



The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.—ROM. vi. 23.

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FOR THE REMEMBRANCER.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

NO. 1.

*Atque illud in firmis mihi latendum jure esse videtur, quod in hac insuetudine mihi ex hoc loco ratione dicendi, causa talis oblata est, in qua oratio nemini deesse potest.*  
CICERO.

The most extraordinary of all the ambitious projects of Charles V. was his attempt to reduce all the nations of Europe, then embroiled by the controversies between the Catholics and the Protestants, to a uniform rule of religious faith and worship. It appears that he lived long enough to discover and confess his folly. In his retreat at the monastery of St. Justus, where he spent the latter years of his life, retired from the busy world, he devoted a part of his time to practical mechanics; and failing in a laborious and patient effort to make two watches keep exact time, he is said to have exclaimed, 'What a fool was I to attempt regulating the opinions of all Europe, who am unable to regulate the movements of two watches.'

In the present age, all coercive measures to alter, modify, or restrain the opinions of men, on any subject, appear the extreme of folly and of tyranny. It would be a waste of words to attempt a formal proof of a principle which nobody thinks of questioning. In fact, the empire of Mind owes no submission, save to the sceptre of Truth. We must not even imagine that we have paid all the respect that is due to the independence of men's minds, when we shall have forborne to injure them in their persons and social rights, on account of their opinions. Correct morality seems to prescribe, not merely that we should offer no violence towards those who differ from us in opinion, but that we should not officiously disturb them in the enjoyment of the right of private judgment, which they exercise peaceably with regard to us; innocently, perhaps, in respect to themselves; and under an awful responsibility to their Creator. It is surely an unamiable trait in character to be fond of contradiction and disputation on matters trivial and inconsequential. This propensity is dangerous, in proportion to the facility with which it can find opportunities of indulgence. For what sentiment do we hear from morning to night falling from the lips of the most intelligent men, which would not admit modification or amendment? How few doctrines are so well established, as to need no farther proof, or so clear as to require no new illustration? But was the world erected a stage for cavilling! The society of disputatious persons, so far at least as my observations reach, answers no one purpose of intellectual or moral improvement, and to the charities of life, and social pleasures, it is plainly hostile.

Yet there are errors of that atrocious character, that the most imperious obligations bind us to oppose, encounter, refute and overthrow them. If, for instance, a friend or brother (and such every man should esteem every other man) should unhappily have formed or embraced sentiments highly injurious to himself or others; should he not only hold them to his own personal detriment, but esteem himself bound to publish and diffuse them to the manifest risk and damage of multitudes; in such a case it becomes an imperative and indispensable duty in those who are aware of the error and its dangerous tendencies, to exert themselves manfully for its refutation. Such interference is not impertinence, it is not intrusion, it is not an inva-

sion of the rights of private judgment; but it is a dignified, manly, moral endeavour to advance the cause of truth, of duty, and of human happiness.

The question at issue between Christians and those who, among other appellations, are denominated Deists;—a name invented and imposed upon them by themselves, as at once descriptive and honourable;—is of incalculable magnitude and importance. It is no less than whether that system of religious belief which we have been taught from our infancy; whether that code of moral discipline which has restrained and regulated our passions, and formed the entire system of our practical habits; whether those high hopes and expectations, which are the balm of our troubled lives, and our sole consolation in the hour of death, be founded in truth and in reality: or whether, on the contrary, they be in all their amplitude and connections the mere figments of imagination, without evidence and without foundation. The numerous and ponderous volumes which Deists have compiled on this controversy, and the zeal and obstinacy with which they pursue their purpose, are proofs of the importance which they attach to the subject. The importance which Christians attach to it need not be mentioned.

Previous to the discussion of evidence, there is one profile of the theme to which I would invite the reader's serious attention. Christianity has now for more than a thousand years been the great rule of religion and morals over a very large portion of the world. During that period, it has been shooting its roots in all directions through society, and entwining its branches around all that is sublimely great, or minutely interesting; around our hearths and our altars; around our senates and our chairs of state; around our tribunals and our seats of learning; around our fleets and our armies. Nay, in its majestic windings it has encircled whole nations, and bound them together by common ligaments of opinion and esteem, of charity and sympathy, which are scarcely to be burst asunder by the most sanguinary wars. Over the whole of christendom there is scarcely a trait of individual or of national character which has not been less or more influenced or modified by the Christian religion. Is it on slight grounds that such a system, so incorporated with the vitals of so many great nations, should be brought into question and jeopardy? Have we calculated the certainty, have we gauged and estimated the effects of that great moral revolution which the abolition of the Christian religion would produce? Should such an event ever take place, its operation will have a sweeping extent. The bare possibility of it fills me with terror; and I think it possible. But what a scene is to follow! The system of education revolutionised; morals quite changed; social intercourse flowing in new channels and regulated by new principles; man himself altered and metamorphosed into a new order of being. I am not at present presuming either the truth or falsehood of Christianity; I speak of it merely as a moral system, whose supposed truth and authority have given it the power to mould mankind into a certain character. But should they at length be persuaded that it is equally destitute of truth and authority, they will soon disabuse themselves of its usurped influence, tear from their bosoms the last fibril of the detected superstition, and fancy themselves advancing towards genuine excellence in proportion as they recede

from its precepts and spirit. What a revolution!

—et quæ sit terre mortalibus orbe  
Forma futura rogant: quis sit laturus in aras  
Thura—.

Those who feel a kindling zeal to oppose Christianity, if they have any bowels of pity for mankind, should deliberately consider that the question which they are about to agitate, is not one of those empty problems proposed on purpose to exercise the wits of a debating club, or test the acumen of a class of logical wranglers in the cloisters of a university. The habits, the morals, the consolations, the hopes and fears of millions, are involved in the issue. These are not light matters; nor should they ever be made the sport of wanton doubt and scepticism, of idle debate and litigation. No man who sincerely wishes well to mankind, can, consistently with that benevolence, attempt to undermine, or in the slightest degree to weaken their faith in the Christian religion, unless upon the three following conditions: First, he must be able to prove to a demonstration, that Christianity is absolutely false: Secondly, he must prove by facts that it has been manifestly injurious to every nation where it has gained admission: Thirdly, he must either shew that society would be better without it than with it, or else he must be prepared to substitute in its room some other system, so far preferable to it, that mankind may prudently consent to incur the calamities and dangers inseparable from a change of the old system, in full assurance that they will be more than balanced by the ultimate benefits of the new. On no other conditions can any man ever claim the right of opposing the Christian religion. And so soon as these conditions shall have been complied with, most cheerfully will we devote our Christianity a sacrifice to truth and human happiness. We will do more; we will ourselves, like Abraham, draw the slaughtering knife, satisfied that God has bidden us.

CRITO.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE REMEMBRANCER.

DEAR SIR,

There is no intelligence generally more pleasing to the faithful, zealous Christian, than receiving or hearing accounts of revivals of religion. Having observed something of this kind in your paper before, it may afford some gratification to your readers, who are well wishers to, and who are praying for, the prosperity of Zion, to peruse the following extracts of letters received from the State of New Jersey, at a place a few miles from Philadelphia [five miles below Woodbury.] The revival is amongst the youth; and what is still more pleasing, in an Episcopal Church and congregation destitute of a regular Minister. The congregation regularly assemble—and the lay-brethren, in turn, officiate by performing the service and reading a sermon.

R. H.

Cross Roads, January 20th, 1814.

Rev. Brother,

I compare myself, at this present time, to the man of Macedonia that St. Paul in his vision saw, saying, come over and help us; for the time of refreshing hath visited us from the presence of the Lord: as it is spoken by the prophet Joel; "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my