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The Integrity and Excellence of Scripture. 1.



A

VINDICATION

OF THE

MUCH-CONTROVERTED PASSAGES,
DEUT. VII. 2. 5. and—XX. 16. 17.

WHEREBY

The *Justness* of the Commands they enjoin are
incontrovertibly proved,

AND, CONSEQUENTLY,

THE OBJECTIONS

OF

THOMAS PAINE and *Dr. GEDDES*
COMPLETELY REFUTED.



By *GEORGE BENJOIN,*
OF JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.



“ At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that Nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil; I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.”

JEREM. XVIII. 7. 8.



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P R E F A C E.

THE Writer does not presume to lay the following pages before the Learned, with an intention to inform them of the meaning of the passages in question; but before such whose faith in the Saviour of mankind, and hopes of future happiness, may have been shaken and diminished by the infectious principles of infidelity, contained in the work called *The Age of Reason*.

For such, chiefly, this pamphlet is intended. To them it is offered with sincerity; with earnest wishes for their own happiness, and for the welfare and felicity of mankind in general.

Ably indeed has that infamous work been answered and refuted by a truly learned and venerable man. The passages which are the principal subject of this little book, have been particularly well treated upon. His Lordship has condescended to answer the objector in his own manner of reasoning. Perceiving, it seems, the caviller's ignorance, and concluding that to enter into deep disquisitions, and to reason with him
from

from Scripture, might not be altogether fair, such disquisitions and arguments being above the objector's capacity; his Lordship therefore proves, that in Thomas Paine's Word of God, *the volume of nature*, it is recorded in indelible letters, that there have happened, and perhaps daily happen, events similar to those which are *unjustly censured and condemned* when in the Sacred Writings they are commanded to take place.—Yet Dr. Geddes terms his Lordship's vindication of God's Justice and Goodness “*a lame justification of the passage*”—thus reviled! (see Dr. Geddes's note on p. 2. of the preface to vol. II. of his translation of “*the books accounted Sacred,*” &c.)

On the fourth page, Dr. G. declares, that were he to confess—were he to determine *Whether to believe every part of the Pentateuch*, or to deny the Divine Legation of Moses; he should not long hesitate—he would deny the Divine Legation of Moses,

His chief objection against both the authenticity and genuineness of Scripture seems to arise from the same passages whereby the above mentioned Antagonist of Religion attempts to prove the Sacred Writings to be a spurious, human production, containing injunctions which are repugnant to the attributes of God, the Author of Nature.

Convinced

Convinced of the difficulty which many men, otherwise good and virtuous, and by no means friends to scepticism, find in reconciling the command enjoined by the passages in question, namely, *utterly to destroy the men, women, infants, and every living creature of Seven Nations*, to the ideas they have formed of the goodness and mercy of God; the writer, in honour of God, the cause of Religion, and the happiness of the Christian world, is induced to endeavour, with great deference, and real diffidence, to explain the passages which are said to contain the above command.—That his endeavours may be crowned with the glorious success of placing the justness and goodness of God's own words in an obvious, striking, and convincing point of view are his sincere and earnest wishes. He will not think so illiberally of mankind, especially not of the really learned, as to apprehend being reproached either with fanaticism, or officiousness in the great important cause of Religion.—Surely, if we consider how much we would do to vindicate and justify the words and actions of any beloved true friend, we shall not think any exertion too great in endeavouring to justify the Words and Actions of God, the only true and ever constant friend and father of us all.

The few hebrew words which occur in the following pages, may, by the English reader, be left unnoticed, without losing any very material part of the

the

the arguments on the Subject: to the Scholar, they will afford satisfaction; as they confirm the writer's interpretation, and justify his translation. He has endeavoured to be as concise as the nature of the subject would allow. The language not being his native tongue, has enabled him with greater facility to conform it to a *popular* style. He hopes that he has removed the objections against this much controverted passage of Scripture, without any subtlety of argument, but by plain right reason. He flatters himself to have removed Dr. *Geddes's* doubts respecting the genuineness of the passage and the injunctions it contains, which to the Doctor appear unjustifiable. On p. 2. of his mentioned preface he says, "*After all that has been written, either by Jews or by Christians, in defence of this sanguinary measure, I confess, my reason, and my religion, continually revolt at it.*" —There certainly is some appearance of sincerity in this confession: and I therefore sincerely wish my interpretation of this "*sanguinary measure*" may soothe and reconcile it to his reason and Conscience —and induce him in future to search the Scriptures,—with more accuracy, before he attempt to translate them; and to think with more becoming reverence of *The Sacred Written Word of God.*

JESUS COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
September, 1797.

WHEN a man like *Thomas Paine*, at once rejects the Sacred Scriptures, and disavows all belief in any Religion, treating the one as fable, and the other as fraud and imposition; we do not feel any kind of surprize at *his* absurdity. But when a *Doctor of Divinity*, first breaking through the accustomable ceremony of the Religion he professes, and then strikes at the very root of all Religion, by declaring that the foundation of true Religion, Sacred Scripture, is not the Will and Word of God; we are struck with amazement at the inconsistency, imprudence, and audacity which were so little expected from such a character. But though to him they are a disgrace,

disgrace, they are by no means such to Religion. No law, Civil or Religious, can be said to be degraded because the Minister of it has abused it: and, Heaven be thanked, the abuser here alluded to is not a Minister of the Church of England. I will therefore only endeavour to remove from the light of the sacred Word of God the bewildering cloud which he has cast upon it, and leave him to settle the merits of his conduct with his conscience and the Pope.

Of all other passages of Scripture, those in DEUT. VII. 2. 5. and XX. 16. 17. are by the Cavillers held forth, as the most inconsistent with the justice and mercy of God, in order to prove the Sacred Writings not to be His Word. If these could be considered as not being the genuine commands of God, any part of Scripture, though it were consistent with the justice
and

and mercy, and the other attributes of God, might be said not to be his Word, and consequently the whole could not be considered in any other light than any other good and learned, but *human* and consequently imperfect production.

We must therefore prove that the above passages are *not* inconsistent with the goodness or any other attribute of God. I will endeavour to prove this in the following pages.

As I never judge of the sense of any *translation* if I can read and understand the *original*, I beg leave to indulge myself with examining the latter, and I will give my reader the former of the passages in question.

I do not mean to give them a *new* translation, for that might be suspected of
partiality

partiality or error by those who have not a competent knowledge of hebrew, and among whom I include the objector, the learned Doctor G——: Nor will I produce any opinion of any commentators; but I intend to prove my position from *Our Bible translation.*

The *correct* hebrew copies have the text thus :

DEUT. VII. 2. ונתנם יהוה אלהיך לפניך והכיתם
החרם תחרים אתם לא תכרת
להם ברית ולא תחנם:

5. כי אם כה תעשו להם מזבחתיהם
תתצו ומצבתם תשברו ואשיריהם
תגדעון ופסיליהם תשרפון באש:

The translation of these two verses in our Bible is,

DEUT. VII. 2. " And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them"
(the

(the Seven Nations) " before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them."

5. " But thus shall ye deal with them, ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire."

The other two verses stand as follow :

DEUT. XX. 16. רק מערי העמים האלה אשר יהוה
אלהיך נתן לך נחלה לא תחיה כל
נשמה:

17. כי החרם תחרים ——— כאשר
צוך יהוה אלהיך:

DEUT. XX. 16. " But of the cities of these

these people," (the Seven Nations) " which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."

17. " But thou shalt utterly destroy them" — " as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee."

Here we see, God commands the people, through Moses, that, when the Seven Nations shall have been overcome by them, they must "*smite them and utterly destroy them:*" and immediately after is enjoined — " thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them." — If by " to smite and utterly to destroy them" is meant *literally* to put every man to death, what need was there for the additional *com-*
mands

mands of *Thou shalt make no covenant with them, and shew no mercy unto them?* There would not only be no need for these additional commands, but they would seem an absolute absurdity: it would be commanding *not to do the things that could not possibly be done!* for how could they make any covenant with them when they had *utterly destroyed them?* How could they *shew them any mercy* after they were destroyed? Besides, the immediately following verse, the third, enjoins — "*Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter shalt thou not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son, &c. &c.*" Now if utter destruction had been commanded, would not all these additional injunctions have been so many absurd, needless expressions?

As to the 16th verse, however expressive the command of " Thou shalt save alive
nothing

nothing that breatheth," *in our translation*, may be, it must be allowed that it is but a mere repetition of the same command; and that it may not be considered as an *other* command, we find added, "as the Lord thy God *hath* commanded thee."

From the additional and seemingly unnecessary injunctions, it should seem that *utter destruction* is not meant.

What kind of destruction is meant, so as to reconcile the additional injunctions, as well as the meaning of the expressions, "Thou shalt smite them," "Thou shalt utterly destroy them," "Thou shalt make no covenant with them," "Thou shalt shew no mercy unto them," "Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth," is now to be shewn.

What kind of destruction is enjoined in
the

the passages before us, shall be the first consideration.

For this we need not go far—God himself explains the passage, and tells the people *in what manner* they are to go about utterly destroying the Seven Nations.—He tells them,

DEUT. VII. 5. "Thus shall ye deal with them: Ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire."

And in

NUMB. XXXIII. 51. "When ye are passed over Jordan, into the land of Canaan,"

52. "Then

(14)

52. " Then ye shall *drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you,* and destroy all their pictures, and destroy all their molten images, and quite pluck down all their high places."

53. " And ye shall *dispossess* the inhabitants of the land, and dwell therein: for I have given you the land to possess it."

55. " But if you will not *drive out* the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come to pass that those which ye

(15)

ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell."

And in

JOSH. III. 10. We have the following words—" And Joshua said, Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that he will *drive out* from before you the Canaanites," &c. &c.

Now, I think it requires no great depth of knowledge or learning to infer from the just mentioned passages, that the destruction which God intends the Seven Nations in the above commands, is neither more nor

less

less than *an utter destruction of their civil as well as idolatrous constitutions*, AS NATIONS. All the power, of each of them, *as a people*, was to be destroyed, as much as conquest, dispossession of their property, and *general dispersion* could possibly make them. Neither "extirpation" nor "extermination" of *every soul* was meant by the command; but an utter destruction of the general constitution, and of every institution of the Seven idolatrous and long before condemned Nations, and of every thing that might enable them ever to become again an established government of idolatry and sin. Had *an utter destruction of life* been even but *implied* by the command, Joshua, and all the succeeding Judges, and particularly the Kings, would have *utterly destroyed every man*, put to death every one who had made their escape when their cities and polity were destroyed by the Israelites.

In

In the first book of Kings, ix. 19. we find that Solomon had great and absolute power: in verse the 20th and 21st of the same book, we are told that Solomon made tributaries of those of the Seven Nations that were not put to death in their war with the Israelites: but Solomon did not *put them to death*, which, as king of Israel, and guided by the law of Moses, he certainly must have done, had the Israelites been, *at any time, commanded to put to death every one* of the Seven Nations. Numerous are the instances where many of the Seven Nations were saved alive—JOSH. ii. 12. 13. 14. and vi. 22. 23. and 25. and xi. 19. and xvi. 10. Likewise Judges i. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. and 33. and can these people, who were thus suffered to live unmolested, be said to have been doomed to *utter destruction?* and the Israelites, and the Judges, and the Kings, to have let them live in spite of the command?

Was

Was not Uriah a descendant of one of the Seven Nations? And was not David, a king and observer of the whole law of Moses, reproved by God through the prophet, for causing the death of that *Hittite*?

To get possession of the lands of the Seven Nations it was necessary that *many* of them should fall in the defence of their lives and property; to banish idolatry from among Israel it was necessary *the whole polity* of these idolatrous nations should be *utterly destroyed*: but these ends might be, and actually were, obtained without shedding the blood of *every one*,—without running the sword through the bosom of the weeping mother and through the smiling suckling infant, as poor Thomas Paine has been taught to understand the meaning of God's command!

It cannot be reasonably urged that the
command

command of God, given by Moses, might not have been clearly understood, both by the people and their Generals, and that therefore they did not *utterly destroy every living being*. Joshua, with whom God promised to be as he had been with Moses, must, I should think, have perfectly well understood the import of God's command, which was to have been, and was executed under him. Could he, and all the Judges, and Samuel, and David, and Solomon, have misunderstood God's command? Or, understanding it, would they *all* have acted contrary to that command?

In a word, there can be no better comment, no better interpretation of the passages in question, than the manner in which the Judges and Kings of the Israelites treated those nations when they had it in their power to treat them just as they thought proper. The command therefore
of

of utterly to destroy Seven Nations, and not to let any being escape alive, is not to be found in the Sacred Writings.

Thus have we proved, and I hope satisfactorily, that the destruction commanded by God in the above passages, is not inconsistent with the justice and mercy of God, but perfectly harmonious with the other passages of Sacred Writ, and consequently that that part of Scripture cannot be said not to be the Word of God.

We have however taken but a general view of the whole command: we will therefore, as it has been proposed above, descend to particulars, and endeavour to explain the particular *expressions* which are, as it were, constituent parts of the command.

I will here select these expressions, and present

present them to my readers in one view, after which I will treat them separately.

DEUT. vii. 2. “Thou shalt smite them”
—“utterly destroy them”
—“shalt make no covenant with them”—“and shew no mercy unto them.”

xx. 16. “Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.”

The first part of the command *seems* to be “*thou shalt smite them,*” which does not, in fact, make any part of it: the verse runs exactly like that which precedes it, which stands in our Bible thus—Deut. vii. 1. “When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee,” &c. &c.—then these nations are mentioned, and the text proceeds

ceeds—verse 2d. “And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee” (and) “thou shalt smite them,” (then) “thou shalt utterly destroy them,” &c. “*Thou shalt smite them,*” is not therefore a part of the *command*, but a relation of a *consequence* which will naturally take place when the first event, namely, *the Lord’s delivering up the nations*, shall have happened. This is so far from a forced or partial interpretation, that even the most literal translation would prove the justness of it: and if I had not partly promised my readers not to prove any thing from a *new* translation, I would have proposed the following, which is perfectly literal.

DEUT. VII. 1. When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee unto the land which thou art going to inherit, and hath cast out many nations from before

before thee, the Hittites, &c. &c.

2. And when the Lord thy God (1) giveth them unto thee, *and thou shalt have* (2) *smitten them*; (3) *dispel, dispel them*: thou shalt not make any covenant with them, nor shew them any *favour* (4).
3. Nor shalt thou make thyself their (5) relation; give not thy daughter unto his

(1) *Giveth them*: for ונתנם

(2) *Shalt have smitten them*: for והכיתם

(3) *Dispel, dispel them*: for חרם החרם תחרים of חרם to degrade, dispel, &c. &c.

(4) *Shew favour*: for תחנם of חנן to favour, to indulge, &c.

(5) *Make thyself their relation*: for התחתן in Hithpangel.

son,

son, nor take his daughter for thy son.

5. But ye shall act towards them thus: Their altars ye shall throw down; their statues ye shall break in pieces; their *Linden trees* (6) ye shall cut down, and their images ye shall burn with fire.

Thus have we proved that the expression "*Thou shalt smite them,*" does not make a part of the *command*, it is not an *injunction*; though could it even be admitted as such, no *cruelty* or *injustice* could be inferred from it, as it would even in that sense enjoin

(6) *Linden trees*: for אֲשִׁירֵיהֶם this species of trees were made use of for idolatrous worship by these Nations. It cannot mean "their groves," for the Israelites were commanded *not to destroy* the trees of any city.—Deut. xx. 19.

nothing

nothing but what is common among enemies at war. This last remark I do not by any means offer as a *concession*.

"*Thou shalt utterly destroy them*" is the second expression.—Upon this, great stress has been laid by many, to prove that it enjoins injustice and cruelty, and therefore cannot, they say, come from God. This, Mr. Paine and Dr. Geddes understand to mean a total, unconditional "extirpation" and "extermination" of men, women, crying and smiling innocent babes, and of every living creature of Seven great Nations!—It means, they seem to say, universal death and destruction! Whereas it means neither more nor less than a *complete victory*.—A perfect subjection of the enemy; a deprivation of all power and establishment; a destruction of idolatry, and a general dispersion of the idolators. Now is there any thing in such an injunction that

is

is inconsistent with the justice and mercy of the only true and living God? especially when we consider who the enemy were! —an enemy accursed ever since the time of Noah.(7)

We see then, for it has been proved above, that the words “*utterly destroy them*” mean an utter ruin and desolation of the Seven Nations *as nations*, but they by no means enjoin to put to death every living creature. This also I have proved from our bible translation: but *in the original*, the word implying “to destroy” is not to be found: —אבר תאבדם or שמר תשמדם are the only proper expressions for *Thou shalt utterly destroy them*. The text has תחרים אתם of חרם to degrade, dispel, accurse, doom to misery, &c.—not to murder.

We will now consider the *third* expression, “*Thou shalt make no covenant*

(7) See GEN. IX. 25.

with

with them.” This expression implies, that, as it was natural that many persons of the Seven Nations would make their escape, the Israelites were not to enter into any kind of treaty with them, so as to make them their *allies*.

Thou shalt “*show no mercy unto them*” is the next expression to be considered. Had they been enjoined to show mercy unto their idolatrous enemy, they must have sheltered, and succoured, and supported them, and they could not then have destroyed their idols, the idolator’s god, which to him must have been dearer than his life.

Now, as there is no *intermediate* way of acting between *showing mercy* and *not to show mercy*, the circumstances on which such an intermediate moderation depends being too numerous for the legislator to enumerate,

enumerate, and for the people to remember and observe them; a *general* command was absolutely necessary: but that, like all other laws, depends on *circumstances* and *by-laws*.

In my translation I have rendered this expression *Nor shew them any favour*, which is the literal meaning of *תנו ולא תחנם* of *Gratiam facere*.

One expression remains to be understood properly, namely, DEUT. XX. 16. "*Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.*"—This *must* mean, the objectors might say, nothing less than to include the *crying and smiling babes* in the whole number of living creatures of Seven mighty Nations, and cause them all, innocent and guilty, to perish together! Now I say this means the very reverse, and for one reason in particular, and that is, because the words which

which immediately follow the injunction "*thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth*" are, "*but thou shalt utterly destroy them.*"—I will explain myself.—The command stands thus:

DEUT. XX. 10. "When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it."

11. "And it shall be, if it makethee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be that *all the people* that is found therein, shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee."

12. "And if it will make no peace with thee, but will

(30)

will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it."

13. " And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hand, thou shalt smite *every male* thereof with the edge of the sword."

14. " But *the women, and the little ones, and the cattle*, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God hath given thee."

15. " Thus shalt thou do unto

(31)

unto all the cities which are very far from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations."

16. " But of the cities of *these people*, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, *thou shalt save alive nothing that BREATHETH.*"

17. " But thou shalt *utterly destroy* THEM—as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee."

Now, the *distinctions* which are here made are very remarkable: first, God commands the Jews to proclaim peace *to all other cities* before they go to war with them; but *not to the Seven Nations*. Secondly, God *enjoins*

joins to save alive the women and children and cattle of the other cities; but as to the Seven Nations, not a living creature is to be *saved* there, that is, *to be kept in the city and suffered to live among them*; for they were *all*, even the children were, and the cattle also, objects or instruments of idolatry. God therefore commands *not to save ANY ONE*, but utterly to destroy "*them*:"—תחרימם not every one that *breatheth*, but THEM, *the whole Nation*. There is not a word in the command that forbids *to let any one escape*, no: but the command is expressive in enjoining that no living creature should be *saved, kept alive*, (8) and remain among the Israelites. It is a *negative* command;—not to support, not to assist, not to shelter any one of them.

Therefore, the immediately following

(8) See the import and literal meaning of the word in the original, on p. 36. note 1.

expression,

expression, "But utterly destroy them," enjoins the *positive* implication.—It informs the Israelites of what they are to do with those who after the victory should remain living—it commands to *disperse* them, to *scatter* them in such a manner that they should never more become a nation again: but it by no means enjoins them to put every living creature to death, or pursue the fugitives, either man, or woman, or child, till they *all and every one* should be utterly destroyed, in the common sense of the word *to destroy*, i. e. to shed the blood of every *fleeing father, drooping mother, and innocent, helpless babe*: God forbid! The command was never so meant: if it had been, what would have prevented the Jews, whose natural hatred against their enemies is known to be inveterate, and who were certain of a perfect victory—what would have hindered them from *utterly destroying every living being* of their most formidable and

and implacable enemy? Would not they have been afraid of being deprived of what they had just taken possession of, by those whom they suffered to escape? Would not they have been afraid that their not *strictly* fulfilling God's command would bring his displeasure upon themselves? But they well knew that they were only commanded to *drive out every living object* of the idolators from among them; to carry destruction among their images and other instruments and objects of idolatry; and to expel to everlasting emigration and dispersion the idolators themselves: and all these points they observed. They therefore executed God's *just* command, to its fullest extent.

Now, if the immediately following words "*But thou shalt utterly destroy them,*" had not followed the preceding expression "*Thou shalt save alive nothing that breath-*
eth,"

eth," the command might, (9) *in our translation,* have appeared to enjoin *universal murder, utter destruction of every living being* of the Seven Nations!

Having proved, *from our received translation,* that the God of all mercy, the creator and preserver of all things, has not in his Sacred Word commanded his then chosen people to act in a manner inconsistent with his Goodness, Justice, and Mercy; I I hope may not be considered as too indulgent to myself, or too prolix, if I present to my readers a plain and literal translation of the two last verses of the passages in question.

DEUT. XX. 16. But of the cities of *these Nations,* which the Lord thy God giveth thee for

(9) I say, *in our translation,* because לֹא תַחַיֵּה in the original, does not mean "thou shalt save alive nothing," &c. See note 1. p. 36.

an inheritance, thou shalt not (1) *support* any thing living.

17. But (2) *dispel*, *dispel* them *all*—as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

This translation is as literal as it can well be made without destroying the sense of the original: and though I have not

(1) Support: for *תחיה* of *חיה* to foster, maintain, support. The commentators interpret this word—"thou shalt not give them *to eat and to drink*:" "thou shalt not afford them *habitations* or *dwellings* among you."

(2) Dispel, dispel them *all*: for *החרם תחרימם* which differs from *החרים אתם* in *vi. 2.* in as much as the latter, in *Chap. vii.* alludes to the *whole*, to all the Seven Nations in general, AS NATIONS: whereas this, in *xx. 17.* alludes to *כל נשמה* ("nothing that breatheth") *any thing living*; any one in PARTICULAR; every one of them: which, as I take them *collectively*, I cannot express it by a better word than *all*.

attempted

attempted to *prove* any thing from it, yet it *confirms* my above interpretation of the passages: by which I trust it has been proved that they are perfectly consistent with the attributes of God.



It has not been the design of the writer of these pages to *justify* the command which the above cited passages are said to contain, namely, utterly to destroy the men, women, children, and every living creature; but to endeavour to prove that *they do not contain such a command*.

But, however successful he may have been in these endeavours, the Deist, it may be apprehended, might still be inclined to reject the Scriptures, and, with Thomas Paine, prefer *Nature* as the Word of God; or, with Dr. Geddes, consider "*The Books accounted Sacred*" of less authority than the records

records of Constantine, Theodosius, and Charlemagne,—or the works of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, &c.

It will therefore be requisite to enquire, first, *Whether Nature's instinct would be sufficient for the happiness of man as a social being, without any recourse whatever to the Scriptures:* and secondly, *Whether the intelligent and learned works which Dr. Geddes considers as being "of more than equal authority" with the historical parts of Scripture; would have been sufficient to make men good, and wise, and happy, and conveyed to them the knowledge of God and Nature, as effectually as the Sacred Writings?*

Before we enter into this enquiry, it may be proper to observe, that if the historical part of Scripture were spurious, little authenticity, if any, could be ascribed to the Whole: because the historical narrative, in the

the Pentateuch as well as in every other book of the Old Testament, relates but events which were either promised or foretold in the other parts of Scripture, and therefore must correspond with these promises and predictions. For instance, the history of the Israelites' being in bondage under the King of Egypt, as well as the number of years of that bondage, must agree in circumstance and time with some other part of Scripture where both are predicted.—If none of those who came out of Egypt entered the promised land, it must undoubtedly correspond with some part of Scripture where it is said that they should not enter their promised land.—If they *utterly destroyed every living creature* of the Seven Nations whose lands they were to inherit, it must have been in consequence of a promise or command in some former, *not historical* part of Scripture.—If Sacred History tell us that *they did not*

utterly

utterly destroy every living creature of those nations, the fact must be conformable to some *preceptive* part of Scripture.—If the latter part of the Sacred Writings, called the New Testament, relates the coming of Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind; the merciful design of God must have been foretold in some former part of Scripture.—If Christ is said, for the sake of mankind, to have suffered *as Man*, yet being God; this wonderful, and to man inconceivable goodness of God must have been promised or predicted in Scripture before the event took place. The same proofs of the Scriptures being the Word of God, holds with respect to every important event throughout every part of Sacred History. If this be proved, no one can reasonably say that the events related in Scripture happened promiscuously, or *by chance*, like those related of the times of Constantine, Theodosius,

dofius, and Charlemagne, or like those enumerated in Voltaire's *Chaine des Evenemens*.

—After all, the unbeliever has still *one objection* left—and when that objection shall have been stated, we will endeavour to refute it.—

We will now turn to Thomas Paine's Hypothesis, and examine into the state Mankind would necessarily be reduced to were they to *reject Scripture*, and *follow Nature* as the Word of God.

Let us consider:—What would man think of himself, and how would he act, were he to lose sight of the Sacred Scriptures?—What would he think *of God*, if he durst to think of *Him*, were he to infer *from Nature only* that there is a God, and that Nature alone expresses the will and word of God? What
 consolation

consolation could he derive from Nature, when by his daily experience he knows that thousands of times he has grossly offended her, by making miserable many beings in nature, which is offending Nature itself, and, what is still more tremendous, the God of Nature? Does Nature tell him on what terms her God, and herself, will forgive him? Does Nature tell the poor, the unfortunate, the afflicted, and the friendless oppressed, that there is a world to come? a world of happiness without end? a world of just reward? a Heaven? No: it is *in Scripture alone* we find the means which the merciful Creator has afforded his creatures for their comfort and consolation in this transitory life: a life replete with disappointment, anguish, and incertitude.—In the Sacred Word of God alone we learn that this is but a state of probation. There, we learn that human weakness is not left to despair, to perish, and

and be for ever neglected. We are there, and no where else, assured that there is an effectual propitiation for our *natural* perverseness and infirmities.

How ignorant, what blind, unintelligible beings would mankind be, had not the world in general derived the first knowledge of God, of Nature, and of Man, *from the Sacred Writings!* We should be *incapable* of forming any idea of the attributes of God. We should be ignorant of the beginning of things, (3) and of

(3) It is very remarkable that all the Learning and Philosophy of both antient times and modern, should never have produced an *History of the Creation of the World* that can stand in competition with GENESIS. The attempts which have been made by some, are confessedly represented as *Fable*. They bear a great resemblance, I think, to some *dramatic* piece taken from known historical *facts*. Each Scene exposes its own fictitiousness. Every performer, though with language the most beautiful, accent the most melodious, harmony of measure, beauty of form, and goodly limbs; falls infinitely short of the personage represented.—Every Act seems but an interlude.—*Imitation* is the leading feature of the whole!

the general history of mankind.—All the human passions, all incidents in life, all nature, are analyzed, as it were, in the *Sacred Writings*.—And yet we are ignorant of man, of ourselves! Every system of every well regulated government, owes its origin to the Sacred Law, *the written Word of God*. It contains nothing that is inconsistent with nature, reason, justice, mercy, and every attribute all civilized nations attribute to the only good, true and living God.—It contains every thing that is necessary for the present felicity, the salvation, and future everlasting happiness of man. It points out to man what will ensure him that endless happiness, and what will deprive him of it, and plunge him into lasting misery. Did ever any one of the antient philosophers produce any moral virtue that is not to be found in the Sacred Written Word of God? Did any man ever produce any virtue that can ensure the salvation, and

procure

procure the happiness of endless futurity, but what is contained in Scripture? Now, though there is not a virtue, or a moral precept that can be invented by man but what is contained in Scripture, yet Scripture enjoins nothing but what man is able to perform.

Were *Nature only* to be considered as the Word of God, and its dictates as His Will, what a scene of confusion, inhumanity, brutality and shame, would be this whole World. We should see our nearest, dearest, and tenderest relatives become a prey to the *natural passions of man!* The aged father would see his innocent, youthful, lovely offspring lavishing and polluting both the beautiful image of God, the pure, rational Mind, and the beautiful symmetry of Nature, in brutality and lust! All sense of shame, all affections, all finer feelings, all other sensations, would be drowned in sensuality.

fuality. Man would be brute; and brutes, ashamed at the shamelessness of man, would hide themselves far from the human monster! *Reason* would get no admittance in the carnal mind! *Morality* would be too weak to conquer the unruly, irresistible passions which *Nature*, unrestrained, excites in the burning human breast. No one could be certain of any thing in his possession: Nature would seem to give every one an equal right to every thing in nature, if his natural inclinations made him wish for it. What would man have to fear if he strictly obeyed *the Word of God*? Not to obey it would to him be a crime. If *Nature* therefore were *his Word of God*, he naturally would obey Nature in all her dictates; and by doing so he would think (if he could think at all,) that he was but doing his duty, and obeying God's instinctive command. To avoid doing wrong, would be the least of his care; for he

he would do nothing but what Nature would prompt him to, and that, with his notions of nature, as being the Word of God, would be doing perfectly right.—*Conscience* would consist of the consideration—*Whether he had gratified his natural desires to their fullest extent, or, Whether he had in any degree checked or restrained them.* The latter only would be judged wrong: the former—*Virtue*. At last, all gratification would become disgust! Nature would be sick of herself! Man and brute would be *so much like one another* that he would be actually *inferior*.—Yet man only would *know that he must die!*—*His Word of God*, the book of Nature, convinces him of that fact.—Wearied with fameness, he would be disgusted with himself and all around him; and, exhausted, he would pause: and, taking a retrospective view of his past days, he would be shocked with horror at the terrible scene of selfishness, brutality, plunder,

der, inhumanity, and murder!—He is bewildered!—at a loss to guess for what purpose he has lived in the world.—Every animal but himself seems to have contributed something useful to society—something in gratitude for its being. He alone stands ungrateful! A being of disgust and contempt.

Leaving the loathsome retrospect of the past, he turns towards the certain future period of his hateful life! Death stares him full in the face! *Horrible aspect!* He feels an agitating impulse—an inward desire to recoil, and live yet a little longer, though in satiety and anguish, rather than be grasped and swallowed by cold, horrid death—for ever: for *Nature* teaches not an *Hereafter*. The life of *Nature* must decay.—Death *will* come—and close the scene of life, of bliss, of all felicity for ever! To the man whose Word of God is *Nature*,
this

this horrid idea renders the poor remnant of his life more horrible than the very hour of death! In that loathsome state of anguish and despair he would turn a rebel against nature itself, and curse the hour of his birth! nay, curse those who gave him life! His grief is excessive: he sees nothing to alleviate his pangs, nothing for consolation.—He can no longer bear the overpowering burden of his thoughts! Abandoned to his grief, he sinks, expiring, and dies a disgrace to his Word of God, *Nature!*

Horrible as may appear the above description, yet such, exactly such would be the state of man, were we not guided by, and derived our hopes and consolations from the Sacred Scriptures, the true Word of God. Such would be the fate of mankind if they were all of *Thomas Paine's* opinion, namely, that *Nature* is the true
Word

Word of God, and that the Sacred Scriptures are false, and not to be depended upon,

Notwithstanding what has been urged, it might perhaps be observed, that as Thomas Paine seems to have studied *Nature more than Scripture*, it does not seem very likely that he should form so high an opinion of *Nature*, and boldly assert his opinion to be *just*, if the man of mere nature were actually liable to fall into so degrading a state as we have above described.

The first part of this observation might serve as a proper reply, and refutation of it: had he studied Nature less and the Scriptures more, in which Nature is delineated in the most accurate manner, and with the sacred pen, he would have been able to give us a truer account of both than he

he has given. Let us examine his own premises upon which he rejects Scripture, and prefers Nature as the Word of God.

But, I beg leave first to make one observation. The authenticity or spurioufness of any work—that is, the truth of the facts it relates, or the falsity of them, ought never to be proved from the work itself.—A combination of the *circumstances* under which such or such an event is said to have happened; the *nature* of the event in particular; right *Reason*, proper *Experience*, *Nature* in general, and the *acknowledged power*, or *known fallibility* of the *Cause* of the event in question;—a combination of these, is the only true standard whereby the truth or fallacy of the relation, and consequently of the whole work, must be proved. The law of these, will judge of the work in the same manner as the Law of Nations judges an individual: neither his

his actions are to be condemned or approved, nor his assertions discredited or believed, *from his own evidence*. Justice requires concealed offences to be detected, and Mercy desires to impute faults, though confessed, to error and infirmity. In both cases therefore the law has recourse to all the *external* evidence that can be procured both for and against the actions and assertions of the individual.—Mercy, however, should always have the *casting-vote*, and preponderate the balance from mere justice to forgiveness.

We will now return to our subject.—The only ground upon which Thomas Paine rejects Scripture, and prefers *Nature*, as the Word of God, is Scripture itself! The Bible, he takes as the only support of his arguments. Now, if the Bible were false, and *Nature* were the Word of God, the invalidity of the Bible should be proved from
Nature.

Nature. Whereas it so happens, that *Nature* itself would have been unintelligible to man, had not the Bible opened our eyes and given us some knowledge of *Nature*. The most learned philosophers of several ages have testified this truth. But let us examine it ourselves.

The first acorn was the produce of an oak: then the first oak cannot have been the produce of an acorn. Yet the oak is but an *effect* as well as the acorn.—Does *Nature* explain the manner in which the first oak came in existence, and by what cause? Impossible! We might as well consult the acorn itself: because *Nature* is as much a *creature*, as much an *effect*, as the acorn.—Is the explanation of it to be found in the history of the times of Constantine, Theodosius, (4) Charlemagne, or in any

(4) Since with Dr. Geddes the Scriptures have lost their *authority*, from the cruelty and injustice some passages seem to inculcate, it may not be improper here to introduce an anecdote of this very *Theodosius* (*The Great*, whom I suppose the Doctor alludes to, and) whose authority he considers

production before or after their times? Does any exposition on Natural Philosophy satis-

more than equal with the Sacred Writings.—“When the people of *Thessalonica*” (or *Therma*) “had killed one of his Officers, probably without intending it, Theodosius ordered his soldiers to put all the inhabitants to the sword; and no less than six thousand persons, *without making any distinction of rank, AGE, or SEX,* were cruelly slain in the course of a few hours.”—“This cruelty and violence so irritated the Clergy, that St. Ambrose compelled the Emperor to do open penance in the Church, and publicly to make atonement for an act of barbarity, which excluded him from the bosom of the Church,” &c. Socrat. 5. &c. Zozim. 4. &c. Now, I should think very few people dispute the authority of the history of those times, (about 390. A. D.) nor indeed of the *Theodosian Code* of Theodosius the younger: but can these persons, and these laws, stand in competition with the Sacred Writers and Sacred Scriptures?—Can the histories and the works of *Socrates, Plato,* and of *Aristotle*; of *Constantine* and *Eusebius*; of *Theodosius, the Father,* and the Grandson; of *Sozomen*; of *Descartes*; *Desaguliers* and *Martin*; be considered of *greater authority* than the only true history of the World, and very Source of all true Philosophy? the Sacred Writings.—Yet to Dr. Geddes they are of more than equal authority. He assigns no reason for this partiality. The *learned Bishop of Landaff* does assign a reason for the authority of the bible.—“*A book, which Newton himself esteemed the most authentic of all histories; which, by its celestial light, illumines the darkest ages of antiquity; which is the touchstone whereby we are enabled to distinguish between true and fabulous Theology, between the God of Israel, holy, just, and good, and the impure rabble of heathen Baalim; which has been thought,*

factorily

factorily explain the manner in which that first oak came to exist, and describe its

by competent judges, to have afforded matter for the laws of Solon, and a foundation for the philosophy of Plato; which has been illustrated by the labour of learning, in all ages and countries; and been admired and venerated for its piety, its sublimity, its veracity, by all who were able to read and understand it!”—Apology for the Bible, p. 208. first edit.—Now, if I had written a reply to Thomas Paine’s books, I think the Doctor could not have thought it a *sarcasm* if I had added to the above quotation from his Lordship—and which even Dr. Geddes has deigned to TRANSLATE!

However, Dr. G. is not the only writer who is incorrect in the distinguishing lines that should always be drawn between the *three qualities* which may be ascribed to a work, namely, *Authenticity, Genuineness,* and *Authority.*

When the facts related in a work are *true*, the work is *authentic.*

When the work is written by him whose name it bears, it is *genuine.*

When these two qualities have been acknowledged by the generality of those whom the work may concern, it may justly be said to be of *authority.*

Now a work may be authentic and yet not *genuine*; and it may be genuine and yet not *authentic*: but it scarce ever acquires *authority* without being at least *one or the other.*—Now, I really believe, I have here stated positions which are *true*: Dr. G. surely, will not oppose truth: and if he do not, how will he prove his hypothesis that the books of Judges, Kings, and Chronicles—are of little or no *authority*, when they have been attested by all good and learned men, himself and Thomas Paine, and a few others of the same opinion excepted?

cause? Do the works of Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, or even an Aristotle or a Newton, or any and every other human performance satisfactorily solve this point? None. Where then can we trace that first cause?—In the sacred *written* Word of God. The same argument holds with every being in nature. Thomas Paine himself would not be able to read and understand his Word of God, the book of Nature, had not he first been taught to read his bible. But as *he never read but part of it*, and that very ill, it cannot be expected that he should understand it well. Yet even the little reading he has had of part of the Sacred Writings, has enabled him to form some idea of Nature. False, indeed, are his ideas of it: but that is not Nature's fault, nor Thomas Paine's; it is the fault of his ignorance.—To persist in that ignorance, and thereby to endeavour to cast a cloud upon the only true light of the

the world, God's Word,—constitutes *his* fault.

He persists in asserting, and undertakes to prove his assertions *from the Bible itself*, that the Bible is unworthy of credit. What an absurdity! He tells you that he derives his authority from a work which he denies to have or deserve any authority! Would you believe the truth of any argument that is proved by an untruth? Thomas Paine tells you that the Bible is an untruth, (at least he tells you that the facts it contains are not true) and he at the same time undertakes to prove from the very Bible itself that it really is a lie! Can any man be so blind as not to see the absurdity? Men and Christians, surely, will not suffer themselves to be ensnared by the vile subtlety of envy, disappointment, impiety, misanthropy, and disaffection!

Having described the horrid state mankind

kind would be reduced to were they to follow Nature only, and shewn the inconsistency of Thomas Paine's arguments, we will revert to the Sacred Writings, and shew their excellence.

The Scriptures open to us a scene very different from that which Nature has just exhibited! They open upon us a scene of comfort and consolation. Having enabled us to form some idea of God's power by an unparalleled description of the *creation of Nature* and all that she contains, we are introduced into the knowledge of the origin and progress of man. His various passions and addictions to *the frailties of nature* are there historically and exemplary delineated, in a manner so beautiful and striking, that to the man of even but moderate knowledge of mankind, it appears to be a history of modern times:—and he cannot help concluding that if mankind were now in the same circumstances as they

they are in Scripture described to have been at the different periods mentioned there, they would, most probably, act in the same manner they are there described to have acted.

As we advance in the Sacred Volume, we clearly perceive a providential view of the future good of mankind in every event the Almighty God had ordered to take place. We learn there, that mankind, *having no other guide but Nature*, became a disgrace to the earth that bore them! that God, the all good and all wise God! heaped mercy upon guilty man, and shewed them more kindness and forbearance than they deserved;—yet not more than might be expected from the Father of all Mercy.—In consideration of their *natural frailty*, he gave them *an hundred and twenty years*, to repent and reform,—*because they were but*
flesh.

flesh. (5)—They had no guide, no other Word of God but Nature! and the *natural principle* of Man,—“*the imagination of Man’s heart, is evil.*”—God, therefore, in compassion of Man’s *natural inclination to evil*, set before their eyes the signal of their punishment and destruction: (if they would not turn from their evil way.) The ark, a most stupendous work, was building during the respite of a hundred and twenty years:—but man, persisting in following *Nature’s*

(5) This passage, GEN. VI. 3. like many others, has been strangely wrested from its original sense. Dr. Priestley is certainly in the right when, on p. 159. of his *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*, he asserts, that the word *בשר* in this passage, means *flesh*; but he is grossly mistaken when he considers it as alluding to *the substance of the body*.—Nor does the word mean as some have thought, “*something criminal.*” It means, simply, *human nature*. The translation of this passage in our bible is very just, with respect to the *sense*; but the *words* stand irregular: the bible has—“*for that he also is flesh;*” whereas it should have been *for, or because he is flesh also*: that is, not *all spirit*, not *all “breath of life,”* not *all soul*, but *frail human nature also*. Therefore in this instance, as in many other, Dr. P. has chosen a text subversive of his own Doctrine.

dictates,

dictates, did not suffer *Reason* to stop the career of their wild passions: They would not think of the God of the Universe, nor enquire into his will or his designs to preserve them.

The measure of their corrupted nature was now become more than completely filled!—Nature itself seemed a reproach, a disgrace to her Creator! “*And God saw that the wickedness of Man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart WAS ONLY EVIL CONTINUALLY*”—“*and it grieved him in his heart,*” (6) ~~And~~ God, by an universal flood, swept all corruption from the earth! The family of Noah was the only one who “*found grace in the eyes of the Lord;*” (7) because “*Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generations; and Noah walked with*

(6) GEN. VI. 5. 6. &c.

(7) ——— 8.

God.”

God." (8) Also the male and female of every living creature, the Almighty had desired Noah to save from the flood, and take them into the ark.

—In Noah God bleffeth all future generations.—Mankind divided into different nations.

To *preserve the world from a similar destruction*, God chooseth to himself one people, whom during the course of above two thousand years, by many, many miracles, and unremitting mercy, in the midst of surrounding idolatrous nations, he keeps separate, to himself. He fostered them with his paternal love and divine care. But even this people could not *walk firmly in the ways of God!* for they were but *human nature*.

(8) GEN. VI. 9.

They

They had not then a *Written Word of God*. He therefore, to point out to them the path of righteousness and life, did not suffer them to be seduced by the ensnaring allurements of Nature, so imperceptibly irresistible to frail humanity, but deigned to interpose his *miraculous* power whenever it was necessary: they could not stand without this aid: nay, even with it they often nearly fell. He communicated his divine Will, often, to their fathers. He sent them his Prophet and deliverer, who wrought miracles, to establish their faith in God. They still were his chosen people: kept separate from the impurity of the vile idolatry of other nations, though they were not *always* entirely free from it themselves, notwithstanding God's goodness towards them.

—He then gave them His Divine Will and Sacred Word in *Written Characters*.

He

He empowered good and wise men to explain and teach them his Word: to lead them on to actions of piety and goodness: such as become the creatures and worshippers of the only True and Living God; and to keep them from every thing that may offend that Benevolent Father and Creator of the Universe.—But neither God's Miracles, nor his Prophet, nor his Sacred Law made any *change in Nature*. Man, as an animal, is the production and compound of Nature: and “*every imagination of the thoughts of Man's heart is evil—* CONTINUALLY.” God's *Justice* cannot countenance and indulge evil. Yet God's *Mercy* is inclined to love and preserve his creatures. Man cannot stand before God! A *Mediator* therefore is promised, to intercede between the Almighty and his People! —Between his Divine Justice and their human perverseness and infirmity.

The chosen people having always been
surrounded

surrounded by idolaters, were themselves too much addicted to idolatry, to form any proper idea of a *Mediator* between God and Man. *Slight hints* therefore is all the Sacred Writings of the Old Testament furnishes them with.—Their faith in God was not yet firm enough to have *at once* revealed to them the nature and certainty of a *Mediator*. Had they been certain of an *Intercessor* between the Almighty and themselves, and that through him their sins would be forgiven, they would have suffered no bounds to check their passions. No indulgence would they have thought too great, no crime too heinous for an *intercession* which God himself had appointed for the forgiveness of sin. God himself would have been considered by them as desirous that they should offend, purposely that the *Mediator* might *intercede* and He *forgive*.

Such, most probably, would have been
the

the conduct of the Israelites, had God *at once* revealed to them the Salvation and Saviour of Mankind.

Such must have been the conduct of a people hard-necked, perverse, passionate, impatient, addicted to idolatry, forgetful of past miracles and mercies, ungrateful for the present, and, in general, disobedient, had they been *assured, in plain terms*, that they were not only the chosen people of God, but that they should be saved by a divinely appointed Intercessor.

Their first legislator, after many miracles, exertions, kindness, reproof, and consolation, departed from them, by God's command. The Prophets succeeded: but Prophecy itself prophesied that Prophets would be no more. (9)

Prophecy had now departed from Israel. It is very obvious that God had not chosen
Israel

(9) Zech. i. 5.

Israel for their peculiar virtue and merit, as superior to every other nation, because they, of all other nations, may justly be considered as the most disobedient and rebellious. No sooner had God been pleased to deliver them, by some miraculous and benevolent interposition, but they ungratefully forgot it, as if it never had happened.

Their Judges, their Prophets, and their Kings were obliged continually to remind them of the great and unremitting mercy and goodness which God had bestowed upon them; of the rewards they might expect by observing God's law, and the punishment which would be inflicted upon them if they forsook God. Nay, God himself very often reproaches them: and it may justly be inferred from their history, that if God had chosen *any other nation*, and selected them as his particular favoured people; fostered them with his divine paternal care; had wrought a continual chain of
miracles

miracles to support them; delivered them from every kind of affliction, and driven away many nations from before them: any nation, we may conclude, would, under the same favourable circumstances, have proved at least as pious and as good a people as Israel have proved to be.

From *Scripture* then it should seem that God had not chosen Israel for *Israel's sake*: but, judging from effects, it appears very obvious that *the Almighty God separated one people to make them the foundation and instrument of the happiness and salvation of mankind in general.*—A Saviour was promised them: God sent that Saviour. His actions, his life and conduct in general; his Death, Resurrection, and particularly his Ascension, proved Jesus Christ to be that Saviour. All efforts to disprove this truth, all endeavours and exertions to subvert it, proved ineffectual. It spread, and spreads now most rapidly through the world.

world. Yet, this people, chosen of God, rejected him.—And have not we reason to believe that if God the Father had himself come down to them, they would have rejected him in the same manner? Could they have asked greater miracles of God than Christ wrought? No *Man* could have done what Christ did; no *Man* ever lived as Christ lived. No *Man* could ever say he was free from sin. Christ did not say he was free from all sin; (for he took the sins of mankind upon himself:) but all the world must acknowledge it: and no man, nay not even the Jews themselves, can justly impute sin to Christ. The Saviour of Mankind came into the world, *not to destroy* the divine foundation of happiness, instituted by God through Moses, *but to fulfil* the merciful promises the law of Moses contains. His allusions are to that law.—*Christ well knew the purity and integrity of that law; he did not pronounce that law to be corrupt: but acknowledged it, together with the prophetic*

phetic writings, to be *The Sacred Word and Will of God*. But, as the Jews had been glorified by being the only people chosen of God; and as Christ was come to make *all the World* the chosen people of God, by holding forth salvation *to all men*; the Doctrines of Christianity, through that very spirit of *universal mercy and benevolence*, were by all nations in general, and by the Jews in particular, considered as a *New Testament* or Will of God: whereas in fact, Christianity is but the fulfilment of God's Word through Moses and his Prophets, bearing the appellation of *The Old Testament*—The *Covenant* through Christ was *new to man*; but it was not *a new Will of God*.

I have thus taken a *very cursory* view, and given a *faint sketch* of the general contents of the Sacred Writings: not to instruct or inform, but to shew the reasonableness of holding them sacred; and to place them in a contrasting point of view

view with the description I have given of Thomas Paine's Word of God, the volume of Nature. This *Nature*, that *natural property, inclination, and free will of every living being*, is the greatest blessing the Almighty has bestowed upon his creatures! But it ceases to be a blessing, and turns to be the reverse, when man follows it blindly, unrestrained and unassisted by Piety, Reason and Virtue. *How to walk in the paths of Nature*, is the great, important question? To be guided by the impulse of Nature alone, and to be led by our natural passions and desires, is but leading ourselves to certain destruction. To walk with God, and to be guided by *his Will*, is the only safe-guard for everlasting happiness. How to attain a proper knowledge of God's Will, should therefore be our first study. Now, that knowledge cannot be acquired from any thing in *Nature*; nor from mere Reason, nor from experience of the world or knowledge of mankind: but

is to be found no where but in The Sacred Scriptures.—In them we find all the comfort, all the consolation man can wish for in this state of imperfect bliss, and every assurance of everlasting happiness hereafter. In them we find a remedy for every evil in nature; a balm for every wound imprudence, misfortune, affliction or distress can inflict on the human mind. Every bleeding heart may find a soothing, comforting restorative of bliss in *the Sacred Written Word of God*. The Scriptures teach us how to live happily, and how to die with the great satisfaction of taking a retrospective view of a past life, which, though defective through the unavoidable infirmities of *Nature*, yet is, by our Faith in Christ, and exertions to act well, propitiated and redeemed unto Salvation by the God of all mercy, the Only Son of God, the Saviour of Mankind. These blessings, and the hope of everlasting happiness

happiness after this transitory scene of folly, disappointment and regret, are in the Sacred Writings held forth *to all men*. Millions, of every rank, of every age, of every situation in life, have centred all their hopes in the promises and consolations contained in the Sacred Written Word of God: and must not that man be very cruel, who, by disparaging and defaming that Sacred Word, attempts to tear up by the very root all their hopes, and comfort, and consolation for ever? What return can he make them for such cruel inhumanity? What atonement can he make to *Nature* for having attempted to render so many of her creatures miserable? How will he lift up his eyes before The God of Nature? Whither will he shrink away and hide himself from the Light, and Presence, and Power of that Great and only God? Can he find any asylum in *Nature*, any hidden corner or invulnerable spot which the Author of
 Nature

Nature cannot penetrate? Where will he conceal his heart from the eye of God?—With such a man Nature itself is angry and offended!—He has made himself the object of her hatred—she is loth to contain him any longer—she fain would put him far beyond herself!—Then let him depart from, and seek shelter *beyond Nature*—let him turn to God! His *Written Sacred Word* alone leads the way: and may he find that mercy there we all stand in need of, we all hope to find, but have no right to claim!

The

The CONCLUSION.

IN this pamphlet the world is presented with those passages upon which the cavillers of several ages past have laid great stress to prove, that as they enjoin commands which to them appear to be inconsistent (1) with the general ideas mankind have ever formed and entertained of God, they cannot therefore come from God: and, as they are contained in Scripture, the whole of the Scriptures, say they, cannot, consequently, be the Word of God. By this ignorance or subtlety they seem to

(1) Le Clerc affirms that the Seven Nations were devoted all to be slain! Cleric. in Deut. vii. 2.

have

have endeavoured to undermine the *whole* fabric, and only source of man's happiness and consolation.

The writer has proved, from the Bible translation, that the general tenor of the passages in question neither implies the cruel commands which have been erroneously imputed to them, nor enjoin any thing that is inconsistent with the goodness and mercy of God.

That *the general spirit* of the command does not imply *an utter destruction of the men, women, and children, and every living creature* of Seven Nations, he proves from the very event itself, namely, that though the Israelites had it in their power to slay every living creature, yet they and their judges, and their Kings, voluntarily suffered many of their enemies to live in unmolested peace, with their wives, and friends,

friends, and little ones, and cattle, and property, even after they had peaceful possession of their dominions, and had the power to destroy them.

The author then treats on the *different parts, the particular expressions*, which constitute the whole of the command, and which, taken singly, might convey a sense repugnant to God's mercy; and explains every one *separately*, and proves them to be perfectly consistent with God's justice and mercy,—even as they stand translated in their present form.

He then has recourse to the *Original*, in which the Sacred Word of God, containing the passages in question, was first given to mankind. The original he literally translates; and proves, that the words, Deut. vii. 2. commonly translated—Thou shalt

shalt “ *utterly destroy them,*” literally mean—Thou shalt *dispel* (expulse, disperse) *them*.—That the words translated—“ *nor shew mercy unto them,*” literally mean—*nor shew them any FAVOUR*.—That the words, Deut. xx. 16. translated “ *Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth,*” literally mean—*Thou shalt not SUPPORT any thing living*. That the expression in Deut. xx. 17.—“ *Thou shalt utterly destroy them,*” means, *thou shalt DISPEL them ALL*.

These different renderings do not proceed from the translator’s choice or fancy, but from the plain and natural meaning of the words in the original; and which words he has produced.

He then presents his reader with a few instances from which it may be proved that Sacred *History* is in perfect harmony with the *preceptive* part of Scripture.

The

The writer then proceeds to prove, that *Nature alone* would not have been sufficient to make mankind happy even but in this life; nor the productions of the learned, to make them wise, and really good:—That from Scripture alone, as being the Word of God, proceeds all knowledge and wisdom, and every consolation.—That they alone contain precepts, the observance of which will make man happy in this life; and assure him everlasting happiness hereafter.

Then follows, a copious description of the miserable state wherein man must fall were he to follow Nature only:—a state wherein neither Religion, Morality, or Reason make part of a man’s conduct.

The *Conscience* of the man of mere Nature is then enquired into; and a description of his miserable end closes the scene of his wretched life.

Thomas Paine's knowledge of God and Nature are then examined; and the ground upon which he maintains that Nature is preferable to the Sacred Writings, is investigated.

Then follows a general rule by which the authenticity or spuriousness of a book ought to be proved.

The General Cause of all effects is then traced; and the source whence we derive our knowledge of Nature pointed out.

The excellence of Scripture is then displayed, and its sacred contents given, *in abstract.*

Israel being chosen God's people is accounted for. The necessity of a Mediator is then shewn, and the divine wisdom in *gradually* revealing Salvation to mankind is illustrated.

The

The predominant features of the character of Christ, are then, concisely, described: then follows a short enumeration of the blessings, happiness, consolation, joyful hopes and expectations which mankind derive from Scripture, the Sacred written Word of God.

F I N I S.

ERRATA.

Page 9. line 13. follow, *read* follows.

- 17. 4. book, *r.* chapter.
- 35. 11. I I hope may, *r.* I hope I may.
- 36. The latter part of note (1) should conclude
note (4) p. 23.
- 41. 9. examine, *r.* enquire.
- 49. 17. consolations, *r.* consolation.
- 55. 13. of the note, qaalities, *r.* qualities.
- 60. the last line but one of the note, other,
r. others.
- 64. 4. worhippers, *r.* worshipers,
- 65. 6. furnishes, *r.* furnifa.
- 76. 8. enjoin, *r.* enjoins,
- 80. 2. are, *r.* is.

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