

The Religious Remembrancer.



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.

Answer to Cerio's Letter.

Sir,

The letter which you directed to me seems to have been written by the trembling hand of an aged foreigner. It bears strong marks of sincerity; and were I personally acquainted with the writer, I doubt not but I should address him as one dear to me. I should probably find him in spiritual things a native of the celestial country, for a while a *foreigner* here below, whose home is heaven, and whose Father God.

It was your duty to have made solemn election of that God, into whose name you were baptized, for your Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, so soon as you were capable of giving rational assent to the truths of the gospel. No sinner can, without insulting the glorious Being who gave him life with all its pleasures, and the word of grace with all its privileges, refuse to take upon himself voluntarily, the very same obligations which God imposed upon him at his birth, and particularly at his baptism, by his sovereign authority. After your baptism, you were in a peculiar sense God's property; and were under higher obligations than a person not baptized, to walk before the Lord in ALL the ordinances of his house, in a blameless manner. It was your duty to celebrate the Lord's supper so soon as you were capable of understanding the nature of that holy ordinance; and it was incumbent on your parents to exhort you to the performance of that duty, and the enjoyment of that privilege. But if your parents did not explain the design of the Eucharist, they were criminally negligent; and if you did not approach the Lord's table with a renewed mind, with faith in Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from sin and hell, with evangelical conviction, with a broken heart, with a design to glorify God, and with a sincere resolution to live as it becometh the ransomed children of God, you were guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; guilty of sinning against your own soul, and against the bleeding Lamb of God. No baptized person, who has arrived at years of discretion, can absent himself wilfully from the Lord's supper without sin; and no one can approach with an unbelieving mind, with an impenitent heart, with all his sins upon his head, without dreadfully offending THE ETERNAL.

What shall a sinner do then? Shall he absent himself? No. Shall he come without saving faith? No. He must believe in the Son of God, that he may be saved, and so eat of that bread and drink of that cup, as to obtain strength, and honour Him who has given us, in the doctrines of grace, nutriment for spiritual life.

It is not possible for your correspondent to decide whether you were not, a living member of Jesus Christ, when you first celebrated his death; but this is certain, that if you did really *pray* for the teaching of the Spirit of God, you had the spirit of adoption, and was a child of the Most High. If you merely repeated a form of words, or *pretended to pray*, you were an unsanctified formalist in religion.

That you were kept from much evil, and from scandalous crimes, is a matter of gratitude, and you should bless God that his Providence, operating either through the restraints imposed by education, or through gracious affections, or through a native amiability of disposition, was your preservation. Our thanks are due to our kind PROTECTOR for many *gifts or graces*, which are not *saving graces*, or *gifts* inseparably connected with eternal salvation. If God gave you an affectionate, kind, be-

nevolent, social disposition, when he formed you a man, bless him for the *natural grace*; and if he has been pleased to *give* you the sanctification of your native disposition through his Word and Spirit, bless him more abundantly for this *spiritual grace*, which is a prelude to everlasting felicity.

You may have been a *babe* in Christ, and may have lived in a state of *spiritual childhood* in the old world. You may have been a child of God, who was for a time negligent, and a backslider; or you may have been visited by the Holy Ghost unto salvation for the first time, when "it pleased the Almighty to stir your mind to more serious thoughts of religion." It is, however, of little importance to ascertain the *time* of your being regenerated, in comparison with knowing the *fact* of your being a *new creature*. You may have read much, and done much, without giving any evidence of being the subject of the birth unto spiritual, divine, everlasting life; but if you are now a Christian, you may, in a course of serious and prayerful examination, discover in yourself all the properties of one who is *quickened together with Christ*.

The signs of spiritual life are best discovered by an allusion to the faculties and operations of the natural man.

THE NATURAL MAN is alive to natural things.

He perceives natural objects.

He has knowledge in human sciences, and *practical knowledge* of their use.

He knows not God, as a Father, Friend and Portion. He knows not Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour, of whom he has need.

From the perception of natural objects he reasons about them, derives inferences, forms judgments, and believes in the existence of the objects which he sees, hears, feels, smells, or tastes.

He believes upon sufficient testimony from his father, or any other credible witness, concerning human affairs; but does not accredit the testimony of God concerning his Son, the natural man, the way of life, heaven and hell.

When he reflects he is conscious of activity, thought and feeling in regard to natural objects.

He remembers the objects of his natural knowledge; but has no remembrance of spiritual knowledge.

He feels no happiness in spiritual perceptions, reflections, and thoughts generally, because he has neither holy thought nor sanctified sensation.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN is alive to spiritual things.

He perceives spiritual objects.

He has knowledge of divine things; and *practical knowledge* of their use.

He knows God as a Father, Friend and Portion. He knows Jesus Christ, as the only Saviour, of whom he has need.

From the perception of spiritual things he reasons about them, derives inferences, forms judgments, and believes in the existence of the objects which he perceives by his spiritual senses.

He believes upon sufficient testimony, not only in relation to human affairs; but he fully accredits the testimony of the Heavenly Father, concerning his Son, the natural man, the way of life, heaven and hell.

When he reflects he is conscious of activity, thought and feeling in regard to the things of God.

He not only remembers the objects of his natural knowledge, but also of his spiritual.

He feels happiness in spiritual perceptions, reflections, remembrance, and knowledge generally, which is spiritual, holy sensation.

He *wills* in relation to natural things, but never chooses the things which please God.

He *wills* in relation to both natural and spiritual things, and often chooses the things which please God.

If the Lord permit, I will continue this subject in a subsequent letter.

Your's respectfully, ————

FOR THE REMEMBRANCER.

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

NO. II.

"I cannot conceive how this sort of writers propose to compass the designs they pretend to have in view, by the instruments they employ. Do they pretend to exalt the mind of man, by proving him no better than a beast? Do they think to enforce the practice of virtue, by denying that vice and virtue are distinguished by good or ill fortune here, or by happiness or misery hereafter? Do they imagine they shall increase our piety, and our reliance on God, by exploding his providence, and insisting that he is neither just nor good?"

BURKE.

In the foregoing number, I shewed, that considering the influence of the Christian religion on the morals and happiness of a large portion of mankind, we have much stronger motives for wishing it true, and, if true, for defending and fortifying it; than the deist can have for wishing it false, or, if even false, for attempting its subversion. I shall now proceed to shew, that throughout this whole argument the believer displays a character of much higher intellectual and moral dignity, than the unbeliever. In order that this comparison may be conducted on fair principles, I shall suppose our believer and our unbeliever equal in natural intelligence, mental culture, general information, candour of judgment, honesty of declaration; in all personal, in all social accomplishments and virtues. I make them both excellent men, that we may have nothing to censure in either; and equal in excellence, that there may be no ground for preference. Let us then contemplate them in that single point of view which displays the sole difference between them.

On a glance, it is apparent that the believer (in his own view of the subject) has discovered, and labours to establish, a system of positive truth; a code of moral law co-extensive with the human powers, and all the diversified relations of man; its basis immutable truth and justice, its end the glory of the Creator and the felicity of the creature. What sublime conception! The Creator legislating for the empire of mind! Whether his system be true or false, there is no cause why you should look down on the man. If true, what theme, I pray you, is there on which a man of intelligence and genius, ought rather to employ his powers? In what enterprise should a man of courage and virtue embark, if not in this, of exerting himself to establish and extend such a system among mankind? But suppose christianity incapable of displaying the demonstration of its truth: let the believer be viewed as a visionary who has embraced an extensive system on inadequate evidence; still you must grant that there is much of real grandeur in the conception. The worst that can be said, is to call it, the sublime wandering of genius beyond the illuminated boundaries of the universe. The morality of the theorist stands clear of all possible imputation. There is much of be-

nevolence in the wish of subjecting mankind to a known and equal rule of moral action, and in the attempts to discover some cordial to cheer the spirits under the afflictions of a calamitous life.

Let us now turn and survey the unbeliever; and on the first inspection we will perceive that his system, even if demonstratively true, is far remote from all ideas of dignity: A long unedifying creed of negative principles. He does *not* believe the doctrines of the Scripture to be true; he does *not* believe its laws obligatory: He does *not* believe the hopes and consolations it inspires to possess any real substance. His whole system is one vast and boundless waste and wilderness of negation. From this dark and barren region, so parched and cheerless, the understanding returns jaded and dejected, not enriched by a single discovery, save that most mortifying one, that there was no positive truth to be discovered. The deist's creed is a worthless thing at best. To what one purpose can it be applied? As soon may *nothing* create a world, as a negative creed produce either virtue or vice, happiness or misery in society.* Nothing effects nothing. So that even supposing the deist's creed ever so true, it is mean and worthless; and some other reason than its natural value and efficacy, must be alledged before its propagators can be acquitted of wasting their efforts for nothing. But if you suppose the deist in an error; if christianity should prove true, his negative creed to the contrary notwithstanding, how alarming is his condition? Why did he dare to examine so awful a question, with so little care as to render mistake possible? Admitting that he can reconcile himself to trifle with his own immortal interest; how dare he, by becoming a propagator of infidelity, to trifle with the eternal interests of mankind? Was he born to be a curse to humanity?

Throughout this comparison I have considered the deist in the simple character of a demolisher of christianity; eager to demolish, ignorant or careless to re-edify. How far this representation accords with the truth of facts, I am willing to leave to the decision of every candid observer. I am not, however, ignorant that it suits a purpose, on some occasions, for deists to pretend that their motive for attempting to level the uncouth and antiquated structure of the Christian religion, is that they may erect on its site a more stately temple to Reason, in all the regular proportions, and with all the conveniences and decorations of modern and more enlightened architecture. The sincerity of these declarations might be questioned without any violent outrage on modesty or delicacy. It might be asked what *positive* system of religious doctrine have they ever attempted to propagate? What moral code have they adopted, and by what are their laws sanctioned? What temples have they built for the new and reformed worship of the Deity? What constitutes the bond of their union, what unites them in heart and interest, what consolations have they to offer their poor, their sick, their dying brethren? What hospitals, what public charities have they endowed for the relief and comfort of decayed infidels? Surely if there were any thing positive in their system, it would produce some positive effect. Their religion, like every other religion, would assume some visible and tangible form and essence, and display itself in the social organizations of its votaries.

Yet let me admit for argument sake, that the deist really intends to substitute a religion in room of that which he would destroy. Let me suppose him to war against christianity, on the same princi-

* The above sentiment may, to some readers, seem harsh and erroneous. I hope however to escape the imputation of hypercritical accuracy, when I insist that deism is a mere negation, and never did, nor can do either good or evil. It is, I confess, closely associated with most operative and destructive principles. The negation of moral restraint gives license to the lusts of our nature; and permits every man to destroy himself in his own way. But it is not the *negative* creed, but the *positive* lust that produces the effect.

ple that Christians war against pagan superstitions; that he demolishes only that he may build; that he eradicates weeds and thorns, only that he may plant the earth with esculent vegetables; in a word that we shall certainly obtain a new and vigorous religion in lieu of one wearing old and ready to vanish away.

I must ask then of what materials this new religion is to be composed? It surely cannot be a religion by EXTRAORDINARY REVELATION; for extraordinary revelation, was swept away together with the christianity which it supported. They stood together, and they have fallen together. The new religion, then, must be the most pure defecated sublimated essence of philosophy, deduced from a thorough analysis of the perfections of the Deity displayed in his works, especially his noblest work, man. Be it so. For nothing better can be supposed.

But wherein has the deist the superiority, even on this supposition? That PHILOSOPHY, so far as it is attainable by man, we have already. Our bible recognises the works of creation as a kindred volume; and, taking us by the hand, leads us forth into the midst of them and instructs us how to deduce from them the perfections of our Maker, and the laws of social virtue. The Christian has already all that the deist proposes to give him, and his bible besides. Revealed religion first turned the attention of man to the moral consideration of the universe. Faith opened his ears to the true harmony of the spheres, and caused him to hear with rapture the voice of the sun, moon and stars praising their Maker. It has taught him to give meaning to storms and winds and thunder. It has sent him to the raven's nest, and lion's den, to the ant-hill and coney-ledge, to the turtle and the crane and the swallow, in a word, to every department of animate and inanimate nature, to collect analogies which illustrate, recommend and enforce the laws of rational and moral action. If the deist insists on ranging the wide field of nature's analogies and laws, we have not the least objection to bear him company, but we beg permission to take our bible along. It will admit all that he will discover. Whatever it may add, it will deduct nothing from the acquisitions of his philosophical research. Its *hortus siccus* will not blast a single flower in nature's domain; and perhaps it may facilitate the labour of classification.

I here drop these introductory remarks. They were not prompted by the least desire or inclination to pre-judge the question, or to secure an undue advantage to the Christian in the conducting of the investigation. But I was desirous of stripping the cause of deism of an advantage very unfairly assumed, and held with unreasonable glorifying and triumph. The deist never presents himself to the contest, without displaying the over-bearing bullying insolence of a Goliath. In the very statement of his cause, christianity dwindles at once into a mere legend, a perfect jumble of priest-craft, and state-craft, and nursery tales; and the whole body of christians in gross and in detail are exhibited in the belittling attitude of persons blindfolded and led along by mere authority; surrendering tamely and ingloriously their understanding to fictions which degrade it. Was it improper to examine a little, the foundations of such loftiness? Was it unfair to shew that Christianity (whether on examination found true or false) has an undeniable greatness and grandeur in its design, which is nothing less than to furnish a rule of moral action to the whole human race, fair, equitable, practicable and beneficial; and to provide for human sorrows the best consolations the case admits. If this be not a sublime conception, if this be not an august and marvellous undertaking, there is nothing sublime, august or marvellous within the compass of human thought. And I am content to leave it to any man to say, whether the mere negation of this system, the mere negation of that rule, and of those consolations, be not the most poverty-struck, jejune and

shrivelled theme that poetry or prose ever dressed off for public exhibition.

Indeed it was not till these latter times that deists could reconcile themselves to so low a stoop; but having reached this lowest depth, "a lower still stood gaping to devour them," and in the bottomless abyss of atheism and scepticism, they found the quiescent centre of repose for their intellectual dignity. The ancient deists pretended to establish a system of their own, and they called themselves Deists, or Adorers of God, according to a system of natural religion, which they affected to demonstrate from the works of creation and Providence. They also were far from deficient in a due respect to their own merit. The race is not quite extinct yet, though greatly thinned by the conquests of the christians on the one hand, and still more by treaties of amity peace and commerce with the atheists and sceptics on the other. They introduce themselves to your acquaintance as sages; they are PHILOSOPHERS:

ποσει την αληθιναν η ορθην

Nature is their bible; God's unquestionable volume, whose authenticity is as visible as its authority is indisputable. Their religion is composed of the very laws of nature, and must of consequence be as perfect as nature herself, and as durable as the universe. All this sounds well. Was it not, then, quite consistent with courteousness to remind these men that the volume of Nature is spread as wide open to Christians as to them; that the bible recognises its authority, and gives admirable specimens of the mode of interpreting it: And that if the same bible should happen to throw light on some of the obscurities of nature; if it should lend authority to what might seem to need support. if it should even open up new walks to the human understanding, and communicate somewhat beyond the lessons of nature; it will be hard to shew what disadvantage will on these accounts result to the Christian as a philosophical investigator of the laws of nature. or why pretensions of this kind should be thought to place him on less honourable ground in the present debate than that occupied by deists.

But I dismiss such matters. And shall proceed, in my next number, to the statement and illustration of the question at issue. CRITO.

FOR THE REMEMBRANCE.

Letter of a dying Son, warning an irreligious Father of his dangerous state.

My dear Father,

Before this reaches you, my eyes will be closed in death and my body laid in the narrow house appointed for all living. As the natural author of my being. I love and venerate you. For all the kindnesses I have received at your hands and that of my ever respected mother, accept of that gratitude, which a son owes to his parents. You will perceive that I have to use the hand of another, to exhibit in this way, the feelings of my heart; It is filled with sensations too big for utterance; yet your eternal welfare presses so heavily on me, that to be silent on this all important point, would be a crime of the blackest hue! I have felt the weight of sin, and I trust in Him who knoweth all things, that the Lord has also made me to know its awful guilt. I have been a transgressor from the womb, and not only have committed sin, but wofully omitted the duties which I owed to God, whom I now feel to be the only good: Who I hope by his all powerful grace has reconciled my carnal heart to him, and is now reconciled to me, through the righteous atonement of my once crucified but now risen and triumphant Lord and Redeemer.

The hour of death is no time for dissimulation. Here at the verge of the grave, that entrance into an awful eternity, the truth must appear, without any false colouring. To this dreadful period I