

writers as clear as the light of day. If some difficulties should still remain, let them be viewed as we do those of creation and providence; and they will form no objection to the reception of the Gospel. There is little doubt but that, like the others, with increasing knowledge, they also will be dispelled.<sup>1</sup>

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SECT. III.

THE PRESERVATION OF THE SCRIPTURES, A PROOF OF THEIR TRUTH AND DIVINE ORIGIN.

As the wonderful harmony and connection of all the parts of Scripture cannot *rationaly* be ascribed to any other cause than their being all dictated by the same spirit of wisdom and foreknowledge; so also is their astonishing and (we may say) MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION a strong instance of God's providential care, a constant sanction and confirmation of the truth contained in them, continued by him without intermission in all ages of the church. Whence comes it, that while the histories of *mighty empires* are lost in the waste of time, the very names of their founders, conquerors, and legislators are consigned with their bodies to the silence and oblivion of the grave? Whence comes it that the history of a mean, insignificant people, and the settlement of God's church, should from its very beginning, which is coeval with the world itself, to this day remain full and complete?<sup>2</sup> Whence comes it that nothing is left of innumerable volumes of philosophy and polite literature, in the preservation of which the admiration and care of all mankind seemed to conspire, and that the Scriptures have, in spite of all opposition, come down to our time entire and genuine? During the captivity, the Urim and Thummim, the ark itself, and every glory of the Jewish worship, was lost; during the profanation of Antiochus (1 Macc. i. 56, 57.) whosever was found with the book of the law was put to death, and every copy that could be found burned with fire; the same impious artifice was put in practice by several Roman emperors during their persecutions of the Christians, especially by Dioclesian, who triumphed in his supposed success against them.<sup>3</sup> After the most barbarous havoc of them, he issued an edict, commanding them, on pain of death under the most cruel forms, to deliver up their Bibles. Though many complied with this sanguinary edict, the greater part disregarded it; and notwithstanding these, and numberless other calamities, the sacred volumes have survived, pure and uncorrupted, to the present time. It is not necessary to mention that more than Egyptian

<sup>1</sup> On the contradictions which are falsely alleged to exist in the sacred writings, see the Appendix to this Volume, Nos. VIII. and IX. *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> There is a chasm in the Jewish history of nearly two hundred and fifty years; viz. between the death of Nehemiah and the time of the Maccabees; but Judaea being, during that period, a province of Syria, and under the prefecture of it, the history of the Jews is of course involved in that of the country to which they were subject.—This was the case during the captivity.

<sup>3</sup> See an account of the persecution of the Christians by Dioclesian (which was continued with unrelenting fury by Maximin), in Dr. Lardner's *Heathen Testimonies*, chap. xl. Works, 8vo. vol. vii. pp. 293—329. 4to. vol. iv. pp. 273—295.

darkness which overwhelmed religion for several centuries; during which any falsification was secure, especially in the Old Testament, the Hebrew language being entirely unknown to all but the Jews; and yet they have, in spite of their prejudices, preserved with scrupulous care even those passages which most confirm the Christian religion; the providence of God having been graciously pleased to make their blindness a standing evidence of the truth of the Scriptures, and their obstinacy an instrument to maintain and promote his doctrine and his kingdom. To this may be added, the present low state of many churches, and the total annihilation of others, of which nothing now remains but the Scriptures translated for their use; happy in this respect, that their particular misfortune is of service to the general cause, inasmuch as so many copies in so many different languages, preserved under so many untoward circumstances, and differing from each other in no essential point, are a wonderful proof of their authenticity, authority, and divinity. All the designs of the enemies of the Scriptures, whether ancient or modern, have been defeated. The Bible still exists, and is triumphant, and doubtless will exist as long as there is a church in the world, that is, until the end of time and the consummation of all things.

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#### SECT. IV.

THE TENDENCY OF THE SCRIPTURES TO PROMOTE THE PRESENT AND ETERNAL HAPPINESS OF MANKIND, CONSTITUTES ANOTHER UNANSWERABLE PROOF OF THEIR DIVINE INSPIRATION.

THE page of history shows that no regular government was ever established without some religion; as if the former was defective without the latter, and the one was a necessary appendage to the other. And it also shows, particularly in the case of the Romans, that while nations cherished a regard for morality and for the sacred obligation of an oath, prosperity attended them<sup>1</sup>, but that when

<sup>1</sup> The testimony of the historian Polybius to the beneficial effects of the pagan superstition in fortifying the sentiments of moral obligation, and supporting the sanctity of oaths, is so weighty and decisive, that it would be an injustice to the subject not to insert it; more especially as it is impossible to attribute it to the influence of credulity on the author himself, who was evidently a sceptic. It is scarcely necessary to remark, that all the benefits which might in any way flow from superstition, are secured to an incomparably greater degree by the belief of true religion. "But among all the useful institutions (says Polybius) that demonstrate the superior excellence of the Roman government, the most considerable, perhaps, is the opinion which people are taught to hold concerning the gods; and that, which other men regard as an object of disgrace, appears, in my judgment, to be the very thing by which this republic is chiefly sustained, — I mean superstition, which is impressed with all its terrors, and influences the private actions of the citizens and the public administration of the state, to a degree that can scarcely be exceeded. The ancients, therefore, acted not absurdly, nor without good reason, when they inculcated the notions concerning the gods, and the belief of infernal punishments; but much rather *are those of the present age to be charged with rashness and absurdity* in endeavouring to extirpate these opinions; for, not to mention other effects that flow from such an institution, if among the Greeks, for example, a single talent only be intrusted to those who have the management of any of the public money, though they give ten written surties, with as many seals, and twice as many witnesses, they are unable to discharge the trust reposed in them with integrity. But the Romans, on the other hand, who in the course of their magistracies and in embassies disburse the greatest sums, are prevailed on, by the single obligation of

immorality became universal, their power and prosperity as rapidly declined. That religion, or virtue, as founded upon reverence of God and the expectation of future rewards and punishments, is of vast public importance, is one of those self-evident axioms, in which all thinking persons instantly acquiesce. It has, however, been reserved for our own times to witness the bold assertion, that "it is a public injury," and to have the question triumphantly demanded, "Who that has read the page of history will venture to say that it has been a benefit to any nation or society of people, in which it has been adopted?"

What the deadly effects of infidelity have been, is known to every one who is in any degree conversant with the history of modern Europe for the last sixty or seventy years, — viz. anarchy, immorality, profaneness, murders innumerable, confusion, and every evil work.<sup>1</sup> What have been the effects actually produced by Christianity, an appeal to the pages of history will readily show. It is not, indeed, the object of the Gospel to gratify idle curiosity and afford us barren and speculative knowledge. It every where aims directly at the heart, and through the heart, to influence the life. Nothing is wanting to remedy the actual state of the world, and to fit men for the worship and felicity of heaven, but that they should believe and obey the Bible.<sup>2</sup> Were all men thus *sincerely and cordially* to believe and obey it as a divine revelation, how would the *moral face* of the world be changed! How would the wilderness and the solitary place be glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose! Wherever, indeed, it has thus been embraced, the most beneficial effects *have been* the result. A *brief* review of the POSITIVE BENEFITS produced by Christianity on the political and moral state of society, and also in private life, will show that it is and could only be of heavenly origin, and afford a satisfactory refutation of the cavils of its enemies.<sup>3</sup>

I. The writings of the earliest professors of Christianity prove that the first converts were *reformed* characters, and the DEFENCES or

an oath, to perform their duty with inviolable honesty. And, as in other states a man is rarely to be found whose hands are pure from public robbery, so among the Romans it is no less rare to discover one that is tainted with this crime." — Hampton's Polybius, vol. ii. book vi. pp. 405, 406.

Though the system of paganism is justly condemned by reason and Scripture, yet it assumed as true several principles of the first importance to the preservation of public manners; such as a persuasion of invisible power, of the folly of incurring the divine vengeance for the attainment of any present advantage, and the divine approbation of virtue: so that, strictly speaking, it was the mixture of truth in it which gave it all its utility. — Hall's Discourse on Infidelity. (Sermons, p. 73. note.)

<sup>1</sup> See a few instances of the effects of atheism, *suprà*, pp. 29—32.; and also, *infra*, pp. 427—429.

<sup>2</sup> "If," says a late eloquent antagonist of Christianity, — "If all were perfect Christians, individuals would do their duty; the people would be obedient to the laws; the chiefs just; the magistrates incorrupt; the soldiers would despise death; and there would be neither vanity nor luxury in such a state." — ROUSSEAU, *Du Contract Social*, liv. iv. ch. 8.

<sup>3</sup> The following statement of the inestimable blessings conferred by Christianity on the world, is chiefly abridged from Dr. Ryan's elaborate "History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind," (3d edit. 8vo. Edinburgh, 1806), collated with Bp. Porteus's Tract on the Beneficial Effects of Christianity. This subject is also copiously and satisfactorily treated by Mr. R. Blakey in "The Temporal Benefits of Christianity exemplified in its influence on the social, intellectual, civil, and political condition of mankind, from its first promulgation to the present day." London, 1849, 8vo.

APOLOGIES, which many of them published against the accusations of unbelievers, also demonstrate the virtues that adorned the primitive Christians.

Thus, although it was not the object of the apostle Paul to point out the influence of his preaching, but to exhort men to virtue, yet some incidental passages of his writings evince that he reformed the manners of his converts, and rendered them ashamed of their former vices. In his Epistle to the Romans he thus expresses himself: — *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of these things is death. But now being made free from sin and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life.* (Rom. vi. 21, 22.) This apostle also, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, observes that some of them were reclaimed by the Gospel: — *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor idolaters, nor effeminate persons, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, ye are sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* (1 Cor. vi. 9—11.) Peter, in the following passage, alludes to the reformation wrought among the Jewish converts in Pontus, Galatia, and other countries: — *The time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lust, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries, wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot.* (1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.)

The various Christian apologists, whom the persecutions of the pagans compelled to vindicate their character and conduct, have borne ample testimony to their exemplary lives and conversation. Among these, the attestations of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras (both of whom had been heathen philosophers), Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Origen, and Lactantius, are particularly worthy of notice; but the limits of this work compel us to admit only two or three.

1. From the following passage of JUSTIN MARTYR, who flourished about the middle of the second century, it is manifest that a mighty change was wrought, in his time, on the proselytes to the Gospel. "We," says the philosopher, "who formerly delighted in vicious excesses, now are temperate and chaste; — we who formerly had recourse to magical arts, have now dedicated ourselves to the good and unbegotten God; — we who formerly placed our greatest pleasure in acquiring wealth and possessions, now bring all that we have into a common stock, and impart to every one in need; — we who hated and destroyed each other, and on account of the difference of manners refused to live with men of a different tribe, now, since the appearance of Christ, live on terms of familiar intercourse with them, and pray for our enemies; and endeavour to persuade those who hate us without a cause to live conformably to the perfect precepts of Christ, to the end that they may become partakers with us of the same joyful hope of a reward from God the Ruler over all."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Apol. c. 17. (p. 61. B. Paris edit.)

2. "We deny not," says TERTULLIAN (who lived about sixty years later than Justin), "a pledge left with us; we defile no man's marriage-bed: we piously educate orphans, relieve the indigent, and render no man evil for evil. The husband, now cured of his former jealousy, expels his now virtuous wife from his house; the father, so tender of his undutiful heathen son, disinherits him when he becomes a Christian and obedient to his will; and the master, hitherto so kind to a faithless servant, discards him on becoming religious and faithful. So much is the Christian name hated, notwithstanding the advantages of the Gospel, that the husband prefers a false wife, the father a rebellious son, and the master a knavish servant, to having them good and virtuous Christians!"<sup>1</sup>

3. "Inquire," says ORIGEN, in his celebrated reply to the cavils and objections of the philosopher Celsus, written about A. D. 246,— "Inquire into the lives of some amongst us: compare our former and present mode of life, and you will find in what impieties and impurities men were involved before they embraced our doctrines. But since they embraced them, how just, grave, moderate, and constant are they become! yea, some are so inflamed with the love of purity and goodness, as to abstain even from lawful enjoyments: the church abounds with such men, wherever the doctrines of Christianity prevailed. How is it possible they can be pestilent members of society, who have converted many from the sink of vice to the practice of virtue and a life of temperance, conformable to the dictates of right reason? We reclaim women from immodesty, quarrelling with, or parting from their husbands; men from the wild extravagance of the sports and theatres; and restrain youth, who are prone to vice and luxury, by painting, not only the vileness of lust, but the punishment reserved for the vicious and dissolute."<sup>2</sup>

4. "They are not Christians," says LACTANTIUS (who flourished A. D. 306), "but pagans, who rob by land, and commit piracy by sea; who poison their wives for their dowries, or their husbands that they may marry their adulterers; who strangle or expose their infants, commit incest with their daughters, sisters, mothers, or vestals, who prostitute their bodies to unnatural lusts, seek heaven by witchcraft, and commit other crimes odious to relate."<sup>3</sup> The same writer also, contrasting the contradictions between the doctrines, precepts, and practice of the philosophers, and the little effects that resulted from them, with the purity and efficacy of the Gospel, has the following animated passage: "Give me a man who is choleric, abusive in his language, headstrong, and unruly; with a very few words,—the words of God,—I will render him as gentle as a lamb. Give me a greedy, covetous, parsimonious man, and I will presently return him to you a generous creature, freely bestowing his money by handfuls. Give me a cruel and bloodthirsty man; instantly his ferocity shall be transformed into a truly mild and merciful disposition. Give me an

<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.* c. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Origen contra Celsum, lib. i. Origen was singularly eminent for his exemplary learning and piety.

<sup>3</sup> Lactantius, *Instit. Divin.* lib. v. c. 9. *Op. tom. i.* pp. 349, 350. Edit. Bipont.

injust man, a foolish man, a sinful man; and on a sudden he shall become honest, wise, and virtuous. So great is the efficacy of divine wisdom, that when once admitted into the human heart, it expels folly, the parent of all vice; and in accomplishing this great end, there is no occasion for any expense, no absolute need of books, or deep and long study or meditation. The benefit is conferred gratuitously, easily, expeditiously; provided the ears and the heart thirst after wisdom. Did or could any of the heathen philosophers accomplish such important purposes as these?"<sup>1</sup> Thus is the infinite superiority of Christianity evinced, in a moral point of view, over every other system of philosophy. Lactantius, it should be recollected, had himself been a heathen philosopher, and here delivers the result of his own experience.

Though we cannot expect from heathens *direct* testimonies to the virtues of men whom they cruelly persecuted, yet the works of heathen writers incidentally furnish ample and sufficient proofs of their innocence and worth. To adduce one or two instances:—it was a common saying of the heathens, that a person was a good man, *only* he was a Christian. PLINY, in the memorable letter already cited<sup>2</sup>, says, on the information of some apostate Christians, that their great crime consisted in assembling together on a stated day before light, to sing hymns to Christ as God; and that they bound themselves by oath, not to the commission of any wickedness, *but NOT to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery, NEVER to falsify their word, NOR to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it.* He adds, that though he put two Christian women to the torture, he discovered NOTHING besides a bad and excessive superstition. In the course of time, the perseverance of Christians in a life of exemplary piety prevailed so far that the apostate emperor JULIAN, in an epistle to Arsacius, a heathen pontiff (written A. D. 430<sup>3</sup>), recommended their charities and other virtues to the imitation of the pagans, and desired Arsacius to turn his eyes to the means by which the superstition of the Christians was propagated, *viz. by sanctity of life, by kindness to strangers, and by the attention they paid to the burial of the dead.* He recommends an imitation of their virtues; exhorts the heathen pontiff to prevail on the priests of Galatia to attend to the worship of the gods; enjoins works of charity; and desires him to relieve the distressed, and build houses for the accommodation of strangers of whatever religion. "*It is,*" adds the emperor, "*a disgrace to the pagans to disregard those of their own religion, while CHRISTIANS do kind offices to strangers and enemies.*" From this admission of Julian, it is evident that the Christians were improved in benevolence and morals by the Gospel; and even the heathens were improved by the example of the Christians. These involuntary testimonies of heathens to the innocence and virtues of the primitive Christians, we shall find corroborated by various other proofs, which we now proceed briefly to exhibit.

## II. If we advert to the EFFECTS OF CHRISTIANITY ON SOCIETY

<sup>1</sup> Lactantius, Instit. Divin. lib. iii. c. 26. tom. i. p. 232. Edit. Bpont.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 178, 179. *suprà*.

<sup>3</sup> Julian. Epist. 130.

IN GENERAL, we shall find that the benevolent spirit of the Gospel served as a bond of union between independent nations; broke down the partition which separated the Heathens and Jews, abated their prejudices, and rendered them more liberal to each other. It checked pride and revenge, those sources of war and bloodshed, and promoted humility and forgiveness; it rendered its *sincere* professors just and honest, and inspired them with firmness under persecution. The apostles and evangelists endured the severest sufferings rather than renounce their religion; nor could the primitive Christians who succeeded them be induced by threats or torments to desert their profession. They neither repined nor railed at their enemies, but endured various excruciating torments with invincible meekness, patience, and resignation. Further, wherever the benign influence of the Gospel has penetrated, it has descended into families, and carried with it peace and happiness. The female sex, which is degraded and maltreated in modern heathen nations, as it was among many of the ancient pagan nations, is elevated, wherever the Gospel has spread, to that rank in society to which it is so justly entitled, and the civil, moral, and religious condition of women has been proportionably improved.<sup>1</sup> Polygamy has been abolished, and divorce is permitted,—not to gratify the levity, caprice, or profligacy of either party, (for in Rome at least the women also had the power of divorce, where their licentiousness was equal to that of the men,)—but only in the case of unfaithfulness to the nuptial vow. It is true that, in certain countries of Europe, where the Christian religion has been so far corrupted as to lose nearly all its influence, illicit connections may be formed, adulterous intrigues pursued, and even crimes against nature perpetrated, with but little dishonour. But it is not so in Britain and other Protestant countries, where the Gospel has had a freer course; for, though the same dispositions are discovered in great numbers of persons, yet the fear of the public frown holds most of them in awe. From the lowest degradation and oppression, the female sex has been raised to respect, cultivation, and refinement, to a rank and influence in society, which they possess only in Christian countries where their interest and happiness are uniformly and properly consulted in every important concern in life. We have no public indecencies between the sexes, no law that requires prostitution. If any unnatural crimes be perpetrated, they are not common; much less are they tolerated by the laws, or countenanced by public opinion. On the contrary, the odium which follows such practices is sufficient to stamp the perpetrators of them with perpetual infamy in the land. Rapes, incests, and adulteries, are not only punishable by law, but odious in the estimation of the public. No one can live in the *known* practice of fornication, lying, theft, fraud, or cruelty, and retain his character. It cannot be pleaded in excuse with us, as it is in China or Hindostan (and as the profligate Rousseau pleaded when he sent his illegitimate offspring to the foundling hospital), that *such things are the custom of the country*.

<sup>1</sup> On this subject the reader will find a collection of interesting facts, compiled from various writers, in an "Essay on what Christianity has done for Women," prefixed to the second volume of "Female Scripture Biography, by F. A. Cox, A. M." London, 1817, 2 vols. 8vo.

Further, the harshness of parental authority has been restrained; the barbarous practice of exposing or depriving of life, weak, deformed, or helpless children (which was sanctioned by the laws of many states), has been abolished, and hospitals have been instituted for the preservation of deserted children; and what was then deemed a wise political expedient to rid the state of useless and troublesome members, is now justly considered and punished as the most atrocious of crimes. And that uncontrolled power which was possessed by fathers and husbands, and which rendered the condition of sons worse than that of slaves<sup>1</sup>, and exposed wives to the most cruel treatment<sup>2</sup>, has been annihilated by the gentle spirit of Christianity. The system of domestic slavery, which subjected the greater part of mankind to the capricious tyranny of a few free-born masters,—who treated and valued them like beasts, while they were sometimes made the sacrifice of a youthful frolic, and murdered in the streets and roads by thousands for amusement,—is fully extinguished; and our own times have witnessed another triumph of Christian benevolence, in the extirpation (at least in the British dominions) of the infamous traffic in human beings; the success of which measure is to be ascribed *principally* to the influence of Christianity in directing public opinion.

Thus, while the Gospel prescribes the best rules for promoting family peace and domestic happiness, it has also removed the great obstacles which have often impeded it. The condition of the inferior and dependent ranks of society has been ameliorated, and every varied form of human suffering finds some alleviation from the active diligence of private benevolence, and the munificent provisions of public charity. The heathens had no public places for the accommodation of the sick, the poor, the widow, or the orphan, nor was there a single hospital in the whole heathen world; whereas every Christian country abounds with charitable institutions for those humane purposes. The flow of beneficence, proceeding from this divine source (especially in this highly favoured country), has scarcely left any means untried for meliorating the sufferings of the poor: it has erected asylums for almost every form of human misery, for all the children of the needy, for the destitute, for the houseless, and for the reformation of criminals. It has extended itself to the abodes of guilt and crime, and has attempted to put within the reach of the prisoner all

<sup>1</sup> "The cruelty of the Roman law, not content with the destruction of infants, extended its severity even to the adult: it considered children not as persons but as *things*, as part of the furniture of the family mansion, which the master of the family might remove, or sell, or destroy, like any other part of the furniture, at his discretion. In one respect, the condition of a son was worse than that of a slave. A slave could only be sold *once*, a son *three* times: and he might be *imprisoned, scourged, exiled, or put to death* by the paterfamilias, without appeal to any other tribunal." (Nieuport de Ritibus Romanis, p. 585.) With respect to daughters, there was an act of power more exquisitely cruel perhaps than all the rest. The father could compel his married daughter to repudiate a husband whom she tenderly loved, and whom he himself had approved. (Esprit des Loix, liv. xxvi. c. 3.) Bp. Porteus's Beneficial Effects of Christianity, in his Tracts, p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> What was, if possible, still more preposterous and intolerable, the wife herself, though the mother perhaps of a numerous family, was subjected, no less than her children, to the paternal authority and despotic will of her husband. She was in the eye of the law considered as his daughter, and might be retained or dismissed at pleasure; and for certain crimes (some of them of a very trivial nature), *might be put to death*. Ibid.



the comforts that are compatible with the strict claims of justice; and it has even reached the inferior animals, by procuring for them gentle treatment, and constituting them objects of legal protection. In vain may we search in the writings of pagan moralists for exhortations to benevolence like this: not a word is to be found in Cicero's Offices, of active and liberal love to the poor, to slaves, to criminals, to the brute creation, in short, to any, except friends and relations, or for merely worldly and selfish purposes; and if *modern* moralists do better, Christianity may claim the praise. What terminated the horrid gladiatorial massacres and murders which destroyed so many thousands of unhappy persons among the Romans?—CHRISTIANITY. What has instituted so many establishments for the reclaiming of the vicious, and for instructing even criminals?—CHRISTIANITY. What has meliorated the condition and procured security to the lives of insolvent debtors, whose misfortunes—not their faults—place them in the power of merciless creditors?—CHRISTIANITY. What has protected widows and orphans against injustice,—orphan princes against usurpers and rebellious subjects,—subjects against exaction and oppression,—the weak against the powerful in suits at law,—the goods and the persons of the shipwrecked against plunderers,—and, in short, every description of persons against the distress which would otherwise have overwhelmed them?—CHRISTIANITY. What has discouraged suicides?—CHRISTIANITY. The heathens very frequently committed suicide agreeably to their religious and philosophical dogmas; but *no REAL Christian* can commit this crime without knowing that he is acting contrary to the principles of the Gospel, committing murder, and clearly violating a divine command. What has discouraged the absurd practice of duels, or deciding doubtful or disputed points by single combat, which obtained so generally in the north and west of Europe?—CHRISTIANITY. It is true, that from a false notion of honour, duels continue to be fought, often for the most frivolous or imaginary affronts; but these are not chargeable upon the Gospel, which prohibits murder of every kind; and the men who engage in such duels show by their conduct that though they may *profess and call themselves Christians*, THEY ARE TOTALLY DESTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE, and act in utter disregard of the laws of a Christian country (at least of this country), which prohibit them, under severe penalties.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By the law of England, where the parties meet with an intent to murder, (and with what other intent, we may ask, *can they meet?* since challenges are always sent at least one or two days before the duel takes place, so that they meet *deliberately* and with a determination to take each other's lives,—thinking it their duty as *gentlemen*, and claiming it as their right to wanton with their own lives and the lives of others, without any warrant for it either human or divine,)—if one party kills the other, it comes within the notion of murder, and is punishable accordingly. So repugnant indeed is our law that not only the principal who actually kills the other, but also his seconds, are guilty of murder, whether they fought or not; and it is held that the seconds of the party slain are likewise guilty as accessories. See Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. iv. p. 199.

The modern practice of duelling is considered as absolutely necessary to protect men from insult: but, that it is a mere custom, and unnecessary for that purpose, is evident from the fact, that females, the Christian societies called Quakers, and Unitas Fratrum or United Brethren, and ministers of the Gospel, are scarcely more insulted than the man who will fight. "It is strange," Dr. Ryan remarks with equal force and justice, "that

III. From society, generally, let us ascend to the influence of Christianity on the RELIGION AND GOVERNMENT OF STATES AND COUNTRIES.

Wherever the Gospel has spread, we have the most satisfactory evidence of its mighty efficacy as a means of improving the present condition of man. Polytheism and idolatry, together with human sacrifices, and all their attendant cruelties and profligate immoralities, have been abolished. And as soon as nations and governments became Christian, they were actuated by that mild, benevolent, and generous spirit, which the early believers had displayed even in the midst of calumny, insult, and persecution. Those princes who embraced Christianity became more humble than their heathen predecessors, blended Christian morality with their civil institutes, and transcribed into their political codes the humanity and benevolence inspired by their religion. Fewer kings were murdered and fewer revolutions took place in Christian than in pagan states. It is the power of the Gospel alone that has greatly reformed the laws of nations<sup>1</sup>, and has diminished the horrors of war. That it has not hitherto been sufficient to banish unjust wars from the earth is true; and, as

fighting should be considered a proof of the truth, honour, or honesty of the duellist: a man may possess personal courage without another good quality. The liar, the knave, the seducer of his friend's wife, will fight. He who was a villain before he fought will still be a villain, and, in some cases, a greater villain than if he had declined the combat. \* [If a man is so grossly insulted, that his religious principle is not sufficiently strong to support him under the affront, let him challenge the aggressor, form a resolution not to fire, and commit this resolution, sealed up, to his second. If he escapes, let him prosecute at law; if he is killed, let his friends prosecute for a wanton and unprovoked murder.] \* I knew a gentleman, who had fought many duels, receive a challenge for a trifling offence; he made an apology, which the challenger did not accept of, but insisted on a meeting. When the challenged went to the ground, he carried a paper, stating the offence, his offer of an apology, his private resolution not to fire, with a direction to his friends to prosecute for murder, if he should fall. The challenger fired without effect; his antagonist did not fire, but prosecuted him at law, and caused him to be imprisoned. Though the challenger was thus punished for firing, it is probable he would have escaped unpunished if he had killed his opponent, as juries are in the habit of perjuring themselves in support of this practice. They find a man guilty of a breach of the peace who sends a challenge, or fires without hitting, but acquit him if he kills in consequence of that challenge! Their usual verdict, that the survivor killed in his own defence, is **GENERALLY FALSE**, because *self-preservation seldom requires a man to kill his antagonist*. Where the combatants are supposed to fire at the same instant, each stands as good a chance of escaping, where he reserves his shot, as where he discharges it, provided his opponent is not apprised of his intention. He defends his honour by standing his adversary's fire, and his reserved shot protects his own life and that of his antagonist. He, therefore, who unnecessarily kills, has no claim to impunity on the plea of self-defence, and juries who urge that plea are absolutely perjured. The jury-man, however, has precedents for disregarding his oath: most juries perjure themselves in the same way, and he is satisfied; as if he was not accountable to God, and to society, for his perjury, and for the evils which generally arise from the encouragement of duels." (Dr. Ryan's History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind, pp. 121, 122.) Most of the preceding observations are equally applicable to the disgusting and brutal practice of prize-fighting.

<sup>1</sup> The beneficial "Influence of Christianity upon International Law" is well illustrated by Mr. C. M. Kennedy, in his Hulsean Prize Essay. Cambridge, 1856.

\*\* A correspondent, since the publication of the sixth edition, has objected that the sentences, above printed between brackets, may mislead a weak Christian to think that he was allowed to fire and receive a challenge. As these sentences form an integral part of a quotation from Dr. Ryan, the author of the present work does not consider himself at liberty to omit them. But whoever calmly and attentively weighs the whole of the quotation above given, and the context of the note in which it occurs, must come to the conclusion that ALL duels are contrary to the word of God and to the spirit of Christianity. *Note to the seventh edition.*

an acute writer has forcibly remarked, "it would have been wonderful if it had, seeing it has never yet been *cordially* embraced by the majority, nor perhaps by the preponderating part of any nation. Nevertheless, it *has* had its influence;"<sup>1</sup> and that influence has been of the most beneficial kind for the happiness of man. For the cold inhumanity which considered war, not as the greatest scourge of the human race, but as the prime business and most exquisite gratification of life;—the restless ambition, passion for martial achievements, and ferocious rapacity which produced the most unprovoked aggressions;—the implacable and vindictive spirit with which wars were carried on, and which, consequently, for many ages, overwhelmed the world with bloodshed, ruin, and desolation;—that relentless cruelty which condemned the unhappy captive to perpetual slavery or to an ignominious death (sometimes by torture) by the hand of the executioner;—the desolations of whole countries, together with the utter destruction of flourishing and opulent cities, and that relentless cruelty which spared not from massacre and extermination the unoffending female, the helpless infant, and the decrepitude of old age;—these are outrages of which we seldom, if ever, hear in the wars carried on by professing Christians, though nothing was more frequent among the most polished nations of antiquity, and those most celebrated for their private and public virtue. (Such were the *pagan* notions of virtue!)

"It is the spirit of Christianity alone which, moderating the views of sovereigns and states, and directing the measures of government to the legitimate objects of its institution, viz. the promotion of the welfare of society and the preservation of its moral interests, leads to an equitable consideration of the rights and independence of other nations, and to an unremitted regard to the well-being of the community over which it presides. It is the spirit of just and reasonable policy which inspires rulers with a desire of fulfilling the intentions of God, who appointed them *as a terror to evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well*; teaching them to promote, upon general and permanent principles, the interests of every class of society, and to ground the confidence of power on the observance of the just claims of every department."<sup>2</sup> Hence the ancient fierceness of despotism, where such a form of government still exists, has been limited and assuaged. Those arbitrary laws and that perversion and corruption of justice which prevailed at Athens, and especially at Rome, during the latter periods of the republic, have disappeared from the codes of Christian states, especially in our own country. These great civil blessings, it may be safely affirmed, are in a great degree owing to the influence which the spirit of Christianity has had on our civil constitution (with which it is so closely and essentially interwoven, that it is part of the common law of England<sup>3</sup>), on the temper of our governors and of the people, on the temper of the laws, and of those who framed them, as well as of those who administer them. It is this holy influence

<sup>1</sup> Fuller's Gospel its own Witness, p. 134.

<sup>2</sup> Bp. Gray's Connection of Sacred and Profane Literature, vol. i. p. 219.

<sup>3</sup> Blackstone's Commentaries, by Professor Christian, vol. iv. p. 59. and note (5).

of Christianity principally "which, by mitigating in some degree the rancour of contending factions against each other, and inspiring them with some little share of mutual charity and forbearance, has hitherto preserved this country from those scenes of carnage and devastation that stain and disgrace the annals of ancient history. It is this which has in general restrained our provincial governors from exceeding the bounds of equity and humanity in their administration; and has carried even to our most distant colonies a large share of the freedom, the justice, the ease, the tranquillity, the security, and prosperity of the parent state. It is this, in fine, which has impressed on the minds of our magistrates and our judges that strong sense of duty to God, to man, and to their country, that sacred regard to justice and rectitude which renders them beyond all example, impartial, upright, and uncorrupt; which secures to every rank of men the equal benefit of the laws, which extends to the meanest their protection, and brings the greatest under their control."<sup>1</sup>

IV. But the blessings conferred by Christianity on the world are not confined to ameliorating the moral, civil, religious, and political condition of mankind: the most polished nations, now in existence, are indebted to it for the preservation and diffusion of literature and the elegant arts of painting, statuary, architecture, and music. Christianity has been instrumental in preserving and disseminating moral, classical, and theological KNOWLEDGE, in every nation where it has been established. The Law, the Gospel, the comments on them, and the works of the fathers, were written in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin: so that a knowledge of these three languages became indispensably necessary to every man who wished to be an intelligent Christian. Christianity being contained in books, the use of letters became necessary to its teachers; nor could learning have been entirely lost, while there was an order of men, who were obliged to possess a moderate share of it, to qualify them for the priesthood, and entitle them to its emoluments. In the time of Tacitus (A.D. 108)<sup>2</sup>, the German nation were strangers to letters; and the two following facts prove that other nations were likely to continue illiterate, had not the teachers of the Gospel exerted themselves for their instruction. The Goths, having made themselves masters of Athens (A.D. 270), brought together into one heap all the books they found there, and would have consumed the valuable treasure, had not one of them told his companions, that while the Greeks amused themselves with those they neglected the art of war, and were easily overcome.<sup>3</sup> Theodoric, a Gothic prince (A. D. 293), would not suffer the children of his subjects to be instructed in the sciences; imagining, that such instruction enervated the mind, rendered men unfit for martial exploits; and that the boy who trembled at the rod, would never look undaunted at the sword or spear.<sup>4</sup> But no sooner was Christianity propagated among barbarians, than they were instructed in the use of letters. Ulphilas, a

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Porteus's Tracts, p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> De Moribus Germ. c. ii. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Zonaras, Annal. lib. xii. c. 26. Gibbon's Hist. vol. i. p. 484.

<sup>4</sup> Procop. De Bello Goth. lib. i. c. 2.

Gothic bishop (A.D. 380), invented letters for his illiterate countrymen, translated the Bible into the vulgar tongue for their use, and instructed them in its doctrines; and some Goths soon became so well informed, that they compared their version with the Latin, the Greek, and the Hebrew originals.<sup>1</sup> Before the introduction of Christianity in Ireland, the natives had no alphabet, no annals but their verses, nor any thing but memory to preserve their verses, their antiquities, the genealogies of their kings, and the exploits of their heroes. The more verses a man could repeat the more learned he was deemed, while the bard who composed any thing new was sure of being respected by the kings and people.<sup>2</sup> This was the state of the Irish, when the Christian missionaries came to instruct them in the use of letters, and in the truths of the Gospel. Such a change, however, was wrought in them by Christianity and its teachers, that Ireland was styled the island of very pious and very learned men. Ansgarius<sup>3</sup>, the chief apostle of the northern nations, not only preached the Gospel to those barbarians, but established schools for the instruction of youth in religion and letters. Cyril and Methodius<sup>4</sup>, who converted the Bulgarians, Moravians, and Bohemians, about the same time, previously invented the Slavic alphabet, and translated the Bible, and some Greek and Latin authors, into the Slavic tongue, for the purpose of expanding their narrow minds, and softening their hard hearts to mildness and pity. Nearly the same may be said of other barbarians who became proselytes of the Gospel. In Russia the teachers of Christianity recommended, at the same time, the Gospel and letters, the rudiments of the arts, of law, and order; and were seconded in their exertions by religious princes, who employed skilful Greeks for decorating the cities, and for the instruction of the people. "The dome and paintings of [the famous Cathedral of] St. Sophia at Constantinople were rudely copied in the Russian churches of Kiow and Novogorod; the writings of the fathers were translated into the Slavonic language; and three hundred noble youths were invited, or compelled, to attend lectures in the college of Jaroslaus."<sup>5</sup> In various parts of Europe, edifices for divine worship arose under the fostering care of the clergy, aided by the munificence of sovereigns and of the laity; and though these were sometimes influenced by unworthy motives, yet the effect has not been the less beneficial to the arts of painting, design, architecture, and music, whose professors were encouraged to the exertion of their talents by liberal remuneration. When, however, the love of literature was succeeded by the love of arms (which was particularly the case during the middle ages) few had inducements to study, except those who were educated and destined for the sacred office; nor could a knowledge of the Greek and Roman classics have been propagated so universally as it was, had not the clergy found them necessary for understanding the Scriptures and the works of the fathers. By these means, they possessed most of the learning of those times, and handed it down to their successors,

<sup>1</sup> Socrat. lib. iv. c. 32. Sozom. lib. vi. c. 36. Philostorg. lib. ii. c. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Bollandi Acta, March xvii.

<sup>3</sup> Mabillon, Annal. 826.

<sup>4</sup> Balbini Miscell. part i.

<sup>5</sup> Gibbon's Hist. vol. x. p. 244.

who had the merit of collecting, transcribing, and preserving books, which otherwise must have perished, when a taste for erudition was almost extinct, and the passion of laymen was directed to arms.<sup>1</sup>

On the subversion of the Greek empire by the Mohammedans, in 1453, literature took refuge in the west of Europe, where many of the clergy were among its most strenuous supporters. At length, learning emerged from the silence of the cloister, whither she had retreated, and where she had been preserved from destruction; and her appearance was followed by a revival of all the blessings which she so eminently bestows. The Reformation promoted, still more, the cause of learning; and its general diffusion has been aided most signally by the discovery and almost universal adoption of the art of printing. The modern opposers of revelation, however, reasoning in a retrograde motion, ascribe all our improvements to philosophy. *But it was religion, the RELIGION OF CHRIST, that took the lead.* The Reformers opened to us the Scriptures, and broke all those fetters that shackled human reason. Philosophy crept humbly in her train, profited by her labours and sufferings; and now ungratefully claims all the honour and praise to herself. Luther, Melancthon, and Cranmer preceded Lord Bacon, Boyle, Newton, and Locke. The horrible excesses that will for ever disgrace the annals of the first French revolution are not chargeable upon Christianity. The French nation renounced Christianity before they plunged into such crimes. Philosophy and reason were their boasted guides. Besides, Christianity ought not to be charged with all the crimes of those who have assumed its name. No institution has ever been able to prevent all the excesses which it forbad; nor is it peculiar to the Christian revelation, that it has *sometimes* furnished a pretext for introducing those very evils and oppressions, which it was designed to remedy.<sup>2</sup> But the mischiefs which, through the corrupt passions of men, have been the *accidental* consequences of Christianity, ought not to be imputed to its spirit. "The Legislator of the universe, in promulgating the sublime laws of

<sup>1</sup> The *Literary Benefits* conferred on the world by Christianity, are thus concisely but forcibly stated by Dr. Jortin. "To whom," says he, "are we indebted for the knowledge of antiquities, sacred and secular, for every thing that is called *Philology*, or the *Literæ Humaniores*? To Christians. To whom, for grammars and dictionaries of the learned languages? To Christians. To whom, for chronology, and the continuation of history through many centuries? To Christians. To whom, for rational systems of morality and of natural religion? To Christians. To whom, for improvements in natural philosophy, and for the application of these discoveries to religious purposes? To Christians. To whom, for metaphysical researches, carried as far as the subject will permit? To Christians. To whom, for the moral rules to be observed by nations in war and peace? To Christians. To whom, for jurisprudence and political knowledge, and for settling the *rights of subjects*, both civil and religious, upon a proper foundation? To Christians — not to atheists or deists, some of whom (as Hobbes in particular) have been known advocates for tyranny." (Jortin's Sermons, vol. vii. pp. 373, 374.) He further observes, that some of the atheistical and deistical writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (and the remark is equally applicable to those of our own times) were "ignorant and illiterate, most of them a sort of half-scholars, and retailers of second-hand wares, none of them eminently learned, or contributors to the advancement of erudition and knowledge in any material article." (Ibid. p. 373.)

<sup>2</sup> On the subject above noticed, the reader will find some excellent and forcible remarks in Dr. Devar's Discourses illustrative of the Designs of Christianity, Disc. 13. entitled "The Imperfection of Christians no valid Objection to Christianity."

Christianity, — though he furnished men with motives calculated to elevate them to his throne, and to extend their hopes far beyond the grave, — did not at the same time transform the intelligent creatures, to whom he gave those laws, into mere machines. *He has given them the power either to conform to Christian precepts or to infringe them; and thus has placed in their own hands their own destiny.* If, after this, a great many of them reject the good and choose the evil, the fault is manifestly theirs, and not his, who by so many the most tremendous denunciations, warns them against the latter, and by the most alluring invitations solicits them to the former." Were all men to become *sincere* believers in the heavenly doctrines of the Gospel, and were all *honestly* disposed to obey its holy precepts, nothing is better calculated to diffuse real comfort, peace, and happiness in this world. Indeed, whoever will candidly and attentively compare the morals of professing Christians throughout the world, defective as they are, with those of the heathen nations in a similar stage of society, will be convinced that the effects of Christianity have been exceedingly beneficial. Some vices were not forbidden, while others were applauded, by the ancients; but the vices of the Christian, the sins of the heart as well as the life, are *all* forbidden by the Gospel. It has silently communicated innumerable blessings to individuals. Besides those enumerated in the preceding pages<sup>1</sup>, we may observe that, through its blessed influence, crimes are less malignant; the manners of mankind are softened and humanised, to a degree unknown in ancient times; a more general respect is paid to the decency of external appearances, and to the sentiments of virtuous and pious men; and although much wickedness still remains among the *nominal* professors of the Christian faith, who are Christians in name, but little better than heathens in practice, yet a large portion of piety and virtue silently exists among the middle and lower classes of mankind, who in every age and

<sup>1</sup> "Much general reformation and happiness, in various ways, hath been introduced into the world by the Gospel, both among individuals, and among nations. But even on a supposition it had been otherwise, it proves nothing against the good effects of Christianity, if it were properly obeyed. It only proves, that notwithstanding the purity of the Gospel, and its gracious intention of making mankind religious and happy, there are numbers who will not be made religious and happy by it. But what could God Almighty do more for man, consistently with leaving him at liberty to act freely? He could only give him a rule to walk by, and reason to enforce that rule; unless he had changed his nature, and, by giving him a new religion, had wrought a standing miracle to force his obedience to it. So that, of course, the world will always be divided into two sorts of people — such as are deaf to all the calls of religion; and such as live up to its rules. Among these latter only are to be found those who feel the happiness of living under Gospel laws. It would be a wonderful thing, indeed, if those should profit by them, who never trouble their heads about them. The patient, who rejects the medicine, must not hope to remove the disease. Our Saviour himself, you remember, prophesied, in the parable of the sower, of the different reception which his Gospel should meet among different men. Some seed, he tells you, would fall among thorns, and be choked — others on beaten ground, and be picked up — but that still there would be some which would fall on good ground, and bring forth fruit in abundance. The Christian religion, therefore, is not meant to work by force, or like a charm, on the minds of men. If it did, there could be no goodness in the observance of it; but it is intended mercifully to guide those to happiness, who will listen to its gracious voice. So that when we look into the world, and wish to see the effects of religion, we must look for it only among real Christians — among those who truly live up to its laws — and not among those who happen to live in a Christian country, and are Christians only in name." Gilpin's Sermons, vol. iii. pp. 9—11.

country form the greatest part of the community. Nay, in Christian countries, even the wicked themselves (who have not cast off all religion, and deliberately renounced the Gospel) are greatly restrained by the fear of future punishments, which are so clearly set forth in the Gospel. So that mankind are, upon the whole, even in a temporal point of view, under infinite obligations to the mild and pacific temper of the Gospel, and have reaped more substantial worldly benefits from it, than from any other institution upon earth; and, whatever of sobriety or moral virtue is to be found either in the writings or lives of the opposers of revelation in modern times, they are indebted for it to that very Christianity which they are impotently endeavouring to subvert. "To say nothing of the best ideas of the old philosophers on moral subjects being derived from revelation (of which there is considerable evidence<sup>1</sup>), it is manifest that, so far as the moderns exceed them, it is principally, if not entirely, owing to this medium of instruction. The Scriptures having diffused the light, they have insensibly imbibed it; and finding it to accord with reason, they flatter themselves that *their* reason has discovered it. 'After grazing,' as one expresses it, 'in the pastures of revelation, they boast of growing fat by nature.' So long as they reside among people, whose ideas of right and wrong are formed by the morality of the Gospel, they must (unless they wish to be stigmatised as profligates) behave with some degree of decorum. Where the conduct is uniform and consistent, charity, and even justice, will lead us to put the best construction upon the motive; but when we see men uneasy under restraints, and continually writing in favour of vices which they dare not openly practise, we are justified in imputing their sobriety not to principle, but to the circumstances attending their situation."<sup>2</sup>

V. It were no difficult task to adduce, from the page of history, numerous FACTS that would fully confirm the preceding general survey of the effects produced by the influence of Christianity. A few additional instances, however, must suffice. Wherever Christian missionaries have gone, the most barbarous heathen nations have be-

<sup>1</sup> A glance at the devotions of the Gentiles will show that, with very few exceptions, there was nothing spiritual in their prayers, — no thanksgiving, — no request for divine assistance in the performance of their duty, — no pious sorrow and acknowledgment of their offences. But "after the propagation of the Christian religion, we find forms of adoration in some Pagan writers which are more rational and spiritual than the old hymns and prayers of their ancestors; and we may reasonably suppose that these improvements arose from the Gospel. See *Procl. Hymn. ad Solem, et ad Musas; Jamblich. de Myst. Egypt. § 5. c. 26.; Simpl. in Epictet. ad fin.* to whom I wish I could add *Maximus Tyrius*. It is pity that he who on other accounts deserves commendation, should have taught that prayer to God was superfluous, *Disc. 30*. See also *Juvenal x. 346.* and the Commentators. *Seneca* says, *Primus est deorum cultus, deos credere: deinde reddere illis majestatem suam, reddere bonitatem.* — *Vis deos propitiare? bonus esto. Satis illos coluit quisquis imitatus est.* *Epist. 95. p. 470.* But that he did not think prayer to be useless and unnecessary, as some may fancy from these words, will appear from the following places. *Nos quoque existimamus vota proficere, salvâ vi et potestate fatorum. Quædam enim a Diis immortalibus ita suspensa relicta sunt, ut in bonum vertant, si adnotæ Diis preces fuerint, si voto suscepta.* *Nat. Quæst. ii. 57. Itaque non dicit Deus beneficia, — non exaudit precantium voces et undique sublatis in cælum manibus vota facientium privata ac publica. Quod profecto non fieret, nec in hunc furorem omnes mortales consensissent alloquendi surda numina et inefficaces Deos, nisi nossent illorum beneficia nunc ultro oblata, nunc orantibus data.* *De Benef. IV. 4.*" (*Jortin's Discourses on the Christian Religion, p. 267. note.*

<sup>2</sup> Fuller's Gospel its own Witness, p. 113.



come civilised. Some of them were cannibals; others worshipped their swords as gods; and all of them offered human victims to their idols. The ferocious became mild; those who prowled about for plunder acquired settled property, as well as a relish for domestic happiness; persons who dwelt in caves or huts learned from missionaries the art of building; they who fed on raw flesh applied to agriculture; men who had been clothed in skins, and were strangers to manufactures, enjoyed the comforts of apparel; and the violent and rapacious renounced their rapine and plunder. The various tribes that inhabited Germany ceased to sacrifice men after the introduction of Christianity; nor did the Huns continue to be strangers to the difference of right and wrong, after they embraced it. The Geloni, and other Scythian tribes, ceased to use the skins of their enemies for clothes; and the Heruli (who latterly over-ran and devastated the western empire) no longer put to death the aged and infirm, as they had formerly done, nor required widows to kill themselves at the tombs of their husbands. The aboriginal inhabitants of Ireland, and the Attacotti (a valiant Caledonian tribe), relinquished cannibalism, and the Hungarians ceased to devour the hearts of their captives, after their conversion. After the conversion also of the Scandinavian nations, they ceased to commit suicide on principle; nor did their wives and slaves voluntarily devote themselves to death, in order to honour the deceased in the paradise of Odin. Christianity imparted to the Danes, Norwegians, and Russians, just ideas of property; and put an end to their piratical expeditions and depredations. The northern kingdoms, which were engaged in incessant wars, while their inhabitants were heathens, became more pacific after the preaching of the Gospel among them. The Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians, who could only speak a barbarous language, acquired the use of letters; a people who were continually making depredations on their neighbours, became content with their own territories; and nations, almost inaccessible on account of their cruelty and superstition, became gentle and sociable in consequence of their conversion. The well-informed lawyer must respect Christianity for the numerous benevolent laws to which it gave rise; and every man who has read (however slightly) the laws of the emperors Theodosius, Justinian, and Charlemagne, or the codes of the Visigoths, Lombards, Anglo-Saxons, and other barbarous nations, must venerate Christianity as the source of many just and merciful laws, which were totally unknown to polished as well as to civilised pagans.

Perhaps no country more greatly needed the light of Christianity, or has been more eminently benefited by it, than England. Druidism, uniformly more sanguinary than other cruel modifications of paganism (though in some respects less erroneous), was succeeded first by the impure mythology of Rome, and then by the sanguinary and war-inspiring worship of the deities of the northern hordes, by whom it was invaded from time to time, and finally subdued. Never was Christianity attended with circumstances more pleasing, or with changes more salutary, than among our rude and ferocious forefathers. The preaching of the Gospel, from the very earliest time

of the Christian æra, abolished human sacrifices (principally wretched captives), that were offered by the Druids: the rude and unsettled Saxons, when converted to Christianity, acquired a relish for the comforts of civilised life, and ceased to immolate their captives, or the cowardly members of their own army. And the descendants of those barbarous savages, who prohibited commercial intercourse with strangers, and who thus cruelly put their prisoners to death, now feed and clothe them, and encourage intercourse with all the nations of the earth. It was the spirit of Christianity, that, in England, put a stop to the dreadful animosities of the barons; that checked the perpetual feuds of the darker ages; that subdued the pride and fierceness which so convulsed the government of our own and other nations; that gave rise to the singular but beneficial institution of chivalry, which tempered the valour of its professors, by uniting in the same persons the various and useful virtues of courtesy, humanity, honour, and justice; and, finally, has diffused that spirit of practical piety, benevolence, and morality, which have justly rendered Britain the glory of all lands.

Such were the happy changes wrought by Christianity on the state of society in ancient times; nor has it been less useful among modern pagans, so far as its pure and life-giving precepts have been propagated and inculcated among them. Indeed, on whatever part of the field of missionary exertions we fix our attention, we have the most satisfactory evidence of the mighty efficacy of the Gospel as the means of improving the present condition of mankind. Thus, in North America, in South America also, and in the East Indies, wherever Christianity has been carried, it has abolished human sacrifices, and all the barbarous practices mentioned in the former part of this work<sup>1</sup>; and has diffused the blessings of civilisation, together with the glad tidings of salvation.<sup>2</sup> In the West Indies it has mitigated the horrors of slavery, and converted stubborn captives (barbarously and unjustly torn from their native soil) into valuable ser-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 17, 18. *suprà*.

<sup>2</sup> Some writers have imagined that certain detestable practices of the pagans were abolished by civilisation, and not by the Christian religion. But the falsehood of this opinion will appear, by considering, that bloody and obscene customs prevailed among the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Greeks, and Romans, who were, in many respects, equal to us in literature and civilisation, and yet performed several hideous rites long after they had arrived at the pinnacle of refinement. Polished heathens offered human victims to their gods, and were, on particular occasions, guilty of every abomination imputed to the uncivilised, except devouring their children. In all rude nations which embraced the Gospel, Christianity and civilisation were as cause and effect, so that the benefits of the latter are to be ascribed to the former. As the Gospel softened and civilised barbarians, we may fairly attribute to it the happy effects of civilisation. The Prussians and Lithuanians having offered human sacrifices, and continued uncivilised till their conversion in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it is probable they would have done so to this day, were it not for Christianity, since the Mingrelians, Circassians, and other heathens, are still more rude than Christian nations under nearly the same circumstances of latitude and soil. The Chinese and Japanese, though polished nations, and well acquainted with arts and manufactures, it is well known, publicly commit crimes which would not be tolerated in the rudest Christian kingdom. Upon the whole, it appears that Christianity has expiated several crimes of the civilised as well as barbarous heathen, has taught each of them virtues to which he was a stranger, and must, wherever it is established, prevent relapses to paganism, and the numerous evils resulting from false systems of religion.--- Dr. Ryan's History of Religion, pp. 277, 278.

vants ; so that a *real* Christian slave, it is well known, was of *greater value* than one who is a pagan, and finally, slavery itself has been annihilated.

Further, in Greenland, among a people who, in addition to all the privations which they endure from the severity of the climate, had been left in the lowest stages of savage life, the Moravians or United Brethren have been instrumental in introducing the comforts and endearments of civilisation ; and those outcasts of society may now be seen enjoying the food and shelter which their industry and perseverance had secured for them. With the admission of the doctrines of Christ, they have relinquished their ferocious habits ; they resumed the exercise of reason when they began to practise the duties of religion ; and instead of exhibiting the miseries of their former condition, we behold the edifying spectacle of men raising their adorations to him who created and redeemed them, and *walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless*. In South Africa, through the divine blessing on the labours of the same missionaries, and those of other societies, among a race equally removed from the habits of civilisation,—and, perhaps, still more hostile to the application of any means of improvement,—Christianity has made a powerful impression ; and has accomplished a change, which has raised those who were placed at the extreme point of human nature to the possession of piety, decency, and happiness. Similar effects have been produced on the western coast of Africa, through the instrumentality of the Church Missionary Society ; and the same effects are uniformly seen to follow its progress.<sup>1</sup>

In short, in proportion as Christianity advances into the regions of paganism, we may confidently anticipate a melioration in the general condition of mankind, and a greater equality in the moral and political advantages of every tribe and people. The beneficial effects of the Gospel, indeed, are felt even in Mohammedan countries ; for all the best moral precepts of the Koran are taken, without acknowledgement, from the Scriptures. Where it agrees with them, it tends to advance human happiness ; where it differs from them, it is generally a rhapsody of falsehoods, contradictions, and absurd fables, that will not bear the test of examination.

As, however, *recent* FACTS most powerfully arrest attention, we shall adduce one instance more of the glorious triumph of Christianity over paganism, which has been achieved *in our own time*, since the commencement of the present century, in the numerous clusters of islands in the southern Pacific Ocean, now collectively termed

<sup>1</sup> The details on which the above statements are founded, may be seen in Crantz's *History of Greenland*, 2 vols. 8vo. London, 1820 ; Latrobe's *Journal of his Visit to South Africa* in 1815 and 1816, 4to. London, 1818 ; and in the later Reports of the Society for Propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge ; of the Church Missionary Society ; of the Society for Missions established by the *Unitas Fratrum* or Moravians ; of the London Missionary Society ; of the Baptist Missions in the East Indies ; and of the Wesleyan Missionary Society. — Abstracts of the most recent of these reports of Christian benevolence (comprising also much important geographical information) may be seen in the periodical journal entitled "*The Missionary Register*."

Polynesia, through the divine blessing on the unwearied labours of devoted missionaries; who have persevered in their arduous undertaking, under discouragements the most protracted and depressing, and with a patient endurance of privations not easily comprehended by those who have always remained at home, or who have visited only civilised portions of foreign climes. In common with missionaries in other parts of the world, they have been described by the enemies of religion, as ignorant and dogmatical fanatics; more intent on the inculcation of the peculiarities of their sect or party, than in promoting the well-being of the people; holding out no inducement by precept or example to industrious habits, &c.: but the PRESENT STATE of the islands in which they spent so many years, compared with what it was previously to and at the time of their arrival (as recorded in the voyages of various navigators), and during several subsequent years, presents a sufficient and triumphant refutation of every charge of this kind. Within a circle of many hundred miles, which is studded with clusters of numerous and populous islands, and of which Tahiti (formerly called Otaheite) is the centre, many thousands of *adult* inhabitants, together with their chieftains, have voluntarily embraced, and made an open profession of, the Christian faith, without the intervention or influence of any Christian Potentate or State; and the consequences of this propagation of the Gospel among them have been, the abolition of theft, polygamy, and infanticide, of human sacrifices, and of the murder of prisoners taken in war, and the extinction of cannibalism. Idolatry, with all its sanguinary rites, has been annihilated; and education, industry, and civilisation have been rapidly diffused, and are daily extending their benevolent influences. Christian congregations have been formed; and from them the life-giving truths of the Gospel have been carried to the surrounding regions. Among savages, who a few years since were but little removed from the most barbarous state of nature, the use of letters and written languages has been introduced. Instead of a rude administration of justice, founded on the arbitrary will of the chieftains, a system of equitable laws and courts of justice, and representative governments, have been established on the basis of Christian Principles, with the voluntary consent of sovereigns, inferior chieftains, and people. The useful arts, with many of the conveniences of life, have been introduced; printing presses have been established, and the Holy Scriptures have been translated and printed, besides multitudes of elementary and useful books; the rudiments of navies have been formed, and piers constructed; roads have been made, and beautiful churches for divine worship have been erected. In short, religious, moral, and social order are rapidly extending; and the inhabitants of the Southern Archipelago are rising in the scale of nations. All these are the fruits of the divine blessing upon unwearied missionary labours<sup>1</sup>, and they have followed the intro-

<sup>1</sup> The missionaries, who have been the honoured instruments in accomplishing the great work above described, have been those who were sent out by the London Missionary and Church Missionary Societies, the North American and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries; and the details of evidence, on which the facts stated in the text are founded,

duction of the Gospel; for civilisation, with all its attendant advantages, INEVITABLY follows the diffusion of Christian Principles and Christian Precepts. Wherever the truth is received in love (and multitudes have so received it), that truth has made them free in the noblest and most enlarged sense of the word. Men who were devoted to intemperance, ferocious, faithless, profligate, and ungodly, have been so changed in their hearts and lives, as to become virtuous, peaceable, and useful members of society; and many thousands of adult persons (besides their children) who, a few years since, were enveloped in error, sensuality, and idolatry, have been turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God. Public, social, and domestic worship are universal. Who can contemplate the former condition of these islands, with their inhabitants groaning and consuming under the tyranny of a cruel system of idolatry, and of vices still more destructive,—and then contrast with it the natives in their present circumstances, gradually emerging from their former darkness and misery under the benign influences of Christianity; worshipping the true God, becoming honourable members of the Christian church, reading the Holy Scriptures (for a written language has been given to them), advancing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, improving in their mental and moral character, and in their social habits, with the comforts of civilised life daily multiplying around them,—where is the Christian who can contemplate these things, and not evidently perceive the finger of Divine Providence,—a most convincing proof of the efficacy of the Gospel, and a most powerful incentive as well as encouragement to further missionary exertions?

VI. Such are the effects which Christianity is actually producing in our own times. Contrast them with the effects of that atheistical philosophy, which towards the close of the eighteenth century plunged France in desolation, misery, and anarchy almost indescribable, and then judge of the want of candour and truth, in a modern opposer of Christianity, who, with such facts before him, could assert that the Christian religion is “a pestilence more destructive of life, happiness, and peace, than all other pestilences combined.”

It is, however, in the private walks of life, especially, that the efficacy of the Christian system has been practically felt in reclaiming the profane and immoral to sobriety, equity, truth, and piety, and to an exemplary behaviour in relative life. Having been *made free from sin, and become the servants of God, they have their fruit unto holiness*, and, after patiently continuing in well-doing, and cheerfully bearing various afflictions (supported by the precious promises of the Bible), they joyfully meet death; being cheered by the hope of *eternal life, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ*: while they who are best acquainted with the Gospel are most convinced that they have been rendered wiser, more holy, as well as more happy, by believing it;

may be seen in the Narrative of the Mission to Otaheite, published by the Directors of the London Missionary Society, and also in their reports from the year 1819 to the present time; in the Missionary Register; in Mr. Stewart's Narrative of his Residence in the Sandwich Islands; and especially in Mr. Ellis's *Polynesian Researches*, in two volumes, 8vo.; in Mr. Williams's Narrative of Missionary Enterprise to the South Sea Islands; and in Mr. Pritchard's *Missionary Encouragement*. London, 1845. 8vo.

and that there is a reality in religion, though various conflicting interests and passions may keep them from duly embracing it. "There are indeed *enthusiasts* also, but they become such by forsaking the old rule of faith and duty for some new fancy; and there are *hypocrites*, but they attest the reality and excellency of religion by deeming it worth their while to counterfeit it."<sup>1</sup>

It is the peculiar glory of the Christian revelation that it is adapted to every rank and station in life. Is the Christian favoured with temporal blessings? He is instructed how to enjoy them aright, and to distribute to the necessities of those who are in want. Are his circumstances contracted? It preserves him from repining. *He hath learned in whatsoever state he is, therewith to be content. He knows both how to be abased, and how to abound; — every where, and in all things, he is instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, — both to abound and to suffer need.* Nor does the Gospel only produce contentment, but it gives to its possessor a certain dignity and authority, which the greatest can never acquire without it. The rods and axes of despots may extort an outward reverence, but nothing commands the hearts and affections of men like real piety and goodness. *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.* (1 Tim. iv. 8.) A conscientious discharge of the duties of religion conciliates the love and esteem of mankind, and establishes a fair character and unblemished reputation. While the real Christian fears God and honours the king, he is honest in his dealings, frugal in his expences, and industrious in the proper calling of his life; and aims to *adorn the doctrine of God his Saviour in all things.* Real Christians, whatever be their rank in life, have a peculiar enjoyment in the possession of temporal goods (whether they be few or many), while the ungodly find emptiness in all their possessions; for the mind, rendered happy by the holy and excellent principles that govern it, mixes its own sweetness with whatever good is received, and imparts an extraordinary relish to it; while the unholy dispositions of those who are not in a Christian state of mind, must, by their very nature, prevent such persons from enjoying what they possess.

But the happy effects of Christianity are not confined to prosperity; its sincere professors have also peculiar consolations in the day of adversity. The experience of every day proves that *man is born to trouble*; and religion will not prevent the Christian from being made to feel what it is to share in the common lot of mankind. But, what supports will it afford him, when the cup of affliction is put into his hands! supports to which mere men of the world are utter strangers. These are for the most part miserable in their affliction. If they be kept from murmuring, it is the summit of their attainments, while Christians are enabled to glory even in tribulation, and cordially to approve all the divine dispensations towards them. They truly possess a *peace that passeth all understanding. Being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,* and they also

<sup>1</sup> Scott's Commentary on the Bible, vol. i. pref. p. 16.

have the testimony of a good conscience, that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, they have had their conversation in the world. This is to them a source of unspeakable joy, with which a stranger intermeddleth not. "What trouble, indeed, can overwhelm, what fear can discompose, that man who loveth Christ, and keepeth his words? What earthly power can make such a man unhappy? Will you take away his riches? His treasure is in heaven. Will you banish him from home? His country is above. Will you bind him in chains? His conscience, his spirit, his affections, are all free. Will you destroy his body? His body shall be raised incorruptible at the last day, and his soul will immediately return unto God, who gave it. Heaven itself is but an emblem of his happiness. As heaven is enlightened by the rising sun, his soul is illuminated by that sun of righteousness, which ariseth, without setting, in his heart. As heaven is intrinsically bright and beautiful, though clouds obscure and midnight darkness surround it, he is peaceful, happy, and serene, in the midst of trials and afflictions. As heaven is exalted above the storms and tempests of this lower atmosphere, he is elevated above the distractions and perturbations of this troublesome world. He is a Christian. His conversation is in heaven. His life is hid, with Christ, in God.

"We admit, then, that such a Christian has his sorrows. But his sorrow is sweeter than this world's joy. Every trial, every affliction, draws him nearer to his God. In the secrecy of his chamber, in the silence of midnight, he has a resource which the world knows not of. He pours forth his fears, his apprehensions, his griefs, into the bosom of his Maker. Suffering thus becomes a well-spring of delight; for it is felt to be a source of spiritual improvement. Thus it is, that all things work together, not only for good, but for enjoyment, to them that love their God. Thus it is, that if they sow in tears, they also reap in joy."<sup>1</sup> Far different from this is the joy of the hypocrite or of the ungodly. His joy is a malignant passion, excited by the temporary success of some of his devices. *Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom; but the triumphing of the wicked is short; and the joy of the hypocrite is but for a moment; God is not in all their thoughts. Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not thee nor the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? What profit should we have if we pray to him?*<sup>2</sup>

But it is in the prospect of *futurity*, especially, that the happy effects of Christianity are peculiarly felt and displayed. The hour of death must, unavoidably, arrive to every individual of the human race. In that awful moment, when the soul is hovering on the confines of two worlds, suffering the agony of bodily torture, and the remorse of an accusing conscience, something is surely needed to cheer the mind. Where, in all the past, do we discover a single instance of cheerful resignation and hope in a dying infidel? In that exigency, the only consolation afforded by infidelity is, "that there is no hereafter." When friends and relatives are expressing by their agonised looks

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Jebb's Sermons, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. xv. 21.; Job xx. 5.; Psal. x. 4.; Job. xxi. 14, 15.

what they are afraid to utter; when medicines and pains are racking the debilitated frame; when the slumbers of conscience are for ever broken, and its awful voice raised:—all—all that unbelief can present to sustain the mind in this trying hour is—the cold and the comfortless doctrine of an ETERNAL SLEEP.

That these sentiments are unequal at such a period to support the mind, is evident from the death-beds of the most eminent of their advocates.<sup>1</sup> Whilst a Paul, a Peter, and a John, and the whole host of Christian martyrs, could survey, unmoved, death in its most terrific forms; while many have vehemently longed for its approach, desiring to depart and be with Christ; while some have exulted in the midst of the most excruciating bodily tortures;—Voltaire endured horrors never to be expressed. His associates have attempted to conceal the fact; but the evidence is too strong to be refuted. Like Herod, who was smitten by an angel whilst receiving undue homage from men; so, immediately after his return from the theatre in which he had been inhaling the incense of adulation from a silly populace, he felt that the stroke of death had arrested him. Immediately his friends crowded around him, and his brethren of the Illuminati exhorted him to die like a hero. In spite of their admonitions, he sent for the *curé* of St. Gervais; and, after confession, signed in the presence of the abbé Mignot (his nephew), and of the marquis de Villevielle (one of the Illuminati), his recantation of his former principles. After this visit, the *curé* was no more allowed to see him. His former friends, having obtained possession of his house, interdicted all access unto him. It has, however, crept out by means of the nurse who attended him, that he died in unutterable agony of mind.<sup>2</sup> D'Alembert, Diderot, and about twenty others, who beset his apartment, never approached him without receiving some bitter execration. Often he would curse them, and exclaim, "Retire! It is you who have brought me to my present state! Begone! I could have done without you all; but you could not exist without me. And what a wretched glory you have procured me!"

These reproaches were succeeded by the dreadful recollection of his own part in the conspiracy against religion. He was heard, in anguish and in dread, alternately supplicating or blaspheming that God against whom he had conspired. He would cry out, in plaintive

<sup>1</sup> "Why is it that, of all the facts gathered from the death-bed scenes of infidels, there are none of a pleasing character? Even in the moments of delirium their minds seem filled with images and fancies of a horrible kind; nor is it surprising that such should be the fact, when we reflect that in their sentiments there is nothing to hope, and everything to fear, from death. The thought of annihilation is itself fitted to inspire gloom; and whatever shakes this belief awakens the most fearful forebodings of a judgment to come; so that infidels naturally view with trembling the near approach of death, and have their fears aroused for the consequences." Rowland's *Common Maxims of Infidelity*, p. 280. New York, 1850.

<sup>2</sup> The same nurse, "being many years afterwards requested to wait on a sick Protestant gentleman, refused, till she was assured he was not a philosopher; declaring, if he were, she would on no account incur the danger of witnessing such a scene as she had been compelled to do at the death of M. Voltaire." Bp. Wilson's (of Calcutta) *Lectures on the Evidences of Christianity*, vol. ii. p. 412. 8vo. edition. Dr. Wilson adds, that he received the account from the *son* of the gentleman to whose dying bed the woman was invited



accents, Oh, Christ! Oh, Jesus Christ! and then complain that he was abandoned by God and man. It seemed as if the hand, which had traced of old the sentence of an impious king, now traced before his eyes his own blasphemies. In vain he turned away from the contemplation of them. The time was coming apace, when he was to appear before the tribunal of him whom he had blasphemed; and his physicians, particularly Dr. Tronchin, calling in to administer relief, thunderstruck, retired. His associates would, no doubt, willingly have suppressed these facts; but it was in vain. The *mareschal de Richelieu* fled from his bed-side, declaring it to be a sight too terrible to be endured<sup>1</sup>; and Dr. Tronchin<sup>2</sup> compared the horrors of Voltaire's dying moments to those inflicted by the furies on Orestes. The

<sup>1</sup> The reader will find a full account of this transaction, and of the horrid death of Voltaire, in the *abbé Barruel's History of Jacobinism*, vol. i. ch. 17. pp. 377—380. This account was confirmed by M. de Luc, a philosopher of distinguished science, and of the greatest honour and probity.

<sup>2</sup> The account of Voltaire's last hours, published by M. Barruel, has at length received a signal confirmation, by the publication (for the first time) of a letter from Dr. Tronchin himself to the eminent Christian philosopher, M. Bonnet, of Geneva, in pp. 272—274. of Ch. Eynard's "*Essai sur la Vie de Tissot*," Lausanne, 1839, 8vo.; from which the following paragraphs have been translated.

"He" [Voltaire, says Dr. Tronchin,] "imagined that I would not see him; and this idea tormented him. In haste he wrote me a letter perfumed with incense, in which he swears eternal esteem and regard to me. I visited him. 'You have been,' he said to me, 'my saviour, be here my tutelary angel. I have but one breath of life left, I come to yield it up in your arms.' He probably spoke the truth; they will kill him.

"If my principles, my dear friend, had required to be strengthened by any tie, the man whom I have seen become weak, agonise, and die before my eyes, would have secured them by a gordian knot; and on comparing the death of a good man, which is but the end of a fine day, with that of Voltaire, I should have seen the difference which exists between a fine day and a tempest; between the serenity of the soul of the wise man who ceases to live, and the dreadful torment of him to whom death is the king of terrors. I thank God I did not need this spectacle; and yet *fortè olim meminisse juvabit*. This man then was predestined to die under my hands. I always told him the truth; and, unhappily for him, I am the only person who never deceived him. 'Yes, my friend,' he often said to me, 'you alone gave me good advice. If I had followed it, I should not be in the dreadful state in which I am. I should have returned to Ferney; I should not have become intoxicated with the incense which has turned my head. Yes! I have followed nothing but smoke: you can do me no more good. Send me the physician for madmen. What fatality brought me to Paris? You told me when I arrived, that an oak of eighty years old does not bear transplanting; and you spoke the truth. Why did I not believe you? And when I had given you my word that I would set out in the invalid carriage which you had promised me, why did I not go? Pity me! I am mad.'

"He was to set out two days after the follies of his coronation at the theatre" [at Paris]; "but the next morning he received a deputation from the French Academy, which intreated him to honour it with his presence before his departure. He attended in the afternoon, and was made president of the society by acclamation. He accepted the office, which is for three months. He thus chained himself for three months, and of his promise given to me nothing remained. From this moment to his death, his days were only a gust of madness. He was ashamed of it. When he saw me, he asked my pardon. He pressed my hands; he intreated me to have pity on him, and not to abandon him; especially as he must use new efforts to make a suitable return for the honour the Academy had done him, and induce it to labour at a new dictionary like that of the *Della Crusca*. The compilation of this dictionary was his last dominant idea, his last passion. He had undertaken the letter A; and he had distributed the twenty-three other letters to twenty-three academicians, many of whom greatly irritated him by undertaking the task with an ill grace. 'They are idle fellows,' said he, 'accustomed to live in idleness; but I will make them advance.' And it was to make them advance, that, in the interval of the two sittings, he took—at his peril—so many drugs, and committed so many follies; which hastened his death, and which threw him into a state of despair and the most frightful madness. I cannot recollect it without horror. As soon as he perceived that all

last hours of D'Alembert were like those of Voltaire.<sup>1</sup> Condorcet boasts, that he refused admission to the *curé* on his second visit. Such a refusal evidently shows that he feared what an interview would disclose. Hume, instead of meeting death with the calmness of a philosopher, played the buffoon in that awful hour, proving, by his comic actions, his anxiety to drown serious thought. Diderot and Gibbon discovered the same anxiety, by deeply interesting themselves in the most trifling amusements. The last hours of Paine were such as might have been expected from his previous immoral and unprincipled habits. Though, in reply to the inquiry of his medical attendant whether he believed or wished to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, he declared that he "had no wish to believe on that subject;" yet, during the paroxysms of his distress and pain, he would invoke the name of that Saviour whom he had blasphemed by his writings, in a tone of voice that would alarm the house: and at length he expired, undeplord and detested by his adopted countrymen.<sup>2</sup> A conduct like this proves that there was one spark of horror in the souls of these antagonists of revelation which all their philosophic efforts were unequal to extinguish.

The whole of the atheist's creed, with respect to the future world, is comprised in the following summary; that his body, begun by chance or necessity, is continued without design, and perishes without hope; that his soul is a mere attribute of his body, useless and worthless while he lives, and destined at his death to rottenness and corruption; and that, the sooner it is returned to its parent mould the better. And, by his mandate, he consigns mankind to the dark and desolate regions of annihilation. By this sweeping sentence, which he passes on all the human race, he takes away from himself and his fellow-men, every motive, furnished by the fear of future punishment or by the hope of future rewards, to virtuous, upright, or amiable conduct.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, how glorious are the Christian's views of the future world. From the promise of his Creator, he learns that his *body, sown here in corruption, weakness, and dishonour, shall be raised,*

his efforts to increase his bodily strength had produced a contrary effect, death was continually before his eyes. From that moment rage took possession of his soul. Remember the furies of Orestes. [*Rappelez vous les fureurs d'Oreste.*] *Furiis agitatus obiit:*" [i. e.] *He, Voltaire, died, tormented by the Furies.*

In order to explain this allusion of Dr. Tronchin, the author may perhaps be permitted to state, that "the Furies of Orestes" was a proverbial expression, among the ancient Greeks and Romans, for the most frightful horrors of mind. According to the Greek poets and mythologers, Orestes was for many years tormented by the vengeful goddesses whom they termed "the Furies," for having been guilty of parricide in murdering his mother and her paramour *Ægisthus*, who had previously assassinated his father *Agamemnon*.

<sup>1</sup> Barruel's History, vol. i. pp. 381, 382.

<sup>2</sup> See Cheetham's Life of Paine, pp. 153—160. (8vo. London, 1818.) which is reprinted from the American publication. What must have been the agony of that man's mind, who could exclaim as Paine did on one occasion, — "I think, I can say what they make Jesus Christ to say, — 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" Ibid. p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> For an able comparison of the principal features of the Atheistical Philosophy with Christianity, the reader is referred to Dr. Godwin's "Philosophy of Atheism examined," Lectures xii. and xiii. London, 1853. 8vo.

beyond the grave, in *incorruption, power, and glory*, with so many attributes of mind or *spirit*, as to be denominated by Him who made it a *spiritual body*. Ever young, active, and undecaying, it shall be re-united to the immortal mind, purified from every stain and every error. This perfect man shall be admitted, with an open and *abundant entrance*, into the heaven of heavens, the peculiar residence of Infinite Majesty, and the chosen seat of infinite dominion. In this noblest of all habitations, this mansion of everlasting joy, he shall be united with an innumerable multitude of companions like himself, sanctified, immortal, and happy. Enrolled among the noblest and best beings in the universe, *a child, a priest, a king* in the house of his Heavenly Father, his endless and only destination will be to know, love, serve, and enjoy God; to interchange the best affections and the best offices with his glorious companions; and to advance in wisdom, virtue, and happiness, . . . FOR EVER.<sup>1</sup>

This is no ideal picture. Hopes and consolations like these have, in every age of Christianity, supported the minds of millions of Christians, in the humble and retired walks of life, as well as in exalted stations. They cheered and animated the minds of such men as the Lord Chief Justice Hale, Pascal, Newton, Boyle, Locke, Addison, Boerhaave, Lord Lyttleton, Baron Haller, Sir William Jones, Beattie, and very many other distinguished laymen (divines are designedly omitted), both British and foreign, who applied their mighty intellects to the investigation and elucidation of the evidences of the Christian records; and whose lives and writings will continue to instruct and edify the world, so long as the art of printing shall perpetuate them.

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Such are the effects which the Christian revelation has actually produced on the happiness of nations, as well as of individuals. Philosophy and infidelity (we have seen) are alike inadequate to accomplish them. *An evil tree, we know, bringeth not forth good fruit. If, therefore, this revelation were not of God it could do nothing.*

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#### SECT. V.

THE PECULIAR ADVANTAGES, POSSESSED BY THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION OVER ALL OTHER RELIGIONS, A DEMONSTRATIVE EVIDENCE OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY.

ALL the truths stated in the preceding pages will appear still more evident, if we consider the Christian revelation, as it stands opposed to all other religions or pretended revelations. The excellency of the Christian revelation consists in this, that it possesses ADVANTAGES WHICH NO OTHER RELIGIONS OR REVELATIONS HAVE, at the same time that it has none of the defects by which they are characterised.

We affirm, that no other religion or revelation has advantages equal to those of the Christian revelation or religion; for no other

<sup>1</sup> Dwight's System of Theology, p. 55.

can pretend to have been confirmed by ancient prophecies. Even Mohammed thought it better to oblige men to call the Scriptures in question, than to derive any arguments from them, which might serve to confirm his mission. There are indeed several religions which have had their martyrs, but of what description? Superstitious men, who blindly exposed themselves to death, like the ignorant East Indians, thousands of whom prostrate themselves before the idol Juggernaut, and hundreds of whom devote themselves to be crushed by the wheels of the machine that carries the colossal image of their idol. But no religion, besides the Christian, was ever confirmed by the blood of an infinite number of sensible, *understanding* martyrs, who voluntarily suffered death in defence of what they had seen; who from *vicious* and *profligate* persons, became exemplary for the sanctity of their lives, upon the confidence they had in their Master; and who at length, being dispersed throughout the world, by their death gained proselytes; and making their blood the seed of the church, cheerfully suffered martyrdom, having certain assurance of being crowned after their death; a certain assurance which they derived from what they themselves had formerly seen.

We find other religions, which pretend to be confirmed and authorised by several signs and extraordinary events from heaven. Thus, the Romans used to attribute to their religion all the advantages they obtained over other nations; and the Mohammedans pretend that the great successes which God was pleased to give their prophet, were so many certain and undeniable marks of the truth of their religion. But to pretend that temporal prosperity is a certain character of a true religion, or adversity that of a false one, is to suppose that the most profligate wretches, provided they are happy in this world, are the greatest favourites of God. But certainly it is not prosperity or adversity *simply considered*, but prosperity or adversity *as foretold by God or his prophets*, that is a certain character of true religion; and when we affirm that several extraordinary events bear witness to the truth of Christianity, we mean only those events which had been foretold by the prophets; as, for instance, the calling of the Gentiles, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the establishment of the Christian church. Finally, there may be several religions that may deceive, but it is only the Christian religion that can truly satisfy mankind. There are some religions grounded upon fabulous miracles, and confirmed by witnesses easily convicted of imposture; but it is only the Christian religion that is firmly and solidly established upon true miracles and valid testimonies. It appears, then, that no religion in the world has such extraordinary qualifications as the Christian religion; of which it must also be affirmed, that it is free from all such defects as are incident to other religions.

No deep research, no great sagacity or penetration of mind, is necessary to discover this truth; for it is manifest that the Christian religion is not designed for the satisfaction of the carnal and worldly appetites of men, like that of the Jews, who aspired only after temporal prosperity and worldly pomp; nor is it a monstrous medley, like that of the ancient Samaritans, made up of a ridiculous mixture

of the pagan and Jewish religion ; nor has it any of the faults or extravagant superstitions of the pagan religion. But as it would extend this chapter (already perhaps too long) to a disproportionate length, were we to oppose it particularly to all the errors of other religions, we shall confine our comparison to showing the advantages possessed by the Christian religion over all the rest, in the following respects:—

### I. In its PERFECTION.

Other religions, as being principally of human invention and institution, were formed by degrees from the different imaginations of several persons, who successively made such additions or alterations as they thought convenient. The Greeks, for example, added several things to that religion which they received from the Egyptians; and the Romans to that which they had received from the Greeks. Menander improved upon the senseless impieties of Simon Magus; and Saturninus and Basilides added to those of Menander.<sup>1</sup> And the reason is, because men are never weary of inventing, nor the people of believing, novelties. But it is not so with the Christian religion, which was wholly delivered by Christ, is entirely contained in every one of the Gospels, and even in each of the epistles of the apostles. Whatever alterations men have thought fit to make in the doctrine which Christ brought into the world only corrupted its purity and spirituality, as appears by the great disproportion there is between the apostolical doctrine and the ordinary speculations of men.

### II. In its OPENNESS.

Other religions durst not show themselves openly in full light, and therefore were veiled over with a mysterious silence and affected darkness. Some of the Gnostics chose the night to cover the impurity of their abominable mysteries. And the Romans exposed themselves to the satirical raillery of their poets, by being so careful to conceal the worship they paid to their goddess Bona. Julian and Porphyry exerted all their talents, either to set off the ridiculous and offensive ceremonies of paganism, or to palliate their superstition, by several various explanations of it; as when they positively affirmed that they worshipped one only supreme God, though they acknowledged at the same time other subordinate deities, depending one upon another; and when they endeavoured to justify the worship they paid to their idols, by using many subtle and nice distinctions. It is certain that there is a principle of pride in the hearts of men which is the reason why they cannot endure to be accused of entertaining any absurd and extravagant opinions, so that whenever their passions have made them embrace a religion which seems not very reasonable, they employ all their ingenuity to make it at least appear consonant to reason. But the Christian religion requires no veil to cover it, no mysterious silence, no dark dissimulation, or close disguise, although it proposes such kinds of objects to us as are vastly contrary to all our prejudices and received opinions. The apostles freely confess that the preaching of the Gospel is, as it were, an apparent folly; but yet they assure us that God was resolved to save the world by that seeming folly. They knew that the death of Christ became a scandal to the Jew, and a folly to the Greek; yet they publicly declared that they were determined not to know any thing save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And how comes it, then, than they did not in the least degree extenuate or endeavour to soften the sense of that seeming paradox (so far were they from concealing it), but were strongly and fully persuaded of the truth of that adorable mystery, and the abundance of their understanding served only to make them more fully comprehend the efficacy of the cross?

### III. In its ADAPTATION to every existing State and Constitution, and to the Capacities of all men.

If we were strictly to consider some religions, we should find that they were at first, for the most part, instituted either by poets or philosophers; and that they

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<sup>1</sup> See an account of these false teachers of Christianity, in Dr. Lardner's *History of Heretics*.

generally sprang from the sportive conceits or witty speculations of the understanding; which is the reason why they were not so universally approved. The philosophers always derided the religion of the vulgar; and the vulgar understood nothing of the religion of the philosophers. Socrates ridiculed the religion of the Athenians; and the Athenians accused Socrates of impiety and atheism, and condemned him to death. The Christian religion alone is approved both by the philosophers and also by the vulgar people, as neither depending upon the ignorance of the latter, nor proceeding from the learning of the former. It has a *divine efficacy and agreeable power, suitable to all hearts*: it is adapted to all climates, and to every existing state-constitution, and is suited to all classes of the human intellect, and to every variety of human character.

1. The Christian religion is adapted to harmonise with every existing state-constitution. It has, indeed, nothing immediately to do with political affairs. It fashions every individual, and produces in him that knowledge and those dispositions and feelings, which enable him to live contented in any place, and become a useful citizen under every kind of civil constitution, and a faithful subject of every government. It does not, according to the principles of its Author, erect one state within another, nor does it in any case disturb the public tranquillity (for loyalty and true piety are never disunited), nor can the interest of the church ever come in collision with that of the government. On the other hand, that state, whose citizens should *really* be formed agreeably to the principles of Christianity, would unquestionably be the happiest and most flourishing. Its rulers would have the most faithful, obedient, and active subjects; and the state itself would be distinguished for an order, which would need no power or constraint for its preservation. The arts and sciences would flourish there without being abused and made the means of poisoning the morals of the people: life also would there be enjoyed in the most agreeable and tranquil manner, and all property and rights would be perfectly secured. No state would be more firmly connected together, and consequently more terrible and invincible to its enemies.<sup>1</sup>

2. Further, the Christian religion is adapted to every class of the human intellect: it is level to the capacity of the most simple and ignorant, though infinitely raised above the philosophy of the wise: it is sublime without being nicely speculative, and simple without being mean; in its sublimity preserving its clearness, and in its simplicity preserving its dignity. In a word, there is nothing so great nor so inconsiderable in human society, but what may some way fall under its consideration, and it is equally approved of and admired by all. It is, moreover, most wonderfully adapted to those habits and sentiments which spring up in the advancement of knowledge and refinement, and which seem destined to continue for ages, as they have done for the last three centuries, and to spread themselves more and more widely over the human race. Since the introduction of the Christian religion, "human nature has made great progress, and society experienced great changes; and in this advanced condition of the world, Christianity, instead of losing its application and importance, is found to be more and more congenial and adapted to man's nature and wants. Men have outgrown the other institutions of that period when Christianity appeared, its philosophy, its modes of warfare, its policy, its public and private economy; but Christianity has never shrunk as intellect has opened, but has always kept in advance of men's faculties, and unfolded nobler views in proportion as they have ascended. The highest powers and affections which our nature has developed find more than adequate objects in this religion. Christianity is indeed peculiarly fitted to the more improved stages of society, to the more delicate sensibilities of refined minds, and especially to that dissatisfaction with the present state, which always grows with the growth of our moral powers and affections. As men advance in civilisation, they become susceptible of mental sufferings, to which ruder ages are strangers; and these Christianity is fitted to assuage. Imagination and intellect become more restless, and Christianity brings them tranquillity by the eternal and magnificent truths, the solemn and unbounded prospects which it unfolds. This fitness of our religion to more advanced stages of society than that in which it was introduced, to wants of human nature not then developed, seems to me very striking. The religion bears the marks of having come from a Being who perfectly understood the human mind, and had power to provide

<sup>1</sup> Reinhard's Plan of the Founder of Christianity, pp. 211, 212. New York, 1831.

for its progress. This feature of Christianity is of the nature of prophecy. It was an anticipation of future and distant ages; and when we consider among whom our religion sprung, where, but in God, can we find an explanation of this peculiarity?"<sup>1</sup>

#### IV. In the SPIRITUALITY OF ITS WORSHIP.

Other religions brought men from spiritual objects to those which were corporeal and earthly: the Christian religion brings them from the objects of sense to those of the understanding. We all know that when the heathens deified men or worshipped a deity under a human shape, they were so far from paying to that deity a worship due to a spiritual nature, that their adoration consisted in several games, shows, and divers exercises of the body. The Jews and Samaritans, by their eager disputes whether God was to be worshipped in Jerusalem or on Mount Gerizim, extinguished charity, the true spirit of religion, in their violent defences of the external part of it. Nay, the prophets complained formerly that the Jews made a true fast to consist in bowing down their heads as a bulrush, and putting on sack-cloth and ashes.<sup>2</sup> And the Holy Scripture observes, that the priests of Baal were wont to cut themselves with knives and lances, when they sacrificed to him, as if there were no other way to make their god hear their prayers but by inflicting such punishments on their own bodies.<sup>3</sup> The modern Jews cannot be persuaded that we have been called to the knowledge of the true God (though they find we all profess to put our trust and confidence in him), because they perceive not that we use any corporeal ceremonies. And the Mohammedans, more irreligious than superstitious, make their religion and its happiness depend chiefly on their senses. When they worship, they turn themselves towards Mecca, as the Jews turned towards Jerusalem, and earnestly desire of God that he would gratify their senses; and though they have a sort of religious respect for the letters that compose the name of God, and the paper on which it is written, yet they are enjoined to oppress men that bear the image of God, by their religion, which breathes nothing but violence, fury, and oppression.

The reason why men thus usually refer every thing to their senses is, because a worship that is corporeal and sensual is far more easy; it is much easier for a man to take the sun for a God than to be continually occupied in seeking after a God that is invisible; to solemnise games and festivals in honour of a pretended deity than to renounce himself for the sake of a true one: it is much easier for him to fast than to renounce his vices; to sing spiritual songs, or bow to a statue, than forgive his enemies. It appears, then, that the Christian religion bears a more excellent character, as it gives us for the object of our worship, not a God under a human shape, but a God that is a spirit, as it teaches us to honour him, not with a carnal, but with a spiritual worship; and this Christ himself has very elegantly told us in these words: *God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.* (John iv. 24.) Who could fill his mind with such elevated notions? And how comes it that he so excellently sets down in that short precept the genius of true religion, of which men before were wholly ignorant?

#### V. In its OPPOSITION TO THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD.

It may be said of all other religions, without exception, that they induce us to look after the pleasures and profits of the world in the worship of God; whereas the Christian religion makes us glorify God by renouncing the world. Thus the heathens, designing rather to please themselves than their deities, introduced into religion whatever could in any way flatter and divert them; and the Mohammedan religion, not being encumbered with many ceremonies, at least affixes temporal advantages to the practice of its worship; as if the pleasures of the world were to be the future reward of religion: but certainly both of them are much mistaken; for the heathens should have known that the worship of God consisted not in diverting and pleasing themselves; and the Mohammedans should not have been ignorant, that since temporal and worldly advantages were insufficient in themselves to satisfy the boundless desires of the human heart, they could not come in competition with those benefits which true religion had peculiarly designed for him. But both these

<sup>1</sup> Dr. W. E. Channing's *Discourse on the Evidences of Revealed Religion*, pp. 36. 38. Bristol, 1824. (Reprinted from the American edition.)

<sup>2</sup> Isa. lviii. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings xviii. 28.

followed the motions of self-love, which being naturally held in suspense between the world and religion, imagines that nothing can be more pleasant than to unite them both, thinking thereby to reconcile its inclination and duty, consecrate its pleasures, and put no difference between conscience and interest.

But the first rule of true religion teaches us that that mutual agreement is impossible; or, to use its own words, that Christ and Belial are incompatible one with the other; that we must either glorify God at the expense of worldly pleasures, or possess the advantages of the world with the loss of our religion: and this certainly shows the Christian religion to have a divine character.

#### VI. In its HUMILIATION OF MAN AND EXALTATION OF THE DEITY.

Other false religions debase the Deity and exalt man; whereas the Christian religion *humbles man, and exalts the Deity*. The Egyptians, a nation that boasted so much of their antiquity, made monsters of their deities; and the Romans made deities of their emperors, many of whom were rather monsters than men: the most famous philosophers were not ashamed to rank their deities below themselves, and themselves even before Jupiter. But the Christian religion teaches us that we owe all to God, who owes nothing at all to us. It humbles us by the consideration of that infinite distance which there is between God and us: it shows that we are miserable despicable creatures in comparison of God, who is a Supreme Being, and who alone is worthy of our love and adoration. Who, then, can but admire so excellent a religion?

#### VII. In its RESTORATION OF ORDER TO THE WORLD.

Other religions made us depend upon those beings which were given us to command, and pretend a power over that Supreme Being upon whom we ought only to depend. They taught men to burn incense to the meanest creatures, and impudently to equal themselves to the universal monarch of the world. It is indeed no wonder that men should be so impious as to desire to become gods, since they were so base as to forget that they were men; and yet how ill their pride became them when they disdained not to submit to four-footed beasts, to the fowls of the air, and to the creeping animals and plants of the earth, as St. Paul reproaches them; and how basely superstitious were they, in that they were not content to deify themselves, but would also deify their own vices and imperfections! But the Christian religion alone restores that equitable order which ought to be established in the world, by submitting every thing to the power of man, that he might submit himself to the will of God. And what can be the duty of true religion, but to restore such just and becoming order in the world?

#### VIII. In its TENDENCY TO ERADICATE ALL EVIL PASSIONS FROM THE HEART.

We need no deep research into other religions to find that they chiefly tend to flatter the corrupt desires of men, and efface those principles of justice and uprightness which God has imprinted on their minds. But he that shall truly consider the Christian religion, will certainly find that it tends to the eradication of those corrupt desires out of our hearts, and restoring those bright characters of honesty and justice imprinted on our minds by the hand of God. The heathens flattered their passions to such a degree as to erect altars in honour of them; and Mohammed was so well pleased with temporal prosperity, that he made it the end and reward of his religion. The Gnostics imagined that when they had arrived at a certain degree of knowledge, which they called a state of perfection, they might commit all sorts of actions without any scruple of conscience; and that sin, which polluted others, would be sanctified in them. But what blindness! what impiety was this! How admirable is the Christian religion, which alone, among all others, shows us our own wickedness and corruption, and heals it with such remedies as are as wholesome to the soul as unpleasing to the body.

#### IX. In its CONTRARIETY to the covetousness and ambition of mankind.

It is, moreover, worthy of remark, that other religions are contrary to policy, either in favouring or restraining too much human weakness and corruption upon



the account of policy; whereas the Christian religion preserves its rights and privileges inviolable, *independent of either*. The pagan religion was against policy in giving too much to human weakness and corruption. It would have been much better for the good and welfare of the state, if men had framed to themselves a greater idea of the holiness of their gods; because they would have been less licentious, and more submissive to the civil laws: whereas they were encouraged by the example of their deities to violate the most sacred and inviolable rights. Mohammed, desirous to avoid this irregularity, retained the notion of a true God; but then, being willing also to flatter men's inclinations in order to draw them to his side, he confusedly mixed with that idea the carnal and gross notions which the heathens had entertained of paradise, borrowing from Christianity such objects as must necessarily mortify our passions, and assuming those from paganism which serve to flatter our bad inclinations. But the Christian religion keeps no such measures either with policy or corruption. Policy complains that the doctrine of Christ necessarily softens men's courage; and that instead of encouraging them to enlist themselves soldiers for the welfare and preservation of the state, it rather makes them lambs, who can hardly be exasperated against their enemies, whom they must continually pray for, and are obliged to love as themselves. And human frailty and corruption murmurs to see itself impugned by the Christian religion, even in the dispositions and most secret recesses of the soul; and that the veil of hypocrisy, and the pious pretences and dissimulations of the soul under which it ought to lie secure, are ineffectual against it. Who, then, but God, can be the author of a religion so equally contrary both to the covetous desires of the mean, and the ambition of the great, and so equally averse both to policy and corruption?

#### X. In its RESTORATION OF THE DIVINE IMAGE TO MAN.

Other religions would have God bear the image of man, and so necessarily represent the Deity as weak, miserable, and infected with all manner of vices, as men are. Whereas the Christian religion teaches us that man ought to bear the image of God; which is a motive to induce us to become perfect, as we conceive God himself to be holy and perfect. That religion, then, which restores to God his glory, and the image of God to man, must necessarily be of divine authority.

#### XI. In its MIGHTY EFFECTS.

False religions were the irregular confused productions of the politest and ablest men of those times: whereas the Christian religion is a wonderful composition, which seems wholly to proceed from the most simple and ignorant sort of people; and, at the same time, it is such as evinces that it *must* have for its principle the God of holiness and love. They who *habitually* apply the Christian religion in their tempers and lives, and who imbibe its spirit and hopes, have an evidence of its superiority still more internal than any which has hitherto been mentioned; — an evidence which is to be *FELT* rather than described, but which is not less real because it is founded on feeling. We refer to that conviction of the divine original of the Christian religion, which springs up and continually gains strength in their hearts. "In such men there is a consciousness of the adaptation of Christianity to their noblest faculties; a consciousness of its exalting and consoling influences, of its power to confer the true happiness of human nature, to give that peace which the world cannot give; which assures them that it is not of earthly origin, but a ray from the everlasting light, a stream from the fountain of heavenly wisdom and love. This is the evidence which sustains the faith of thousands, who never read and cannot understand the learned books of Christian apologists; who want, perhaps, words to explain the ground of their belief, but whose faith is of adamantine firmness; who hold the Gospel with a conviction more intimate and unwavering, than mere argument can produce."<sup>1</sup>

And now let us put together all these characters, and ask the opposers of revelation, whether they can be so extravagant as to ascribe to an impostor a religion so perfect in its original, that nothing could ever since be superadded to it, but what necessarily lessens its

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Channing's Discourse on the Evidences of Revealed Religion, p. 44.

perfection; a religion that proposes its mysteries with such authority and boldness; that brings men from sensual objects to spiritual ones; that extirpates corruption; that restores the principles of righteousness and uprightness which were imprinted in our souls; that teaches us to glorify God without any regard to self-love or pleasure; to exalt God and humble ourselves; to submit ourselves to his will, who is above us all, and to raise ourselves above those beings which he has put in subjection under us; a religion that is contrary to policy, and yet more averse to corruption; that astonishes our reason, and yet gives us the peace of a good conscience; and, in a word, is as delightful to the one as it is comfortable to the other?

If the Christian religion, then, has all these qualifications, as it certainly has, we cannot doubt but that it is directly, as to these qualifications, opposite to all other religions. And if it be thus opposite to all other religions, it must necessarily have a principle opposite to them; so that, as all other religions peculiarly belong to the flesh, the Christian wholly appertains to the spirit; and as the former are the products of the corrupt desires and imaginations of men, so the latter must have for its principle the God of holiness and purity.<sup>1</sup>

The preceding considerations will derive additional force if we contrast the advantages which infidelity and Christianity respectively afford to those who embrace them.

Let it be supposed, then, that the deist is right, and that Christianity is a delusion; what does the former gain? In what respects has he the advantage? Is the deist *happier* than the Christian? No. — Is he *more useful* in society? No. — Can he meet the sorrows of life with *more fortitude*? No. — Can he look into futurity with *more composure*? No. His highest bliss arises from base lusts; his conscience is his daily tormentor; his social circle is a wilderness overgrown with thorns; his life is perfect madness; and of his death it may be said, that *he dieth as a fool dieth*. But the Christian is happy in himself, or rather in his Saviour; he is *useful* in his day; amid all the tumults and anxieties incident to mortality, he enjoys a peace which the world can neither give nor take away; his mind is supported under all the sorrows and afflictions of life; and, in that awful moment, when the great problem is about to be solved, — of annihilation or eternity, — he looks forward to futurity with holy tranquillity. *At least*, he is as safe in his death as any of the children of men.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, let it be supposed that the antagonist of revelation is *wrong*, and that Christianity is **TRUE** (and **TRUE** it will be

<sup>1</sup> Abbadie's Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion, vol. ii. pp. 307—320. But the fullest view of the superiority of the Christian Revelation will be found in the Rev. Jerome Alley's "Vindiciæ Christianæ: a Comparative Estimate of the Genius and Temper of the Greek, the Roman, the Hindu, the Mahometan, and the Christian Religions" (London, 1826, 8vo.);—a work written with equal elegance, accuracy, and research

<sup>2</sup> On the subject of the preceding paragraph, the reader will find several admirable and eloquent observations in Dr. Dwight's Two Discourses on the Nature and Danger of Infidel Philosophy, pp. 69—98.

*found*), what advantage has the Christian more than the infidel — the believer than the unbeliever? or what does it profit us to be Christ's peculiar people? Much every way. For if our happiness in a future state, as is highly probable, shall increase in proportion to what we know, believe, and practise of our duty, upon a principle of obedience to the will of God, in the present life; the consequence is indisputable, that the more we know, believe, and practise of our duty here, so much the more pure and exalted will be our joys in the eternal mansions of bliss hereafter. This, then, is the Christian's boasting, and this our serious triumph, that the Holy Scriptures have made us fully acquainted with all the various relations in which we stand to the Divine Nature, as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and constant assistant in our progress towards perfection; that our whole duty is laid open to our view, and that we never can be ignorant of what is the good and acceptable will of our Sovereign Lord; that we have the strongest motives of gratitude and interest to animate us to live up to the law of our being; and that we are filled with the comfortable assurance that our merciful God and Father will receive our sincere though imperfect endeavours to serve and please him, in and through the death and mediation of his Son Jesus Christ. *The best Christian must be the best, and, consequently, upon the whole, will be the happiest man.* Let it not, therefore, be imagined, as is too often the case, that God arbitrarily assigns to Christians a higher degree of happiness than to others, without having a proper regard to their moral agency, and that this is the doctrine of the Gospel. On the contrary, the faith of sincere Christians is always directed to the right and best object, their piety is of the noblest kind, and their virtues the most pure and extensive: to be uniformly engaged in an upright, benevolent, and religious course of action is the solemn vow and profession of Christians. In a word, the deist, by wilfully rejecting all moral evidence, *forfeits all things, and gains nothing*; while **THE CHRISTIAN HAZARDS NOTHING, AND GAINS ALL THINGS.**

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#### SECT. VI.

INABILITY TO ANSWER ALL OBJECTIONS NO JUST CAUSE FOR REJECTING THE SCRIPTURES. — UNBELIEVERS IN DIVINE REVELATION MORE CREDULOUS THAN CHRISTIANS.<sup>1</sup>

ALL the objections which can with any colour or pretence be alleged against the Scriptures have at different times been considered and answered by men of great learning and judgment, the result of whose inquiries we have attempted to concentrate in the present volume; and several objections, particularly those relative to the Mosaic history of the creation and of the deluge, have been demonstrated to be groundless and frivolous. But even though all the diffi-

<sup>1</sup> For the materials of this section, the author is indebted to Dr. Jenkin's *Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion*, vol. ii. pp. 548—554.; to Dr. Ryan's *Evidences of the Mosaic and Christian Codes*, pp. 293—296.; and to Dr. Samuel Clarke's *Discourse on the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion*, &c. Proposition xv. (Boyle's Lectures, vol. ii. pp. 192—196. folio. edit.)

culties that are alleged to exist in the Sacred Writings could not be accounted for, yet this would be no just or sufficient cause why we should reject the Scriptures: because objections for the most part are impertinent to the purpose for which they were designed, and do not at all affect the *evidence* which is brought in proof of the Scriptures; and if they were pertinent, yet unless they could confute that evidence, they ought not to determine us against them.

He that, with an honest and sincere desire to find out the truth or falsehood of a revelation, inquires into it, should first consider impartially what can be alleged for it, and afterwards consider the objections raised against it, that so he may compare the arguments in proof of it and the objections together, and determine himself on that side which appears to have most reason for it. But to insist upon particular objections, collected out of difficult places of Scripture, without attending to the main grounds and motives which induce a belief of the truth of the Scriptures, is a very fallacious mode of arguing; because it is not in the least improbable that there may be a true revelation which may have great difficulties in it. But if sufficient evidence be produced to convince us that the Scriptures are indeed the word of God, and there be no proof on the contrary to invalidate that evidence, then all the objections besides that can be raised, are but objections, and *no more!*<sup>1</sup> For if those arguments, by which our religion appears to be true, remain still in their full force, notwithstanding the objections, and if no positive and direct proof be brought that they are insufficient, we ought not to reject those arguments and the conclusions deduced from them on account of the objections, but to reject the objections for the sake of those arguments; because, if those cannot be disproved, all the objections which can be conceived must proceed from some mistake. For when a person is once assured of the truth of a thing by direct and positive proof, he has the same assurance that all objections against it must be vain and false which he has that such a thing is true; because every thing must be false which is opposite to truth, and nothing but that which takes off the arguments, by which anything is proved to be true, can ever prove it false; but all objections must be false themselves or irrelevant to the purpose for which they are alleged, if the evidence for the truth of that against which they are brought cannot be disproved, that is, if the thing against which they are brought be true.

To illustrate these observations by a few examples:— If a man produce never so many inconsistencies, as he thinks, in the Scriptures, yet unless he be as well assured, at least, that these which he calls inconsistencies cannot be in any book of divine revelation, as he may be that the Scriptures are of divine revelation, he cannot in reason reject their authority. And to be assured of this, it must be considered what is inconsistent with the evidence whereby the authority of the Scriptures is proved to us; for whatever is not inconsistent with this evidence cannot be inconsistent with their authority. In like manner, if a man should frame never so many objections against

<sup>1</sup> On this subject the reader will find some admirable observations in Dr. Watt's *Caveat against Infidelity*, Section 5. Advice xi. Works, vol. iv. p. 105. London, 1810. 4to.