state of our North America colonies can be ignorant, that the French in Canada spare neither cost nor pains, to gain over to their interest the neutral Indians, and to seduce even those Indians, who are yet in alliance with us (i). If these natives were once united with us in religious sentiments, this would do much, firmly to attach them to the British interest. To attempt this, by employing a competent number of missionaries in these parts, by building towns for the Indians on the

(i) See Mr William Clarke's observations on the French encroachments upon the British colonies in North America, and on the importance of these colonies to Great Britain. Boston 1755. This judicious pamphlet is reprinted at London.

frontiers of our colonies, and by maintaining ministers and schoolmasters to instruct them; would, in all probability, be accepted with thankfulness, by many of these Indians, and would convince them, that our professions of friendship for them were sincere (j). And, if we may judge from facts, towns of Christian natives, would prove a strong barrier to our settlements, and in a great measure intimidate our enemies from encroaching upon them (k). Though therefore, religious motives were out of the question, good policy would determine the true patriot, to encourage every probable scheme for the conversion of these Indians (l).

(j) The Mohawks, and some other tribes, have of late discovered an earnest thirst after knowledge, and a strong disposition to hearken to instruction. The Indian school erected at Stockbridge, was so much approved by the natives, far and near, that the French, to prevent their Indians from repairing to it for instruction, were obliged to set up a school at Canada on a similar plan. See Mr Hopkins's historical memoirs relating to the Housatunnuk Indians. Boston 1753. p. 175, 176.

(k) Stockbridge is more exposed to the Canada Indians than any other place whatever; and yet in the last war, the enemy turned off east to Connecticut river, and west to the Dutch settlements, where they did much mischief, while Stockbridge, though more exposed, was not molested. A small number of Christian Indians dwelt there. The enemy knew, that they were our fast and hearty friends, and cared not to come within their reach. Hopkins's memoirs, p. 166, 167.

(l) The late prince of Wales, who well understood the state of our colonies, and their importance to Great Britain, was greatly pleased to hear, of the attempts to Christianize the Housatunnuk and Mohawk Indians: and, besides a very handsome gratuity for encouraging the Stockbridge school, readily offered an annual bounty, out of his own revenue, for these pious purposes. I learn these facts, from sermons published by Mess^{rs} Prince and Mather, on occasion of the death of that excellent prince. He was taken, from a nation, which was not worthy of him. To Britain and her colonies, the loss is inexpressible. May the offspring of his royal highness, in some

Hitherto, I have solicited your charity, from regard to the civil interests of the nation. But, I hope, I speak to many, who know and consider the value of an immortal soul, and who esteem Christ and his gospel the best of blessings. And can you behold multitudes of souls, in imminent danger of eternal destruction, and not listen to the cry of their needs? seemeth it to you a great thing, to bestow a little of your superfluous wealth, for that end, for which, the Son of God, thought it not too much, to bleed and to die? To rescue mankind from the bondage of sin and Satan, is an undertaking truly generous and heroic: and it is impossible, to do them any other service, which can equal this. Brethren, if any do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he, which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins (m). And, can you refuse a charity, the joyful effects of which, may be felt by your perishing brother, thro' endless ages? Can you spend your money on the elegancies of life? can you, without grudging, squander it away on vanities and trifles? and, have you none to spare, for the service of him, who tho' he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye thro' his poverty, might be made rich? Dare you presume, to pray daily, that Christ's kingdom may come: while yet ye have no heart, to exert yourselves, in the smallest degree, for the advancement of that kingdom? by pleading that God's name may be hallowed, do you mean to be excused, from hallowing it yourselves:

measure compensate it, by inheriting his amiable dispositions! May all ranks, hearken with reverence, to the voice of providence, in that melancholy event, and in succeeding warnings! and may we turn to him, who in so alarming a manner has threatened to smite us, that he may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and think upon us, that we perish not!

(m) James v. 19, 20.

to be excused, from honouring God with your substance, and with the first fruits of your increase? Shall Jesuites compass sea and land, and spare neither money nor labour, to profelyte men to idolatry and superstition: and, shall the zeal, the activity, the liberality, of those who profess the pure gospel of Christ, fall short of theirs? If we are backward, to impart to others, the means of grace: may not God, in righteous displeasure, deprive us of them; or by withdrawing from them the influences of his Spirit, permit them, to become to us, a favour of death unto death?

The image of God was the glory of man in his primitive state: and a begun resemblance to the Son of God is the glory of the Christian. God would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth (n). Is, then, indifference, whether others are eternally happy or eternally miserable, any part of his image? Jesus came to seek and to save that which is lost? and, are we fellow-workers with him, if we forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and them that are ready to be slain?

Tell me, ye, who are now got to the upper world, did your employing part of your substance for these kind and charitable purposes, darken your evidences for heaven, and fill you with terror and remorse, when walking thro' the valley and shadow of death? or, are you afraid, lest it should prove to you a grief and offence of heart, in that important day, when they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever (o)? when Christ appears, will these have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming, who, tho' they had fair opportunities, declined to do any thing, for advancing his kingdom?

(n) 1 Tim. ii. 4. (o) Dan. xii. 3.

Art thou, my friend, rich and honourable? Thy riches and honour come from God. And, does not gratitude, does not justice require, that of his own thou shouldst give him? To thee much has been given: and of thee, therefore, much shall be required. Death will ere long strip thee of every outward distinction, and summon thee to give an account of thy stewardship. He, who gave thee thy talents, will reckon with thee for every one of them (p). And, if thou abuse them, or if thou hidest them in a napkin, will that prepare thee, for giving in thy accounts, with joy, and not with grief?

Hast thou no need of the blessing of God, on thy estate and substance? thinkest thou, to obtain that blessing, by refusing to employ them for the purposes, for which the Lord of all things, granted them to thee? or, art thou afraid, lest if thou lend unto God, it shall not be repaid thee again? Was this indeed the case, and hadst thou nothing more to expect from God: yet how base the ingratitude, to refuse a little to him, who has given thee all things richly to enjoy! But know, that here the calls of interest, and the calls of gratitude, are precisely the same. Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free (q). If under the gospel, worldly prosperity is not so absolutely entail'd upon goodness, as it was under the Sinaitic covenant: yet to those, who improve their talents, in the service, and for the glory of God; so much even of worldly prosperity is secured, as consists with their best and highest interest: and, more than that, would be a curse, rather than a blessing. But, if thou art not recompensed in this world: doubtless, thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (r).—None of your substance, my brethren, is laid out to such advantage, as what you liberally contribute for charitable purposes. It is thus ye may

(p) Matth. xxv. 19. (q) Eph. vi. 8. (r) Luke xiv. 14.

make to yourselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, which, when ye fail, shall receive you, into everlasting habitations (f). It is thus, ye may lay up treasures in heaven, where neither moth, nor rust can corrupt, nor thieves break thro' and steal. For tho' the heavenly reward is given, not for our righteousness, but for the merits of Christ: yet, it is given, in degrees proportionable to our good works. What ye now sow, ye shall reap in another world (t). He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he that soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully (u). The liberal soul shall then be made fat, and he that watereth, shall be watered himself (v). Give, and it shall then be given, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over. Cast your bread upon the waters, and ye shall find it after many days (w). And, what you give, give freely and cheerfully, not grudgingly, and as of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful Giver.

(f) Luke xvi. 9. (t) Gal. vi. 7. (u) 2 Cor. ix. 6. (v) Prov. xi. 25. (w) Eccles. xi. 1.

THE PRESENT
STATE
OF THE
SOCIETY IN SCOTLAND
FOR PROPAGATING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE.

THE Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge took its rise about the year 1700.—A few private gentlemen laid the foundation of it at Edinburgh, with a design to propagate the knowledge of Christianity thro' the remote corners of the Highlands of Scotland.

After these gentlemen had procured subscriptions to the extent of L. 1000 Sterling, they obtained from her Majesty queen Ann, a proclamation, recommending the design to all her subjects ; and soon after, her royal letters patent, erecting the subscribers into a society, or body corporate, to be ever after designed, *The society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge* ; and granting unto them full power to receive subscriptions, mortifications, donations, legacies, sums of money, lands, goods and gear ; and therewith to erect and maintain schools, to teach to read, especially the holy scriptures, and other pious books ; as also to teach writing, arithmetic, and such

like degrees of knowledge in the Highlands, islands, and remote corners of Scotland, and in other parts therein-mentioned; and to use such means for instructing the people in the Christian reformed Protestant religion, as may be competent, &c.

In consequence of this patent, which bears date the 25th of May 1709, the first nomination of members was made by the lord president and judges of the court of session, out of the list of original subscribers.—And since that time rules of management have been framed, so full and compleat, that now there is no part of their business without its proper and known regulation.

When this society was first erected, the condition of the inhabitants of the Highlands was very forlorn. Ignorance, idleness and barbarity prevailed almost every where: few attempts had been made to reform them: some had been made even to make them worse.—James VI. had done somewhat to make the Highlanders more tame and gentle:— he had erected some new royal burghs among them;— he had also made very severe statutes against the clans;— but these statutes could not be carried into execution.— Charles I. went more roundly to work: he proscribed a whole clan at once; suppressed the * name, and obliged them yearly to appear before his council, and find caution.— But Charles II. had other service for them: he made those fierce and savage clans still fiercer and more savage; and wheted their appetite for plunder and rapine by the infamous measure of the Highland host.— During the reign of James VII. Popery began to flourish:— the priests appeared in their habits at Whitehall, and the king went publicly to mass.— If these things were done at court, in the face of the sun and of the nation, there can be no wonder that in other and remote places of the country the utmost diligence was used to make men converts to his majesty's religion, Popery.— This

* The name of M^rGregor.

was the case in Scotland, particularly in the Highlands;— and it appears more than probable that measures were taken once more to have enforced other arguments with that of a Catholic Highland host:— but, thank God, these measures proved abortive, and only served to hasten forward the glorious revolution.

The revolution came; and with it came many fair, many rich blessings to Britain in general, and to Scotland and the Highlands of Scotland in particular.—— But it is hard to cure old prejudices;— hard is it to root out old opinions and practices, tho' big with folly and absurdity.

At the time of the revolution, the Highlanders were many of them sunk in the grossest tenets of Popery or Paganism:— their clanships, their personal services, were hard and slavish to the highest degree:— their chiefs were barbarous and tyrannical, not amenable to justice:— their private and personal feuds were unextinguished:— in short a state more unhappy could scarce be imagined; and yet it has in fact already required a space of near 70 years, with the repeated endeavours of the king and parliament, and of this society, to convince them that liberty was to be preferred to slavery, industry to idleness, true Christianity to Heathenism or Popery.

The rebellion 1715 was a daring attempt, by these unhappy men, to bring the nation back to its former misery.—— But the attempt fail'd.—— The rebellion 1745 was still more insolent, and from concurring causes advanced to greater height; but it also miscarried, and the nation resumed her former quiet.—— Both these attempts turned the attention of the legislature towards the Highlands of Scotland, as they shewed the necessity of reformation, cost what it would.—— The consequence has been, that several laws have been enacted favourable to them beyond expression:— Such, in particular, is the act for abolishing heretable jurisdictions— for altering the tenure by ward—

and for annexing certain Highland estates to his majesty and his heirs unalienably.

By this last mentioned act, the rents and profits of the estates annexed are to be applied in civilizing the inhabitants, in promoting among them the Protestant religion, good government, industry and manufactures, together with principles of duty and attachment to his majesty king George, and the succession in his family.—And as one great inconvenience complained of in the Highlands, was the wide extent of parishes,—some of which were thirty five miles in length, and twenty five in breadth; therefore by the said act, it is provided, that such parishes be divided and new churches erected in them with proper stipends to the pastors.—Nay more, his majesty, by the said act, is impowered to erect schools for instructing the youth in reading and writing the English language, and in the several branches of manufacture and agriculture.—These are the methods proposed by the legislature of Great Britain, for reformation of the Highlands of Scotland:—and they are the very method proposed and followed by the society: and, to every impartial and unprejudiced mind, they will perhaps appear the only methods adequate to the design.—Men must have right principles to act from, or they will act from bad ones.—This holds remarkably in the Highlands, where, if we are not careful to make the inhabitants good Protestants, the church of Rome will take care to make and keep them good Papists.—If this society is not careful to make them the one, the *Propaganda* at Rome will take care to make them the other.—So long as there is either Pope or Pretender, so long will the inhabitants of the Highlands of Scotland be liable to become a prey to their cunning and artful insinuations.

The method followed by the society to prevent these dangerous consequences, is that of erecting public schools

in the different corners of the Highlands and islands, under the inspection of the several presbyteries where they are situate, who transmit annually a report to the society anent the state of them.——The qualifications of the several schoolmasters must be certified on trial as follows, viz. That the candidate is a person well known to the presbytery, of whose piety, loyalty and prudence they are satisfied; that he understands the principles of the Protestant religion, writing and arithmetic; that they judge him well affected to the present government, and in every respect qualified for the office of schoolmaster.——Their duty is to instruct their scholars in the principles of the Christian reformed religion—to direct their morals, and to train them up in the social virtues—to teach them writing and orthography, arithmetic and church-music, but no Latin—to report those who are absent, to the visitors—to transmit lists of their scholars names annually, with the time of their entry, the time of their departure, and degree of proficiency—to worship God every day and every night—and to take care that the scholars attend public worship on the Lord's day.—They are likewise to teach their scholars to translate the Irish language into English, and to speak the English.—They are not allowed to serve by a substitute, nor their schools to vaik more than 20 days; and no salary is paid to them without proper certificates of their service, and reports made by the visitors.—If these are made, the salaries are paid twice in the year.

The number of schools presently kept up, and maintained by the society, is no less than 170—at which are educated no fewer than 6659—children of both sexes.——Many of these schools are situated in the most distant and lonely corners of the continent—and some of them in the most solitary islands of the sea, where otherwise in all probability the rays of the Sun of righteousness would

would never have reached.—And in placing them, the society are particularly careful not to settle too near any parochial schools, but rather to disseminate and spread them as far and as wide as possible.—This society has subsisted for no more than 46 years, and yet, at the lowest computation one can make, it has been the means of instructing as many thousands of poor helpless children in the knowledge of Christianity.—Sure a design such as this deserves to be encouraged.

It has been one principal care of the society to introduce among the Highlanders a knowledge of the English language, to fit them for understanding and being understood by the rest of the world—Without this the means of introducing other branches of knowledge among them behoved to be expensive and few.—The only books printed in their language are Popish books, printed at Rome, or under the direction of the Scotch college at France—and the reading these books is certainly no promising way of turning them Protestants.—And tho' this society has sometimes caused print and distribute among them books in that language, but of a different tendency, yet it is their opinion that the Irish language ought to be as expeditiously and intirely rooted out as possible; nor have they been slack or sparing in the use of any means in their power for gaining this desirable end.

Perhaps there is no better method of directing the friends of Christianity and of the present government in the right way of reforming the Highlands of Scotland, than by considering the methods which the enemies of both have followed to ruin them.—If it is their method carefully to preserve the spirit of clanship, licentiousness and rapine, with the other like methods of continuing a nation barbarous; it ought to be our aim to introduce among them a spirit of liberty, industry and honesty, and the other meek arts of peace and good government.—If it has

been their method to keep the Highlanders firmly attached to a Popish prince as their king, and to the Pope of Rome as their saviour ; it ought to be our endeavour to disentangle them from both. In short, whatever methods they follow on the one hand, it is our duty to follow the reverse method upon the other.—And certainly we ought to be at some pains to wipe off the old reproach, That men are at greater pains to propagate a false religion than a true.

In the year 1738, the society applied to his present gracious Majesty for a second patent, in order to enable them to make some attempts to root out that idleness and false taste of liberty so prevalent among the Highlanders. This patent they obtained in the terms following, viz.

“ GEORGE, by the grace of God, King of Great Britain,
 “ France and Ireland, defender of the faith ; forasmuch-
 “ as, we taking into our royal consideration, that her late
 “ Majesty queen Anne, of blessed memory, did, upon
 “ the narrative of the charitable inclinations of many of
 “ her subjects, for raising a voluntary contribution, to-
 “ wards the further promoting Christian knowledge, and
 “ the increase of piety and virtue in Scotland, by her
 “ letters patent, bearing date at St James’s, the 25th day
 “ of May 1709, constitute, appoint, ordain and declare,
 “ the said contributors to be a legal society and corpora-
 “ tion, by the name of *The society in Scotland for pro-*
 “ *pagating Christian knowledge* ; with power to them to
 “ receive subscriptions, to erect and maintain schools to
 “ teach to read, especially the holy scriptures ; as also,
 “ to teach writing, arithmetic, and such like degrees of
 “ knowledge as might be competent, as in the said letters,
 “ patent, containing divers other clauses, at more length,
 “ is set forth : And we taking likewise into consideration,
 “ the petition of the said society for propagating Christian
 “ knowledge, in their anniversary general court, held at
 “ Edinburgh, upon Thursday the 7th of January last,

“ setting forth the said letters patent ; and that it is found
“ by experience, that the breeding up of young people to
“ handy-labour, trades and manufactures, together with
“ learning to read and write, will be of great benefit, not
“ only to these young people, but likewise to the nation
“ in general, and better answer the inclinations of the
“ contributors, for promoting piety and virtue ; that the
“ foresaid society are, by their said original patent, de-
“ clared able and capable, in law, to purchase and enjoy
“ lands, tenements, rents, and other privileges and jurif-
“ dictions in fee and perpetuity, not exceeding the yearly
“ value of L. 2000 Sterling ; but it may be doubted,
“ whether, by the said patent, they have power to sell
“ and dispose of lands once purchased : the said society
“ therefore humbly prayed, we would be pleased, not
“ only to ratify and perpetually confirm the foresaid
“ letters patent, for the ends therein mentioned, but also
“ further to empower and authorise the said society, by
“ all lawful means, and according to rules by them to be
“ established in that behalf, over and above the purposes
“ of their original patent, to cause such of the children, as
“ they shall think fit, to be instructed, and bred up to
“ husbandry and housewifery, or in trades and manufac-
“ tures, or in such like manual occupations as the society
“ shall think proper, and that in such places, and in such
“ manner, as the society, or their directors, shall think
“ the most practicable and expedient ; and further, to
“ empower the said society, to sell and dispose of such
“ lands, tenements, rents, privileges, and jurisdictions,
“ as they already have, or shall hereafter purchase, so often
“ as they shall judge the same expedient, and for the in-
“ terest of the society. Therefore we, from an earnest
“ desire for promoting the good of our subjects, in all
“ parts of our dominions, ordain letters patent to be made
“ and past under the seal appointed, by the treaty of union ;

to be kept and made use of in Scotland, in place of
“ the great seal of Scotland, containing our ratification,
“ and perpetual confirmation, of the foresaid letters patent,
“ for the ends and purposes therein mentioned ; and also,
“ our full power and authority to the said society, by all
“ lawful means, and according to rules by them to be
“ established in that behalf, over and above the purposes
“ of their original patent, to cause such of the children, as
“ they shall think fit, to be instructed, and bred up to
“ husbandry and housewifery, or in trades and manufac-
“ tures, or in such like manual occupations as the society
“ shall think proper, and that in such places, and in such
“ manner, as the society, or their directors for the time
“ being, shall think the most practicable and expedient ;
“ and containing likewise our full powers to the said so-
“ ciety, to sell and dispose of such lands, tenements, rents,
“ privileges and jurisdictions, as they already have, or shall
“ hereafter purchase, as often as they shall judge the same
“ expedient, and for the interest of the society ; provided
“ always, that such sale or disposal of the foresaid lands,
“ tenements, and others, shall have the consent and ap-
“ probation of our trusty and wellbeloved, the lords ju-
“ stice-general, president of the court of session, chief
“ baron of the court of exchequer, justice clerk, our advo-
“ cate, and solicitor for the time being, or any three of
“ them, &c. In testimony whereof, we have ordained our
“ seal, appointed, by the treaty of union, to be kept and
“ used in place of the great seal of Scotland, to be hereto
“ appended. At our court at Kensington, the 6th day of
“ June 1738, and of our reign the 11th year.”

Upon obtaining this second patent, the society, by ad-
vice of some persons skilled in agriculture, erected a school
in the parish of Callendar, for teaching that happy art.—
They were encouraged to do the like with regard to ma-
nufactures, in several other places, by some persons of di-
stinction who took the said schools under their immediate

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care and inspection ; and also by that laudable spirit of erecting work-houses, which, of late, has become so general and prevailing : with which good designs the society has not failed to concur, by appointing proper salaries for masters and teachers in such work-houses, as has already been done in the Orphan-Hospital, and Poor-house at Edinburgh, and in the Poor-house at Dalkeith.

The society, some time ago, gave a commission and salary to a schoolmaster for manufactures at Craig, near Montrose ; and have also concluded a bargain for building a school-house at the town of Inverness, where, besides reading and writing, the scholars are to be taught different kinds of manufacture.—The school-house will cost the society L. 516 Sterling. This they have been enabled to do by a special mortification made by John Raining of Norwich, merchant, deceased.

At Lochcarron, one of the colonies for promoting the linen manufacture, fixed on by the trustees, the society have also endeavoured to push the purposes of their second patent.—Besides a schoolmaster, they have settled considerable yearly salaries on a black-smith, a shoemaker, a cart-wright, and a plow-man, who are to be employed by them for five years.—The plowman is to instruct, *gratis*, all that offer themselves ; and the others are obliged to instruct a number of apprentices, and to give maintenance at bed and board to them, if the society finds that expedient, at a reasonable rate, to be paid by the society.

Upon the same plan have they proceeded, with regard to a new factory erected by the trustees at Glenmoriston.—The ignorance and irreligion that prevailed among the inhabitants of that country, was amazing.—Religion they had none, except Popery ; and, of one thousand persons, by whom the glen was inhabited, not above 40 could so much as read.

They had no schools, nor other mean of instruction whatever, except some Popish priests, whose business it was to

corrupt their minds more and more, both as to civil and religious principles.——The consequence was, that, to a man, they were all engaged in the rebellion 1745.——Here, therefore, the society judged was a fit place to make an attempt; and as the trustees had planted one of their factories at it, the society thought it their duty to assist: and, besides a schoolmaster, to whom they gave a suitable salary, they have also given salaries to a black-smith and a gardener who are to reside there, and are to teach apprentices, on the same terms above-mentioned with those at Lochcarron.

Several other designs of the like nature are now under the consideration of the society, of which they will take the liberty to acquaint the public, when the same are fully adjusted.

To conclude; as the *Society in Scotland for propagating Christian knowledge*, was at first founded, and is still maintained, by the charity of well disposed persons; it is no more than common justice, to let such know how, and in what manner their charity is applied.—For this reason, among many, the directors have thought it their duty to present their fellow members, and the world with the preceding short account of its present state, which, they hope, will not fail to give satisfaction to every good man, to every one who values either the civil or the religious prosperity of his country.

With respect to those who have already been so generous as to contribute to the funds of the society, especially during the year past; the directors beg leave to return such persons their most sincere acknowledgments: and they hope that those, who have not as yet turned their thoughts this way, will now do it, and will direct the application of what they may give, either to the purposes of the first or second patent, as they judge proper;——a thing which the directors will most carefully observe; and, in which case, they will most religiously follow the will of the donor.

Names of the persons appointed to receive benefactions in London and Edinburgh for the use of this society.

IN London, CLAUD JOHNSTON, merchant.

In Edinburgh, Mr JAMES DAVIDSON of Halltree, and JOHN DAVIDSON writer to the signet.

FORM of a LEGACY.

ITEM, *I give and bequeath the sum of*
to the society in Scotland for propagating Christian know-
ledge, to be applied (either to the purposes of the first or second
charter, as the donor pleases.)

Committee of DIRECTORS for the year 1756.

JAMES SMOLLET of Bonhill, Esq; his majesty's sheriff-depute for the shire of Dumbarton, and one of the commissaries of Edinburgh, Preses.

The Reverend Mr ROBERT HAMILTON, professor of Divinity in the college of Edinburgh.

Mr ALEXANDER WEBSTER

Mr ROBERT WALLACE

Mr ROBERT WALKER

} Ministers of Edinburgh.

Baillie WILLIAM TOD, merchant in Edinburgh.

Mr ANDREW CHALMER, writer there.

Mr ALEXANDER TAIT, secretary to the Edinburgh insurance.

Mr JOHN RUSSEL junior, writer to the signet.

Mr THOMAS BOES, writer in Edinburgh.

Mr ALEXANDER YOUNG, writer there.

Mr THOMAS LUMISDEN, printer there.

Baillie GAVIN HAMILTON, bookseller there.

Mr WILLIAM RAMSAY of Preston.

Mr GEORGE ARBUTHNOT, merchant in Edinburgh.

The most Honourable the Marquis of LOTHIAN is president of the general court.

The Right Honourable WILLIAM GRANT of Prestongrange, one of the senators of the college of Justice,—secretary.

JAMES NIMMO, Esq; cashier of excise, comptroller.

ALEXANDER CHALMERS accomptant.

JAMES DAVIDSON of Halltree

JOHN DAVIDSON writer to the signet

} Joint treasurers

WILLIAM ROSS writer in Edinburgh, clerk.

JOHN LOTHIAN bookholder.

JAMES BROWN bookseller.

ALEXANDER COUTS officer.

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