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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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“ We trample on their whole delight,
 “ And seek a country out of sight,
 “ A country in the skies.”

If then the religion of JESUS CHRIST be a delusion, it is, at least, a happy delusion; and even a wise man would scarcely wish to be undeceived. He would rather be ready to say with the great *Roman* Orator, when speaking of the immortality of the soul:—“ If in this I err, I
 “ willing err; nor, while I live, shall any man wrest from
 “ me this error, with which I am extremely delighted.”*

If we wished to exemplify these observations, it would be no difficult matter to produce various very striking instances of persons, as well from the *Sacred Writings*, as from the history of these latter ages, whose conduct and character have been conformable to the above representations. But as the *Bible* is in every one's hands, and may be consulted at pleasure, we will call the attention of the *reader* to a few instances of persons, who have been eminent in their way, during these latter ages only, and, some of them, even in our own times. These may be DYING INFIDELS—PENITENT and RECOVERED INFIDELS—DYING CHRISTIANS, *who have lived too much in the spirit of the world*—and CHRISTIANS dying, either with great composure of mind, or IN THE FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH.

I. EXAMPLES of dying INFIDELS.

The wicked is driven away in his own wickedness. Prov. 14. 32.

“ Horrible is the end of the unrighteous generation.” Wis. 3. 19.

“ With the talents of an angel, a man may be a fool.”—YOUNG.

I. MR. HOBBS was a celebrated *Infidel* in the last age, who, in bravado, would sometimes speak very unbecoming things of GOD and his WORD. Yet, when alone, he was haunted with the most tormenting reflections, and would awake in great terror, if his candle happened but
 to

* “ Si in hoc erro, lubenter erro, nec mihi hunc errorem, quo
 “ delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo.”

to go out in the night. He could never bear any discourse of death, and seemed to cast off all thoughts of it. He lived to be upwards of ninety. His last sensible words were, when he found he could live no longer, "I shall be glad then to find a hole to creep out of the world at." And, notwithstanding all his high pretensions to learning and philosophy, his uneasiness constrained him to confess, when he drew near to the grave, that "he was about to take a leap in the dark."—The writings of this *old sinner*, ruined the EARL OF ROCHESTER, and many other gentlemen of the first parts in the nation, as that Nobleman himself declared, after his conversion.

2. The account which the celebrated SULLY gives us of young SERVIN is out of the common way. The beginning of June, 1623, says he, I set out for *Calais*, where I was to embark, having with me a retinue of upwards of two hundred gentlemen, or who called themselves such, of whom a considerable number were really of the first distinction. Just before my departure old SERVIN came and presented his son to me, and begged I would use my endeavours to make him a man of some worth and honesty; but he confessed he dared not hope, not through any want of understanding or capacity in the young man, but from his natural inclination to all kinds of vice. The old man was in the right: what he told me having excited my curiosity to gain a thorough knowledge of young SERVIN, I found him to be at once both a wonder and a monster; for I can give no other idea of that assemblage of the most excellent and most pernicious qualities. Let the reader represent to himself a man of a genius so lovely, and an understanding so extensive, as rendered him scarce ignorant of any thing that could be known; of so vast and ready a comprehension, that he immediately made himself master of what he attempted; and of so prodigious a memory, that he never forgot what he had once learned; he possessed all parts of philosophy and the mathematics, particularly fortification and drawing: even in theology he was so well skilled, that he was an excellent preacher whenever he had a mind to exert that talent, and an able disputant for and against the reformed

formed religion indifferently; he not only understood *Greek*, *Hebrew*, and all the languages which we call learned, but also the different jargons or modern dialects; he accented and pronounced them so naturally, and so perfectly imitated the gestures and manners both of the several nations of *Europe*, and the particular provinces of *France*, that he might have been taken for a native of all or any of these countries; and this quality he applied to counterfeit all sorts of persons, wherein he succeeded wonderfully; he was, moreover, the best comedian and greatest droll that perhaps ever appeared; he had a genius for poetry, and had wrote many verses; he played upon almost all instruments, was a perfect master of music, and sung most agreeably and justly; he likewise could say mass; for he was of a disposition to do, as well as to know, all things: his body was perfectly well suited to his mind, he was light, nimble, dexterous, and fit for all exercises; he could ride well, and in dancing, wrestling, and leaping, he was admired: there are not any recreative games that he did not know; and he was skilled in almost all mechanic arts. But now for the reverse of the medal: here it appeared that he was treacherous, cruel, cowardly, deceitful; a liar, a cheat, a drunkard and glutton; a sharper in play, immersed in every species of vice, a blasphemer, an atheist; in a word, in him might be found all the vices contrary to nature, honour, religion, and society; the truth of which he himself evinced with his latest breath, for he died in the flower of his age, in a common brothel, perfectly corrupted by his debaucheries, and expired with a glass in his hand, cursing and denying God.

3. The honourable FRANCIS NEWPORT was educated by his parents in a religious manner. As he grew up to years of discretion he fell into the hands of *Infidels*, lost all his religion, and commenced *Infidel* himself. Being some time after seized with sickness, his serious convictions returned, and he became alarmed for the safety of his condition. After enduring the most horrible agonies of mind possible, till, in a very short time, his bodily strength was exhausted; with a groan so dreadful and loud, as though

it had been more than human, he cried out, *Oh the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation!*—and expired.

It may be much questioned, whether a more affecting *Narrative* was ever composed in any language, than the true history of this unhappy gentleman's last sickness and death. It is greatly to be desired, that men of all denominations would give it a serious perusal.

4. Mr. WILLIAM EMMERSON was, at the same time an *Infidel*, and one of the first mathematicians of the age. Though, in some respects, he might be considered as a worthy man, his conduct through life was rude, vulgar, and frequently immoral. He paid no attention to religious duties, and both intoxication and profane language were familiar to him. Towards the close of his days, being afflicted with the stone, he would crawl about the floor on his hands and knees, sometimes *praying*, and sometimes *swearing*, as the humour took him.—What a poor creature is man without religion! SIR ISAAC NEWTON died of the same disorder, which was attended, at times, with such severe paroxysms, as forced out large drops of sweat that ran down his face. In these trying circumstances, however, he was never observed to utter the smallest complaint, or to express the least impatience. What a striking contrast between the conduct of the *Infidel* and the *Christian*!

5. MONSIEUR VOLTAIRE, during a long life, was continually treating the *Holy Scriptures* with contempt, and endeavouring to spread the poison of *Infidelity* among the nations. See, however, the end of such a conduct. In his last illness he sent for Dr. TRONCHIN. When the DOCTOR came, he found VOLTAIRE in the greatest agonies, exclaiming with the utmost horror—*I am abandoned by God and man.*—He then said, *Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth, if you can give me six months life.* The DOCTOR answered, *Sir, you cannot live six weeks.* VOLTAIRE replied, *Then I shall go to hell, and you will go with me!* and soon after expired.

This is the *Hero* of modern *Infidels*! Dare any of them say—*Let me die the death of Voltaire, and let my last end be like his?* Wonderful infatuation! He occupies the first niche, in the *French Pantheon*! That he was a man of
great

great and various talents, none can deny: but his want of sound learning, and moral qualifications, will ever prevent him from being ranked with the benefactors of mankind, by the wise and good. Such an *Hero*, indeed, is befitting a nation under judicial infatuation, to answer the wise ends of the GOVERNOR of the world. If the reader has felt himself injured by the poison of this man's writings, he may find relief for his wounded mind, by perusing carefully FINDLAY'S *Vindication of the Sacred Books from the Misrepresentations and Cavils of VOLTAIRE*; and LEFAN'S LETTER'S of certain JEWS to VOLTAIRE. The hoary *Infidel* cuts but a very sorry figure in the hands of these *Sons of Abraham*.

6. Mr. ADDISON tells us of a Gentleman in *France*, who was so zealous a promoter of *Infidelity*, that he had got together a select company of disciples, and travelled into all parts of the kingdom to make converts. In the midst of his fantastical success, he fell sick, and was reclaimed to such a sense of his condition, that after he had passed some time in great agonies and horrors of mind, he begged those who had the care of burying him, to dress his body in the habit of a *Capuchin*, that the devil might not run away with it: and, to do further justice upon himself, he desired them to tie a halter about his neck, as a mark of that ignominious punishment, which, in his own thoughts, he had so justly deserved.

7. The last days of DAVID HUME, that celebrated *Deist*, were spent in playing at whist, in cracking his jokes about CHARON and his boat, and in reading LUCIAN, and other entertaining books.—This is a consummation est worthy of a clever fellow, whose *conscience* was *fear'd as with an hot iron*! Dr. JOHNSON observes upon this impenitent death-bed scene—"HUME owned he had never read the NEW TESTAMENT with attention. Here then was a man, who had been at no pains to inquire into the truth of religion, and had continually turned his mind the other way. It was not to be expected that the prospect of death should alter his way of thinking, unless GOD should send an angel to set him right.—He had a vanity in being

being thought easy.”—DIVES *fared sumptuously every day*, and saw no danger: but—the next thing we hear of him is—*In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments!**

8. The late all-accomplished EARL of CHESTERFIELD hath given us a picture of mere human happiness extremely mortifying. His declarations near death wereworthy of such a life: “I have run,” says he, “the silly rounds of
“ business and pleasure, and have done with them all. I
“ have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and confe-
“ quently know their futility, and do not regret their loss.
“ I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth,
“ very low.—Shall I tell you, that I bear this melancholy
“ situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation
“ which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot
“ help it. I bear it, because I must bear it, whether I
“ will or no!—I think of nothing but killing time the
“ best way I can, now that he is become my enemy.—
“ It is my resolution to *sleep in the carriage during the re-*
“ *mainder of the journey.*” Such are the dying declarations of this complete saint of the world! How little is man, in his most finished estate, without religion! Let us hear in what manner the lively Believer in *Jesus* takes his leave of this mortal scene:—*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous JUDGE, will give me at that day!*

9. The sad evening before the death of the noble ALTAMONT, upon the striking of the clock, he cried out,
“ *Oh, time! time! it is fit thou shouldest strike thy murder-*
“ *er to the heart. How art thou fled forever! A month!*
“ *—Oh, for a single week! I ask not for years; though an*
“ *age were too little for the much I have to do!—Oh!*
“ *thou*

* It is much to be lamented that a man of HUME's abilities should have prostituted his talents in the manner it is well known he did. With all his pretensions to philosophy, he was an advocate for *adultery* and *suicide*. The reader will find a sufficient answer to all his sophistry in HORNE's *Letters on Infidelity*, and BEATTIE's *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth, in Opposition to Sophistry and Scepticism*.

“*Oh! my Father, thy great merciful and indulgent, Lord God! Hell itself
 “is a refuge, it hides me from thy frown!”* Soon after,
 his understanding failed. His terrified imagination uttered
 horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgot. And ere
 the sun arose, the gay, young, noble, ingenious, accom-
 plished, and most wretched ALTAMONT expired.*

10. *The Gentleman of Fortune* described by Mr. HERVEY in his *Admonitory Letter* to RICHARD NASH, Esq. *Master of the Ceremonies at Bath*, is an instance of peni-
 tential sorrow of a very impressive kind. Before his last
 sickness, he was a man of the most robust body, and of
 the gayest temper that can be imagined. All his vigour
 and hilarity, however, were gone, when HERVEY waited
 upon him, and he was near the time of his dissolution.
 “Oh!” said he, with a look strongly expressive of the
 anguish of his mind, “that I had been wise, that I had
 “known this, that I had considered my latter end! If
 “God would restore me to health again, I call heaven
 “and earth to witness, I would labour for holiness, as I
 “shall soon labour for life. I would gladly part with all
 “my estate, large as it is, or a world, to obtain it.
 “Now my benighted eyes are enlightened, I clearly dis-
 “cern the things that are excellent. As for riches, and
 “pleasures, and the applauses of men, I account them as
 “dross and dung, no more to my happiness than the fea-
 “thers that lie on the floor. *Oh! if the righteous Judge*
 “*would try me once more, every opportunity of spiritual*
 “*improvement, should be dearer to me, than thousands of*
 “*gold and silver?* But, alas! the day in which I should
 “have worked is over and gone, and I see a sad, horrible
 “night approaching, bringing with it the blackness of
 “darkness forever. *I shall be ruined, undone, and de-*
 “*stroyed with an everlasting destruction!*”

11. Mr. CUMBERLAND, in the *Observer*, gives us one
 of the most mournful tales, that ever was related, concern-
 ing a gentleman of *Infidel* principles, whom he denomi-
 nates ANTIHEUS. “I remember him,” says he, “in
 “the

* This affecting Narrative may be seen at large in YOUNG'S *Con-
 tary and Fabulous*.

“ the height of his fame, the hero of his party; no man
 “ so carested, followed and applauded: he was a little
 “ loose, his friends would own, in his moral character, but
 “ then he was the honestest fellow in the world; it was
 “ not to be denied, that he was rather free in his notions,
 “ but then he was the best creature living. I have seen
 “ men of the gravest characters wink at his fallies; be-
 “ cause he was so pleasant and so well bred, it was im-
 “ possible to be angry with him. Every thing went well
 “ with him, and ANTITHEUS seemed to be at the summit
 “ of human prosperity, when he was suddenly seized with
 “ the most alarming symptoms: he was at his country
 “ house, and (which had rarely happened to him) he at
 “ that time chanced to be alone; wife or family he had
 “ none, and out of the multitude of his friends no one
 “ happened to be near him at the moment of his attack.
 “ A neighbouring *physician* was called out of bed in the
 “ night to come to him with all haste in this extremity:
 “ he found him sitting up in his bed supported by pillows,
 “ his countenance full of horror, his breath struggling as
 “ in the article of death, his pulse intermitting, and at
 “ times beating with such rapidity as could hardly be
 “ counted. ANTITHEUS dismissed the attendants he had
 “ about him, and eagerly demanded of the *physician*, if he
 “ thought him in danger: the *physician* answered that he
 “ must fairly tell him he was in eminent danger.—How
 “ so! how so! do you think me dying?—He was sorry
 “ to say, the symptoms indicated death.—Impossible! you
 “ must not let me die: I dare not die: O doctor! save
 “ me if you can.—Your situation, Sir, is such, that it is
 “ not in mine, or any other man’s art, to save you; and
 “ I think I should not do my duty, if I gave you any
 “ false hopes in these moments, which, if I am not mis-
 “ taken, will not more than suffice for any worldly or
 “ other concerns, which you may have upon your mind
 “ to settle.—*My mind is full of horror*, cried the dying
 “ man, *and I am incapable of preparing it for death*.—He
 “ now fell into an agony, accompanied with a shower of
 “ tears; a cordial was administered, and he revived in a
 “ degree; when turning to the *physician*, who had his
 “ fingers

“ fingers upon his pulse, he eagerly demanded of him,
 “ if he did not see that blood upon the feet-curtains of
 “ his bed. There was none to be seen, the *physician* as-
 “ surd him; it was nothing but a vapour of his fancy.
 “ —*See it plainly*, said ANTITHEUS, *in the shape of a hu-*
 “ *man hand: I have been visited with a tremendous appari-*
 “ *tion. As I was lying sleepless in my bed this night, I took*
 “ *up a letter of a deceased friend, to dissipate certain thoughts*
 “ *that made me uneasy, I believed him to be a great phi-*
 “ *losopher, and was converted to his opinions: persuaded*
 “ *by his arguments and my own experience that the disorderly*
 “ *affairs of this evil world could not be administered by any*
 “ *wise, just, or provident being, I had brought myself to*
 “ *think no such being could exist, and that a life, produced by*
 “ *chance, must terminate in annihilation: this is the reason-*
 “ *ing of that letter, and such were the thoughts I was re-*
 “ *volving in my mind, when the apparition of my dear friend*
 “ *presented itself before me; and unfolding the curtains of*
 “ *my bed, stood at my feet, looking earnestly upon me for a*
 “ *considerable space of time. My heart sunk within me;*
 “ *for his face was ghastly, full of horror, with an expression*
 “ *of such anguish as I can never describe: his eyes were fixed*
 “ *upon me, and at length with a mournful motion of his head*
 “ *—Alas, alas! he cried, we are in a fatal error—and tak-*
 “ *ing hold of the curtains with his hand, shook them violently*
 “ *and disappeared.—This, I protest to you, I both saw and*
 “ *heard, and look! where the print of his hand is left in*
 “ *blood upon the curtains.*”

ANTITHEUS survived the relation of this vision very few hours, and died delirious in great agonies.

What a forsaken and disconsolate creature is a man without religion!

THESE eleven examples are such as to give but little encouragement to any person, who has a proper concern for his own welfare, to embark, either in the *atheistic* or *deistic* schemes. In those cases, where the conscience was awake, the unhappy men were filled with anguish and amazement inexpressible. And in those other cases, where conscience seemed to be asleep, there appears nothing en-
viable in their situation, even upon their own supposition,
that

that there is no after-reckoning. If to die like an ass is a privilege, I give them joy of it! much good may it do them! May I die like a *Christian, having a hope blooming with immortal expectations!*

Let us turn from these horrible instances of perverted reason, and take a view of some more promising scenes.

II. EXAMPLES of persons recovered from their INFIDELITY.

“ If, sick of folly, I relent, he writes

“ My name in heav'n.”

12. CHARLES GILDON, author of a book called the *Oracles of Reason*, was convinced of the fallacy of his own arguments against religion, and the danger of his situation, by reading LESLIE'S *Short Method with a Deist*. He afterwards wrote a defence of revealed religion, entitled, *The Deist's Manual*, and died in the *Christian* faith.

13. The late LORD LITTLETON, author of the *History of Henry the Second*, and his friend GILBERT WEST, Esq. had both imbibed the principles of *Unbelief*, and had agreed together to write something in favour of *Infidelity*. To do this more effectually, they judged it necessary, first to acquaint themselves pretty well with the contents of the *Bible*. By the perusal of that book, however, they were both convinced of their error; both became converts to the religion of CHRIST JESUS; both took up their pens and wrote in favour of it; the former, his *Observations on the Conversion of ST. PAUL*; the latter, his *Observations on the Resurrection of CHRIST*; and both died in peace.

14. SIR JOHN PRINGLE, one of the first characters of the present age, though blessed with a religious education, contracted the principles of *Infidelity*, when he came to travel abroad in the world. But as he scorned to be an *implicit Believer*, he was equally averse to being an *implicit Unbeliever*. He, therefore, set himself to examine the principles of the *Gospel* of CHRIST, with all caution and seriousness. The result of his investigation was, a full conviction of the divine original and authority of the *Gospel*. The
evidence