

be perceived, in reference to himself, as one eternal NOW.

We cannot, however, consider the phrase, ONE ETERNAL NOW, although it has been adopted for ages, and sanctioned by the highest authorities, in any other light than that of an accommodating expression, which the poverty of language compels us to use. The word NOW, can hardly be divested of its reference to time; and, although the words *past* and *future*, bring with them more unquestionable evidence of this reference, yet the same modes of reasoning which have been introduced with regard to them, can, with some trifling variations be advanced, to demonstrate this term to be equivocal, when used to express the Divine existence. No word that implies time in any of its various modes, can, with any degree of propriety, except in an accommodating sense, be adopted to convey the idea that is intended to be expressed. And, perhaps, the utmost height to which our most elevated thoughts can soar, on such an occasion, must finally terminate in this plain language, 'THE ETERNAL GOD EXISTS IN A TRANSCENDENT MANNER, WHICH NO EARTHLY ANALOGIES CAN ILLUSTRATE.'

[To be continued in our next.]

Unitarianism weighed and found wanting; in a Series of Letters addressed to the Rev. George Harris, and occasioned by his Evening Lectures in Renshaw-street Chapel, Liverpool. By Robert Philip. London, pp. 65.

It appears from a short preface, with which this pamphlet is introduced to our notice, that, although the Evening Lectures of Mr. Harris may be assigned as the immediate cause of this publication, they did not suggest to Mr. Philip the first idea, of turning his attention to the Socinian controversy. Prior to this time, he had been preparing for the press a work of some considerable extent, in which the essential parts of these letters were embodied. But the observations made by Mr. Harris, and the arguments which he advanced, coinciding in many respects with those which Mr. Philip had previously examined, he was already furnished with the prominent parts of a reply, apparently written by a kind of accidental anticipation. These letters, which are seven in number, were then broken from their primitive connexion, and

filled up with such occasional remarks, as the Lectures, which had been delivered, very naturally suggested.

After commencing our perusal of this pamphlet, we must confess, that our expectations were far from being sanguine; and our reflections on the first letter, were by no means calculated to remove this unfavourable impression. To us the reasonings appeared rather vague and dubious. Even the premises themselves we could only view as problematical; and the conclusion, though legitimately deduced, we beheld as unimportant, because it could not boast of an exclusive application.

In prosecuting our task, the clouds, however, which had gathered round us from the commencement of our journey, began to dissipate; and as we gradually ascended an eminence to behold the author's views, the controversial horizon assumed a new aspect. Proceeding thus, we had made distinct observations on every letter, intending to introduce a comparative estimate of their respective importance. But, on reviewing the whole, the disproportion which would have appeared between the extent of the pamphlet, and our analysis of its contents, compelled us to abandon our original design, and to pursue this which we have now adopted.

In the examination of these letters, we have been forcibly struck with that connected view which the author has taken of Prophecy, Providence, and Fact; considered as distinct, but inseparable parts of one general system of divine economy. To each of these branches he directs the attention of his readers; and, after placing them fully in view under various aspects, he endeavours to infer, that neither Prophecy, Providence, nor Public Opinion, is favourable to Unitarianism: and, it must be confessed, that in most instances he has been successful. Throughout the whole, we find many sensible observations and appropriate arguments: an amiable spirit seems to breathe in almost every page; and several paragraphs are enriched with a pleasing originality of thought. The reasonings, however, are rather popular than profound; but their force is always recommended by their perspicuity; and to every reader, who rather wishes to have his judgment informed, than his understanding bewildered with paradoxes, this pamphlet presents no contemptible fund to satisfy moderate expectation.

Viewing Unitarianism merely as a rational system, or a speculative theory, it will be readily admitted, that it has an imposing form, and an alluring appearance; but when, with this system in our hands, we turn to the doctrines of Revelation, we behold incongruities which dissolve the charm. On this point Mr. Philip has argued strongly in his sixth letter; and from his reasonings he has fairly inferred, that the moral condition of man, considered as a sinner, requires new principles of action, which natural religion is unable to supply, and which Unitarianism professedly disowns. These new principles, the sacred writings declare to be necessary; and it is among the peculiar beauties of Revelation, that it defines their nature, and points us to their primitive source.

That the doctrines of the Gospel seem to favour these new principles of moral action, the assertors of Unitarianism appear to be well aware; and, from the specimens which their improved version of the Scriptures affords, we are warranted in concluding, that a Bible formed upon Unitarian principles, would not be exactly like that which we have received from God. It is no good omen in favour of any system, to find complaints almost uniformly made against nearly all those passages which seem to frown upon it.

Of the rational mode of proceeding which so conspicuously associates itself with this accommodating system, the Author charges Mr. Harris in his fourth letter; and the term *Sacrifice* is adduced, as furnishing an evidence of the fact. This, instead of retaining, in the lexicons of Unitarianism, its primitive meaning, is taught to disown whatever its modern application does not imply; and hence it has no more connexion with *expiation*, than the patriotism or heroic suffering of Brutus, Hampden, or Sydney.

Of the leading articles which compose the Unitarian creed, the Author has placed before his readers an epitome, which seems neither to be distorted by misrepresentation, nor rendered defective through omission. The passages of scripture with which this creed is contrasted, are judiciously selected; and their importance derives an additional interest, from their appearing on a ground which we have not been always accustomed to tread. Truth requires only to be understood, to command our homage; but the lustre with which it

occasionally shines depends upon those adventitious circumstances, which ingenuity knows how to impart. How far the Author has been successful in this, the reader may form some opinion from the following specimen.

“Suppose then, for a moment, that God, in a visible and indisputable manner, should abolish the Bible entirely, and give to the world, in its stead, *a written copy of the Unitarian system*, having all the authority and sacredness which the Bible has had. Suppose all this done in the eyes of all nations; and the creed of every nation Unitarian; and this state of things five hundred years old; and the present Bible utterly forgotten; and the existing commentaries and orthodox writings lost; and nothing extant but what you approve of now. You can have no serious objections to these suppositions, because the chief part of them are hopes you cherish, and wish to see realized. And it will reconcile you to the imaginary loss of the old Bible, when I remind you, that any unwillingness on this head, would betray a lurking suspicion, that your system is not scriptural at present.

“Now, Sir, suppose that after five hundred years, when your system would be dominant, and endeared by as many pious and learned works as Trinitarianism now boasts, some minister of talents and influence should address such a circular as the following to the Unitarian churches.

“‘Dearly beloved,

“‘Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love! All men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: and let all the angels of God worship him; for he is before all things, and by him all things consist. By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were made by him and for him. His goings forth were of old, even from everlasting. When his Father addressed him, he says, ‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever!’ ‘Thou, Jehovah, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.’ Therefore, it becomes us to ascribe, ‘Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and

unto the Lamb for ever; because he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father.—The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.' Amen.

"How would such a letter be received, Sir, by churches, formed on the principle that divine names and divine honours are the exclusive rights of the Father? The writer would be branded as an idolater, and his letter committed to the flames. Or, if any one leaned to his opinions, an appeal would be made to the New Bible, (which I have supposed,) and the wavering brother dared to produce from it, one instance in which Christ is called God, Jehovah, or Creator. And you know that he could not, if any of the existing summaries of Unitarianism were exalted into the rank of the Bible, and substituted in its room. And if these passages, which I have thrown into the form of a letter, would savour of idolatry five hundred years hence, (under that state of things I have supposed,) they do so now, on every principle but that of the Son's equality with the Father." p. 55.

The preceding extract exhibits a fair specimen of the Author's mode of arguing; but more unexceptionable passages might be selected, to display his talent at composition.

If an inhabitant of some unknown region, who had never heard of the discordant opinions which distinguish contending parties, were to examine our Bible, and were then called upon to give his judgment on the doctrines which it contains, no man can reasonably suppose that he would decide in favour of Unitarianism. If, therefore, this system be true, and the Bible be a revelation from God, the sacred volume must be considered as one of the most astonishing prodigies that was ever submitted to the inspection of angels or men. In every view, its doctrines are of such a complexion, and its language is so constructed, that the book itself seems better calculated to lead men into error, than to shew them the way of salvation. It records instances of idolatry under the Christian system, which were unreprieved; and teaches, by example as well as by precept, those very evils, which it informs us its Author abhors.

There can be little doubt, if the poor were to have the Gospel preached unto them, that the sacred books were intended to be understood, in every thing

necessary to salvation, without the aid of critical analysis, or without requiring the exercise of the Unitarian pruning-knife. We find, indeed, within its pages, depths in which leviathans may swim; but it contains also shallows in which lambs may wade. And in a revelation coming from God to teach mankind the way to heaven, we should naturally expect, that no doctrines would be more seriously inculcated, more frequently repeated, or more unequivocally expressed, than those which the divine benevolence had made necessary to salvation; even though that wisdom which is not from above, after having invented or discovered difficulties, might smile at the humility of faith, and inquire—How can these things be? But from Unitarianism we have learnt a very different lesson. Its success seems to depend upon the skill of its advocates, whose critical dexterity the unlearned cannot comprehend. And even where the doctrines which it teaches are embraced, they seem better calculated to give light to the head, than to communicate virtue to the heart. To those doctrines which lead to the sound and saving conversion of sinners to God, and which make men new creatures in Christ Jesus, Unitarianism can make but very feeble pretensions. And, we may rest assured, so long as we have the sacred word for our guide, that the religious system which does not lead to the conversion of sinners, is not the system of the Bible, nor the religion revealed by God.

"From the fame and grandeur of Christ's miracles, Nicodemus concluded, that he was a teacher come from God; for, as the ruler justly observed, 'no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' This, you know, amounts to all the faith in Christ, which Unitarians think necessary or proper. This they consider as believing unto salvation, when the belief is accompanied with corresponding obedience. Now, Sir, if they are right in this opinion, we may expect, especially as true faith was a rare thing in Israel at the time, that Nicodemus's confession, although given by night, would be well received and highly approved of. But, instead of being so, Jesus took no notice whatever of it; and, what was very unusual with him, returned an abrupt answer to the 'master in Israel: for you must allow, that the words, 'Verily, verily, I say unto

' thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,' are any thing, but an approval of his faith. And is it not evident, that his faith was not satisfactory, seeing Christ inculcated on him the necessity of believing on the Son of God, as well as of undergoing the new birth? When Peter made his celebrated confession,—that Jesus was *the Christ, the Son of the living God*, it was approved and applauded, and even declared to be an express revelation from the Father to the apostle. Now, Sir, mark the different reception given to these two confessions; and say, is there not a difference in the creeds themselves which led to it? And yet Unitarians mean no more by the Son of God, than Nicodemus meant by *Teacher come from God*. This, Sir, I call a case in point, and one that merits your serious attention, both as a man and as a minister. As a man, it is your interest to have the approbation of Christ to your creed; and as a minister, to take care that you insist upon all the faith which Christ insisted on. You deprecate, I am sure, such a reception for your flock as Nicodemus met with: it devolves on you, therefore, to guard them against stopping short where *he did*."—p. 24, 25.

It is among the infelicities of Unitarianism, to exhibit a creed, which, in some of its articles, is less calculated for the meridian of Christianity, than for the suburbs of Infidelity. Between the faith of many who advocate this system, and that professed by Thomas Paine, in his Age of Reason, there is a melancholy resemblance. In the doctrines which they reject, they mutually concur. The former indeed profess to believe the Bible; while the latter disdains its authority. But to facts and doctrines, which reason can sanction,—by tracing them from given premises, to the same conclusions that Revelation has set before the eye of faith, Thomas Paine would not have hesitated to give his assent; and beyond this, it is much to be feared, that many Unitarians are not inclined to pass. In both cases, the plain result is, "We will receive Revelation so far as it meets our approbation, on the ground of reason, but not under the sanctions of authority." When this fails, Infidelity indeed retires; and Unitarianism only remains to accommodate, with the tortures of criticism, those truths which it would otherwise disbelieve.

We might here terminate our obser-
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ventions, if the claims of justice, and the importance of the subject, did not demand the introduction of another short paragraph. This develops the Author's views of those general principles, which render the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ essentially necessary to human salvation.

"Now, it is not on the doctrines of natural religion, that we differ: these are common to both. We go hand in hand, through all the range of those principles which arise out of the natural and moral relations of creatures to their Creator; and do not separate, until we reach those principles which have arisen in consequence of the creature's disregard of relative obligation. Here we divide, and continue to diverge until we lose sight of each other. For example, Trinitarians say, that the present state of mankind being depraved and guilty, has brought into REVEALED RELIGION doctrines totally *different* in character from those of NATURAL RELIGION, but the *same* in their moral influence. The former, however, are brought in so, as not to set aside the latter. The doctrine of atonement magnifies, and the doctrine of justification by faith establishes, the moral law. They are therefore *additions*, not *substitutes* for the truths of NATURAL RELIGION; additions called for by the guilt and depravity of the human race. And it surely occurs to you, that the religious system of *sinners*, is likely to have some peculiarities, and *must* differ in all the points which regard sin, from a system adapted to the condition of innocent beings. For, if it did not, there would be nothing to check or remedy sin, but its own consequences. And on your scheme, there is nothing else to do so, but law and its penal sanctions; and the first you make so lax, that it requires no satisfaction; and the second so light, that they inspire no terrors." p. 51.

We must now take our leave of this Author, and his work. If any apology be necessary for the length of this article, we hope it will be found in the importance of the subject which has passed under our review. The questions which we have seen agitated, affect the vitals of Christianity. Of this the Author seems to have been fully aware; and, so far as popular argument and popular language can be deemed beneficial to the cause of truth, we cannot suppose that this pamphlet has been written in vain.