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P L E A

FOR

R E L I G I O N,

AND THE

Sacred Writings:

Addressed to the Disciples of Thomas Paine, and wavering Christians
of every Persuasion:

By the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, M. A.

I hate when Vice can bolt her arguments,
And Virtue has no tongue to check her pride.

MILTON.

←→

One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.

MATTHEW.

←→

In times when erroneous and noxious tenets are diffused, all men should embrace
some opportunity to bear their testimony against them.

HORNE.



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It is usually said, that example has a more powerful effect upon the mind than precept. None can deny that these are respectable ones. They are such as every *Deist* and *Infidel* in the kingdom should well consider, before he ventures his salvation upon the justness of his own principles. If equal danger, or if any danger, attended our embracing the *Christians* scheme, the *Unbeliever* would be in a certain degree justified in withholding his assent to that scheme: but as *all* the hazard is on his side of the question, language furnishes no words to express the extreme folly of treating *religion* with levity, much less with ridicule and contempt.

III. EXAMPLES of dying Christians, who had lived in the spirit of the world.

This shall ye have of my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow. Is. 50. 11.

21. HUGO GROTIUS is said to have possessed the brightest genius ever recorded of a youth in the learned world, and was a profound admirer, and a daily reader, of the *Sacred Writings*: yet after all his attainments, reputation, and labour in the cause of learning, he was constrained at last to cry out, “ Ah! I have consumed my life in a laborious doing of nothing!—I would give all my learning and honour for the plain integrity of JOHN URICK!”

This JOHN URICK was a religious poor man, who spent eight hours of the day in prayer, eight in labour, and but eight in meals, sleep, and other necessaries.

GROTIUS had devoted too much of his time to worldly company, secular business, and learned trifles, too little to the exercises of the closet. *This is forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

22. When SALMASIUS, who was one of the most consummate scholars of his time, came to the close of life, he saw cause to exclaim bitterly against himself. “ Oh!” said he, “ I have lost a world of time! time the most precious thing in the world! whereof had I but one year
“ more,

“ more, it should be spent in DAVID’S Pſalms and PAUL’S “ Epistles!”—“ Oh! Sirs,” ſaid he again to thoſe about him, “ mind the world leſs, and GOD more!”

23. Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, whoſe death made ſuch a noiſe a few years ago, was unqueſtionably one of the firſt men of the age, and a ſerious believer in JESUS CHRIST all his days. Mixing, however, too much with men of no religion, his mind was kept barren of ſpiritual conſolation, and he was grievouſly haunted with the fear of death through his whole life. “ The approach of death,” ſaid he to a friend, “ is very dreadful. I am afraid to think on “ that which I know I cannot avoid. It is vain to look “ round and round for that help which cannot be had. “ Yet we hope and hope, and fancy that he who has lived “ to-day, may live to-morrow.” To another friend he ſaid, “ He never had a moment in which death was not “ terrible to him.” On another occaſion he declared in company at *Oxford*, “ I am afraid I ſhall be one of thoſe “ who ſhall be damned—ſent to hell, and puniſhed ever- “ laſtingly.” When this great man, however, actually approached diſſolution, “ all his fears were calmed and “ abſorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his truſt in “ the merits and propitiation of JESUS CHRIST.” He was full of reſignation, ſtrong in faith, joyful in hope of his own ſalvation, and anxious for the ſalvation of his friends. He particularly exhorted Sir JOSHUA REYNOLDS, on his dying bed, “ to read the *Bible*, and to keep holy the *Sabbath-day*.” The laſt words he was heard to ſpeak were, “ GOD bleſs you”!

24. Baron HALLER, a famous *Swiſs Phyſician*, the delight and ornament of his country, was at the ſame time a great philoſopher, a profound politician, an agreeable poet, and more particularly famous for his ſkill in botany, anatomy, and phyſic. During his laſt ſickneſs he had the honour of a viſit from JOSEPH, the late *Emperor of Germany*. Upon his death-bed, owing, probably, to the variety of his literary purſuits, the multiplicity of his engagements, and the honours heaped upon him by the world, he went through ſore conflicts of ſpirit concerning his intereſt in the ſalvation of the REDEEMER. His mind was clouded,
and

and his soul destitute of comfort. In his last moments, however, he expressed renewed confidence in God's mercy through CHRIST, and left the world in peace.

25. SIR JOHN MASON, on his death-bed, spoke to those about him in the manner following:—"I have lived to
 " see five princes, and have been privy-counsellor to four
 " of them. I have seen the most remarkable things in
 " foreign parts, and have been present at most state-
 " transactions for thirty years together; and I have learnt
 " this after so many years experience—That seriousness is
 " the greatest wisdom, temperance the best physic, and a
 " good conscience the best estate. And, were I to live
 " again, I would change the court for a cloister, my privy-
 " counsellor's bustle for a hermit's retirement, and the
 " whole life I have lived in the palace, for an hour's
 " enjoyment of God in the chapel."

26. PHILIP the *Third, King of Spain*, when he drew near the end of his days, expressed his deep regret for a careless and worldly life in the following emphatical words:—"Ah! how happy would it have been for me, had I
 " spent these twenty three years, that I have held my
 " kingdom, in a retirement!"

27. *Cardinal MAZARINE*, one of the greatest statesmen in *Europe*, cried out a little before his death with astonishment and tears:—"Oh! my poor soul! what will be-
 " come of thee? Whither wilt thou go? Were I to
 " live again, I would be a capuchin, rather than a
 " courtier."

28. GEORGE VILLIERS, *Duke of Buckingham*, was the richest man, and one of the greatest wits in *England*, and yet such were his vices and extravagances, that, before he died, he was reduced to poverty and general contempt. In this situation he was brought to a sense of his folly. "How-
 " ever," says he, "I may have acted in opposition to the
 " principles of religion, or the dictates of reason, I can
 " honestly declare, I have always had the highest veneration for both. But, O! what a prodigal have I been of
 " that most valuable of all possessions, *Time*? I have
 " squandered it away with a profusion unparalleled; and
 " now, when the enjoyment of a few days would be worth
 " the

“ the world, I cannot flatter myself with the prospect of
 “ half a dozen hours.—*What a pity that the Holy Writings*
 “ *are not made the criterion of true judgment!* or that any
 “ person should pass for a gentleman in this world, but he
 “ that appears solicitous about his happiness in the next!”

Nothing is so well calculated to convince us of the vast importance of living *wholly* under the power of the *Gospel*, as seeing great and valuable men dying in such a low, sneaking, and unworthy manner, as many of the first characters of our world have been known to do. The cases of GROTIUS and SALMASIUS, of JOHNSON and HALLER, are mortifying instances. Great talents, great learning, great celebrity, are all utterly insufficient to constitute a man happy, and give him peace and confidence in a dying hour. We know the promises of GOD are all *yea and amen* in CHRIST JESUS: but if the promises are sure, and strongly animating, to the proper objects of them, the threatenings of GOD are not less infallible, and at the same time are extremely alarming to the proper objects of them. Nothing within the compass of nature can enable a man, with the eyes of his mind properly enlightened, to face death without fear and dismay, but a strong conscientious sense, founded on *scriptural* evidence, that our sins are pardoned, that GOD is reconciled, and that the *Judge* of the world is become our friend.

IV. EXAMPLES of persons living and dying either with confidence, or in the full assurance of faith.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. Ps. 116. 15.
Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his. Num.
 23. 10.

29. JOSEPH ADDISON, Esq. was a very able and elegant advocate for the *Bible*, in life and death. Just before his departure, having sent for a young nobleman nearly related to him, who requested to know his dying commands—his answer was—“ See in what peace a *Christian* can die!”

30. Dr. JOHN LELAND, after spending a long and exemplary