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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:

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By the Rev. DAVID SIMPSON, M. A.

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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.



MACCLESFIELD:

PRINTED AND SOLD FOR THE AUTHOR BY

Edward Bayley;

Sold also by Dilly, London, Clarke, Manchester, and others.

1797.

Price 2s. 6d.

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

evidence of *Revelation* appeared to him to be solid and irrefragable; and the nature of it to be such as demanded his unhesitating acceptance.

15. SAME JENYNS, Esq. *Member of Parliament for Cornwall*, by some means had been warped aside into the paths of *Infidelity*, and continued in this state of mind some years. Finding his spirit, however, not at rest, he was induced to examine the grounds upon which his *Unbelief* was founded. He discovered his error; was led to believe in the SAVIOUR of mankind; and wrote a small treatise in defence of the *Gospel*, entitled, *A View of the internal Evidences of Christianity*; a work worthy the perusal of every man, who wishes to understand the excellency of the religion he professes.

16. DOCTOR OLIVER, a noted *Physician* at *Bath*, was a zealous *Unbeliever* till within a short time of his death. Being convinced of his error, and the danger of his situation, he bewailed his past conduct with strong compunction of heart, and gave up his spirit at last, in confident expectation of mercy from GOD, through the merit of that SAVIOUR, whom, for many years, he had ridiculed and opposed. "Oh," said he, "that I could undo the mischief that I have done! I was more ardent to poison people with the principles of irreligion and unbelief, than almost any *Christian* can be to spread the doctrines of CHRIST."

17. GENERAL DYKERN received a mortal wound at the battle of *Bergen in Germany*, A. D. 1759. He was of a noble family, and possessed equal abilities as a minister in the closet, and a general in the field, being favoured with a liberal education. Having imbibed the principles of *Infidelity*, by some means or other, he continued a *professed Deist*, till the time he received his fatal wound. During his illness, however, a great and effectual change was wrought upon his mind by the power of divine grace, and he died in the full assurance of faith, glorying in the salvation of JESUS, and wondering at the happy change which had taken place in his soul.\*

\* See this extraordinary case more at large in DECOETLOGON'S *Divine Treasury*, p. 27.



18. JOHN, *Earl of ROCHESTER*, it is well known, was one of the wickedest and wittiest men in the kingdom. The hand of GOD, however, being upon him, he was brought to a deep sense of the danger of his situation, and abhorred himself, repenting in dust and ashes. After this, he acknowledged, that all the *seeming absurdities in Holy Scripture*, fancied by men of corrupt and reprobate judgments, were vanished, and that their excellency and beauty appeared, now that he was come to receive the truth in the love of it.—“ I shall now die,” said he at last, “ but, “ Oh! what unspeakable glories do I feel! What joys “ beyond thought or expression am I sensible of! I am “ assured of GOD’s mercy to me, through JESUS CHRIST. “ Oh! how I long to die, and to be with my SAVIOUR!” For the admonition of others, and to undo, as much as was in his power, the mischief of his former conduct, he subscribed the following *Recantation*, and ordered it to be published after his death:

“ For the benefit of all those, whom I may have drawn “ into sin by my example and encouragement, I leave to “ the world this my last declaration, which I deliver in the “ presence of the great GOD, who knows the secrets of all “ hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be “ judged: That from the bottom of my soul, I detest “ and abhor the whole course of my former wicked life; “ that I think I can never sufficiently admire the goodness “ of GOD, who has given me a true sense of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto “ lived without hope, and without GOD in the world; “ have been an open enemy to JESUS CHRIST, doing the “ utmost despite to the HOLY SPIRIT of grace: and that “ the greatest testimony of my charity to such, is, to “ warn them, in the name of GOD, as they regard the “ welfare of their immortal souls, no more to deny his “ being or his providence, or despise his goodness; no “ more to make a mock of sin, or contemn the pure and “ excellent religion of my ever blessed REDEEMER, “ through whose merits alone, I, one of the greatest of “ sinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveness. Amen.”

19. Captain JOHN LEE, who was executed for forgery, *March* 4. 1784, became an *Infidel*, through reading the elegant, but sophistical, writings of DAVID HUME. Deeply, however, did he repent his folly, when he came to be in distressed circumstances. “ I leave to the world,” said he in a letter to a friend the night before his execution, “ this mournful memento, that however much a man may  
 “ be favoured by personal qualifications, or distinguished  
 “ by mental endowments, genius will be useless, and abilities avail but little, unless accompanied by a sense of  
 “ religion, and attended by the practice of virtue.”

20. Another GENTLEMAN, whose name is concealed out of delicacy to his connections, was descended of a noble and religious family. His life was extremely irregular and dissolute, but his natural parts and endowments of mind so extraordinary, that they rendered his conversation agreeable to persons of the highest rank and quality. Being taken ill, he believed he should die at the very beginning of his sickness. His Friend, with whom he had frequently disputed against the existence of God and the truths of *revealed religion*, came to visit him on the second day after he was seized. He asked him how he did, and what made him so dejected?

“ Alas !” said he, “ are you so void of understanding,  
 “ as to imagine I am afraid to die ? Far be such thoughts  
 “ from me. I could meet death with as much courage as  
 “ I have encountered an enemy in the field of battle, and  
 “ embrace it as freely as I ever did any friend whom I  
 “ entirely loved : for I see nothing in this world that is  
 “ worth the pains of keeping. I have made tryal of most  
 “ states and conditions of life. I have continued at home  
 “ for a considerable time, and travelled abroad in foreign  
 “ parts. I have been rich and poor. I have been raised  
 “ to honour, and reversed in a high degree. I have also  
 “ been exposed to scorn and contempt. I have been wise  
 “ and foolish. I have experienced the difference between  
 “ virtue and vice, and every thing that was possible for a  
 “ man in my station ; so that I am capable of distinguish-  
 “ ing what is really good and praise-worthy, and what is  
 “ not. Now I see with a clearer sight than ever, and dis-  
 “ cern



“ cern a vast difference between the *vain licentious discourse*  
 “ of a *Libertine* and the *sound arguments* of a *true Believer* :  
 “ for though the former may express himself more finely  
 “ than the latter, so as to puzzle him with hard questions  
 “ and intricate notions, yet all amounts to no more than  
 “ the fallacy of a few airy repartees, which are never  
 “ affected by sober *Christians*, nor capable of eluding the  
 “ force of solid reason. But now I know how to make a  
 “ a distinction between them; and I wish from the bottom  
 “ of my heart I had been so sensible of my error in the  
 “ time of my health; then I had never had those dreadful  
 “ foretastes of hell I now have. Oh! what a sad account  
 “ have I to give of a long life spent in sin and folly! I  
 “ look beyond the fears of a *temporal death*. All the dread  
 “ that you perceive in me arises from the near approach I  
 “ make to an *eternal death*; for I must die to live to all  
 “ eternity.”

This unhappy *Gentleman* continued in this manner to bewail his past folly, atheism, and infidelity for forty days, and then expired. His Friend, however, took large pains with him to encourage his repentance, faith, and return to a proper state of mind; the particulars of which would be too tedious to record in this place. At last, however, he was brought to entertain some hope, that the REDEEMER of mankind would take pity on his deplorable condition, pardon his sins, and rescue him from that everlasting destruction which awaits all such characters. He told his Friend, therefore, that if he departed with a *smile*, he might hope for the best concerning him; but if he should be seen to give up the ghost with a *frown*, there would be reason to fear the worst.

This was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and he lived till four the next morning. A little before he expired he was heard to speak these words softly to himself—*Oh! that I had possession of the meanest place in heaven, and could but creep into one corner of it.* Afterwards he cried out four several times together—*O dear, dear, dear, dear*—and, near a minute before he expired, his Friend perceived him to look full in his face, with a *smiling* countenance.

There we leave him till the resurrection-morn.

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.

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### 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,