

health itself and nutrition itself, oblige us to the pain of a constant *correction* of them;) yet still, the love of GOD and heavenly hope, will not want something to oppress them in this world.

Let a man descend calmly into his heart, and see if there be no root of bitterness springing up: whether at least his thoughts, which are ever in motion, do not sometimes fall out into projects suggested by *pride*, or sink into indolent *trifling*, or be entangled in mean *anxiety*? Does not he find a motion of *anger*, or of *gaiety*, leavening him in an instant throughout; depriving him of the meekness, and steady *discernment*, he laboured after? Or, let him but conceive at any time, that unfeigned obedience, and watchful zeal, and dignity of behaviour, which is suitable, I don't say to an angel, but to a sinner that has "a good hope through grace," and endeavour to work himself up to it; and if he finds no sort of *obstacle* to this within him, he has indeed then no opportunity of suffering. In short, if he is such an abject sort of creature, as will, unless grace should do him a perpetual violence, relapse frequently into a course of thinking and acting, entirely *without God*; then he can never want occasions of suffering, but will find his own nature to be the same burden to him, as that "faithless and perverse generation" was to our Saviour, of whom he said, "How long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" I will conclude all with that excellent Collect of our Church: "O GOD, who in all ages hath taught the hearts of thy faithful people, by the sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one GOD, world without end."

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L E T T E R X.

From the BISHOP of LANDAFF, to THOMAS PAINE.

[ *Concluded from page 536.* ]

YOU are animated with proper sentiments of piety, when you speak of the structure of the universe. No one, indeed, who considers it with attention, can fail of having his mind filled with the supremest veneration for it's Author. Who can contemplate, without astonishment, the motion of a comet, running far beyond the orb of Saturn, endeavouring to escape into the pathless regions of unbounded space, yet feeling, at it's utmost distance, the attractive influence of the sun, hearing, as it were, the voice of GOD arresting it's progress, and compelling it, after a lapse of ages, to reiterate it's ancient course?—Who can comprehend the distance of the stars from the earth, and

and from each other? — It is so great, that it mocks our conception; our very imagination is terrified, confounded, and lost, when we are told, that a ray of light, which moves at the rate of above ten millions of miles in a minute, will not, though emitted at this instant from the brightest star, reach the earth in less than six years. — We think this earth a great globe; and we see the sad wickedness, which individuals are often guilty of, in scraping together a little of it's dirt: we view, with still greater astonishment and horror, the mighty ruin which has, in all ages, been brought upon human kind, by the low ambition of contending powers, to acquire a temporary possession of a little portion of it's surface. But how does the whole of this globe sink, as it were, to nothing, when we consider that a million of earths will scarcely equal the bulk of the sun; that all the stars are suns; and that millions of suns constitute, probably, but a minute portion of that material world, which GOD hath distributed through the immensity of space! — Systems, however, of insensible matter, though arranged in exquisite order, prove only the wisdom and the power of the great Architect of nature. — As percipient beings, we look for something more — for his goodness — and we cannot open our eyes without seeing it.

Every portion of the earth, sea, and air, is full of sensitive beings, capable, in their respective orders, of enjoying the good things which GOD has prepared for their comfort. All the orders of beings are enabled to propagate their kind; and thus provision is made for a successive continuation of happiness. Individuals yield to the law of dissolution inseparable from the material structure of their bodies: but no gap is thereby left in existence; their place is occupied by other individuals capable of participating in the goodness of the Almighty. Contemplations such as these fill the mind with humility, benevolence, and piety. But why should we stop here? why not contemplate the goodness of GOD in the redemption, as well as in the creation of the world? By the death of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, he hath redeemed the whole human race from the eternal death, which the transgression of Adam had entailed on all his posterity. — You believe nothing about the transgression of Adam. The history of Eve and the serpent excites your contempt; you will not admit that it is either a real history, or an allegorical representation of death entering into the world through sin, through disobedience to the command of GOD. — Be it so. — You find, however, that death doth reign over all mankind, by whatever mean it was introduced: this is not a matter of belief, but of lamentable knowledge. — The New Testament tells us, that, through the merciful dispensation of GOD, Christ hath

overcome death, and restored man to that immortality which Adam had lost : — this also you refuse to believe. — Why ? Because you cannot account for the propriety of this redemption. — Miserable reason ! stupid objection ! What is there that you can account for ? Not for the germination of a blade of grass, not for the fall of a leaf of the forest — and will you refuse to eat of the fruits of the earth, because GOD has not given you wisdom equal to his own ? Will you refuse to lay hold on immortality, because he has not given you, because he, probably, could not give to such a being as man, a full manifestation of the end for which he designs him, nor of the means requisite for the attainment of that end ? What father of a family can make level to the apprehension of his infant children, all the views of happiness which his paternal goodness is preparing for them ? How can he explain to them the utility of reproof, correction, instruction, example, of all the various means by which he forms their minds to piety, temperance, and probity ? We are children in the hand of GOD ; we are in the very infancy of our existence ; just separated from the womb of eternal duration ; it may not be possible for the Father of the universe to explain to us (infants in apprehension !) the goodness and the wisdom of his dealings with the sons of men. What qualities of mind will be necessary for our well-doing through all eternity, we know not ; what discipline in this infancy of existence may be necessary for generating these qualities, we know not ; whether GOD could or could not, consistently with the general good, have forgiven the transgression of Adam, without any atonement, we know not ; whether the malignity of sin be not so great, so opposite to the general good, that it cannot be forgiven whilst it exists, that is, whilst the mind retains a propensity to it, we know not : so that if there should be much greater difficulty in comprehending the mode of GOD'S moral government of mankind than there really is, there would be no reason for doubting of it's rectitude. If the whole human race be considered as but one small member of a large community of free and intelligent beings of different orders, and if this whole community be subject to discipline and laws productive of the greatest possible good to the whole system, then may we still more reasonably suspect our capacity to comprehend the wisdom and goodness of all GOD'S proceedings in the moral government of the universe.

You are lavish in your praise of Deism ; it is so much better than Atheism, that I mean not to say any thing to it's discredit ; it is not, however, without it's difficulties. What think you of an uncaused cause of every thing ? of a Being who has no relation to time, not being older to-day than he was yesterday, nor younger to-day than he will be to-morrow ? who has no relation

to space, not being a part here and a part there, or a whole any where? What think you of an omniscient Being, who cannot know the future actions of a man? Or, if his omniscience enables him to know them, what think you of the contingency of human actions? And if human actions are not contingent, what think you of the morality of actions, of the distinction between vice and virtue, crime and innocence, sin and duty? What think you of the infinite goodness of a Being, who existed through eternity, without any emanation of his goodness manifested in the creation of sensitive beings? Or, if you contend that there has been an eternal creation, what think you of an effect coeval with it's cause, of matter not posterior to it's Maker? What think you of the existence of evil, moral and natural, in the work of an infinite Being, powerful, wise, and good? What think you of the gift of freedom of will, when the abuse of freedom becomes the cause of general misery? I could propose to your consideration a great many other questions of a similar tendency, the contemplation of which has driven not a few from Deism to Atheism, just as the difficulties in revealed religion have driven yourself, and some others, from Christianity to Deism.

For my own part, I can see no reason why either revealed or natural religion should be abandoned, on account of the difficulties which attend either of them. I look up to the incomprehensible Maker of heaven and earth with unspeakable admiration and self-annihilation, and am a Deist. — I contemplate, with the utmost gratitude and humility of mind, his unsearchable wisdom and goodness in the redemption of the world from eternal death, through the intervention of his Son Jesus Christ, and am a Christian. — As a Deist, I have little expectation. — As a Christian, I have no doubt of a future state. I speak for myself, and may be in an error, as to the ground of the first part of this opinion. You, and other men, may conclude differently. From the inert nature of matter — from the faculties of the human mind — from the apparent imperfection of God's moral government of the world — from many modes of analogical reasoning, and from other sources, some of the philosophers of antiquity did collect, and modern philosophers may, perhaps, collect a strong probability of a future existence; and not only of a future existence, but (which is quite a distinct question) of a future state of retribution, proportioned to our moral conduct in this world. Far be it from me to loosen any of the obligations to virtue; but I must confess, that I cannot, from the same sources of argumentation, derive any positive assurance on the subject. Think then with what thankfulness of heart I receive the Word of GOD, which tells me, that though

“in Adam (by the condition of our nature) all die;” yet “in Christ (by the covenant of grace) shall all be made alive.” I lay hold on “eternal life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ;” I consider it not as any appendage to the nature I derive from Adam, but as the free gift of the Almighty, through his Son, whom he hath constituted Lord of all, the Saviour, the Advocate, and the Judge of human kind.

“Deism,” you affirm, “teaches us, without the possibility of being mistaken, all that is necessary or proper to be known.” — There are three things, which all reasonable men admit are necessary and proper to be known — the being of GOD — the providence of GOD — a future state of retribution. — Whether these three truths are so taught us by Deism, that there is no possibility of being mistaken concerning any of them, let the history of philosophy, and of idolatry, and superstition, in all ages and countries, determine. A volume might be filled with an account of the mistakes into which the greatest reasoners have fallen, and of the uncertainty in which they lived, with respect to every one of these points. I will advert, briefly to the last of them. Notwithstanding the illustrious labours of Gassendi, Cudworth, Clarke, Baxter, and of above two hundred other modern writers on the subject, the *natural* mortality or immortality of the human soul is as little understood by us, as it was by the philosophers of Greece or Rome. The opposite opinions of Plato and of Epicurus, on this subject, have their several supporters amongst the learned of the present age, in Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, in every enlightened part of the world; and they who have been most seriously occupied in the study of the question concerning a future state, as deducible from the nature of the human soul, are least disposed to give from reason a positive decision of it either way. The importance of revelation is by nothing rendered more apparent, than by the discordant sentiments of learned and good men (for I speak not of the ignorant and immoral) on this point. They shew the insufficiency of human reason, in a course of above two thousand years, to unfold the mysteries of human nature, and to furnish, from the contemplation of it, any assurance of the quality of our future condition. If you should ever become persuaded of this insufficiency, (and you can scarce fail of becoming so, if you examine the matter deeply,) you will, if you act rationally, be disposed to investigate, with seriousness and impartiality, the truth of christianity. You will say of the Gospel, as the Northumbrian heathens said of Paulinus, by whom they were converted to the christian religion — “The more we reflect on the nature of our soul, the less we know of it. Whilst it animates our body, we may know some of its properties;

properties; but when once separated, we know not whither it goes, or from whence it came. Since, then, the *gospel* pretends to give us clearer notions of these matters, we ought to hear it, and laying aside all passion and prejudice, follow that which shall appear most conformable to right reason."

What a blessing is it to beings, with such limited capacities as our's confessedly are, to have GOD himself for our instructor in every thing which it much concerns us to know! We are principally concerned in knowing — not the origin of arts, or the recondite depths of science — not the histories of mighty empires desolating the globe by their contentions — not the subtilties of logic, the mysteries of metaphysics, the sublimities of poetry, or the niceties of criticism. — These, and subjects such as these, properly occupy the learned leisure of a few; but the bulk of human kind have ever been, and must ever remain, ignorant of them all; they must, of necessity, remain in the same state with that which a German Emperor voluntarily put himself into, when he made a resolution, bordering on barbarism, that he would never read a printed book. We are all, of every rank and condition, equally concerned in knowing — what will become of us after death; — and, if we are to live again, we are interested in knowing — whether it be possible for us to do any thing whilst we live here, which may render that future life an happy one. — Now, "that thing called christianity," as you scoffingly speak — that last best gift of Almighty God, as I esteem it, the gospel of Jesus Christ, has given us the most clear and satisfactory information on both these points. It tells us, what Deism never could have told us, that we shall certainly be raised from the dead — that, whatever be the nature of the soul, we shall certainly live for ever — and that, whilst we live here, it is possible for us to do much towards the rendering that everlasting life an happy one. — These are tremendous truths to bad men; they cannot be received and reflected on with indifference by the best; and they suggest to all such a cogent motive to virtuous action, as Deism could not furnish even to Brutus himself.

Some men have been warped to infidelity by viciousness of life; and some have hypocritically professed christianity from prospects of temporal advantage: but, being a stranger to your character, I neither impute the former to you, nor can admit the latter as operating on myself. The generality of unbelievers are such, from want of information on the subject of religion; having been engaged from their youth in struggling for worldly distinction, or perplexed with the incessant intricacies of business, or bewildered in the pursuits of pleasure, they have neither ability, inclination, nor leisure, to enter into critical disquisitions concerning the truth of christianity. Men of this description

description are soon startled by objections which they are not competent to answer; and the loose morality of the age (so opposite to christian perfection!) co-operating with their want of scriptural knowledge, they presently get rid of their nursery faith, and are seldom sedulous in the acquisition of another founded, not on authority, but sober investigation. Presuming, however, that many Deists are as sincere in their belief as I am in mine, and knowing that some are more able, and all as much interested as myself, to make a rational enquiry into the truth of revealed religion, I feel no propensity to judge uncharitably of any of them. They do not think as I do, on a subject surpassing all others in importance; but they are not, on that account, to be spoken of by me with asperity of language, to be thought of by me as persons alienated from the mercies of God. The gospel has been offered to their acceptance; and, from whatever cause they reject it, I cannot but esteem their situation to be dangerous. Under the influence of that persuasion I have been induced to write this book. I do not expect to derive from it either fame or profit; these are not improper incentives to honourable activity; but there is a time of life when they cease to direct the judgment of thinking men. What I have written will not, I fear, make any impression on you; but I indulge an hope, that it may not be without its effect on some of your readers. Infidelity is a rank weed, it threatens to overspread the land; its root is principally fixed amongst the great and opulent, but you are endeavouring to extend the malignity of its poison through all the classes of the community. There is a class of men, for whom I have the greatest respect, and whom I am anxious to preserve from the contamination of your irreligion—the merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen of the kingdom. I consider the influence of the example of this class as essential to the welfare of the community. I know that they are in general given to reading, and desirous of information on all subjects. If this little book should chance to fall into their hands after they have read your's, and they should think that any of your objections to the authority of the Bible have not been fully answered, I intreat them to attribute the omission to the brevity which I have studied; to my desire of avoiding learned disquisitions; to my inadvertency; to my inability; to any thing rather than to an impossibility of completely obviating every difficulty you have brought forward. I address the same request to such of the youth of both sexes, as may unhappily have imbibed, from your writings, the poison of infidelity; beseeching them to believe, that all their religious doubts may be removed, though it may not have been in my power to answer, to their satisfaction, all your objections. I pray God that the rising generation

generation of this land may be preserved from that "evil heart of unbelief," which has brought ruin on a neighbouring nation; that neither a neglected education, nor domestic irreligion, nor evil communication, nor the fashion of a licentious world, may ever induce them to forget, that religion alone ought to be their rule of life.

In the conclusion of my *Apology for Christianity*, I informed Mr. Gibbon of my extreme aversion to public controversy. I am now twenty years older than I was then, and I perceive that this my aversion has increased with my age. I have, thro' life, abandoned my little literary productions to their fate: such of them as have been attacked, have never received any defence from me; nor will this receive any, if it should meet with your public notice, or with that of any other man.

Sincerely wishing that you may become a partaker of that faith in revealed religion, which is the foundation of my happiness in this world, and of all my hopes in another, I bid you farewell.

R. LANDAFF.

Calgarth Park, Jan. 20, 1796.

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Experience and happy Death of SARAH ROBERTS, of Brambly,  
near Sheffield.

SHE was born at Darnall, near Sheffield. Her parents were the first in that place who admitted the Methodists to preach in their house. Her mother died about four years ago, happy in the enjoyment of the peace and love of GOD. Her parents brought her up in the fear of the Lord. Her natural disposition was chearful and humane; and in her youth she had a measure of the fear of offending GOD, and a desire to serve him. About the age of 24, she married Charles Roberts, of Brambly; by whom she had eleven children; ten of them are now living, and they are all in our Society. Some of them have found peace with GOD, and the rest are seeking salvation. She was a kind obliging wife, and a tender mother to her children, whom she laboured to instruct in the way to everlasting life.

As she attended the ministry of GOD's word with diligence and seriousness, she was convinced of her sinful state by nature, and saw the insufficiency of her morality, and that the splendid dress of self righteousness could not justify her in the sight of GOD. The burden of sin she felt and saw in a scriptural light, and sought for a pardon thro' faith in Christ Jesus. During the exercise of mind inseparable from one deeply convinced of the sinfulness of sin, she was frequently distressed with the trials occasioned