

us, every accursed thing; "For if we hear this voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die."

* * Every experienced Christian will readily observe, that Mr. WESLEY wrote the preceding SERMON before he was fully acquainted with the Power of Divine Grace. Nevertheless, it evidently discovers a mind under the influence of the fear of GOD, and a sincere desire to know and please him. The arguments he makes use of to prove the *sinfulness* of attending public Diversions, are striking and unanswerable, and demand our most serious regard. We stand upon the brink of Eternity! There is only a step between us and the unfathomable gulph! Are not sensual diversions and amusements solely calculated to divert our thoughts from GOD, and the things of Grace and Glory? Is it possible then for any one of us to be present at those scenes of riot and dissipation, with a single eye, with a pure intention to please GOD? Previous to our entrance into the field of folly, can we retire in secret, and kneel down at the feet of the Almighty, and intreat his Blessing upon the premeditated madness that we design not only to be a spectator of, but a party concerned and interested in the success of it? Would not our presence in such deplorable scenes, harden and darken the minds of those who noticed us? Is it possible to retire from the race-ground, or any other place devoted to folly, without a guilty conscience? And could we then deceive ourselves with the imagination, that we had been giving all diligence to be found of CHRIST in peace without spot and blameless?

L E T T E R IX.

From the BISHOP of LANDAFF to THOMAS PAINE.

[Continued from page 432.]

"THOSE," you say, "who are not much acquainted with ecclesiastical history, may suppose that the book called the New Testament has existed ever since the time of Jesus Christ; but the fact is historically otherwise; there was no such book as the New Testament till more than three hundred years after the time that Christ is said to have lived."—This paragraph is calculated to mislead common readers; it is necessary to unfold its meaning. The book, called the New Testament, consists of twenty-seven different parts; concerning seven of these, viz. the Epistle to the Hebrews, that of James, the second of Peter, the second of John, the third of John, that of Jude, and the Revelation, there were at first some doubts; and the question, whether they should be received into the canon, might be decided, as all questions concerning opinions must be, by vote. With respect to the other twenty parts, those who are most acquainted with ecclesiastical history will tell you, as Du Pin does after Eusebius, that they were owned as canonical, at all times, and by all christians. Whether the council of Laodicea was held before or after that of Nice, is not a settled point; all the books of the New Testament, except the Revelation,

tion, are enumerated as canonical in the Constitutions of that council; but it is a great mistake to suppose, that the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were not in *general use* amongst christians, long before the council of Laodicea was held. This is not merely my opinion on the subject; it is the opinion of one much better acquainted with ecclesiastical history than I am, and, probably, than you are, — *Mosheim*. “The opinions,” says this author, or “rather the conjectures, of the learned concerning the time when the books of the New Testament were collected into one volume, as also about the authors of that collection, are extremely different. This important question is attended with great and almost insuperable difficulties to us in these latter times. It is however sufficient for us to know, that, before the middle of the second century, the greatest part of the books of the New Testament were read in every christian society throughout the world, and received as a divine rule of faith and manners. Hence it appears, that these sacred writings were carefully separated from several human compositions upon the same subject, either by some of the apostles themselves, who lived so long, or by their disciples and successors, who were spread abroad through all nations. We are well assured, that the *four gospels* were collected during the life of St. John, and that the three first received the approbation of this divine apostle. And why may we not suppose, that the other books of the New Testament were gathered together at the same time? What renders this highly probable is, that the most urgent necessity required it's being done. For, not long after Christ's ascension into heaven, several histories of his life and doctrines, full of pious frauds, and fabulous wonders, were composed by persons, whose intentions, perhaps, were not bad, but whose writings discovered the greatest superstition and ignorance. Nor was this all: productions appeared, which were imposed on the world by fraudulent men as the writings of the holy apostles. These apocryphal and spurious writings must have produced a sad confusion, and rendered both the history and the doctrine of Christ uncertain, had not the rulers of the church used all possible care and diligence in separating the books that were truly apostolical and divine, from all that spurious trash, and conveying them down to posterity in one volume.”

Did you ever read the apology for christians, which Justin Martyr presented to the Emperor Antonius Pius, to the Senate, and people of Rome? I should sooner expect a falsity in a petition, which any body of persecuted men, imploring justice, should present to the King and Parliament of Great Britain, than in this apology. — Yet in this apology, which was presented not fifty years after the death of St. John, not only parts of *all the four gospels are quoted*, but it is expressly said, that on the day called Sunday, a portion of them was read in the public assemblies of the christians. I forbear pursuing this matter farther; else it might easily be shewn, that probably the gospels, and certainly some of St. Paul's epistles, were known to Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, contemporaries with the Apostles. These men could not quote or refer to books which did not exist: and therefore, though you
could

could make it out that the book called the New Testament did not formally exist under that title, till 350 years after Christ; yet I hold it to be a certain fact, that all the books, of which it is composed, were written, and most of them received by all christians, within a few years after his death.

You raise a difficulty relative to the time which intervened between the death and resurrection of Jesus, who had said, that the Son of man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.—Are you ignorant then that the Jews used the phrase three days and three nights to denote what we understand by three days? — It is said in Genesis, chap. vii. 12. “The rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and this is equivalent to the expression, (ver. 17.) “And the flood was forty days upon the earth.” Instead then of saying three days and three nights, let us simply say — three days — and you will not object to Christ's being three days — Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, in the heart of the earth. I do not say that he was in the grave the whole of either Friday or Sunday; but an hundred instances might be produced, from writers of all nations, in which a part of a day is spoken of as the whole. — Thus much for the defence of the historical part of the New Testament.

You have introduced an account of Faustus, as denying the genuineness of the books of the New Testament. Will you permit that great scholar in sacred literature, Michaelis, to tell you something about this Faustus? — “He was ignorant, as were most of the African writers, of the Greek language, and acquainted with the New Testament merely through the channel of the Latin translation: he was not only devoid of a sufficient fund of learning, but illiterate in the highest degree. An argument, which he brings against the genuineness of the gospel, affords sufficient ground for this assertion; for he contends, that the gospel of St. Matthew could not have been written by St. Matthew himself, because he is always mentioned in the third person.” You know who has argued like Faustus, but I did not think myself authorized on that account to call you illiterate in the highest degree; but Michaelis makes a still more severe conclusion concerning Faustus; and he extends his observation to every man who argued like him—“A man capable of such an argument must have been ignorant not only of the Greek writers, the knowledge of which could not have been expected from Faustus, but even of the Commentaries of Cæsar. And were it thought improbable that so heavy a charge should be laid with justice on the side of his knowledge, it would fall with double weight on the side of his honesty, and induce us to suppose, that, preferring the arts of sophistry to the plainness of truth, he maintained opinions which he believed to be false.” (Marsh's Transl.) Never more, I think, shall we hear of Moses not being the author of the Pentateuch, on account of its being written in the third person.

Not being able to produce any argument to render questionable either the genuineness or the authenticity of St. Paul's Epistles, you tell us, that “it is a matter of no great importance by whom they were written, since the writer, whoever he was, attempts to prove his doctrine

trine by argument : he does not pretend to have been witness to any of the scenes told of the resurrection and ascension, and he declares that he had not believed them." That Paul had so far resisted the evidence which the Apostles had given of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, as to be a persecutor of the disciples of Christ, is certain ; but I do not remember the place where he declares that he had not believed them. The High Priest and the Senate of the children of Israel did not deny the reality of the miracles, which had been wrought by Peter and the Apostles ; they did not contradict their testimony concerning the resurrection and the ascension ; but whether they believed it or not, they were fired with indignation, and took counsel to put the Apostles to death : and this was also the temper of Paul ; whether he believed or did not believe the story of the resurrection, he was exceedingly mad against the saints. The writer of Paul's Epistles does not attempt to prove his doctrine by argument ; he in many places tells us, that his doctrine was not taught by man, or any invention of his own, which required the ingenuity of argument to prove it : — " I certify you, brethren, that the gospel, which was preached of me, is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Paul does not pretend to have been a witness of the *story* of the resurrection, but he does much more ; he asserts, that he was himself a witness of the resurrection. After enumerating many appearances of Jesus to his disciples, Paul says of himself, " Last of all, he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time." Whether you will admit Paul to have been a *true* witness or not, you cannot deny that he pretends to have been *a* witness of the resurrection.

The story of his being struck to the ground, as he was journeying to Damascus, has nothing in it, you say, miraculous or extraordinary : you represent him as struck by lightning.—It is somewhat extraordinary for a man, who is struck by lightning, to have, at the very time, full possession of his understanding ; to hear a voice issuing from the lightning, speaking to him in the Hebrew tongue, calling him by his name, and entering into conversation with him. His companions, you say, appear not to have suffered in the same manner : — the greater the wonder. If it was a common storm of thunder and lightning which struck Paul and all his companions to the ground, it is somewhat extraordinary that he alone should be hurt ; and that, notwithstanding his being struck blind by lightning, he should in other respects be so little hurt, as to be immediately able to walk into the city of Damascus. So difficult is it to oppose truth by an hypothesis ! — In the character of Paul you discover a great deal of violence and fanaticism ; and such men, you observe, are never good moral evidences of any doctrine they preach. — Read, sir, Lord Lyttleton's observations on the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul ; and I think you will be convinced of the contrary. That elegant writer thus expresses his opinion on this subject — " Besides all the proofs of the christian religion, which may be drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament, from the necessary connection it has with the whole system of the

the Jewish religion, from the miracles of Christ, and from the evidence given of his resurrection by all the other apostles, I think the conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, is, of itself, a demonstration sufficient to prove christianity to be a divine revelation." I hope this opinion will have some weight with you; it is not the opinion of a lying Bible-prophet, of a stupid evangelist, or of an a b ab priest, — but of a learned layman, whose illustrious rank received splendor from his talents.

You are displeas'd with St. Paul "for setting out to prove the resurrection of the *same* body." — You know, I presume, that the resurrection of the same body is not, by all, admitted to be a scriptural doctrine. — "In the New Testament (wherein, I think, are contained all the articles of the christian faith) I find our Saviour and the Apostles to preach *the resurrection of the dead*, and the *resurrection from the dead*, in many places; but I do not remember any place where the resurrection of the same body is so much as mentioned." This observation of Mr. Locke I so far adopt, as to deny that you can produce any place in the writings of St. Paul, wherein he sets out to prove the resurrection of the same body. I do not question the possibility of the resurrection of the same body, and I am not ignorant of the manner in which some learned men have explained it; (somewhat after the way of your vegetative speck in the kernel of a peach;) but as you are discrediting St. Paul's doctrine, you ought to shew that what you attempt to discredit is the doctrine of the Apostle. As a matter of choice, you had rather have a better body — you will have a better body, — "Your natural body will be raised a spiritual body," your corruptible will put on incorruption. You are so much out of humour with your present body, that you inform us, every animal in the creation excels us in something. Now I had always thought, that the single circumstance of our having hands, and their having none, gave us an infinite superiority not only over insects, fishes, snails, and spiders, (which you represent as excelling us in loco-motive powers,) but over all the animals of the creation; and enabled us, in the language of Cicero, describing the manifold utility of our hands, to make as it were a new nature of things. As to what you say about the consciousness of existence being the only conceivable idea of a future life — it proves nothing, either for or against the resurrection of a body, or of the same body; it does not inform us, whether to any or to what substance, material or immaterial, this consciousness is annexed. I leave it, however, to others, who do not admit personal identity to consist in consciousness, to dispute with you on this point, and willingly subscribe to the opinion of Mr. Locke, "that nothing but consciousness can unite remote existences into the same person."

From a caterpillar's passing into a torpid state resembling death, and afterwards appearing a splendid butterfly, and from the (supposed) consciousness of existence which the animal had in these different states, you ask, Why must I believe, that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue in me the consciousness of existence hereafter? — I do not dislike analogical reasoning, when applied to proper objects, and
kept

kept within due bounds: — but where is it said in Scripture, that the resurrection of the same body is necessary to continue in you the consciousness of existence? Those who admit a conscious state of the soul between death and the resurrection, will contend, that the soul is the substance in which consciousness is continued without interruption: — those who deny the intermediate state of the soul as a state of consciousness, will contend, that consciousness is not destroyed by death, but suspended by it, as it is suspended during a sound sleep; and that it may as easily be restored after death, as after sleep, during which the faculties of the soul are not extinct, but dormant. — Those who think that the soul is nothing distinct from the compages of the body, not a substance but a mere quality, will maintain, that the consciousness appertaining to every individual person is not lost when the body is destroyed; that it is known to GOD; and may, at the general resurrection, be annexed to any system of matter he may think fit, or to that particular compages to which it belonged in this life.

In reading your book I have been frequently shocked at the virulence of your zeal, at the indecorum of your abuse in applying vulgar and offensive epithets to men who have been held, and who will long, I trust, continue to be holden, in high estimation. I know that the scar of calumny is seldom wholly effaced, it remains long after the wound is healed; and your abuse of holy men and holy things will be remembered, when your arguments against them are refuted and forgotten. Moses you term an arrogant coxcomb, a chief assassin; Aaron, Joshua, Samuel, David, monsters and impostors; the Jewish kings a parcel of rascals; Jeremiah and the rest of the prophets, liars; and Paul a fool, for having written one of the sublimest compositions, and on the most important subject that ever occupied the mind of man — the lesson in our burial service; — this lesson you call a doubtful jargon, as destitute of meaning as the tolling of the bell at the funeral. — Men of low condition! pressed down, as you often are, by calamities generally incident to human nature, and groaning under burdens of misery peculiar to your condition, what thought you when you heard this lesson read at the funeral of your child, your parent, or your friend? Was it mere jargon to you, as destitute of meaning as the tolling of a bell? — No. — You understood from it, that you would not all sleep, but that you would all be changed in a moment at the last trump; you understood from it, that this corruptible must put on incorruption, that this mortal must put on immortality, and that death would be swallowed up in victory; you understood from it, that if (notwithstanding profane attempts to subvert your faith) ye continue steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, your labour will not be in vain.

You seem fond of displaying your skill in science and philosophy; you speak more than once of Euclid: and, in censuring St. Paul, you intimate to us, that when the apostle says — one star differeth from another star in glory — he ought to have said — in distance. — All men see that one star differeth from another star in glory or brightness; but few men know that their difference in brightness arises from their dif-

ference in distance; and I beg leave to say, that even you, philosopher as you are, do not *know* it. You make an assumption which you cannot prove—that the stars are *equal* in magnitude, and placed at *different* distances from the earth;—but you cannot prove that they are not *different* in magnitude, and placed at *equal* distances, though none of them may be so near to the earth, as to have any sensible annual *parallax*. I beg pardon of my readers for touching upon this subject; but it really moves one's indignation, to see a smattering in philosophy urged as an argument against the veracity of an apostle. — “Little learning is a dangerous thing.”

Paul, you say, affects to be a naturalist; and to prove (you might more properly have said illustrate) his system of resurrection from the principles of vegetation — “Thou fool,” says he, “that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die:” — to which one might reply, in his own language, and say — “Thou fool, Paul, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die *not*.” It may be seen, I think, from this passage, who affects to be a naturalist, to be acquainted with the microscopical discoveries of modern times; which were probably neither known to Paul, nor to the Corinthians; and which, had they been known to them both, would have been of little use in the illustration of the subject of the resurrection. Paul said — that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die: — every husbandman in Corinth, though unable perhaps to define the term death, would understand the apostle's phrase in a popular sense, and agree with him that a grain of wheat must become *rotten* in the ground before it could sprout; and that, as GOD raised from a rotten grain of wheat, the roots, the stem, the leaves, the ear of a new plant, he might also cause a new body to spring up from the rotten carcase in the grave.—Doctor Clarke observes, “In like manner as in every grain of corn there is contained a minute insensible seminal principle, which is itself the entire future blade and ear, and in due season, when all the rest of the grain is corrupted, evolves and unfolds itself visibly to the eye; so our present mortal and corruptible body may be but the *exuviae*, as it were, of some hidden and at present insensible principle, (possibly the present seat of the soul,) which at the resurrection shall discover itself in its proper form.” I do not agree with this great man (for such I esteem him) in this philosophical conjecture; but the quotation may serve to shew you, that the germ does not evolve and unfold itself visibly to the eye till all the rest of the grain is *corrupted*; that is, in the language and meaning of St. Paul, till it *dies*. — Though the authority of Jesus may have as little weight with you as that of Paul, yet it may not be improper to quote to you our Saviour's expression, when he foretels the numerous disciples which his death would produce — “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and *die*, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” — You perceive from this, that the Jews thought the death of the grain was necessary to its reproduction: — hence every one may see what little reason you had to object to the apostle's popular illustration of the possibility of a resurrection. Had he known as much as any naturalist in Europe does, of the progress of an

an animal from one state to another, as from a worm to a butterfly, (which you think applies to the case,) I am of opinion he would not have used that illustration in preference to what he has used, which is obvious and satisfactory.

Whether the fourteen epistles ascribed to Paul were written by him or not, is, in your judgment, a matter of indifference. — So far from being a matter of indifference, I consider the genuineness of St. Paul's epistles to be a matter of the greatest importance; for if the epistles, ascribed to Paul, were written by him, (and there is unquestionable proof that they were,) it will be difficult for you, or for any man, upon fair principles of sound reasoning, to deny that the christian religion is true. The argument is a short one, and obvious to every capacity. It stands thus: — St. Paul wrote several letters to those whom, in different countries, he had converted to the christian faith; in these letters he affirms two things; — first, that he had wrought miracles in their presence; — secondly, that many of themselves had received the gift of tongues, and other miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. — The persons to whom these letters were addressed must, on reading them, have certainly known, whether Paul affirmed what was true, or told a plain lie; they must have known, whether they had seen him work miracles; they must have been conscious, whether they themselves did or did not possess any miraculous gifts. — Now can you, or can any man, believe, for a moment, that Paul (a man certainly of great abilities) would have written public letters, full of lies, and which could not fail of being discovered to be lies, as soon as his letters were read? — Paul could not be guilty of falsehood in these two points, or in either of them; and if either of them be true, the christian religion is true. References to these two points are frequent in St. Paul's epistles: I will mention only a few. In his Epistle to the Galatians, he says, (chap. iii. 2. 5.) "This only would I learn of you, received ye the spirit (gifts of the spirit) by the works of the law? — He ministrereth to you the spirit, and worketh miracles among you." — To the Thessalonians he says, (1 Theff. ch. i. 5.) "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost." — To the Corinthians he thus expresses himself: (1 Cor. ii. 4.) "My preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit and of power;" — and he adds the reason for his working miracles — "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." — With what alacrity would the faction at Corinth, which opposed the apostle, have laid hold of this and many similar declarations in the letter, had they been able to have detected any falsehood in them! There is no need to multiply words on so clear a point — the genuineness of Paul's Epistles proves their authenticity independently of every other proof; for it is absurd in the extreme to suppose him, under circumstances of obvious detection, capable of advancing what was not true; and if Paul's Epistles be both genuine and authentic, the christian religion is true. — Think of this argument.

You

You close your observations in the following manner:—
 “Should the Bible (meaning, as I have before remarked, the Old Testament) and Testament hereafter fall, it is not I that have been the occasion.” You look, I think, upon your production with a parent’s partial eye, when you speak of it in such a style of self-complacency. The Bible, sir, has withstood the learning of Porphyry, and the power of Julian, to say nothing of the manichean Faustus—it has resisted the genius of Bolingbroke, and the wit of Voltaire, to say nothing of a numerous herd of inferior assailants—and it will not fall by your force. You have barbed anew the blunted arrows of former adversaries; you have feathered them with blasphemy and ridicule; dipped them in your deadliest poison; aimed them with your utmost skill; shot them against the shield of faith with your utmost vigour; but, like the feeble javelin of aged Priam, they will scarcely reach the mark, will fall to the ground without a stroke.

LIFE OF PHILIP MELANCTHON.

[Continued from page 441.]

CHAP. V. *Distressing situation of the Reformers. The Light of Science and the Gospel visit Europe about the same time. Melancthon early qualified for rendering important service to science. He delivers Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans. The study of the Scriptures neglected for many ages. The Reformers introduce the laws of a just Interpretation of Scripture. Melancthon enters upon the Marriage State. Eminent men not always happy in domestic Life. Remarks on the temper and habits of studious men. The Reformers become more formidable to their enemies. The Reformers are outlawed by a Bull of Excommunication. Luther commits the Bull to the flames. Appears before the Diet at Worms. Cruel Edict published against him. Escapes the storm, and is concealed in a strong Castle. Leo X. dies, he is succeeded by Adrian VI. The Reformation advances. Fanaticks appear during Luther’s absence. Melancthon contends with them.*

THE situation of the Reformers for many years was truly distressing; they were often tost by furious storms and tempests on a tumultuous sea, amidst dangerous rocks and faithless quicksands. In this perilous situation they had inevitably perished had they not been directed to steer their course by that bright and morning star, whose glory they were constrained to keep in view till