

The Rev^d DAVID SIMPSON, A.M.

Simpson. 220.

SACRED LITERATURE:

SHEWING THE

HOLY SCRIPTURES

TO BE SUPERIOR TO THE MOST CELEBRATED

WRITINGS OF ANTIQUITY,

BY THE TESTIMONY OF

ABOVE FIVE HUNDRED WITNESSES,

AND ALSO BY

A COMPARISON OF THEIR SEVERAL KINDS OF COMPOSITION.

IN TWELVE BOOKS,

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

EPISTLES AND EXTRACTS,

FROM SOME OF THE MOST

EARLY OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS.

THE WHOLE

Intended not only to recommend the BIBLE as superior to all other Books, but as a moral and theological Repository for Christians of every Rank and Degree.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

By the Revd. DAVID SIMPSON, M. A.

VOL. I.

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MDCCLXXXVIII.

TO

THE YOUNGER CLERGY OF EVERY DENOMINATION,

CANDIDATES FOR HOLY ORDERS,

AND

MASTERS OF GRAMMAR SCHOOLS,

THESE FOUR VOLUMES,

COLLECTED MORE IMMEDIATELY FOR THEIR USE,

ARE AFFECTIONATELY RECOMMENDED,

AND RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY

THEIR HUMBLE SERVANT,

The Editor.

I AM inclined to think, that a Chriſtian may poſſibly find a higher ſatisfaction in perſuading men to pay praiſes to the Scripture, than in receiving them from all the world beſides.

Sir Robert Boyle.

THE Bible is a book of ſuch tranſcendent worth, and ſo happily ſuited to all the parts and purpoſes of the Chriſtian life, that it can never be too much recommended to the world. Every thing that allures the world to peruſe it, is a bleſſing to mankind.

Doctor Watts.

UNBELIEVERS attempt to make proſelytes to infidelity by preſſing upon the minds of the unlearned in Scripture knowledge the authorities of Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Helvetius, Hume, and other deiſtical writers. It is proper, that young men ſhould be furniſhed with a ready anſwer to arguments in favour of infidelity, which are taken from the high literary characters of thoſe who profeſs it: let them remember then, that Bacon, Boyle, Newton, Grotius, Locke, Euler;——that Addiſon, Hartley, Hailer, Weſt, Jenyns;——that Lords Nottingham, King, Barrington, Littleton, with an hundred other laymen, who were ſurely as eminent for their literary attainments in every kind of ſcience as either Bolingbroke or Voltaire, were profeſſed believers of Chriſtianity. I am quite aware, that the truth of Chriſtianity cannot be eſtabliſhed by authorities; but neither can its falſehood be ſo eſtabliſhed. Arguments ad verecundiam *have little weight with thoſe who know how to uſe any others; but they have weight with the lazy and the ignorant on both ſides of the queſtion.*

Biſhop Watſon.

PREFACE.

VARIOUS are the means deviſed to inſtruct and entertain mankind. The Divine and Philoſopher, the Poet and Hiſtorian, are all engaged, though in different ways, to contribute to one or other of theſe purpoſes. All nature is explored, and every theme exhauſted, to furniſh freſh inſtruction or entertainment. Few indeed are equal to the buſineſs of ſtriking out a new path. How many ages paſſed from Homer to Virgil, and again from Virgil to Milton? Original genius, original thoughts, and original works, but rarely make their appearance. When they do appear, they attract our attention, and merit our veneration. The preſent Publication, however, can lay claim to no ſuch honour. Though the plan is, perhaps, original, the matter itſelf is not ſo. On the contrary, much of it has been laid before the Public, *at ſundry times, and in divers manners.* Its higheſt pretenſion is, to ſet old truths in a new light; to bring into one view a variety of uſeful and entertaining matter; but above all, to recommend the Holy Scriptures to the moſt ſerious attention of all ranks and degrees of men. Every perſon

ſeems obliged to caſt the beſt offering he is able into the treaſury of God, and, in one way or another, to contribute his mite towards the general Good. It is true,

> ——— God doth not need
> Either man's work or his own gifts; who beſt
> Bear his mild yoke, they ſerve him beſt: his ſtate
> Is kingly; thouſands at his bidding ſpeed,
> And poſt o'er land and ocean without reſt;
> They alſo ſerve who only ſtand and wait. *Milton.*

It may not be foreign to the deſign of theſe volumes to preſent the younger and leſs experienced Reader with a ſhort ſketch of the great Book of Nature, before he enters upon the recommendation and illuſtration of the Book of Revelation. For the Books of Nature and Revelation, in the words of a juſtly celebrated Chriſtian biſhop and philoſopher, equally elevate our conceptions, and incite our piety; they mutually illuſtrate each other; they have an equal claim to our regard; for they are both written by the finger of the One eternal incomprehenſible God, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

> ——— Wonderful indeed are all his works,
> Pleaſant to know, and worthieſt to be all
> Had in remembrance always with delight;
> But what created mind can comprehend
> Their number, or the wiſdom infinite
> That brought them forth, but hid their cauſes deep?
> *Milton.*

This great volume of the Works, as well as that of the Word of God, may beſt be read and underſtood by conſidering the ſeveral parts, of which it conſiſts, ſeparately. And a more eaſy and natural diviſion cannot, perhaps, be deviſed, than that which is uſually adopted by our beſt philoſophical writers. From their works the Compiler hath ſelected the following Epitome, and obſervations.

1. *Some*

1. *Some Reflections on the Heavens.*

THE Planets and Comets which move round the Sun as their centre, conſtitue what is called, the Solar Syſtem. Thoſe Planets which are near the Sun not only finiſh their circuits ſooner, but likewiſe move faſter in their reſpective orbits, than thoſe which are more remote from him. The motions of the Planets are all performed from weſt to eaſt, in orbits nearly circular. Their names, diſtances, bulks, and periodical revolutions, are as follow:

The Sun, an immenſe globe of fire, is placed near the common centre of the orbits of all the Planets and Comets; and turns round his axis in 25 days 6 hours. His diameter is computed to be 763000 miles.

Mercury, the neareſt Planet to the Sun, goes round him in 87 days 23 hours, which is the length of his year. But, being ſeldom ſeen, and no ſpots appearing on his ſurface, the time of his rotation on his axis, is as yet unknown. His diſtance from the Sun is computed to be 32000000 of miles, and his diameter 2600. In his courſe round the Sun, he moves at the rate of 95000 miles every hour. His light and heat are almoſt ſeven times as great as ours; and the Sun appears to him almoſt ſeven times as large as to us.

Venus, the next Planet in order, is computed to be 59000000 miles from the Sun; and by moving at the rate of 69000 miles every hour in her orbit, ſhe goes round the Sun in 225 of our days nearly. Her diameter is 7906 miles; and by her motion upon her axis the inhabitants are carried 43 miles every hour.

The Earth is the next Planet above Venus in the ſyſtem. It is 82000000 miles from the Sun, and goes round him in a little more than 365 days. It travels at the rate of 1000 miles every hour on its axis; is about 8000 miles in diameter. In its orbit it moves at the rate of 58000 every hour; which motion, though 120 times ſwifter than that of a cannon-ball, is little more than half as ſwift as Mercury's motion in his orbit.

The

The Moon is not a Planet, but only an attendant upon the Earth; going round it in a little more than 29 days, and round the Sun with it every year. The Moon's diameter is 2180 miles, and her diſtance from the Earth's centre 240000. She goes round her orbit in about 27 days, at the rate of near 2300 miles every hour.

Mars is the Planet next in order, being the firſt above the Earth's orbit. His diſtance from the Sun is computed to be 125000000 miles; and by travelling at the rate of 47000 miles every hour, he goes round the Sun in about 687 of our days. His diameter is 4444 miles, and by his diurnal rotation the inhabitants are carried 556 miles every hour.

Jupiter, the biggeſt of all the Planets, is ſtill higher in the ſyſtem, being about 426000000 miles from the Sun; and going at the rate of 25000 miles every hour in his orbit. His annual period is finiſhed in about 12 of our years. He is above 1000 times as big as the Earth, for his diameter is 81000 miles; which is more than ten times the diameter of the Earth. Jupiter turns round his axis in near 10 hours, and his year contains upwards of 10000 of our days. His equatorial inhabitants are carried nearly 26000 miles every hour, beſides the 25000 above mentioned by his annual motion.

Jupiter has 4 Moons. The firſt goes round him in about two of our days, at the diſtance of 22900 miles from his centre: the ſecond performs its revolution in about three days and a half, at 364000 miles diſtance: the third in a little more than ſeven days, at the diſtance of 580000 miles: and the fourth in near 17 days, at the diſtance of 1000000 miles from his centre.

Beſides theſe Moons, Jupiter is ſurrounded by faint ſubſtances, called Belts, in which ſo many changes appear, that philoſophers are not agreed either concerning their nature or uſe.

Saturn, the next to Jupiter, is about 780000000 miles from the Sun; and travelling at the rate of 18000

18000 miles every hour, performs its annual circuit in about 30 years. Its diameter is 67000 miles; and therefore it is near 600 times as big as the Earth.

This planet has 5 Moons: the firſt goes round him in near two days, at the diſtance of 140000 miles from his centre: the ſecond in near three days, at the diſtance of 187000 miles: the third in 4 days and a half, at the diſtance of 263000 miles: the fourth in about 16 days, at the diſtance of 600000 miles: and the fifth in about 80 days, at the diſtance of 1800000 miles.

Beſides theſe Moons, Saturn is attended with a thin broad Ring, as an artificial globe is by an horizon; the nature and uſe of which are but little known at preſent.

Georgium Sidus, the remoteſt of all the Planets yet diſcovered, is near 40000 miles in diameter, and upwards of 83 years in performing its revolution. How many Moons this Planet is attended by is unknown. Two have been already diſcovered. And, if the ingenious and indefatigable Mr. Herſchel is ſpared with life and health, we may expect to be favoured with ſtill further diſcoveries.

Every perſon who looks upon, and compares the ſyſtems of Moons together, which belong to Jupiter, Saturn, and the Georgium Sidus, muſt be amazed at the vaſt magnitude of theſe three Planets, and the noble attendance they have in reſpect to our little Earth: and can never bring himſelf to think, that an infinitely wiſe Creator ſhould diſpoſe of all his animals and vegetables here, leaving the other Planets bare and deſtitute of rational creatures. To ſuppoſe that he had any view to our benefit, in creating theſe Moons, and giving them their motions round their reſpective Primaries; to imagine, that he intended theſe vaſt bodies for any advantage to us, when he well knew, that they could never be ſeen but by a few Aſtronomers peeping through teleſcopes; and that he gave to the Planets regular returns of day and night, and

different

different ſeaſons to all, where they would be convenient; but of no manner of ſervice to us, except only what immediately regards our own Planet, the Earth; to imagine, I ſay, that he did all this on our account, would be charging him impiouſly with having done much in vain: and as abſurd, as to imagine that he has created a little Sun and a Planetary Syſtem within the ſhell of our Earth, and intended them for our uſe. Theſe conſiderations amount to little leſs than a poſitive proof, that all the Planets are inhabited: for if they are not, why all this care in furniſhing them with ſo many Moons, to ſupply thoſe with light, which are at the greater diſtances from the Sun? Do we not ſee, that the farther a Planet is from the Sun, the greater Apparatus it has for that purpoſe? ſave only Mars, which being but a ſmall Planet, may have Moons too ſmall to be ſeen by us. We know that the Earth goes round the Sun, and turns round its own axis, to produce the viciſſitudes of ſummer and winter by the former, and of day and night by the latter motion, for the benefit of its inhabitants. May we not then fairly conclude, by parity of reaſon, that the end and deſign of all the other Planets is the ſame? And is not this agreeable to the beautiful harmony which exiſts throughout the Univerſe? Surely it is: and raiſes in us the moſt magnificent ideas of the Supreme Being, who is every where, and at all times preſent; diſplaying his power, wiſdom and goodneſs, among all his creatures! and diſtributing happineſs to innumerable ranks of various Beings!

The Comets are ſolid opaque bodies, with long tranſparent tails or trains, iſſuing from that ſide which is turned away from the Sun. They move about the Sun, in very excentric ellipſes, and are of a much greater denſity than the earth; for ſome of them are heated in every period to ſuch a degree, as would vitrify or diſſipate any ſubſtance known to us. Sir Iſaac Newton computed the heat of the Comet, which appeared in the year 1680, when neareſt the Sun to be

2000

2000 times hotter than red-hot iron, and that, being thus heated, it muſt retain its heat until it comes round again, although its period ſhould be more than 20000 years; and it is computed to be only 575.

It is believed, that there are at leaſt 21 Comets belonging to our Syſtem, moving in all ſorts of directions. But of all theſe the periods of three only are known with any degree of certainty. The firſt of the three appeared in the years 1531, 1607, 1682, and 1758, and is expected to appear every 75th year. The ſecond of them appeared in 1532 and 1661, and may be expected to return in 1789, and every 129th year afterwards. The third, having laſt appeared in 1680, and its period being no leſs than 575 years, cannot return until the year 2225. This Comet, at its greateſt diſtance, is about 1120000000 miles from the Sun; and at its leaſt diſtance from the Sun's centre, which is 49000 miles, is within leſs than a third part of the Sun's ſemi-diameter from his ſurface. In that part of its orbit which is neareſt the Sun, it flies with the amazing ſwiftneſs of 880000 miles in an hour; and the Sun, as ſeen from it, appears an 100 degrees in breadth, conſequently 40000 times as large as he appears to us. The aſtoniſhing length that this Comet runs out into empty ſpace, ſuggeſts to our minds an idea of the vaſt diſtance between the Sun and the neareſt fixed Stars; of whoſe attractions all the Comets muſt keep clear, to return periodically, and go round the Sun; and it ſhews us alſo, that the neareſt Stars, which are probably thoſe that ſeem the largeſt, are as big as our Sun, and of the ſame nature with him; otherwiſe, they could not appear ſo large and bright to us as they do at ſuch an immenſe diſtance.

The extreme heat, the denſe atmoſphere, the groſs vapours, the chaotic ſtate of the Comets, ſeem at firſt ſight to indicate them altogether unfit for the purpoſes of animal life, and a moſt miſerable habitation for rational Beings; and therefore ſome are of opinion, that they are ſo many hells for tormenting the damned

with

with perpetual viciſſitudes of heat and cold. But when we conſider, on the other hand, the infinite power and goodneſs of the Deity; the latter inclining, the former enabling him to make creatures ſuited to all ſtates and circumſtances; that matter exiſts only for the ſake of intelligent Beings; and that wherever we find it, we always find it pregnant with life, or neceſſarily ſubſervient thereto; the numberleſs ſpecies, the aſtoniſhing diverſity of animals in earth, air, water, and even on other animals; every blade of graſs, every tender leaf, every natural fluid, ſwarming with life; and every one of theſe enjoying ſuch gratifications as the nature and ſtate of each requires: when we reflect moreover, that ſome centuries ago, till experience undeceived us, a great part of the Earth was judged uninhabitable; the Torrid Zone, by reaſon of exceſſive heat, and the two Frigid Zones becauſe of their intolerable cold; it ſeems highly probable, that ſuch numerous and large maſſes of durable matter as the Comets are, however unlike they be to our earth, are not deſtitute of Beings capable of contemplating with wonder, and acknowledging with gratitude, the wiſdom, ſymmetry, and beauty of the Creation; which is more plainly to be obſerved in their extenſive Tour through the heavens, than in our more confined circuit. If farther conjecture is permitted, may we not ſuppoſe them inſtrumental in recruiting the expended fuel of the Sun; and ſupplying the exhauſted moiſture of the Planets? However difficult it may be, circumſtanced as we are, to find out their particular deſtination, this is an undoubted truth, that wherever the Deity exerts his power, there he alſo manifeſts his wiſdom and goodneſs.

The Fixed Stars, as appears from ſeveral conſiderations, are placed at an immenſe diſtance from us. Our Earth is at ſo great a diſtance from the Sun, that if ſeen from thence, it would appear no bigger than a point, although its circumference is known to be upwards of 25000 miles. Yet that diſtance is ſo ſmall, compared with the Earth's diſtance from the Fixed Stars, that if the

the orbit in which the Earth moves round the Sun were ſolid, and ſeen from the neareſt Star, it would likewiſe appear no bigger than a point, although it is at leaſt 162000000 miles in diameter. For the Earth in going round the Sun is 162000000 miles nearer to ſome of the Stars at one time of the year, than at another; and yet their apparent magnitudes, ſituations, and diſtances from one another ſtill remain the ſame; and a teleſcope which magnifies above 200 times, does not ſenſibly magnify them: which proves them to be at leaſt 400000 times farther from us than we are from the Sun.

It is not to be imagined, that all the Stars are placed in one concave ſurface, ſo as to be equally diſtant from us; but that they are ſcattered at immenſe diſtances from one another through unlimited ſpace. So that there may be as great a diſtance between any two neighbouring Stars, as between our Sun and thoſe which are neareſt to him. Therefore an Obſerver, who is neareſt any Fixed Star, will look upon it alone as a real Sun; and conſider the reſt as ſo many ſhining points, placed at equal diſtances from him in the firmament.

By the help of teleſcopes we diſcover thouſands of Stars which are inviſible to the naked eye; and the better our glaſſes are, ſtill the more become viſible; ſo that we can ſet no limits either to their number or their diſtances. The celebrated Huygens carries his thoughts ſo far, as to believe it not impoſſible, that there may be Stars at ſuch inconceivable diſtances, that their light has not yet reached the Earth ſince its creation, although the velocity of light be a million of times greater than the velocity of a cannon-bullet: and Mr. Addiſon very juſtly obſerves, this thought is far from being extravagant, when we conſider, that the Univerſe is the work of infinite power, prompted by infinite goodneſs; having an infinite ſpace to exert itſelf in; ſo that our imagination can ſet no bounds to it.

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The Sun appears very bright and large in compariſon of the Fixed Stars, becauſe we keep conſtantly near the Sun, in compariſon of our immenſe diſtance from the Stars. For, a Spectator, placed as near to any Star as we are to the Sun, would ſee that Star a body as large and bright as the Sun appears to us: and a Spectator, as far diſtant from the Sun as we are from the Stars, would ſee the Sun as ſmall as we ſee a Star, diveſted of all its circumvolving Planets; and would reckon it one of the Stars in numbering them.

The Stars, being at ſuch immenſe diſtances from the Sun, cannot poſſibly receive from him ſo ſtrong a light as they ſeem to have; nor any brightneſs ſufficient to make them viſible to us. For the Sun's rays muſt be ſo ſcattered and diſſipated before they reach ſuch remote objects, that they can never be tranſmitted back to our eyes, ſo as to render theſe objects viſible by reflection. The Stars therefore ſhine with their own native and unborrowed luſtre, as the Sun does; and ſince each particular Star, as well as the Sun, is confined to a particular portion of ſpace, it is plain, that the Stars are of the ſame nature with the Sun.

It is no ways probable, that the Almighty, who always acts with infinite wiſdom, and does nothing in vain, ſhould create ſo many glorious Suns, fit for ſo many important purpoſes, and place them at ſuch diſtances from one another, without proper objects near enough to be benefited by their influences. Whoever imagines they were created only to give a faint glimmering light to the inhabitants of this globe, muſt have a very ſuperficial knowledge of Aſtronomy, and a mean opinion of the Divine Wiſdom: ſince, by an infinitely leſs exertion of creating power, the Deity could have given our Earth much more light by one ſingle additional Moon.

Inſtead then of one Sun and one World only in the Univerſe, as the unſkilful in Aſtronomy imagine, that Science diſcovers to us ſuch an inconceivable number of

of Suns, Syſtems, and Worlds, diſperſed through boundleſs ſpace, that if our Sun, with all the Planets, Moons, and Comets belonging to it, were annihilated, they would be no more miſſed, by an eye that could take in the whole Creation, than a grain of ſand from the ſea ſhore. The ſpace they poſſeſs being comparatively ſo ſmall, that it would ſcarce be a ſenſible blank in the Univerſe, although Saturn, the outermoſt of our Planets, revolves about the Sun in an orbit of 4884000000 miles in circumference, and ſome of our Comets make excurſions upwards of 1000000000 miles beyond Saturn's orbit; and yet, at that amazing diſtance, they are incomparably nearer to the Sun than to any of the Stars; as is evident from their keeping clear of the attractive power of all the Stars, and returning periodically by virtue of the Sun's attraction.

From what we know of our own Syſtem, it may be reaſonably concluded, that all the reſt are with equal wiſdom contrived, ſituated, and provided with accommodations for rational inhabitants. Let us therefore take a ſurvey of the Syſtem to which we belong; the only one acceſſible to us; and from thence we ſhall be the better enabled to judge of the nature and end of the other Syſtems of the Univerſe. For although there is almoſt an infinite variety in the parts of the Creation which we have opportunities of examining, yet there is a general analogy running through and connecting all the parts into one ſcheme, one deſign, one whole!

And then, to an attentive conſiderer, it will appear highly probable, that the Planets of our Syſtem, together with their Moons, are much of the ſame nature with our Earth, and deſtined for the like purpoſes. For, they are ſolid opaque globes, capable of ſupporting animals and vegetables. Some of them are bigger, ſome leſs, and ſome much about the ſize of our Earth. They all circulate round the Sun, as the Earth does, in a ſhorter or longer time, according

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to their reſpective diſtances from him; and have, where it would not be inconvenient, regular returns of ſummer and winter, ſpring and autumn. They have warmer and colder climates, as the various productions of our Earth require: and, in ſuch as afford a poſſibility of diſcovering it, we obſerve a regular motion round their axes like that of our Earth, cauſing an alternate return of day and night; which is neceſſary for labour, reſt, and vegetation, and that all parts of their ſurfaces may be expoſed to the rays of the Sun

Such of the Planets as are fareſt from the Sun, and therefore enjoy leaſt of his light, have that deficiency made up by ſeveral Moons, which conſtantly accompany, and revolve about them, as our Moon revolves about the Earth. The remoteſt Planet has, over and above, a broad Ring encompaſſing it; which, like a lucid zone in the heavens reflects the Sun's light very copiouſly on that Planet: ſo that if the remoter Planets have the Sun's light fainter by day than we, they have an addition made to it morning and evening by one or more of their Moons, and a greater quantity of light in the night-time.

On the ſurface of the Moon, becauſe it is nearer us than any other of the celeſtial bodies are, we diſcover a nearer reſemblance of our Earth. For, by the aſſiſtance of teleſcopes, we obſerve the Moon to be full of high mountains, large valleys, deep cavities, and even volcanoes. Theſe ſimilarities leave us no room to doubt, but that all the Planets and Moons in the Syſtem are deſigned as commodious habitations for creatures endowed with capacities of knowing and adoring their beneficent Creator.

Since the Fixed Stars are prodigious ſpheres of fire, like our Sun, and at inconceivable diſtances from one another, as well as from us, it is reaſonable to conclude, they are made for the ſame purpoſes that the Sun is; each to beſtow light, heat, and vegetation on

a certain

a certain number of inhabited Planets, kept by gravitation within the ſphere of its activity.

What an auguſt! what an amazing conception, if human imagination can conceive it, does this give of the Works of the Creator! Thouſands of thouſands of Suns, multiplied without end, and ranged all around us, at immenſe diſtances from each other, attended by ten thouſand times ten thouſand Worlds, all in rapid motion, yet calm, regular, and harmonious, invariably keeping the paths preſcribed them; and theſe Worlds peopled with myriads of intelligent Beings, formed for endleſs progreſſion in perfection and felicity.

If ſo much power, wiſdom, goodneſs, and magnificence is diſplayed in the material Creation, which is the leaſt conſiderable part of the Univerſe, how great, how wiſe, how good muſt He be, who made and governs the Whole! *

Some Reflections on the Earth and Sea.

IT has been already obſerved, that the Earth ranks as a Planet in the Solar Syſtem; that its diameter is near 8000 miles, and its circumference about 25000. The ſurface of it is divided into land and water; the land is again divided into four parts, which are called, Europe, Aſia, Africa, and America. The ſeas and unknown parts of its ſurface contain 160522026 ſquare miles; the inhabited parts 38990569: Europe 4456065; Aſia 10768823; Africa 9654807; America 14110874; in all 199512595; which is the number of ſquare miles on the whole ſurface of our globe.

And if we examine it a little farther, what an admirable ſpecimen have we of the Divine ſkill and goodneſs? This globe is intended, not only for an habitation, but for a ſtorehouſe of conveniences. And if we examine the ſeveral apartments of our great abode, we ſhall find reaſon to be charmed with the diſplays both of nice œconomy and boundleſs profuſion.

* See Ferguſon's Aſtronomy.

The furface of the ground, coarfe as it may feem, is yet the Laboratory where the moft exquifite operations are performed. And though a multitude of generations have been accommodated by it, it ftill continues inexhauftible.

The unevenneſs of the ground, far from being a defect, heightens its beauty and augments its uſefulneſs. Here it is ſcooped into deep and ſheltered vales, almoſt conſtantly covered with verdure, which yields an eaſy couch and agreeable food to the various tribes of catile. There it extends into a wide, open country, which annually bears a copious harveſt: an harveſt not only of the principal Wheat, which is the ſtaff of our life, but of the appointed Bariey, and various other grain, which are food for our animals.

The Furrows vary their produce. They bring forth Flax and Hemp, which help us to ſome of the moſt neceſſary accommodations of life. Theſe are wove into ample volumes of cloth, which fixed to the maſt, give wings to our ſhips. It is twiſted into vaſt lengths of cordage, which gives nerves to the crane, and ſinews to the pully, or elſe adhering to the anchor, ſecure the veſſel, even amidſt the driving tempeſt. It covers our tables with a graceful elegance, and ſurrounds our bodies with a cheriſhing warmth.

Yonder ariſe the hills, like a grand Amphitheatre! Some are clad with mantling vines, ſome crowned with towering cedars, ſome ragged with mis-ſhapen rocks or yawning with ſubterraneous caves. And even thoſe inacceſſible crags, thoſe gloomy cavities, are not only a refuge for wild goats, but ſometimes for thoſe of whom the world was not worthy.

At a greater diſtance the mountains penetrate the clouds, with their aſpiring brows. Their ſides arreſt and condenſe the vapours as they float along. Their caverned bowels collect the dripping treaſures, and ſend them gradually abroad by trickling ſprings: and hence the waters increaſing roll down, till they have

ſwept

ſwept through the moſt extenſive climes, and regained their native ſeas.

The Vine requires a ſtrong reflection of the ſunbeams and a large proportion of warmth. How commodiouſly do the hills and mountains miniſter to this purpoſe? May we not call thoſe vaſt declivities the garden-walls of nature? Theſe concenter the ſolar fire, and completely ripen the grape! O that any ſhould turn ſo valuable a gift of God into an inſtrument of ſin!

What is nature but a ſeries of wonders? That ſuch a variety of fruits ſhould riſe from the inſipid, ſordid earth? I take a walk through my garden or orchard in December. There ſtand ſeveral logs of wood on the ground. They have neither ſenſe nor motion; yet in a little time they are beautified with bloſſoms, they are covered with leaves, and at laſt loaded with fruit. I have wondered at the account of thoſe prodigious engines, invented by Archimedes. But what are all the inventions of men, to thoſe nice automata of nature?

The Foreſt rears myriads of maſſy bodies, which though neither gay with bloſſoms, nor rich with fruit, ſupply us with timber of various kinds. But who ſhall cultivate them? The toil were endleſs. See therefore the ever wiſe and gracious ordination of Providence! They have no need of the ſpade or the pruning-knife. They want no help from man.

When ſawed into beams they ſuſtain the roofs of our houſes. They make carriages to convey our heavieſt loads. Their ſubſtance is ſo pliant, that they are eaſily formed into every kind of furniture: yet their texture ſo ſolid, that they compoſe the moſt important parts of the largeſt engines. At the ſame time, their preſſure is ſo light, that they float upon the waters. Thus while they ſerve all the ends of architecture, and beſtow numberleſs conveniences on the family, they conſtitute the very baſis of navigation, and give being to commerce.

If we defcend from the Ground Floor of our habitation into the fubterraneous lodgments, we fhall find there alfo the moft exquifite contrivance acting in concert with the moft profufe goodnefs. Here are various minerals of fovereign efficacy: beds fraught with metals of richeft value: and mines, which yield a metal of a meaner afpect, but fuperior ufefulnefs. Without the affiftance of iron, what would become of all our mechanic fkill? without this we could fcarce either fix the maft, or drop the faithful anchor. We fhould fcarce have any ornament for polite, or utenfil for common life.

Here is an inexhauftible fund of combuftible materials. Thefe mollify the moft ftubborn bars. They melt even the moft ftubborn flint, and make it more ductile than the fofteft clay. By this means we are furnifhed with the moft curious and ferviceable manufacture in the world; which admits into our houfes the chearing light, yet excludes the wind and rain: which gives new eyes to decrepit age, and more enlarged views to philofophy; bringing near what is immenfely remote, and making vifible what is immenfely fmall.

Here are quarries ftocked with ftones, which do not fparkle like gems, but are more eminently ufeful. Thefe form houfes for peace, fortifications for war. Thefe conftitute the arches of the bridge, the arms of the mole or quay, which fcreen our fhips from the moft tempeftuous feas. Thefe are comparatively foft in the bowels of the earth, but harden when in the open air. Was this remarkable peculiarity reverfed, what difficulties would attend the labours of the mafon? His materials could not be extracted from their bed, nor faſhioned without infinite toil. And were his work compleated, it could not long withftand the fury of the elements.

Here are various aſſortments and beds of Clay, which however contemptible in its appearance, is abundantly more beneficial than the rocks of diamond or vein

of gold: this is moulded into veſſels of any ſhape and ſize: ſome ſo delicately fine as to ſuit the table of a princeſs; others ſo remarkably cheap, that they miniſter to the convenience of the pooreſt peaſant: all ſo perfectly neat, as to give no diſguſt even to the niceſt palate.

A multiplicity of other valuable ſtores is locked up in theſe ample vaults. But the key of all is given to induſtry, in order to produce each as neceſſity demands.

Which ſhall we moſt admire, the bounty or wiſdom of our great Creator? How admirable is his precaution in removing theſe cumbrous wares from the ſurface, and beſtowing them under the ground in proper repoſitories? Were they ſcattered over the ſurface of the ſoil, it would be embarraſſed with the enormous load. Our roads would be blocked up, and ſcarce any room left for the operations of huſbandry. Were they on the other hand, buried at a great depth, it would coſt us immenſe pains to procure them. Were they uniformly ſpread into a pavement for nature, univerſal barrenneſs muſt enſue: whereas at preſent we have a magazine of metallic, without leſſening our vegetable treaſures. Foſſils of every kind enrich the bowels, verdure adorns the face of the earth.

Well then may even the inhabitants of heaven lift up their voice and ſing, *Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!* And is there not infinite reaſon for us to join this triumphant choir? Since all theſe things are to us, not only a noble ſpectacle, bright with the diſplay of our Creator's wiſdom, but likewiſe an ineſtimable gift, rich with the emanations of his goodneſs. The earth hath he ſet before the inhabitants of his glory: but he hath given it to the children of men. Has he not then an undoubted right to make that tender demand, *My ſon, give me thine heart?*

The Rocks which bound the ſea, are here prodigiouſly high and ſtrong, an everlaſting barrier againſt

both winds and waves. Not that the omnipotent engineer has any need of theſe here. It is true, they intervene, and not only repreſs the rolling billows, but ſpeak the amazing Majeſty of the Maker. But in other places the Creator ſhews, he is confined to no expedient. He bids a bank of deſpicable ſand repel the moſt furious ſhocks of aſſaulting ſeas. *And though the waves toſs themſelves, they cannot prevail: though they roar, yet they cannot paſs over.*

Nay, is it not remarkable, that Sand is a more effectual barrier againſt the ſea than Rock? Accordingly the ſea is continually gaining upon a rocky ſhore: but it is continually loſing on a ſandy ſhore: unleſs where it ſets in with an eddy. Thus it has been gaining from age to age, upon the iſle of Portland and the Land's End in Cornwall, undermining, throwing down, and ſwallowing up one huge rock after another. Mean time the ſandy ſhores both on our ſouthern and weſtern coaſts, gain continually upon the ſea.

Beneath the Rocks frequently lies a ſmooth, level ſand, almoſt as firm as a well-compacted cauſeway: inſomuch that the tread of an horſe ſcarce impreſſes it, and the waters never penetrate it. Without this wiſe contrivance the ſearching waves would inſinuate into the heart of the earth; and the earth itſelf would in ſome places be hollow as an honey-comb, in others bibulous as a ſponge. But this cloſely-cemented pavement is like claying the bottom of the univerſal canal: ſo that the returning tides only conſolidate its ſubſtance, and prevent the ſun from cleaving it with chinks.

Here the Main rolls its ſurges from world to world. What a ſpectacle of magnificence and terror! How it fills the mind and amazes the imagination! It is the moſt auguſt object under the whole heaven. What are all the canals on earth, to this immenſe reſervatory? What are the proudeſt palaces on earth, to yonder concave of the ſkies? What the moſt pompous

pous illuminations, to this ſource of day? They are a ſpark, an atom, a drop. Nay in every ſpark, and atom, and drop, that proceeds from the hand of the Almighty, there is the manifeſtation of a wiſdom and a power abſolutely incomprehenſible.

Let us examine a ſingle drop of water, only ſo much as will adhere to the point of a needle. In this ſpeck an eminent poiloſopher computes no leſs than thirteen thouſand globules. And if ſo many thouſands exiſt in ſo ſmall a ſpeck, how many in the unmeaſured extent of the ocean? Who can count them? As well may we graſp the wind in our fiſt, or mete out the univerſe with our ſpan.

Nor are theſe regions without their proper inhabitants, clothed in exact conformity to the clime: not in ſwelling wool, or buoyant feathers, but with as much compactneſs and as little ſuperfluity as poſſible. They are clad, or rather ſheathed in ſcales, which adhere cloſe, and are laid in a kind of natural oil: than which apparel nothing can be more light, and at the ſame time nothing more ſolid. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their fleſh: it prevents the cold from chilling their blood; and enables them to make their way through the waters, with the utmoſt facility. And they have each an air-bladder, a curious inſtrument, by which they riſe to what height or ſink to what depth they pleaſe.

It is impoſſible to enumerate the ſcaly herds. Here are animals of monſtrous ſhapes, and amazing qualities. The upper jaw of the Sword-fiſh is lengthened into a ſtrong and ſharp ſword, with which (though not above ſixteen feet long) he ſcruples not to engage the Whale himſelf. The Sun-fiſh is one round maſs of fleſh; only it has two fins, which act the part of oars. The Polypus, with its numerous feet and claws, ſeems fitted only to crawl. Yet an excreſcence riſing on the back enables it to ſteer a ſteady courſe in the waves. The ſhell of the Nautilus forms a kind of boat, and he unfurls a membrane to the wind for a ſail.

fail. He extends alſo two arms, with which as with oars, he rows himſelf along. When he is diſpoſed to dive, he ſtrikes fail, and at once ſinks to the bottom. When the weather is calm, he mounts again, and performs his voyage without either chart or compaſs.

Here are ſhoals upon ſhoals of every ſize and form. Some lodged in their ſhells, ſeem to have no higher employ, than imbibing nutriment, and are almoſt rooted to the rocks on which they lie: while others ſhoot along the yielding flood, and range the ſpacious regions of the deep. How various is their figure! The ſhells of ſome ſeem to be the rude production of chance, rather than of ſkill or deſign. Yet even in theſe we find the niceſt diſpoſitions. Uncouth as they are, they are exactly ſuited to the exigencies of their reſpective tenants. Some on the other hand are extremely neat. Their ſtructure is all ſymmetry and elegance. No enamel is comparable to their poliſh. Not a room in all the palaces of Europe is ſo adorned as the bed-chamber of the little fiſh that dwells in Mother of Pearl. Where elſe is ſuch a mixture of red, blue and green, ſo delightfully ſtaining the moſt clear and gliſtering ground?

But what I admire more than all their beauty, is the proviſion made for their ſafety. As they have no ſpeed to eſcape, ſo they have no dexterity to elude their foe. So that were they naked, they muſt be an eaſy prey to every free-booter. To prevent this, what is only cloathing to other animals, is to them a cloathing, an houſe, and a caſtle. They have a fortification which grows with them, and is a part of themſelves. And by means of this they live ſecure amidſt millions of ravenous jaws.

Here dwell Mackerel, Herring, and various other kinds, which when lean wander up and down the ocean: but when fat they throng our creeks and bays, or haunt the running ſtreams. Who bids theſe creatures leave our ſhores when they become unfit for our ſervice? Who rallies and recalls the undiſciplined

vagrants

vagrants, as ſoon as they are improved into deſirable food? Surely the furlow is ſigned, the ſummons iſſued, and the point of re-union ſettled, by a Providence ever indulgent to mankind, ever loading us with benefits.

Theſe approach, while thoſe of enormous ſize and appearance abandon our ſhores. The latter would fright the valuable fiſh from our coaſts; they are therefore kept in the abyſſes of the ocean: juſt as wild beaſts, impelled by the ſame over-ruling power, hide themſelves in the receſſes of the foreſt.

One circumſtance relating to the natives of the deep is very aſtoniſhing. As they are continually obliged to devour one another for neceſſary ſubſiſtence, without extraordinary recruits, the whole watery race muſt ſoon be totally extinct. Were they to bring forth no more at a birth than land animals, the increaſe would be far too ſmall for the conſumption. The weaker ſpecies would ſoon be deſtroyed by the ſtronger, and the ſtronger themſelves muſt ſoon after periſh. Therefore to ſupply millions of animals with their food, and yet not depopulate the watery realms, the iſſue produced by every breeder is almoſt incredible. They ſpawn not by ſcores, but by millions: a ſingle female is pregnant with a nation. Mr. Lewenhock counted in an ordinary cod, 9,384,000 eggs. By this amazing expedient, conſtant reparation is made, proportionable to the immenſe havock.

And as the ſea abounds with animal inhabitants, ſo it does alſo with vegetable productions: ſome ſoft as wool, others hard as ſtone. Some riſe like a leafleſs ſhrub, ſome are expanded in the form of a net; ſome grow with their heads downward, and ſeem rather hanging on, than ſpringing from the juttings of the rocks. But as we know few particulars concerning theſe, I would only offer one remark in general. The herbs and trees on the dry land are fed by the juices that permeate the ſoil, and fluctuate in the air. For this purpoſe they are furniſhed with leaves

leaves to collect the one, and with roots to attract the other. Whereas the ſea plants having ſufficient nouriſhment in the circumambiant waters, have no need to detach roots into the ground, or forage the earth for ſuſtenance. Inſtead therefore of penetrating, they are but juſt tacked to the bottom, and adhere to ſome ſolid ſubſtance only with ſuch a degree of tenacity, as may ſecure them from being toſt to and fro by the agitation of the waves.

We ſee from this and numberleſs other inſtances, what diverſity there is in the operations of the great Creator. Yet every alteration is an improvement, and each new pattern has a peculiar fitneſs of its own.

Conſidered in another view, the ſea is that grand reſervoir which ſupplies the earth with its fertility: and the air and ſun are the mighty engines, which work without intermiſſion, to raiſe the water from this inexhauſtible ciſtern. The clouds as aqueducts convey the genial ſtores along the atmoſphere, and diſtribute them in ſeaſonable and regular proportions, through all the regions of the globe.

How hardly do we extract a drop of perfectly ſweet water from this vaſt pit of brine? Yet the ſun draws off every moment millions of tons in vaporous exhalations, which being ſecurely lodged in the Bottles of Heaven, are ſent abroad ſweetened and refined, without the leaſt brackiſh tincture, or bituminous ſediment: ſent abroad upon the wings of the wind, to diſtil in dews and rain, to ooze in fountains, to trickle along in rivulets, to roll from the ſides of mountains, to flow in copious ſtreams amidſt burning deſarts, and through populous kingdoms, in order to refreſh and fertilize, to beautify and enrich every ſoil in every clime,

How amiable is the goodneſs, how amazing the power, of the world's adorable Maker! How amiable his goodneſs, in diſtributing ſo largely what is ſo extenſively beneficial? That water, without which we can ſcarce perform any buſineſs, or enjoy any comfort,

ſhould

ſhould ſtream by our houſes, ſtart up from the ground, drop down from the clouds! Should come from the ends of the earth, to ſerve us, from the extremities of the ocean! How amazing his power! That this boundleſs maſs of fluid ſalt, ſo intolerably nauſeous to the taſte, ſhould be the original ſpring, which quenches the thirſt both of man and every animal! Doubtleſs the power by which this is effected, can make all things work together for our good.

Vaſt and various are the advantages which we receive from this liquid element. The waters glide on in ſpacious currents, which not only chear the adjacent country, but by giving a briſk motion to the air, prevent the ſtagnation of the vapours. They paſs by large cities, and quietly rid them of a thouſand nuiſances. But they are alſo fit for more honourable ſervices. They enter the gardens of a prince, float in the canal, aſcend in the Jet d'Eau, or fall in the grand caſcade. In another kind they ply at our mills, toil inceſſantly at the wheel, and by working the largeſt engines, take upon them an unknown ſhare of our fatigue, and ſave us both labour, time, and expence.

So forcibly do they act when collected. And how do they inſinuate when detached? They penetrate the minuteſt tubes of a plant, and find a paſſage through all its meanders. With how much difficulty does the labourer puſh his way up the rounds of a ladder? While theſe carry their loads to a much greater height, and climb with the utmoſt eaſe. They convey nouriſhment from the loweſt fibres that are plunged in the earth, to the topmoſt twigs that wave amidſt the clouds. Thus they furniſh the whole vegetable world with neceſſary proviſion, by means of which *the trees of the Lord are full of ſap, even the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted.* And notwithſtanding their vaſt elevation and prodigious diffuſion, not a ſingle branch is deſtitute of leaves, nor a ſingle leaf of moiſture.

Beſides

Beſides the ſalutary and uſeful circulation of the rivers, the ſea has a motion no leſs advantageous. Daily for five or ſix hours, it flows toward the land, and for the ſame time, retires to its inmoſt caverns. How great is the power that protrudes to the ſhores ſuch an inconceivable weight of waters, without any concurrence from the winds, often in direct oppoſition to them? Which bids the mighty element revolve with the moſt exact punctuality? Did it advance with a lawleſs and unlimited ſwell, it might deluge whole continents. Was it irregular and uncertain in its approaches, navigation would be at a ſtand. But being conſtant in its ſtated period, and never exceeding its appointed bounds, it does no prejudice to the country, and ſerves all the ends of traffic.

Is the ſailor returned from his voyage? The Flux is ready to convey his veſſel to the very doors of the owner, without any hazard of ſtriking on the rocks, or of being faſtened in the ſands. Has the merchant freighted his ſhip? The Reflux bears it away with the utmoſt expedition and ſafety. Behold, O man, how highly thou art favoured by thy Maker! *He hath put all things in ſubjection under thy feet. All ſheep and oxen, all the beaſts of the field: the fowls of the air, and the fiſhes of the ſea.* Yea, the ſurges of the ſea are ſubſervient to thee. Even theſe, wild and impetuous as they are, are ready to receive thy load, and like an indefatigable beaſt of burden, carry it to the place which thou chooſeſt.

What preſerves this vaſt flood in perpetual purity? It receives the refuſe and filth of the whole world. Whatever would defile the land and pollute the air, is tranſmitted to the ocean. How then is this receptacle of every nuiſance kept clean, kept from contracting a noiſome and peſtilential taint? 'Tis partly by its inceſſant motion, and partly by its ſaltneſs. By the one it is ſecured from any internal principle of corruption; by the other it works itſelf clear of any adventitious defilement.

Conſider

Conſider the ſea in another capacity, and it connects the remoteſt realms of the univerſe, by facilitating the intercourſe between their reſpective inhabitants. The ancients indeed looked on the ocean as an impaſſable gulph. But we find it juſt the reverſe; not a bar of ſeparation, but the great bond of union. For this purpoſe it is never exhauſted, though it ſupplies the whole earth with rain: nor overflows, though all the rivers in the univerſe are perpetually augmenting its ſtores. By means of this we travel farther, than birds of the ſtrongeſt pinions fly. We croſs the flaming line, viſit the frozen pole, and wing our way even round the globe.

What a multitude of ſhips are continually paſſing and repaſſing this univerſal thorough-fare! Whole harveſts of corn, and vintages of wine, lodged in volatile ſtore-houſes, are wafted by the breath of heaven, to the very ends of the earth: wafted, enormous and unwieldy as they are, almoſt as ſpeedily as the roe bounds over the hills.

Aſtoniſhing, that an element ſo unſtable, ſhould bear ſo immenſe a weight! That the thin air ſhould drive on with ſuch ſpeed thoſe vaſt bodies, which the ſtrength of a legion could ſcarce move! That the air and water ſhould carry to the diſtance of many thouſand miles, what the united force of men and machines could ſcarce drag a ſingle yard!

How are the mariners conducted through this fluid common, than which nothing is more wide or more wild? Here is no tract, no poſts of direction, nor any hut where the traveller may aſk his way. Are they guided by a pillar of fire? No, but by a mean and otherwiſe worthleſs foſſil. Till this ſurpriſing ſtone was diſcovered, ſhips crept timorouſly along the coaſts. But this guides them, when nothing but ſkies are ſeen above, and nothing but ſeas below. This gives intelligence that ſhines clear in the thickeſt darkneſs, and remains ſteady in the moſt tempeſtuous agitations.

agitations. This emboldens us to launch into the heart of the ocean, and to range from pole to pole. By this means are imported to our iſlands the choice productions of every nation under heaven. Every tide conveys into our ports, the treaſures of the remoteſt climes. And almoſt every private houſe in the kingdom, is accommodated from the four quarters of the globe. At the ſame time that the ſea adorns the abodes of the rich, it employs the hands of the poor. What a multitude of people acquire a livelihood, by preparing commodities for exportation? And what a multitude by manufacturing the wares imported from abroad? Thus, though it is a falſe ſuppoſition, that the waters themſelves are ſtrained through ſubterranean paſſages into the inland countries, yet it is true, that their effects are tranſfuſed into every town, every hamlet, and every cottage.

Some Reflections on the Atmoſphere.

IF we turn our thoughts to the Atmoſphere, we find a moſt curious and exquiſite apparatus of air. This is a ſource of innumerable advantages; all which are fetched from the very jaws of ruin. To explain this. The preſſure of the air on a perſon of a moderate ſize is equal to the weight of twenty thouſand pounds. Tremendous conſideration! Should an houſe fall upon us with half that force, it would break every bone of our bodies. Yet ſo admirably has the Divine wiſdom contrived the air, and ſo nicely counterpoiſed its dreadful power, that we ſuffer no manner of inconvenience; we even enjoy the load. Inſtead of being as a mountain on our loins, it is as wings to our feet, or ſinews to our limbs. Is not this common ordination of Providence ſomewhat like the miracle of the burning buſh? Well may we ſay unto God, O how terrible, yet how beneficent, art thou in thy works!

The

The air, though too weak to ſupport our flight, is a thoroughfare for innumerable wings. Here the whole common-wealth of birds expatiate, beyond the reach of their adverſaries. Were they to run upon the earth, they would be in ten thouſand dangers, without ſtrength to reſiſt, or ſpeed to eſcape them: whereas by mounting the ſkies, they are ſecure from peril, they ſcorn the horſe and his rider. Some of them perching on the boughs, or ſoaring aloft, entertain us with their notes. Many of them yield us wholeſome and agreeable food, and yet give us no trouble, put us to no expence, but till the time we want them, are wholly out of the way.

The air is charged alſo with ſeveral offices, abſolutely needful for mankind. In our lungs it ventilates the blood, qualifies its warmth, promotes the animal ſecretions. We might live even months, without the light of the Sun, yea, or the glimmering of a Star. Whereas, if we are deprived but a few minutes of this, we ſicken, we faint, we die. The ſame univerſal nurſe has a conſiderable ſhare in cheriſhing the ſeveral tribes of plants. It tranſfuſes vegetable vigour into the trunk of an oak, and a blooming gaiety into the leaves of a roſe.

The air likewiſe conveys to our noſtrils the extremely ſubtle Effluvia which exhale from odoriferous bodies: particles ſo ſmall, that they elude the moſt careful hand. But this receives and tranſmits the inviſible vagrants, without loſing even a ſingle atom; entertaining us with the delightful ſenſations that ariſe from the fragrance of flowers, and admoniſhing us to withdraw from an unwholeſome ſituation, to beware of pernicious food.

The air by its undulating motion conducts to our ear all the diverſities of ſound. While danger is at a conſiderable diſtance, this advertiſes us of its approach; and with a clamorous but kind importunity, urges us to provide for our ſafety.

The

The air wafts to our ſenſe all the modulations of muſic, and the more agreeable entertainments of converſation. It diſtributes every muſical variation with the utmoſt exactneſs, and delivers the meſſage of the ſpeaker with the moſt punctual fidelity: whereas, without this internuncio, all would be ſullen and unmeaning ſilence. We ſhould neither be charmed by the harmonious, nor improved by the articulate accents.

How gentle are the breezes of the air when unconfined! but when collected, they act with ſuch immenſe force, as is ſufficient to whirl round the hugeſt wheels, though clogged with the moſt incumbering loads. They make the ponderous millſtones move as ſwiftly as the dancer's heel; and the maſſy beams play as nimbly as the muſician's fingers.

In the higher regions there is an endleſs ſucceſſion of clouds, fed by evaporations from the ocean. The clouds are themſelves a kind of ocean, ſuſpended in the air. They travel in detached parties, over all the terreſtrial globe. They fructify by proper communications of moiſture, the ſpacious paſtures of the wealthy, and gladden with no leſs liberal ſhowers the cottager's little ſpot.

Nay, they ſatisfy the deſolate and waſte ground, and cauſe the bud of the tender herb to ſpring forth: that the natives of the lonely deſert, the herds which know no maſter's ſtall, may nevertheleſs experience the care of an all-ſupporting parent.

How wonderful! that pendant lakes ſhould be diffuſed, fluid mountains heaped over our heads, and both ſuſtained in the thinneſt part of the atmoſphere! How ſurprizing is the expedient which without veſſels of ſtone or braſs, keeps ſuch loads of water in a buoyant ſtate? Job conſidered this with holy admiration. *Doſt thou know the balancings of the clouds?* How ſuch ponderous bodies are made to hang in even poiſe, and hover like the lighteſt down? *He bindeth up the waters in his thick cloud:* and the cloud, though nothing is more looſe and fluid, becomes by

by his order tenacious, as caſks of iron, is not rent under all the weight.

When the fluices are opened and the waters deſcend, one would think they ſhould pour down in torrents. Whereas inſtead of this, which would be infinitely pernicious, they coaleſce into globules, and are diſpenſed in gentle ſhowers. They ſpread themſelves as if ſtrained through the orifices of the fineſt watering pot, and form thoſe ſmall drops of rain which the clouds diſtil upon man abundantly. Thus inſtead of drowning the earth, and ſweeping away its fruits, they cheriſh univerſal nature, and (like their great Maſter) diſtribute their ſtores, to men, animals, vegetables, as they are able to bear them.

But beſide waters, here are cantoned various parties of winds, mild or fierce, gentle or boiſterous, furniſhed with breezy wings, to fan the glowing firmament, or elſe fitted to act as an univerſal beſom, and by ſweeping the chambers of the atmoſphere to cleanſe the fine aëreal fluid. Without this wholeſome agency of the winds, the air would ſtagnate and become putrid: ſo that all the great cities in the world, inſtead of being ſeats of elegance, would degenerate into ſinks of corruption.

At ſea, the winds ſwell the mariner's ſails, and ſpeed his courſe along the watery way. By land they perform the office of an immenſe ſeeds-man, ſcattering abroad the ſeeds of numberleſs plants, which, though the ſupport of many animals, are too ſmall for the management, or too mean for the attention of man.

Here are lightenings ſtationed, in act to ſpring whenever their piercing flaſh is neceſſary, either to deſtroy the ſulphureous vapours, or diſlodge any other noxious matter, which might prejudice the delicate temperature of the ether, and obſcure its more than chryſtalline tranſparency.

Above all is ſituate a radiant and majeſtic orb, which enlightens and chears the inhabitants of the earth: while the air, by a ſingular addreſs, amplifies its uſeful-

neſs. Its reflecting power augments that heat, which is the life of nature: its refracting power prolongs that ſplendor, which is the beauty of the creation.

I ſay, augments the heat. For the air is a cover which, without oppreſſing us with any perceivable weight, confines, reflects, and thereby increaſes the vivifying heat of the ſun. The air increaſes this, much in the ſame manner as our cloaths give additional heat to our body: whereas when it is leſs in quantity, when it is attenuated, the ſolar heat is very ſenſibly diminiſhed. Travellers on the loſty mountains of America, ſometimes experience this to their coſt. Though the clime at the foot of thoſe vaſt mountains, is extremely hot and ſultry, yet at the top the cold is ſo exceſſive, as often to freeze both the horſe and rider to death. We have therefore great reaſon to praiſe God, for placing us in the commodious concavity, the cheriſhing wings of an atmoſphere.

The emanations of light, though formed of inactive matter, yet (aſtoniſhing power of divine wiſdom!) are refined almoſt to the ſubtilty of ſpirit, and are ſcarce inferior even to thought in ſpeed. By which means they ſpread, with almoſt inſtantaneous ſwiftneſs, through an whole hemiſphere: and though they fill whatever they pervade, yet they ſtraiten no place, embarraſs no one, encumber nothing.

Every where indeed, and in every element we may diſcern the footſteps of the Creator's wiſdom. The ſpacious canopy over our heads is painted with blue; and the ample carpet under our feet is tinged with green. Theſe colours, by their ſoft and chearing qualities, yield a perpetual refreſhment to the eye. Whereas had the face of nature gliſtered with white, or glowed with ſcarlet, ſuch dazzling hues, inſtead of chearing, would have fatigued the ſight. Beſides, as the ſeveral brighter colours are interſperſed, and form the pictures in this magnificent piece, the green and the blue make an admirable ground, which ſhews them all to the utmoſt advantage.

Had

Had the air been much groſſer, it would have dimmed the rays of the ſun and darkened the day. Our lungs would have been clogged in their vital function, and men drowned or ſuffocated therein. Were it much more ſubtle, birds would not be able to wing their way through the firmament: neither could the clouds be ſuſtained, in ſo thin an atmoſphere. It would elude likewiſe the organs of reſpiration: we ſhould gaſp for breath with as much difficulty and as little ſucceſs as fiſhes do, when out of their native element.

Some Reflections on the Vegetable creation.

AS to Vegetation itſelf, we are ſenſible all our reaſonings about the wonderful operations of nature, are ſo full of uncertainty, that as the wiſe man truly obſerves, *Hardly do we gueſs aright at the things that are upon earth, and with labour do we find the things that are before us.* This is abundantly verified in vegetable nature. For though its productions are ſo obvious to us, yet are we ſtrangely in the dark concerning them, becauſe the texture of their veſſels is ſo fine and intricate, that we can trace but few of them, though aſſiſted with the beſt microſcopes. But although we can never hope to come to the bottom and firſt principle of things, yet may we every where ſee plain ſignatures of the hand of a Divine Architect.

All vegetables are compoſed of water and earth, principles which ſtrongly attract each other: and a large portion of air, which ſtrongly attracts when fixed, but ſtrongly repels when in an elaſtic ſtate. By the combination, action, and re-action of thoſe few principles all the operations in vegetables are effected.

The particles of air diſtend each ductile part, and invigorate their ſap, and meeting with the other mutually attracting principles, they are by gentle heat and motion enabled to aſſimilate into the nouriſhment of the reſpective parts. Thus nutrition is gradually advanced, by the nearer and nearer union of theſe

principles, till they arrive at ſuch a degree of conſiſtency, as to form the ſeveral parts of vegetables. And at length by the flying off of the watery vehicle, they are compacted into hard ſubſtances.

But when the watery particles again ſoak into and diſunite them, then is the union of the parts of vegetables diſſolved, and they are prepared by putrefaction, to appear in ſome new form, whereby the nutritive fund of nature can never be exhauſted.

All theſe principles are in all the parts of Vegetables. But there is more oil in the more exalted parts of them. Thus ſeeds abound with oil, and conſequently with ſulphur and air. And indeed as they contain the rudiments of future vegetables, it was neceſſary they ſhould be ſtored with principles, that would both preſerve them from putrefaction, and alſo be active in promoting germination and vegetation.

And as oil is an excellent preſervative againſt cold, ſo it abounds in the ſap of the more northern trees. And it is this by which the ever-greens are enabled to keep their leaves all the winter.

Leaves not only bring nouriſhment from the lower parts within the attraction of the growing fruit, (which like young animals is furniſhed with proper inſtruments to ſuck it thence) but alſo carry off the redundant watery fluid, while they imbibe the dew and rain, which contain much ſalt and ſulphur: for the air is full of acid and ſulphureous particles; and the various combinations of theſe, are doubtleſs very ſerviceable in promoting the work of Vegetation. Indeed ſo fine a fluid as the air, is a more proper medium, wherein to prepare and combine the more exalted principles of Vegetables, than the groſs watery fluid of the ſap. And that there is plenty of theſe particles in the leaves is evident, from the ſulphureous exudations often found on their edges. To theſe refined aëreal particles, not only the moſt racy, generous taſte of fruits, but likewiſe the moſt grateful odours of flowers, yea and their beautiful colours are probably owing.

In

In order to ſupply tender ſhoots with nouriſhment, nature is careful to furniſh, at ſmall diſtances, the young ſhoots of all ſorts of trees, with many leaves throughout their whole length: which as ſo many jointly acting powers, draw plenty of ſap to them.

The like proviſion has nature made, in the corn, graſs, and reed-kind: the leafy ſpires, which draw nouriſhment to each joint, being provided long before the ſtem ſhoots: the tender ſtems would eaſily break, or dry up, ſo as to prevent their growth, had not theſe ſcabbards been provided, which both ſupport and keep them in a ſupple and ductile ſtate.

The growth of a young bud to a ſhoot, conſiſts in the gradual dilatation and extenſion of every part, till it is ſtretched out to its full length. And the capillary tubes ſtill retain their hollowneſs, notwithſtanding their being extended, as we ſee melted glaſs tubes remain hollow, though drawn out to the fineſt thread.

The pith of trees is always full of moiſture, while the ſhoot is growing, by the expanſion of which, the tender, ductile ſhoot is diſtended in every part. But when each year's ſhoot is fully grown, then the pith gradually dries up. Mean time nature carefully provides for the growth of the ſucceeding year, by preſerving a tender, ductile part in the bud, replete with ſucculent pith. Great care is likewiſe taken to keep the parts between the bark and wood always ſupple with ſlimy moiſture, from which ductile matter the woody fibres, veſicles, and buds are formed.

The great variety of different ſubſtances in the ſame Vegetable proves, that there are peculiar veſſels for conveying different ſorts of nutriment. In many vegetables ſome of thoſe veſſels are plainly ſeen full of milky, yellow, or red nutriment.

Where a ſecretion is deſigned to compoſe an hard ſubſtance, viz. the kernel or ſeed of hard-ſtone fruits, it does not immediately grow from the ſtone, which would be the ſhorteſt way to convey nouriſhment to it. But the umbilical veſſel fetches a compaſs round the

concave of the ſtone, and then enters the kernel near its cone. By this artifice the veſſel being much prolonged, the motion of the ſap is thereby retarded, and a viſced nutriment conveyed to the ſeed, which turns to an hard ſubſtance.

Let us trace the Vegetation of a tree, from the ſeed to its full maturity. When the ſeed is ſown, in a few days it imbibes ſo much moiſture, as to ſwell with very great force, by which it is enabled both to ſtrike its roots down, and to force its ſtem out of the ground. As it grows up, the firſt, ſecond, third, and fourth order of lateral branches ſhoot out, each lower order being longer than thoſe immediately above them, not only as ſhooting firſt, but becauſe inſerted nearer the root, and ſo drawing greater plenty of ſap. So that a tree is a complicated engine, which has as many different powers as it has branches. And the whole of each yearly growth of the tree, is proportioned to the whole of the nouriſhment they attract.

But leaves alſo are ſo neceſſary to promote its growth, that nature provides ſmall, thin expanſions, which may be called primary leaves, to draw nouriſhment to the buds and young ſhoots, before the leaf is expanded. Theſe bring nutriment to them in a quantity ſufficient for their ſmall demand: a greater quantity of which is afterward provided, in proportion to their need, by the greater expanſion of the leaves. A ſtill more beautiful apparatus we find in the curious expanſions of bloſſoms and flowers, which both protect and convey nouriſhment to the embryo, fruit and ſeeds. But as ſoon as the calix is formed into a ſmall fruit, containing a minute. ſeminal tree, the bloſſom falls off, leaving it to imbibe nouriſhment for itſelf, which is brought within the reach of its function, by the adjoining leaves.

Let us proceed to make ſome additional reflections upon the vegetable kingdom.

All plants produce ſeeds: but they are entirely unfit for propagation, till they are impregnated. This is performed

performed within the flower, by the duſt of the Antheræ falling upon the moiſt Stigmata, where it burſts and ſends forth a very ſubtle matter, which is abſorbed by the ſtyle, and conveyed down to the ſeed. As ſoon as this operation is over, thoſe organs wither and fall. But one flower does not always contain all theſe: often the male organs are on one, the female on another. And that nothing may be wanting, the whole apparatus of the Antheræ and Stigmata is in all flowers contrived with wonderful wiſdom. In moſt, the Stigmata ſurround the piſtil, and are of the ſame height. But where the piſtil is longer than the Stigmata, the flowers recline, that the duſt may fall into the Stigmata, and when impregnated riſe again, that the ſeeds may not fall out. In other flowers the piſtil is ſhorter, and there the flowers preſerve an erect ſituation. Nay, when the flowering ſeaſon comes on, they become erect though they were drooping before. Laſtly, when the male flowers are placed below the female, the leaves are very ſmall and narrow, that they may not hinder the duſt from flying upwards like ſmoke: and when in the ſame ſpecies one plant is male, and the other female, there the duſt is carried in abundance by the wind from the male to the female. We cannot alſo without admiration obſerve, that moſt flowers expand themſelves when the ſun ſhines, and cloſe when either rain, clouds, or evening is coming on, leſt the genital duſt ſhould be coagulated, or otherwiſe rendered uſeleſs. Yet when the impregnation is over, they do not cloſe, either upon ſhowers, or the approach of evening.

For the ſcattering of ſeed nature has provided numberleſs ways. Various berries are given for food to animals: but while they eat the pulp, they ſow the ſeed. Either they diſperſe them at the ſame time: or if they ſwallow them, they are returned with intereſt. The miſtletoe always grows on other trees; becauſe the thruſh that eats the ſeeds of them, caſts them forth with his dung. The junipers alſo, which fill our woods,

are ſown in the ſame manner. The croſs-bill that lives on fir-cones, and the hawfinch which feeds on pine-cones, ſow many of thoſe ſeeds, eſpecially when they carry the cone to a ſtone or ſtump, to ſtrip off its ſcales. Swine likewiſe and moles by throwing up the earth, prepare it for the reception of ſeeds.

The great Parent of all decreed that the whole earth ſhould be covered with plants. In order to this he adapted the nature of each to the climate where it grows. So that ſome can bear intenſe heat, others intenſe cold. Some love a moderate warmth. Many delight in dry, others in moiſt ground. The Alpine plants love mountains whoſe tops are covered with eternal ſnow. And they blow and ripen their ſeeds very early, leſt the winter ſhould overtake and deſtroy them. Plants which will grow no where elſe, flouriſh in Siberia, and near Hudſon's Bay. Graſs can bear almoſt any temperature of the air: in which the good providence of God appears: this being ſo neceſſary all over the globe, for the nouriſhment of cattle.

Thus neither the ſcorching ſun nor the pinching cold hinders any country from having its vegetables. Nor is there any ſoil which does not bring forth ſome. Pond-weed and water-lilies inhabit the waters. Some plants cover the bottom of rivers and ſeas: others fill the marſhes. Some clothe the plains: others grow in the drieſt woods, that ſcarce eover ſee the ſun. Nay, ſtones and the trunks of trees are not void, but covered with liverwort.

The wiſdom of the Creator appears no where more, than in the manner of the growth of trees. As their roots deſcend deeper than thoſe of other plants, they do not rob them of nouriſhment. And as their ſtems ſhoot up ſo high, they are eaſily preſerved from cattle. The leaves falling in autumn guard many plants againſt the rigor of winter: and in the ſummer afford both them and us a defence againſt the heat of the ſun. They likewiſe imbibe the water from the earth, part of which tranſpiring through their leaves, is inſenſibly

diſperſed,

diſperſed, and helps to moiſten the plants that are round about. Laſtly, the particular ſtructure of trees contributes very much to the propagation of inſects. Multitudes of theſe lay their eggs upon their leaves, where they find both food and ſafety.

Many plants and ſhrubs are armed with thorns, to keep the animals from deſtroying their fruits. At the ſame time theſe cover many other plants, under their branches, ſo that while the adjacent grounds are robbed of all plants, ſome may be preſerved to continue the ſpecies.

The moſſes which adorn the moſt barren places, preſerve the ſmaller plants, when they begin to ſhoot, from cold and drought. They alſo hinder the fermenting earth from forcing the roots of plants upward in the ſpring, as we ſee happen annually to trunks of trees. Hence few moſſes grow in ſouthern climates, not being neceſſary there to theſe ends.

Sea-Matweed will bear no ſoil but pure ſand. Sand is often blown by violent winds, ſo as to deluge as it were meadows and fields. But where this grows, it fixes the ſand, and gathers it into hillocks. Thus other lands are formed, the ground increaſed, and the ſea repelled, by this wonderful diſpoſition of nature.

How careful is nature to preſerve that uſeful plant graſs? The more its leaves are eaten, the more they increaſe. For the Author of nature intended, that vegetables which have ſlender ſtalks and erect leaves ſhould be copious and thick ſet, and thus afford food for ſo vaſt a quantity of grazing animals. But what increaſes our wonder is, that although graſs is the principal food of ſuch animals, yet they touch not the flower and ſeed-bearing ſtems, that ſo the ſeeds may ripen and be ſown.

The Caterpillar of the Moth, which feeds upon graſs to the great deſtruction thereof, ſeems to be formed in order to keep a due proportion between this and other plants. For graſs when left to grow freely,

increaſes to that degree as to exclude all other plants, which would conſequently be extirpated, unleſs the inſect ſometimes prepared a place for them. And hence it is, that more ſpecies of plants appear, when this caterpillar has laid waſte the paſture the preceding year, than at any other time.

But all plants ſooner or later, muſt ſubmit to death. They ſpring up, they grow, they flouriſh, they bear fruit, and having finiſhed their courſe, return to the duſt again. Almoſt all the black mould which covers the earth is owing to dead vegetables. Indeed after the leaves and ſtems are gone, the roots of plants remain: but theſe too at laſt rot and change into mould. And the earth thus prepared, reſtores to plants what it has received from them. For when ſeeds are committed to the earth, they draw and accommodate to their own nature the more ſubtile parts of this mould: ſo that the talleſt tree is in reality nothing but mould wonderfully compounded with air and water. And from theſe plants when they die, juſt the ſame kind of mould is formed as gave them birth. By this means fertility remains continually uninterrupted: whereas the earth could not make good its annual conſumption, were it not conſtantly recruited.

In many caſes the cruſtaceous Liverworts are the firſt foundation of vegetation. Therefore however deſpiſed, they are of the utmoſt conſequence, in the œconomy of nature. When rocks firſt emerge out of the ſea, they are ſo poliſhed by the force of the waves, that hardly any herb is able to fix its habitation upon them But the minute cruſtaceous liverworts ſoon begin to cover theſe dry rocks, though they have no nouriſhment but the little mould and imperceptible particles, which the rain and air bring thither. Theſe liverworts dying turn into fine earth, in which a larger kinds of liverworts ſtrike their roots. Theſe alſo die, and turn to mould: and then the various kinds of moſſes find nouriſhment. Laſtly, theſe dying yield

ſuch

ſuch plenty of mould, that herbs and ſhrubs eaſily take root and live upon it.

That trees, when dry or cut down, may not remain uſeleſs to the world, and lie melancholy ſpectacles, nature haſtens on their deſtruction, in a ſingular manner. Firſt the liverworts begin to ſtrike root in them; afterward the moiſture is drawn out of them, whence putrefaction follows. Then the muſhroom-kind find a fit place to grow on, and corrupt them ſtill more. A particular ſort of beetle next makes himſelf a way between the bark and the wood. Then a ſort of caterpillar, and ſeveral other ſorts of beetles, bore numberleſs holes through the trunk. Laſtly, the woodpeckers come, and while they are ſeeking for inſects, ſhatter the tree already corrupted, and exceedingly haſten its return to the earth from whence it came. But how ſhall the trunk of a tree, which is emerſed in water ever return to earth? A particular kind of worm performs this work, as ſea-faring men well know.

But why is ſo inconſiderable a plant as thiſtles, ſo armed and guarded by nature? Becauſe it is one of the moſt uſeful plants that grows. Obſerve an heap of clay, on which for many years no plant has ſprung up: let but the ſeeds of a thiſtle fix there, and other plants will quickly come thither, and ſoon cover the ground: for the thiſtles by their leaves attract moiſture from the air, and by their roots ſend it into the clay, and by that means not only thrive themſelves, but provide a ſhelter for other plants.

Indeed, there is ſuch a variety of wiſdom, and profuſion of goodneſs, diſplayed in every object of nature, even in thoſe that ſeem uſeleſs or inſignificant, and what is more, in many of thoſe which to an ignorant and ſuperficial obſerver, appear noxious, that it is paſt doubt to the true philoſopher, nothing has been made in vain. That is a fine as well as pious obſervation of Sir John Pringle, founded on the experiments of Dr. Prieſtley, that no vegetable grows in

vain,

vain, but that from the oak of the foreſt to the graſs of the field, every individual plant is ſerviceable to mankind; if not always diſtinguiſhed by ſome private virtue, yet making a part of the whole, which cleanſes and purifies our atmoſphere. In this the fragrant roſe and deadly nightſhade co-operate; nor is the herbage, nor the woods that flouriſh in the moſt remote and unpeopled regions, unprofitable to us, nor we to them; conſidering how conſtantly the winds convey to them our vitiated air, for our relief, and their nouriſhment. And if ever theſe ſalutary gales riſe to ſtorms and hurricanes, let us ſtill trace and revere the ways of a beneficent Being; who not fortuitouſly but with deſign, not in wrath but in mercy, thus ſhakes the waters and the air together, to bury in the deep thoſe putrid and peſtilential Effluvia, which the vegetables upon the face of the earth had been inſufficient to conſume.

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4. *Some general Reflections and Obſervations on Beaſts, Birds, Fiſhes, and other inferior parts of the Works of God.*

NO part of Nature is deſtitute of inhabitants. The woods, the waters, the depths of the earth, have their reſpective tenants; while the yielding air, and thoſe tracts where man can never, but with much art and danger, aſcend, are alſo paſſed through by multitudes of the moſt beautiful Beings of the creation.

Every order of animals is fitted for its ſituation in life; but none more apparently than Birds. Though they fall below Beaſts in the ſcale of nature, yet they hold the next rank, and far ſurpaſs Fiſhes and Inſects, both in the ſtructure of their bodies, and in their ſagacity.

The body of Man preſents the greateſt variety: Beaſts leſs perfectly formed, diſcover their defects in the ſimplicity of their conformation: the mechaniſm of Birds is yet leſs complex: Fiſhes are furniſhed with fewer organs ſtill; while Inſects, more imperfect than all, fill up the chaſm between animal and vegetable

getable nature. Of Man, the moſt perfect animal, there are but three or four ſpecies; the kinds of Beaſts are more numerous; Birds are more various ſtill; Fiſhes yet more; but Inſects afford an immenſe variety.

As to the number of animals, the ſpecies of Beaſts, including alſo Serpents, are not very numerous. Such as are certainly known and clearly deſcribed, are not above an hundred and fifty. And yet probably not many that are of any conſiderable bigneſs, have eſcaped the notice of the curious.

The ſpecies of Birds, known and deſcribed, are near five hundred, and the ſpecies of Fiſhes, ſecluding ſhell fiſh, as many: but if the ſhell fiſh are taken in, above ſix times the number. How many of each genus remain undiſcovered, we cannot very nearly conjecture. But we may ſuppoſe, the whole ſum of Beaſts and Birds to exceed by a third part, and Fiſhes by one half, thoſe that are known.

The Inſects, taking in the exſanguious, both terreſtrial and aquatic, may for number vie even with plants themſelves. The exſanguious alone, by what Dr. Liſter has obſerved and delineated, we may conjecture cannot be leſs, if not many more, than three thouſand ſpecies. Indeed this computation ſeems much too low: for if there are a thouſand ſpecies in this iſland and the ſea near it; and if the ſame proportion hold between the Inſects natives of England, and thoſe of the reſt of the world: the ſpecies of Inſects on the whole globe, will amount to ten thouſands.

Now if the number of creatures even in this lower world, be ſo exceedingly great; how great, how immenſe muſt be the power and wiſdom of him that formed them all! For as it argues far more ſkill in an artificer, to be able to frame both clocks and watches, and pumps, and many other ſorts of machines, than he could diſplay in making but one of thoſe ſorts of engines: ſo the Almighty declares more of his wiſdom,

dom, in forming ſuch a multitude of different ſorts of creatures, and all with admirable and unreproveable art, than if he had created but a few.

Again: The ſuperiority of knowledge would be diſplayed, by contriving engines for the ſame purpoſes after different faſhions, as the moving clocks or other engines by ſprings inſtead of weights: and the infinitely wiſe Creator, has ſhewn by many inſtances, that he is not confined to one only inſtrument, for the working one effect, but can perform the ſame thing by divers means. So though moſt flying creatures have feathers, yet hath he enabled ſeveral to fly without them; as the bat, one ſort of lizard, two ſorts of fiſhes, and numberleſs ſorts of inſects. In like manner, although the air bladder in fiſhes ſeems neceſſary for ſwimming: yet are many ſo formed as to ſwim without it, as firſt, The cartilaginous kind, which nevertheleſs aſcend and deſcend at pleaſure, although by what means we cannot tell: ſecondly, The cetaceous kind: the air which they receive into their lungs, in ſome meaſure anſwering the ſame end.

Yet again: Though God has tempered the blood and bodies of moſt fiſhes to their cold element, yet to ſhew he can preſerve a creature as hot as beaſts themſelves in the coldeſt water, he has placed a variety of theſe cetaceous fiſhes in the northermoſt ſeas. And the copious fat wherewith their bodies is incloſed, by reflecting the internal heat, and keeping off the external cold, keeps them warm even in the neighbourhood of the pole. Another proof that God can by different means produce the ſame effect, is the various ways of extracting the nutritious juice out of the aliment in various creatures.

In Man and Beaſts the food firſt chewed, is received into the ſtomach, where it is concocted and reduced into chyle, and ſo evacuated into the inteſtines, where being mixed with the choler and pancreate juice, it is farther ſubtilized, and rendered ſo fluid, that its finer

ſiner parts eaſily enter the mouth of the lacteal veins. In birds there is no chewing: but in ſuch as are not carnivorous, it is immediately ſwallowed into the crop, or anti-ſtomach (which is obſerved in many, eſpecially piſcivorous birds) where it is moiſtened by ſome proper juice, and then transferred to the gizzard, by the working of whoſe muſcles, aſſiſted by ſmall pebbles, which they ſwallow for that purpoſe, it is ground ſmall, and ſo tranſmitted to the inteſtines.

In oviparous Reptiles, and all kind of Serpents, there is neither chewing nor comminution in the ſtomach, but as they ſwallow animals whole, ſo they void the ſkins unbroken, having extracted the nutritious juices. Here, by the by, we may obſerve the wonderful delatibility of the throats and gullets of Serpents. Two entire adult mice have been taken out of the ſtomach of an adder, whoſe neck was no bigger than one's little finger.

Fiſhes, which neither chew, nor grind their meat, do, by means of a corroſive juice in their ſtomach, reduce ſkin, bones, and all into chyle. And yet this juice ſhews no acidity to the taſte. But how mild ſoever it taſtes, it corrodes all animal ſubſtances, as aqua fortis does iron.

Several eminent men have been of opinion, that all brutes are mere machines. This may be agreeable enough to the pride of man; but it is not agreeable to daily obſervation. Do we not continually obſerve in the brutes which are round about us, a degree of reaſon? Many of their actions cannot be accounted for without it: as that commonly noted of dogs, that running before their maſters, they will ſtop at the parting of the road, till they ſee which way their maſters take. And when they have gotten what they fear will be taken from them, they run away and hide it. Nay, what account can be given, why a dog being to leap on a table, which he ſees he cannot reach at once, if a ſtool or chair ſtands near it,

it, firſt mounts that, and thence proceeds to the table? If he were mere clock-work, and his motion cauſed by a material ſpring, that ſpring being once ſet to work, would carry the machine in a right line, towards the object that put it in motion.

Were it true, that brutes were mere machines, they could have no perception of pleaſure or pain. But how contrary is this, to the doleful ſignifications they give, when beaten or tormented? How contrary to the common ſenſe of mankind? For do we not all naturally pity them, apprehending them to feel pain juſt as we do? Whereas no man is troubled to ſee a plant torn, or cut, or mangled how you pleaſe. And how contrary to Scripture? *A righteous man regardeth the life of his beaſt: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* Prov. 12. 10. The former clauſe is uſually rendered, a good man is merciful to his beaſt. And this is the true rendering, as appears by the oppoſite clauſe, that the wicked is cruel. Cruelty then may be exerciſed toward beaſts. But this could not be, were they mere machines.

The natural inſtinct of all creatures, and the ſpecial proviſion made for ſome of the moſt helpleſs, do in a particular manner demonſtrate the great Creator's care.

Firſt, What an admirable principle is the natural affection of all creatures toward their young! By means of this, with what care do they nurſe them up, thinking no pains too great to be taken for them, no danger too great to be ventured upon, for their guard and ſecurity! How will they careſs them with their affectionate notes, put food into their mouths, ſuckle them, cheriſh and keep them warm, teach them to pick and eat, and gather food for themſelves: and in a word, perform the whole part of ſo many nurſes, deputed by the ſovereign Lord of the world, to help ſuch young and ſhiftleſs creatures till they are able to ſhift for themſelves.

Other

Other animals, infects in particular, whofe offspring is too numerous for the parent's provifion, are fo generated as to need none of their care. For they arrive immediately at their perfect ftate, and fo are able to fhift for themfelves. Yet thus far the parental inftinct (equal to the moft rational fore-fight) extends, that they do not drop their eggs any where, but in commodious places, fuitable to their fpecies. And fome include in their nefts, fufficient and agreeable food, to ferve their young till they come to maturity.

And for the young themfelves: as the parent is not able to carry them about, to clothe them and dandle them, as man doth: how admirably is it contrived, that they can foon walk about, and begin to fhift for themfelves! How naturally do they hunt for their teat, fuck, pick and take in their proper food!

On the other hand, the young of man (as their parent's reafon is fufficient, to help, to nurfe, feed and cloath them) are born utterly helplefs, and are more abfolutely than any creature, caft upon their parent's care.

Secondly, What admirable provifion is made for fome of the moft helplefs creatures, at a time when they muft otherwife utterly perifh! The winter is an improper feafon to afford food for infects and many other animals. When the fields, trees, and plants are naked, and the air is chilled with froft; what would become of fuch animals, whofe tender bodies are impatient of cold, and who are nourifhed only by the produce of the fpring or fummer? To prevent their total deftruction, the wife Preferver of the world has fo ordered, that in the firft place, thofe who are impatient of cold, fhould have fuch a peculiar ftructure of body, as during that feafon, not to fuffer any wafte, nor confequently need any recruit. Hence many forts of birds, and almoft all infects, pafs the whole winter without any food: and moft of them without any refpiration. It feems all motion of the animal juices

is extinct. For though cut in pieces they do not awake, nor does any fluid ooze out at the wound. This ſleep therefore is little leſs than death, and their waking, than a reſurrection: when the returning ſun revives them and their food together.

The next proviſion is for ſuch creatures as can bear the cold, but would want food. This is provided againſt in ſome, by a long patience of hunger, in others by their wonderful inſtinct, in laying up food before hand, againſt the approaching winter. By ſome of theſe, their little treaſuries are at the proper ſeaſon well ſtocked with proviſions. Yea, whole fields are here and there beſpread with the fruits of the neighbouring trees laid carefully up in the earth, and covered ſafe by provident little animals.

And what a prodigious act is it of the Creator's indulgence to the poor, ſhiftleſs irrationals, that they are already furniſhed with ſuch cloathing, as is proper to their place and buſineſs! with hair, with feathers, with ſhells, or with firm armature, all nicely accommodated, as well to the element wherein they live, as to their ſeveral occaſions there! To beaſts, hair is a commodious cloathing; which together with the apt texture of their ſkin, fits them in all weathers to lie on the ground, and to do their ſervice to man. The thick and warm fleeces of others, are a good defence againſt the cold and wet, and alſo a ſoft bed: yea, and to many, a comfortable covering for their tender young.

All the animals near Hudſon's Bay, are cloathed with a cloſe, ſoft, warm fur. But what is ſtill more ſurpriſing, and what draws all attentive minds to admire the wiſdom and goodneſs of Providence is, that the very dogs and cats which are brought thither from England, on the approach of winter change their appearance, and acquire a much longer, ſofter, and thicker coat of hair than they originally had.

And as hair is a commodious dreſs for beaſts, ſo are feathers for birds. They are not only a good guard

guard againſt wet and cold, but nicely placed every where on the body, to give them an eaſy paſſage through the air, and to waft them through that thin medium. How curious is their texture for lightneſs, and withal cloſe and firm for ſtrength! and where it is neceſſary they ſhould be filled, what a light, medullary ſubſtance are they filled with? ſo that even the ſtrongeſt parts, far from being a load to the body, rather help to make it light and buoyant. And how curiouſly are the vanes of the feathers wrought with capillary filaments, neatly interwoven together, whereby they are ſufficiently cloſe and ſtrong, both to guard the body againſt the injuries of the weather, and to impower the wings, like ſo many ſails, to make ſtrong impulſes on the air in their flight.

No leſs curious is the cloathing of Reptiles. How well adapted are the rings of ſome, and the contortions of the ſkin of others, not only to fence the body ſufficiently, but to enable them to creep, to perforate the earth, and to perform all the offices of their ſtate, better than any other covering?

Obſerve, for inſtance, the tegument of the Earthworms, made in the compleateſt manner, for making their paſſage through the earth, wherever their occaſions lead them. Their body is made throughout of ſmall rings, which have a curious apparatus of muſcles, that enable them with great ſtrength to dilate, extend, or contract their whole body. Each ring is likewiſe armed with ſtiff, ſharp prickles, which they can open at pleaſure, or ſhut cloſe to their body. Laſtly, under their ſkin there is a ſlimy juice, which they emit as occaſion requires, to lubricate the body, and facilitate their paſſage into the earth. By all theſe means they are enabled, with eaſe and ſpeed, to work themſelves into the earth, which they could not do, were they covered with hair, feathers, ſcales, or ſuch cloathing as any of the other creatures.

How wiſely likewiſe are the inhabitants of the waters cloathed! The ſhells of ſome fiſhes, are a

ſtrong guard to their tender bodies, and conſiſtent enough with their ſlow motion: while the ſcales and fins of others afford them an eaſy and ſwift [illegible] through the waters.

Admirable likewiſe is the ſagacity of brute animals, in the convenience and method of their habitations. Their architectonic ſkill herein, exceeds all the ſkill of man. With what inimitable art do ſome of theſe poor, untaught creatures, lay a parcel of rude ugly ſticks or ſtraws together! With what curioſity do they line them within, yea, wind and place every hair, feather, or lock of wool, to guard and keep warm the tender bodies, both of themſelves and their young? And with what art do they thatch over and coat their neſts without, to deceive the eye of the ſpectators, as well as to guard and fence them againſt the injuries of the weather?

Even inſects, thoſe little, weak, tender creatures, what artiſts are they in building their habitations? How does the bee gather its comb from various flowers, the waſp from ſolid timber? With what accuracy do other inſects perforate the earth, wood, ye ſtone itſelf? Farther yet, with what care and neatneſs do moſt of them line their houſes within, and ſeal them up and fence them without? How artificially do others fold up the leaves of trees; others glue light bodies together, and make floating houſes, to tranſport themſelves to and fro, as their various occaſions require?

Another inſtance of the wiſdom of him that made and governs the world, we have in the balance of creatures. The whole ſurface of the terraqueous globe, can afford room and ſupport, to no more than a determinate number of all ſorts of creatures. And if they ſhould increaſe to double or treble the number, they muſt ſtarve or devour one another. To keep the balance even, the great Author of nature hath determined the life of all creatures to ſuch a length, and their increaſe to ſuch a number, proportioned

to their uſe in the world. The life indeed of ſome hurtful creatures is long; of the lion in particular. But then their increaſe is exceeding ſmall: and by that means they do not overſtock the world. On the other hand, where the increaſe is great, the lives of thoſe creatures are generally ſhort. And beſide this, they are of great uſe to man, either for food or on other occaſions. This indeed ſhould be particularly obſerved, as a ſignal inſtance of divine providence, that uſeful creatures are produced in great plenty: others in ſmaller numbers. The prodigious increaſe of inſects, both in and out of the waters, may exemplify the former obſervation. For innumerable creatures feed upon them, and would periſh were it not for this ſupply. And the latter is confirmed by what many have remarked: that creatures of little uſe, or by their voracioufneſs, pernicious, either ſeldom bring forth, or have but one or two at a birth.

How remarkable is the deſtruction and reparation of the whole animal creation? The ſurface of the earth is the inexhauſtible ſource whence both man and beaſt derive their ſubſiſtence. Whatever lives, lives on what vegetates, and vegetables, in their turn, live on whatever has lived or vegetated: it is impoſſible for any thing to live, without deſtroying ſomething elſe. It is thus only that animals can ſubſiſt themſelves, and propagate their ſpecies.

God in creating the firſt individual of each ſpecies, animal or vegetable, not only gave a form to the duſt of the earth, but a principle of life, incloſing in each, a greater or ſmaller quantity of organical particles, indeſtructible and common to all organized beings. Theſe paſs from body to body, ſupporting the life, and miniſtering to the nutrition and growth of each. And when any body is reduced to aſhes, theſe organical particles, on which death hath no power, ſurvive and paſs into other beings, bringing with them nouriſhment and life. Thus every production, every renovation, every increaſe by gene-

rarion or nutrition, ſuppoſe a preceding deſtruction, a converſion of ſubſtance, an acceſſion of theſe organical particles, which ever ſubſiſting in an equal number, render nature always equally full of life.

The total quantity of life in the univerſe is therefore perpetually the ſame. And whatever death ſeems to deſtroy, it deſtroys no part of that primitive life, which is diffuſed through all organized beings. Inſtead of injuring nature, it only cauſes it to ſhine with the greater luſtre. If death is permitted to cut down individuals, it is only, in order to make of the univerſe, by the re-production of beings, a theatre ever crouded, a ſpectacle ever new. But it is never permitted to deſtroy the moſt inconſiderable ſpecies.

That beings may ſucceed each other, it is neceſſary that there be a deſtruction among them. Yet like a provident mother, nature in the midſt of her inexhauſtible abundance, has prevented any waſte, by the few ſpecies of carnivorous animals, and the few individuals of each ſpecies; multiplying at the ſame time both the ſpecies and individuals of thoſe that feed on herbage. In vegetables ſhe ſeems to be profuſe, both with regard to the number and fertility of the ſpecies.

In the ſea indeed all the ſpecies are carnivorous. But though they are perpetually preying upon, they never deſtroy each other, becauſe their fruitfulneſs is equal to their depredation.

Thus thro' ſucceſſive ages ſtands
Firm fixt thy providential care!
Pleas'd with the works of thine own hands
Thou doſt the waſtes of time repair.

Let us add a few more reflections on the world in general. The ſame wiſe Being, who was pleaſed to make man, prepared for him alſo an habitation ſo advantageouſly placed, that the heavens and the reſt of the univerſe might ſerve it both as an ornament and

and a covering. He conſtructed likewiſe the air which man was to breathe, and the fire which was to ſuſtain his life. He prepared alſo metals, ſalts, and all terreſtrial elements to renew and maintain throughout all ages, whatever might be on any account neceſſary for the inhabitants of the earth.

The ſame Divine Ruler is manifeſt in all the objects that compoſe the univerſe. It is he that cauſed the dry land to appear, above the ſurface of the ocean, gauged the capacity of that amazing reſervoir, and proportioned it to the fluid it contains. He collects the riſing vapours, and cauſes them to diſtil in gentle ſhowers. At his command the ſun darts his enlivening rays, and the winds ſcatter the noxious effluvia, which if they were collected together might deſtroy the human race.

He formed thoſe hills and lofty mountains which receive and retain the water within their bowels, in order to diſtribute it with œconomy to the inhabitants of the plains, and to give it ſuch an impulſe, as might enable it to overcome the unevenneſs of the lands, and convey it to the remoteſt habitations.

He ſpread under the plains beds of clay, or compact earths, there to ſtop the waters, which, after a great rain, make their way through innumerable little paſſages. Theſe ſheets of water frequently remain in a level with the neighbouring rivers, and fill our wells with their redundancy, or as thoſe ſubſide, flow into them again.

He proportioned the variety of plants in each country, to the exigencies of the inhabitants, and adapted the variety of the ſoils, to the nature of thoſe plants.

He endued numerous animals with mild diſpoſitions, to make them the domeſtics of man: and taught the other animals to govern themſelves, with an averſion to dependence in order to continue their ſpecies without loading man with too many cares.

If we more nearly ſurvey the animal and vegetable world, we find all animals and plants, have a certain

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and determined form, which is invariably the ſame. So that if a monſter ever appear, it cannot propagate its kind, and introduce a new ſpecies into the univerſe. Great indeed is the variety of organized bodies. But their number is limited. Nor is it poſſible to add a new genus either of plants or animals, to thoſe of which God has created the germina, and determined the form.

The ſame Almighty power has created a preciſe number of ſimple elements, eſſentially different from each other, and invariably the ſame. By theſe he varies the ſcene of the univerſe, and at the ſame time prevents its deſtruction, by the very immutability of the nature and number of theſe elements, ſo that the world is for ever changed, and yet eternally the ſame.

Yet if we would account for the origin of theſe elements, we are involved in endleſs uncertainty. We can only ſay, he who has appointed their different uſes in all ages, has rendered thoſe uſes infallible, by the impoſſibility of either deſtroying or increaſing them.

Herein we read the characters of his power, which is invariably obeyed; of his wiſdom, which has abundantly provided for every thing; and of his tender kindneſs toward man, for whom he has provided ſervices equally various and infallible. It is an additional proof of his continual care of his creatures, that though every thing be compoſed of ſimple elements, all placed within our reach, yet no power is able to deſtroy the leaſt particle of them. Nothing but the ſame cauſe which was able to give them birth, can annihilate them, or change their nature. In truth, the deſign and will of the Creator, is the only phyſical cauſe of the general œconomy of the world: the only phyſical cauſe of every organized body, every germen that flouriſhes in it; the only phyſical cauſe of every minute, elementary particle, which enters into the compoſition of all.

We muſt not then expect ever to have a clear and full conception of effects, natures, and cauſes. For where

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is the thing which we can fully conceive? We can no more comprehend either what body in general is, or any particular body, ſuppoſe a maſs of clay, or a ball of lead, than what a ſpirit, or what God is.

If we turn our eyes to the minuteſt parts of animal life, we ſhall be loſt in aſtoniſhment! And though every thing is alike eaſy to the Almighty, yet to us it is matter of the higheſt wonder, that in thoſe ſpecks of life, we find a greater number of members to be put in motion, more wheels and pullies to be kept going, and a greater variety of machinery, more elegance and workmanſhip (ſo to ſpeak) in the compoſition, more beauty and ornament in the finiſhing, than are ſeen in the enormous bulk of the crocodile, the elephant, or the whale. Yea, they ſeem to be the effects of an art, as much more exquiſite as the movements of a watch are, than thoſe of a coach or a waggon.

Hence we learn, that an atom to God is as a world, and a world but as an atom; juſt as to him, *one day is as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years but as one day.* Every ſpecies likewiſe of theſe animalculæ may ſerve to correct our pride, and ſhew how inadequate our notions are, to the real nature of things. How extremely little can we poſſibly know, either of the largeſt or ſmalleſt part of the creation? We are furniſhed with organs capable of diſcerning, to a certain degree of great or little only. All beyond is as far beyond the reach of our conceptions, as if it had never exiſted.

Proofs of a wiſe, a good and powerful Being are indeed deducible from every thing around us: but the extremely great and the extremely ſmall, ſeem to furniſh us with thoſe that are moſt convincing. And perhaps, if duly conſidered, the fabric of a world, and the fabric of a mite, may be found equally ſtriking and concluſive.

Glaſſes diſcover to us numberleſs kinds of living creatures, quite indiſcernible to the naked eye. And how many thouſand kinds may there be, gradually decreaſing

decreaſing in ſize, which we cannot ſee by any help whatever? Yet to all theſe we muſt believe God has not only appointed the moſt wiſe means for preſervation and propagation, but has adorned them with beauty equal, at leaſt, to any thing our eyes have ſeen.

In ſhort, the world around us is the mighty volume wherein God has declared himſelf. Human languages and characters are different in different nations. And thoſe of one nation are not underſtood by the reſt. But the Book of Nature is written in an univerſal character, which every man may read in his own language. It conſiſts not of words, but things, which picture out the Divine perfections. The firmament every where expanded, with all its ſtarry hoſt, declares the immenſity and magnificence, the power and wiſdom of its Creator. Thunder, lightning, ſtorms, earthquakes and volcanoes, ſhew the terror of his wrath. Seaſonable rains, ſun-ſhine and harveſt, denote his bounty and goodneſs, and demonſtrate how *he opens his hand, and fills all living things with plenteouſneſs.* The conſtantly ſucceeding generations of plants and animals, imply the eternity of their firſt cauſe. Life, ſubſiſting in millions of different forms, ſhews the vaſt diffuſion of his animating power, and death the infinite diſproportion between him and every living thing.

Even the actions of animals are an eloquent and a pathetic language. Thoſe that want the help of man have a thouſand engaging ways, which like the voice of God ſpeaking to his heart, command him to preſerve and cheriſh them. In the mean time the motions or looks of thoſe which might do him harm, ſtrike him with terror, and warn him, either to fly from or arm himſelf againſt them. Thus it is, that every part of nature directs us to nature's God.

The reader will eaſily excuſe our concluding this chapter alſo, with an extract from Mr. Hervey.

In

In all the animal world, we find no tribe, no individual neglected by its Creator. Even the ignoble creatures are moſt wiſely circumſtanced and moſt liberally accommodated.

They all generate in that particular ſeaſon, which ſupplies them with a ſtock of proviſions, ſufficient not only for themſelves, but for their increaſing families. The ſheep yean, when there is herbage to fill their udders, and create milk for their lambs. The birds hatch their young, when new-born inſects ſwarm on every ſide. So that the caterer, whether it be the male or the female parent, needs only to alight on the ground, or make a little excurſion into the air, and find a feaſt ready dreſſed for the mouths at home.

Their love to their offspring, while they are helpleſs, is invincibly ſtrong: whereas the moment they are able to ſhift for themſelves it vaniſhes as though it had never been. The hen that marches at the head of her little brood, would fly at a maſtiff in their defence. Yet within a few weeks, ſhe leaves them to the wide world, and does not even know them any more.

If the God of Iſrael inſpired Bezaleel and Aholiah with wiſdom and knowledge in all manner of workmanſhip, the God of nature has not been wanting, in his inſtructions to the fowls of the air. The ſkill with which they erect their houſes, and adjuſt their apartments is inimitable. The caution with which they hide their abodes from the ſearching eye, or intruding hand, is admirable. No general, though fruitful in expedients, could build ſo commodious a lodgment. Give the moſt celebrated artificer the ſame materials, which theſe weak and unexperienced creatures uſe. Let a Jones or a Demoivre have only ſome rude ſtones or ugly ſticks, a few bits of dirt or ſcraps of hair, a lock of wool, or a coarſe ſprig of moſs: and what works could they produce? We extol the commander, who knows how to take advantage of the ground; who by every circumſtance embarraſſes the forces of his enemy,

and

and advances the ſucceſs of his own. Does not this praiſe belong to the feathered leaders? Who fix their pencile camp, on the dangerous branches that wave aloft in the air, or dance over the ſtream? By this means the vernal gales rock their cradle, and the murmuring waters lull the young, while both concur to terrify their enemies, and keep them at a diſtance. Some hide their little houſhold from view, amidſt the ſhelter of intangled furze. Others remove it from diſcovery, in the centre of a thorny thicket. And by one ſtratagem or another they are generally as ſecure, as if they intrenched themſelves in the earth.

If the Swan has large ſweeping wings, and a copious ſtock of feathers, to ſpread over his callow young, the Wren makes up by contrivance what is wanting in her bulk. Small as ſhe is, ſhe will be obliged to nurſe up a very numerous iſſue. Therefore with ſurpriſing judgment ſhe deſigns, and with wonderful diligence finiſhes her neſt. It is a neat oval, bottomed and vaulted over with a regular concave: within made ſoft with down, without thatched with moſs, only a ſmall aperture left for her entrance. By this means the enlivening heat of her body is greatly encreaſed during the time of incubation. And her young no ſooner burſt the ſhell, than they find themſelves ſcreened from the annoyance of the weather, and comfortably repoſed, till they gather ſtrength in the warmth of a bagnio.

Perhaps we have been accuſtomed to look upon inſects, as ſo many rude ſcraps of creation, but if we examine them with attention, they will appear ſome of the moſt poliſhed pieces of divine workmanſhip. Many of them are decked with the richeſt finery. Their eyes are an aſſemblage of microſcopes: the common Fly, for inſtance, who, ſurrounded with enemies, has neither ſtrength to reſiſt, nor a place of retreat to ſecure herſelf. For this reaſon ſhe has need to be very vigilant, and always upon her guard. But her head is ſo fixed that it cannot turn to ſee what paſſes, either

either behind or around her. Providence therefore has given her, not barely a retinue, but more than a legion of eyes: inſomuch that a ſingle fly is ſuppoſed to be miſtreſs of no leſs than eight thouſand. By the help of this truly amazing apparatus, ſhe ſees on every ſide, with the utmoſt eaſe and ſpeed, though without any motion of the eye, or flection of the neck.

The Dreſs of inſects is a veſture of reſplendent colours ſet with an arrangement of the brighteſt gems. Their wings are the fineſt expanſion imaginable, compared to which lawn is as coarſe as ſackcloth. The caſes, which encloſe their wings, glitter with the fineſt varniſh, are ſcooped into ornamental flutings, are ſtudded with radiant ſpots, or pinked with elegant holes. Not one but is endued with weapons to ſeize their prey, and dexterity to eſcape their foe, to diſpatch the buſineſs of their ſtation, and enjoy the pleaſure of their condition.

What if the Elephant is diſtinguiſhed by his huge Proboſcis? The uſe of this is anſwered in theſe his meaneſt relations, by their curious feelers, remarkable, if not for their enormous ſize, yet for their ready flexion and quick ſenſibility. By theſe they explore their way in the darkeſt road: by theſe they diſcover and avoid, whatever might defile their neat apparel, or endanger their tender lives.

Every one admires the majeſtic Horſe. With how rapid career does he bound along the plain? Yet the Graſs-hopper ſprings forward with a bound abundantly more impetuous. The Ant too, in proportion to his ſize, excels him both in ſwiftneſs and ſtrength: and will climb precipices, which the moſt courageous courſer dares not attempt to ſcale. If the Snail moves more ſlowly, ſhe has however no need to go the ſame way twice over: becauſe whenever ſhe departs, wherever ſhe removes, ſhe is always at home.

The Eagle, it is true, is privileged with pinions that out-ſtrip the wind. Yet neither is that poor outcaſt, the groveling Mole, diſregarded by Divine Providence.

Becauſe

Becauſe ſhe is to dig her cell in the earth, her paws ſerve for a pick-axe and ſpade. Her eye is ſunk deep into its ſocket, that it may not be hurt by her rugged ſituation. And as it needs very little light, ſhe has no reaſon to complain of her dark abode. So that her ſubterranean habitation, which ſome might call a dungeon, yields her all the ſafety of a fortified caſtle, and all the delights of a decorated grot.

Even the Spider, though abhorred by man, is the care of all-ſuſtaining heaven. She is to ſupport herſelf by trepanning the wandering fly. Suitably to her employ, ſhe has bags of glutinous moiſture. From this ſhe ſpins a clammy thread, and weaves it into a tenacious net. This ſhe ſpreads in the moſt opportune place. But knowing her appearance would deter him from approaching, ſhe then retires out of ſight. Yet ſhe conſtantly keeps within diſtance; ſo as to receive immediate intelligence when any thing falls into her toils, ready to ſpring out in the very inſtant. And it is obſervable, when winter chills the air, and no more inſects rove through it, knowing her labour would be in vain, ſhe leaves her ſtand, and diſcontinues her work.

I muſt not forget the inhabitants of the hive. The Bees ſubſiſt as a regular community. And their indulgent Creator has given them all implements neceſſary either for building their combs, or compoſing their honey. They have each a portable veſſel, in which they bring home their collected ſweets: and they have the moſt commodious ſtore-houſes, wherein they depoſit them. They readily diſtinguiſh every plant, which affords materials for their buſineſs: and are complete practitioners in the arts of ſeparation and refinement. They are aware that the vernal bloom and ſummer ſun continue but for a ſeaſon. Therefore they improve to the utmoſt every ſhining hour, and lay up a ſtock ſufficient to ſupply the whole ſtate, till their flowery harveſt returns.

If the maſter of this lower creation is ennobled with the powers of reaſon, the meaneſt claſſes of ſenſitive beings, are endued with the faculty of inſtinct: a ſagacity which is neither derived from obſervation, nor waits the finiſhing of experience: which without a tutor teaches them all neceſſary ſkill, and enables them without a pattern to perform every needful operation. And what is more remarkable, it never miſleads them, either into erroneous principles, or pernicious practices: nor ever fails them in the moſt nice and difficult of their undertakings.

Let us ſtep into another element, and juſt viſit the watery world. There is not one among the innumerable myriads, that ſwim the boundleſs ocean, but is watched over by the ſovereign eye, and ſupported by his Almighty hand. He has condeſcended even to beautify them. He has given the moſt exact proportion to their ſhape, the gayeſt colours to their ſkin, and a poliſhed ſurface to their ſcales. The eyes of ſome are ſurrounded with a ſcarlet circle: the back of others diverſified with crimſon ſtains. View them when they glance along the ſtream, or when they are freſh from their native brine, the ſilver is not more bright, nor the rainbow more glowing than their vivid, gloſſy hues.

But as they have neither hands nor feet, how can they help themſelves, or eſcape their enemies? By the beneficial, as well as ornamental furniture of fins. Theſe when expanded, like maſts above, and ballaſts below, poiſe their floating bodies, and keep them ſteadily upright. They are likewiſe greatly aſſiſted by the flexibility and vigorous activity of their tails: with which they ſhoot through the paths of the ſea, ſwifter than a veſſel with all its ſails. But we are loſt in wonder at the exquiſite contrivance and delicate formation of their gills: by which they are accommodated, even in that denſe medium, with the benefits of reſpiration! A piece of mechaniſm this, indulged to the meaneſt of the fry: yet infinitely ſurpaſſing, in the fineneſs

fineneſs of its ſtructure and operation, whatever is curious in the works of art, or commodious in the palaces of princes.

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5. *Some obſervations on the difference between things natural and artificial.*

IF we examine the fineſt needle by the microſcope, the point of it appears about a quarter of an inch broad, and its figure neither round nor flat, but irregular and unequal. And the ſurface, however ſmooth and bright it may ſeem to the naked eye, is then ſeen full of raggedneſs, holes, and ſcratches, like an iron bar from the forge. But examine in the ſame manner the ſting of a bee, and it appears to have in every part a poliſh moſt amazingly beautiful, without the leaſt flaw, or inequality, and ends in a point too fine to be diſcerned by any glaſs whatever: and yet this is only the outward ſheath of far more exquiſite inſtruments.

A ſmall piece of the fineſt lawn, from the diſtance and holes between its threads, appears like a lattice or hurdle. And the threads themſelves ſeem coarſer than the yarn wherewith ropes are made for anchors. Fine Bruſſel's lace will look as if it were made of a thick, rough, uneven hair-line, intwiſted or clotted together in a very aukward and unartful manner. But a ſilkworm's web on the niceſt examination appears perfectly ſmooth and ſhining, and as much finer than any ſpinſter in the world can make, as the ſmalleſt twine is than the thickeſt cable. A pod of this ſilk winds into nine hundred and ſixty yards. And as it is two threads twiſted together all the length, ſo it really contains one thouſand eight hundred and ſixty; and yet weighs but two grains and an half. What an exquiſite fineneſs! and yet this is nothing to the ſilk that iſſued from the worm's mouth when newly hatched.

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The ſmalleſt dot which can be made with a pen, appears through a glaſs, a vaſt irregular ſpot, rough, jagged, and uneven about all its edges. The fineſt writing (ſuch as the Lord's Prayer in the compaſs of a ſilver penny) ſeems as ſhapeleſs and uncouth as if wrote in Runic characters. But the ſpecks of moths, beetles, flies, and other inſects, are moſt accurately circular: and all the lines and marks about them are drawn to the utmoſt poſſibility of exactneſs.

Our fineſt miniature paintings appear before a microſcope, as mere daubings, plaiſtered on with a trowel. Our ſmootheſt poliſhings are ſhown to be mere roughneſs, full of gaps and flaws. Thus do the works of art ſink, upon an accurate examination. On the contrary, the nearer we examine the works of nature, even in the leaſt and meaneſt of her productions, the more we are convinced, nothing is to be found there, but beauty and perfection. View the numberleſs ſpecies of inſects, what exactneſs and ſymmetry ſhall we find in all their organs? What a profuſion of colouring, azure, green, vermilion; what fringe and embroidery on every part! How high the finiſhing, how inimitable the poliſh we every where behold! Yea, view the animalculæ, inviſible to the naked eye, thoſe breathing atoms ſo ſmall, they are almoſt all workmanſhip: in them too we diſcover the ſame multiplicity of parts, diverſity of figures, and variety of motions, as in the largeſt animals. How amazingly curious muſt the internal ſtructure of theſe creatures be! how minute the bones, joints, muſcles, and tendons! how exquiſitely delicate the veins, arteries, nerves! what multitudes of veſſels and circulations muſt be contained in this narrow compaſs! and yet all have ſufficient room for their ſeveral offices, without interfering with each other!

The ſame regularity and beauty is found in vegetables. Every ſtalk, bud, flower, and ſeed, diſplays a figure, a proportion, an harmony, beyond the reach of art. There is not a weed whoſe every leaf

does not ſhew a multiplicity of pores and veſſels curiouſly diſpoſed for the conveyance of juices, to ſupport and nouriſh it, and which is not adorned with innumerable graces to embelliſh it.

But ſome may aſk, to what purpoſe has nature beſtowed ſo much expence on ſo inſignificant creatures? I anſwer, this very thing proves they are not ſo inſignificant, as we fondly ſuppoſe. This beauty is given them either for their own ſake, that they themſelves may be delighted with it, or for ours, that we may obſerve in them the amazing power and goodneſs of the Creator. If the former, they are of conſequence in the account of their Maker, and therefore deſerve our regard. If the latter, then it is certainly our duty to take notice of, and admire them.

In ſhort, the whole univerſe is a picture, in which are diſplayed the perfections of the Deity. It ſhews not only his exiſtence, but his unity, his power, his wiſdom, his independence, his goodneſs. His unity appears in the harmony we cannot but ſee in all the parts of nature; in that one ſimple end to which they are directed, and the conformity of all the means thereto. On every ſide we diſcern either ſimple elements or compound bodies, which have all different actions and offices. What the fire inflames, the water quenches: what one wind freezes, another thaws. But theſe and a thouſand other operations, ſo ſeemingly repugnant to each other, do nevertheleſs, all concur in a wonderful manner, to produce one effect. And all are ſo neceſſary to the main deſign, that were the agency of any one deſtroyed, an interruption of the order and harmony of the creation muſt immediately enſue.

Suppoſe, for inſtance, the wind to be taken away, and all Society is in the utmoſt diſorder. Navigation is at a ſtand, and all our commerce with foreign nations deſtroyed. On the other hand the vapours raiſed from the ſea would remain ſuſpended, juſt where they roſe. Conſequently we ſhould be deprived

deprived of that uſeful covering the Clouds, which now ſcreens us from the ſcorching heat: yea, and of the fruitful rains. So our land would be parched up, the fruits of the earth wither, animals die, through hunger and thirſt, and all nature languiſh and droop. All the parts of nature therefore were conſtituted for the aſſiſtance of each other, and all undeniably prove the Unity of their Omniſcient Creator.

His Power appears in the whole frame of creation, and his Wiſdom in every part of it. His independence is pointed out in the inexhauſtible variety of beaſts, birds, fiſhes and inſects: and his goodneſs, in taking care of every one of theſe, *opening his hand, and filling all things living with plenteouſneſs.*

Every thing is calculated by Divine Wiſdom, to make us wiſer and better. And this is the ſubſtance of true philoſophy. We cannot know much. In vain does our ſhallow reaſon attempt to fathom the myſteries of nature, and to pry into the ſecrets of the Almighty. His ways are paſt finding out. The eye of a litttle worm is a ſubject capable of exhauſting all our boaſted ſpeculations. But we may love much. And herein we may be aſſiſted by contemplating the wonders of his Creation. Indeed he ſeems to have laid the higheſt claim to this tribute of our love, by the care he has taken to manifeſt his goodneſs in the moſt conſpicuous manner, while at the ſame time he has concealed from us the moſt curious particulars, with regard to the eſſences and ſtructure of his works. And to this our ignorance it is owing, that we fancy ſo many things to be uſeleſs in the Creation. But a deep ſenſe of his goodneſs will ſatisfy all our doubts, and reſolve all our ſcruples.

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6. *Some conſiderations on the nature of man.*

Near 6000 years are elapſed ſince the creation. At firſt there were only two human Beings. When

the flood came upon the earth, which was 1656 years from the beginning of time, theſe two had increaſed, according to a moderate computation, to the number of 10737418240 perſons. From Noah and his family are ſprung the preſent race of men, and are generally ſuppoſed to be only about 358000000 perſons.

If we proceed from the number to the nature of reaſonable beings, we ſhall find much of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God diſplayed in the ſtructure of the human body, as well as in the all-directing mind.

Let us begin with the leſs adorned, but more ſolid parts, thoſe which ſupport, and which contain the reſt. Firſt, you have a ſyſtem of Bones, caſt in a variety of moulds, in a variety of ſizes: all ſtrong, that they may bear up the machine, yet light, that they may not weigh us down: bored with an inward cavity to contain the moiſtening marrow, and perforated with fine ducts, to admit the nouriſhing veſſels. Inſenſible themſelves, they are covered with a membrane, exquiſitely ſenſible, which warns them of, and ſecures them from the annoyance of any hurtful friction; and alſo preſerves the muſcles from being fretted in their action, by the hard and rough ſubſtance of the bone. They are largeſt at the extremities, that they may be joined more firmly, and not ſo eaſily diſlocated. The manner of their articulation is truly admirable, and remarkably various: yet never varied without demonſtrating ſome wiſe deſign, and anſwering ſome valuable end. Frequently when two are united, the one is nicely rounded and capped with a ſmooth ſubſtance; the other is ſcooped into an hollow of the the ſame dimenſions to receive it. And both are lubricated with an unctuous fluid, to facilitate the rotation.

The Feet compoſe the firmeſt pedeſtal, infinitely beyond all that ſtatuary can accompliſh, capable of altering its form, and extending its ſize, as different circumſtances require. They likewiſe contain a ſet of the niceſt ſprings, which help to place the body in a variety

variety of attitudes, and qualify it for a multiplicity of motions. The undermoſt part of the heel, and the extremity of the ſole, are ſhod with a tough inſenſible ſubſtance: a kind of natural ſandal, which never wears out, never wants repair: and which prevents an undue compreſſion of the veſſels by the weight of the body. The legs and thighs are like ſtately columns, ſo articulated that they are commodious for walking, and yet do not obſtruct the eaſy poſture of ſitting. The legs ſwell out towards the top with a genteel projection, and are neatly wrought off towards the bottom: a variation which leſſens their bulk, while it increaſes their beauty.

The Ribs, turned into a regular arch, are gently moveable, for the act of reſpiration. They form a ſafe lodgement for the lungs and heart, ſome of the moſt important organs of life. The Back-bone is deſigned, not only to ſtrengthen the body, and ſuſtain its moſt capacious ſtore-rooms, but alſo to bring down the continuation of the brain, uſually termed the Spinal Marrow. It both conveys and guards this ſilver cord, as Solomon terms it, and by commodious outlets tranſmits it to all parts. Had it been only ſtrait and hollow, it might have ſerved theſe purpoſes. But then the loins muſt have been inflexible: to avoid which, it conſiſts of very ſhort bones, knit together by cartilages. This peculiarity of ſtructure gives it the pliancy of an oſier, with the firmneſs of an oak. By this means it is capable of various inflections, without bruiſing the ſoft marrow, or diminiſhing that ſtrength which is neceſſary to ſupport all the upper ſtories. Such a formation in any other of the ſolids, muſt have occaſioned great inconvenience. Here it is unſpeakably uſeful, a maſter-piece of creating ſkill.

The Arms are exactly proportioned to each other, to preſerve the equilibrium of the ſtructure. Theſe being the guards that defend, and the miniſters that ſerve the whole body, are fitted for the moſt diverſified and extenſive operations: firm with bone, yet

not weighty with fleſh, and capable of performing all uſeful motions. They bend inwards and turn outwards; they move upwards or downwards. They wheel about in whatever direction we pleaſe. To theſe are added the hands, terminated by the fingers, not of the ſame length, nor of equal bigneſs, but in both reſpects different, which gives the more beauty, and far greater uſefulneſs. Were they all fleſh, they would be weak: were they one entire bone, they would be utterly inflexible: but conſiſting of various little bones and muſcles, what ſhape can they not aſſume? Being placed at the end of the arm the ſphere of their action is exceedingly enlarged. Their extremities are an aſſemblage of fine tendinous fibres, acutely ſenſible: which notwithſtanding are deſtined to almoſt inceſſant employ, and frequently among rugged objects. For this reaſon they are overlaid with nails, which preſerve them from any painful impreſſions.

In the Hand we have a caſe of the fineſt inſtruments. To thoſe we owe thoſe beautiful ſtatues, this melodious trumpet. By the ſtrength of the hand the talleſt firs fall, and the largeſt oaks deſcend from the mountains. Faſhioned by the hand they are a floating warehouſe, and carry the productions of art and nature from Britain to Japan.

The hand is the original and univerſal ſceptre, which not only repreſents, but aſcertains our dominion over all the elements and over every creature. Though we have not the ſtrength of the horſe, the ſwiftneſs of the greyhound, or the quick ſcent of the ſpaniel, yet directed by the underſtanding, and enabled by the hand, we can as it were make them all our own. Theſe ſhort hands have found a way to penetrate the bowels of the earth, to touch the bottom of the ſea. Theſe feeble hands can manage the wings of the wind, arm themſelves with the violence of fire, and preſs into their ſervice the forcible impetuoſity of water. How greatly then are we indebted to our wiſe Creator, for this diſtinguiſhing, this invaluable member?

Above

Above all is the Head, for the reſidence of the brain, ample to receive, and firm to defend it. It has a communication with all, even the remoteſt parts; has outlets for diſpatching couriers to all quarters, and avenues for receiving ſpeedy intelligence, on all needful occaſions. It has lodgements wherein to poſt centinels, for various offices: to expedite whoſe operations the whole turns on a curious pivot, nicely contrived to afford the largeſt and freeſt circumvolutions.

This is ſcreened from heat, defended from cold, and at the ſame time beautified by the Hair: a decoration ſo delicate, as no art can ſupply, ſo perfectly light, as no way to encumber the wearer.

While other animals are prone in their aſpect, the attitude of man is erect, which is by far the moſt graceful, and beſpeaks ſuperiority. It is by far the moſt commodious, for proſecution of all our extenſive deſigns. It is likewiſe ſafeſt, leſs expoſed to dangers, and better contrived to repel or avoid them. Does it not alſo remind us of our noble original, and our ſublime end? Our original, which was the breath of the Almighty: our end, which was the enjoyment of him in glory?

Thus much for the rafters and beams of the houſe. Let us now ſurvey the lodgings within. Here are Ligaments, a tough and ſtrong arrangement of fibres, to unite the ſeveral parts, and render what would otherwiſe be an unwieldy jumble, a well compacted and ſelf-manageable ſyſtem: Membranes, thin and flexile tunicles, to inwrap the fleſhy parts, to connect ſome, and form a ſeparation between others: Arteries, the rivers of our little world, that ſtriking out as they go, into numberleſs ſmall canals, viſit every ſtreet, yea every apartment in the vital city. Theſe being wide at firſt, and growing narrower and narrower, check the rapidity of the blood. This thrown from the heart, dilates the arteries, and their own elaſtic force contracts them: by which means they vibrate againſt the finger, and much aſſiſt both in the diſcovery and cure

of

of diſeaſes. The larger arteries, wherever the blood is forced to bend, are ſituate on the bending ſide; leſt being ſtretched to an improper length, the circulation ſhould be retarded. They are not, like ſeveral of the veins, near the ſurface, but placed at a proper depth. And hereby they are more ſecure from external injuries. In thoſe parts which are moſt liable to preſſure, an admirable expedient takes place. The arteries inoſculate with each other: breaking into a new track, they fetch a little circuit, and afterwards return into the main road. So that if any thing block up or ſtraiten the direct paſſage, the current by diverting to this new channel, eludes the impediment, flows on, and ſoon regains its wonted courſe.

The Veins receive the blood from the arteries, and re-convey it to the heart. The preſſure of the blood is not near ſo forcible in theſe as in the arteries. Therefore their texture is conſiderably ſlighter. Such an exact œconomiſt is nature, amidſt all her liberality! In many of theſe canals, the current, though widening continually, is obliged to puſh its way againſt the perpendicular: hereby it is expoſed to the danger of falling back and overloading the veſſels. To prevent this, Valves are interpoſed at proper diſtances, which are no hindrance to the regular paſſage, but prevent the reflux, and facilitate the paſſage of the blood to the grand receptacle. But theſe valves are only where the blood is conſtrained to climb: where the aſcent ceaſes, they ceaſe alſo.

Here are Glands to filtrate the paſſing fluids, each of which is an aſſemblage of veſſels, complicated with ſeeming confuſion, but with perfect regularity. Each forms a ſecretion far more curious than the moſt admired operations of chymiſtry. Muſcles, compoſed of the fineſt fibres, yet endued with incredible ſtrength, faſhioned after a variety of patterns, but all in the higheſt taſte for elegance and conveniency. Theſe are the inſtruments of motion, and at the command of the will, execute their functions quick

as

as lightning: Nerves, ſurpriſingly minute, which ſet the muſcles at work, diffuſe the power of ſenſation through the body, and upon any impreſſion from without, give all needful intelligence to the ſoul: Veſicles, diſtended with an unctuous matter, in ſome places compoſe a ſoft cuſhion; as in the calf of the leg, whoſe large muſcles, mixt with fat, are of ſingular ſervice to thoſe important bones. This flanks and fortifies them, like a ſtrong baſtion, ſupports and cheriſhes them, like a ſoft pillow. In other places they fill up the vacuities, and ſmooth the inequalities of the fleſh. Inwardly they ſupply the machine for motion; outwardly they render it ſmooth and graceful.

The Skin, like a curious ſurtout, covers the whole, formed of the moſt delicate net-work, whoſe meſhes are minute, and whoſe threads are multiplied, even to a prodigy: the meſhes are ſo minute, that nothing paſſes them, which is diſcernible by the eye; though they diſcharge every moment myriads and myriads of ſuperfluous incumbrances. The threads are ſo multiplied, that neither the point of the ſmalleſt needle, nor the infinitely finer lance of a gnat, can pierce any part without drawing blood, and cauſing an uneaſy ſenſation. Conſequently, without wounding by ſo ſmall a puncture, both a nerve and a vein!

But a courſe of inceſſant action muſt exhauſt the ſolids and waſte the fluids, and unleſs both are properly recruited, in a ſhort time deſtroy the machine. For this reaſon it is furniſhed with the organs, and endued with the powers of nutrition: Teeth, the foremoſt, thin and ſharp, to bite aſunder the food; the hindermoſt, broad and ſtrong, indented with ſmall cavities, the better to grind in pieces what is tranſmitted to them. But in children the formation of teeth is poſtponed till they have occaſion for them.

Were the teeth, like other bones, covered with the perioſteum, chewing would give much pain. Were they

they quite naked, they would ſoon decay and periſh. To guard againſt both, they are overlaid with a neat enamel, harder than the bone itſelf, which gives no pain in chewing, and yet ſecures them from various injuries.

The Lips prevent the food from ſlipping out of the mouth, and, aſſiſted by the tongue, return it to the grinders. While they do this in concert with the cheeks, they ſqueeze a thin liquor from the adjacent glands. This moiſtens the food and prepares it for digeſtion. When the mouth is inactive theſe are nearly cloſed: but when we ſpeak or eat, their moiſture being then neceſſary, is expreſt as need requires.

But the food could not deſcend merely by its own weight, through a narrow and clammy paſſage into the ſtomach. Therefore to effect this, muſcles both ſtrait and circular are provided. The former inlarge the cavity, and give an eaſy admittance. The latter, cloſing behind the deſcending aliment, preſs it downward. But before the food enters the gullet, it muſt of neceſſity paſs over the orifice of the wind-pipe: whence it is in danger of falling upon the lungs, which might occaſion inſtant death. To obviate this, a moveable lid is placed, which when the ſmalleſt particle advances, is pulled down and ſhut cloſe. But as ſoon as it is ſwallowed, is let looſe and ſtands open. Thus the important paſs is always made ſure againſt any noxious approaches; yet always left free to the air, and open for reſpiration

The food deſcending into the ſtomach, is not ready for the bowels. Therefore that great receiver is ſtrong to bear, and proper to detain it, till it is wrought into the ſmootheſt pulp imaginable. From hence it is diſcharged by a gentle force, and paſſes gradually into the inteſtines.

Near the entrance waits the Gall-bladder, ready to pour its ſalutary juice upon the aliment, which diſſolves any thing viſcid, ſcours the inteſtines, and keeps all

all the fine apertures clear. This bag, as the ſtomach fills, is preſt thereby, and then only diſcharges its contents. It is alſo furniſhed with a valve of a very peculiar, namely, of a ſpiral form; through which the deterſive liquid cannot haſtily pour, but muſt gently ooſe. Admirable conſtruction! which, without any care of ours, gives the needful ſupply, and no more.

The nutriment then purſues its way through the mazes of the inteſtines: which by a wormlike motion protrude it and force its ſmall particles into the lacteal veſſels. Theſe are a ſeries of the fineſt ſtrainers, ranged in countleſs multitudes all along the ſides of the winding paſſage. Had this been ſtrait or ſhort, the food could not have reſigned a ſufficient quantity of its nouriſhing particles. Therefore it is artfully convolved, and greatly extended, that whatever paſſes may be ſifted thoroughly. As the aliment proceeds, it is more and more drained of its lutricious juices. In conſequence of this, it would become hard and pain the tender parts, but that glands are poſted in proper places, to diſcharge a lubricated fluid. Theſe are ſmaller or fewer near the ſtomach, becauſe there the aliment is moiſt enough: whereas in the bowels remote from the ſtomach, they are either multiplied or enlarged.

The Chyle drawn off by the lacteals is carried through millions of ducts, too fine even for the microſcope to diſcover. To this it is owing that nothing enters the blood, but what is capable of paſſing through the fineſt veſſels. It is then lodged in ſeveral commodious cells (the glands of the Meſentary) and there mixt with a thin diluting lymph, which makes it more apt to flow. Hence it is conveyed to the common receptacle, and mounts through a perpendicular tube into the laſt ſubclavian vein. This tube lies contiguous to the great artery, whoſe ſtrong pulſation drives on the fluid, and enables it to aſcend and unload its treaſure, at the very door of the heart.

But

But the Chyle is as yet in too crude a ſtate, to be fit for the animal functions. Therefore it is thrown into the lungs. In the ſpungy cells of this amazing laboratory, it mixes with the external air, and its whole ſubſtance is made more ſmooth and uniform. Thus improved it enters the left ventricle of the heart, a ſtrong, active, indefatigable muſcle. The large muſcles of the arm or of the thigh are ſoon wearied: a day's labour, or a day's journey, exhauſts their ſtrength. But the heart toils whole weeks, whole months, nay years, unwearied: is equally a ſtranger to intermiſſion and fatigue. Impelled by this, part of the blood ſhoots upward to the head; part rolls through the whole body.

But how ſhall a ſtream divided into myriads of channels, be brought back to its ſource? Should any portion of it be unable to return, putrefaction, if not death, muſt enſue. Therefore the all-wiſe Creator has connected the extremities of the arteries, with the beginning of the veins: ſo that the ſame force which darts the blood through the former, helps to drive it through the latter. Thus it is re-conducted to the great ciſtern, and there played off afreſh.

Where two oppoſite currents would be in danger of claſhing, where the ſtreams from the Vena cava and Vena aſcendens co-incide, a fibrous excreſcence interpoſes, which like a projecting pier, breaks the ſtroke of each, and throws both into their proper receptacle. Where the motion is to be ſpeedy, the channels either forbear to wind (as in the great artery, which deſcends to the feet) or leſſen in their dimenſions, as in every interval between all the ramifications. When the progreſs is to be retarded, the tubes are variouſly convolved or their diameter contracted. Thus guarded, the living flood never diſcontinues its courſe, but night and day, whether we ſleep or wake, ſtill perſeveres to run briſkly through the arteries, and return ſoftly through the veins.

But

But farther. The great Creator has made us an invaluable preſent of the ſenſes, to be the inlets of innumerable pleaſures, and the means of the moſt valuable advantages.

The eye, in its elevated ſtation, commands the moſt enlarged proſpects. Conſiſting only of fluids incloſed within coats, it ſhews us all the graces and glories of nature. How wonderful, that an image of the hugeſt mountains, and the wideſt landſcapes ſhould enter the ſmall pupil! that the rays of light ſhould paint on the optic nerve, paint in an inſtant of time, paint in their trueſt colours and exacteſt lineaments, every ſpecies of external objects.

The Eye is ſo tender, that the ſlighteſt touch might injure its delicate frame. It is guarded therefore with a peculiar care, intrenched deep and barricaded round with bones. As the ſmalleſt fly might incommode its poliſhed ſurface, it is farther protected by two ſubſtantial curtains. In ſleep, when there is no occaſion for the ſenſe, but a neceſſity to guard the organ, theſe curtains cloſe of their own accord. At any time they fly together as quick as thought. They are lined with an extremely fine ſponge, moiſt with its own dew. Its briſly paliſades keep out the leaſt mote, and moderate the too ſtrong impreſſions of the light.

As in our waking hours we have almoſt inceſſant need for theſe little orbs, they run upon the fineſt caſtors, rolling every way with the utmoſt eaſe: which circumſtance, added to the flexibility of the neck, renders our two eyes as uſeful as a thouſand.

The Ear conſiſts of an outward porch and inner rooms. The porch, ſomewhat prominent from the head, is of a cartilaginous ſubſtance, covered with tight membranes, and wrought into ſinuous cavities. Theſe, like circling hills, collect the wandering undulations of the air, and tranſmit them with a vigorous impulſe, to the finely ſtretched membrane of the drum. This is expanded upon a circle of bones, over a poliſhed reverberating cavity. It is furniſhed with braces that

ſtrain

ſtrain or relax, as the ſound is faint or ſtrong. The hammer and the anvil, the winding labyrinth, and the ſounding galleries, theſe and other pieces of mechaniſm, all inſtrumental to hearing, are inexpreſſibly curious.

Amazingly exact muſt be the tenſion of the auditory nerves, ſince they anſwer the ſmalleſt tremors of the atmoſphere, and diſtinguiſh their moſt ſubtle variations. Theſe living chords, tuned by an almighty hand, and ſpread through the echoing iſles, receive all the impreſſions of ſound, and propagate them to the brain. Theſe give exiſtence to the charms of muſic, and the ſtill nobler charms of diſcourſe.

The eye is uſeleſs amidſt the gloom of night. But the ear hears through the darkeſt medium. The eye is on duty only in our waking hours: but the ear is always acceſſible.

As there are concuſſions of the air, which are diſcernible only by the inſtruments of hearing, ſo there are odoriferous particles wafted in the air, which are perceivable only by the ſmell. The noſtrils are wide at the bottom, that more effluvia may enter, narrow at the top, that, when entered, they may act more ſtrongly. The ſteams that exhale from fragrant bodies, are fine beyond imagination. Microſcopes that ſhew thouſands of animals in a drop of water, cannot bring one of theſe to our ſight. Yet ſo judiciouſly are the olfactory nets ſet, that they catch the vaniſhing fugitives. They imbibe all the roaming perfumes of ſpring, and make us banquet even on the inviſible dainties of nature.

Another capacity for pleaſure our bountiful Creator has beſtowed, by granting us the powers of taſte. This is circumſtanced in a manner ſo benign and wiſe, as to be a ſtanding plea for temperance, which ſets the fineſt edge on the taſte, and adds the moſt poignant reliſh to its enjoyments.

And theſe ſenſes are not only ſo many ſources of delight, but a joint ſecurity to our health. They are the inſpectors that examine our food, and enquire into

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the properties of it. For the discharge of this office they are excellently qualified, and most commodiously situated. So that nothing can gain admission, till it has past their scrutiny.

To all these, as a most necessary supplement, is added the sense of Feeling. And how happily is it tempered between the two extremes, neither too acute, nor too obtuse! Indeed all the senses are exactly adapted to the exigencies of our present state. Were they strained much higher, they would be avenues of anguish, were they much relaxt, they would be well-nigh useless.

The crowning gift which augments the benefits accruing from all the senses, is Speech. Speech makes me a gainer by the eyes and ears of others; by their ideas and observations. And what an admirable instrument for articulating the voice, and modifying it into speech, is the Tongue? This little collection of muscular fibres under the direction of the Creator, is the artificer of our words. By this we communicate the secrets of our breasts, and make our very thoughts audible. This likewise is the efficient cause of music; it is soft as the lute, or shrill as the trumpet. As the tongue requires an easy play, it is lodged in an ample cavity. It moves under a concave roof, which gives additional vigour to the voice, as the shell of a violin to the sound of the strings.

Wonderfully wise is the regulation of voluntary and involuntary motions. The will in some cases has no power: in others she is an absolute sovereign. If she command, the arm is stretched, the hand closed. How easily, how punctually are her orders obeyed!—To turn the screw, or work the lever, is laborious and wearisome. But we work the vertibræ of the neck, with all their appendent chambers: we advance the leg with the whole incumbent body; we rise, we spring from the ground, and though so great a weight is raised, we meet with no difficulty or fatigue.

That

That all this ſhould be effected without any toil, by a bare act of the will, is very ſurpriſing. But that it ſhould be done, even while we are entirely ignorant of the manner in which it is performed, is moſt aſtoniſhing! Who can play a ſingle tune upon the ſpinnet, without learning the differences of the keys? Yet the mind touches every ſpring of the human machine, with the moſt maſterly ſkill, though ſhe knows nothing at all of the nature of her inſtrument, or the proceſs of her operations.

The eye of a ruſtic, who has no notion of optics, or any of its laws, ſhall lengthen and ſhorten its axis, dilate and contract its pupil, without the leaſt heſitation, and with the utmoſt propriety: exactly adapting itſelf to the particular diſtance of objects, and the different degrees of light. By this means it performs ſome of the moſt curious experiments in the Newtonian philoſophy, without the leaſt knowledge of the ſcience, or conſciouſneſs of its own dexterity!

Which ſhall we admire moſt, the multitude of organs? Their finiſhed form and faultleſs order? Or the power which the ſoul exerciſes over them? Ten thouſand reins are put into her hands: and ſhe manages all, conducts all, without the leaſt perplexity or irregularity. Rather with a promptitude, a conſiſtency and ſpeed, that nothing can equal!

So fearfully and wonderfully are we made! Made of ſuch complicated parts, each ſo nicely faſhioned, and all ſo exactly arranged; every one executing ſuch curious functions, and many of them operating in ſo myſterious a manner! And ſince health depends on ſuch a numerous aſſemblage of moving organs; ſince a ſingle ſecretion ſtopped may ſpoil the temperature of the fluid, a ſingle wheel clogged may put an end to the ſolids: with what holy fear ſhould we paſs the time of our ſojourning here below! Truſting for continual preſervation, not merely to our own care, but to the Almighty Hand, which formed the admirable machine, directs its agency, and ſupports its being!

This is an ingenious deſcription of the Caſket, it is fit we ſhould attend to the Jewel it contains. If the Houſe is ſo curiouſly and wonderfully made by the all-wiſe Architect, what may we not expect the Inhabitants to be?

Know'ſt thou th' importance of a Soul immortal?
Behold the midnight glory: worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! redouble this amaze;
Ten thouſand add, and twice ten thouſand more;
Then weigh th' whole; one ſoul outweighs them all,
And calls th' aſtoniſhing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor. YOUNG.

The reaſoning of Mr. Addiſon on this ſubject is very flattering to human nature, and deſerves the ſerious conſideration of every intelligent Being. The perpetual progreſs of the Soul, ſays that elegant writer, to its perfection, without a poſſibility of ever arriving at it, ſeems to me to carry a great weight with it for the immortality thereof. How can it enter into the thoughts of man, that the Soul, which is capable of ſuch immenſe perfections, and of receiving new improvements to all eternity, ſhall fall away into nothing almoſt as ſoon as it is created? Are ſuch abilities made for no purpoſe? A brute arrives at a point of perfection that he can never paſs: in a few years he has all the endowments he is capable of; and were he to live ten thouſand more, would be the ſame thing he is at preſent. Were a human ſoul thus at a ſtand in her accompliſhments, were her faculties to be full blown, and incapable of farther enlargements, I could imagine it might fall away inſenſibly, and drop at once into a ſtate of annihilation. But can we believe a thinking being that is in a perpetual progreſs of improvement, and travelling on from perfection to perfection, after having juſt looked abroad into the works of its Creator, and made a few diſcoveries of his infinite goodneſs, wiſdom and power, muſt periſh at her firſt ſetting out, and in the very beginning of her enquiries?

A man, conſidered in his preſent ſtate, ſeems only ſent into the world to propagate his kind. He provides himſelf with a ſucceſſor, and immediately quits his poſt to make room for him.

——————————— Heres,
Heredem alterius, velut unda ſupervenit undam.
HORACE. Ep. 2.

—— Heir crowds heir, as in a rolling flood
Wave urges wave. CREECH.

He does not ſeem born to enjoy life, but to deliver it down to others. This is not ſurpriſing to conſider in animals, which are formed for our uſe, and can finiſh their buſineſs in a ſhort life. The ſilk-worm, after having ſpun her taſk, lays her eggs and dies. But a man can never have taken in his full meaſure of knowledge, has not time to ſubdue his paſſions, eſtabliſh his ſoul in virtue, and come up to the perfection of his nature, before he is hurried off the ſtage. Would an infinitely wiſe Being make ſuch glorious creatures for ſo mean a purpoſe? Can he delight in the production of ſuch abortive intelligences, ſuch ſhort-lived reaſonable beings? Would he give us talents that are not to be exerted? Capacities that are never to be gratified? How can we find that wiſdom, which ſhines through all his works, in the formation of man, without looking on this world as only a nurſery for the next, and believing that the ſeveral generations of rational creatures, which riſe up and diſappear in ſuch quick ſucceſſions, are only to receive their firſt rudiments of exiſtence here, and afterwards to be tranſplanted into a more friendly climate, where they may ſpread and flouriſh to all eternity.

There is not, in my opinion, a more pleaſing and triumphant conſideration in religion than this of the perpetual progreſs which the ſoul makes towards the perfection of its nature, without ever arriving at a period in it. To look upon the ſoul as going on from

from ſtrength to ſtrength, to conſider that ſhe is to ſhine for ever with new acceſſions of glory, and brighten to all eternity: that ſhe will ſtill be adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge; carries in it ſomething wonderfully agreeable to that ambition that is natural to the mind of man. Nay, it muſt be a proſpect pleaſing to God himſelf, to ſee his creation for ever beautifying in his eyes, and drawing nearer to him, by greater degrees of reſemblance.

Methinks, this ſingle conſideration, of the progreſs of a finite ſpirit to perfection, will be ſufficient to extinguiſh all envy in inferior nature, and all contempt in ſuperior. That cherubim, which now appears as a god to a human ſoul, knows very well, that a period will come about in eternity, when the human ſoul ſhall be as perfect as he himſelf now is: nay, when ſhe ſhall look down upon that degree of perfection, as much as ſhe now falls ſhort of it. It is true, the higher nature ſtill advances, and by that means preſerves his diſtance and ſuperiority in the ſcale of being; but he knows, how high ſoever the ſtation is of which he ſtands poſſeſſed at preſent, the inferior nature will at length mount up to it, and ſhine forth in the ſame degree of glory.

With what aſtoniſhment and veneration may we look into our own ſouls, where there are ſuch hidden ſtores of virtue and knowledge, ſuch inexhauſted ſources of perfection? We know not yet what we ſhall be, nor will it ever enter into the heart of man to conceive the glory that will be always in reſerve for him. The ſoul, conſidered with its Creator, is like one of thoſe mathematical lines that may draw nearer to another for all eternity without a poſſibility of touching it: and can there be a thought ſo tranſporting, as to conſider ourſelves in theſe perpetual approaches to him, who is not only the ſtandard of perfection but of happineſs!

7. *Some conſiderations on the Chain of Being ſuppoſed to be in nature.*

THE Chain of Being, which ſome worthy perſons have ſuppoſed to exiſt in nature, is a very pleaſing idea, and has been ably handled by the late Soame Jenyns, Eſq. in his Diſquiſition upon that ſubject. The farther we enquire, ſays that able writer, into the Works of our great Creator, the more evident marks we ſhall diſcover of his infinite wiſdom and power, and perhaps in none more remarkable, than in that wonderful Chain of Beings, with which this terreſtrial globe is furniſhed; riſing above each other, from the ſenſeleſs clod, to the brighteſt genius of human kind, in which, though the chain itſelf is ſufficiently viſible, the links, which compoſe it, are ſo minute, and ſo finely wrought, that they are quite imperceptible to our eyes. The various qualities, with which theſe various Beings are endued, we perceive without difficulty, but the boundaries of thoſe qualities, which form this chain of ſubordination, are ſo mixed, that where one ends, and the next begins, we are unable to diſcover. The manner by which this is performed, is a ſubject well worthy of our conſideration, and on an accurate examination appears to be this.

In order to diffuſe all poſſible happineſs, God has been pleaſed to fill this earth with innumerable orders of Beings, ſuperior to each other in proportion to the qualities, and faculties which he has thought proper to beſtow upon them: to mere matter he has given extenſion, ſolidity, and gravity; to plants, vegetation; to animals, life and inſtinct; and to man, reaſon; each of which ſuperior qualities augments the excellence and dignity of the poſſeſſor, and places him higher in the ſcale of univerſal exiſtence. In all theſe, it is remarkable, that he has not formed this neceſſary, and beautiful ſubordination, by placing Beings of quite different natures above each other, but by granting

ing ſome additional quality to each ſuperior order, in conjunction with all thoſe poſſeſſed by their inferiors; ſo that, tho' they riſe above each other in excellence, by means of theſe additional qualities, one mode of exiſtence is common to them all, without which they never could have coaleſced in one uniform and regular ſyſtem.

Thus, for inſtance, in plants we find all the qualities of mere matter, the only order below them, ſolidity, extenſion, and gravity, with the addition of vegetation; in animals, all the properties of matter, together with the vegetation of plants, to which is added, life, and inſtinct; and in man we find all the properties of matter, the vegetation of plants, the life and inſtinct of animals, to all which is ſuperadded, reaſon.

That man is endued with theſe properties of all inferior orders, will plainly appear by a ſlight examination of his compoſition; his body is material, and has all the properties of mere matter, ſolidity, extenſion, and gravity; it is alſo veſted with the quality of plants, that is, a power of vegetation, which it inceſſantly exerciſes without any knowledge, or conſent of his: it is ſown, grows up, expands, comes to maturity, withers and dies, like all other vegetables: he poſſeſſes likewiſe the qualities of lower animals, and ſhares their fate; like them, he is called into life without his knowledge or conſent; like them, he is compelled by irreſiſtible inſtincts, to anſwer the purpoſes for which he was deſigned; like them, he performs his deſtined courſe, partakes of its bleſſings, and endures its ſufferings for a ſhort time, then dies, and is ſeen no more: in him inſtinct is not leſs powerful, than in them, tho' leſs viſible, by being confounded with reaſon, which it ſometimes concurs with, and ſometimes counteracts; by this, with the concurrence of reaſon, he is taught the belief of a God, of a future ſtate, and the difference between moral good and evil; to purſue happineſs, to avoid danger, and to take care of himſelf, and his offspring; by this too he is frequently impelled, in contradiction to reaſon, to relinquiſh

eaſe, and ſafety, to traverſe in hoſpitable deſerts and tempeſtuous ſeas, to inflict, and ſuffer all the miſeries of war, and, like the Herring, and the Mackarel, to haſten to his own deſtruction, for the public benefit, which he neither underſtands, or cares for. Thus is this wonderful chain extended from the loweſt to the higheſt order of terreſtrial beings, by links ſo nicely fitted, that the beginning and end of each is inviſible to the moſt inquiſitive eye, and yet they all together compoſe one vaſt and beautiful ſyſtem of ſubordination.

The manner by which the conſummate wiſdom of the divine Artificer has formed this gradation, ſo extenſive in the whole, and ſo imperceptible in the parts, is this:—He conſtantly unites the higheſt degree of the qualities of each inferior order to the loweſt degree of the ſame qualities, belonging to the order next above it; by which means, like the colours of a ſkilful painter, they are ſo blended together, and ſhaded off into each other, that no line of diſtinction is any where to be ſeen. Thus, for inſtance, ſolidity, extenſion, and gravity, the qualities of mere matter, being united with the loweſt degree of vegetation, compoſe a ſtone; from whence this vegetative power aſcending thro' an infinite variety of herbs, flowers, plants, and trees, to its greateſt perfection in the ſenſitive plant, joins there the loweſt degree of animal life in the ſhell-fiſh, which adheres to the rock; and it is difficult to diſtinguiſh which poſſeſſes the greateſt ſhare, as the one ſhews it only by ſhrinking from the finger, and the other by opening to receive the water, which ſurrounds it. In the ſame manner this animal life riſes from this low beginning in the ſhell-fiſh, thro' innumerable ſpecies of inſects, fiſhes, birds, and beaſts, to the confines of reaſon, where, in the dog, the monkey, and the chimpanzè, it unites ſo cloſely with the loweſt degree of that quality in man, that they cannot eaſily be diſtinguiſhed from each other. From this loweſt degree in the brutal Hottentot, reaſon,

ſon, with the aſſiſtance of learning and ſcience, advances, thro' the various ſtages of human underſtanding, which riſe above each other, till in a Bacon, or a Newton, it attains the ſummit.

Here we muſt ſtop, being unable to purſue the progreſs of this aſtoniſhing chain beyond the limits of this terreſtrial globe with the naked eye; but thro' the perſpective of analogy and conjecture, we may perceive, that it aſcends a great deal higher, to the inhabitants of other planets, to angels, and archangels, the loweſt orders of whom may be united by a like eaſy tranſition with the higheſt of our own, in whom, to reaſon may be added intuitive knowledge, inſight into futurity, with innumerable other faculties, of which we are unable to form the leaſt idea; through whom it may aſcend, by gradations almoſt infinite, to thoſe moſt exalted of created Beings, who are ſeated on the footſtool of the celeſtial throne.

We cannot cloſe this long and pleaſing digreſſion, in behalf of the Exiſtence of God, and the Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs diſplayed in the Works of Creation, better, than in the incomparable Hymn of our great Epic Poet:

These are thy glorious Works, Parent of Good!
Almighty, thine this univerſal Frame,
Thus wond'rous fair; thyſelf how wond'rous then!
Unſpeakable, who ſit'ſt above theſe Heavens
To us inviſible, or dimly ſeen
In theſe thy loweſt works; yet theſe declare
Thy goodneſs beyond thought, and pow'r divine.
Speak ye who beſt can tell, ye ſons of light,
Angels; for ye behold him, and with ſongs
And choral ſymphonies, day without night,
Circle his throne rejoicing; ye in Heaven!
On Earth join all ye Creatures to extol
Him firſt, him laſt, him midſt, and without end.
Faireſt of ſtars, laſt in the train of night,
If better thou belong not to the dawn,
Sure pledge of day, that crown'ſt the ſmiling morn
With thy bright circlet, praiſe him in thy ſphere,

While

While day ariſes, that ſweet hour of prime.
Thou Sun, of this great world both eye and ſoul,
Acknowledge him thy greater, ſound his praiſe
In thy eternal courſe, both when thou climb'ſt,
And when high noon haſt gain'd, and when thou fall'ſt.
Moon, that now meet'ſt the orient ſun, now fly'ſt,
With the fix'd ſtars, fix'd in their orb that flies,
And ye five other wand'ring fires that move
In myſtic dance not without ſong, reſound
His praiſe, who out of darkneſs call'd up light.
Air, and ye Elements, the eldeſt birth
Of Nature's womb, that in quaternion run
Perpetual circle, multiform; and mix
And nouriſh all things; let your ceaſeleſs change
Vary to our great Maker ſtill new praiſe.
Ye Miſts and Exhalations that now riſe
From hill or ſteaming lake, duſky or gray,
Till the ſun paint your fleecy ſkirts with gold,
In honour to the world's great Author riſe,
Whether to deck with clouds th' uncolour'd ſky,
Or wet the thirſty earth with falling ſhowers,
Riſing or falling ſtill advance his praiſe.
His praiſe, ye Winds, that from four quarters blow,
Breathe ſoft or loud; and wave your tops, ye Pines,
With every plant, in ſign of worſhip wave.
Fountains and ye that warble, as ye flow,
Melodious murmurs, warbling tune his praiſe.
Join voices, all ye living Souls: ye Birds,
That ſinging up to Heaven gate aſcend,
Bear on your wings, and in your notes, his praiſe.
Ye that in waters glide, and ye that walk
The earth, and ſtately tread, or lowly creep;
Witneſs, if I be ſilent, morn or even,
To hill or valley, fountain, or freſh ſhade
Made vocal by my ſong, and taught his praiſe.
Hail, univerſal Lord! be bounteous ſtill
To give us only good; and if the night
Have gather'd ought of evil or conceal'd,
Diſperſe it, as now light diſpels the dark.

But to return from this digreſſion on the Book of Nature,* to give ſome account of the principal deſign of the preſent Publication. The

* See Survey of the Wiſdom of God in the Works of Creation, by the Rev. John Weſley, M. A.

The Compiler of these Volumes has long been of opinion, that the Holy Scriptures contain the most excellent kind of learning, and that they do not usually rank according to their merit, as literary productions, in the estimation of mankind. He conceived, therefore, that he should be rendering an essential service to the cause of religion and learning, if he could, by any means, be instrumental in the hands of Providence, in making them more generally read and esteemed.

The next consideration with him was, how this design might most effectually be accomplished. A variety of methods presented themselves to his mind, each of which seemed to engage it for a season; but this, which he has adopted, appeared to deserve the preference. His own opinion is only that of an obscure individual, and would consequently have but little weight with the Public; but the sentiments of a competent number of the most learned and illustrious persons, of different periods, countries, sects and religions, could not fail, he supposed, of having a considerable degree of influence, and a powerful tendency to make the Bible more universally regarded.

The Work, therefore, from the very nature of it, is, principally, a Compilation. It consists of Extracts from such writers as occurred in the course of reading for the improvement of his own mind. The trouble of perusing the various authors, and selecting the passages suitable to his purpose, has not only afforded much pleasure, but has been attended with such powerful convictions of the truth and excellence of the Sacred Writings, as he was before, in a good measure, a stranger to. The Testimonies produced are many of them very valuable, having different views; but all, directly or indirectly, tending to establish the authority, to promote the knowledge, or display the honour of the Divine Word.

The four volumes are divided into Twelve books, for the greater convenience of arranging the different kinds of

of matter under their proper heads. This the Compiler has endeavoured to do through the whole Work, though it has ſometimes happened that the Extracts would rank almoſt equally well under different ones. The Firſt book conſiſts chiefly of Teſtimonies in favour of the Holy Scriptures; ſome of which relate to the Bible in general, others to particular parts only. Several of the caſes introduced towards the cloſe of it, may, on the firſt view, appear foreign to the deſign of the Work: but they are intended to ſhew the Reader, that, with whatever contempt we may treat the Word of God, and the great things of Religion, while we are in health and proſperity, our hearts do moſtly fail us when ſickneſs and diſſolution make their approach. Such inſtances ſeem calculated to impreſs the minds of the generality of readers more powerfully, than the moſt refined reaſonings upon the truth and excellence of Chriſtianity. Thoſe happy perſons, who are ſuperior to, and unmindful of, ſuch conſiderations, whoſe ſouls are capable of reliſhing pure intellectual truth, may proceed to ſuch other parts of the Work as are more congenial to their taſte; and permit the great bulk of mankind to feed upon ſuch food as they are able to digeſt. The general deſign of this, and indeed of all the five firſt books, is, to eſtabliſh the truth of the Bible on the foundation of Teſtimony; at leaſt, to ſhew, in oppoſition to the Infidels and Sceptics of the age, that there is a vaſt majority of men, of the moſt enlarged and improved underſtandings, in all the various ranks of life, and diverſities of religious opinions and profeſſions, who have believed in the divine authority of the Bible.

But though the general deſign of the firſt five books is ſuch, yet each of them has a more particular aim. The Second book conſiſts chiefly in Proofs of the divine authority of the Sacred Writings, with anſwers to a number of Objections, that are uſually made by Unbelievers to ſeveral of the hiſtories, and other matters which are therein contained In this the Compiler more

more immediately intended the conviction of Unbelievers and the eſtabliſhment of the Wavering; and he humbly hopes, the generality of his younger Readers, for whoſe uſe the whole Work is principally deſigned, will find conſiderable information and ſatisfaction in the peruſal of it. One preliminary, however, he muſt inſiſt on, from every ſceptical Reader, before he enters upon this book, which is, that he will do himſelf and the argument the juſtice to give Paſcal's ſerious Expoſtulation with Unbelievers, and Whiſton's thoughts on the Temper of Mind neceſſary for the diſcovery of divine truth, and on the Degree of Evidence that ought to be expected in divine matters, a fair and repeated examination. If he refuſes the argument this reaſonable piece of equity, he may as well paſs on; it is a matter of little conſequence whether he vouchſafes it a reading or not.

The intention of the third book, is, to illuſtrate the Beauties of the Holy Scriptures, and to ſhew, that they are not only true and authentic, but vaſtly ſuperior to all other books in eloquence, and every other excellence that diſtinguiſhes fine writing.

The fourth contains a great variety of Teſtimonies in favour of the Greek and Hebrew languages, with ſeveral inſtances of perſons who have been ſingular for their knowledge of and attachment to the Sacred Writings. This is intended to ſhew young people the value and importance of the Word of God in general, and of the Hebrew tongue in particular, and to induce them to the ſtudy of it; eſpecially as they will find, if they have reſolution to attempt a beginning, that it is attainable, at a much leſs expence of time and trouble, than is generally apprehended.

In this department the Editor freely owns, that he had in view his fair country-women. Here they will find a conſiderable number of their own ſex, who have been eminent for their application to the Holy Scriptures: ſeveral inſtances are alſo produced of thoſe who have rendered themſelves renowned by their

ſkill

ſkill in the learned, or modern languages, or both. He meant, by bringing ſo many examples into one view, to encourage young Ladies to attempt ſomething of the ſame kind, either with or without the help of a maſter. It is indeed ſhameful for a young Lady, of any expectations, to remain ignorant of her native language, at leaſt: but after ſhe is miſtreſs of that, it then becomes a queſtion, whether ſhe ſhall attempt the learning any other: and if any; how many? If but one, the faſhionable opinion is, it ought to be the French. But why? Cui bono? For no ſolid and Chriſtian reaſons, he will aver. If it is to chatter a few ſentences of miſerable ſtuff, it would be much better let alone, and a language made uſe of that ſhe can ſpeak with propriety and elegance. If it is to enable her to read French authors, it is granted they have ſome very pleaſing ones; but few equal to the Engliſh writers, and ſurely none to be compared to the inimitable authors of the Old Teſtament; beſides the infinite obligation that lies upon us all, as Chriſtians, to do our beſt to arrive at a thorough knowledge of the whole Word of God.

But another reaſon why young Ladies, who have any taſte for polite literature, ſhould make the ſtudy of the Hebrew follow their native language, is the uncommon facility with which it is learned. If they could be prevailed upon, after the acquirement of Engliſh, to ſpend one fourth part of the time in learning Hebrew, to enable them to converſe with God in his own dialect, which they uſually ſpend unſeaſonably a-bed in a morning, or at the toilet, the aſſembly, or the card-table, or in reading and ſighing over thoſe wretched pretty things called Novels, which ſo ſoften and enervate their minds as to render them utterly incapable of all virtuous and noble exertions, it would not fail but they would reap a rich harveſt of profit and ſatisfaction.

With reſpect to its not being the cuſtom to teach Ladies the languages, we may ſay in the words of the learned

Matron

Matron in Erafmus, Why do you tell me of the generality of people, the very worſt pattern of conduct? Why do you talk to me of cuſtom, the teacher of all that is bad? Let us accuſtom ourſelves to that which we know is beſt: ſo that will become uſual, which was unuſual, and that will become agreeable which was diſagreeable, and that faſhionable which appeared unfaſhionable.*

O how different muſt the Aſpaſias, the Cornelias, the Aurelias, the Attias, the Heloiſas, the Olympias, the Rowes and the Burys, appear in the eyes of all ſuperior Intelligences, and in the eyes of all virtuous and ſenſible men, from the poor empty butterflies of the age, who, amidſt all their paſſion for ſentimental reading, and all their pretenſions to faſhion and gentility, are ſtrangers to the firſt principles of uſeful knowledge, and the ſober dictates of ſound religion!

But we need not go back to paſt ages for inſtances of female characters, who, riſing ſuperior to the faſhions of their own times, are an ornament to human nature, and an honour to their ſex. We have Hiſtorians, Poetreſſes, Dramatic writers, Moraliſts, aud even Divines, if the expreſſion may be allowed, among the Ladies of our own times. And, under due reſtrictions, with a proper attention to the peculiar duties of their ſtation, it is devoutly to be wiſhed, the number might be encreaſed a thouſand fold; and that piety and learning might go hand in hand with both ſexes till time ſhall be no more.

Though ſuch a courſe of Female education, as is here recommended, is extremely unfaſhionable, yet the Editor is not altogether ſingular in his opinion of the propriety of it. Sir Thomas More, in the days of king Henry the 8th, Joſeph Addiſon, Eſq. about the beginning of this century, and Mr. Knox, in our own times, with Eraſmus and many others in different ages, are all advocates for ſuch an improved mode of inſtruction

* See Knox on the Education of Women, in his Liberal Education.

ſtruction for the Ladies; and none, it is to be hoped, can wiſh to oppoſe it, but thoſe who are themſelves ignorant, and know not the value of a good education, or who, like the late Lord Cheſterfield, wiſh to degrade the Sex. Women, ſays that all-accompliſhed nobleman, are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle, ſometimes wit; but for ſolid reaſoning, good ſenſe, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who acted or reaſoned in conſequence of it, for four-and-twenty hours together. A man of ſenſe only trifles with them, plays with them, humours, and flatters them, as he does with an engaging child. But he neither conſults them about, nor truſts them with ſerious matters.*

Theſe are ſentiments unworthy of a man, except it were a Mahometan, who believes that women are deſtitute of ſouls. Surely his Lordſhip had been very unfortunate in his connections, that in a courſe of ſo many years he ſhould never have the happineſs of converſing with one truly ſenſible and virtuous woman! If this is true, it calls aloud for ſome improvement in their mode of education.—But let us attend to the views of the celebrated Mr. Knox; who in his Eſſay on the Inſenſibility of the Men to the Charms of a Female mind cultivated with polite and ſolid Literature, thus expreſſes himſelf in a Letter from a young Lady to her Friend:

SIR,

I AM the only daughter of a clergyman, who, on the death of my mother, which happened when I was about three years old, concentered his affection on me, and thought he could not diſplay his love more effectually than in giving me a good education. His houſe was ſituated in a ſolitary village, and he had but little parochial duty, ſo that there was ſcarcely any thing to divert his attention from this object. He had ever

* See his Letters.

ever been devoted to letters, and conſidered learning, next to virtue, as the nobleſt diſtinction of human nature.

As ſoon as I could read, I was initiated in Lilly's Grammar, and, before I was eight years old, could repeat every rule in it with the greateſt accuracy. I was taught indeed all kinds of needle work; but two hours in every day were invariably ſet apart for my improvement in Latin. I ſoon perfected myſelf in the elementary parts, and had read Phædrus and Cornelius Nepos with a ſtrict attention to the grammatical conſtruction of every word and phraſe which they contained. From theſe I was advanced to Virgil and Horace. Under the direction of ſo good a claſſic as my father, I ſoon acquired a taſte for their beauties, and not only read them through with great delight, but committed their more beautiful paſſages to memory.

My father was ſo well pleaſed with my proficiency, and with the taſk of inſtructing the object of his tendereſt love, that he reſolved to carry my improvements higher, and to open to my views the ſpacious fields of Grecian literature. The Greek Grammar I maſtered with great eaſe, and I found a ſweetneſs in the language which amply repaid me for the little difficulties I ſometimes encountered. From the Greek Teſtament I proceeded to the Cyropædia of Xenophon, the Orations of Demoſthenes, the Dialogues of Plato, and the Iliad and Odyſſey of Homer. That I received great improvement from this courſe, cannot be denied; but the pleaſure of it alone was to me a ſufficient reward. I was enabled to drink of the fountain-head, while others were obliged to content themſelves with the diſtant and polluted ſtream. I found that no tranſlations whatever, however accurately they might exhibit the ſenſe of originals, could expreſs the beauties of the language. I was poſſeſſed of a power of inſpecting thoſe volumes, in admiration of which the world has long agreed, but from which my ſex has been for the moſt part unreaſonably excluded. It was a noble

a noble privilege, and I value myſelf upon it; but I hope and believe I did not deſpiſe thoſe who had not partaken of it, ſolely for want of opportunities.

The French and Italian languages became eaſy after my acquaintance with the Latin, and my father was of opinion that they are indiſpenſably neceſſary to the modern ſcholar. In French I read Rollin, Boileau, Fontenelle, Voiture, Bouhours, Bruyere, Rouſſea, Voltaire, and Marmontel; in Italian, Petrarch, Taſſo, Arioſto, Guicciardin, and the Cortegiano of Caſtiglione. All theſe gave me a degree of pleaſure, which I am ſure none would be without who are capable of obtaining it.

After having laid a foundation in the languages, which I believe is ſeldom done with ſucceſs but at an early age, my father allowed me to feaſt without controul on the productions of my own country. The learning I had acquired enabled me to read them critically, and to underſtand all their alluſions. The beſt writers abound ſo much in quotations, that I cannot help thinking that they who are unacquainted with the ancient languages, muſt often be mortified at their inability to unlock the concealed treaſure.

All the claſſical poets from Shakeſpeare to Pope, were my ſtudy and delight. Hiſtory, which my father always recommended as peculiarly ſuited to adorn the female mind, was a favourite purſuit. I digeſted Hume and Robertſon, and took a pleaſure in every biographical anecdote I could collect. After reading a life, or the hiſtory of any particular event, I was always deſired by my father to give my ſentiments upon it in writing; an exerciſe which I found to be attended with great advantage.

I never penetrated deeply into the ſciences, yet I could not reſt ſatisfied without a ſuperficial knowledge of aſtronomy, of the ſolar ſyſtem, of experimental philoſophy, and of geography, mathematical, phyſical, and political. This little was neceſſary for rational converſation, and I had neither time nor taſte for ſcientific refinements. Poetry was my delight,

and

and I ſometimes wrote it, as the partiality of my poor father led him to aſſert, in a pleaſing manner.

I do not make it a merit of my own, becauſe it was entirely owing to my father's direction, that with all my attention to books I did not neglect the ornamental accompliſhments. My father excelled in muſic, and he taught me to play on the harpſichord. He engaged a good maſter to inſtruct me in dancing, and he always cautioned me againſt that neglect of dreſs and of accurate cleanlineſs, which, he ſaid, had ſometimes involved literary ladies in deſerved diſgrace. He likewiſe inculcated the neceſſity of avoiding a pedantic manner of converſation, and ſtrictly charged me never to be overbearing, or to ſhew in the company of others the leaſt appearance of conſcious ſuperiority. I believe I may venture to ſay, that I complied with his directions, and that I talked with perfect eaſe among the ſuperficial, and neither expreſſed nor felt contempt, except where vanity and affectation were combined with ignorance.

Yet, notwithſtanding my improvements, and my earneſt endeavours to prevent them from becoming invidious, I find myſelf received in the world with leſs cordiality than I had reaſon to expect. My own ſex ſtand too much in awe of me to bear me any affection. When I come into their company, an univerſal ſilence would prevail, if it were not interrupted by myſelf. Though I cannot ſay that I am treated rudely, yet I can eaſily perceive that the civilities I receive are conſtrained; and I have every reaſon to believe, that no ſmall pains are taken to traduce my character, and to ridicule my taſte in dreſs, and all the circumſtances of external behaviour. It is kindly hinted, that a little aukwardneſs and impropriety may be excuſed in a learned lady, and that dreſs and decorum are beneath the notice of a poeteſs.

I have no reaſon to think that my perſon is particularly diſagreeable; yet, I know not how it is, I am avoided by gentlemen who are ambitious of the

company of other ladies. They have dropt, in the hearing of ſome of my friends, that though they think me extremely clever, yet they cannot reconcile the ideas of female attractions and the knowledge of the Greek. They do not mean to detract from my praiſe; but they muſt own, that I am not the woman after their hearts. They entertain a notion, that a lady of improved underſtanding will not ſubmit to the leſs dignified cares of managing a houſehold. She knows how to make verſes, ſays ſome witty beau, but give me the woman who can make a pudding.

I muſt confeſs, I ever thought it the moſt valuable recommendation of a wife to be capable of becoming a converſable companion to her huſband; nor did I ever conceive that the qualifications of a cook-maid, a laundreſs, or a houſe-keeper, were the moſt deſirable accompliſhments in a partner for life. A woman of improved underſtanding and real ſenſe is more likely to ſubmit to her condition, whatever it may be, than the uneducated or the half-learned; and ſuch an one will always be willing to ſuperintend œconomy, when it becomes her duty; and to take an active part in houſhold management, when the happineſs of him ſhe loves, and of herſelf, depends upon her perſonal interference.

The education of children in the earlier periods, particularly of daughters, naturally belongs to the mother. Her inclination to improve them, ſeconded by her ability to take the proper methods, muſt be attended with the moſt valuable effects. The world is acquainted with the happy conſequences of a Cornelia's parental care. But it ſeems probable, that little nouriſhment of mind can be imbibed from a mother, whoſe ideas hardly ever wandered beyond the limits either of a kitchen or a dreſſing-room. Neither is there ſufficient reaſon to conclude, that ſhe whoſe intellectual acquiſitions enable her to entertain her huſband, and to form the minds of her children, muſt be incapable or unwilling to ſuperintend the

table.

table, and give a perſonal attention to domeſtic œconomy.

That learning belongs not to the female character, and that the female mind is not capable of a degree of improvement equal to that of the other ſex, are narrow and unphiloſophical prejudices. The preſent times exhibit moſt honourable inſtances of female learning and genius. The ſuperior advantages of boys education are, perhaps, the ſole reaſon of their ſubſequent ſuperiority. Learning is equally attainable, and, I think, equally valuable, for the ſatisfaction ariſing from it, to a woman as a man. For my own part, I would not loſe the little I poſſeſs, to avoid all thoſe diſagreeable conſequences of which I have juſt now complained.

Sir Thomas More, in his Advice to a Friend, who was ſeeking a Wife, adviſes him to overlook wealth and beauty, and, if he deſired a happy life, to join himſelf with a woman of virtue and knowledge. His words are thus tranſlated by a juſtly admired author:

May you meet with a wife who is not always ſtupidly ſilent, nor always prattling nonſenſe! May ſhe be learned, if poſſible, or at leaſt capable of being made ſo! A woman thus accompliſhed, will be always drawing ſentences and maxims of virtue out of the beſt authors of antiquity. She will be herſelf in all changes of fortune, neither blown up in proſperity, nor broken with adverſity. You will find in her an even, chearful, good-humoured friend, and an agreeable companion for life. She will infuſe knowledge into your children with their milk, and from their infancy train them up to wiſdom. Whatever company you are engaged in, you will long to be at home, and retire with delight from the ſociety of men, into the boſom of one who is ſo dear, ſo knowing, and ſo amiable. If ſhe touches her lute, or ſings to it any of her own compoſitions, her voice will ſoothe you in your ſolitudes, and ſound more ſweetly in your ear than that of the nightingale. You will waſte with

pleaſure whole days and nights in her diſcourſe. She will keep your mind in perpetual ſerenity, reſtrain its mirth from being diſſolute, and prevent its melancholy from being painful.

Such was doubtleſs the wife of Orpheus; for who would have undergone what he did to have recovered a fooliſh bride? Such was the daughter of Ovid, who was his rival in poetry. Such was Tullia, as ſhe is celebrated by the moſt learned and the moſt fond of fathers; and ſuch was the mother of the two Gracchi, who is no leſs famous for having been their inſtructor, than their parent.*

The opinion of Mr. Addiſon ſhall cloſe theſe obſervations on Female education:

I have often wondered, ſays this elegant writer, that learning is not thought a proper ingredient in the education of a woman of quality or fortune. Since they have the ſame improveable minds as the male part of the ſpecies, why ſhould they not be cultivated by the ſame method? Why ſhould reaſon be left to itſelf in one of the ſexes, and be diſciplined with ſo much care in the other?

There are ſome reaſons why learning ſeems more adapted to the female world, than to the male. As in the firſt place, becauſe they have more ſpare time upon their hands, and lead a more ſedentary life. Their employments are of a domeſtic nature, and not like thoſe of the other ſex, which are often inconſiſtent with ſtudy and contemplation.

A ſecond reaſon why women ſhould apply themſelves to uſeful knowledge rather than men, is becauſe they have the natural gift of ſpeech in greater perfection. Since they have ſo excellent a talent, ſuch a copia verborum, or plenty of words, it is pity they ſhould not put it to ſome uſe. If the female tongue will be in motion, why ſhould it not be ſet to go right? Were they furniſhed with matters of fact, out of

* See the Guardian.

of arts and ſciences, it would now and then be of great eaſe to their invention.

If we look into the hiſtories of famous women, we find many eminent philoſophers of this ſex: nay, we find that ſeveral females have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in thoſe ſects of philoſophy which ſeem almoſt repugnant to their natures. There have been famous female Pythagoreans, notwithſtanding moſt of that philoſophy conſiſted in keeping a ſecret, and that the diſciple was to hold her tongue five years together. I need not mention Portia, who was a ſtoic in petticoats; nor Hipparchia, the famous ſhe cynic, who arrived at ſuch a perfection in her ſtudies, that ſhe converſed with her huſband, or man-planter, in broad day light, and in the open ſtreets.

Learning and knowledge are perfections in us, not as we are men, but as we are reaſonable creatures; in which order of beings the female world is upon the ſame level with the male. We ought to conſider in this particular, not what is the ſex, but what is the ſpecies to which they belong. At leaſt I believe every one will allow me, that a female philoſopher is not ſo abſurd a character, and ſo oppoſite to the ſex, as a female gameſter; and that it is more irrational for a woman to paſs away half a dozen hours at cards or dice, than in getting up ſtores of uſeful learning. This therefore is another reaſon why I would recommend the ſtudies of knowledge to the female world, that they may not be at a loſs how to employ thoſe hours that lie upon their hands.

I might alſo add this motive to my fair readers, that ſeveral of their ſex, who have improved their minds by books and literature, have raiſed themſelves to the higheſt poſts of honour and fortune. A neighbouring nation may at this time furniſh us with a very remarkable inſtance of this kind; but I ſhall conclude this head with the hiſtory of Athenais, which is a very ſignal example to my preſent purpoſe.

The emperor Theodoſius being about the age of one and twenty, and deſigning to take a wife, deſired his ſiſter Pulcheria and his friend Paulinus, to ſearch his whole empire for a woman of the moſt exquiſite beauty and higheſt accompliſhments. In the midſt of this ſearch, Athenais, a Grecian virgin, accidentally offered herſelf. Her father, who was an eminent philoſopher of Athens, and had bred her up in all the learning of that place, at his death left her but a very ſmall portion, in which alſo ſhe ſuffered great hardſhips from the injuſtice of her two brothers. This forced her upon a journey to Conſtantinople; where ſhe had a relation who repreſented her caſe to Pulcheria, in order to obtain ſome redreſs from the emperor. By this means that religious princeſs became acquainted with Athenais, whom ſhe found the moſt beautiful woman of her age, and educated, under a long courſe of philoſophy, in the ſtricteſt virtue, and moſt unſpotted innocence. Pulcheria was charmed with her converſation, and immediately made her reports to the emperor, her brother Theodoſius. The character ſhe gave made ſuch an impreſſion on him, that he deſired his ſiſter to bring her away immediately to the lodgings of his friend Paulinus, where he found her beauty and her converſation beyond the higheſt idea he had framed of them. His friend Paulinus converted her to Chriſtianity, and gave her the name of Eudoſia. After which the emperor eſpouſed her, and enjoyed all the happineſs in his marriage which he promiſed himſelf from ſuch a virtuous and learned bride. She not only forgave the injuries which her two brothers had done her, but raiſed them to great honours; and by ſeveral works of learning, as well as by an exemplary life, made herſelf ſo dear to the whole empire, that ſhe had many ſtatues erected to her memory, and is celebrated by the fathers of the church as the ornament of her ſex.*

Ariſe

* See Addiſon's works, Vol. 4.

Arife then, ye virtuous fair ones, and aſſert your proper dignity. Cultivate your better part. Strengthen and enlarge your minds by a diligent application to ſolid learning. Moderate induſtry, with perſeverance, will do great things. Along with your other attainments, get the languages, if you can. Fail not, however, thoroughly to underſtand your own. Without this you muſt ever appear to much diſadvantage. And, if you have leiſure and inclination, be not afraid to enter upon the Hebrew, in preference to all other languages. Read the fourth book of this Compilation over carefully firſt, by way of encouragement, and it will not be many months before you will have it in your power to peruſe the moſt ancient and eloquent authors in the world, in their own proper tongue. The Latin, Greek, and French will richly reward your toil likewiſe, if you have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them. But the Greek, for obvious reaſons, ſhould follow the Sacred language. None whoſe approbation is truly deſirable will ſneer at and diſcourage you. Imagine not it is none of your concern ſo to do. You are made for pure intellectual pleaſures as much as we: whereas multitudes of your ſex act as though they were the mere baubles and play-things of men. And, indeed, having no ſtock of uſeful learning, and their underſtandings being unenlarged, it muſt be confeſſed, they are incapable of more refined pleaſures. In many inſtances, they are the ſport of their own paſſions, and the ridicule and burleſque of all their more ſenſible and diſcerning connections.

The fifth book is principally made up of Exhortations to, and Directions for, reading the Holy Scriptures in the moſt uſeful and profitable manner. This is more immediately deſigned for the encouragement of private Chriſtians of every order, and for their guidance and information in their daily converſe with the Word of God.

The ſeven laſt books are upon a different plan. In the firſt five, the Reader will find many high encomiums

comiums upon the vaſt ſuperiority of the Sacred Writings to all others. But in the laſt ſeven are collected a large number of the fineſt parts of the Bible, which are contraſted with ſome of the moſt valuable paſſages of the Pagan writers. Hereby even the unlearned Reader may be able to judge for himſelf which are ſuperior. Each of theſe books is divided into two parts: the firſt conſiſts of Extracts from the Bible and Apocryphal authors; the ſecond of Extracts from the Writings of the ancient Heathens. Theſe are intended, not only to compare with the former, but as Specimens of the writings of the famous Greeks and Romans, and alſo to form, in conjunction with them, a moral and theological Repoſitory for Readers of every character and degree. Any perſon of diſcernment will eaſily perceive a very material difference between one and the other; though, with pleaſure it is confeſſed, the latter are, in many inſtances, excellent in themſelves, and highly worthy of our attention. Nay, even the extracts from the Apocryphal books are vaſtly inferior to thoſe from the Bible: but in compliance with the practice of the firſt ages of the goſpel, the Compiler has given them a place with the Divine Writings.

The ſixth book contains Proverbs and other Miſcellaneous matters: the ſeventh, Prayers, Poems, and Songs of Praiſe: the eighth, Miracles and Parables: the ninth, Prophetical Diſcourſes: the tenth, epiſtles: the Eleventh, Orations, and other Diſcourſes: the twelfth, Hiſtories.

From this ſhort view of the Work, the Reader may obſerve, that the Holy Bible abounds with a vaſt variety of matter, a confuſed magnificence above all order, and is the fitteſt book in the world to be the Arbiter of the final fates of men. In ſhort, ſpeaking of the Holy Scriptures merely as compoſitions, without any regard whatever to their heavenly pretenſions, the Compiler defies all the ſons of infidelity to produce ſuch a number of weighty and important Proverbs—ſuch divine and

fervent

fervent Prayers—ſuch ſublime and rapturous Songs—ſuch aſtoniſhing and beneficent Miracles—ſuch pertinent and beautiful Parables—ſuch accurate and infallible prophecies—ſuch excellent and pathetic Epiſtles—ſuch powerful and eloquent Orations—ſuch inſtructive and entertaining Hiſtories, as are here collected in great abundance from that richly-fraught magazine of all true excellence in compoſition, The Holy Bible. Well may he ſay with Propertius, on another occaſion, to every Reader into whoſe hands theſe volumes ſhall come,

Cedite, Romani ſcriptores; cedite, Graii:

And with St. Auſtin; Tolle et lege; tolle et lege; and recommend to the Gentleman and the Scholar, as well as to the illiterate Chriſtian, the daily peruſal of the Bible, with infinitely greater propriety, than ever Horace did to the learned Romans the ſtudy of the Grecian models:

Nocturnâ verſate manu, verſate diurnâ.

In this department of the Work, however, the Compiler had further views than a mere Compariſon. Many of the writings of the ancient Heathens had frequently given him much pleaſure in the peruſal. He was deſirous that others ſhould partake the ſame pleaſure, who, through want of ability or learning, could have no acceſs to the originals. He therefore reſolved to ſelect the choiceſt parts of their works into one view, that the mere Engliſh reader might be capable of reaping advantage from them. He wiſhed ſtill further, that ſome of the pureſt pieces of Chriſtian antiquity were aſſociated with his Selection from the Holy Scriptures and Pagan writers; partly, becauſe of their own great excellency and importance; partly, to enrich and render more valuable his Compilation; but principally, that the unlearned Reader might ſee how the Scriptures were underſtood, and what were the genuine doctrines of Chriſtianity in the firſt and pureſt ages.—To the whole are added two Indexes, whereby any of the important

important matters contained in the four volumes may be turned to with the greateſt readineſs and facility.

Floriferis ut apes in ſaltibus omnia limant,
Omnia nos itidem depaſcimur aurea dicta.

Lucretius.

In the numerous paſſages that have been collected, though, in the words of a great Prelate, there is nothing but what appears to the Compiler of ſome real weight, and therefore of great importance; yet the Reader will obſerve ſeveral things, which will appear to him very little, if he can think things to be of little importance, which are of any real weight at all, upon ſuch a ſubject as religion. However, the proper force of the following Collection lies in the whole general evidence conſidered together.*

It will be eaſily obſerved alſo, that the Compiler of the preſent Work does not mean to make himſelf anſwerable for all the opinions of the Writers whoſe words he has here laid before the Public. He only adduces their authority to ſhew, that however they may differ in other reſpects, and however vary in their interpretations, yet they all agree in receiving the Holy Scriptures as the Word of God, and the infallible criterion of truth.

Another view the Compiler had in the preſent Publication, which ought not to be paſſed over in ſilence, was. to be of particular uſe to his own Family and Relations, together with thoſe large bodies of people among whom he has had the honour of preaching the Goſpel, in different places. He has frequently had opportunities of ſeeing, that there is a great want of uſeful books among the poorer kind of people, and even among many of our more decent and reſpectable families. He wiſhed to contribute his endeavour to remove this deſtructive evil. And by the preſent Publication he conſiders himſelf as furniſhing them with a whole library, upon moral and religious ſubjects,

* Preface to Butler's Analogy.

jects, and bringing them acquainted with some of the best and most celebrated writings in that way, that ever appeared in any language. This he conceives to be a more real and essential service to his Family, Friends, and Hearers, than if he had written and published ten times as much from his own proper fund; which he might easily have done in a course of many years constant labour in his profession. Though the Work, therefore, is dedicated to a large and learned body of men, with a view of bringing the Bible into more general estimation, as a book of consummate worth and perfection, yet he earnestly, and more especially recommends the diligent and frequent perusal of it to his Children and Family, to his Friends and Congregation at large, those dear and tender connections, as a legacy more truly valuable, than if he had left to each of them some thousands of pounds in his last will and testament. He calls upon them, however, to observe, that it contains not the sentiments and opinions of any private and sinister party of men, but proceeds on the broad basis of general information and utility. Neither does it arrogate to itself the place of the Bible, though the substance of that precious treasure is contained in it, but rather, directs, with every argument that can well be suggested, to the constant and attentive perusal of it, by holding it forth as the One Book, which is calculated to entertain and improve mankind beyond all others, and to guide our feet in the way of peace: that as there is but One God of nature, One Mediator between Him and man, one Spirit to renew and sanctify all the elect people of God, One Sun in the firmament to illuminate our system; so by the favour of heaven, there is One Book, and But One, which truly and exclusively claims the Deity for its author, and which is infinitely well adapted to enlighten the understandings, and to save the souls of his creatures. All other books, like the moon and stars in the firmament, may have their inferior and subordinate uses, but must not assume the place of, neither

come

come in competition with, this great, moral and religious Luminary of our world, THE BIBLE.

Amongſt a variety of other matter that will be found in theſe volumes the following is particularly important, and will ſtamp an intrinſic value upon the publication, even if the plan ſhould not be approved by the public. In the two firſt volumes is the ſubſtance of Harwood's Introduction to the New Teſtament—Biſhop Taylor's Moral Demonſtration of the truth of Chriſtianity—Biſhop Watſon's Addreſs to the deiſtical gentry of the day—The principal of Dr. Horne's Letters on Infidelity—Biſhop Newton's Diſſertation on the wretched ſtate of the Jews—Such of Knox' Eſſays as are on Biblical ſubjects—Lord Forbes' Demonſtration of the Divine Legation of Moſes—Lowman's Diſſertation on the Civil Government of the Hebrews—Several genuine accounts of the laſt moments of celebrated infidels—Biſhop Stillingfleet's maſculine reaſonings on the excellency of the Holy Scriptures—Saurin's Compariſon between Heatheniſm and Chriſtianity—Miſs Carter's Compariſon between Chriſtianity and Stoiciſm—Dr. Hawkſworth's fine Compariſon between the writings of the Heathen and the Holy Scriptures—Steel and Addiſon's Papers on Sacred Criticiſms—Rapin, Fenelon, Rollin, and Ganganelli on the Beauty and eloquence of the Divine Writings—Dr. Delany's, Dr. Chandler's, and Dean Smith's Illuſtrations of various Beauties of the Bible—Blair on the Poetry and Eloquence of the Hebrews—Lloyd's Eſſay on the literary Beauties of the Scriptures—Biſhop Law's fine Obſervations on the Life and Writings of our Saviour—Several of Mr. Pratt's Illuſtrations of the Beautiful and Sublime of Holy Scripture—Sterne's Sermon on the Excellency of the Sacred Writings—Biſhop Newcome's Obſervations on our Lord's Conduct—White's Obſervations on the ſame, with his compariſon between Chriſt and Mahomet, the Goſpel and Alcoran—Hervey's Obſervations upon and Illuſtrations of the Holy Scriptures—Dr. Weale's Obſervations

Obſervations on the Eloquence of our Saviour and St. Paul, with divers Illuſtrations—Several of the fineſt Illuſtrations from Blackwall's Sacred Claſſics—But above all, the Reader will here find the ſubſtance of the late biſhop Lowth's Prælectiones de Sacrâ Poeſi Hebrærum, with moſt of his elegant Introduction to the prophet Iſaiah. All theſe are here produced pretty much at large, beſides many other Criticiſms upon various parts of the Divine Writings, and numerous Obſervations upon the Greek and Hebrew languages, eſpecially the latter.

In the two laſt volumes the Reader will find the Subſtance of the Bible under a new arrangement, the fineſt parts of the Apocryphal books, and whatever is deemed moſt moral and uſeful in all Heathen antiquity. Here are the Moral parts of Homer—The Golden Verſes of Pythagoras—The Hymns of Orpheus, Callimachus, Cleanthes, and Eupolis, to Jupiter—Several of the moral Odes of Horace—The ſecond Olympic Ode of Pindar—Prodicus' Choice of Hercules—The Picture of Human Life, by Cebes—The Pollio of Virgil—Several of the Epiſtles of Horace, Cicero, Pliny, Iſocrates, and other Ancients—The firſt book of Heſiod's Works and Days—The dying Advice of Cyrus the Great—The firſt and ſixth Satyrs of Horace—The tenth of Juvenal—The ſecond of Perſius—Socrates' Apology, with Plato's Account of his Death, and his Thoughts on the Immortality of the Soul—The Subſtance of Cicero's Cato and Tuſculan Diſputations—Homers and Virgil's Views of the State of the Dead—The Manual of Epictetus—The Subſtance of the Commentaries of the Emperor Marcus Antoninus—The Orations of Demoſthenes on the Claſſes, and Cicero for Marcellus:—Theſe, with many other paſſages from the Ancients, equally inſtructive and entertaining, the Reader will find in the two laſt volumes; beſides the choiceſt pieces of the Chriſtian Fathers, who lived in, or ſoon after the age of the Apoſtles. Such

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is the feaſt provided for the Reader! If he has a taſte formed for excellence in writing, he may here be gratified, as far as he well can be ſo, without having recourſe to the Originals. There, and there alone is full ſatisfaction to be had. But this is a pleaſure which none can enjoy but the Scholar. How few then, compared with the vaſt bulk of mankind, or even with the great body of worthy and ſenſible people, and people of ſome taſte for polite literature, can enjoy that ſatisfaction? The chief part of this publication, however, is level to the capacity of every improved mind, whether acquainted with the learned languages or not; and is intended to give the mere Engliſh ſcholar ſome encouragement and aſſiſtance, in his endeavours to cultivate a taſte for the literary Beauties of the Holy Scriptures, and other Authors moſt celebrated for fine writing.

The Compiler has not entered minutely into a Compariſon between the Sacred and profane writers, as at firſt he had intended. This he found had already been, incidentally, done to his hand by ſome of the moſt able of our modern authors. He was of opinion, therefore, it would be more for the advantage of the Work, and the honour of the Divine Writings, to ſelect ſuch Compariſons, and to lay them before the Reader, in the words of their reſpective authors, than to hazard an inferior attempt of his own. Accordingly there will be found in the third book of the ſecond volume, eſpecially, and in other parts of this Compilation, a conſiderable variety of ſuch Compariſons: firſt, between Chriſt and Socrates, by the late biſhop Law: between Chriſt and Mahomet, and between the Goſpel and Alcoran, by Dr. White: between the Evangeliſts in relating the life and doctrines of our Saviour, and Plato and Xenophon in relating the doctrine of their maſter, by the ſame author. Then, ſecondly, various fine Illuſtrations and Compariſons by Hawkſworth, Addiſon, and Steel, in the Adventurer, Spectator, and Guardian: Delany's between the famous

mous thunder-ſtorm of Virgil and that of David: Chandler's between David's God and the Jupiter of Heſiod and Callimachus: Rouſſeau's between our Saviour and Socrates: biſhop Browne's between the Eloquence of our Lord, and that of the moſt celebrated Heathen: Sherlock's between Chriſt and Mahomet; between the Ends of Religion and Infidelity: Miſs Carter's between Chriſtianity and Stoiciſm: Saurin's between Chriſtianity and Heatheniſm: Tillotſon's between Virgil's view of the laſt judgment and inviſible world, and that of the laſt judgment and inviſible world of the Scriptures. Theſe, with many other paſſages, will be found compared by ſome of the moſt celebrated among modern writers. In the Introduction to each of the laſt ſeven books the Compiler has himſelf indeed drawn a ſort of general Compariſon between the Sacred and profane authors on each ſubject, but he has left it to the ingenious Reader, if he thinks proper, to enter more minutely into a compariſon between any two writers or paſſages he pleaſes to ſelect for that purpoſe.

The Compiler's diſtance from the Preſs has been the occaſion of ſeveral mortifying miſtakes, eſpecially in the proper names. Theſe are moſt of them corrected in the two Indexes; and ſuch as materially affect the ſenſe will be found rectified in the table of Errata.

The Preface to the third volume, and the Introductions to the ſeveral Books, but particularly that to the firſt, will more fully explain the intention of the preſent Publication; to them therefore he would recommend the Reader, before he enters upon a regular peruſal of the volumes.

In the whole Collection he is not conſcious of having, in any one inſtance, altered the ſenſe of his Author, although he has frequently been obliged to change an expreſſion, to render the ſenſe complete when taken out of its proper connection. This was a liberty which was unavoidable in a work of this kind,

kind, and therefore will undoubtedly meet with the candour and indulgence of the Reader, as well as the Author, from whoſe work the extract is made.

The Compiler's thanks are certainly due to the many excellent writers, whoſe names are recorded in the following pages. He has ranged through their works with great freedom; and whenever he met with any paſſage that ſuited his deſign, he did not heſitate to tranſplant it out of its native ſoil, and to beautify and adorn his own Publication with it. Sometimes he has had an opportunity of peruſing the reſpective Writers in their own proper language, and at other times tranſlations of them have fallen in his way. In moſt caſes he has ſeen and examined the paſſages with his own eyes; in a few inſtances he has been obliged to take them on the faith of others. A ſmall number of quotations from Greek and Latin authors is left untranſlated, which may poſſibly diſguſt certain Readers, and which ſeems to call for an apology.* He would therefore inform them, that the ſubſtance of ſeveral ſuch quotations is to be found in other paſſages; that ſometimes it is not poſſible to tranſlate them without loſing much of their ſpirit and beauty; that the ſenſe of others is as well confined to thoſe who are capable of underſtanding the original; that if they were tranſlated they would be of ſmall ſervice to perſons not verſed in claſſical learning; that ſometimes he uſes this variety and mixture, to pleaſe his own taſte, be it good or bad; that he wiſhed to afford a little peculiar inſtruction and entertainment to the younger ſcholar; and laſtly, that the quotations in Engliſh of every kind are ſufficiently numerous to ſatisfy and entertain the minds of the generality of his unlearned Readers.

There will be found among the multitude of quotations that follow, a few inſtances where reflections are made upon ſome of the diſtinguiſhed Parties of Chriſtians.

* See Preface to Jortin's Life of Eraſmus.

Chriſtians. This, however, has been avoided as much as was convenient. The Compiler profeſſes himſelf a friend of mankind, and means not to enter into any of the peculiarities of Party. TO RECOMMEND THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE TO EVERY PARTY IS THE GRAND OBJECT OF THIS PUBLICATION.

After all; the Compiler is truly ſenſible, that he is very far from having done full juſtice to his Theme; but he hopes, this imperfect Eſſay, which, ſo far as he knows, is new in its kind, if it ſhould meet with a favourable reception from his Friends and the Public, will be a means of making the Holy Scriptures more generally read, of cauſing the Hebrew language to be leſs neglected, and of engaging others, that have greater leiſure and abilities, to add their more valuable labours to thoſe of other learned and venerable characters, who are already engaged in Biblical purſuits. And however defective the Execution of the Work may be, he is well aſſured, the Deſign, at leaſt, muſt meet with the full approbation of every wiſe and good man. If any of his Readers are diſpoſed to be critical and cenſorious, he would admoniſh them to advert to the intention rather than the execution. The Work is no other than a Compilation; the Editor wiſhes it to be conſidered as ſuch, and conſequently can expect no fame from the publication of it. He is already ſenſible of a number of imperfections, and believes many improvements might be made in the plan. Others, he fears, will be ſenſible of far more, and diſcover greater defects than he is at preſent aware of. But on account of the good Intention and Tendency of the Publication, which has coſt him much money, and much time, to bring it to its preſent ſtate, he hopes that the Public in general, and his Friends in particular, will give it that candid and benevolent reception, which indeed they uſually do give to every attempt calculated to promote the happineſs of mankind.

And now,* could the Editor flatter himſelf, that any one would take half the pleaſure in reading his Work which he hath taken in compiling it, he would not fear the loſs of his labour. The employment detached him from the buſtle and hurry of life, the din of party, and the noiſe of folly; vanity and vexation flew away for a ſeaſon, care and diſquietude came not near his dwelling. He aroſe, freſh as the morning to his taſk; the ſilence of the night invited him to purſue it; and he can truly ſay, that food and reſt were not preferred before it. Happier hours than thoſe which have been ſpent in theſe meditations on the Holy Scriptures, he never expects to ſee in this world. Very pleaſantly did they paſs, and moved ſmoothly and ſwiftly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. They are gone, but have left a reliſh and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is ſweet.

* See Horne on the Book of Pſalms.

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INTRO-

INTRODUCTION

TO

SACRED LITERATURE.

THOUGH the Bible is uſually conſidered among Chriſtians as the Book of God, and, as ſuch, moſt worthy of our ſerious attention and regard; it ſeems by no means to be eſteemed in that high and ſuper-eminent degree, even with many perſons of piety and learning, to which it hath a moſt juſt and unqueſtionable claim. It is frequently looked upon as a code of penal precepts and rigid maxims, calculated to keep the world in awe, rather than as a volume filled with the moſt refined and important truths, abounding, at the ſame time, with all the majeſty of language, all the excellencies of fine writing, and divinely calculated to accompliſh the gentleman, to entertain and improve the ſcholar, as well as to make the Chriſtian wiſe unto ſalvation. This degree of neglect which it meets with, may probably ariſe, partly, from our being accuſtomed to conſider it in the degrading light of a ſchool-book; and, partly, from its being moſt injudiciouſly broken into chapters and verſes. The former circumſtance impreſſes the mind with a low and unfavourable idea of its excellence; and the latter ſo mars and diſfigures its beauty, that it requires too great a ſhare of attention and diſcernment, for a careleſs and ſuperficial reader, to ſee through the veil that ſhades and diſguiſes it. Let the poems of Homer, Virgil, or Milton; the orations of Demoſthenes or Cicero; the odes of Pindar or Horace; or the ſermons of Tillotſon and

Blair, be disjointed in the same monkish and indiscreet manner, and abundance of their most exquisitely fine and beautiful passages will be very much obscured, if not totally concealed and hidden from our view. One great inconvenience, says Mr. Locke, that the New Testament labours under, in its present form, is, its improper division into chapters and verses; whereby it is so chopped and minced, and stands so broken and divided, that not only the common people take the verses usually for distinct aphorisms; but even men of more advanced knowledge, in reading it, lose very much of the strength and coherence, and the light that depends on it.——

The judicious Mr. Blackwall somewhere says, 'There seem 'to me no conveniences in the division of the Sacred Books 'into chapters and verses, that can balance the inconvenience and prejudice they bring. The most valuable book in the world is the worst divided; and is deformed and encumbered with the most improper sections and pauses. Stops are made, chapters and verses ended, where the sense, narration, and argument is mangled and broke off. Even the most learned sometimes lose some of the pleasure and advantage of their studies, by reading books so unnaturally divided.—— Mr. Wynne observes, that if Livy's history, or Tully's orations, &c. were mangled in the same unnatural manner, without regard to the sense, or change of subject, what critic would not exclaim against it, as rendering those books unintelligible? and since the Inspired Writings are of infinitely greater importance than any classic author, why should we expose those sacred books to the contempt of infidels, by suffering them to appear in so disadvantageous a light?——

It cannot be enough lamented, if such trifling and unworthy causes are suffered to impede that general reception and universal admiration, which are so justly due to the most divine and inestimable volume the world was ever blest with: a volume, compared with which, all the admired authors of antiquity are exceedingly inferior! This indeed is no more than might have been expected. When a God of infinite wisdom vouchsafes to instruct the world, the manner, as well as the matter; the language and composition, as well as the precepts and doctrine, might reasonably be supposed to appear worthy of himself. And that it is so, is what I have endeavoured to shew at large in the following testimonies, proofs, illustrations, and comparisons.

Our curiosity, however, ought by no means to rest here. The variety of matter and information, as well as the purity

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of precepts, and the importance of doctrines, with which that divine book abounds, is truly aſtoniſhing; and what no perſon will ever be able thoroughly to diſcover, unleſs he diligently attend to the different kinds of matter and compoſition, and compare and lay them together.

A common and ſuperficial obſerver looks around him on the works of nature with a ſort of ſtupid wonder and ſurprize. He ſees a vaſt variety of objects on every ſide, in the heavens, on the earth, in the ſea, and in the air. But, not being accuſtomed to ſeparate, arrange, and compare them, his mind is filled with confuſion and diſorder, and he continues a ſtranger to thoſe refined feelings, thoſe ſublime conceptions of wonder and adoration, which, ſo pleaſingly and powerfully, impreſs the ſoul of a more accurate and methodical obſerver. A philoſophic mind will readily tell us the number of the ſtars, and call them all by their names: it will deſcribe the motions, magnitudes, diſtances, and periodical times, of the ſeveral bodies of our ſyſtem, with an exactneſs (to a perſon ignorant of the art, and a ſtranger to ſuch ſpeculations) truly ſurprizing. Beaſts, birds, inſects, fiſhes, trees, ſhrubs, plants, flowers, and other objects of nature, will be arranged, numbered, named; and their various qualities, excellencies, beauties, defects, pointed out; and the wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, of the ſupreme Architect diſplayed and illuſtrated.

Thus, the Word of God, like the works of nature, and like the Author of nature, abounds with various and aſtoniſhing excellence. And it undoubtedly ſhould be the buſineſs, as it certainly is the duty, of every Chriſtian, as far as his leiſure and abilities will admit, to enter into all the beauties and deſigns of both theſe grand volumes. In each of them we moſt clearly read and trace the footſteps and perfections of the Deity. True, however, it is, that both one and the other of theſe volumes abound with intricate and obſcure paſſages; paſſages which puzzle and confound the moſt learned and intelligent: but yet there is important matter enough in both, which comes within the reach and capacity of the meaneſt and moſt uninformed (if ſincere and prayerful) Chriſtian, to comprehend. It will be our duty, therefore, diligently to obſerve thoſe parts of the works and Word of God, which come within the compaſs of our underſtandings; and yet, not ſo as to diſbelieve and reject the more myſterious and obſcure, but rather patiently to wait for further light and information in a way of meek ſubmiſſion and perſevering inveſtigation. It is allowed on all hands, that God himſelf is abſolutely incomprehenſible:

if, therefore, the works of nature are his production, and the Bible his inſpiration, we may juſtly expect ſome inimitable ſtrokes, and ſome ſelf-evident traces of his incommunicable perfections in both. If the writings of a Newton or a Locke ſtretch ſo far beyond the reach of a common unimproved underſtanding, as they moſt certainly do; ſhall the works, or the Word of the Almighty, be expected, in every inſtance, to be level to the capacity, even of the pureſt and moſt exalted genius; much leſs to the apprehenſion of every ignorant ſelf-ſufficient pretender to religion or learning? A Newton or a Locke would ſmile at and pity the poor conceited Ignoramus, who ſhould pretend to criticiſe and find fault with their ſublime ſpeculations: and ſhall not the Almighty, who is perfect in knowledge, and jealous of his honour, humble and abaſe the man, who, vainly and conceitedly, exalts himſelf againſt the adorable wiſdom and conſummate excellence of his works and Word?

Another unhappy impropriety is evident in the conduct of many worthy perſons. The ſyſtems of nature and revelation are both acknowledged to be from God: and yet even men of letters will be found oftentimes to ſlight the latter, while they attentively ſtudy, and zealouſly admire the former. Men of learning are inſenſible, to the matchleſs beauties and all important excellencies of the Bible; men of piety and religion, to the wonders of creation. Both theſe grand volumes, however, were intended by the Author of them to be diligently read and cloſely ſtudied, as the only way of arriving at the knowledge of his nature and perfections. Theſe different views, very probably, ariſe from different modes of education. Perſons of ordinary learning, whoſe minds have happily taken a religious turn, are oftentimes placed out of the way of ſuch converſation and books, as are calculated to open to them the various beauties and wonders of creation. And on the other hand, in our beſt grammar ſchools, the Greek and Roman authors are the only, or rather the principal writers young gentlemen are accuſtomed to read, and hear ſpoken of, with any degree of warmth and approbation. The elegance of their language, the juſtneſs of their ſentiments, the ſublimity of their conceptions, are frequently pointed out, and ſtrongly, and, indeed, juſtly recommended to their niceſt and moſt accurate imitation: whereas, the noble ſtrains of the Sweet-ſinger of Iſrael, and the ſublime flights of Moſes and the Prophets, are treated with almoſt total ſlight and neglect. The fine majeſtic diſcourſes of the Saviour of men, with the divine effuſions of the glorious company of the Apoſtles, are

read

read indeed—but how? and for what purpoſe? Why, moſt commonly, in a haſty, careleſs, ſuperficial manner, merely to enable them to commence candidates for admiſſion into the univerſity, or to obtain a title to holy orders. Rarely, very rarely, are the ſublimities of their language, the elegance of their diction, the purity and perfection of their doctrines, inſiſted on and diſplayed. Hence our graduates and young divines are accuſtomed, too often through all their future lives, to conſider the Bible, as a poor, low, unimportant performance, dangerous to be read, leſt their ſtyle ſhould ſuſtain an injury. And though by the uſage of their country they are obliged to pay ſome reſpect to this antiquated book, they are wont to eſteem it as utterly unworthy the attention of the fine gentleman, or the polite ſcholar.

It hath been obſerved, that men of letters have frequently neglected the book of divine revelation. Others there are, it muſt be acknowledged, who have treated it with contempt and ridicule, and uſed their proſtituted labours to depreciate and leſſen its credit and influence in the world. This was undoubtedly the caſe with Celſus, the Epicurean philoſopher, in the ſecond; with Porphyry, the Platonic philoſopher, in the third; and with Julian, the apoſtate, in the fourth century. This was the caſe alſo with Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, and others of our own times. But what might be the reaſon of their unbelief and oppoſition? Were they ſerious and earneſt inquirers after truth; and men of pious, holy, heavenly minds? men that did "juſtly, loved mercy, "and walked humbly with their God?" And did they, after all, really diſbelieve and reject the Bible for want of evidence? Nay rather, is it not more probable, that it was becauſe their minds had, in ſome way or other, contracted a variety of unreaſonable prejudices? and above all, were not they againſt the Bible, becauſe the Bible was againſt them? Be this as it may (they are in the hand of God, and the judge of all the earth, and the kind and bountiful parent of all his creatures, will do right,) we ſhall do well to conſider, that even this oppoſition of infidels makes a part of the prophetic ſcheme revealed in that wonderful book, and conſtitutes one branch of proof for its veracity; and, that though ſuch authors are againſt the Bible, yet more, and greater, and more excellent, are they that are for it. Many volumes might be filled with learned and venerable names, and noble teſtimonies, in favour of that moſt precious and ineſtimable book. The names and opinions of ſome of the moſt clear, and unexceptionable witneſſes, who have had occaſion to ſpeak or

write upon the ſubject, will not be diſagreeable to any pious reader, and may confirm the faith of ſome. This kind of evidence for the truth and excellence of the Word of God, is not, I confeſs, abſolutely concluſive: but it ſeems better adapted to the capacities of the bulk of Chriſtians (at leaſt as a collateral proof) than that which is uſually urged, moſt juſtly and ably urged, from the nature of the doctrine, the reality of the miracles, and the accompliſhment of the prophecies, and, if I miſtake not, will afford a degree of conviction to the ſerious and well-diſpoſed mind not eaſy to be reſiſted.

I. The Almighty himſelf, after the death of Moſes, that eminent man of God, addreſſes his valiant ſucceſſor in theſe animating words: "Be ſtrong and of a good courage; for "unto this people ſhalt thou divide for an inheritance the "land, which I ſware unto their fathers to give them. Only "be thou ſtrong, and very courageous, that thou mayeſt "obſerve to do according to all the law, which Moſes my "ſervant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right "hand, or to the left, that thou mayeſt proſper whitherſo-"ever thou goeſt. This book of the law ſhall not depart "out of thy mouth; but thou ſhalt meditate therein day "and night, that thou mayeſt obſerve to do according to all "that is written therein; for then thou ſhalt make thy way "proſperous, and then thou ſhalt have good ſucceſs."

Here it may be obſerved, that the whole ſucceſs of Joſhua's arms depended upon his paying an implicit regard to the law of Moſes. Joſhua was obedient; he did as the Lord commanded him; and he ſucceeded, he flouriſhed, he proſpered, whitherſoever he went. "There was not a man able to ſtand "before him all the days of his life: as God was with Moſes, "ſo he was with him; he did not fail him, nor forſake him."

II. Jeſus Chriſt, the ſon of the moſt high God, and the Saviour of ſinful men, expreſſly commands his followers to "ſcrutinize the Scriptures; for in them, (ſays he) ye think "ye have eternal life; and they are they which teſtify of "me." And after his reſurrection, "beginning at Moſes, "and all the prophets, he expounded unto his diſciples in "all the Scriptures the things concerning himſelf;" and aſſured them at the ſame time, "that all things were to be "fulfilled which were written in the law of Moſes, and in "the prophets, and in the pſalms, concerning him."

Taking for granted the truth of the New Teſtament, theſe teſtimonies by Jeſus Chriſt are a perfect confirmation of the Old. They are more than ten thouſand witneſſes of an inferior kind.

III. Moſes

III. Moſes, the moſt ancient of hiſtorians, and the wiſeſt of legiſlators, hath laid this ſolemn injunction upon every individual of the race of Abraham: "Hear, O Iſrael, the "Lord our God is one Lord: and thou ſhalt love the Lord "thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and "with all thy might. And theſe words which I command "thee this day ſhall be in thine heart; and thou ſhalt teach "them diligently unto thy children, and ſhalt talk of them "when thou ſitteſt in thine houſe, and when thou walkeſt by "the way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt "up. And thou ſhalt bind them for a ſign upon thine hand, "and they ſhall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And "thou ſhalt write them upon the poſts of thine houſe, and on "thy gates."

Such were the injunctions, ſuch the commands, which Moſes, the lawgiver of the Jewiſh nation, laid upon that people. And we need but read their ſtory to ſee, that when they obeyed theſe injunctions they were happy and proſperous; and when they diſobeyed them, they were always, in one form or other, proportionably wretched and diſtreſſed, and not unfrequently given up into the hands of their enemies.

IV. King David alſo, the moſt ſucceſsful of warriors, the ſublimeſt of poets, and the moſt ſeraphic of muſicians, thus ſweetly ſings the praiſes of the Moſaic law: "The law of "the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul: the teſtimony of "the Lord is ſure, making wiſe the ſimple: the ſtatutes of "the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment "of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of "the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the "Lord are true and righteous altogether; more to be deſired "are they than gold, yea than much fine gold: ſweeter alſo "than honey and the honey comb. Moreover, by them is "thy ſervant warned; and in keeping of them there is great "reward."—And in the 119th pſalm we have the ſame excellent author relating his experience of the happy effects, which the Moſaic law had upon his own mind: "O how I "love thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou "through thy commandments haſt made me wiſer than mine "enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more under-"ſtanding than all my teachers; for thy teſtimonies are my "meditation. I underſtand more than the ancients; becauſe "I keep thy precepts. How ſweet are thy words to my taſte! "Yea, ſweeter than honey to my mouth! Through thy "precepts I get underſtanding; therefore I hate every falſe "way."

V. The

V. The great apoſtle of the Gentiles, who, independent of his piety and apoſtleſhip, was moſt eminently a man of genius and learning, gives us his opinion of the Word of God in theſe ſtrong expreſſions: "All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works."

VI. St. Peter alſo, the apoſtle of the Circumciſion, aſſures us, that "prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt."

Theſe teſtimonies in favour of the Sacred Writings, it may be objected, are all taken from the Bible itſelf, and are not therefore, in this caſe, to be attended to.

True: unbelievers may argue thus, if they pleaſe: they may call them partial evidences, and not to be depended upon, when they bear witneſs to themſelves. But, this being granted, we have a cloud of witneſſes to the ſame purpoſe, many of which are not liable to the ſame objection.

VII. In the ſixth and ſeventh articles of religion, to the truth of which all the archbiſhops, biſhops, and clergy of England and Ireland have ſubſcribed, our pious reformers have given it as their opinion, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament contain all things neceſſary to ſalvation, and that the Old Teſtament is not contrary to the New. And in the firſt Homily, which contains an affectionate exhortation to the reading and ſtudying the Holy Scriptures, we have theſe words: Unto a Chriſtian man there can be nothing either more neceſſary or profitable than the knowledge of Holy Scripture; foraſmuch as in it is contained God's true Word, ſetting forth his glory, and alſo man's duty. And there is no truth or doctrine neceſſary for our juſtification and everlaſting ſalvation, but may be drawn out of that fountain and well of truth: therefore as many as are deſirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God, muſt apply their minds to know the Holy Scripture; without which they neither can ſufficiently know God and his will, neither their own office and duty. And as drink is pleaſant to them that be dry, and meat to them that are hungry; ſo is the reading, hearing, ſearching and ſtudying of Holy Scripture to them that are deſirous to know God and themſelves, and to do his will. And thoſe perſons only do loathe and abhor the heavenly knowledge and food of God's Word, that are ſo drowned in worldly

worldly buſineſs and vanities, that they neither favour God, nor any godlineſs: for that is the cauſe why they deſire ſuch vanities rather than the knowledge of God. Therefore, forſaking the corrupt judgment of carnal and worldly minded people, let us reverently hear and read Holy Scripture, which is the food of the ſoul. For in Holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to avoid; what to believe, what to love, and what to expect in the world to come.

Such are the ſentiments, and ſuch the exhortations, of Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, and others, who ſealed their opinions with their blood. Such alſo are the ſentiments of the church of Scotland, and of all the Proteſtant churches, of every denomination, throughout the known world. However they may differ in other matters of leſs importance, and however diſagree in the interpretation thereof, they all agree in this, with one mouth, with one conſent, that the Bible contains the Word of God; that we ought to be ruled and guided by it in all our conduct; that we are to be judged by it at the laſt day; and that we are to be eternally happy, or everlaſtingly miſerable, according as the Bible acquits or condemns us.

Nay, it ought to be obſerved, that the Greek and Roman churches alſo, as well as the Proteſtant, receive the Bible as the Word of God, and that even the Alcoran of Mahomet takes for granted the truth of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations, all the beſt parts of that extraordinary compoſition being copied from the Old and New Teſtament.

It will again be objected, that the clergy in all ages have agreed to eſtabliſh the Bible as the Word of God from lucrative views, for the ſake of the emoluments ariſing from the church, and the eaſe and honour uſually conferred on that order of men.

Here we are conſtrained to acknowledge, that prieſtcraft hath too much prevailed in every period of the Chriſtian church, and amongſt all the different ſects and parties that compoſe it. Men of corrupt minds, and covetous diſpoſitions, have, not unfrequently, crept into the ſacred miniſtry, for the ſake of the loaves and fiſhes. "Put me into the "prieſts office, that I may get a piece of bread," has more than once been the cry, to the great ſcandal and diſgrace of the church of Chriſt. But though truth obliges us to confeſs thus much, we are conſtrained by the ſame truth to acknowledge, that this has not always been the caſe. Many there have been in almoſt every age who have undertaken the arduous

arduous taſk of preaching the goſpel from pure and diſintereſted motives, and who would not, knowingly and deliberately, contribute to maintain a ſyſtem of ſpiritual tyranny, for the ſake of any human conſiderations whatever.

But, ſuppoſe this were not the caſe; are there none beſides the clergy that have aſſerted, proved, and gloried in the divine authority of the Bible? Yes; to the confuſion of vice and infidelity, many are the champions of the cauſe of God and truth, who have been men of profound piety, ſound ſenſe, native genius, and large acquired learning, and who have had no worldly intereſt to anſwer by maintaining and ſupporting a lie. And though, in the following collection, I have not confined myſelf to inſtances of this kind, yet many of them will be univerſally deemed perſons of firſt rate learning and abilities, and as ſound and impartial judges of truth in doctrine, and excellence in writing, as the world ever produced. A conſiderable number of the extracts are, indeed, from the works of the clergy, of different denominations: but this circumſtance, I hope, can be no juſt objection to their authority, eſpecially upon ſubjects of taſte and literature. The teſtimonies of infidels alſo, and of dying penitents, or wretched apoſtates, concerning the Divine Word, and the great truths of religion, ſhall make a part of our collection, and ought ſurely to have much weight and conſideration with every ſceptical and unbelieving mind.

SACRED LITERATURE.

BOOK I.

Teſtimonies in Favour of the Holy Scriptures.

I. FLAVIUS JOSEPHUS.

EVERY one is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer nor is there any diſagreement in what is written; they being only prophets that have written the original and eldeſt accounts of things, as they learned them of God himſelf by inſpiration, and others have written what hath happened in their own times, and that in a very diſtinct manner. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, to diſagree from, and contradict one another, as the Greeks have; but only twenty-two books, which contain the records of all the paſt times, which are juſtly believed to be divine. And of them, five belong to Moſes, which contain his laws, and the traditions of the origin of mankind, till his death. This interval of time was little ſhort of three thouſand years. But as to the time from the death of Moſes, till the reign of Artaxerxes, king of Perſia, who reigned after Xerxes, the prophets, who were after Moſes, wrote down what was done in their times, in thirteen books. The remaining four books contain hymns to God, and precepts for the conduct of human life. 'Tis true, our hiſtory hath been written ſince Artaxerxes very particularly; but hath not been eſteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers; becauſe there hath not been an exact ſucceſſion of prophets ſince that time. And how firmly we have given credit to theſe books of our own nation, is evident by what we do. For during ſo many ages as have already paſſed, no one hath been ſo bold,

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as either to add any thing to, or take any thing from, or to make any change in them. But it is become natural to all Jews, immediately, and from their very birth, to eſteem theſe Books to contain divine doctrines; and to perſiſt in them; and, if occaſion be, willingly to die for them. For 'tis no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently, to be ſeen to endure racks, and deaths of all kinds, upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to ſay one word againſt our laws, and the records that contain them.—

If a man aſk any Jew concerning the laws, he will tell every thing readier than his name: for learning them from the firſt time they have ſenſe of any thing, they retain them imprinted in their minds.——

Now there was about this time Jeſus, a wiſe man; if it be lawful to call him a man: for he was a doer of wonderful works; a teacher of ſuch men as receive the truth with pleaſure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was (the) Chriſt. And when Pilate, at the ſuggeſtion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the croſs; thoſe that loved him at the firſt, did not forſake him: for he appeared to them alive again, the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold theſe, and ten thouſand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Chriſtians ſo named from him, are not extinct at this day. *Works, paſſim.*

2. JUSTIN MARTYR.

THERE were of old, among the Jews, certain prophets of God, by whom the prophetic Spirit made proclamation of things to come, long before they were in being; theſe prophecies, juſt as they were delivered, were committed to writing by the prophets themſelves in their own Hebrew mother tongue, and the books put into the cuſtody of the kings of Judea then in being. When Ptolemy, therefore, king of Egypt, was ſetting up his library, and very inquiſitive about the moſt curious collection of all ſorts of books, being informed of theſe prophetic writings, he diſpatched an embaſſador to the Jewiſh high-prieſt, who was at that time inveſted with regal power, to requeſt of him theſe prophecies; and accordingly the royal high prieſt ſent them in their original language; but the contents of theſe books being not intelligible to the Egyptians in the Hebrew tongue, he ſent a ſecond embaſſy to deſire him to ſend over men to tranſlate them into Greek; and by theſe means, theſe books are in

being

being with the Ægyptians to this day; and this tranſlation is in the hands almoſt of every Jew all the world over; which, tho' they read, they underſtand not. *Firſt Apology.*

3. Irenæus.

MATTHEW publiſhed his Goſpel among the Hebrews, written in their own language, whilſt Peter and Paul were preaching the goſpel at Rome, and founding the church. After their death, Mark, the diſciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing what Peter had preached. Luke alſo, the follower of Paul, compiled in a book the Goſpel preached by him. Afterwards John, the diſciple of the Lord, he that leaned on his breaſt, publiſhed a Goſpel, when he lived at Epheſus, a city of Aſia. *Euſebius' Ecc. Hiſt.*

4. Origen.

THERE are twenty-two books of the Old Teſtament, Geneſis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joſhua; Judges and Ruth are by the Hebrews comprehended in one book; the firſt and ſecond of Kings, are among them one book, called Samuel; the third and fourth of Kings, among the Hebrews one book, called the Kingdom of David: the firſt and ſecond book of Chronicles, in one volume, called the Words of Days; Eſdras the firſt and ſecond book, by them made one book called Ezra: the book of Pſalms; Solomon's Proverbs; Eccleſiaſtes; the Song of Songs; the twelve minor Prophets; Iſaias; Jeremiah, with his Lamentations; Daniel; Ezekiel; Job; Eſther.——There are four Goſpels, which, and only which, are to be allowed, without contradiction, by the church of God under heaven. As for the firſt, it was written by Matthew, formerly a publican, but afterwards an apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt. The ſecond is Mark's Goſpel, who wrote it as Peter expounded to him. The third is the Goſpel according to St. Luke, which is commended by Paul. Laſtly, St. John's Goſpel. *Euſebius' Ecc. Hiſt.*

5. Eusebius.

IN the firſt place are to be ranked the four ſacred Goſpels: next to which follows the book of the Acts of the Apoſtles: after that are to be reckoned the Epiſtles of Paul; after which follows that which is called The Firſt Epiſtle of John; and in like manner The Epiſtle of Peter is to be admitted as authentic: then is to be placed, if you think good, the Revelation of John: and theſe are the books that, with general conſent, are acknowledged. Among thoſe which are queſtioned

tioned as doubtful, which yet are approved and mentioned by many, is that which is called The Epiſtle of James, and that of Jude, alſo The Second Epiſtle of Peter, and thoſe called the Second and Third of John. *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory.*

6. TATIAN.

WHEN I gave my mind to a ſerious ſearch after truth, it happened, that I met with books written in a barbarous language, which, in reſpect to the doctrine contained in them, were much older than any writings of the Greeks, and contained divine truths in oppoſition to their errors and ſuperſtitions. And I was fully convinced of the truth of theſe writings, from the plainneſs and unaffectedneſs of the ſtyle, from the ſincerity of the writers, from the intelligible account they give of the creation of the world, from the prophetical foreſight they contain of things to come, from the excellency of their precepts, and becauſe the whole deſign of thoſe books is to inſtruct men in the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God. *Oratio ad Græcos.*

7. TERTULLIAN.

THE Divine Writings have been the treaſury of all ſucceeding wiſdom. Which of the poets, which of the ſophiſters have not drank from the fountain of the prophets? It is from theſe ſacred ſources likewiſe, that the philoſophers have refreſhed their thirſty, inquiſitive ſpirits. ——

This is my preſcription againſt the adulterers of the faith, to try all their doctrines by the Goſpel, that rule of truth, which came from Chriſt, and was tranſmitted by his apoſtles; that, I ſay, is the touchſtone by which all the different opinions of ſucceeding teachers are to be proved.—I adore the plenitude of the Scripture. *Works, paſſim.*

8. ST. ATHANASIUS.

HE who confines his deſire of knowledge to the principles of pure religion and ſolid reaſon, has no occaſion to make the tour of human learning, and ſpend his life in libraries. This is a ſcience, which obtrudes herſelf upon him, and will make him underſtand her whether he will or not. The theatre of the univerſe is her ſchool, the ſeveral claſſes of the creatures ſo many ſubjects of ſpeculation and proofs of her poſitions, and the Word of God her volume or ſyſtem of infallible authorities and divine inſtitutions.—'Tis certain there is not one neceſſary or ſaving truth left out of that compleat collection

collection or body of Sacred Oracles.—The religion you have embraced has all the infallible evidence and clear demonſtration poſſible to vouch for the certainty and truth of it.

Oration againſt the Gentiles, paſſim.

9. ISIDORE PELEUSIOTA.

THE Sacred and Heavenly Oracles, ſince they were ſpoken and written for the advantage of mankind in general, are tempered with perſpicuity; ſo that ordinary people, who attend the meaner employments of life, receive great advantage by their plainneſs; and in a moment learn what is becoming, juſt, and profitable. *Apud Suicer.*

10. ST. AMBROSE.

GOD now walketh in paradiſe when I read the Holy Scriptures. The book of Geneſis is a paradiſe in which the virtues of the patriarchs do grow: the book of Deuteronomy is a paradiſe in which the precepts of the law do bloſſom: the Goſpel is a paradiſe in which the tree of life doth bear good fruit, and diffuſeth the appointments of eternal expectations among all people. *Works.*

11. BASIL THE GREAT.

WHAT is it that we are not taught in this book of Pſalms? Are we not inſtructed here concerning all moral virtues, the magnificence of fortitude, the exactneſs of juſtice, the gravity of temperance, the perfections of prudence? Are we not informed hence concerning the manner of repentance, the meaſure of patience, and whatever other good and virtuous things we can name? Here is the treaſure of compleat theology, here is the common ſtorehouſe of all good documents. *Firſt Homily on the Pſalms.*

12. ST. AUSTIN.

EVERY thing in the Scripture is ſublime and divine; its truth and doctrine are moſt aptly accommodated to the refreſhment and building up of our minds; and in all reſpects ſo ordered, that every one may draw thence what is ſufficient for him, provided he approaches it with devotion, piety and religion. *Of the Chriſtian Doctrine.*

13. LACTANTIUS.

THE truths of religion are delivered in a brief and plain manner, ſuch as beſt became the majeſty of God; who, when

when he declares his will to men, can have no need of aſſigning reaſons for it, as if he was not to be believed or obeyed on other terms. He ſpoke therefore as the ſupreme Arbiter of all, whoſe prerogative it is not to argue but aſſert.
Works.

14. JOHN GASPARD SUICER.

IN the Evangelical preachings, the beauty of truth ſhines out ſo clear and pure, that it illuminates the mind, while it flows into the ſouls of pious men like light.

The wiſdom and goodneſs of the divine law-giver delivered the doctrines of eternal life in plain and common words, and wonderful perſpicuity of ſtyle; that mean and illiterate people, who have equal concern in the contents of thoſe ineſtimable writings, with the profoundeſt ſcholars, may learn their duty, and be encouraged to obedience by the infinite advantages there clearly and ſtrongly propoſed to them; neither has Providence neglected the learned and the wiſe: that plain and eaſy ſtyle often expreſſes ſuch noble ſentiments and treaſures of divine wiſdom, as command the cloſeſt attention and moſt awful admiration, of the moſt elevated minds.
Apud Theſaurum.

15. JOHN WICKLIFFE.

THE will of God is evidently revealed in two Teſtaments. —The Goſpel is ſufficient to direct a Chriſtian in the conduct of his life.—Any diſputation, not originally produced from thence, muſt be accounted profane. *Middleton's Biog. Evan.*

16. THE CONFESSION

Of Robert Ferrar, biſhop of St. David's, Rowland Taylor, John Philpot, John Bradford, Laurence Saunders, John Hooper, biſhop of Worceſter and Glouceſter, Edward Crome, John Rogers, Edmund Lawrence, J. P. and J. M. and Miles Coverdale, Confeſſors and Martyrs.

WE confeſs and believe all the canonical books of the Old Teſtament, and all the books of the New Teſtament, to be the very true Word of God, and to be written by the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt, and are therefore to be heard accordingly, as the judge in all controverſies and matters of religion. *Fox's Acts and Monuments.*

17. CONFESSION OF THE CHURCH OF HELVETIA.

I believe and confeſs the canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apoſtles of both Teſtaments to be the very true Word

Word of God.—For God himself spake to the fathers, prophets, apostles, and speaketh yet unto us by the Holy Scriptures.—The canonical Scripture, being the Word of God, and delivered by the Holy Ghost, and published to the world by the prophets and apostles, being of all other the most perfect and ancient philosophy, doth alone perfectly contain all piety and good ordering of life.

18. Confession of the Church of Bohemia.

THE Bible is true, certain, and worthy to be believed, whereunto no human writings whatsoever, or of what sort soever they be, may be compared, but that, as man's writings, they must give place to the Holy Scripture.——Wherefore every one ought very highly to esteem the divine writings of the holy prophets and apostles, resolutely to believe them, and religiously to yield unto them in all things, diligently to read them, and according to them ought every man to frame and order himself.

19. Confession of the French Church.

WE believe that the word contained in the books of the Old and New Testament, came from one God, of whom alone, and not of men, the authority thereof dependeth. And seeing this is the sum of all truth, containing whatsoever is required for the worship of God and our salvation, we hold it not lawful for men, no, not for the angels themselves, to add or detract any thing from that word, or to alter any whit at all in the same.

20. The Belgic Confession.

WE believe that the Holy Scripture doth most perfectly contain all the will of God, and that in it all things are abundantly taught whatsoever is necessary to be believed of man to attain salvation.——The holy doctrine therein contained is perfect and absolute in all points and parcels thereof.

21. Saxon Confession.

WE do plainly avouch before God and the whole church in heaven and in earth, that we do with a true faith embrace all the writings of the prophets and apostles.

22. The Wirtemberg Confession.

THE Holy Scripture we call those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority there was never

doubt made in the church. This Scripture we believe and confeſs to be the oracle of the Holy Ghoſt, ſo confirmed by heavenly teſtimonies, that if an angel from heaven preach any other thing, let him be accurſed.

23. The Sweedland Confession.

NO part of Chriſtian truth and ſound doctrine can be wanting to him who with all his might laboureth to follow and embrace the Scripture of God.

Harmony of the Confeſſion of the reformed Churches.

24. Picus Mirandula.

THE noble Picus Mirandula was accounted the beſt linguiſt and ſcholar of his age, and yet after he had run through innumerable volumes, he reſted in the Bible, as the only book wherein he had found out the true eloquence and wiſdom. The Holy Scripture, ſays he, is not only capable of perſuading and moving; but it conſtrains, it drives, it forces. The words of the law ſeem to be rude and barbarous; but they are powerful, full of life and fire, piercing the moſt ſecret receſſes of the ſoul, and transform the whole man by a marvellous change.

Letter to Hermolaus Barbarus, and Woodward's fair Warnings.

25. Martin Luther.

IT is well known with how great ſeverity God hath commanded his Word to be heard and learned; for he moſt highly eſteemeth it, and hath beſtowed much labour in defending and publiſhing it to the world: he hath ſuffered all the prophets to come into perils and dangers; at the laſt alſo he ſent his own Son, becauſe of his Word, whom he ſuffered to die even the death of the croſs; and what perſecutions have not the apoſtles themſelves bore for the Word's ſake? What afflictions have not all the Chriſtians ſuffered? unto ſome of whom he hath committed the miniſtry of his word faithfully to be executed, and to others, he hath enjoined the charge of hearing the ſame. If there were no other cauſe beſides this, whereby we might be moved to hear and learn God's word, but for that it is the good pleaſure, will, and commandment of God, yet this one ought to be ſufficiently great and weighty; for it is our duty as creatures to obey our Lord and Creator with all readineſs of mind.——

One of St. Paul's words containeth well three of Tully's orations.

Sermons and Table Talk.

26. Faustus

26. Faustus Socinus.

AS to him who believes there is, or may be, ſome true religion, I cannot indeed ſee, if he be a man of ſound judgment, how he can avoid diſcovering clearly, that the Chriſtian religion not only excels all other, but has in it likewiſe whatever can be deſired in any true religion; inſomuch, that either this alone muſt be true, or no religion is, or can be, but what is falſe.——

What other religion ever was, or can be, in which ſo great, not to ſay greater innocence and integrity of life, or truer probity was required? What religion ſo perfectly free from all ſuperſtition, or the leaſt ridiculous pageantry, as that worſhip, which all who truly profeſs themſelves Chriſtians, acknowledge to be recommended to them in their religion? Or rather, what other religion, whoſe precepts and rules of life, if compared with ours, are not like a faint glimmering light, oppoſed to the noon-day ſun?

An Argument for the Authority of Holy Scripture.

27. Sir Francis Bacon,

WAS a man, who for the greatneſs of genius, and compaſs of knowledge, did honour to his age and country; one might almoſt ſay to human nature itſelf. He poſſeſſed at once all thoſe extraordinary talents which were divided amongſt the greateſt authors of antiquity. He had the ſound, diſtinct, comprehenſive knowledge of Ariſtotle, with all the beautiful lights, graces and embelliſhments of Cicero. One does not know which to admire moſt in his writings, the ſtrength of reaſon, force of ſtyle, or brightneſs of imagination. Such is the character which Addiſon has given us of this extraordinary man. Among his works is a prayer of his own compoſing which ſeems to have been for his own private uſe, and in which, when there was no room for hypocriſy and unmeaning pretences, he diſcovers the higheſt reverence for the Word of God. I ſhall beg leave to write down the prayer itſelf, with the title to it, as it will be a profitable entertainment to ſuch of my readers as are unacquainted with it.

A Prayer *or* Psalm *made by my* Lord Bacon, *Chancellor of England.*

MOST gracious Lord God, my merciful Father; from my youth up, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Comforter. Thou, O Lord, ſoundeſt and ſearcheſt the depths and ſecrets of all

hearts; thou acknowledgeſt the upright of heart; thou judgeſt the hypocrite; thou pondereſt men's thoughts and doings as in a balance; thou meaſureſt their intentions as with a line; vanity and crooked ways cannot be hid from thee.

Remember, O Lord, how thy ſervant hath walked before thee; remember what I have firſt ſought, and what hath been principal in my intentions. I have loved thy aſſemblies, I have mourned for the diviſions of thy church, I have delighted in the brightneſs of thy ſanctuary. This vine, which thy right hand hath planted in this nation, I have ever prayed unto thee, that it might have the firſt and the latter rain, and that it might ſtretch her branches to the ſeas, and to the floods. The ſtate and bread of the poor and oppreſſed have been precious in mine eyes; I have hated all cruelty and hardneſs of heart; I have (though in a deſpiſed weed) procured the good of all men. If any have been my enemies, I thought not of them, neither hath the ſun almoſt ſet upon my diſpleaſures, but I have been as a dove, free from ſuperfluity of maliciouſneſs. Thy creatures have been my books, but thy Scriptures much more. I have ſought thee in the courts, fields, and gardens; but I have found thee in thy temples.

Thouſands have been my ſins, and ten thouſands my tranſgeſſions, but thy ſanctifications have remained with me, and my heart (through thy grace) hath been an unquenched coal upon thine altar.

O Lord, my ſtrength! I have ſince my youth met with thee in all my ways, by thy fatherly compaſſions, by thy comfortable chaſtiſements, and by thy moſt viſible providence. As thy favours have encreaſed upon me, ſo have thy corrections; ſo as thou haſt been always near me, O Lord! And ever as my worldly bleſſings were exalted, ſo ſecret darts from thee have pierced me; and when I have aſcended before men, I have deſcended in humiliation before thee. And now, when I thought moſt of peace and honour, thy hand is heavy upon me, and hath humbled me according to thy former loving-kindneſs, keeping me ſtill in thy fatherly ſchool, not as a baſtard, but as a child. Juſt are thy judgments upon me for my ſins, which are more in number than the ſands of the ſea, but have no proportion to thy mercies; for what are the ſands of the ſea? Earth, heavens, and all theſe, are nothing to thy mercies. Beſides my innumerable ſins, I confeſs before thee, that I am a debtor to thee for the gracious talent of thy gifts and graces, which I have neither put into a napkin,

nor

nor put it, as I ought, to exchangers, where it might have made beſt profit, but miſ-ſpent it in things for which I was leaſt fit; ſo I may truly ſay, my ſoul hath been a ſtranger in the courſe of my pilgrimage. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for my Saviour's ſake, and receive me into thy boſom, or guide me into thy ways. *Guardian.*

28. SIR MATTHEW HALE.

I HAVE been acquainted ſomewhat with men and books: I have had long experience in learning, and in the world: there is no book like the Bible, for excellent learning, wiſdom, and uſe, and it is want of underſtanding in them who think or ſpeak otherwiſe. *Letter to one of his Sons.*

29. SALMASIUS.

THIS great and eminent French ſcholar, after all his ſtudy, and labour, and honour, went out of the world with this ſorrowful reflection: Oh! I have loſt a world of time; of time the moſt precious thing in the world; whereof had I but one year longer, it ſhould all be ſpent in David's pſalms and Paul's epiſtles. *Woodward's Fair Warnings.*

30. SELDEN.

THIS famous perſon, one of the moſt eminent philoſophers, and moſt learned men of his time, who had taken a diligent ſurvey of antiquity, and what knowledge was conſiderable amongſt Jews, Heathens, and Chriſtians, and read as much perhaps as any man ever did; towards the latter end of his days, declared to archbiſhop Uſher; that notwithſtanding he had been ſo laborious in his enquiries, and curious in his collections, and had poſſeſt himſelf of a treaſure of books and manuſcripts upon all ancient ſubjects; yet he could reſt his ſoul on none, ſave the Scriptures.

Penn's No Croſs, No Crown.

31. HUGO GROTIUS.

THIS great and excellent man wrote a whole book to prove the truth of the Divine Writings, and exhorts his readers carefully to preſerve the holy doctrine of Chriſt, as a moſt valuable treaſure; and to that end, often to read the Sacred Writings; by which no one can poſſibly be deceived, who has not firſt deceived himſelf. And then the ſame incomparable perſon adds, For the authors of them were more

faithful, and more full of the divine influence, than either willingly to deceive us in any neceſſary truth, or to hide it in obſcurity. *De Veritate.*

32. Sir Christopher Hatton.

THIS great ſtateſman, a little before his death, adviſed his relations to be ſerious in ſearching after the will of God in his Holy Word; For, ſaid he, it is deſervedly accounted a piece of excellent knowledge to underſtand the laws of the land, and the cuſtoms of a man's country; how much more to know the ſtatutes of heaven, and the laws of eternity, thoſe immutable and eternal laws of juſtice and righteouſneſs! To know the will and pleaſure of the Great Monarch, and Univerſal King! I have ſeen an end of all perfection, but the commandments of God are exceeding broad.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

33. Robert, King of Sicily.

THIS pious monarch, writing to Francis Petrarcha, ſays, I tell thee, my Petrarcha, the Holy Books are dearer to me than my kingdom, and were I under any neceſſity of quitting one, it ſhould be my diadem. *Woodward's Fair Warnings.*

34. Charles the Fifth.

HE was emperor of Germany, king of Spain, and lord of the Netherlands. After 23 pitched battles, 6 triumphs, 4 kingdoms conquered, and 8 principalities added to his dominions, he reſigned up all his pomp into other hands, and betook himſelf to retirement; leaving this teſtimony behind concerning the life he ſpent in the honours of the world, and the pleaſure he enjoyed in his retreat: That the ſincere ſtudy, profeſſion, and practice of the Chriſtian religion had in it ſuch joys and ſweetneſs as courts were ſtrangers to. *Penn's No Croſs, No Crown.*

35. Robert Barclay.

WE account the Holy Scriptures, without all deceit or equivocation, the moſt excellent writings in the world; to which not only no other writings are to be preferred, but even in divers reſpects not comparable thereto.

Apology for the true Chriſtian Divinity.

36. Francis Junius,

A learned perſon, known by his Latin tranſlation of the Old Teſtament from the Hebrew, with his aſſociate Tremellius, confeſſeth of himſelf, that he was in his younger years much aſſaulted with a profane diſtruſt of the providence of God; till being in extreme danger of his life in a tumult at Lyons, and being wonderfully preſerved, he was conſtrained to acknowledge a divine providence therein: after which, by his father's advice, he began to peruſe the New Teſtament, of which he writeth thus: When I opened the New Teſtament, I firſt fixed my eyes on that moſt auguſt chapter with which St. John begins his Goſpel: "In the beginning was the "Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was "God." I read part of the chapter, ſays he, and was ſoon convinced that the divinity of the argument, and the majeſty and authority of the ſtyle, did far excel all the eloquence and art of human writings: my whole body trembled, my mind was aſtoniſhed, and I was ſo affected all that day, that I knew not where, or what I was. O my God, thou waſt mindful of me, according to the multitude of thy mercies; and in pity broughteſt home thy loſt ſheep into thy fold.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

37. John Lock, Esq.

MORALITY becomes a gentleman, not barely as a man, but in order to his buſineſs as a gentleman; and the morality of the Goſpel of Chriſt doth ſo excel that of other books, that to give a man a full knowledge of morality, he need read no other book but the New Teſtament.——The credit and authority our Saviour and his apoſtles had over the minds of men, by the miracles they did, tempted them not to mix any conceits, any wrong rules, any thing tending to their own by intereſt, or that of a party, in their morality. No tang of prepoſſeſſion or fancy; no footſteps of pride or vanity; no touch of oſtentation or ambition appears to have had a hand in it. It is all pure, all ſincere; nothing too much, nothing wanting; but ſuch a complete rule of life as the wiſeſt men muſt acknowledge tends entirely to the good of mankind; and that all would be happy if all would practiſe it.

As the Lively Oracles, the Holy Scriptures, are confeſſedly an immenſe bleſſing, and inexhauſtible treaſure, which the divine wiſdom and bounty have adapted to all the purpoſes of an holy life, directing us to a cure for every diſeaſe of

of the ſoul, conſidered both in a moral and theological ſenſe; the diſplaying the authority, uſe, and excellency of them, muſt have a direct tendency not only to excite our curioſity, but to animate our deſire and impatience to be thoroughly acquainted with the contents of them. Theſe therefore reſemble the leaves of the tree of life which were appointed for the healing of the nations; and diſcover that pure fountain, opened to the houſe of David, and to the inhabitants of Jeruſalem, for ſin and for uncleanneſs. And we may affirm of the Holy Scriptures, what St. Paul attributes to his own preaching, that in them is declared all the counſel of God's will; namely, that inſtruction in faith, and that regulation in practice, which is able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, and thoroughly furniſhed unto all good works. And indeed the perfection, the fulneſs, the comprehenſion of the Holy Scriptures, is truly aſtoniſhing. The knowledge moſt myſterious and profound is there exhibited to us. The truths moſt uſeful and and neceſſary are there unfolded to us. The precepts moſt pure and perfective of mankind; of which the great ſecretaries of nature, in their four thouſand years improvement, gave us little beſides blunders and blotted paper; are theſe recommended, nay, and demonſtrated too, as they are exemplified in the conduct of all thoſe who have had the common underſtanding, and the grace to be governed by their directions. So that the ſcioliſts and empirics, who have uſed their ſufficiency and, in contradiction to St. Paul, ſay, the foolishneſs of man is wiſer than God, are of all creatures the most ridiculous. But the great antipathy which a thoughtleſs mind among ſt profeſſes againſt the Scriptures, is beſt accounted for from hence, because they make us acquainted with ourſelves, and teach us ſundry unfaſhionable duties, which they are determined never to copy after; and therefore, as it happens in too many other caſes, the Scriptures being againſt them, they are againſt the Scriptures. They will not waſh in Jordan! But ſince the addreſs and expoſtulation proceeded from the mouth of Heathens, it may have the more weight: If the prophet had bid thee do ſome great thing, wouldſt thou not have done it? How much rather then [illegible] ſaith to thee, Waſh, and be clean? Apollos, the [illegible], was mighty in the Scripture, knowing only [illegible] of John. But theſe men reject the counſel of [illegible] themſelves: being abominable and diſobedient, [illegible] to every good work reprobate. So that thoſe who diſ[illegible] in the Holy Scriptures, may be liſted under

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ſome of theſe denominations, the proud, heady, high-minded, ſuperficial boaſters; the low, carnal, indolent, heavy ſenſualiſts; the confident, malicious, raging, wicked hearts of unbelief. *Work's, paſſim.*

38. Sir Philip Sidney.

THIS polite ſcholar, and valiant ſoldier left his farewel among his friends in theſe words: Love my memory, cheriſh my friends, but above all, govern your wills and affections by the Will and Word of your Creator. In me behold the end of this world, and all its vanities.

Penn's No Croſs, No Crown.

39. Count Oxenstiern,

CHANCELLOR of Sweedland, a perſon of the firſt quality, ſtation, and ability in his country, after all his honour and acquirements, declared in his retirement to Whitlock the Engliſh ambaſſador, I have ſeen much, and enjoyed much of this world, but I never knew how to live till now. I thank my good God that he has given me time to know him, and to know myſelf. All the comfort I have, and all the comfort I taſte, and which is more than the whole world can give, is feeling the good ſpirit of God in my heart, and reading in the Bible, which came from that Spirit. And though you are now in the prime of your age and vigour, and in great favour and buſineſs, this will all leave you, and you will one day better underſtand and reliſh what I ſay to you; and then you will find, that there is more wiſdom, truth, comfort, and pleaſure, in retiring, and turning your heart from the world to the good Spirit of God, and in reading the Bible, than in all the courts and favour of princes. *Woodward's Fair Warnings.*

40. Monsieur Boileau.

EVERY word and ſyllable of the Bible ought to be adored. It not only cannot be enough admired, but it cannot be too much admired. *Anſwer to M. Le Clerc.*

41. Mr. Charles Gildon.

THE Bible is the ſacred repoſitory of all neceſſary truths, the moſt ancient and authentic of all books, and the only one that gives us the idea of true religion. *Deiſt's Manual.*

42. Bishop

42. Bishop Hall.

I durſt appeal to the judgment of a carnal reader, let him not be prejudicate, that there is no hiſtory ſo pleaſant as the Sacred. Set aſide the majeſty of the inditer; none can compare with it for magnificence and antiquity of the matter, the ſweetneſs of compiling, and the ſtrange variety of memorable occurrences. *Works.*

43. Bishop Beveridge.

I HAVE diligently read and examined the Bible, and muſt ingenuouſly confeſs, that at the very firſt glance, methought I read divinity in it, and could not but conclude from the majeſty of its ſtyle, the purity of its precepts, the harmony of its parts, the certainty of its promiſes, and the excellency of its rewards, that it could be derived from no other author but God himſelf. *Private Thoughts.*

44. King James.

SOLOMON's Proverbs is a book ſo full of golden ſentences and moral precepts, in all things that concern our converſation in this world, as among all the profane philoſophers and poets, there is not to be found ſo rich a ſtorehouſe of natural wiſdom, agreeing with the will and divine wiſdom of God. *Works.*

45. Bishop Wilson.

HE that reads the Sacred Scriptures, and underſtands the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the way of conducting men thither, need not complain for want of learning. *Works.*

46. Rev. Samuel Cradock, B. D.

THE Sacred Books do bring unto us the moſt gladſome tidings and joyfulleſt meſſage that ever was brought to the children of men. *Harmony of the Evangeliſt.*

47. Rev. James Macknight, D. D.

UPON the narroweſt ſearch that it is poſſible for us to make, we muſt acknowledge, that the Goſpels cannot be found fault with as books of hiſtory, on account of the impropriety or improbability of any of the actions, whether ordinary or extraordinary therein recorded.

Converſion of the World to Chriſtianity.

48. Bishop

48. Bishop King.

THE whole book of Pſalms is a collection of prayers of all ſorts; and there are few of them but what are moſt excellent forms of prayer, expreſſed in ſuch pathetic, ſignificant, and moving words, that we may have great reaſon to thank God for furniſhing us with them, and which we can never hope to equal by any of our own invention.

Diſcourſe on the Inventions of Men.

49. Bishop Ward.

THE morality of the Goſpel infinitely excels the inſtitutions of any of the heathen philoſophers.

Apology for the myſteries of the Goſpel.

50. Rev. Miles Barne, D. D.

THE moſt extravagant opinions, which ever yet ſaw the light, have ſhrouded themſelves under the patronage of Holy Writ. What ſhall we ſay then, ſhall we condemn the Scriptures of ſin? Shall we ſay, that the Scriptures are of themſelves either productive of error, or not a ſufficient ſtore-houſe of truth? God forbid! The Scriptures are holy, juſt and good, but private men wreſt them to their own deſtruction.

Authority of Church Guides aſſerted.

51. Bishop Fowler.

IT was the whole buſineſs of our Saviour's life to make men in all reſpects virtuous and holy;—and his whole converſation was a rare exemplification of all kinds of virtue and true goodneſs.

Deſign of Chriſtianity.

Rev. Samuel Bradford, D. D.

Although there be not, throughout the writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles, a ſyſtem of morality drawn up according to the model of the ſchools; yet a man that way diſpoſed might eaſily form from thence the moſt perfect and admirable ſcheme of moral diſcipline, that ever yet was produced.

Excellency of the Chriſtian Revelation.

53. Henry Earl of Warrington.

I next mention his regard to the ſacred Oracles of God, the Holy Scriptures, and his care in reading and conſulting them, to cull out ſuch directions as might be uſeful upon all occaſions, and applicable to the ſeveral emergencies of his actions.

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To which end he had drawn up ſeveral heads (above an hundred in number) in a large book for that purpoſe, and under them had noted with his own hand, ſuch places of Scripture as were properly reducible to them.—An example ſo much the more commendable and remarkable, as poſſibly more rare in perſons of his ſtation and variety of avocations: and would to God it were not too epidemical a miſtake, not only in men of honour, but of parts and wit, yea, and learning too, to lay aſide the Bible as a dull inſipid book, fit only for the clergy to conſult, or melancholy folks to pore on: alas! they little know the worth of it, that ſlight or diſeſteem it; but they that diligently conſult it as the rule of life and manners, the more they read it, the more they admire it, and as David and all good men have experienced it, find it "a "lanthorn to their feet, and a light to their paths." I dare ſay with aſſurance that no one that has ſeriouſly ſet himſelf to read and conſider it, ever found cauſe to repent the loſs of his time; and that whoſoever will take pains to note down ſuch paſſages as may be of moſt uſe and concern to him will find at once a faithful adviſer, a truſty monitor, and a ſure guide; which will lead him into the paths of true wiſdom and goodneſs, which two perfect human nature, and are the higheſt attainments of this life.

Funeral Sermon by Dr. Wren.

54. Rev. Richard Hooker.

HOW abominably have the Heathens erred in their hiſtorical accounts of the deluge, the children of Iſrael's deliverance out of Egypt, &c. by depending only upon reports? And how had the ſtate of the church of God been defaced, if it had not been ſecured by the Sacred Records? How had we wanted things in point of doctrine, hiſtories of mercies, pious examples, with other memorable remarks worthy our admiration and gratitude, which are there put together with ſo much exactneſs, that there is neither want nor ſatiety?

Eccleſiaſtical Polity.

55. Lewis 14th, King of France.

THE king abounds with good ſentiments; he ſometimes reads the Bible, and thinks it the fineſt of all books.

Letters of Madam de Maintenon.

56. Rev.

56. Rev. George Monro, M. A.

A soul that is capable to diſcern and reliſh divine things, will diſcover in the plain diſcourſes of our Saviour, ſtrains of rhetoric that excel in perſuaſiveneſs and efficacy, the eloquence and oratory that the world is fond of, as much as the brightneſs of the ſun, when in its meridian glory, excels in light and warmth the fainter twinklings of the diſtant ſtars. —It is very certain that humility and purity of heart, and fervent prayers for the Holy Spirit, together with a ſincere diſpoſition to obedience, are the only keys that can unlock our Saviour's diſcourſes, and lead us to the living and ſolid underſtanding of them.

Full Meaſures.

57. Bishop Hopkins.

THE Scripture is ſuited to every capacity. It is a ford wherein a lamb may wade, and an elephant ſwim; and herein is the infinite wiſdom of God ſeen, in wreathing together plain truths with obſcure, that he might gain the more credit to his Word, by the one inſtructing the ignorance of the weakeſt, by the other puzzling and confounding the underſtanding of the wiſeſt. This alſo adds a beauty and ornament to the Scripture.

As the beauty of the world is ſet off by a graceful variety of hills and vallies, ſo is it in the Scripture. There are ſublime truths, that the moſt aſpiring reaſon of man cannot overtop, and there are more plain and eaſy truths in which the weakeſt capacity may converſe with delight and ſatisfaction. No man is offended with his garden for having a ſhady thicket in it; no more ſhould we be offended with the Word of God, that among ſo many fair and open walks, we here and there meet with a thicket that the eye of human reaſon cannot look through. *Works.*

58. Mr. Abraham Cowley.

WHAT can we imagine more proper for the ornaments of wit or learning in the ſtory of Ducalion, than in that of Noah? Why will not the actions of Sampſon afford as plentiful matter as the labours of Hercules? Why is not Jephtha's daughter as good a woman as Iphigenia? And the friendſhip of David and Jonathan more worthy celebration, than that of Theſeus and Perithous? Does not the paſſage of Moſes and the Iſraelites into the holy land, yield incomparably more.

more poetical variety, than the voyages of Ulyſſes or Æneas? Are the obſolete thread bare tales of Thebes and Troy, half ſo ſtored with great, heroical, and ſupernatural actions, as the wars of Joſhua, of the Judges, of David, and divers others? Can all the transformations of the gods give ſuch copious hints to flouriſh and expatiate on, as the true miracles of Chriſt, or of the prophets, and apoſtles? What do I inſtance in theſe few particulars? All the Books of the Bible are either already moſt admirable, and exalted pieces of poeſy, or are the beſt materials in the world for it. *Work.*

59. Sir Richard Blackmore.

SINCE the book of Job, and other poetical parts of the Sacred Writings, do at leaſt equal the chief beauties of the Heathens, and by their uſefulneſs in their excellent inſtructions infinitely excel them, it is a matter of admiration that the Chriſtian poets ſhould be ſo far enamoured with the Pagan writings, as to form themſelves entirely by their patterns, to be taken up with the ſtudy of them to the total neglect of theſe inſpired writings. What pains and labour have our men been at, how great a part of their ſhort lives have they ſpent, what a multitude of volumes have they publiſhed to illuſtrate the meaning, and diſcover the excellencies of Greek and Latin poets, and to tranſlate them into their own languages? If this were the work of gentlemen, that had nothing elſe to employ themſelves about, and had no other capacity of being uſeful to mankind, it might perhaps paſs for an inoffenſive amuſement, and a pardonable ſort of idleneſs. But 'tis indeed wonderful that to give a new ſenſe to an expreſſion in an ancient poet, to ſtop a period more exactly, to rectify a word, to give a truer ſpelling to a man's name, or to reſtore a corrupt ſentence, ſhould be looked on as ſuch a perfection, as ſets a man in the firſt rank of learned men; and that a kind of knowledge, which does not make mankind any way wiſer or better, ſhould procure a mighty reputation, and dignify the owners of it with the honourable titles of great critics, and maſters of polite learning.

I would not derogate from the true value of claſſical knowledge. The Greek and Latin poets ſhould be ſtudied that we may underſtand thoſe languages of which there is ſuch a manifeſt neceſſity: but 'tis moſt evident, that for the ſenſe, for the noble and ſublime thoughts, and what is more than all other conſiderations, for the forming a man's mind according to the juſteſt ideas of virtue and true wiſdom, and thereby promoting

promoting his honour and his happineſs, the poetical parts of the Scripture have an infinite advantage above all others put together; and therefore one would think ſhould not be leſs worthy of a Chriſtian's ſtudy and application, than Homer and his followers. *Preface to Job.*

60. Rev. Dr. Jackson.

WOULD men apply their minds to ſtudy Scripture, and obſerve their own and others courſe of life, experience would teach them, that there is no eſtate on earth, nor human buſineſs in Chriſtendom this day on foot, but have a ruled caſe in Scripture for their iſſue and ſucceſs. *Works.*

61. Neiremberg.

I am perſuaded, that in the firſt chapter of Geneſis, Moſes taught more than all the Pagan philoſophers and interpreters of nature. *De orig. ſcript.*

62. Bishop Kidder.

WHOEVER looks into the laws of the Goſpel may ſoon diſcern that it is a bleſſed inſtitution.—It is full of weighty principles, of divine and heavenly precepts, of the moſt endearing and pathetic motives to obedience. It hath nothing trifling in it, but is fraught with a wiſdom that is divine; and is placed above the contempt and ſcorn of men. It commends itſelf to the conſciences of all that are ingenuous and inquiſitive; and no man will ſpeak evil of it, but a fool that underſtands it not, or the debauched ſinner who is condemned by its precepts, and denounced againſt by its ſevereſt menaces. *Demonſtration of the Meſſias.*

63. Rev. P. Allix.

THE articles which are contained in the Chriſtian religion are ſo ſolidly grounded upon proofs of fact, that I can aſſert with reaſon, that no facts in the world can be produced, ſo well eſtabliſhed as theſe are, which are the fundamentals of our religion. *Reflections upon the Books of the Holy Scriptures.*

64. David Hartley, M. A.

NO writers, from the invention of letters to the preſent times, are equal to the penmen of the books of the Old and New Teſtaments, in true excellence, utility, and dignity. *Obſervations on Man.*

65. Sir

65. Sir Robert Boyle,

THAT truly Chriſtian philoſopher, wrote a whole volume in praiſe of the ſtyle and language of Holy Scripture, and calls the Bible, That matchleſs book; and ſays, It needs but to be ſufficiently underſtood to be highly venerated; and that it is impoſſible we can ſtudy it too much, or eſteem it too highly. *Conſiderations on the Style of the Holy Scriptures.*

66. Bishop Conybeare.

THE ſtudy of hiſtory, and an acquaintance with what hath happened in former ages, is of ſingular uſe and advantage: and therefore the Sacred Writings, at the ſame time that they deliver to us the general rules of life, furniſh us with ſeveral memorable accounts, of the lives and actions of men. By theſe may we illuſtrate the particular rules of duty; and ſeeing either the ſucceſs or miſcarriages of former times, direct our behaviour in ſuch a manner, as to obtain the advantages in which they have gone before us, and avoid thoſe difficulties, with which they have encountered.

In this reſpect, the hiſtory of the Bible far exceeds the accounts delivered to us by other writers. The ſtories there recorded are ſhort, clear, and full; abounding with variety of uſeful matter, and ſuitable to all the circumſtances of life; inſomuch that there is hardly any one point, but what may be learnt by a due attention to the ſeveral hiſtories in the Sacred Writings. *Sermons.*

67 Rev. Meric Casaubon, D. D.

IT cannot be denied, that St. Paul in ſome kind, and upon ſome ſubject, is as eloquent as ever man was; not inferior to Demoſthenes or Oſchines, or any other anciently moſt admired. *Treatiſe of Enthuſiaſm*

68. Bishop Gibson.

THE account given in the New Teſtament of the redemption wrought for us by Chriſt, is, that his death made ſatisfaction to the divine juſtice for the ſins of mankind; that through faith in him, we are aſſured of the forgiveneſs of our ſins, on repentance and amendment; that being forgiven, we are juſtified in the ſight of God, and reconciled to him; that he who reconciles us to God, ſanctifies our hearts by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform God's will, and thereby continue in his favour; that for the ſame end he mediates

mediates and intercedes for us with God, while we are in this life; and, that thro' him, we have the promiſe of eternal life.

This is a ſhort view of the Chriſtian inſtitution, both in the ends it propoſes, and the means for attaining thoſe ends; from whence it appears, that the method which the Goſpel lays down for our ſalvation, is throughout a conſiſtent and uniform ſcheme, worthy of God, and contrived with the greateſt wiſdom and goodneſs, for the comfort and happineſs of man. *Excellency of the Goſpel Revelation.*

69. Dean Stanhope

WELCOME this holy religion, this bleſt and powerful book, to us dark, wretched mortals: a book pure and clear as the place it came from; wiſe and good, like the Spirit of him that formed it. And may this invaluable book be ever firſt and beſt in our eſteem, moſt in our thoughts, our ſtudies and deſires. May it be entirely writ and fairly copied in our memories and hearts, and ſhine bright in all our converſation. For this divine volume will ſanctify our ſtudies, enlarge our underſtandings, refine and exalt our ſouls, and teach us to excel others, and even daily to excel ourſelves. In much of all other knowledge there is much ſorrow; but this will make us wiſe with pleaſure and ſafety; not only wiſer for this world, but for heaven and eternal ſalvation.

Perfection and uſefulneſs of the Scriptures.

70. Rev. Matthew Henry.

WE call the Divine Writings, The Bible, by way of eminency, becauſe it is incomparably the beſt book that ever was written, the book of books, ſhining like the ſun in the firmament of learning; other valuable and uſeful books, like the moon and ſtars, borrowing their light from it.

Preface to his Expoſition of the Bible.

71. Mr. Philip Bedingfeld.

THE loftineſs and magnificence of the prophet Iſaiah's ſtyle; the nobleneſs of his metaphors and illuſtrations; his inimitable and divine eloquence, together with his wonderful diſcovery of things to come, conſpire to ſhew him a man altogether extraordinary. *Paraphraſe on Iſaiah.*

72. Mr. John Clutterbuck.

IN the book of Pſalms we find diſcouragements to all vice, incitements to all virtue, directions for our behaviour in all

ſtates and conditions of life, and remedies for all the diſtempers of our ſouls. No book in the world is to be compared with it for theſe purpoſes *Preface to his Book of Pſalms.*

73. Rev. Dr. Trapp.

IF we make a right uſe of our reaſon, we cannot but obſerve the divine plenitude or fulneſs, the wonderful depth and richneſs, the harmony and beauty of the Holy Scriptures, eſpecially the prophetical part of them. *On the Goſpels.*

74. Rev. Thomas Watson.

HAD I the tongue of angels, I could not ſufficiently ſet forth the excellency of Scripture. *Body of Divinity.*

75. Rev. Stephen Charnock.

THERE is not any particular genius in man but may find ſomething ſuitable to win upon him in the Revealed Will of God. There is a ſtrain of reaſon to ſatisfy the rational; of eloquence, to gratify the fanciful; of intereſt, to allure the ſelfiſh; of terror, to ſtartle the obſtinate. As a ſkilful angler ſtores himſelf with baits, according to the appetites of the ſorts of fiſh he intends to catch; ſo in the Word of God there are varieties of baits, according to the varieties of the inclinations of men; threatenings to work upon fear; promiſes to work upon love; examples of holy men ſet out for imitation. *Works.*

76. Mr. Samuel Torchel.

HOLY Scripture is the greateſt treaſury of heavenly wiſdom and ſcience, that the whole earth hath in keeping; and of which we cannot put too high a value. Let me add ſome juſt characters of the whole Bible, and the particular books; ſome of which I have gathered from the ancients and others, but many of them holding out their own evidence.

THE WHOLE BIBLE.

The ſoul's food, ſo Athanaſius.
The common ſhop of ſoul phyſic; ſo Baſil.
The invariable rule of truth; ſo Irœneus.
The divine balance; ſo Auguſtin.

1. *In reſpect of the dictating of it; it is,*
The library of the Holy Ghoſt.
Chriſt's aphoriſms.

The

The acts and ſtatutes of the higheſt parliament.
God's mint-houſe.
The ſignet of God's right-hand.
The epiſtle of God to the world.
The court-roll of God's fines and amercements.

2. *In reſpect of its worth, it is,*

A ſtately palace.
A fruitful field.
The true Heſperides.
The ineſtimable pearl.

3. *In reſpect of its uſe; it is,*

The touch-ſtone of error.
The key of the ſheep-fold.
The glaſs of life.
The weather-glaſs.
The Chriſtian's magazine.
The armory.

PARTICULAR BOOKS.

Geneſis. The cabinet of greateſt antiquities.
Exodus. The ſacred rule of law and juſtice.
Leviticus. The holy ephemerides.
Numbers. God's arithmetic.
Deuteronomy. The faithful monitor.
Joſhua. The holy war.
Judges. The mirror of magiſtrates and tyrants.
Ruth. The picture of a pious widow.
Samuel. Kings. Sacred politics.
Chronicles. The holy annals.
Ezra. Nehemiah. An idea of church and ſtate reformation.
Eſther. The great example of God's providence.
Job. The ſchool of patience.
Pſalms. The ſoul's ſoliloquies. The little bible. The anatomy of conſcience. The roſe-garden. The pearl iſland.
Proverbs. Divine ethics, politics, œconomics.
Eccleſiaſtes. Experience of the creature's vanity.
Canticles. The myſtical bride-ſong.
Iſaiah. The evangelical prophet.
Jeremiah. The pathetical mourner.

Lamentations. The voice of the turtle.
Ezekiel. Urim and Thummim in Babylon.
Daniel. The apocalypſe of the Old Teſtament.
Hoſea. Sermons of faith and repentance.
Joel. The thunderer.
Amos. The plain-dealing reprover.
Obadiah. Edom's whip.
Jonah. The prophetical apoſtle of the Gentiles.
Micah. The wiſe men's ſtar.
Nahum. The ſcourge of Aſſur.
Habakkuk. The comforter of captives.
Zephaniah. Preparation for ſad times.
Haggai. Zeal for God's houſe.
Zachariah. Prophetic hieroglyphics.
Malachi. The bound-ſtone of the two Teſtaments.
Matthew. } The four trumpeters proclaiming the title of
Mark. } the great king.
Luke. }
John. }
Acts. The treaſury of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory.
Romans. } The principles of Chriſtian faith. The catholic catechiſm.
1. Corinthians. Apoſtolical reformation.
2. Corinthians. A pattern of juſt apologies.
Galatians. The epiſtle to the Romans epitomized.
Epheſians. The opening of the great myſtery of ſalvation.
Philippians. An apoſtolical parœneſis.
Coloſſians. A brief rule of faith and manners.
1. Theſſalonians. Practice theology.
2. Theſſalonians. Polemic theology.
1. Timothy. The ſacred paſtoral.
2. Timothy. The title of the Scripture pleaded.
Titus. Agenda, or church-orders.
Philemon. The rule of relations.
Hebrews. A commentary upon Leviticus.
James. The golden alphabet of a Chriſtian.
1. Peter. A theological ſummary.
2. Peter. The encouragement of a ſpiritual warrior.
1. John. The glaſs of love, or charity.
2. John. The pattern of a pious matron.
3. John. The mirror of hoſpitality.
Jude. A picture of falſe prophets.
Revelation. } Daniel redivivus. The opening of the treaſury of future events.

Phœnix.

77. ARCH-

77. Archbishop Tillotson.

THE Goſpel hath not only declared the thing to us, that there ſhall be a future judgment; but for our farther aſſurance and ſatisfaction in this matter, and that theſe things might make a deeper impreſſion, and ſtrike a great awe upon our minds, God hath been pleaſed to reveal it to us with a great many particular circumſtances, ſuch as are very worthy of God, and apt to fill the minds of men with dread and aſtoniſhment, as often as they think of them.

For the circumſtances of this judgment revealed to us in the Goſpel, are very ſolemn and awful, not ſuch as the wild fancies and imaginations of men would have been apt to have dreſſed it up withal, ſuch as the fictions of the Heathen poets, and the extravagancies of Mahomet; which, though they be terrible enough, yet they are withal ridiculous; but ſuch as are every way becoming the majeſty of the great God, and the ſolemnity of the great day, and ſuch as do not in the leaſt ſavour of the vanity and lightneſs of human imagination. ——What more magnificent and ſuitable to this glorious ſolemnity, than the awful circumſtances, which the Scripture mentions of the appearance of this great judge; that he ſhall deſcend from heaven in great majeſty and glory, attended with his mighty angels, and that every eye ſhall ſee him; that upon his appearance, the frame of nature ſhall be in an agony, and the whole world in flame and confuſion; that thoſe great and glorious bodies of light ſhall be obſcured, and by degrees extinguiſhed: the ſun ſhall be darkened, and the moon turned into blood, and all the powers of heaven ſhaken; yea, the heavens themſelves ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements diſſolve with fervent heat; the earth alſo, and all the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up. I appeal to any man, whether this be not a repreſentation of things very proper and ſuitable to that great day, wherein he who made the world ſhall come to judge it? And whether the wit of man ever deviſed any thing ſo awful, and ſo agreeable to the majeſty of God, and the ſolemn judgment of the whole world? The deſcription which Virgil makes of the judgment of another world, of the elyſian fields, and the infernal regions, how infinitely do they fall ſhort of the majeſty of the Holy Scripture, and the deſcription there made of heaven and hell, and of the great and terrible day of the Lord! So that in compariſon they are childiſh and trifling; and yet perhaps he had the moſt regular and moſt governed imagination of any man that ever lived, and ob-

ſerved the greateſt decorum in his characters and deſcriptions. But who can declare the great things of God, but he to whom God ſhall reveal them! *Works.*

78. Rev. William Lowth, B. D.

THE Bible contains the moſt ancient records which are extant in the world, and informs us of the moſt remarkable occurrences that ever happened in it.—It inſtructs us in ſuch ſublime truths, as are ſufficient to raiſe admiration in the greateſt underſtandings, and yet delivers them in ſuch plainneſs and ſimplicity of expreſſion, as is proper at once to inform, and to affect the meaneſt capacities.—Although the ſeveral books of it were written in diſtant ages, by perſons of different qualities, conditions and intereſts, with great variety both of matter and manner of expreſſion; yet they all agree in teaching the ſame fundamental truth, and promoting one and the ſame excellent deſign, namely, the glory of God, and the eternal happineſs of men. Theſe holy books have ſtood the teſt of the moſt inquiſitive men in all ages, and bore up againſt the injuries of time itſelf, that devours all things. Jews and Gentiles, as well as Chriſtians, have ſome way or other given teſtimony to their truth.—No body ever thoroughly ſearched into them, and lived up to their directions, that ever found cauſe to repent them of their pains. On the contrary, the wiſeſt and beſt of men, the more they have ſtudied them, the more cauſe they have found to admire them, and ſtill the greater comfort and ſatisfaction they have felt, by being devoutly exerciſed in them.

Directions for profitably reading of the Holy Scriptures.

79. Rev. Samuel D'Oyley, M. A.

IN the Goſpel we ſee nothing defective, nothing that has the leaſt tincture of human weakneſs and imperfection. Never was there opened ſo eloquent a mouth, and all who heard him might with reaſon cry out, "Never man ſpeak "like this man."——What an infinite and inexhauſtible ſpring of beauties, contributing to the advancement of eloquence, are the Holy Scriptures? Had the Ciceroes and the Demoſtheneſes had the opportunities of borrowing from hence, would not their diſcourſes, think you, have abounded with beauties ſtill more perfect, than thoſe, which after ſo many ages we continue to admire?——I ſee nothing more proper to give your ſtyle that ſublimity, which is worthy of God's Word, than the reading of the prophets. In theſe divine

divine orators, who were warmed and tranſported with the Holy Spirit, we find ſuch turns, figures, and expreſſions, as the profane could never arrive at.

Chriſtian Eloquence in Theory and Practice.

80. Earl of Nottingham.

THE Scriptures we are ſure are the Word of God.

Anſwer to Whiſton.

81. Rev. William. Outram, D. D.

IF we conſider the matters of practice which are commanded in the Goſpel, they are ſo ſuitable to our reaſon, they are ſo plainly good for the world, they do ſo evidently deſign our happineſs, they are every way ſo becoming God, that it can be nothing but the prejudice of men's unreaſonable luſts and paſſions, that can perſuade any man in the world, that the laws preſcribed us in the Goſpel, are not the laws of the living God. *Sermons.*

82. Rev. Robert Jenkin, M. A.

ALL the cavils that are made againſt the ſtyle of Scripture, proceed from ignorance of antiquity, and from raſhneſs in judging of ancient times, and foreign countries by our own. Whoever would either delight or profit, muſt ſpeak and act in ſome meaſure according to the genius of the people with whom he converſes. And if we will but read the Scriptures with the ſame candor and reſpect with which we read the writings of human authors, and conſider the times, and perſons, and the occaſions upon which they were written, there is nothing that can ſeem harſh, or improper, either in the words or actions of the perſons inſpired. If we will but obſerve the circumſtances in which the ſeveral parts of the Scriptures were written, we ſhall find cauſe to admire the ſimplicity, and plainneſs, and modeſty of the ſtyle of the Scriptures.

In many books of the Scriptures the ſtyle is ſublime and elegant beyond any thing to be found in other writings, and yet as natural as if it could not otherwiſe have been expreſſed; and this is the true excellency of ſtyle, that it be plain and natural, and yet eloquent. Longinius gives a high character of Moſes's ſtyle in a book, the deſign whereof is to repreſent the moſt perfect idea of eloquence. Indeed ſuch is the fitneſs both in verſe and proſe of the words and ſtyle of Moſes, ſo admirably ſuited to the ſubject upon all occaſions,

occaſions, as if he had been to ſubſcribe a pattern of true eloquence, as well as to enact laws. Henry Stephens has obſerved, that there is a great reſemblance in Herodotus to the ſtyle of the Scriptures. Herodotus had Homer in his view throughout his hiſtory, and Homer's expreſſions are the ſame with thoſe uſed in the Scriptures, in many inſtances.—Grotius compares Iſaiah to Demoſthenes, a ſublime, but a moſt natural and judicious writer. The ſame author compares Ezekiel to Homer for the beauty and nobleneſs of his ſtyle. Mr. Cowley compares the prophets, eſpecially Iſaiah, to Pindar. And of David he obſerves, that the beſt tranſlators have been ſo far from doing honour, or at leaſt juſtice to that divine poet, that methinks, ſays he, they revile him worſe than Shimei. And Buchanan himſelf comes, in his opinion, no leſs ſhort of David, than his country does of Judea. Yet Iſaiah, and the reſt of the prophets and the pſalms are tranſlated into our language word for word, as far as it is poſſible for one language to be thus rendered into another. And notwithſtanding all the differences of time, and place, and cuſtoms, and perſons, no ſenſible man reads them in the Engliſh tongue, but he muſt acknowledge, that their ſtyle, with all their diſadvantages, is truly great and excellent. Whereas there are none of the Heathen authors, that are ſo much eſteemed, which, if they were literally tranſlated, as the Scriptures are, would bear the reading, but they would appear ridiculous and impoſſible to be underſtood. For the ſpirit, and genius, and peculiar idioms of moſt tongues being ſo very different one from another, and depending upon the cuſtoms and humours of the people of ſeveral countries, it was the evident care and providence of God, to cauſe great part of the Scriptures, though written by ſo many different men, and at ſuch diſtant times, and ſome books of them in the earlier ages of the world, to be penned in ſuch a language and ſtyle, as is moſt natural, and which, without any want of art, exceeds the moſt artificial and ſtudied eloquence in ſublime and noble thoughts and expreſſions, and in all the beauties and ornaments of ſpeech: and yet, which in all the neceſſary points of ſalvation is eaſy to be underſtood, under all the diſadvantages of a verbal tranſlation, by men of ordinary capacities, who live ſo many ages after. The propecies of Iſaiah cannot be read, or heard, or thought of without being moved by them: with what life then, with what zeal and flame muſt they have been delivered.

Reaſonableneſs and Certainty of the Chriſtian Religion.

83. Rev.

83. Rev. John Smith, M. A.

THE doctrine of Chriſtian religion propounded to us by our Saviour and his apoſtles, is ſet forth with ſo much ſimplicity, and yet with ſo much repugnancy to that degenerate genius and ſpirit that rules in the hearts and lives of men, that we may truly ſay of it, it is both the eaſieſt and the hardeſt thing.—There is a divine and ſpiritual ſenſe which only is able to converſe internally with the life and ſoul of divine truth, as mixing and uniting itſelf with it; while vulgar minds behold only the body and outſide of it.

Select Diſcourſes.

84. Rev. Dr. Clark, Rector of St. James!

THE Goſpel of Chriſt, as taught by himſelf and his apoſtles, in its original plainneſs and purity, is a doctrine of truth and ſimplicity, a doctrine ſo eaſy to be underſtood, ſo reaſonable to be practiſed, ſo agreeable to the natural notions and reaſon of mankind, ſo beneficial in its effects, if men were really governed by it; teaching them nothing but the worſhip of the true God, through the mediation of Chriſt; and towards each other, juſtice, righteouſneſs, meekneſs, charity, and univerſal good-will; in expectation of a future judgment, and of a laſting ſtate of happineſs in a better world, for them who love God and keep his commandments; this doctrine of Chriſt, I ſay, in its native ſimplicity and purity, is ſo reaſonable, ſo excellent, and of ſuch irreſiſtible evidence, that had it never been corrupted by ſuperſtitions from within, it never could have been oppoſed by power from without; but it muſt of neceſſity have captivated mankind to the obedience of faith; 'till the knowledge of the Lord had filled the earth, as the waters cover the ſea.——

Whatever difficulties there may be in ſome of the hiſtorical, or prophetical, or controverſial parts of the books of Scripture, yet as to the practical part, the duties required of a Chriſtian in order to ſalvation, there is no man that ever read the ſermons of Chriſt and his apoſtles, or ever heard them read, but underſtood perfectly well what our Saviour meant by commanding us to worſhip the one true God of nature, the Author and Lord of the univerſe, and to do to all men as we would they ſhould do to us; and that, "denying ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world;" in expectation of being righteouſly and impartially adjudged, according

according to our works, to a ſtate of happineſs or miſery in the world to come; by our Saviour himſelf, our merciful and compaſſionate judge. There never was any man in the Chriſtian world, but felt the reaſonableneſs and importance of this doctrine; and, whenever theſe things have been repeated to him, was immediately conſcious to himſelf, either of having followed or tranſgreſſed theſe precepts. *Sermons.*

85. Cardinal Bellarmin,

WAS a very zealous communicant in the church of Rome, a warm champion, and too eager a diſputant and aſſerter of the papal monarchy: but then he was the glory and ornament of his own church; I might have ſaid, of the age he lived in, for his great learning, and eminent piety.

The firſt is demonſtrable from his noble writings; the latter from his life and death. While he lived, he was perpetually employed in doing good, and promoting the intereſts of learning and religion. He reſigned the archbiſhopric of Capua, when other public affairs would not ſuffer him to diſcharge his paſtoral office in that ſee; at which that whole dioceſe were inexpreſſibly afflicted. He died happily and glorioufly, to his laſt moments declaring, that he expected ſalvation only from the mercies of God, through the merits and interceſſion of his eternal Son, the ſole mediator between God and man.

This great and admirable perſon plainly and fully determines for the fulneſs of Holy Scriptures, notwithſtanding the miſtakes and blunders of ſcribes, and all the difference and variety of various readings. Theſe are his words: Varietates iſtæ non ſunt tanti momenti, ut in iis, quæ ad fidem et mores pertinent, Sanctæ Scripturæ integritas deſideretur: plerumque enim differentia eſt in dictionibus quibuſdam poſita, quæ ſenſum aut parum, aut nihil mutant.

Sacred Claſſics.

86. Rev. Wm. Gurnal, M. A.

THE very matter contained in the Holy Scriptures demonſtrates their heavenly deſcent, it being ſuch as cannot be the birth or product of a creature.—Conſider the hiſtorical, prophetical, doctrinal, and preceptive, with its appendices of promiſes and threatenings to enforce the ſame; and ſee if a print of a Deity be not ſtamped upon them all.

Chriſtian Armour.

87. Arch-

87. Archbishop Sharp.

WE are ſure that Moſes and the prophets, Chriſt and his apoſtles, taught nothing but the truth of God, he having ſo publicly and ſo convincingly ſet his ſeal to all their doctrines. And we are ſure likewiſe, that the Scripture contains nothing in it but what was taught by them, and conſequently muſt be the truth of God alſo. *Sermons.*

88. The Rev. John Jennings.

THE religion of Jeſus comes from God, and is a moſt glorious diſpenſation, not only for the ſublime wonders of its doctrine, and the divine purity of its precepts, but that it excels all other religions in the ſtrength of its motives, the richneſs of its promiſes, and the ſufficiency of the divine aid attending it. *Sermons on preaching Chriſt.*

89. Dr. Augustus Hermannus Tranck.

THE Scriptures are undoubtedly far preferable to any other books. *Letter on the moſt uſeful way of preaching.*

90. Rev. Philip Limberch, S. T. P.

WHATSOEVER is neceſſary for us to know, believe, hope for and practice in order to ſalvation, is fully contained in the Holy Scripture. *Body of Divinity.*

91. Rev. Sam. Newton, D. D.

THE Sacred Writings of the Old Teſtament teach us to form the moſt juſt and noble ideas of God.—The writings of the prophets every where abound with the ſublimeſt deſcriptions and repreſentations of the Deity.—An admirable wiſdom, goodneſs, and purity, ſhone in the whole conduct and character of the great author of the Goſpel.—Never was there a character ſo perfect, ſo godlike, venerable and amiable. *Preface to his Bible.*

92. Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, in France.

IN the perſon of our Saviour every thing is conſiſtent; his life, his doctrine, his miracles. The ſame truth ſhines through the whole; every thing concurs to exhibit in him the maſter of mankind, and pattern of perfection.—

Who would not admire the condeſcenſion with which he tempers the ſublimity of his doctrine? It is milk for babes, and at the ſame time meat for the ſtrong. *Univerſal Hiſtory.*

93. Robert

93. Robert Millar, M. A.

AS the Scriptures are revealed by God, ſo they are a revelation worthy of him; they are ſuch as were fit for a gracious God to give for the good of his church and people in all ages; they anſwer all the purpoſes that are requiſite in a divine revelation. This demonſtrates not only the truth, but alſo the excellency of our holy religion; and indeed theſe two go hand in hand together.—The Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament are a full ſtorehouſe, containing all things neceſſary for our conduct and aſſiſtance in our way to heaven, as a book inſpired and ſent of God.

Hiſtory of the Propagation of Chriſtianity.

94. Mr. Alexander Cruden, M. A.

THE incomparable excellencies of the Bible are above all commendation, and will be in the higheſt eſteem by all the true members of the church of God, whoſe faith, hope, and comfort are built upon theſe Divine Oracles.

Preface to his Concordance.

95. Bishop Berkley.

IF I durſt follow my own judgment, I ſhould be apt to think there are noble beauties in the ſtyle of the Holy Scripture: in the narrative parts a ſtrain ſo ſimple and unaffected; in the devotional and prophetic, ſo animated and ſublime; and in the doctrinal parts, ſuch an air of dignity and authority as ſeems to ſpeak their original divine.

Minute Philoſopher.

96. John Jebb, D. M.

THE Bible is a book which contains whatever is profitable for doctrine, for inſtruction, and reproof; and which, among its other epithets and titles deſcriptive of its worth, may juſtly be ſtiled, in the words of the immortal Chillingworth, "The religion of Proteſtants."

Account of Theological Lectures.

97. Rev. Thomas Jones, M. A.

IT is a material defect in all the ſyſtems of morality which have been left us by the Heathen ſages, that however beautiful and lovely they have painted virtue to the eyes of men, repreſenting her precepts as very conducive to their trueſt intereſts; yet how to perform that which is good they find

find not. They convince us, it is true, of the reasonableness and necessity of moral goodness, but furnish us with no power or principle, whereby to reduce their precepts into practice. They leave mankind the same poor, helpless creatures they find them, convinced indeed, that universal obedience is justly due from a creature to his Creator, enamoured with the charms of virtue, making many a feeble effort towards the practice of it, but so tied and bound with the chains of a corrupt and depraved nature, that when they would do good, evil is present with them.

Nor are the schemes proposed to us by the sons of infidelity in our own times, less discouraging. They have nothing to offer in exchange for the Gospel of Christ, that will at all secure the glory of God, or produce a moral change in the hearts of men. That evil bias, which our natures have received continues still an insuperable difficulty, how refined and well digested soever their systems. To give mankind the power as well as the inclination to please God, and to serve him acceptably, is the sole prerogative of his own revelation. What all the systems of men could not accomplish, the Christian dispensation hath most happily effected. That blessed book, the Bible, not only acquaints us with our natural sinfulness and misery, but also points out to us the means and method of recovery; shews us on whom our help is laid, and directs us where to apply for strength and grace, to carry every good purpose into execution. Real Christianity inspires the soul with a vital principle, whereby the practice of virtue and goodness, so hard to nature, is made easy and delightful. *Works.*

98. Rev. William Dodd, L. L. D.

WHAT is the great aim and design of the Christian system? For what purpose all this labour of love; all this anxiety of omnipotence itself? Solely for the perfection of the human mind, solely for the spiritual improvement of mankind; the present virtue and comfort, the future perfection and happiness of all who believe and embrace this system. *Sermons to young Men.*

99. Nicholas Robinson, M. D.

THE Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a system of the human nature the grandest, the most extensive and complete, that ever was divulged to mankind since the

the foundations of nature; and ſuch a ſcheme as the greateſt wits could never diſcover, unaſſiſted by the ſpirit of God.
Chriſtian Philoſopher.

100. Rev. George Watson, M. A.

WHAT are all the celebrated productions of Grecian or Roman wit when put into the balance with ſuch compoſitions as the Pſalms? The beſt of thoſe upon trial will be found greatly wanting. The diſproportion between them, like the diſtance between their authors, is infinite; and they will always ſtand diſtinguiſhed, thoſe by the alloy of human frailty that runs through every part of them, theſe by their abſolute, divine purity.—Indeed, to ſay the Sacred Writings far ſurpaſs human, is ſaying little of writings dictated by God himſelf; nor ſhould I have mentioned it, but for the concluſion I intended to draw from it; which is, that if the ſuperiority be ſo apparently theirs, ſo undoubtedly ought to be the preference.—The ſubjects the Bible treats of are the moſt intereſting, the ſublimeſt that can be conceived, the inſtruction it contains full and ſatisfactory, the compoſition and ſtyle of it maſterly beyond all compariſon, and the pleaſure the reading of it affords rational, pure and laſting, ſuch as nothing but the joy it is intended to lead us to can excel. *Sermon, Chriſt the Light of the World.*

101. James Howel, M. A.

THE Holy Scriptures are the immediate book of God, containing all manner of knowledge that is uſeful and entertaining.—In ſhort, all manner of learning, arts and ſciences are therein ſo exactly diſpoſed by the Holy Ghoſt, that they are a magazine accommodated to all places, times and perſons, in the greateſt emergencies. *Hiſtory of the Bible.*

102. Rev. John Mason, M. A.

THE Word of God muſt be nearer to us than our friends, dearer to us than our lives, ſweeter to us than our liberty, and pleaſanter to us than all earthly comforts.

All arguments againſt the Word of God are fallacies; all conceits againſt the Word are deluſions; all deriſion againſt the Word is folly; and all oppoſition againſt the Word is madneſs. *Remains.*

103. Mrs. Trimmer.

A beautiful ſimplicity of language and ſublimity of ſentiment, diſtinguiſhes the Sacred Volume, as the work of inſpired writers. *Sacred Hiſtory,*

104. Rev. Samuel Ogden, D.D.

AMIDST innumerable and undeniable marks of divine wisdom and goodness, we find in the world confusion, sin and misery. Revelation informs us that it was not created in this disordered state; that a great change has taken place in it, occasioned by the fault of a human pair, its first inhabitants; by which means their posterity are fallen into a worse condition than had been originally prepared for them by their gracious Creator. Death, which God made not, took possession of the world, and guilt and pain have a large dominion in it; and might have stretched their empire to a dreadful extent, had not a person of divine nature and attributes, united, in a manner incomprehensible, with the supreme Father of all things, been pleased, by the Father's appointment, and out of his own inconceivable goodness, to interpose in our behalf.

He came down from heaven; and still continuing to be one with the supreme Nature, he assumed ours. He became man: he lived upon earth, did good, endured pain, preached piety and righteousness, worked wonders, suffered death as a malefactor, restored himself to life, returned to heaven, and now governs his church by the operation of yet another divine person, who with him and the Father, is one God, blessed for ever.

All this, you seem to say, is strange and wonderful. It is so. The divine existence, eternity, infinity, which yet reason obliges us to acknowledge, is very wonderful. The divine government of the world, which we experience, is in many instances exceedingly astonishing. The world is filled with wonders; and if you attempt ignorantly to remove them, they become greater. If you deny what is strange, you must admit what is impossible. *Sermons.*

105. Monsieur Leonard Euler.

WAS one of the greatest philosophers, and best of men, that science, religion, and virtue, have exhibited in any age; in order to shew of what intellectual and moral improvement human nature is susceptible.

His probity and integrity were pure and incorruptible; and the honest indignation with which he inveighed against every instance of perfidy and injustice, was singularly remarkable. His piety was rational and sincere; his devotion was fervent: he was intimately persuaded of the truth of Christianity;

Chriſtianity; felt its importance to the dignity and happineſs of human nature; and looked upon its detractors and oppoſers as the moſt pernicious enemies of man.

Fuſs' Eulogy, and Monthly Review.

106. AUGUST GOTTLIEB SPANGENBERG, A GERMAN.

THERE is a treaſure of the eternal truths of God in the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament.—Who ever duly conſiders the contents of the Old and new Teſtament, muſt value the Bible highly, and bleſs and praiſe God with his whole heart, that it has been preſerved unto our times.—We find the whole counſel of God concerning our ſalvation in the Holy Scriptures,—There appears in the ſtyle, throughout all the ſcriptures, of the Old and New Teſtament, a very peculiar ſimplicity.—The Holy Scripture, notwithſtanding its ſimplicity, even in reference to its ſtyle, doth evince itſelf to be a divine book. Where, for inſtance, is there an hiſtorian, who has related ſo much, and things of ſuch importance, in ſo few and ſuch artleſs words as John? Where has any one teſtified, in ſuch an incomparable manner, concerning the majeſty of God, and other ſubjects thereunto appertaining, as Iſaiah has done? But upon this ſubject alone a volume might be written, if we would treat it in its extent.

Expoſition of the doctrine of the united Brethren, paſſim.

107. BISHOP WARBURTON.

NO wonder, that a religion of divine original, conſtituted to ſerve many admirable ends of providence, ſhould be full of ſuch complicated myſteries, as filled the learned apoſtle with admiration. On the other hand, this religion being for the uſe of man, we need not deſpair, when we have attained a proper knowledge of man's nature, and the dependencies thereon, of making ſtill growing diſcoveries, on the internal evidence of the divinity of its original.

Te Bible is, by far, the oldeſt book in the world.

Divine Legation of Moſes.

108. BISHOP NICHOLSON.

PRECEPTS of life and worſhip, we read in Moſes; examples of virtue and piety, in the hiſtories: predictions, promiſes and threats, in the prophets; the plain and true doctrine

doctrine of ſalvation, in the Evangeliſts and Epiſtles. But the book of Pſalms is ſo compoſed, that it comprehends whatſoever may be uſeful in all theſe: prophecies we find here to ſettle, promiſes to ſtay the wavering ſpirit; many ſtories to delight a curious reader; examples of virtue enough and enough; rules for practice good ſtore; dehortations from vice; exhortations to virtue; judgments brought on the wicked; mercies multiplied upon the righteous: in a word, a whole treaſury of divine truth.

David's Harp ſtrung and tuned.

109. TRANSLATORS OF THE BIBLE.

IF we are ignorant, the Scriptures will inſtruct us; if out of the way, they will bring us home; if out of order, they will reform us; if in heavineſs, comfort us; if dull, quicken us; if cold, inflame us.

If the Scriptures be ſo full and ſo perfect, how can we excuſe ourſelves of negligence, if we do not ſtudy them? Of curioſity, if we be not content with them? Men talk much of *ειρεβιωνη*, how many ſweet and goodly things it had hanging on it; of panaces the herb, that it was good for all diſeaſes; of catholicon the drug, that it is inſtead of all purges; of Vulcan's armour, that it was an armour of proof againſt all thruſts and all blows. Well, that which they falſely or vainly attributed to theſe things for bodily good; we may juſtly and with full meaſure aſcribe unto the Scripture, for ſpiritual. It is not only an armour, but alſo a whole armoury of weapons, both offenſive and defenſive; whereby we may ſave ourſelves, and put the enemy to flight. It is not an herb, but a tree, or rather a whole paradiſe of trees of life, which bring forth fruit every month, and the fruit thereof is for meat, and the leaves for medicines. It is not a pot of manna, or a cruſe of oil, which were for memory only, or for a meal's meat or two; but, as it were, a ſhower of heavenly bread ſufficient for a whole hoſt, be it never ſo great, and, as it were, a whole cellar full of oil veſſels, whereby all our neceſſities may be provided for: and our debts diſcharged. In a word, it is a panary of wholeſome food againſt fenowed traditions; a phyſician's ſhop of preſervatives againſt poiſoned hereſies; a pandect of profitable laws againſt rebellious ſpirits; a treaſury of moſt coſtly jewels, againſt beggarly rudiments; finally, a fountain of moſt pure water ſpringing up to everlaſting life. And what marvel? The original thereof being from heaven, not from earth;

the author being God, not man; the inditer, the Holy Spirit, not the wit of the apoſtles or prophets; the penmen ſuch as were ſanctified from the womb, and endued with a principal portion of God's Spirit; the matter verity, piety, purity, uprightneſs; the form, God's Word, God's Teſtimony, God's Oracles, the Word of Truth, the Word of Salvation; the effects, light of underſtanding, ſtableneſs of perſuaſion, repentance from dead works, newneſs of life, holineſs, peace, joy in the Holy Ghoſt; laſtly, the end and reward of the ſtudy thereof, fellowſhip with the ſaints, participation of the heavenly nature, fruition of an inheritance immortal, undefiled, and that never ſhall fade away. Happy is the man that delighteth in the Scripture, and thrice happy that meditateth in it day and night.

Preface to the Bible.

110. Rev. Dr. Whichcote.

LET Chriſtianity have its due value and eſteem, ſuch as the principles of it do deſerve. There is no other inſtitution that ever was ſet on foot in the world, that doth ſo much good in the world, or doth ſo much poliſh the minds and ſpirits of men, as this inſtitution of Chriſtian religion doth.

A true Goſpel ſpirit doth excel in meekneſs, gentleneſs, modeſty, humility, patience, forbearance; and theſe are eminent endowments, and mightily qualify men to live in the world. This is that which makes men bear univerſal love and good-will; and overcomes evil with good, teacheth men to return courteſies for injuries. This, I dare ſay, had we a man among us that we could produce, that did live an exact Goſpel life; had we a man that was really goſpelized; were the Goſpel a life, a ſoul, and a ſpirit to him,—he would be the moſt lovely, uſeful perſon under heaven; this man for every thing that is excellent, and worthy, and uſeful, would be miraculous and extraordinary in the eyes of all men in the world. Chriſtianity would be recommended to the world by his ſpirit and converſation.

Works.

111. Rev. Wetenhall Wilks, A.M.

THE hiſtorical part of the Old Teſtament wonderfully diſplays the divine energy in creating, preſerving, and diſpoſing of all things. The prophetic part of it gives glorious promiſes of the Meſſiah, which have all been fully completed.

The

The inſtructive part of it is profitable for doctrine, for correction, &c. and teaches us many things that coincide with the precepts of the Goſpel. In the Goſpels there is a full account of the myſtery of our redemption. In the Epiſtles there is a great variety of Chriſtian duties and inſtructions, for the edification of the church. *Syſtem of uſeful Inſtructions.*

112. Rev. David Jennings, D. D.

THE laws and rules of duty which the Bible contains are all worthy of God, as they are all agreeable to the perfections of his nature. They are rules of purity, ſuitable to the holineſs of God; they are rules of righteouſneſs, agreeable to his juſtice; they are laws of kindneſs, ſuitable to his goodneſs.——

The doctrines of the Bible are every way worthy of God. They no way contradict, but very much improve and heighten our rational ideas of his nature and perfections: they clearly ſhew us how the honour of the divine juſtice and holineſs are fully ſecured, while ſinners are pardoned and received to his mercy; and how the ſeemingly oppoſite claims of the ſeveral attributes of God are all reconciled in our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. In ſhort, if we compare both the precepts and doctrines of the Bible, with all the notions of God which reaſon can give us, ſure we muſt own, that it looks very like a tranſcript of the divine Mind, for it is every way worthy of God. It is juſt ſuch a revelation as we wanted, and ſuch as might reaſonably be expected that God would give to men. It is highly probable therefore, to ſay no more, that it is indeed a revelation from God.

Appeal to Reaſon and Common Senſe.

113. Rev. Jonathan Swift, D. D.

THE ſyſtem of morality to be gathered out of the writings or ſayings of the Heathen philoſophers, falls undoubtedly very ſhort of that delivered in the Goſpel, and wants, beſides, the divine ſanction which our Saviour gave to his.—But I am deceived, if a better comment could be any where collected upon the moral part of the Goſpel, than from the writings of theſe excellent men.

Letter to a Young Clergyman.

114. Archbishop Leighton.

SANCTÆ Scripturæ incomparabilis ſublimitas, et puritas, nam et myſteria tam alta, et præcepta tam ſancta fru-

ſtra alibi quæras. Stili inimitabilis, et divina plane majeſtas mira cum ſimplicitate temperata. Nec vox hominum ſonat, ſed tota quanta, quanta eſt, grandius quiddam ore mortali.

Prælectiones.

115. Rev. John Goodman, D. D.

THE Holy Scripture is that proviſion God hath thought fit to make for our weakneſs and ignorance. This is the tranſcript of the Divine Mind, a light that ſhineth in darkneſs, and by which divine wiſdom deſigned to guide us through all the mazes of diſputes, and to reſolve us of all the important queſtions that concern our eternal intereſts; and this is that which he hath ſo fitted to our uſe, that whoſoever conſults it with a mind free from prejudices and anticipation, he ſhall not miſs his way to heaven.

Old Religion.

116. Rev. Matthew Poole,

EVERY reaſonable man finds the Holy Scriptures of ſo venerable antiquity, and diſcerneth in them ſuch ſtamps of divinity, in the majeſty of their ſtyle, the purity of the matter, the ſublimeneſs and ſpirituality of the propoſitions contained in them, the ſelf-denial of the penmen, the heavenlineſs of the ſcope, and the end of thoſe Sacred Writings, the harmony of the parts, the ſeal of miracles, and principally in the mighty power and efficacy of them upon the ſouls and conſciences of multitudes, both for conviction, and for ſupport, and conſolation, that he eaſily concludes, "this "is the voice of God and not of man."

Preface to Annotations on the Bible.

117. Rev. Benjamin Kennicott, D.D.

AMONGST all the ancient books in the world, the Holy Bible ſtands unrivalled in its antiquity as well as its importance.

Hiſtory of the Hebrew Text.

118. Matthew Prior, Esq.

THE noble images and reflections, the profound reaſonings upon human actions, and excellent precepts for the government of life, which are found in the Proverbs, Eccleſiaſtes, and other books, commonly attributed to Solomon, afford ſubjects for finer poems in every kind, than have, I think, yet appeared in the Greek, Latin, or any modern language.

Preface to Solomon.

119. Alex-

119. Alexander Pope, Esq.

THE pure and noble, the graceful and dignified ſimplicity of language is no where in ſuch perfection as in the Scripture and Homer. One may affirm, with all reſpect to the Inſpired Writings, that the Divine Spirit made uſe of no other words but what were intelligible and common to men at that time, and in that part of the world; and as Homer is the author neareſt to thoſe, his ſtyle muſt of courſe bear a greater reſemblance to the Sacred Books, than that of any other writer. *Preface to Homer.*

120. Rev. Daniel Neal, M. A.

ALL the marks and characters of inſpiration are no way ſo conſpicuous as in the Holy Scriptures. Moſes, David, Solomon, Daniel, and the reſt of the prophets, were pious and upright men, and it is no inconſiderable proof of their integrity, that they have left their own faults and infirmities upon record. Their doctrines are reaſonable, juſt and good, tending to promote the glory of God and the happineſs of men, in the practice of true virtue and righteouſneſs. What ſublime ſtrains of devotion are in the Pſalms of David! What excellent rules for the conduct of life in the writings of king Solomon? And how glorious does the God of Iſrael ſhine throughout all the prophets! *Berry Street Sermons.*

121. Monsieur Rapin.

A PREACHER muſt not only improve and enrich his judgment by a long ſtudy of divinity, and frequent converſe with the fathers, whom he ſhould take care to read in a good method; but he muſt likewiſe endeavour to form to himſelf ſuch a chriſtian rhetoric, as we don't find deſcribed by the ancient maſters, who had not the leaſt idea of it; nor by the modern, who have only copied from the ancient. The majeſty of our religion, the ſanctity of its laws, the purity of its morals, the loftineſs of its myſteries, and the importance of all its ſubjects, ought to give ſuch an elevation to ſacred eloquence, as is not to be ſuſtained by the weakneſs of a merely human capacity. There muſt be a great, and noble, and majeſtic air, and a language, if poſſible, not inferior to the theme. For no man ought to ſpeak of God, and of heavenly things, without the utmoſt dignity of ſtyle, and ſuch a voice of great words as the prophet mentions. It would be in vain to ſeek this pitch of eloquence in Ariſtotle's rhetoric, in the ideas of Hermogenes, or the inſtitutions of Quintilian.

Even that ſublime manner which Longinus has framed, by heaping together all the great expreſſions of the ancients, is but low and creeping, in compariſon with that which a preacher ought to follow, if he ſhould truly reach and maintain his character; that exalted mien which becomes the greatneſs of Chriſtianity, and the incomprehenſible myſteries of faith, can only be repreſented by thoſe divine images which occur in the Holy Scriptures, to all ſuch as have the true gift of ſearching its depths. It is only in this pure and fruitful ſtream, that a preacher can find thoſe magnificent expreſſions, which have the Holy Spirit for their author: 'tis hence he muſt take thoſe bright ideas, and that true ſublimity, which compoſe the eſſential character of the oratory of the temple. ſuch as recommended Apollos to the approbation of St. Paul. and to the honour of being his fellow labourer, as an eloquent man. and mighty in the Scriptures. A preacher then, who would attain the eloquence peculiar to his function. muſt be conſtant and aſſiduous in reading the prophets, and muſt allow himſelf time to meditate on what he reads; eſpecially if he is deſirous of exciting terror, which he will almoſt perpetually have occaſion to do. For we are not ſkilled in the art of preaching. unleſs we can alarm the conſcience of a ſinner, and by caſting proper fears into his ſpirit, can awaken him out of that ſlumber which was brought upon him by the ſoftneſs of a licentious age. The Holy Scripture is ſo plentiful a fountain of all the riches, and all the ornaments of eloquence, as to afford a proper model for every way, and every ſtyle. Thus Iſaiah is lofty, Jeremiah is pathetical, Ezekiel terrible, Daniel mild and gentle; and as for the other prophets, greatneſs is their general character; nor have we any thing written with the like force by Pagan authors. Good ſenſe and true reaſon was never diſplayed to ſo much advantage in any moral treatiſe, as it is in the books of Solomon.

No hiſtory was ever written with ſuch a mixt air of ſimplicity and majeſty as that of Moſes; a few words cited from the beginning of which ſupplied Longinus with his nobleſt examples of the ſublime kind, ſo vaſtly ſuperior to the greateſt elevation of human ſtyle. Nothing was ever compoſed with more tender paſſions, or with a greater delicacy of pious and devout ſtrains, than the Pſalms of David. The moſt refined policy of worldly ſages, never carried its views ſo far as the books of Proverbs and Eccleſiaſtes. In a word, the utmoſt extent and capacity of human wit was never able to furniſh out a ſubject ſo vaſt and profound as thoſe adorable myſteries of

of grace and predeſtination contained in St. Paul's epiſtles. But indeed, what eulogies can deſcribe the excellence and dignity of the New Teſtament, which is, moſt emphatically, the book of our religion, and to which all the prophetic writings were but a kind of preface or introduction? What can be conceived ſo great and expreſſive, as that ſhort character of our Lord's diſcourſes, given by himſelf, "The "words that I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit, and they are "life?" Other books are compoſed only of words; this only of things: and as 'tis the character of man's ſpirit, to ſpeak much, and ſay little; ſo 'tis the character of the ſpirit of God; to ſpeak little, and ſay much. For the Holy Scriptures, having a peculiar greatneſs of ſenſe, couched under a plain and familiar phraſe, lead us commonly to conceive more than they expreſs. *Critical Words.*

122. MASSILLON, BISHOP OF CLERMONT.

IN the hiſtories which have been left us by men, we ſee nothing but the agency of man. They are men who obtain the victories, who take towns, who ſubdue kingdoms, who dethrone ſovereigns, who elevate themſelves to the ſupreme power: God appears in no part, men are the ſole actors of all theſe things. But in the hiſtory of the Holy Books it is God alone who performs the whole; God alone cauſeth kings to reign, placeth them upon their thrones, or depoſeth them again. It is God alone who oppoſeth the enemy, who ſacks towns, who diſpoſeth of kingdoms and empires, who giveth peace or exciteth war: God alone appeareth in this Sacred Hiſtory: it is he, if I may ſo ſpeak, who is the ſole hero. The kings and the conquerors of the earth appear but as the miniſters of his Will. In ſhort, theſe Divine Books unfold the ways of providence. God, who conceals himſelf in the other events recorded in our hiſtories, ſeems to reveal himſelf in theſe: and it is in this Book alone that we ought to learn to read the other hiſtories which men have left us.

The Holy Books which have preſerved religion to our times, contain the firſt monuments of the origin of things. They are more ancient than all the fabulous productions of the human mind, which have ſince in ſo melancholy a manner amuſed the credulity of the following ages. And as error always ſprings from truth, and is a corrupt imitation of it, it is in the principal actions of this Divine Hiſtory, that the fables of Paganiſm find their foundation; ſo that one may ſay, there is no error which pays not thereby homage to the antiquity and authority of our Sacred Writings.

The

The ſincerity of Moſes appears in the ſimplicity of his hiſtory. He uſed no precautions to gain credit, becauſe he ſuppoſes thoſe for whom he wrote were not deſtitute of faith, and becauſe he relates none but facts which were publicly known, to preſerve the memory of them rather among their deſcendants, than to inſtruct that generation in the nature of them.

He concealeth not in a myſterious manner the holy books from the people, leſt they ſhould diſcover the falſehood of them, like as the vain oracles of the Sybils were laid up with care in the Capitol, which was built to keep up the pride of the Romans, expoſed to the eyes of the prieſts alone, and produced from time to time by fragments to juſtify to the minds of the people, either a dangerous enterprize, or an unjuſt war. Here the prophetic books were daily read by a whole people; the young and old, the women and children, the prieſts and the common people, the kings and ſubjects, were bound without ceaſing to have them in their hands; every one had right to ſtudy their duty, and to diſcover their hopes there. Far from flattering their pride, they declared fully the ingratitude of their fathers; they announced in every page their misfortunes to be the juſt chaſtiſement of their crimes; they reproached kings with their lewdneſs; prieſts with their injuſtice, the great with their profuſion; the people with their inconſtancy and infidelity, and this notwithſtanding theſe holy books were dear to them; and by the oracles which they ſaw there to be accompliſhed every day, they waited with confidence the fulfilment of thoſe of which all the world at this day are the witneſſes.—

There is a nobleneſs, and an elevation in the maxims of the Goſpel, to which mean and grovelling minds cannot attain. The religion which forms great ſouls, appears to be made only for them: and in order to be great, or to become ſo, there is a neceſſity of being a Chriſtian.—

Philoſophy diſcovered the ſhame of the paſſions; but ſhe did not teach how to conquer them; her pompous precepts were rather the eulogium of virtue, than the remedy of vice. It was even neceſſary for the glory and triumph of religion, that the greateſt geniuſſes, and all the power of human reaſon ſhould have exhauſted themſelves, in order to render men virtuous. If the Socrateſes and the Platos, had not been teachers of the world before Jeſus Chriſt, and had not in vain attempted to regulate manners, and correct men by the ſole force of reaſon, man might have been able to do honour by his virtue to the ſuperiority of reaſon, or the beauty of

virtue

virtue itſelf: but theſe preachers of wiſdom did not make wiſe men; and it was neceſſary that the vain efforts of philoſophy ſhould prepare new triumphs for grace.

In ſhort, it was religion, which exhibited to the world the true wiſe man, ſo long ſince announced to us, by all the pomp and parade of human reaſon. She has not limited all her glory, like philoſophy, to the eſſay of hardly forming one ſage in a century amongſt men: ſhe hath peopled with them cities, empires, deſarts; and the whole univerſe has been to her another Lycæum, where, in the midſt of public places ſhe hath preached wiſdom to all mankind. It is not only amongſt the moſt polite nations that ſhe hath choſen her wiſe men: the Greek and Barbarian, the Roman and Scythian, have been equally called to her divine philoſophy: it is not only for the learned that ſhe hath reſerved the ſublime knowledge of her myſteries; the ſimple have prophecied as well as the ſage; and the ignorant themſelves have become her doctors and apoſtles. It was neceſſary that the true wiſdom ſhould become the wiſdom of all men.

But further ſtill: her doctrine was fooliſhneſs in appearance; and yet, the philoſophers ſubmitted their proud reaſon to this holy folly: ſhe announced nothing but cropes and ſufferings; and yet the Cæſars became her diſciples. She alone came to teach mankind that chaſtity, humility, temperance might be ſeated on the throne, and that the ſeat of the paſſions and of pleaſures, might become the ſeat of virtue and innocence. What a glory was this for religion.

Thoughts upon different Subjects, and Sermons to the Great.

123. Lord Littleton.

IF the glorious light of the Goſpel be ſometimes overcaſt with clouds of doubt, ſo is the light of our reaſon too. But ſhall we deprive ourſelves of the advantage of either, becauſe thoſe clouds cannot perhaps be entirely removed while we remain in this mortal life? Shall we obſtinately and frowardly ſhut our eyes againſt that day-ſpring from on high that has viſited us, becauſe we are not as yet able to bear the full blaze of his beams? Indeed, not even in heaven itſelf, not in the higheſt ſtate of perfection to which a finite being can ever attain, will all the counſels of providence, all the height and the depth of the infinite wiſdom of God, be ever diſcloſed or underſtood. Faith, even then, will be neceſſary; and there will be myſteries which cannot be penetrated by the moſt exalted archangel, and truths which cannot be known

known by him otherwiſe than from revelation, or believed upon any other ground of aſſent than a ſubmiſſive confidence in the divine wiſdom. What, then, ſhall man preſume that his weak and narrow underſtanding is ſufficient to guide him into all truth, without any need of revelation or faith? Shall he complain that the ways of God are not like his ways, and paſt his finding out? True philoſophy, as well as true Chriſtianity, would teach us a wiſer and modeſter part. It would teach us to be content within thoſe bounds which God has aſſigned to us, "caſting down imaginations, and "every high thing that exalteth itſelf againſt the knowledge "of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the "obedience of Chriſt." *Converſion of St. Paul.*

124. SIR ISAAC NEWTON,

UNIVERSALLY acknowledged to be the ableſt philoſopher and mathematician that this, or perhaps any other nation has produced, is alſo well known to have been a firm believer, and a ſerious Chriſtian. This great man applied himſelf, with the utmoſt attention, to the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures, and conſidered the ſeveral parts of them with an uncommon exactneſs; particularly as to the order of time, and the ſeries of prophecies and events relating to the Meſſiah. Upon which head he left behind him an elaborate diſcourſe, to prove, that the famous prophecy of Daniel's weeks, which has been ſo induſtriouſly perverted by the deiſts of our times, was an expreſs prophecy of the coming of the Meſſiah, and received its full accompliſhment in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.—

What paſſed on a certain occaſion between Sir Iſaac and the famous Dr. Halley is much to the honour of the Divine Word. Dr. Halley, who was a profeſſed infidel, throwing out ſome indecent reflections upon Chriſtianity, Sir Iſaac ſtopt him ſhort, and addreſſed him in theſe or the like words:— Dr. Halley, I am always glad to hear you, when you ſpeak about aſtronomy, or other parts of the mathematics, becauſe that is a ſubject you have ſtudied, and well underſtand; but you ſhould not talk of Chriſtianity, for you have not ſtudied it: I have, and am certain you know nothing of the matter.—

It is ſaid of the ſame great man, that, tho' he entered further into the depths of philoſophy than ever mortal before him, yet he accounted the Scriptures of God to be the moſt ſublime philoſophy; and never mentioned his Creator's name without an awful pauſe of adoration, wonder, and ſelf-abaſement. *Addiſons Evidences; Britiſh Biography and the Apparatus to Stackhouſe's Hiſtory of the Bible.*

125 REV.

125. Rev. George Carr.

CHRISTIANITY is the moſt charitable, benevolent inſtitution in the world; one proof, among others, that it is derived from the beſt and moſt benevolent of beings.—No religion ever preſcribed better rules of conduct; none differing from it can be ſo good. *Sermons.*

126. Rev. Thomas Vincent.

THE Scriptures are pure and holy from the beginning of them to the end; in no hiſtory ſhall we find ſuch examples of holineſs as the Scriptures do record; in no writings of moral philoſophers, ſhall we find ſuch precepts of holineſs. *On Judgment.*

127. Sir Francis Walsingham.

THE retirement and unuſual penſiveneſs of this great man, who was ſecretary of ſtate in the reign of queen Elizabeth, being looked upon by his friends at court as a fit of melancholy, ſome of them came to him on purpoſe to divert him; but Sir Francis ſoon palled their jocular humour, ſaying, Ah! my friends, while we laugh, all things are ſerious round about us: God is ſerious, who exerciſeth patience towards us: Chriſt is ſerious, who ſhed his blood for us, the Holy Ghoſt is ſerious, who ſtriveth againſt the obſtinacy of our hearts; the Holy Scriptures bring to our ears the moſt ſerious and important things in the whole world; the holy ſacraments repreſent the moſt ſerious and awful matters; the whole creation is ſerious in ſerving God and us; all that are in heaven and hell are ſerious; how then can a man, that hath one foot in the grave, jeſt and laugh?

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

128. Sir Thomas Smith,

WHO was likewiſe ſecretary of ſtate in the ſame reign, after his great ſervices to his ſovereign and the public, and in particular to our two univerſities in ſettling the payment of their rents by the corn-rate; became ſo deeply ſenſible of the great care and application that is neceſſary to a due preparation for the life to come, that he quitted all ſecular buſineſs, and diſcharged all unneceſſary attendants, and ſent to his worthy friends the biſhops of Winchester and Worceſter, intreating them to draw up the plaineſt and exacteſt method of making our peace with God, and of holy living in this preſent

preſent world, according to the directions of God's Holy Word: adding, That it is great pity, that men know not for what end they are born into this world, till they are ready to go out of it. *Woodward's Fair Warnings.*

129. Rev. John Ray, M. A.

THE commandments of God are not grievous or uneaſy; his law is holy, and juſt, and good; his precepts equal and reaſonable; nay, ſo ſuitable and agreeable to the nature and reaſon of man, that I will be bold to ſay, they ought upon their own account to be obſerved and obeyed by us, were there no heaven to reward our obedience, no hell to puniſh our diſobedience. *Perſuaſive to a Holy Life.*

130. Robert Nelson, Esq.

WHATEVER is neceſſary for us to know and believe, to hope for and practice in order to ſalvation, is fully contained in the Holy Scriptures. *On the Feſtivals and Faſts.*

131. John Calvin.

RERUM, quæ in Scripturis tractantur, cæleſtis veritas, humanum modum excedit, nihilque terrenum redolet, et ſola ſibi ad ſe tuendam ſufficit. *Apud Inſtitutiones.*

132. William Melmoth, Esq.

SINCE there is nothing in religion but what tends to make our lives eaſy, chearful, and contented; nothing but what is ſuitable to our natures, and agreeable to the dictates of right reaſon; nothing but what will enoble our minds, enlarge our underſtandings, and inſpire us with a generous principle of univerſal love, and charity, and goodwill, to mankind; in ſhort, ſince "the commands of God "are not grievous," but "his yoke is eaſy and his burden "light;" it manifeſtly follows, that, as a good life is the higheſt wiſdom, ſo a wicked one is the extreme of folly and madneſs. *Great Importance of a Religious Life.*

133. Bishop Bull.

THE ſacred writings of the Old and New Teſtament being penned by holy perſons either entirely and immediately inſpired, or directed and aſſiſted by the Divine Spirit in what they meditated and wrote, have nothing in them that

that is frivolous or uſeleſs, nothing but what may yield us profitable matter of inſtruction, if rightly underſtood.

Sermons.

134. Mrs. Tooley.

THE late Mr. Thomas Bradbury dined one day at the houſe of Mrs. Tooley, an eminent chriſtian lady in London; who was famous in her day for the love ſhe bore to Chriſt, and to all his ſervants and people. Her houſe and table were open to them all, being another Lydia in that reſpect. Mr. Timothy Rogers, who wrote the book on Religious Melancholy, and was himſelf many years under that diſtemper, dined there the ſame day with Mr. Bradbury; and, after dinner, he entertained Mrs. Tooley and him with ſome ſtories concerning his father, who was one of the ejected miniſters in the year 1662, and the ſufferings he underwent on account of his non-conformity. Mr. Rogers particularly related one anecdote, that he had often heard his father, with a good deal of pleaſure, tell to himſelf and others, concerning a deliverance which he had from being ſent to a priſon after his mittimus was written out for that purpoſe. He lived near the Houſe of one Sir Richard Bradock, a juſtice of the peace, who was a moſt violent perſecutor, and laid out himſelf to diſtreſs ſerious diſſenters by all means which the ſevere laws then in being put in his power; particularly, by enforcing the ſtatute againſt conventicles. He bore a great hatred to Mr. Rogers, and wanted above all things to have him in his power; and a fair opportunity, as he thought, offered itſelf to him. He heard that Mr. Rogers was to preach at a place ſome miles diſtant; and he hired two men to go as ſpies, who were to take the names of all the hearers they knew, and to witneſs againſt Mr. Rogers and them. The thing ſucceeded to his wiſh: they brought the names of ſeveral perſons who were hearers on that occaſion; and Sir Richard ſent and warned ſuch of them as he had a particular ſpite at, and Mr. Rogers, to appear before him. Accordingly, they all came, with trembling hearts, expecting the worſt; for they knew the violence of the man. While they were in his great hall, expecting to be called upon, there came into the hall a little girl, a grandchild of Sir Richard's, about ſix or ſeven years of age. She looked at Mr. Rogers, and was much taken with his venerable appearance; and he, being naturally fond of children, took her on his knee, and made a great deal of her; and ſhe grew fond of him. At laſt Sir Richard ſent one of his ſervants to inform the company

pany that one of the witneſſes was fallen ſick, and could not be preſent that day; and therefore warned them to come on another day, which he then named to them. Accordingly, they came; and the crime, as the juſtice called it, was proved. He ordered their mittimus to be written, to ſend them all to gaol. Mr. Rogers, before he came, expecting to ſee the little girl again, had brought ſome ſweetmeats to give her, and he was not diſappointed; for ſhe came running to him, and was fonder of him than ſhe had been the day before. She was, it ſeems, a particular favourite of her grandfather's, and had got ſuch an aſcendency over him, that he could deny her nothing. She was withal a child of a violent ſpirit, and could bear no contradiction, as ſhe was indulged in every thing. Once, it ſeems, when ſhe was contradicted in ſomething, ſhe run a penknife into her arm, that had almoſt coſt her, either her life, or the loſs of her arm. After which, Sir Richard would not ſuffer her to be contradicted in any thing. While ſhe was ſitting on Mr. Rogers's knee, and eating the ſweetmeats which he gave her, ſhe looked wiſhfully on him, and ſaid, What are you here for Sir? He anſwered, I believe your grandfather is going to ſend me and my friends, whom you ſee here to gaol. To gaol? ſays ſhe; why, what have you done? I did nothing, but preach at ſuch a place; and they did nothing, but hear me. Says ſhe, my grandpapa ſhan't ſend you to gaol. Ay but, my dear, ſaid he, I believe he is now making our mittimus, to ſend us all there. She ran immediately to the chamber where her grandfather was, and knocked with her hands and heels, till ſhe got in; and ſaid, What are you going to do with my good old gentleman in the hall? That's nothing to you, ſaid her grandfather; get you about your buſineſs. But I wont, ſaid ſhe; he tells me that you are going to ſend him and his friends to gaol; and if you ſend them, I'll drown myſelf in the pond as ſoon as they are gone. I will, indeed. When he ſaw the girl was reſolute and peremptory, it ſhook him, and overcame the wicked deſign he had formed to perſecute theſe innocent men. He ſtept into the hall, with the mittimus in his hand, and ſaid, I had here made out your mittimus, to ſend you all to priſon, as you deſerve; but, at my grandchild's requeſt, I let fall the proſecution, and ſet you all at liberty. They all bowed and thanked him. After which, Mr. Rogers ſtept up to the child, and laid his hands upon her head; and lifting up his eyes to heaven, he ſaid, God bleſs you my dear child; may the bleſſing of that God, whoſe cauſe you now did plead, though as yet you know him not, be upon you in life, at death, and throughout

throughout eternity. And when he and his friends went away, Mrs. Tooley liſtened with uncommon attention to the ſtory; and, looking on Mr. Rogers, ſaid, And are you that Mr. Rogers's ſon? Yes madam, anſwered he, I am. Well ſaid ſhe, as long as I have been acquainted with you, I never knew that before. I am the very perſon your dear father bleſſed, in the manner you now related: it made ſuch an impreſſion on me, as I could never forget. Upon this double diſcovery, Mrs. Tooly and Mr. Rogers found they had a ſuperadded tie of Chriſtian regard to each other, beyond what they had before. And then he and Mr. Bradbury were deſirous to know how ſhe, who had been bred up with an averſion to real religion, was now ſo eminent for it? She complied with their requeſt, and very freely told them her ſtory. She ſaid, that, after her grandfather's death, ſhe was left ſole heireſs of his great eſtate: and, being in the bloom of youth, and having none to controul her, ſhe ran after all the faſhionable diverſions of the time in which ſhe lived, without any manner of reſtraint. But, at the ſame time, ſhe confeſſed, that, at the end of them all, ſhe found a diſſatisfaction both with herſelf and them, that always ſtruck a damp to her heart, which ſhe did not know how to get rid of, but by running the ſame fruitleſs ground over and over again; but all in vain. She contracted ſome ſlight illneſs, upon which ſhe thought ſhe would go to Bath, as hearing that that was a place for pleaſure as well as health. When ſhe came thither, ſhe was led in providence to conſult an apothecary, who was a religious man. He enquired, what ſhe ailed? Why, ſays ſhe, doctor, I don't ail much, as to my body; but I have an uneaſy mind, which I can't get rid of. Truly, ſaid he, Miſs, I was ſo too, till I met with a book that cured me of it. Books! ſaid ſhe; I get all the books I can lay my hands on: all the plays, novels, and romances I can hear of. But after I have read them, my uneaſineſs is the ſame. That may be, ſaid he: I don't wonder at it. But this book I ſpeak of, I can ſay of it, what I can ſay of no other I ever read: I never tire of reading it; but can begin to read it again, as if I had never ſeen it before. And I always find ſomething new in it. Pray, ſays ſhe, doctor, what book is that? Nay, Miſs, anſwered he, that is a ſecret I don't tell to every one. But could not I get a ſight of that book, ſays ſhe. Yes, Miſs, if you ſpeak me fair, I can help you to it. Pray get it me then, doctor, and I will give you any thing you pleaſe.—He anſwered, If you will promiſe one thing, I will bring it you; and that is, that you will read it over, carefully:

and,

and, if you ſhould not ſee much in it at firſt, that you will give it a ſecond reading. She promiſed faithfully ſhe would: and, after raiſing her curioſity by coming twice or thrice without bringing it, he at laſt brought it, took it out of his pocket, and gave it her. It was a New Teſtament. When ſhe looked on it ſhe ſaid, poh, I could get that at any time. Why, Miſs, ſo you might, replied the doctor; but remember, I have your ſolemn promiſe, that you will read it carefully. Well, ſays ſhe, though I never read it before, I'll give it a reading. Accordingly ſhe began to read it; and it ſoon attracted her attention. She ſaw ſomething ſhe had a deep concern in, and if ſhe was uneaſy in her mind before, ſhe was ten times more ſo now. She did not know what to do with herſelf. So ſhe got away back to London, to ſee what the diverſions there would do again. But all was in vain.—She lodged at the court end of the town; and had a gentlewoman with her, by way of a companion. One Saturday night ſhe dreamed, that ſhe was in a place of worſhip, and heard a ſermon which ſhe could remember nothing of, when ſhe awaked, excepting the text; but the dream made ſuch an impreſſion on her mind, that the idea ſhe had of the place and of the miniſter's face, was as ſtrong as if ſhe had been acquainted with both for a number of years. She told her dream to her companion, on the Lord's-day morning; and, after breakfaſt, ſaid, ſhe was reſolved to go in queſt of it, if ſhe ſhould go from one end of London to the other. Accordingly they ſet out, and went into this and the other church, as they paſſed along; but none of them anſwered what ſhe ſaw in her dream. About one o'clock they found themſelves in the heart of the city; and they went into an eating houſe, and had a bit of dinner; and ſet out again in ſearch of this unknown place. About half an hour after two, they were in the Poultry; and ſhe ſaw a great many people going down the Old Jewry. So ſoon as ſhe entered the door of it, and looked about, ſhe turned to her companion, and ſaid, with ſome ſurpriſe, This is the very place I ſaw in my dream. She had not ſtood long, till Mr. Shower, who was then miniſter of the place, went up into the pulpit; and ſo ſoon as ſhe looked on him, with greater ſurpriſe ſtill, ſhe ſaid, This is the very man I ſaw in my dream; and if every part of it hold true, he will take that for his text, Pſalm 116. 7. "Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul; for the "Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." When he began to pray, ſhe was all attention, and every ſentence went to her heart. Having finiſhed prayer, he took that for his text;

and

and there God met with her ſoul in a ſaving way and manner: and ſhe at laſt obtained what ſhe ſo long ſought for in vain elſewhere, reſt to her ſoul in him, who is the life and happineſs of them that believe. *Middleton's Biographia Evangelica.*

135. Rev. Theophilus Lindsey, M. A.

SINCE miraculous powers have been withdrawn, which happened very ſoon, the unity of the ſpirit. is the kind affection, good order, and attention to mutual edification, which ought to ſubſiſt among thoſe who profeſs the doctrine of Chriſt, which was dictated by the ſame Holy Spirit of God: ſomething above the pureſt friendſhips of this world, as much as the motives, views, and excellence of the Goſpel, ſurpaſſed the wiſdom of man: an endeavour to make all thoſe wiſe and virtuous with whom we are connected, and thereby to qualify ourſelves with them, for perfect and durable felicity.——In the Word of God, as in his works, there are treaſures of wiſdom ſtill unexplored. *Sermon in Eſſex Houſe.*

136. Rev. Samuel Squire, D. D.

IN Chriſt's diſcourſes no views of ſelf intereſt appear, no ſchemes of popular ambition are carried on, nor any particular vice indulged under the ſpecious pretence of the public good; but all is uniformly and conſiſtently pure and holy, grave and ſerious, ſolemn and devout, without the leaſt tincture of ſuperſtition, vanity or oſtentation; all is plain, ſimple and obvious to the poor as well as the rich, to the vulgar as well as the philoſopher.

Indifference for Religion inexcuſable.

137. Rev. Hary Spens, D. D.

THOSE, no doubt, who enjoy the ſuperior advantages of Divine Revelation, may be ſuppoſed to find great imperfections in the writings of the ancient moraliſts, when compared with the ſublime diſcoveries of revealed religion. Still, however, we may be allowed to ſay, when we conſider the character of Socrates, and the writings of Plato, that divine providence ſeems to have raiſed up theſe illuſtrious philoſophers, to be advocates for virtue, and to give ſome check to the progreſs of prevailing corruption and impiety. Various methods of inſtruction appear to have been employed by the All-Wiſe for the reformation of mankind: the learning of Egypt and the Eaſt; the arts and ſciences of Greece; the laws and poliſhed manners of the Romans; the doctrines of

the ancient ſages, as well as the precepts of the Jewiſh prophets. Some of theſe methods, encountering with the obſtinate and incorrigible vices of the times, met with mighty oppoſition: thus Jeruſalem killed her prophets; Athens her philoſophers: however their doctrines were not to be ſuppreſſed: they rather ſpread ſo much the more; and now, in theſe diſtant ages and nations, they draw the admiration of the wiſeſt and worthieſt of mankind.

It appears to be but an indiſcreet ſort of zeal for the honour of religion, to aim at eſtabliſhing it on the ruins of the few, but valuable remains of ancient wiſdom. The Chriſtian religion, no doubt, challenges our higheſt eſteem and veneration, as her inſtitutes are of divine original, and, of all thoſe that were ever beſtowed on mankind, the nobleſt and the beſt; but, at the ſame time, ſome regard and deference are likewiſe due to philoſophy, which, rightly underſtood, is no other than natural religion: and theſe two, are not rivals and adverſaries, but ſiſters and companions, deſcended from the ſame parent, and deſtined for the ſame employment; to make men good and happy; the latter purſuing this end more feebly; the former, with greater energy and ſucceſs. *Plato's Republic.*

138. Maurice Ashley, Esq.

REAL religion is the ſummit and completion of all knowledge; runs through all, and ariſes from collecting what is divine in all things. The fowls of the air are fed; the ſtature of man is limited; the lillies of the field are cloathed by providence; without it a bird falls not to the ground, nor a hair from the head: this is Chriſtianity, or the doctrine of our Saviour, is real religion, and is not to be found but in the mind of the wiſe and good, and of the few who enter in at the ſtrait gate. *Preface to Cyropædia.*

139. Rev. Thomas Vivian, M. A.

THE ſongs of praiſe in the book of Revelation are the moſt lively and animating; tending to fill the heart with the moſt ſublime devotion. The magnificent ſcenes here deſcribed, engage the mind and affections, in contemplating the glories of the future ſtate, and are powerful towards drawing off the attention from the periſhing things of this world. In a word, he that hath an ear to hear, a mind to underſtand, and a heart to reliſh the great and glorious things diſplayed in this book, will find it equally beneficial and delightful. *On the Book of Revelation.*

140. Gilbert

140. GILBERT WEST, ESQ.

I CANNOT forbear taking notice of one other mark of integrity which appears in all the compoſitions of the ſacred writers, and particularly the Evangeliſts; and that is, the ſimple, unaffected, unornamental, and unoſtentatious manner, in which they deliver truths ſo important and ſublime, and facts ſo magnificent and wonderful, as are capable, one would think, of lighting up a flame of oratory, even in the dulleſt and coldeſt breaſts. They ſpeak of an angel deſcending from heaven to foretel the miraculous conception of Jeſus, of another proclaiming his birth, attended by a multitude of the heavenly hoſt praiſing God, "and ſaying, "Glory to God in the higheſt, and on earth peace, good-will "towards men;" of his ſtar appearing in the Eaſt; of angels miniſtring to him in the wilderneſs; of his glory in the mount; of a voice twice heard from heaven, ſaying, "This is my beloved Son;" of innumerable miracles performed by him, and by his diſciples in his name; of his knowing the thoughts of men; of his foretelling future events; of prodigies accompanying his crucifixion and death; of an angel deſcending in terrors, opening his ſepulchre, and frightening away the ſoldiers who were ſet to guard it; of his riſing from the dead, aſcending into heaven, and pouring down, according to his promiſe, the various and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit upon his apoſtles and diſciples. All theſe amazing incidents do theſe inſpired hiſtorians relate nakedly and plainly, without any of the colourings and heightenings of rhetoric, or ſo much as a ſingle note of admiration; without making any comment or remark upon them, or drawing from them any concluſion in honour either of their maſter or themſelves, or to the advantage of the religion they preached in his name; but contenting themſelves with relating the naked truth, whether it ſeems to make for them or againſt them, without either magnifying on the one hand, or palliating on the other, they leave their cauſe to the unbiaſſed judgment of mankind, ſeeking, like genuine apoſtles of the Lord of truth, to convince rather than to perſuade; and therefore coming, as St. Paul ſpeaks of his preaching, "not with "excellency of ſpeech,——not with enticing words of "man's wiſdom, but with demonſtration of the Spirit, "and of power, that," adds he, "your faith ſhould not "ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of "God." And let it be remembered that he, who ſpeaks this, wanted not learning, art or eloquence, as is evident from his ſpeeches recorded in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and from the

teſtimony of that great critic Longinus, who, in reckoning up the Grecian orators, places among them Paul of Tarſus; and ſurely, had they been left ſolely to the ſuggeſtions and guidance of human wiſdom, they would not have failed to lay hold on ſuch topics, as the wonders of their maſter's life, and the tranſcendent purity and perfection of the noble, generous, benevolent morality contained in his precepts, furniſhed them with. Theſe topics, I ſay, greater than ever Tully, or Demoſthenes, or Plato, were poſſeſſed of, mere human wiſdom would doubtleſs have prompted them to make uſe of, in order to recommend in the ſtrongeſt manner the religion of Jeſus Chriſt to mankind, by turning their attention to the divine part of his character, and hiding, as it were in a blaze of heavenly light and glory, his infirmities, his ſufferings, and his death. And had they upon ſuch topics as theſe, and in ſuch a cauſe, called into their aſſiſtance all the arts of compoſition, rhetoric, and logic, who would have blamed them for it? Not thoſe perſons, I preſume, who dazzled and captivated with the glittering ornaments of human wiſdom, make a mock at the ſimplicity of the Goſpel, and think it wit to ridicule the ſtyle and language of the Holy Scriptures. But the all-wiſe Spirit of God, by whom theſe ſacred writers were guided into all truth, thought fit to direct or permit them to proceed in a different method; a method, however, very analogous to that, in which he hath been pleaſed to reveal himſelf to us in the great book of nature, the ſtupendous frame of the univerſe; all whoſe wonders he hath judged it ſufficient to lay before us in ſilence, and expects from our obſervations the proper comments and deductions, which, having endued us with reaſon, he hath enabled us to make. And though a careleſs and ſuperficial ſpectator may fancy he perceives even in this fair volume many inconſiſtencies, defects, and ſuperfluities; yet to a diligent, unprejudiced, and rational enquirer, who will take pains to examine the laws, conſider and compare the ſeveral parts, and regard their uſe and tendency, with reference to the whole deſign of this amazing ſtructure, as far as his ſhort abilities can carry him, there will appear, in thoſe inſtances which he is capable of knowing, ſuch evident characters of wiſdom, goodneſs, and power, as will leave him no room to doubt of their author, or to ſuſpect that in thoſe particulars which he hath not examined, or to a thorough knowledge of which he cannot perhaps attain, there is nothing but folly, weakneſs, and malignity. The ſame thing might be ſaid of the written book, the ſecond volume, if I may ſo

ſpeak,

ſpeak, of the revelation of God, the Holy Scriptures. For as in the firſt, ſo alſo in this are there many paſſages, that to a curſory, unobſerving reader appear idle, unconnected, unaccountable, and inconſiſtent with thoſe marks of truth, wiſdom, juſtice, mercy, and benevolence, which in others are ſo viſible, that the moſt careleſs and inattentive cannot but diſcern them. And even theſe, many of them at leaſt, will often be found, upon a cloſer and ſtricter examination, to accord and coincide with the other more plain and more intelligible paſſages, and to be no heterogenous parts of one and the ſame wiſe and harmonious compoſition. In both, indeed, in the natural as well as the moral Book of God, there are, and ever will be many difficulties, which the wit of man may never be able to reſolve; but will a wiſe philoſopher, becauſe he cannot comprehend every thing he ſees, reject for that reaſon all the truths that lie within his reach, and let a few inexplicable difficulties over-balance the many plain and infallible evidences of the finger of God, which appear in all parts, both of his created and written works? Or will he preſume ſo far upon his own wiſdom, as to ſay, God ought to have expreſſed himſelf more clearly? The point and exact degree of clearneſs, which will equally ſuit the different capacities of men in different ages and countries, will, I believe, be found more difficult to fix than is imagined; ſince what is clear to one man in a certain ſituation of mind, time, and place, will inevitably be obſcure to another, who views it in other poſitions, and under other circumſtances. How various and even contradictory are the readings and comments, which ſeveral men, in the ſeveral ages and climates of the world, have made upon nature! And yet her characters are equally legible, and her laws equally intelligible, in all times and in all places: "There is no ſpeech nor "language where her voice is not heard: her ſound is gone "out through all the earth, and her words to the end of the "world." All theſe miſrepreſentations therefore, and miſconſtructions, of her works, are chargeable only upon mankind, who have ſet themſelves to ſtudy them with various degrees of capacity, application, and impartiality. The queſtion then ſhould be, Why hath God given men ſuch various talents? And not, Why hath not God expreſſed himſelf more clearly? And the anſwer to this queſtion, as far as it concerns man to know, is, that God will require of him according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not. If what is neceſſary for all to know, is knowable by all; thoſe men, upon whom God hath been pleaſed to be-

ſtow capacities and faculties ſuperior to the vulgar, have certainly no juſt reaſon to complain of his having left them materials for the exerciſe of thoſe talents, which, if all things were equally plain to all men, would be of no great advantage to the poſſeſſors. If, therefore, there are in the ſacred writings, as well as in the works of nature, many paſſages hard to be underſtood, it were to be wiſhed, that the wiſe and learned, inſtead of being offended at them, and teaching others to be ſo too, would be perſuaded, that both God and man expect that they would ſet themſelves to conſider and examine them carefully and impartially, and with a ſincere deſire of diſcovering and embracing the truth, not with an arrogant unphiloſophical conceit of their being already ſufficiently wiſe and knowing. And then I doubt not but moſt of theſe objections to revelation, which are now urged with the greateſt confidence, would be cleared up and removed, like thoſe formerly made to Creation, and the Being and Providence of God, by thoſe moſt ignorant, moſt abſurd, and yet moſt ſelf-ſufficient pretenders to reaſon and philoſophy, the Atheiſts and Sceptics.

Obſervations on the Reſurrection.

141. Miss Carter.

EPICTETUS often lays it down as a maxim, that it is impoſſible for one perſon to be in fault, and another to be the ſufferer. This, on the ſuppoſition of a future ſtate, will certainly be made true at laſt; but in the ſtoical ſenſe, and ſyſtem, is an abſolute extravagance. Take any perſon of plain underſtanding, with all the feelings of humanity about him, and ſee whether the ſubtleſt Stoic will ever be able to convince him, that while he is inſulted, oppreſſed, and tortured, he doth not ſuffer. See what comfort it will afford him, to be told, that, if he ſupports his afflictions, and ill-treatment with fortitude and patience, death will ſet him free, and then he and his perſecutor will be equally rewarded; will equally loſe all perſonal exiſtence, and return to the elements. How different are the conſolations propoſed by Chriſtianity, which not only aſſures its diſciples, that they ſhall reſt from their labours in death, but that their works ſhall follow them: and by allowing them to rejoice in hope, teaches them the moſt effectual way of becoming patient in tribulation.

The Stoical doctrine, that human ſouls are literally parts of the Deity, was equally ſhocking, and hurtful; as it ſuppoſed

poſed portions of his being to be wicked and miſerable; and by debaſing men's ideas of the divine dignity, and teaching them to think themſelves eſſentially as good as he, nouriſhed in their minds an irreligious and fatal preſumption. Far differently the Chriſtian ſyſtem repreſents mankind, not as a part of the eſſence, but a work of the hand of God: as created in a ſtate of improveable virtue and happineſs; fallen by an abuſe of free will, into ſin, miſery, and weakneſs; but redeemed from them by an Almighty Saviour; furniſhed with additional knowledge and ſtrength; commanded to uſe their beſt endeavours; made ſenſible, at the ſame time, how wretchedly defective they are; yet aſſured of endleſs felicity on a due exertion of them. The Stoic philoſophy inſults human nature and diſcourages all our attempts, by enjoining and promiſing a perfection in this life, of which we feel ourſelves incapable. The Chriſtian religion ſhows compaſſion to our weakneſs, by preſcribing to us only the practicable taſk of aiming continually at further improvements, and animates our endeavours, by the promiſe of a divine aid, equal to every trial.

Specifying thus the errors and defects of ſo celebrated a ſyſtem, is an unpleaſing employment: but in an age, fond of preferring the gueſſes of human ſagacity before the unerring declarations of God, it ſeemed on this occaſion neceſſary to obſerve, that the Chriſtian morality is agreeable to reaſon and nature; that of the Stoics, for the moſt part, founded on notions, intelligible to few; and which none could admit, without contradiction to their own hearts. They reaſoned, many times, admirably well, but from falſe principles; and the nobleſt of their practical precepts, being built on a ſandy baſis, lay at the mercy of every ſtrong temptation.

Stoiciſm is indeed in many points inferior to the doctrine of Socrates, which did not teach, that all externals were indifferent, which did teach a future ſtate of recompence; and agreeably to that, forbad ſuicide. It doth not belong to the preſent ſubject to ſhow, how much even this beſt ſyſtem is excelled by Chriſtianity. It is ſufficient juſt to obſerve, that the author of it died in a profeſſion, which he had always made of his belief in the popular deities, whoſe ſuperſtitions, and impure worſhip was the great ſource of corruption in the Heathen world; and the laſt words he uttered, were a direction to his friend, for the performance of an idolatrous ceremony. This melancholy inſtance of ignorance and error, in the moſt illuſtrious character for wiſdom and virtue,

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in all heathen antiquity, it not mentioned as a reflection on his memory, but as a proof of human weakneſs in general. Whether reaſon could have diſcovered the great truths, which in theſe days are aſcribed to it, becauſe now ſeen ſo clearly by the light of the Goſpel, may be a queſtion; but that it never did, is an undeniable fact; and that is enough to teach us thankfulneſs for the bleſſing of a better information. Socrates, who had, of all mankind, the faireſt pretenſions to ſet up for an inſtructor, and reformer of the world, confeſſed that he knew nothing, referred to tradition, and acknowledged the want of a ſuperior guide: and there is a remarkable paſſage in Epictetus, in which he repreſents it, as the office of his ſupreme God, or of one deputed by him, to appear among mankind, as a teacher and example.

Upon the whole, the ſeveral ſects of Heathen philoſophy ſerve, as ſo many ſtriking inſtances of the imperfection of human wiſdom; and of the extreme need of a divine aſſiſtance, to rectify the miſtakes of depraved reaſon, and to replace natural religion on its true foundation. The Stoics every where teſtify the nobleſt zeal for virtue, and the honour of God; but they attempted to eſtabliſh them on principles, inconſiſtent with the nature of man, and contradictory to truth and experience. By a direct conſequence of theſe principles, they were liable to be ſeduced, and in fact, often were ſeduced into pride, hard-heartedneſs, and the laſt dreadful extremity of human guilt, ſelf-murder.

But however indefenſible the philoſophy of the Stoics in ſeveral inſtances may be, it appears to have been of very important uſe, in the heathen world; and they are, on many accounts, to be conſidered in a very reſpectable light. Their doctrine of evidence and fixed principles, was an excellent preſervative from the miſchiefs, that might have ariſen from the ſcepticiſm of the Academic and Pyrrhoniſts, if unoppoſed; and their zealous defence of a particular providence, a valuable antidote to the atheiſtical ſcheme of Epicurus. To this may be added, that their ſtrict notions of virtue in moſt points, (for they ſadly failed in ſome) and the lives of ſeveral among them, muſt contribute a good deal to preſerve luxurious ſtates from an abſolutely univerſal diſſoluteneſs; and the ſubjects of arbitrary government, from a wretched and contemptible puſillanimity.

Even now, their compoſitions may be read with great advantage, as containing excellent rules of ſelf-government, and of ſocial behaviour; of a noble reliance on the aid and protection of heaven, and of a perfect reſignation and ſubmiſſion

miſſion to the divine will; points, which are treated with great clearneſs, and with admirable ſpirit, in the leſſons of the Stoics; and though their directions are ſeldom practicable on their principles, in trying caſes, may be rendered highly uſeful in ſubordination to chriſtian reflections.

If, among thoſe, who are ſo unhappy as to remain unconvinced of the truth of chriſtianity, any are prejudiced againſt it by the influence of unwarrantable inclinations; ſuch perſons will find very little advantage in rejecting the doctrines of the New Teſtament for thoſe of the Portico; unleſs they think it an advantage to be laid under moral reſtraints, almoſt equal to thoſe of the goſpel, while they are deprived of its encouragements and ſupports. Deviations from the rules of ſobriety, juſtice and piety, meet with ſmall indulgence in the ſtoic writings; and they, who profeſs to admire Epictetus, unleſs they purſue that ſeverely virtuous conduct which he every where preſcribes, will find themſelves treated by him with the utmoſt degree of ſcorn and contempt. An immoral character is indeed, more or leſs, the out-caſt of all ſects of philoſophy; and Seneca quotes even Epicurus, to prove the univerſal obligation of a virtuous life. Of this great truth, God never left himſelf without witneſs. Perſons of diſtinguiſhed talents and opportunities ſeem to have been raiſed, from time to time, by Providence, to check the torrent of corruption, and to preſerve the ſenſe of moral obligations on the minds of the multitude, to whom the various occupations of life left but little leiſure to form deductions of their own. But then they wanted a proper commiſſion to enforce their precepts; they intermixed with them, through falſe reaſoning, many groſs miſtakes; and their unavoidable ignorance, in ſeveral important points, entangled them with doubts, which eaſily degenerated into pernicious errors.

If there are others, who reject chriſtianity, from motives of diſlike to its peculiar doctrines, they will ſcarcely fail of entertaining more favourable impreſſions of it, if they can be prevailed on, with impartiality, to compare the Holy Scriptures, from whence alone the chriſtian religion is to be learned with the ſtoic writings; and then fairly to conſider, whether there is any thing to be met with in the diſcoveries of our bleſſed Saviour, in the writings of his apoſtles, or even in the obſcureſt parts of the prophetic books, by which, equitably interpreted, either their ſenſes, or their reaſon are contradicted, as they are by the paradoxes of theſe philoſophers: and if not whether notices from above, of things in which, though we comprehend them but imperfectly, we are poſſibly much more

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intereſted, than at preſent we diſcern, ought not to be received with implicit veneration; as uſeful exerciſes and trials of that duty, which finite underſtandings owe to infinite wiſdom. *Introduction to Epictetus.*

142. Mr. Thomas Phillips.

THE more we read, the more we meditate on the Holy Scriptures, the more we ſhall diſcover in them an inexhauſtible ſource of light, and of all manner of inſtruction; that their language is not the language of men, nor the ſubject a production of their ingenuity; that they have a character peculiar to themſelves, and different from the compoſitions even of the greateſt and beſt men; that they are exempt from all vulgar paſſions and intereſts, and to the ordinary views of human prudence and forecaſt; in fine, that no man ever raiſed himſelf ſo much above humanity as to produce a work, in which all is ſo ſuperior to man.

The moſt accurate of the Pagan authors are juſtly charged with errors, darkneſs, and uncertainties, with reſpect both to facts and doctrine: but it became the wiſe and great Being, who inſpired the ſacred penmen, to exempt their works from all ſuch imputations; and, accordingly, he has favoured them with every argument of truth and perſuaſion, adorned them with the graces of language and ſentiment, lighted up and enlivened them with the brighteſt examples of virtue and ſanctity, annexed to their ſtudy and meditation ſuch helps and communications of his Holy Spirit as cannot be deſcribed, and made the belief and practice of them the only foundation of true peace and happineſs.—

Every one readily allows no ſubject can be equal to the life of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt; that is, to the incarnation and birth; the miracles and doctrine; the ſufferings and death; the reſurrection and aſcenſion of a God become man to reform and ſave a ſinful and loſt world: And whoever imagines this hiſtory can be better wrote than it is by the Evangeliſts, has it yet to learn. But though it becomes a chriſtian to be particularly converſant in this and the other writings of the New Teſtament, yet there is not any part of the Old which does not furniſh ample matter of inſtruction.—The book of Geneſis, in the account it gives of the creation, of the fall and puniſhment of our firſt parents, of the righteouſneſs of Noah, of the deluge, of the wonderful obedience of Abraham, and the promiſe made by God to reward it, of the deſtruction of Sodom, and the providence of God over the patriarch Joſeph, preſents to our minds

minds the moſt ſuitable ſubjects to fill them with every chriſtian ſentiment of reverence for the Supreme Being and his laws, love of his goodneſs, and dread of his juſtice. When we go on to Exodus, we ſee the wonders wrought by the Almighty in favour of his people, the impenitence of Pharoah, and the various chaſtiſements by which the murmurings and idolatry of the Iſraelites in the deſart were puniſhed. Leviticus and Numbers ſet forth the accuracy which God exacts in his worſhip: Deuteronomy, the ſanctity of his laws; Joſhua, the accompliſhment of his promiſes. In the book of Judges, we ſee the ſtrength and weakneſs of Sampſon; in that of Ruth, the plain-dealing and equity of Boaz; in thoſe of Kings, the holineſs of Samuel, of Elijah, of Eliſha, and the other prophets; the reprobation of Saul; the fall and repentance of David, his mildneſs and patience; the wiſdom and ſin of Solomon; the piety of Hezekiah and Joſiah. In Eſdras, the zeal for the law of God; in Tobit, the conduct of a holy family; in Judith, the power of grace; in Eſther, prudence; in Job, a pattern of admirable patience. The Maccabees afford ſuch inſtances of perſonal and national bravery; ſuch an exalted and generous love of our country, and all this grounded on the true principles of valour and patriotiſm, as the moſt boaſted atchievements in profane ſtory are perfect ſtrangers to. The Proverbs and Eccleſiaſtes, and the other two books which go under the title of the Wiſdom of Solomon and of the Son of Sirach, teach a more uſeful and ſublime philoſophy than all the writings which Greece and Rome have publiſhed. The noble images and reflections, the profound reaſonings on human actions, and excellent precepts for the government of life, ſufficiently witneſs their inſpired origin. This treaſure, indeed, is thrown together in a confuſed magnificence, above all order, that every one may collect and digeſt ſuch obſervations as chiefly tend to his own particular inſtruction. And though it behoves us to reverence the doctrine of the Holy Ghoſt, rather than pretend to aſſign the reaſons for his diſpenſing it in this or that manner, yet, I think, we perceive the fitneſs of the method here taken, in ſetting forth the nature, ſubſtance, and end of our obligations; and, without entering on minute diſcuſſions, in taking in the whole compaſs of duty; for by this means the paths of life are not only pointed out to each individual, and his perſonal character formed; but the minds of mankind, in general, are furniſhed and enriched with the beauty, copiouſneſs, and variety of all virtues.—The Prophets announce not only the promiſes,

promiſes, but alſo the characteriſtic marks of the Meſſiah, with the threats againſt ſinners, and thoſe calamities which were to befal the Jews and other nations. The Pſalms unite in themſelves the chief ſubjects, and all the different excellencies of the Old Teſtament. In a word, every thing in the Sacred Writings will appear, as it truly is, holy, grand, and profitable, provided it be read with ſuitable diſpoſitions.

The Study of Sacred Literature ſtated and conſidered.

143. Rev. Robert Robinson.

WHEN the Lord Jeſus Chriſt appeared in the world he had been long expected by the Jewiſh church, as a prophet like unto Moſes, and his miniſtry had been characterized, as the moſt beneficial that could be imagined. The people, therefore, formed the higheſt expectations of his œconomy; and he framed it ſo, as to exceed all deſcription. "He "taught—not as the ſcribes."

Firſt, inſtead of deriving his doctrine from popular notions, human paſſions, the intereſts of princes, or the traditions of prieſts, he took it immediately from the Holy Scriptures, to which he conſtantly appealed. The truths of natural religion he explained and eſtabliſhed; the doctrines of revelation he expounded, elucidated, and enforced, and thus brought life and immortality to light by the goſpel.

Next, the doctrines, which he taught, were all plain facts: "—God is a ſpirit—God ſent his Son into the world, that "the world through him might be ſaved—Moſes wrote of "Me—He that believeth on Him, that ſent Me, is paſſed "from death unto life—The dead ſhall hear the voice of the "Son of God—The wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting "puniſhment—The righteous ſhall go into life eternal "—My kingdom is not of this world—The merciful are "happy—Happy are the pure in heart—Few find the nar-"row way, that leadeth to life—Many go in at the wide "gate that leadeth to deſtruction."—All theſe, and many more of the ſame kind, are facts plain and true, and they were the ſimple truths, which Jeſus Chriſt choſe to teach.

Thirdly, the motives, which he employed to give his doctrine energy, were not taken from ſinful ſecular things; but it was urged home in its truth and importance. This fact is true, and, THEREFORE, you ought to believe it, whether the world admit it or not. That duty is important to your health, to your property, to your comfort, to your ſalvation, to your pleaſing God, and, THEREFORE, you ought to perform it, whether the world perform it or not.

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The tempers, in which he executed his miniſtry, were the nobleſt; that can be conceived. He was humble, compaſſionate, firm, diſintereſted, and generous. He diſplayed, in all the courſe of his miniſtry, ſuch an aſſortment of properties as obliged ſome of his auditors to burſt into exclamatory admiration: "Bleſſed are the paps which thou haſt "ſucked!" Others to "hang upon his lips, wondering at "the gracious words, that proceeded out of his mouth:" and all to acknowledge, "never man ſpake like this man!" This was not a temporary tide of popularity, it was admiration founded on reaſon, and all ages ſince have admired and exclaimed in like manner.

Add to theſe the ſimplicity and majeſty of his ſtyle, the beauty of his images, the alternate ſoftneſs and ſeverity of his addreſs, the choice of his ſubjects, the gracefulneſs of his deportment, the indefatigableneſs of his zeal—where ſhall I put the period? His perfections are inexhauſtible, and our admiration is everlaſting. The character of Chriſt is the beſt book a preacher can ſtudy.

In order to mortify human vanity, to convince the world that religion was a plain, ſimple thing, and that a little common ſenſe, accompanied with an honeſt, good heart, was ſufficient to propagate it, without any end derived from the cabinets of princes, or the ſchools of human ſcience, he took twelve poor illiterate men into his company, admitted them to an intimacy with himſelf, and, after he had kept them a while in tuition, ſent them to preach the good tidings of ſalvation to his countrymen. A while after he ſent ſeventy more, and the diſcourſes, which he delivered to each claſs at their ordination, are made up of the moſt wiſe and benevolent ſentiments, that ever fell from the mouth of man. All the topics are pure theology, and all unpolluted with puerile conceits, human politics, literary dreams, eccleſiaſtical traditions, party diſputes, and all the other diſgraces of preaching, which thoſe ſanctimonious hypocrites, ſcribes, and phariſees, and pretended doctors and rabbies, had introduced into it.

Jeſus Chriſt had never paid any regard to the place, where he delivered his ſermons; he had taught in the temple, the ſynagogues, public walks, and private houſes; he had preached on mountains, and in barges and ſhips, His miſſionaries imitated him, and convenience for the time was conſecration of the place. He had been equally indifferent to the poſture; he ſtood, or ſat, as his own eaſe and the popular edification required. The time alſo had been accommodated to the

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ſame end. He had preached early in the morning, late in the evening, on ſabbath days and feſtivals, and whenever elſe the people had leiſure and inclination to hear. It had been foretold, the Meſſiah "ſhould not lift up, nor cry, "nor cauſe his voice to be heard in the ſtreets," that is, ſhould not uſe the artifices of thoſe, who ſought for popularity. It ſhould ſeem, Jeſus Chriſt uſed very little action: but that little was juſt, natural, grave, and expreſſive. He ſometimes wept, and always felt: but he never expreſſed his emotions in a theatrical manner, much leſs did he preach as a drowſy pedant declaims, who has no emotions to expreſs.

The ſucceſs that accompanied the miniſtry of our Emanuel, was truly aſtoniſhing. My ſoul overflows with joy, my eyes with tears of pleaſure, while I tranſcribe it. When this "Sun of righteouſneſs aroſe with healing under his wings," the diſintereſted populace, who lay all neglected and forlorn, benighted with ignorance and benumbed with vice, ſaw the light, and hailed the brightneſs of its riſing. Up they ſprang, and after him in multitudes, men, women, and children went. Was he to paſs a road? They climbed the trees to ſee him; yea, the blind ſat by the way ſide to hear him go by. Was he in a houſe? They unroofed the building to come at him. As if they could never get near enough to hear the ſoft accents of his voice, they preſſed, they crouded, they trod upon one another to ſurround him. When he retired into the wilderneſs, they thought him another Moſes, and would have made him a king. It was the fineſt thing they could think of. He, greater than the greateſt monarch, deſpiſed worldly grandeur: but to fulfil prophecy, ſitting upon a borrowed aſs's colt, rode into Jeruſalem the Son of the Higheſt, and allowed the tranſported multitude to ſtrew the way with garments and branches, and to rouſe the inſenſible metropolis by acclamations; the very children ſhouting, "Hoſannah! "Hoſannah in the higheſt! Hoſannah to the Son of David; "Bleſſed be he, that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Diſſertation on Preaching.

144. Rev. Joseph Bellamy, D. D.

THE viſible creation, the heavens and the earth, the ſun, moon, and ſtars, with all the laws, order and harmony in the natural ſyſtem, as they are ſpecimens of almighty power, infinite wiſdom, and goodneſs; ſo they may be conſidered, as a deſigned manifeſtation of theſe perfections, as inanimate pictures of the inviſible glories, of the inviſible God. But if we turn our eyes off from the material world, the meaneſt part of

of God's creation, to the view of holy intelligences, who were in a peculiar ſenſe made after the image of God, here we ſhall behold living images of the living God. But ſtill all this is finite, the inanimate pictures and the living images are finite; but God himſelf is abſolutely infinite. Theſe repreſentations, therefore, are very ſcanty, very deficient; and but a ſmall portion of God can be known by them. Wherefore infinite wiſdom hath laid a plan, in which he himſelf, as it were, may ceaſe to be inviſible, may come out to the view of the intellectual ſyſtem in all his glory, in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt his Son, "who is the image of the inviſible God," even "the brightneſs of his glory and the expreſs image of his perſon." The veil is rent, the holy of holies is expoſed to public view, and the glory of the Lord is to be ſeen by ſaints on earth, and principalities and powers in heaven, in the face of Jeſus Chriſt. This manifeſtation therefore of God, in and by Jeſus Chriſt, which is called the Goſpel, is the completeſt and brighteſt exhibition of all the divine perfections that ever was, or that, perhaps, ever will be made.

Glory of the Goſpel.

145. Rev. Jonathan Edwards, M. A.

GOD has greatly glorified himſelf in the work of creation; and in many of his other works of providence: but above all, is he glorified in the work of redemption. All God's works do praiſe him. His glory ſhines brightly from them all: but as ſome ſtars differ from others in glory, ſo the glory of God ſhines brighter in ſome of his works than in others. And amongſt all theſe, the work of redemption is like the ſun in his ſtrength. The glory of the author is abundantly the moſt reſplendent in this work.

There is as much in the goſpel to ſhew that it is no work of men, as there is in the ſun in the firmament. Perſons that are come to the mature exerciſe of their reaſon, and look upon the ſun, and conſider the nature of it, its wonderful height, its courſe, its brightneſs and heat, may know that it is no work of man. So, if the nature of the Goſpel be duly conſidered, if the true nature of it is ſeen, it may be known that it is no work of man, and that it muſt be from God.

If the wiſdom appearing in the goſpel be duly conſidered and underſtood, it will be ſeen as much to excel all human wiſdom, as the ſun's light excels the light of fires of our own kindling.

Sermons.

146. Miss

146. Miss Hannah More.

YOU I invoke not now, ye fabled nine!
I not invoke you, though you well were fought
In Greece and Latium, by immortal bards,
Whoſe ſyren ſong enchants; and ſhall enchant,
Thro' time's wide-circling round, tho' falſe their faith,
And leſs than human were the gods they ſung.
Tho' falſe their faith, they taught the beſt they knew,
And, bluſh, O Chriſtians! liv'd above their faith.
They wou'd have bleſs'd the beam, and hail'd the day,
Which chas'd the moral darkneſs from their ſouls.
Oh! had their minds receiv'd the clearer ray
Of true devotion; they had learn'd to ſcorn
Their deities impure, their ſenſeleſs gods,
And wild mythology's fantaſtic maze.

Pure Plato! how had thy chaſte ſpirit hail'd
A faith ſo fitted to thy moral ſenſe!
What hadſt thou felt, to ſee the fair romance
Of high imagination, the bright dream
Of thy pure fancy more than realiz'd!
O ſweet enthuſiaſt! thou hadſt bleſt a ſcheme
Fair, good, and perfect. How had thy rapt ſoul
Caught fire, and burnt with a diviner flame!
For ev'n thy fair idea ne'er conceiv'd
Such plenitude of love, ſuch boundleſs bliſs,
As Deity made viſible to ſenſe.
Unhappy Brutus! philoſophic mind!
Great 'midſt the errors of the ſtoic ſchool!
How had his kindling ſpirit joy'd to find,
That his lov'd virtue was no empty name:
Nor had he met the viſion at Philippi;
Nor had he ſheath'd his bloody dagger's point,
Or in the breaſt he lov'd, or in his own.

The Pagan page how far more wiſe than ours!
They with the gods they worſhipp'd grac'd their ſong;
Our ſong we grace with gods we diſbelieve;
The manners we adopt without the creed.
Shall fiction only raiſe poetic flame,
And ſhall no altars blaze, O Truth! to thee?
Shall falſehood only pleaſe, and fable charm?
And ſhall eternal truth neglected lie?
Becauſe immortal, ſlighted or profan'd?
Truth has our rev'rence only, not our love;

Our

Our praiſe, but not our heart. A deity
Confeſs'd, but ſhunn'd; acknowledg'd, not ador'd:
She comes too near us, and ſhe ſhines too bright.
Her penetrating beam at once betrays
What we wou'd hide from others and ourſelves.

Why ſhun to make our duty our delight?
Let pleaſure be the motive (and allow
That immortality be quite forgot):
Where ſhall we trace, thro' all the page profane,
A livelier pleaſure, and a purer ſource
Of innocent delight, than the fair book
Of Holy Truth preſents? For ardent youth,
The ſprightly narrative; for years mature,
The moral document, in ſober robe
Of grave philoſophy array'd: which all
Had heard with admiration, had embrac'd
With rapture; had the ſhades of Academe,
Or the learn'd porch produc'd it. Then, O then,
How wiſdom's hidden treaſures had been couch'd
Beneath fair allegory's graceful veil!

Do not the pow'rs of ſoul-enchanting ſong,
Strong imag'ry, bold figure, every charm
Of Eaſtern flight ſublime, apt metaphor,
And all the graces in thy lovely train,
Divine ſimplicity! aſſemble all
In Sion's ſongs, and bold Iſaiah's ſtrain?

Why ſhou'd the claſſic eye delight to trace
How Pyrrha and the fam'd Theſſalian king
Reſtor'd the ruin'd race of loſt mankind;
Yet turn, incurious, from the patriarch fav'd,
The righteous remnant of a delug'd world?
Why are we taught, delighted, to recount
Alcides' labours, yet neglect to learn
How mighty Samſon led a life of toil
Herculean? Pain and peril mark'd them both;
A life eventful, and diſaſtrous death.
Can all the tales, which Grecian records yield;
Can all the names the Roman page records,
Renown'd for friendſhip and ſurpaſſing love;
Can gallant Theſeus and his brave compeer;
Oreſtes, and the partner of his toils;
Achates and his friend; Eúryalus

And blooming Niſus, pleaſant in their lives,
And undivided by the ſtroke of death;
Can each, can all, a lovelier picture yield
Of virtuous friendſhip: can they all preſent
A tenderneſs more touching than the love
Of Jonathan and David?—Speak, ye young!
You who are undebauch'd by faſhion's lore,
And, unſophiſticate, from nature judge,
Say, is your quick attention ſtronger drawn,
By waſted Thebes, than Pharaoh's ſmitten hoſts?
Or do the vagrant Trojans yield a theme
More grateful to the eager appetite
Of young impatience, than the wand'ring tribes,
By Moſes thro' the thirſty deſert led?
The beauteous maid (tho' tender is the tale),
Whoſe guiltleſs blood on Aulis' altars ſtream'd,
Smites not the boſom with a ſofter pang
Than Jephthah's daughter, doom'd like her to die.

Sacred Dramas.

147. William Melmoth, Esq.

ONE of the ſtrongeſt and moſt affecting inſtances of a faithful attachment to be met with in hiſtory, occurs in the friendſhip which ſubſiſted between two females. The inſtance alluded to, is recorded in the Jewiſh annals, and moſt pathetically related by one of the ſacred pen-men. The reader need not be told, that this is the friendſhip of Naomi and Ruth.

Two very remarkable inſtances of friendſhip occur, in the hiſtory of our Saviour's life: it may not perhaps be altogether unneceſſary to ſtate them in all their ſtriking circumſtances.

The evangeliſt, in relating the miracles which Chriſt performed at Bethany by reſtoring a perſon to life who had lain ſome days in the grave, introduces his narrative by emphatically obſerving, that "Jeſus loved Lazarus;" intimating, it ſhould ſeem, that the ſentiments which Chriſt entertained of Lazarus, were a diſtinct and peculiar ſpecies of that general benevolence with which he was actuated towards all mankind. Agreeably to this explication of the ſacred hiſtorian's meaning, when the ſiſters of Lazarus ſent to acquaint Jeſus with the ſtate in which their brother lay; they did not even mention his name; but pointed him out by a more honourable and equally notorious deſignation; the

terms of their meſſage were, "behold! he whom thou "loveſt is ſick!" Accordingly, when he informs his diſciples of the notice he had thus received, his expreſſion is, "our friend Lazarus ſleepeth." Now that Chriſt did not upon this occaſion uſe the word friend in its looſe undiſtinguiſhing acceptation, but in a reſtrained and ſtrictly appropriated ſenſe; is not only manifeſt from this plain account of the fact itſelf, but appears farther evident from the ſequel. For, as he was advancing to the grave, accompanied with the relations of the deceaſed, he diſcovered the ſame emotions of grief as ſwelled the boſoms of thoſe with whom Lazarus had been moſt intimately connected; and ſympathizing with their common ſorrow, he melted into tears. This circumſtance was too remarkable to eſcape particular obſervation: and it drew from the ſpectators, what one ſhould think it muſt neceſſarily draw from every reader, this natural and obvious reflection, "behold! how he loved him!"

But in the concluding cataſtrophe of our Saviour's life, he gave a ſtill more deciſive proof, that ſentiments of the ſtrongeſt perſonal attachment and friendſhip, were not unworthy of being admitted into his ſacred boſom. They were too deeply, indeed, impreſſed, to be extinguiſhed even by the moſt excruciating torments. In thoſe dreadful moments, obſerving among the afflicted witneſſes of his painful and ignominious ſufferings, that faithful follower, who is deſcribed by the hiſtorian as "the diſciple whom he loved;" he diſtinguiſhed him by the moſt convincing inſtance of ſuperior confidence, eſteem and affection that ever was exhibited to the admiration of mankind. For, under circumſtances of the moſt agonizing torments, when it might be thought impoſſible for human nature to retain any other ſenſibility but that of its own inexpreſſible ſufferings; he recommended to the care and protection of this his tried and approved friend, in terms of peculiar regard and endearment, the moſt tender and ſacred object of his private affections. But no language can repreſent this pathetic and affecting ſcene, with a force and energy equal to the ſublime ſimplicity of the Evangeliſt's own narrative: "Now there ſtood by "the croſs of Jeſus, his mother and his mother's ſiſter, and "Mary Magdalene. When Jeſus ſaw his mother, and the "diſciple by, whom he loved; he ſaith to his mother, Be"hold thy ſon! Then he ſaith to the diſciple, Behold thy "mother! And from that hour that diſciple took her to "his own home."

It may ſafely be aſſerted, that among all thoſe memorable examples of friendſhip, which have been celebrated with the higheſt encomiums by the ancients; there cannot be produced a ſingle inſtance, in which the moſt diſtinguiſhing features of exalted amity are ſo ſtrongly diſplayed, as in the foregoing relation. The only one, perhaps, that bears even a faint reſemblance to it, is that famous tranſaction, recorded by Lucian in his dialogue intitled Toxaris. Eudamidas being on his death bed made his will, by which he bequeathed his aged mother to the care and protection of Aretheus: and his daughter to Charixenus, to be diſpoſed of in marriage according to his diſcretion; injoining him at the ſame time, to give her as ample a portion as his circumſtances would admit. He added, that in caſe either of the legatees ſhould happen to die, he ſubſtituted the ſurvivor in his ſtead. Charixenus died very ſoon after the teſtator: in conſequence of which, Aretheus took each of theſe ſingularly confidential legacies to himſelf; and celebrating the marriage of his only daughter and that of his friend, on the ſame day, he divided his fortune equally between them.

When the very different circumſtances attending theſe reſpective examples, are duly conſidered; it muſt be acknowledged, that the former riſes as much above the latter in the proof it exhibits of ſublime friendſhip, as it does in the dignity of the characters concerned. Upon the whole then it appears, that the divine founder of the Chriſtian religion, as well by his own example, as by the ſpirit of his moral doctrine, has not only encouraged but conſecrated friendſhip.

Remarks on Cicero's Lælius.

148. Rev. Joseph Priestley, L. L. D.

IT appears to me, that we muſt either admit the truth of the Goſpel hiſtory, which contains an account of the doctrine, miracles, death and reſurrection of Chriſt, (on which the belief of a future life depends) or believe what is infinitely more incredible, viz. that ſeveral thouſand people, preſent at the tranſactions and who had no motive to believe them without ſufficient evidence, but every motive to turn their eyes from them, or diſbelieve them if they could, ſhould yet without ſuch evidence, have given the firmeſt aſſent to them, and have entertained ſo little doubt of the extraordinary facts, as to maintain their faith in them at the hazard of every thing dear to them in life, and even chearfully lay down their lives, rather than abandon their faith. Let philoſophers, as ſuch, account for this great fact, without admitting more real miracles, and thoſe of a more extrordinary

extraordinary kind, than the belief of Chriſtianity requires of me, and I will relinquiſh my preſent faith, dear as it is to me, and join them in expoſing it. As philoſophers, the queſtion between us is, whoſe faith, ſtrictly ſpeaking, is more agreeable to preſent appearances? Whatever we may think of an author of nature, and of his attention to it, we equally believe in the uniformity of the laws of nature, and that man, whoſe conſtitution is a part of the ſyſtem of nature, was the ſame kind of being two thouſand years ago that he is now; as much as that a horſe of that age, or an oak tree of that age, had the ſame properties with the horſes and oaks of the preſent. Conſequently, whatever was poſſible with reſpect to man, in any former period, is equally poſſible now.

But will any man, who gives a moment's attention to the ſubject, ſay, that it is even poſſible that ſeveral thouſand perſons, in London or Paris could be made to believe, that any man in London or Paris died and roſe from the dead in their own life-time; that they ſhould perſiſt in this perſuaſion through life, without ſhewing any ſign of inſanity; that they ſhould gain numerous proſelytes to their opinion, though it ſubjected all who embraced it to all kinds of perſecution, and even to death; and that the belief of it ſhould eſtabliſh itſelf againſt all oppoſition, without any perſon being able to detect the impoſition?

Now I apprehend, that this might take place more eaſily in London, or in Paris, at this day, than it could have done at Jeruſalem in the time of our Saviour. Human nature could not have been the ſame thing then that we find it to be at preſent, if mankind could have been ſo impoſed upon. This I therefore think abſolutely incredible, conſequently, as the leſs difficulty of the two, as believing a thing much leſs improbable, I admit the truth of the goſpel hiſtory, the admiſſion of which makes the ſubſequent account of the propagation of Chriſtianity (which all hiſtory and even the preſent ſtate of things, proves to be true) perfectly eaſy and natural. Admitting theſe leading facts, all the reſt follow of courſe, and all things came to be as they are without any farther miracle. But real miracles we muſt have ſomewhere, in order to account for the preſent ſtate of things; and if we muſt admit miracles, let them be ſuch as have a great object, and not ſuch as have no object at all, but only ſerve to puzzle and confound us.

The hiſtory of the Jews, and the books of the Old Teſtament, furniſh many facts, which no hypotheſis beſides that of the divine origin of their religion can explain. Let the philoſopher only admit as a poſtulatum, that Jews are, and

always were, men; conſtituted as other men are, and let him not deceive himſelf, by conſidering them as beings of another ſpecies.

All I wiſh in this reſpect is, that perſons who pretend to the character of philoſophers, would be ſo throughout, and carry the ſame ſpirit into the ſtudy of hiſtory, and of human nature, that they do into their laboratories; firſt aſſuring themſelves with reſpect to facts, and then explaining thoſe facts by reducing them to general principles (which, from the uniformity of nature, muſt be univerſally true) and then I ſhall have no doubt of their becoming as firm believers in Chriſtianity as myſelf. They will find no other hypotheſis, that can explain ſuch appearances as they cannot deny to be real. Let philoſophers now ſay, whether there be reaſon in this, or not.

I therefore take the liberty, having been led to advance thus much, to addreſs my brother philoſophers on a ſubject equally intereſting to us as philoſophers and as men. Do not diſregard a queſtion of infinite moment. Give it that degree of attention to which it is naturally intitled, and eſpecially do not ſo far abandon the ſerious character of philoſophers, as to laugh where you ought to reaſon. At leaſt, do this great ſubject, and yourſelves, the juſtice to conſider the facts, and endeavour to frame ſome hypotheſis by which to account for them; and do not decide in half an hour, on an inquiry which well deſerves the ſtudy of a great part of your lives.

If I have a ſtronger bias than many other perſons in favour of Chriſtianity, it is that which philoſophy gives me. I view with rapture the glorious face of nature, and I admire its wonderful conſtitution, the laws of which are daily unfolding themſelves to our view. It is but little that the life of man permits us to ſee at preſent, and therefore I feel a moſt eager deſire to renew my acquaintance with it hereafter, and to reſume theſe enquiries with which I am ſo much delighted now, and which muſt be interrupted by death. Could I imagine, that the knowledge of nature would ever be exhauſted, and that we were approaching to a termination of our enquiries, I could more contentedly ſhut my eyes on a ſcene in which nothing more was to be ſeen or done. But to quit the ſtage at preſent (and I believe the aſpect of things will be exactly ſimilar in any future period of our exiſtence) without the hope of reviſiting it, would fill me with the deepeſt regret. The general, who, like Epaminondas, or Wolfe, dies in the arms of victory, dies with ſatisfaction; but not ſo he that is cut off in the beginning of a doubtful, though promiſing engagement.

Thus

Thus I feel on the idea of ceaſing to breathe, when I have but juſt begun to know what it is that I breathe.

Mr. Herſchell's late diſcoveries in, and beyond, the bounds of the ſolar ſyſtem, the great views that he has given us of the arrangement of the ſtars, their revolutions, and thoſe of the immenſe ſyſtems into which they are formed, are peculiarly calculated to inſpire an ardent deſire of ſeeing ſo great a ſcene a little more unfolded. Such diſcoveries as theſe, give us a higher idea of the value of our being, by raiſing our ideas of the ſyſtem of which we are a part, and, with this, an earneſt wiſh for the continuance of it.

Beſides, civil ſociety is but in its infancy, the world itſelf is but very imperfectly known to the civilized inhabitants of it, and we are but little acquainted with the real value of thoſe few of its productions of which we have ſome knowledge, and which we are only beginning to name, and to arrange. How muſt a citizen of the world wiſh to know the future progreſs of it!

To have no wiſh of this kind certainly argues a low, and ignoble, and, I will ſay, an unphiloſophical mind. I conſider all ſuch perſons, how ſuperior ſoever they may be to myſelf in other reſpects, with pity and concern.

They would have unſpeakably more ſatisfaction in their philoſophical purſuits, if they carried them on with the views of things that I have. It has been juſtly obſerved, that great views indicate, and indeed conſtitute, great minds. What elevation of mind, then, would the proſpects of the Chriſtian add to thoſe of the philoſopher! With men of reflection this apology for my conduct will, I doubt not, be admitted as ſatisfactory; and till I hear better reaſons than have yet been offered to me for changing my conduct, I ſhall continue to give my attention to my different purſuits, according to my own ideas of their reſpective importance; and my friends have no reaſon to fear that I ſhall neglect philoſophy. It has, perhaps, but too ſtrong charms for me. I ſhall endeavour, however, to keep it in its proper place, and not ſo much attach myſelf to the ſtudy of the laws which govern this world, as to loſe ſight of the ſubſerviency of this world, and of all things in it to another and a better; in which I hope to reſume theſe pleaſing philoſophical purſuits and to ſee, in a comprehenſive view, thoſe detached diſcoveries which we are now making here.

At preſent all our ſyſtems are in a remarkable manner unhinged by the diſcovery of a multiplicity of facts, to which it appears difficult, or impoſſible, to adjuſt them. We need not

not, however, give ourſelves much concern on this account. For when a ſufficient number of new facts ſhall be diſcovered (towards which every imperfect hypotheſis will contribute) a more general theory will ſoon preſent itſelf: and perhaps to the moſt incurious and leaſt ſagacious eye. Thus, when able navigators have, with great labour and judgment, ſteered towards an undiſcovered country, a common ſailor, placed at the maſt-head, may happen to get the firſt ſight of the land. Let us not, however, contend about merit, but let us all be intent on forwarding the common enterprize, and equally enjoy any progreſs we make towards ſucceeding in it; and, above all, let us acknowledge the guidance of that Great Being, who has put a ſpirit in man, "and whoſe inſpi-" ration giveth him underſtanding."

Preface to philoſophical experiments and obſervations.

149. Rev. John Wesley, M. A.

THE Word of the living God, which directed the firſt patriarchs alſo, was, in the time of Moſes, committed to writing. To this were added in ſeveral ſucceeding generations, the inſpired writings of the other prophets. Afterwards, what the Son of God preached, and the Holy Ghoſt ſpake by the apoſtles, the apoſtles and evangeliſts wrote. This is what we now ſtyle the Holy Scripture: this is that Word of God which remaineth for ever: of which, "tho' heaven and " earth paſs away, one jot or tittle ſhall not paſs away." The Scripture therefore of the Old and New Teſtament, is a moſt ſolid and precious ſyſtem of divine truth. Every part thereof is worthy of God: and all together are one entire body, wherein is no defect, no exceſs. It is the fountain of heavenly wiſdom, which they who are able to taſte, prefer to all writings of men, however wiſe, or learned, or holy.

An exact knowledge of the truth was accompanied in the inſpired writers with an exactly regular ſeries of arguments, a preciſe expreſſion of their meaning, and a genuine vigour of ſuitable affections.

In the language of the Sacred Writings, we may obſerve the utmoſt depth together with the utmoſt eaſe. All the elegancies of human compoſures ſink into nothing before it; God ſpeaks not as man, but as God. His thoughts are very deep; and thence his words are of inexhauſtible virtue. And the language of his meſſengers alſo is exact in the higheſt degree: for the words which were given them, accurately anſwered the impreſſion made upon their minds: and hence Luther ſays, Divinity is nothing but a grammar of the language

of

of the Holy Ghoſt. To underſtand this thoroughly, we ſhould obſerve the emphaſis which lies on every word, the holy affections expreſſed thereby, and the tempers ſhewn by every writer. *Preface to his New Teſtament.*

150. Rev. John Wilson.

Who can ſet forth the excellency and uſefulneſs of God's Word? It is a glaſs to diſcover our ſpots, a lamp to guide us in the dark, a fire to warm our cold affections, a magazine to ſupply us with armour againſt our ſpiritual enemies. It is a phyſic garden, wherein grow all ſorts of medicinal herbs for our ſpiritual maladies: the promiſes are as fragrant flowers or ſpices in this garden: believers take many a pleaſant walk among theſe beds of ſpices. It is an apothecary's ſhop, out of which we may have eye-ſalve for our blindneſs, ſovereign cordials in our ſoul-diſtreſſes. Here are ſuitable cordials for all our various caſes, be it deſertion, temptation, poverty, ſickneſs, reproach, perſecution, &c. Here are the waters of the ſanctuary for cleanſing us from our pollutions. Here is the heavenly rain, for making ſoft and tender our hard hearts. The Scriptures are both food and phyſic to our ſouls; here is meat for ſtrong men, and milk for babes. The two Teſtaments, as Auguſtine ſaith, are the two breaſts which we muſt ſuck for ſpiritual nouriſhment. And there are none of God's children that will call them dry breaſts, or empty ciſterns; they have often afforded them ſtrength, nouriſhment, light, life, and comfort. O how highly have God's people, in all ages, prized God's Holy Word, and the liberty of reading it! It hath been ſweet as honey to their taſte. I have read of one, who being a priſoner in a dark dungeon, when light was allowed him for a ſhort time to take his meat he would take his Bible, and read a portion of it, ſaying, He could eat without light, but he could not read without it. I am perſuaded there is no better way in this world for improving the faculty of ſight, and benefit of light, than by reading the word of God.

Works.

151. Mr. Preston.

THE book of Job, the Pſalms, Proverbs, Eccleſiaſtes, the Wiſdom of Solomon, and of the Son of Sirach, ſupply large and rich funds for obſervations, and materials for writing. You cannot read more profitable books, believe me; and if you beſtow a due ſhare of attention and reflec-

tion

tion on them, you will find them exceedingly pleaſant, as well as profitable.

The only addition I have to make to this ſubject, is to quote you one inſtance of irony from the Holy Scriptures, which I think as ſtrong and as juſt as any I ever read. It is in ridicule of the prieſts of Baal, who was a falſe God; an idol and no more. His prieſts invoked him to perform a miracle. Elijah mocketh them. The reaſons which he aſſigns for their god not anſwering their interceſſion, are the ſevereſt piece of raillery imaginable.

"Cry aloud, ſays he, for he is a god; either he is talk-
"ing, or he is purſuing, or he is on a journey; or, per-
"adventure he ſleepeth, and muſt be awaked."

All which charges being ſo unworthy of a god, the raillery is conceived, in its full force, the moment the prophet opens his mouth, and muſt be underſtood by the moſt ordinary capacity. The whole chapter is worth your reading.

The 58th chapter of Iſaiah I recommend to you. It is admirable, as far as reſpects the ſubject itſelf; but the diſpoſition of the chapter, the repetitions, the emphaſis and energy, and the many figures introduced, make it admirably worth your notice. The chapter is ſtill more excellent, inaſmuch as it is full of ſtrong figures, yet appears exceedingly ſimple and plain.——The Holy Scriptures and Apocrypha, are of more intrinſic value, towards your preſent welfare and future happineſs, than all the other books, I know, put together, and will be ever deemed ſo by perſons of ſolid ſenſe. I will mention one or two paſſages, which I have reflected on a thouſand times; and it will be well for you to carry them much in your mind, for they will never fail. God ſays, "Him that honoureth me I will honour, and who-
"ever deſpiſeth me ſhall be lightly eſteemed."——The next paſſage is in the firſt book of Samuel: "For the Lord ſeeth
"not as man ſeeth; for man looketh on the outward ap-
"pearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart."

Letters to a young Lady, paſſim.

152. Rev. Thomas Hunter, M. A.

YOU cannot ſeriouſly and impartially peruſe your Bible, without being a wiſer and a better man, more informed in the knowledge of human nature, and more powerfully drawn to the practice of your reaſonable duty.

Diſcourſes on Providence.

153. Rev. Thomas Gibbons, D. D.

AMONG the writings to which I have been obliged for pertinent and ſtriking inſtances of the tropes and figures, I own myſelf largely indebted to the Sacred Scriptures; thoſe Sacred Scriptures, which, while I revere as the Oracles of God, graciouſly communicated for the inſtruction and advantage of mankind in their higheſt and everlaſting intereſts, ſo I alſo admire, as containing, in immenſe variety, the moſt beautiful flowers, and the moſt auguſt ſublimities of rhetoric.

Rhetoric.

154. M. De Montesquieu.

IT appears from a paſſage of the books of the pontiffs, quoted by Cicero in his ſecond book of laws, that they had amongſt the Romans inexpiable crimes; and it is on this that Zozymus founds the narration ſo proper to blacken the motives of Conſtantine's converſion; and Julian, that bitter raillery on his converſion in his Cæſars.

The Pagan religion indeed, which prohibited only ſome of the groſſer crimes, and which ſtopped the hand, but meddled not with the heart, might have crimes that were inexpiable; but a religion which bridles all the paſſions; which is not more jealous of actions than of thoughts and deſires; which holds us not by a few chains, but by an infinite number of threads; which, leaving human juſtice aſide, eſtabliſhes another kind of juſtice; which is ſo ordered, as to lead us continually from repentance to love, and from love to repentance; which puts between the judge and the criminal a greater mediator, between the juſt and the mediator a great judge; a religion like this ought not to have inexpiable crimes. But, while it gives fear and hope to all, it makes us ſufficiently ſenſible, that though there is no crime in its own nature inexpiable, yet a whole criminal life may be ſo: that it is extremely dangerous to affront mercy, by new crimes and new expiations; that an uneaſineſs on account of ancient debts, from which we are never entirely free, ought to make us afraid of contracting new ones, of filling up the meaſure, and going even to that point where paternal goodneſs is limited.

Spirit of Laws.

155. Rev. John Gill, D. D.

THE Sacred Books contain things of the greateſt moment and importance to the ſpiritual and eternal welfare of men, to the honour and intereſt of the great Redeemer, and

to

to the glory of God; and therefore ſhould be moſt carefully peruſed, moſt diligently ſearched into, and, as much as in us lies, ſhould be ſtudiouſly, diſtinctly, and rightly explained.

Preface to the New Teſtament.

156. Rev. William Enfield, D. D.

WHETHER we conſider the nature and tendency of our Saviour's diſcourſes, or the manner in which he addreſſed himſelf to the people, we ſhall be convinced that he poſſeſſed every qualification requiſite to complete the character of a preacher of righteouſneſs, and ſhall ſee reaſon to ſay concerning him, "Never man ſpake like this man."

Sermons for the uſe of families.

157. Rev. Charles Peters, M. A.

EVERY thing in the Holy Scriptures ſeems to have a tendency to make us better, as often as we read them with a due attention. We there behold the moſt excellent rules and precepts for an holy life, ſuch as, were they duly practiſed, would turn the race of men into a ſociety of angels here on earth. We are there entertained with ſome of the moſt perfect patterns of piety and virtue that ever flouriſhed ſince the world began. But, above all, the Holy Scriptures lay before us the moſt powerful arguments and motives to the practice of a good life that it is poſſible for the imagination of man to conceive. *Sermons*

158. Rev. John Young, D. D.

THE religion of the Son of God requires nothing but what every wiſe man will find it his intereſt to obſerve, and refuſes us no enjoyments that are truly worth the poſſeſſing. —A ſpirit of love breathes forth in every thing he taught, in every thing he commanded.

Sermons on various Subjects.

159. Sir David Dalrymple.

HISTORIANS, who wrote in the days of Diocletian and Conſtantine, could not, without exceſſive affectation, have made digreſſions concerning the riſe and progreſs of a ſect which was very numerous and well known in the days of Diocletian, and, in the days of Conſtantine, roſe triumphant over Paganiſm.

They

They were unbelievers, and, therefore, they could not extol the Perfection of the Chriſtian ſyſtem, or the fortitude of the martyrs in the cauſe of Chriſtianity; but they were faithful, although not lively or eloquent hiſtorians, and we may ſee good reaſon for applauding the candour and decency of thoſe Heathens, who have neither vilified our faith, nor calumniated its primitive profeſſors.

Diſquiſitions concerning the Antiquities of the Chriſtian Church.

160. Rev. George Whitefield, M. A.

CHRIST is the treaſure hid in the field, both of the Old and New Teſtament. In the Old, you will find him under prophecies, types, ſacrifices, and ſhadows; in the New, manifeſted in the fleſh, to become a propitiation for our ſins as a prieſt, and as a prophet to reveal the whole will of his heavenly Father.—Search therefore the Scriptures; taſte and ſee how good the Word of God is, and then you will never leave that heavenly manna, that angel's food, to feed on dry huſks, that light bread, thoſe trifling, ſinful compoſitions, in which men of falſe taſte delight themſelves: no; you will then diſdain ſuch poor entertainment; and the Word of God will then be ſweeter to you than honey, and the honey-comb, and dearer than gold and ſilver.——In the 46th pſalm I know not which to admire moſt, the piety, or the poetry; the matter, or the manner; and I believe I may venture to defy all the critics on earth to ſhew me any compoſition of Pindar, or Horace, that any way comes up to the diction of it, conſidered only as human. *Sermons, paſſim.*

161. Rev. John Guise, D. D.

THE knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is ſo neceſſary to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith in Chriſt Jeſus, that it ought to have an uppermoſt place in our daily thoughts and deſires.—And as the Sacred Hiſtory, contained in the four Evangeliſts—carries the higheſt evidence of the truth and excellence of the Chriſtian religion;—it is of great importance to be well acquainted with theſe parts of the oracles of God. *Expoſition of the four Evangeliſts.*

162. Rev. James Beattie, L. L. D.

IS it bigotry to believe the ſublime truths of the Goſpel with full aſſurance of faith? I glory in ſuch bigotry: I would not part with it for a thouſand worlds: I congratulate the man who is poſſeſſed of it; for, amidſt all the viciſſitudes and calamities

calamities of the preſent ſtate, that man enjoys an inexhauſtible fund of conſolation, of which it is not in the power of fortune to deprive him.

——There is not a book on earth ſo favourable to all the kind, and all the ſublime affections, or ſo unfriendly to hatred and perſecution, to tyranny, injuſtice, and every ſort of malevolence as the Goſpel.——It breathes nothing throughout but mercy, benevolence, and peace.——

Poetry is ſublime, when it awakens in the mind any great and good affection, as piety, or patriotiſm. This is one of the nobleſt effects of the heart. The Pſalms are remarkable beyond all other writings, for their power of inſpiring devout emotions. But it is not in this reſpect only that they are ſublime. Of the divine nature they contain the moſt magnificent deſcriptions that the ſoul of man can comprehend. The hundred and fourth Pſalm, in particular, diſplays the power and goodneſs of providence, in creating and preſerving the world, and the various tribes of animals in it, with ſuch majeſtic brevity and beauty, as it is vain to look for in any human compoſition.——

Such of the doctrines of the Goſpel as are level to human capacity appear to be agreeable to the pureſt truth and the ſoundeſt morality. All the genius and learning of the Heathen world; all the penetration of Pythagoras, Socrates, and Ariſtotle, had never been able to produce ſuch a ſyſtem of moral duty, and ſo rational an account of providence and of man, as is to be found in the New Teſtament. Compared, indeed, to this, all other moral and theological wiſdom

Loſes diſcountenanced, and like folly ſhews.

Works, paſſim.

163. Rev. East Apthorp, D. D.

THE firſt, and truly original hiſtorians, are thoſe of the Hebrew ſcriptures. The ſacred writers, to the unequalled dignity of their ſubject, unite a majeſtic ſimplicity and perſpicuity of ſtyle and narrations. Moſes, the moſt ancient, is the moſt perfect of hiſtorians. His ſtyle is copious, even, and clear. Like a deep river, he bears his reader with a calm and majeſtic courſe. It was his purpoſe, to give us a body of laws, as well as a thread of hiſtory; and by interweaving them together he has authenticated both. For it is impoſſible to forge the civil and religious polity of a great nation.

In the ſucceeding books of the hiſtoric Scriptures, I think, we may diſcern a manner of writing leſs ſimple, leſs pure, than

than that of Moſes. The reign of David and that of Solomon may be deemed the Auguſtan age of Hebrew literature. The writings of this period are correct, expreſſive, harmonious. In the ſubſequent memoirs, we ſee the Hebrew ſtyle manifeſtly tinctured with the Arabian, Perſian, and Chaldaic idioms.——

Chriſtianity appears in all its beauty in the writings of the New Teſtament.——

When we conſider the Chriſtian morality in its ground of obligation, its principle of charity, and in its detail of ſpecial duties; we are ſtruck with admiration at the ſimplicity and perfection of a rule of life, which without any artificial ſyſtem extended the Jewiſh law, and combined all the excellencies of Gentile philoſophy; the elevation of Plato, without his myſticiſm: the reaſonableneſs of Ariſtotle, without his contracted ſelfiſhneſs and worldly views; tempering the rigour of Zeno, with the moderation of Epicurus: while by the greatneſs of its end, it reforms, refines, and elevates human nature from ſenſe to ſpirit, from earth to heaven.

Letters on the Prevalence of Chriſtianity, and Diſcourſes on Prophecy.

164. Rev. Charles De Coetlogon, M. A.

THERE is no excellency in natural religion but what is contained and revealed with every poſſible advantage. It teaches us to conceive of God, as human reaſon unaſſiſted could never have conceived of him, but which right reaſon cannot but approve. It contains the moſt refined and exalted ſyſtem of morals; entirely free from all the corruptions and iniquities of the Mahometan, and from the vain foppery, ſuperſtition, and idolatry, of the Popiſh religion; and, which is no ſmall circumſtance in its favour, it has every advantage of the Jewiſh religion, none of its diſadvantages, and ten thouſand greater advantages than that diſpenſation ever enjoyed. *Divine Meſſage.*

165. Rev. William Paley, M. A.

THE Chriſtian Scriptures are more copious and explicit upon our obligation to beſtow relief upon the poor than almoſt any other. The deſcription which Chriſt hath left us of the proceedings of the laſt day, eſtabliſhes the obligation of bounty, ſo far as his authority can be depended upon, beyond controverſy. "When the Son of man ſhall come "in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then ſhall

"he

" he ſit upon the throne of his glory, and before him ſhall " be gathered all nations; and he ſhall ſeparate them one " from another.—Then ſhall the king ſay unto them on his " right hand, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the " kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the " world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was " thirſty, and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye " took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was ſick, and " ye viſited me: I was in priſon, and ye came unto me.— " And inaſmuch as ye have done it to one of the leaſt of " theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It is not neceſſary to underſtand this paſſage as a literal account of what will actually paſs on that day. Suppoſing it only a ſcenical deſcription of the rules and principles, by which the ſupreme arbiter of our deſtiny will regulate his deciſions, it conveys the ſame leſſon to us; it equally demonſtrates of how great value and importance theſe duties in the ſight of God are, and what ſtreſs will be laid upon them. The apoſtles alſo deſcribe this virtue as propitiating the divine favour in an eminent degree. And theſe recommendations have produced their effect. It does not appear that before the times of Chriſtianity, a hoſpital, infirmary, or public charity of any kind, exiſted in the world; whereas moſt countries in Chriſtendom have long abounded with theſe inſtitutions. To which may be added, that a ſpirit of private liberality ſeems to flouriſh amidſt the decay of many other virtues: not to mention the legal proviſion for the poor, which obtains in this country, and which was unknown and unthought of by the moſt poliſhed nations of antiquity. *Moral and political Philoſophy.*

166. Rev. Charles Churchill.

THE Goſpel laws, if fairly and impartially conſidered, are undoubtedly the moſt excellent in the world. God does not rule us in an arbitrary manner, and impoſe laws merely to demonſtrate his authority, but governs us, as we are reaſonable creatures, in a reaſonable way. The laws which he has given us are adapted to the frame of our reaſon; and as creatures poſſeſſed of that faculty, we cannot help aſſenting to their equity, how much ſoever we may neglect the performance of them; they carry full authority and conviction along with them, they ſpeak their original, and atteſt their author to be more than man.——The laws of the Goſpel are free from all the imperfections of human laws; they are delivered in a clear, conciſe, and perſpicuous manner, and as they

they were designed for the direction of the ignorant, as well as of the learned, they lie level to the meaneſt capacities, they are perfectly uniform, conſiſtent and harmonious.——The laws of the Goſpel are alſo fixt and immutable, liable to no change, ſubject to no repeal. The varying circumſtances, the fallibility, ſhortſightedneſs, and want of integrity in human lawgivers, make it oftentimes neceſſary to vary their laws, but as God is free from all theſe blemiſhes, as there is in him no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning, ſo in the goſpel laws which he has eſtabliſhed, there are no miſtakes, no infirmities to require an alteration; they are a full, perfect, and perpetual ſtandard of all our actions, to which all nations ſhould bow and obey.

To theſe excellencies let us alſo join the ſublimity and uſefulneſs of theſe laws. In three ſhort chapters of the New Teſtament are contained more noble and ſublime doctrines, than the whole body of Heathen philoſophy can ſupply us with; upon firſt ſight indeed they appear ſo eaſy and familiar, that we may be induced to think, that we ourſelves could have been the authors of them; but upon enquiry we ſhall find, that the moſt acute and diligent ſpirits among the ancients, after a whole life ſpent in the ſtudy of virtue, could with all the advantages of human literature, produce nothing which deſerved to be put in the ſcale againſt Chriſtianity. *Works, paſſim.*

167. J. Stephens, Esq.

OUR Saviour's ſermon on the mount contains the pureſt ſyſtem of morality, and the moſt heavenly doctrine, that has ever yet appeared in the world. It is here that we find the duties of an intelligent being, and rational creature, not only towards his Creator, but towards his fellow-creatures, clearly pointed out. It is here that we find the dictates of that pure voice of uncorrupted nature, which ſpeaks to every intelligent being, as the voice of God, ſo fully and clearly explained, that the meaneſt capacity cannot miſtake it. And whoever reads this ſermon with attention, will find it ſpeaking to his heart, and giving him a full explanation to his own imperfect and limited ideas. It is here that we are taught humility, meekneſs, brotherly love, charity, and that god-like quality, forgiveneſs. It is here that we are taught to think poorly of ourſelves, and of all our own merits, and to addreſs the Father of ſpirits in prayer. In fact, it is here that we are taught to live like rational creatures, who are only paſſengers through this tranſitory life, and who are to pre-

pare ourſelves for a life eternal. And all thoſe particulars, although they were preached apparently by a poor carpenter's ſon, are delivered with ſuch a tone of majeſty, ſublimity, and, at the ſame time, ſimplicity, as the greateſt philoſophers could never imitate.

Chriſtian Religion compared with all other Religions.

168. Rev. James Neale, M.A

THE language of Hoſea is all fire. His thoughts roll along as thunder. Thucydides among the Greeks, and Salluſt among the Romans, remotely give us ſome idea of Hoſea's diction. *Prophecies of Hoſea, tranſlated.*

169. Baron Haller.

THE gravity of our Saviour's diſcourſes, and the majeſtic compoſure with which they were delivered, evidently marked their divine teacher. "He ſpoke as never man ſpoke;" this was the declaration of thoſe who heard him, notwithſtanding their prejudice againſt his perſon and doctrine. And to this teſtimony I cannot with-hold my aſſent, when I compare his diſcourſes with any of thoſe that have been delivered by the moſt eminent philoſophers of Greece and China.

Letters to his Daughter.

170. Rev. J. Mainwaring, B. D.

THE graceful negligence of nature always pleaſes beyond the trueſt ornaments that art can deviſe. Indeed, they are then trueſt, when they approach the neareſt to this negligence. To attain it, is the very triumph of art. The wiſe artiſt, therefore, always compleats his ſtudies in the great ſchool of creation, where the forms of elegance lie ſcattered in an endleſs variety: and the writer, who wiſhes to poſſeſs ſome portion of that ſovereign excellence, ſimplicity, even though he were an infidel, would have recourſe to the Scriptures and make them his model.——

The pathetic and ſublime ſimplicity of our Saviour's whole deſcription of the laſt judgment cannot be paralleled in any writing of any age.

—In the Goſpel we find no pompous diſplays of reaſoning; no laboured and difficult diſtinctions; no long and learned enquiries concerning the nature and kinds of virtue; but virtue itſelf repreſented to the life; in examples, and precepts, which are level to the plaineſt underſtandings; in familiar occurrences; in ſhort and ſimple narrations; in actions,

or

or diſcourſes real, or imagined. And perhaps, among other things, it is this unſyſtematic form, this neglect of art and method, which produces that graceful eaſe, that venerable, majeſtic ſimplicity, that air of truth and originality, which diſtinguiſh the Scriptures from all human writings.

Sermons and Diſſertation.

171. Rev. Nathaniel Lardner, D. D.

THE volume of the New Teſtament conſiſts of ſeveral pieces.—The whole is writ without affectation, with the greateſt ſimplicity and plainneſs, and is confirmed by other ancient writers of unqueſtioned authority.—The divine providence has all along watched over and guarded theſe beſt of books (a very fit object of an eſpecial care) which contain the beſt of principles, were apparently writ with the beſt views, and have in them inimitable characters of truth and ſimplicity.

Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory.

172. Rev. Henry Hunter, D. D.

THE Holy Scriptures poſſeſs an acknowledged ſuperiority over all other writings, in all the different kinds of literary compoſition.—The Sacred Book is altogether extraordinary in its kind, whether we conſider the beauty of the compoſition, the importance of the information it contains, the internal marks of authenticity it bears, or the noble purpoſes to which it has been, and may be made ſubſervient. *Sacred Biography.*

173. Rev. Henry Stebbing, D. D.

CONSIDER Chriſtianity as it was left us by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and no exception can lie againſt it, as a means unfit to ſecure the purpoſes intended by it.—A man muſt know little of the world, who does not think that Chriſtianity, in its moſt frightful dreſs, is far preferable to the Pagan worſhip. *Diſcourſe on the uſe and advantages of the Goſpel Revelation.*

174. Rev. John Balguy, M. A.

HOW, Sir, can you retain any prejudice againſt a religion, that holds forth ſuch a ſublime ſyſtem of morality? that contains rules and precepts, ſo excellent, and ſo divine? Examine the wiſdom of the ancients; look through the productions of all ages; and if in any, or in all of them, a ſcheme of doctrine can be found, more juſt and glorious in itſelf, or more conducive to the welfare and perfection of

mankind; that better anſwers all wiſe and good purpoſes, whether human or divine: inſtead of recommending the Goſpel to you any more, I ſhall earneſtly intreat you to embrace that in the room of it, and adhere to it while you live.

Letter to a Deiſt.

175. Rev. John Jortin, D. D.

THERE never was a book which abounded more with internal proofs of the truth of its contents than the New Teſtament. A ſpirit of piety, charity, and diſintereſtedneſs appears through the whole.

Diſcourſes concerning the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

176. Benjamin Rush, M. D.

IN every age and country, where Chriſtianity has been propagated, the moſt accompliſhed orators have generally been the moſt ſucceſsful reformers of mankind. There muſt be a defect of eloquence in a preacher, who with the reſources for oratory, which are contained in the Old and New Teſtaments, does not produce in every man who hears him, at leaſt a temporary love of virtue. The truths of Chriſtianity afford the greateſt ſcope for the human underſtanding, and they will become intelligible to us, only in proportion as the human genius is ſtretched by means of philoſophy, to its utmoſt dimenſions.—The truths of Chriſtianity and philoſophy, dwell alike in the mind of the Deity, and reaſon and religion are equally the offspring of his goodneſs. They muſt, therefore, ſtand and fall together.

Oration at Philadelphia.

177. Rev. John Andrews, L. L. B.

I AM fully perſuaded, that there is a real ſtandard of eloquence founded in reaſon and nature; and that according to that ſtandard, the Holy Scriptures furniſh out a nobler ſublime, and a more pure, flowing, and unaffected eloquence, than any other writings in the world.

Scripture Doctrine of Grace.

178. Rev. Sam. Croxall, D. D.

WERE the Bible but conſidered impartially and attentively, in its moſt advantageous lights; as it contains all the written revelation of God's will now extant; as it is the baſis of our national religion, and gives vigour and ſpirit to all our

our ſocial laws; as it is the moſt ancient, and conſequently, curious collection of hiſtorical incidents, moral precepts, and political inſtitutions; as the ſtyle of it is, in ſome places, nobly ſublime and poetical, and in others, ſweetly natural, plain, and unaffected: in a word, as the being well acquainted with it is highly requiſite, in order to make men uſeful and ornamental in this life, to ſay nothing of their happineſs in the next, it is to be hoped, that a cool reflection or two of this ſort, might induce the more ingenious and rational among them, to let the Bible take its turn, in their riper years, among thoſe volumes which paſs through their hands either for amuſement or inſtruction. And ſhould ſuch an entertainment once become faſhionable, of what mighty ſervice would it be to the intereſt of religion, and conſequently the happineſs of mankind!

Scripture Politics.

179. Rev. John Brown, M. D.

IF we examine the Sacred Records, we ſhall find they conſiſt of four different kinds, the poetic, oratorical, hiſtorical, and didactic forms. The poetic lies chiefly in the book of Pſalms, of Job, and ſeveral detached paſſages in the Prophets, particularly of Iſaiah. They contain many noble efforts of unmixed poetry or pure imitation; yet theſe, being all centered in one intention, that of extolling the works, and celebrating the power, wiſdom and goodneſs of the Deity, do generally partake of the character of eloquence, being chiefly of the lyric kind. In all theſe, the great character of ſimplicity is ſo ſtrongly predominant, that every attempt to embelliſh them, by adding the ſupernumerary decorations of ſtyle in tranſlation, hath ever been found to weaken and debaſe them.

As to the oratorical or pathetic parts, innumerable might be produced, equal, if not ſuperior to any recorded by profane antiquity. In theſe, the leading character of ſimplicity is no leſs remarkable. Our Saviour's parables and exhortations are generally admirable in this quality. Filled with unfeigned compaſſion for the weakneſs and miſeries of man, they breathe nothing but the pureſt benevolence. St. Paul's laſt converſation with his friends at Epheſus, on his departure for Jeruſalem; his diſcourſe on the reſurrection, and on charity; his reproofs, his commendations, his apologies, eſpecially that before Agrippa, are wrote in the nobleſt ſtrain of ſimplicity. And as a perfect model of this kind, we may give the ſtory of Joſeph and his brethren, which for tender-

neſs, true pathos, and unmixed ſimplicity, is beyond compare, ſuperior to any thing that appears in ancient ſtory.

But as the moſt important part of Scripture lies in the hiſtorical and preceptive part; eſpecially in the New Teſtament, whence chiefly our idea of duty muſt be drawn; ſo we find this uniform and ſimple manner eminently prevailing throughout, in every precept and narration. The hiſtory is conveyed in that artleſs ſtrain which alone could adapt it to the capacities of all mankind; the precepts delivered by our Saviour are drawn from the principles of common ſenſe, improved by the moſt exalted love of God and man; and either expreſſed in clear and direct terms, or couched under ſuch images and alluſions, as are every where to be found in nature, ſuch as are, and muſt ever be univerſally known, and familiar to all mankind; in which we may further obſerve, his manner of teaching was greatly ſuperior to the juſtly applauded Socrates, who, for the moſt part drew his images and alluſions from the leſs known arts and manners of the city. Through all this variety of ſtriking alluſion and moral precept the ſtyle ever continues the ſame, unadorned, ſimple, vehement and majeſtic; yet never drawing the reader's attention on itſelf, but on the divine ſentiments it conveys.

To this we may further add, that theſe ſeveral kinds of compoſition are mixed and united with ſuch propriety and force, as is ſcarce to be equalled in any other writings. The poetical parts are heightened by the great ſtrokes of eloquence and precept; the pathetic by the nobleſt imagery and ſtricteſt morals; and the preceptive is ſtrengthened and enforced by all the aids of poetry, eloquence and parable; calculated at once to engage the imagination, to touch the paſſions, and command the reaſon of mankind.

Eſſays on the Characteriſtics.

180. Archbishop Herring.

THE books of Scripture are venerable books, and, no doubt, moſt excellent themſelves.

Letters to William Duncombe, Eſq.

181. Rev. William Robertson, D. D.

CHRISTIANITY is rational and ſublime in its doctrines, humane and beneficent in its precepts, pure and ſimple in its worſhip.—The temper which Chriſtianity inſpired was mild and gentle; and the doctrines it taught added ſuch dignity and luſtre to human nature, as reſcued it from the diſhonourable

nourable ſervitude into which it was ſunk.—What a wonderful and bleſſed change hath Chriſtianity produced in the face of the world! Together with the knowledge of it, liberty, humanity, and domeſtic happineſs, diffuſed themſelves over every corner of the earth.—Genuine Chriſtianity is diſtinguiſhed above all other religions, by the mildneſs of its ſpirit: the enemy of every practice which hardens the heart: the encourager of every virtue which renders the character humane. Wherever it hath been eſtabliſhed in purity, and practiſed with zeal, kindneſs, long-ſuffering, meekneſs, charity, are the graces which accompany it.

Sermon upon the Situation of the World when Chriſt appeared.

182. Rev. Richard Price, D. D.

IT is not poſſible, that any information ſhould be ſo important, as that which we have in the Sacred Writings. The diſcoveries lately made in the ſyſtem of the material world are juſtly thought of with admiration. They beſtow, indeed, new luſtre and dignity on human nature. But they are of no conſequence and deſerve no regard, compared with the diſcoveries contained in the Bible, ſuppoſing it entitled to our faith. We are here made acquainted with ſeveral facts in the ſcheme of the moral world, and the hiſtory of providence, which are not only wonderful, but intereſting in the higheſt degree. *Four Diſſertations.*

183. Critical Review.

WHEN we conſider, that, according to the common computation, it is 3230 years ſince the death of Moſes; that his five books were written in a language, which is now but very imperfectly underſtood; that in numberleſs inſtances we are unacquainted with the force, the beauty, and even the meaning, of his expreſſions, the uſe and propriety of his inſtitutions, and the ſingular notions and cuſtoms of the ancient patriarchs and Jews; and that he has been expoſed to peculiar envy, on account of his pretenſions to a ſacred and prophetical character, and more particularly in conſequence of having been the legiſlator and hiſtorian of a people, who have been deſpiſed by all other nations; under theſe circumſtances, we ſhall not be ſurpriſed to find, that his writings have been miſrepreſented and ridiculed by ſuperficial writers, wits, deiſts, and unbelievers.

We are indeed ſo far from joining Monſieur Voltaire in wiſhing to expoſe the character of the Jewiſh legiſlator, that we ſhould

ſhould rejoice to ſee it raiſed above all exceptions; not merely becauſe the Pentateuch is admitted into our canon of Scripture, but on account of his hiſtory, which, in our eſtimation, is infinitely more valuable than that of Herodotus, Thucydides, Livy, in ſhort, of any other Greek or Roman writer, as it comprehends an interval of 2552 years, which, without it, would have been a blank in the annals of time, a period of utter darkneſs and oblivion.——Inſtances of majeſtic ſimplicity and unaffected grandeur are to be met with, in great plenty, throughout the Sacred Writings. Many paſſages may be produced from thence, which in this reſpect are ſuperior to any that we find in the ancient claſſics, or in modern writers. Several circumſtances concurred to give the Scriptures this diſtinguiſhing pre-eminence. They were written in ages of primitive ſimplicity, when all frivolous embelliſhments of ſtyle were unknown. They are the productions of oriental writers, who were uſed to bold, metaphorical expreſſions, and magnificent images. But, above all, the ſacred writers employed their thoughts on the moſt exalted ſubjects; the excellence of the Supreme Being, the works of Omnipotence, and the diſpenſations of Providence. They were animated by a divine ſpirit, and felt that noble enthuſiaſm, which Longinus calls, το σφοδρον ενθουσιαστικον παθος. The writings of the Old and New Teſtament are the nobleſt compoſitions of antiquity; the beauties and ſublimities of which, though diffuſed through almoſt every page, have been ſhamefully neglected, or miſunderſtood.

Volumes 45 *and* 43.

184. JOHANNES ALBERTUS BENGELIUS.

DUÆ ſunt boni ſermonis virtutes, profunditas et facilitas. Eæ raro conjunctæ ſunt apud humanos ſcriptores: atque ut quiſque ſcribit ipſe, ſic ei videntur alii ſcribere. Qui omnia verba expendit, in alieno ſcripto ſe aliquid alicubi invenire putat, ne auctori quidem quæſitum: qui magis promiſcue ſcribit, aliorum quoque ſermones dilutius accipit. At in Scripturis Divinis ſumma profunditas cum ſummâ facilitate conjungitur.—Omnes mundanas in ſtilo curiæ elegantias longiſſimè ſuperat Divinus Sermo. Deus, non ut homo, ſed ut Deus, verba facit, ſeipſo digna. Altæ ſunt ejus cogitationes; inde verba, inexhauſtæ virtutis. Apud interpretes quoque ejus, quamvis ab hominibus haud eruditos, exactiſſima eſt oratio.——Syſtema teſtimoniorum divinorum ſolidiſſimum pretioſiſſimumque eſt Scriptura V. et N. T. neque ſolum ſingulæ partes Deo dignæ ſunt, ſed etiam conjunctæ unum

unum corpus integrum aptumque referunt, quod nullo defectu, nullo excuſſu laborat. Fons eſt ſapientiæ: quem, qui guſtarunt, omnibus aliorum quamlibet ſanctorum, expertorum, devotorum, ſapientum hominum documentis antenunt.

Genomon Novi Teſtamenti, paſſim.

185. Bishop Patrick.

THE excellence of the book of Proverbs will be beſt underſtood by the ſerious peruſal of it; which will diſcover it to be a magazine of all ſorts of wiſdom.

Preface to Proverbs.

186. Rev. Thomas Burnet, S. T. P.

LAUDEMUS et admiremur virum illum maximum, legiſlatorem conſultiſſimum, ſummumque Dei prophetam, omnis genûs miraculis ſplendeſcentem. Quem vidit olim et obſtupuit Ægyptus literatorum ſedes, triumphantem in ſuos Magos et Hierophantas. Quem omnes deinceps gentes celebrârunt. Quem denique e cælo deductum, in teſtem ſuæ gloriæ, adſcivit Chriſtus. Hæ tibi erunt laudes, prophétarum princeps: hæc monumenta tuæ gloriæ, donec cæli et terra manſerint incolumes.

De Fide et Officiis Chriſtianorum.

187. Marcilius Ficinus,

THAT great philoſophic ſoul, and as learned an Italian as that nation ever bred, after he had read all good authors, reſted in the Bible as the only book.

Edwards on the Scriptures.

188. Sir Peter King.

WE all believe in one and the ſame God, hope to be ſaved by one and the ſame Redeemer, deſire to be ſanctified by one and the ſame Sanctifier, receive one and the ſame Scriptures, aſſent to the ſame doctrines, and acknowledge the neceſſity of the ſame duties.——

The very ſoul and ſpirit of Chriſtianity conſiſts in unity, love, and amity.

Enquiry into the Conſtitution of the Primitive Church.

189. Des Cartes.

NEVER did any philoſopher behave more reſpectfully in regard to the Deity than he was wont to deport himſelf. He was

was always very reſerved in his diſcourſes concerning religion. He never ſpake of the Deity but with the greateſt circumſpection, always with much diſcretion and good ſenſe, accompanied with a noble and elevated manner in his expreſſion. He was continually on his guard, leſt he ſhould let any thing eſcape, either in his writing or ſpeaking, that might be thought derogatory from the reſpect due to religion. His delicacy in that article was extreme. *Encyclopedy.*

190. Mr. J. Newbery.

MOSES' Ode at the Red Sea is incomparably better than any thing the Heathen poets have produced of the kind; and is by all good judges conſidered as a maſter-piece of ancient eloquence. The thoughts are noble and ſublime; the ſtyle magnificent and expreſſive: the figures bold and animated; the tranſactions and excurſions are ſudden and frequent; but they are ſhort, and the poet, having digreſſed for a moment, returns immediately to the great object that excited his wonder, and elevated his ſoul with joy and gratitude. The images fill the mind with their greatneſs, and ſtrike the imagination in a manner not to be expreſſed. *Art of Poetry.*

191. Rev. Josiah Tucker, D. D.

AS to the nature and genius of the Scripture-ſtyle, we ſhould ever bear in mind, that the eaſtern nations are a people of great vivacity and quick apprehenſions; that they conceive things, and enter into the ſpirit of what was intended to be ſaid, without the formality of a long ſeries of propoſitions, and of producing each argument in its full length. They would have diſdained, as heavy and ſpiritleſs, the methodical compoſitions of our times and climate. They delighted in bold figurative expreſſions, and quick ſallies from one ſubject to another. St. Paul was remarkable for his oriental caſt and lively imagination.—His eloquence was ſtrong and impetuous; his apoſtrophes, or turning from one ſubject to another, ſudden and unexpected. *Sermons.*

192. Mrs. Griffith.

SHAKESPEARE by frequently interſperſing alluſions to the Scriptures, throughout his writings, awakens us to the contemplation of a religion ſo pure, ſo equally free from the ſeverities of diſcipline, and the ſuperſtitions of devotion; of a ſyſtem of theology, framed even as a man himſelf would chuſe; in fine, of a faith and doctrine, which has but ſtronger bound

bound the ſocial ties, given an higher ſanction to moral obligations, and proved our duty to be our intereſt alſo.

Morality of Shakeſpeare's Drama illuſtrated.

193. Rev. Mr. Madan.

WHEN we contemplate Chriſtianity, as revealed in the Old Teſtament, and as opened to us in the New Teſtament, we may truly call it a moſt noble, moſt gracious and moſt glorious diſplay of heavenly wiſdom, and emanation from all the perfections and attributes of the Deity; ſuited, divinely ſuited, to relieve the wants, and to heal the miſery, of fallen man, to ſtamp once more the divine image on the human ſoul, and make "it meet to partake of the inheritance of the ſaints in light." *Thelyphthora.*

194. Rev. Robert Bolton, B. D.

THE book of Proverbs is a ſacred cabinet of richeſt jewels; I mean the moſt ſelected, and wiſeſt aphoriſms, that ever iſſued out of a mortal brain.--It is compared to a great heap of gold rings, rich and orient, ſeverally, and every one ſhining with a diſtinct ſenſe by itſelf.

Inſtructions for comforting afflicted Conſciences.

195. Bishop Cumberland.

WE muſt either uſe our reaſon in the ſtudy of the Scriptures, or we have no reaſon to ſtudy them at all: nor need we fear any evil conſequences from ſuch a practice: for all the doctrines of revelations, when freed from the errors of the miſtaken and the impoſition of the deſigning part of its votaries, and taken as they ſtand in the Scriptures themſelves, free from all human figments and unwarrantable deductions, will ſtand the teſt of reaſon. *Treatiſe on the Laws of Nature.*

196. Bishop Burnet.

THE rules given in the Goſpel to all orders of men, and in all the relations of life, would make all families and ſocieties both eaſy and happy; the obligation to ſtrict juſtice to all others, and to an abatement of what in juſtice we might demand from others, by doing as we would be done by: the rules of not only paſſing by and forgiving injuries, but of loving enemies, and doing good for evil; the tenderneſs, as well as the extent of our charity, the meaſures and manner of our bounty to the poor, the modeſty of deportment, the condeſcending gentleneſs, as well as the unaffected humility

that

that are enjoined, have all ſuch characters in them, ſo ſuited to our faculties, and to human ſociety; to the calm of a man's mind, as well as to the comforts of his life, to fortify him againſt misfortunes, and to ſupport him againſt the feebleneſs and frailties of his nature; that he who will ſuffer himſelf to weigh all this carefully, muſt feel a ſtrong diſpoſition to believe a religion to be true, that agrees with the higheſt thoughts that we can have of God, and the beſt ſeeds or principles that we feel within ourſelves.

Four Diſcourſes to the Clergy.

197. THE EVER-MEMORABLE MR. JOHN HALES.

FOR matchleſs ſtrength of body and feats of arms, whom can the world oppoſe to Samſon, to David and to his Worthies? For wiſdom and learning did not Moſes and Solomon outgo all the wiſdom of the Eaſt? yea, all the wiſe men of the world beſides? ——Chriſt is our Ariſtotle; he hath written us a ſpiritual logic; he hath ſhewed us a method and order, what firſt to do, what next, and how to range every thing in its proper place. He that ſhall follow this, may be ſecure of his end; it is impoſſible he ſhould loſe his pains.

Golden Remains.

198. PELAGIUS,

ALLOWED, that Holy Scripture contains the whole will of God in the plaineſt manner, with the ſtrongeſt motives to preſerve and recover innocence: that every man's reaſon was to be his interpreter, and that errors of judgment, which had no ill influence on ſociety, were not puniſhable by man, nor by God himſelf, if they were invincible.

Chriſtian's Magazine.

199. QUEEN ANNE.

ALMIGHTY and eternal God, the diſpoſer of all the affairs in the world, there is nothing ſo great as not to be ſubject to thy power, nor ſo ſmall, but it comes within thy care; thy goodneſs and wiſdom ſhew themſelves through all thy works, and thy loving kindneſs and mercy do appear in the ſeveral diſpenſations of thy providence, of which, at this time I earneſtly deſire to have a deep and humble ſenſe. It has pleaſed thee to take to thy mercy my deareſt huſband, who was the comfort and joy of my life, after we had lived together many years happily in all conjugal love and affection. May I readily ſubmit myſelf to thy good pleaſure,

and

and ſincerely reſign mine own will to thine, with all Chriſtian patience, meekneſs and humility. Do thou graciouſly pardon the errors and failings of my life, which have been the occaſion of thy diſpleaſure; and let thy judgments bring me to ſincere and unfeigned repentance, and to anſwer the wiſe ends for which thou haſt ſent them. Be thou pleaſed ſo to aſſiſt me with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that I may continue to govern the people which thou haſt committed to my charge, in godlineſs, righteouſneſs, juſtice, and mercy. In the management of all affairs, public and private, grant I may have a ſtrict regard to thy holy will, that I may diligently and heartily advance thy glory, and ever entirely depend on thy providence. Do thou, O gracious Father, be pleaſed to grant I may do the greateſt good I can in all my capacity, and be daily improving every Chriſtian grace and virtue: ſo that when thou ſhalt think fit to put an end to this ſhort and uncertain life, I may be made a partaker of thoſe gracious, endleſs joys, which thou haſt prepared for thoſe that love and fear thee, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen. *Chriſtian's Magazine.*

200. PRINCE EUGENE.

I BELIEVE in thee, O my God! Do thou ſtrengthen my faith: I hope in thee; confirm my hopes: I love thee; inflame my love more and more: I repent of all my ſins; but do thou encreaſe my repentance! As my firſt beginning I worſhip thee; as my laſt end I long for thee: as my eternal benefactor, I praiſe thee; and as my ſupreme protector I pray unto thee; that it may pleaſe thee, O Lord, to guide and lead me by thy providence, to keep me in obedience to thy juſtice; to comfort me by thy mercy, and to protect me by thy almighty power. I ſubmit unto thee all my thoughts, words, and actions, as well as my afflictions, pains, and ſufferings, and I deſire to have thee always in my mind, to do all my works in thy name, and for thy ſake to bear all adverſity with patience. I will nothing but what thou willeſt, O God; becauſe 'tis agreeable unto thee. O give me grace that I may be attentive in my prayer, temperate in my diet, vigilant in my conduct, and unmoveable in all good purpoſes. Grant, moſt merciful Lord, that I may be true and faithful to thoſe that have entruſted me with their ſecrets; that I may be courteous and kind towards all men, and that both in my words and actions, I may ſhew unto them a good example. Diſpoſe my heart to admire and praiſe thy goodneſs, to hate all errors and evil works, to love my neighbour

and

and to deſpiſe the world. Aſſiſt me good God, in ſubduing luſt by mortification, covetouſneſs by liberality, anger by mildneſs, and lukewarmneſs by zeal and fervency. Enable me to conduct myſelf with prudence in all tranſactions, and to ſhew courage in danger, patience in adverſity, and in proſperity an humble mind. Let thy grace illuminate my underſtanding, direct my will, ſanctify my body, and bleſs my ſoul. Make me diligent in curbing all irregular affections, zealous in imploring thy grace, careful in keeping thy commandments, and conſtant in working out my own ſalvation. Finally, O God, make me ſenſible how little is the world, how great thy heavens, how ſhort time, and how long will be the life of eternity. O that I may prepare myſelf for death! that I may dread thy judgments, that I may avoid the torments of hell, and obtain of thee, O God! eternal life through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

Chriſtian's Magazine.

201. ROGER ASCHAM, ESQ.

I NEVER knew yet ſcholar, that gave himſelf to like, and love, and follow chiefly Plato and Ariſtotle in Greek, and Tully in Latin, but he proved both learned, wiſe, and alſo honeſt man; if he joined withal the true doctrine of God's Holy Bible, without the which, the other three be but fine edge-tools in a fool's or madman's hand.——

He that will dwell in theſe few books only; firſt, in God's Holy Bible, and then join with it Tully in Latin, Plato, Ariſtotle, Xenophon, Iſocrates, and Demoſthenes in Greek, muſt needs prove an excellent man. *The Schoolmaſter.*

202. REV. BASIL KENNET, D. D.

THERE is not one book in the whole ſacred canon, in what manner or ſtyle ſoever it was delivered, or upon whatſoever ſubject and occaſion, but is yet of ſervice to piety, and good to the uſe of edifying.

Sermons before a Society in Foreign Parts.

203. JAMES HARRIS, ESQ.

SEVERAL ſects of philoſophers were ſtill exiſting, when St. Paul came to Athens. We cannot enough admire the ſuperior eloquence of that apoſtle, in his manner of addreſſing ſo intelligent an audience. We cannot enough admire the ſublimity of his exordium; the propriety of his mentioning an altar, which he had found there; and his quotations from Aratus, one of their well-known poets.

Philological Inquiries.

204. MR.

204. Mr. S. Berington.

MOSES was one of the learnedeſt men of all antiquity. His writings ſhew us, that he was a philoſopher, a geometrician, geographer, hiſtorian, as well as a great legiſlator; and his divine poems mixed among his works, manifeſt ſuch an inſpired genius, as might be imitated by the ancients, but never excelled. The moſt ſublime ſtrokes in Homer, I am ſure, don't ſurpaſs the exalted flights of Moſes, in his canticles, particularly that of the paſſage over the Red Sea.

Diſſertations on the Creation.

205. Arminius.

I COMMEND my ſpirit to God, its faithful creator and ſaviour, before whom I have walked in my profeſſion and calling, with a good conſcience, in ſimplicity and ſincerity. I call him to witneſs, that I have advanced nothing but what, after the moſt attentive conſideration, I have deemed the ſenſe of Scripture: and that, in whatſoever I have advanced, I have had in view only to extend the knowledge of the religion of Jeſus Chriſt, the worſhip of God, and the common holineſs and peace of all.

Extract from his Will.

206. Bernard Gilpin.

MY nature hath evermore fled controverſy ſo much as I could. My delight and deſire hath been to preach Chriſt, and our ſalvation by him, in ſimplicity and truth; and to comfort myſelf with the ſweet promiſes of the Goſpel, and in prayer. I have been always ſcrupulous and troubled either in ſubſcribing, or ſwearing to any thing beſide the Scriptures, and articles of our belief, becauſe the Scriptures ought ever to have a pre-eminence above man's writings.

Letter to his Brother.

207. Rev. John Leland, D. D.

BESIDES the external proofs ariſing from the miraculous facts, whoſoever, with an unprejudiced mind looks into the Revelation itſelf, as contained in the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament may obſerve remarkable internal characters, which demonſtrate its excellent nature and tendency. —If we examine the nature and tendency of the religion, which was taught by Chriſt, and by the apoſtles in his name, we ſhall find it to be worthy of God.——The precepts of Chriſtianity

Chriſtianity are unqueſtionably holy and excellent. The pureſt morality is taught in all its juſt and noble extent.

View of Deiſtical Writers.

208. Du Pin.

THERE are ſome grammarians who have had ſo little ſenſe as to deſpiſe the ſtyle of the Holy Scripture, and diſſuade Chriſtians from reading it; whereas nothing can be more proper to form and elevate the mind, and give a true taſte of eloquence, than the Sacred Writings.

TO this long catalogue of illuſtrious names, let us, as was propoſed, add the Teſtimonies of a few avowed infidels, apoſtates, and dying penitents, in favour of the Holy Scriptures, and the great truths of religion. Fas eſt et ab hoſte doceri.

209. Huldric.

AND the king (Herod) gave orders for the putting to death every infant to be found in Bethlehem, and the king's meſſengers kill every infant, according to the royal order.

In the Toldoth Jeſhu.

210. Macrobius.

WHEN Auguſtus heard that Herod's own ſon was killed among the infants, under two years of age, put to death, in Syria, by his father's order, he ſaid it was better to be Herod's hog, than his ſon. *Saturn.*

211. Maimonides.

AND he (Jeſus) was the cauſe that Iſrael periſhed by the ſword, that their remains were oppreſſed, the law changed, and the greater part of the world perverted.

De Chriſto.

212. Achmet Benabdalla.

THE Lord Jeſus Chriſt is held by us (Mahometans) to be a prophet, and the meſſenger of God, and our lady, the virgin Mary, his mother, to be bleſſed of God, holy, who brought him forth, and conceived him miraculouſly by the almighty power of God.

Letter to Maurice, Prince of Orange.

N. B. See teſtimonies of the Heathen in favour of Chriſtianity, in the 12th ſection of Dr. Harwood's proofs, in the ſecond book of this work.

213. Charles

213. Charles Blount, Esq.

UNDOUBTEDLY in our travels to the other world the common road is the safest; and though deism is a good manuring of a man's conscience, yet certainly if sowed with Christianity, it will produce the most plentiful crop.

Letter to Dr. Sydenham.

214. Dr. Tindal.

CHRISTIANITY itself, stript of the additions that policy, mistake, and the circumstances of time have made to it, is a most holy religion; and all its doctrines plainly speak themselves to be the will of an infinitely wise and good God.

Christianity as old as the Creation.

215. Dr. Morgan.

LET us take Confucius, Zoroaster, Plato, Socrates, or the greatest moralist that ever lived without the light of revelation, and it will appear, that their best systems of morality were intermixed and blended with so much superstition, and so many gross absurdities, as quite eluded and defeated the main design of them. *Moral Philosopher.*

216. John Toland, M. A.

ALL the doctrines and precepts of the New Testament, if it be indeed divine, must consequently agree with natural reason, and our own ordinary ideas. This every considerate and well-disposed person will find by the careful perusal of it; and whoever undertakes this task, will confess the gospel not to be hidden from us, nor far off, but very nigh us, in our mouths, and in our hearts. It affords the most illustrious examples of close and perspicuous ratiocination conceivable.

I think I may justly say, that they are strangers to true method, who complain of confusion and disorder in the New Testament.—The facility of the gospel is not confined only to method; for the style is also most easy, most natural, and in the common dialect of those to whom it was immediately consigned.

Piety towards God, and the peace of mankind, was the apostle's gain, and Christ and his gospel their glory.

Christianity not Mysterious.

217. Chubb.

IN Christ we have an example of a quiet and peaceable spirit, of a becoming modesty and sobriety: just and honest,

upright and ſincere; and above all, of a moſt gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour. One who did no wrong, no injury to any man; in whoſe mouth was no guile, who went about doing good, not only by his preaching and miniſtry, but alſo in curing all manner of diſeaſes among the people. His life was a beautiful picture of human nature, when in its native purity and ſimplicity; and ſhewed at once what excellent creatures men would be, when under the influence and power of that goſpel he preached unto them.

True Goſpel.

218. Lord Bolingbroke.

THERE are many paſſages in Scripture, which give moſt ſublime ideas of the majeſty of the Supreme Being.—The conceptions which the Jews entertained of the Supreme Being were very orthodox in the eye of reaſon; and their pſalmiſts, and their prophets, ſtrained their imaginations to expreſs the moſt elevated ſentiments of God, and of his works, and of the methods of his providence.——No religion ever appeared in the world whoſe natural tendency was ſo much directed to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind as Chriſtianity.—No ſyſtem can be more ſimple and plain than that of natural religion as it ſtands in the goſpel.—The ſyſtem of religion which Chriſt publiſhed, and his evangeliſts recorded, is a complete ſyſtem to all the purpoſes of religion natural and revealed.—Chriſtianity as it ſtands in the goſpel contains not only a complete but a very plain ſyſtem of religion.——The goſpel is in all caſes one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity.

Works, paſſim.

How aſtoniſhing it is, after ſuch acknowledgments as theſe, that this great man, ſhould embark and perſevere in the cauſe of infidelity! But when it is conſidered, that he was a man of violent paſſions, which hurried him into many indiſcretions and follies, we ſhall ceaſe to be ſurprized. For we are told in his life, that he was a libertine, much addicted to women, and apt to indulge himſelf in late hours, and in all the exceſſes that uſually attend them. We ought not to wonder, that ſuch a man, however great his natural abilities, ſhould be an oppoſer of the pure and holy doctrines of the meek and lowly Jeſus!

219. Hobbs.

IT is remarked by thoſe that critically obſerved this celebrated deiſt, that though in a humour or bravado he would ſpeak

ſpeak very ſtrange and miſbecoming things of God; yet in his ſtudy, in the dark, and in his retired thoughts, he trembled before him. Many appear like atheiſts in their mirth, and wine, and company, who are quite otherwiſe in ſickneſs, and danger, and ſolitude. What could make this ſtrange man awake in ſuch terror and amazement, if his candle happened to go out in the night? but that he was unable to bear the diſmal reflections of his dark and deſolate mind; not knowing how to extinguiſh, or how to bear the light of the candle of the Lord within him: which conſtrained him to confeſs at his death, that he was about to take a leap in the dark.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

220. PHILIP THE THIRD OF SPAIN,

LYING on his death-bed, ſent thrice at midnight for Florentius, his confeſſor and chaplain, to aſſiſt him in his laſt moments; who, coming to his bed, diſcourſed to him of the approach of death, exhorting him to ſubmit to the will of God. To whom the king, all in tears, replied, You may remember, that in your ſermon on Aſh-wedneſday, you ſaid one of your auditors might die this Lent; this touched me, and behold now my fatal hour is at hand: but ſhall I attain eternal happineſs? And here great grief and trouble of mind ſeizing the poor prince, he ſaid to the confeſſor, Surely you have not hit upon the right way of healing; is there no other remedy? Which when the confeſſor thought he had ſpoken of his bodily diſeaſe, the king ſpeedily replied, Ah! ah! I am not ſolicitous for my body and my temporary diſeaſe, but for my ſoul. To which the confeſſor ſaid, I have done what I can, and muſt leave the reſt to God. And here he took occaſion to diſcourſe of God's mercy; and withal minded the king of what his majeſty had done for the honour and worſhip of that God before whom he was going to appear. To which the king replied, Ah! how happy had it been for me, If I had ſpent thoſe three and twenty years in retirement which I have paſſed on the throne of Spain. To this the confeſſor rejoined, that it would be very acceptable to God, if he would lay his kingdom, his majeſty, his life, and ſalvation at the feet of his crucified Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, and ſubmit himſelf to his will. Willingly, willingly, replied the heart-ſick king, will I do this; and from this moment do I lay all that God gave me, my dominions, power, and life, at the feet of Jeſus Chriſt, my Saviour, who was crucified for me; whoſe image he then kiſs'd with great affection; and then told Florentius,

that he had really ſuggeſted matter of great comfort to him: which were ſome of the laſt words he ſpake.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

221. DR. OLIVER,

THE celebrated Bath phyſician, had been a very inveterate infidel till within a ſhort time before his death. In his laſt ſickneſs, the arrows of ſpiritual conviction ſtuck faſt in him. Lady Huntingdon never ſaw a perſon more thoroughly humbled, diſtreſt, and broken in heart. Coming to him about two days before he died, he lamented, not only his own paſt infidelity, but the zeal and ſucceſs with which he had endeavoured to infect the minds of others. O that I could undo the miſchief I have done! I was more ardent, ſaid he, to poiſon people with the principles of irreligion and unbelief, than almoſt any Chriſtian can be to ſpread the doctrines of Chriſt.——Chear up, anſwered her Ladyſhip; Jeſus, the great ſacrifice for ſin, atoned for the ſins of the ſecond table as well as for thoſe of the firſt.—God, replied he, certainly can, but I fear he never will, pardon ſuch a wretch as I.—— You may fear it at preſent, rejoined ſhe, but you and I ſhall moſt certainly meet each other in heaven.—The Doctor then ſaid, "O woman, great is thy faith." My faith cannot believe that I ſhall ever be there.

Soon after, the Lord lifted up the light of his countenance on the Doctor's ſoul. He lay the reſt of his time, triumphing and praiſing free grace; and went off, at laſt, as happy as an angel.

Toplady's Poſthumous Works.

222. D'ALEMBERT.

I REMEMBER, that when I converſed with him at Paris, in my travels, he told me, that he had carefully examined Chriſtianity, and had found nothing againſt reaſon in it.

Narrative of the Converſion of Count Struenſee.

223. COUNT STRUENSEE.

THE more I learn Chriſtianity from Scripture, the more I grow convinced, how unjuſt thoſe objections are which it is charged with. I find for inſtance, that all which Voltaire ſays of the intolerance of the Chriſtians, and of bloodſhedding cauſed by Chriſtianity, is a very unjuſt charge laid upon religion. It is eaſily to be ſeen, that thoſe cruelties, ſaid to be cauſed by religion, if properly conſidered, were the production of human paſſions, ſelfiſhneſs and ambition, and that religion ſerved in ſuch caſes only for a cloak.——

I am

I am fully convinced of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, and I feel its power in quieting my conſcience, and reforming my ſentiments.——I have examined it during a good ſtate of health, and with all the reaſon I am maſter of. I tried every argument, I felt no fear, I have taken my own time, and I have not been in haſte.——I own with joy, I find Chriſtianity more amiable the more I get acquainted with it. I never knew it before. I believed it contradicted reaſon and the nature of man whoſe religion it was deſigned to be. I thought it an artfully contrived and ambiguous doctrine, full of incomprehenſibilities. Whenever I formerly thought on religion in ſome ſerious moments, I had always an idea in my mind how it ought to be, which was, it ſhould be ſimple and accommodated to the abilities of men in every condition. I now find Chriſtianity to be exactly ſo; it anſwers entirely that idea which I had formed of true religion. Had I but formerly known it was ſuch, I ſhould not have delayed turning Chriſtian till this time of my impriſonment. But I had the misfortune to be prejudiced againſt religion, firſt through my own paſſions, but afterwards likewiſe through ſo many human inventions, foiſted into it, of which I could ſee plainly that they had no foundation, though they were ſtiled eſſential parts of Chriſtianity. I was offended when God was always repreſented to me as an angry, jealous judge; who is much pleaſed when he has an opportunity of ſhewing his revenge, though I knew he was love itſelf; and am now convinced, that though he muſt puniſh, yet he takes no kind of delight in it, and is rather for pardoning. From my infancy, I have known but few Chriſtians that had not ſcandalized me by their enthuſiaſm, and wickedneſs, which they wanted to hide under the cloak of piety. I knew indeed that not all Chriſtians were ſuch, or talked ſuch an affected language; but I was too volatile to enquire of better Chriſtians after the true ſpirit of religion. Frequently I heard ſermons in my youth, but they made no impreſſion upon me. That without Chriſt there was no ſalvation, was the only truth which ſerved for a ſubject in all ſermons, and this was repeated over and over again in ſynonimous expreſſions. But it was never ſet in its true light, and never properly proved. I ſaw people cry at church, but after their tears were dried up, I found them in their actions not in the leaſt better, but rather allowing themſelves in every tranſgreſſion, upon the privilege of being faithful believers.——He ſaid, he obſerved in St. Paul a great genius, much wiſdom, and true philoſophy.—The apoſtles write extremely well, now and then inimitably

beautiful, and at the ſame time with ſimplicity and clearneſs. ——The free-thinkers extol the fables of Æſop, but the parables and narrations of Chriſt will not pleaſe them: notwithſtanding they are derived from a greater knowledge of nature, and contain more excellent morality. Beſides, they are propoſed with a more noble and artleſs ſimplicity, than any writings of this kind, among ancient or modern authors.

Narrative of his Converſion and Death.

224. Count Brandt,

WITH great freedom owned before me and others, that his impriſonment was the means of ſetting his ſoul at liberty; and he found his chains ſo little troubleſome to him, that he would oftentimes take them up and kiſs them. For, ſaid he, when I believed myſelf to be free, I was a miſerable ſlave to my paſſions; and now ſince I am a priſoner, truth and grace have ſet me at liberty. He pitied the miſerable condition of thoſe that were under the yoke of unbelief and ſin, which he himſelf had worn, and kept himſelf in it by reading deiſtical writings. He mentioned, among the reſt, the works of Voltaire, to whom he owed very little that was good. He ſaid he had ſpent upon his travels four days with this old advocate for unbelief, and had heard nothing from him but what could corrupt the heart and found morals. He was very ſorry for all this, but was much pleaſed, that he had found a taſte for the true Word of God, whoſe efficacy upon his heart, ſince he read it with good intentions, convinced him of its divine origin. *Dr. Hee's Hiſtory of Count Enevold Brandt.*

225. James Earl of Marlborough.

A little before his death in the battle at ſea on the coaſt of Holland, A. D. 1665, wrote the following letter to Sir Hugh Pollard, comptroller of his majeſty's houſhold.

Sir,

I Believe the goodneſs of your nature, and the friendſhip you have always borne me, will receive with kindneſs the laſt office of your friend. I am in health enough of body, and (through the mercy of God in Jeſus Chriſt) well diſpoſed in mind. This I premiſe, that you may be ſatisfied that what I write proceeds not from any phantaſtic error of mind, but from a ſober reſolution of what concerns myſelf, and earneſt deſire to do you more good after my death, than mine example (God of his mercy pardon the badneſs of it) in my life-time may do you harm. I will not ſpeak ought of

of the vanity of this world; your own age and experience will ſave that labour: but there is a certain thing that goeth up and down the world, called religion, dreſſed and pretended phantaſtically, and to purpoſes, bad enough, which yet by ſuch evil dealing loſeth not its being; the great good God hath not left it without a witneſs, more or leſs, ſooner or later, in every man's boſom, to direct us in the purſuit of it: and for the avoiding of thoſe inextricable diſquiſitions and entanglements our own frail reaſon would perplex us withal, God in his infinite mercy hath given us his Holy Word, in which, as there are many things hard to be underſtood, ſo there is enough plain and eaſy, to quiet our minds, and direct us concerning our future being. I confeſs to God and you, I have been a great neglecter, and, I fear, a deſpiſer, of it: God of his infinite mercy pardon me the dreadful fault. But when I retired myſelf from the noiſe and deceitful vanity of the world, I found no comfort in any other reſolution, than what I had from thence. I commend from the bottom of my heart the ſame to your (I hope) happy uſe. Dear Sir Hugh, let us be more generous than to believe we die as the beaſts that periſh; but with a Chriſtian, manly, brave reſolution, look to what is eternal. I will not trouble you further. The only great God, and holy God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, direct you to an happy end of your life, and ſend us a joyful reſurrection.

Old James, near the coaſt of Holland, April 24, 1665.

So prays,
Your true Friend,
MARLBOROUGH.

I beſeech you commend my love to all mine acquaintance; particularly, I pray you that my couſin Glaſcock may have a ſight of this letter, and as many friends beſide as you will, or any elſe that deſire it. I pray grant this my requeſt.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

226. MR. NICHOLAS FERRAR,

A GENTLEMAN of a good eſtate, extraordinary parts, and the beſt education, being withal of a very happy temper; after many years ſpent in travels, experience, and reading, whereby he became a great maſter both of hiſtory and languages; having ſeen the vanity of all earthly things, and the corruption of the common converſation of the world, he firmly and vigorouſly applied his mind and heart to the kingdom of God, and the righteouſneſs thereof. And that he might proſecute this noble end with leſs interruption, he retired to his houſe at Little-Gidding, in Huntingdonſhire, where,

where, with a numerous family of his relations, he applied himſelf in a very ſerious manner to the ſervice of God, which he chearfully obſerved all the days of his life, in holy and devout prayer, publicly in the chapel at the ſet hours, and privately in the houſe day and night at the ſtated times; and the reſt of his vacant hours he ſpent in pious conference, in reading the Holy Scriptures, with uſual comments in an orderly or profitable courſe, in receiving the pious viſits of many good men and women from moſt parts of the nation: in relieving the aged poor, and inſtructing the young; and whilſt his female relations wrought with their needles many works of piety and charity, he did the ſame in a more ſublime manner with his pen; leaving a moſt eminent example of fervent and diſcreet piety and charity to a ſelfiſh and profane world. *Woodward's Fair Warnings.*

227. ALTAMONT.

THE ſad evening before the death of this noble youth I was with him. No one was there, but his phyſician, and an intimate friend whom he loved, and whom he had ruined. At my coming in, he ſaid;

You, and the phyſician, are come too late.—I have neither life, nor hope. You both aim at miracles. You would raiſe the dead.

Heaven, I ſaid, was merciful.—

Or I could not have been thus guilty. What has it not done to bleſs, and to ſave me?—I have been too ſtrong for Omnipotence! I plucked down ruin!

I ſaid, The bleſſed Redeemer——

Hold! hold! you wound me!—This is the rock on which I ſplit—I denied his name.

Refuſing to hear any thing from me, or take any thing from the phyſician, he lay ſilent, as far as ſudden darts of pain would permit, till the clock ſtruck. Then with vehemence;

Oh, time! time! it is fit thou ſhouldeſt thus ſtrike thy murderer to the heart.—How art thou fled for ever!—A month!—Oh, for a ſingle week! I aſk not for years; tho' an age were too little for the much I have to do.

On my ſaying, we could not do too much: that heaven was a bleſſed place——

So much the worſe. 'Tis loſt! 'tis loſt!—Heaven is to me the ſevereſt part of hell!

Soon after I propoſed prayer.

Pray

Pray you that can. · I never prayed. I cannot pray—Nor need I. Is not heaven on my ſide already? It cloſes with my conſcience. Its ſevereſt ſtrokes but ſecond my own.

His friend being much touched, even to tears, at this, (who could forbear? I could not) with a moſt affectionate look, he ſaid:

Keep thoſe tears for thyſelf. I have undone thee.—— Doſt weep for me? That's cruel. What can pain me more?

Here his friend, too much affected, would have left him.

No, ſtay. Thou ſtill mayeſt hope.—Therefore hear me. How madly have I talked? How madly haſt thou liſtened and believed? But look on my preſent ſtate, as a full anſwer to thee, and to myſelf. This body is all weakneſs and pain; but my ſoul, as if ſtrung up by torment to greater ſtrength and ſpirit, is full powerful to reaſon; full mighty to ſuffer. And that, which thus triumphs within the jaws of mortality, is doubtleſs, immortal.—And, as for a Deity, nothing leſs than an Almighty could inflict what I feel.

I was about to congratulate this paſſive, involuntary, confeſſor, on his aſſerting the two prime articles of his creed, extorted by the rack of nature; when he thus, very paſſionately:

No, no! let me ſpeak on. I have not long to ſpeak—My much injured friend! my ſoul, as my body, lies in ruins; in ſcattered fragments of broken thought: remorſe for the paſt, throws my thoughts on the future. Worſe dread of the future, ſtrikes it back on the paſt. I turn, and turn, and find no ray. Didſt thou feel half the mountain that is on me, thou wouldſt ſtruggle with the martyr for his ſtake; and bleſs heaven for the flames; — that is not an everlaſting flame; that is not an unquenchable fire.

How were we ſtruck? Yet, ſoon after, ſtill more. With what an eye of diſtraction, what a face of deſpair, he cried out:

My principles have poiſoned my friend; my extravagance has beggared my boy; my unkindneſs has murdered my wife! And is there another hell?—Oh! thou blaſphemed, yet moſt indulgent, Lord God! Hell itſelf is a refuge, if it hides me from thy frown.

Soon after his underſtanding failed. His terrified imagination uttered horrors not to be repeated, or ever forgot. And e're the ſun aroſe, the gay, young, noble, ingenious, accompliſhed, and moſt wretched Altamont expired.

Young's Centaur not Fabulous.

228. FRANCIS

228. Francis Spira.

ABOUT the year 1540 lived this unhappy man at Citadella, a town near Padua in Italy. He was a lawyer of great abilities and practice at the bar. Having embraced the reformed religion with remarkable zeal and earneſtneſs, he freely expreſſed his opinion of the ſeveral points of the controverted doctrine, both to his friends and to every body. A conduct of this ſort could not be long concealed in Italy, but was at length noticed to John Caſo, archbiſhop of Benevento, the pope's legate at Venice. When Spira was informed of this, he was very ſenſible of his danger; and therefore, after revolving the matter in his thoughts, he followed eaſy counſels, and went to the legate, who had ſent for him. Before the legate, he recanted his errors, as he termed them, begged his abſolution, and promiſed obedience for the future. Though the legate was glad of his voluntary confeſſion; yet, for the ſake of example, he enjoined him, by way of penance, to return home, and make a public recantation of the proteſtant doctrines. All this he promiſed to do, againſt the impreſſions of his mind, and the clear conviction of his conſcience, which reproached, and reproached him again, for his ſhameful deſertion and denial. When he came home, the ſolicitations of his friends, who urged, that the welfare of himſelf, of his wife, children, eſtate and all, depended upon it, prevailed; and he made his formal recantation. Soon afterwards his ſoul was ſtruck with horror at what he had done; and he fell into the moſt dreadful deſpair of God's mercy. Growing worſe and worſe, and expreſſing himſelf in language almoſt too dreadful to repeat, concerning his crime, and his aſſured damnation from God; he was removed by his friends from Citadella to Padua, that he might have both better advice of phyſicians, and the conſtant conference of learned men. His phyſicians ſoon confeſſed his malady beyond their art, and preſcribed for him as the beſt and only remedy, good advice and ſpiritual conſolation. Accordingly, many of the clergy and others conſtantly attended him, and laboured to heal his mind by ſuch portions of Scripture, as exhibit the riches and extent of the mercy of God to repenting ſinners. He allowed the truth of thoſe paſſages, and of all they could ſay reſpecting the love of God in Chriſt; but ſtill inſiſted, that he was particularly excluded to be an inſtance of the divine vengeance, and that the promiſes did not belong to him, who muſt juſtly be damned to everlaſting

everlasting torments, because he had abjured the truths of God, knowing them to be so, and against the repeated admonitions of his conscience. He said, in language, as dreadful as ever was heard, that he felt the pains of damnation, even then, in his soul; that he wanted to be at the worst, which hell could inflict upon him, as the expectation of more torments encreased those he already sustained; and that, though he saw all glory and excellency in God, yet he was so far from loving him on that account, that he most horribly hated him the more. In this condition he continued for some time, refusing all sustenance, and spitting it out again, when forced upon him. Vergerio, bishop of Istria, frequently visited him, and set before him the freedom and fulness of the divine grace, urging the instances of Peter and others, who had fallen from God, but were received into mercy again. But all his exhortations were in vain. Whatever could be said, was thrown away upon poor Spira; and his malady increased more and more. In short, he languished, and sunk, and died, in all the agonizing tortures of the most miserable despair.

Middleton's Biographia Evangelica.

229. ROUSSEAU.

THIS was one of the most eccentric and unaccountable geniuses that, perhaps, ever had existence. I am not like any man, says he himself, whom I have ever seen; and, I believe, that I am not like any man that exists. —And we may take the liberty likewise of adding, that as few men were ever like him in his life, so few ever died making like protestations with this man. Ah! my dear, said he, to his wife just before he expired, how happy a thing is it to die, when one has no reason for remorse, or self-reproach. And then, addressing himself to the Almighty, he said: Eternal Being! the soul that I am now going to give thee back, is as pure, at this moment, as it was when it proceeded from thee: render it partaker of thy felicity!

This same extraordinary man, though sometimes he appears to be in earnest in his opposition to the Gospel, under a gale of conviction, makes the following ingenuous confession in favour of it:

I will confess to you, that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers with all their pomp of diction: how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the Scripture! Is it possible

poſſible that a book, at once ſo ſimple and ſublime, ſhould be merely the work of man? Is it poſſible that the ſacred perſonage, whoſe hiſtory it contains, ſhould be himſelf a mere man? Do we find that he aſſumed the tone of an enthuſiaſt or ambitious ſectary? What ſweetneſs, what purity in his manner? What an affecting gracefulneſs in his delivery? What ſublimity in his maxims? What profound wiſdom in his diſcourſes! What preſence of mind, what ſubtlety, what truth in his replies! How great the command over his paſſions! Where is the man, where the philoſopher, who could ſo live, and ſo die, without weakneſs, and without oſtentation? When Plato deſcribed his imaginary good man loaded with all the ſhame of guilt, yet meriting the higheſt rewards of virtue, he deſcribes exactly the character of Jeſus Chriſt: the reſemblance was ſo ſtriking, that all the Fathers perceived it.

What prepoſſeſſion, what blindneſs muſt it be, to compare the ſon of Sophroniſcus to the ſon of Mary? What an infinite diſproportion there is between them? Socrates dying without pain or ignominy, eaſily ſupported his character to the laſt; and if his death, however eaſy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wiſdom, was any thing more than a vain ſophiſt. He invented, it is ſaid, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practiſe; he had only to ſay therefore what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precepts. Ariſtides had been juſt before Socrates defined juſtice; Leonidas had given up his life for his country before Socrates declared patriotiſm to be a duty; the Spartans were a ſober people before Socrates recommended ſobriety; before he had even defined virtue Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where could Jeſus learn, among his competitors, that pure and ſublime morality, of which he only hath given us both precept and example. The greateſt wiſdom was made known amongſt the moſt bigoted fanaticiſm, and the ſimplicity of the moſt heroic virtues did honour to the vileſt people on earth. The death of Socrates, peaceably philoſophizing with his friends, appears the moſt agreeable that could be wiſhed for; that of Jeſus expiring in the midſt of agonizing pains, abuſed, inſulted, and accuſed by a whole nation, is the moſt horrible that could be feared. Socrates in receiving the cup of poiſon, bleſſed indeed the weeping executioner who adminiſtered it; but Jeſus, in the midſt of excruciating tortures, prayed for his mercileſs tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were thoſe

of

of a ſage, the life and death of Jeſus are thoſe of a God. Shall we ſuppoſe the evangelic hiſtory a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the hiſtory of Socrates, which nobody preſumes to doubt, is not ſo well atteſted as that of Jeſus Chriſt. Such a ſuppoſition, in fact, only ſhifts the difficulty without obviating it: it is more inconceivable that a number of perſons ſhould agree to write ſuch a hiſtory, than that one only ſhould furniſh the ſubject of it. The Jewiſh authors were incapable of the diction, and ſtrangers to the morality contained in the Goſpel, the marks of whoſe truth are ſo ſtriking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more aſtoniſhing character than the hero. *Emilius.*

230. SIR DUNCOMB COLCHESTER,

LATELY of the county of Glouceſter, was a gentleman of excellent parts, a generous ſpirit, and undaunted courage; who, after many years too looſely ſpent in fundry extravagancies, was by a long and painful ſickneſs brought to a very ſerious ſenſe of the excellency of religion, and of his great ſin and folly in the neglect and contempt of it: of all which the reader will have a more diſtinct view in his own penitential declaration, which is as follows:

Gentlemen and friends,

Since it has pleaſed Almighty God, of his great and undeſerved goodneſs and mercy, to bring me, one of the chieſeſt of ſinners, by a long and ſharp viſitation, to a ſenſe of my ſins, I adore and praiſe him.

It is a duty, I know, incumbent on me, as ever I hope for his pardon and forgiveneſs, to do what in me lies to bring honour to his holy name, and to make reparation for the miſchiefs I have done by my former vicious life, and antidote, ſo far as I can, the poiſon which my example has ſhed round about me. In order whereunto, I do hereby declare, that I am heartily ſorry for all the ſins of my paſt life! the remembrance whereof, however pleaſant they formerly ſeemed to be, is now grief and bitterneſs to my ſoul. More particularly, that I may take ſhame to myſelf, as I do, with the deepeſt ſorrow, lament my rioting and drunkenneſs, my chambering and wantonneſs, thoſe daring and preſumptuous ſins, which had ſo long dominion over me. I do alſo moſt heartily lament that great ſin which I was ſo frequently guilty of, of encouraging and drawing others to exceſs, which has made me partaker (O ſad thought!) of other men's ſins, and liable to anſwer for more than mine own. I am ſenſible, that as it

has

has been my practice, ſo it is ſtill of too many gentlemen, and that they, as I did, reckon exceſſive drinking ſo far from a fault, as to be rather one of the beſt indications of a hearty reſpect and true affection to the perſons they entertain. But, O falſe love! O treacherous friendſhip! To receive their friends, men, and ſend them out of their houſes, beaſts. I with from the bottom of my ſoul, that any thing that I could ſay, would make all thoſe, whoſe conſciences accuſe them of guilt in this particular, to lothe and abhor this wicked practice, as I do. And I alſo heartily lament my great neglect of putting the laws in execution againſt common drunkards, ſwearers, and ſuch like ſcandalous ſinners: and do earneſtly beſeech all ſuch as are in authority, and whoſe buſineſs it is to ſee the laws executed, if any ſuch come to hear this paper read, that they will be more careful in that particular, and conſider, their power is a talent intruſted them, whereof they muſt give a ſtrict account to their heavenly Lord: ſo by their being duly conſcientious in the diſcharge of their duty herein, we may hope for a reformation among us, and then with confidence we may expect God's bleſſing to reſt upon us. And as I do abhor myſelf for my neglect in this particular now mentioned, and all my great ſins and provocations againſt an infinite Majeſty; ſo I do hereby further declare my full purpoſe and reſolution, if it ſhall pleaſe Almighty God, with whom all things are poſſible, to reſtore me health, or prolong my days by his ſpecial grace and aſſiſtance, without which I ſhall be able to do nothing, to lead a new life in all holy obedience to his will and commands: and deſire, that this declaration of mine, if I fail to do ſo, may be produced as a teſtimony againſt me, to my ſhame and reproach. But ſince my recovery is very uncertain, and what I have the leaſt reaſon in the world to hope, being heartily deſirous to do what good I can in the circumſtances I am in; I do hereby earneſtly warn and beſeech all ſinners, eſpecially thoſe whom my example has at any time encouraged; the remembrance whereof ſtill fills me with ſhame and ſorrow) to repent of all their ſins and provocations, leſt God's vengeance overtake them in their ſecurity, and there be no remedy.

And I beſeech them further to take notice, that if this warning be ſlighted, the wilful neglect and refuſal thereof will at laſt be charged upon them, as an heinous aggravation of all their ſins they ſhall hereafter commit; will encreaſe their condemnation, and make their doom more dreadful and terrible. But that it may have a contrary effect, and be a means

to

to reduce them from their ſins to a holy and religious life, that ſo their ſouls may be ſaved in the great day of the Lord, is the earneſt prayer of their languiſhing and ſorrowful friend,

DUNCOMB COLCHESTER,

Nov. 1694.
Signed and delivered, in the preſence of ſeveral of his friends.

Who deſires this may be read in the pariſh churches of Micheldean and Weſtbury, and ſhewn to ſuch gentlemen, friends and others, as may bring God moſt glory.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

231. MR. CUMBERLAND.

I BELIEVE there are few people, who have not at ſome time or other felt a propenſity to humour themſelves in that kind of melancholy, which ariſes in the mind upon reviſiting the ſcene of former happineſs, and contemplating the change that time has wrought in its appearance by the mournful compariſon of preſent with paſt impreſſions.

In this train of thought I was the other day carried almoſt imperceptibly to the country ſeat of a deceaſed friend, whoſe loſs I muſt ever lament. I had not been there ſince his death, and there was a drearineſs in the ſcene as I approached, that might have almoſt tempted me to believe even things inanimate partook of my ſenſations. The traces of my friend, whoſe ſolicitude for order and ſeemlineſs, reached to every thing about him, were no longer to be ſeen; the cottages and little gardens of his poor neighbours, which uſed to be ſo trim and neat, whilſt his eye was over them, ſeemed to be falling into neglect; the lawn before his houſe was now become a ſolitude; no laboùrers at their work; no domeſtics at their ſports and exerciſes: I looked around for my old acquaintance, that uſed to be grazing up and down upon their penſions of paſturage; they had probably been food for hounds long ago; nature had loſt her ſmile of hoſpitality and benevolence; methought I never ſaw any thing more diſconſolate.

As I entered the houſe, an aged woman, whom I had long remembered as one of the family, met me in the paſſage, and looking me in the face, cried out, Is it you Sir?—and burſt into tears: ſhe followed me into the common ſitting-room, and as ſhe was opening the ſhutters, obſerved to me, that it did not look as it uſed to do, when my lord was living. It was true, I had already made the remark in ſilence:—How the face of a friend, ſaid I within myſelf, enlivens all things

about

about him! What hours of placid delight have I paſſed within theſe walls? Have I ever heard a word here fall from his lips, that I have wiſhed him to recal? Has the reputation of the abſent ever bled by a ſtab of his giving? Has the ſenſibility of any perſon preſent ſuffered for an expreſſion of his? Once, and only once, in this very ſpot, I drew from him the circumſtantial detail of an unfortunate period in his life: it was a recital ſo manly and ingenuous, ſo void of colouring, ſo diſdainful of complaint, and ſo untainted by aſperity, that it carried conviction to my mind, and I can ſcarce conceive a degree of prejudice that could have held out againſt it; but I could perceive that the greateſt event in a man's hiſtory may turn by ſprings ſo ſubtle and concealed, that they can never be laid open for public exculpation, and that in the proceſs of all human trials there may be things too ſmall for the fingers of the law to feel; motives, which produce the good or ill fortunes of men, and govern their actions, but which cannot guide the judgments, or even come under the contemplation of thoſe who are appointed to decide upon them.

I ſoon quitted this apartment, and entered one which I contemplated with more ſatisfaction, and even with a degree of veneration; for it was the chamber, in which I had ſeen my friend yield up his laſt breath of life. Few men had endured greater perſecution in the world; none could leave it in greater peace and charity: if forgiveneſs of injuries conſtitutes a merit, our enemies ſurely are thoſe to whom we are moſt beholden. How awful is the laſt ſcene of a man's life, who has filled a dubious and important part on the ſtage of the world!—Of a truth, thought I, thou art happily removed out of an unfriendly world; if thou hadſt deceived my good opinion, it had been an injury to my nature: but though the living man can wear a maſk and carry on deceit, the dying Chriſtian cannot counterfeit: ſudden death may ſmite the hypocrite, the ſenſualiſt, the impoſter, and they may die in their ſhame; but ſlow and gradual diſſolution, a lingering death of agony and decay, will ſtrip the human heart before it ſeizes it; it will lay it naked, before it ſtops it. There is no trifling with ſome ſolemnities; no prevaricating with God, when we are on the very threſhold of his preſence: many worldly friendſhips diſſolve away with his breath to whom they were pledged; but thy laſt moments, my friend, were ſo employed as to ſeal my affection to thy memory cloſer than it was ever attached to thy perſon: and I have it now to ſay, there was a man, whom I loved and ſerved, and who has not deceived or betrayed me.

And

And what muſt I now think of popularity, when I reflect upon thoſe who had it, and upon this man, who had it not? Fallacious teſt! Contemptible purſuit! How often, ſince the exile of Ariſtides, has integrity been thy victim, and villainy thine idol? Worſhip it then, thou filthy idolater, and take the proper wages of thy ſervility; be the dupe of cunning, and the ſtalking-horſe of hypocriſy.

What a contraſt to the death I have now been reviewing, occurs to my mind, when I reflect upon the dreadful conſummation of the once popular Antitheüs! I remember him in the height of his fame, the hero of his party; no man ſo careſſed, followed and applauded: he was a little looſe, his friends would own, in his moral character, but then he was the honeſteſt fellow in the world; it was not to be denied, that he was rather free in his notions, but then he was the beſt creature living. I have ſeen men of the graveſt characters wink at his ſallies; becauſe he was ſo pleaſant and ſo well-bred, it was impoſſible to be angry with him. Every thing went well with him, and Antitheüs ſeemed to be at the ſummit of human proſperity, when he was ſuddenly ſeized with the moſt alarming ſymptoms: he was at his country houſe, and (which had rarely happened to him) he at that time chanced to be alone; wife or family he had none, and out of the multitude of his friends no one happened to be near him at the moment of this attack.

A neighbouring phyſician was called out of bed in the night to come to him with all haſte in this extremity: he found him ſitting up in his bed ſupported by pillows, his countenance full of horror, his breath ſtruggling as in the article of death, his pulſe intermitting, and at times beating with ſuch rapidity as could hardly be counted. Antitheüs diſmiſſed the attendants he had about him, and eagerly demanded of the phyſician, if he thought him in danger: the phyſician anſwered that he muſt fairly tell him he was in imminent danger—How ſo! how ſo! do you think me dying? —He was ſorry to ſay, the ſymptoms indicated death.— Impoſſible! you muſt not let me die: I dare not die: O doctor! ſave me if you can.—Your ſituation, Sir, is ſuch, that it is not in mine, or any other man's art, to ſave you; and I think I ſhould not do my duty, if I gave you any falſe hopes in theſe moments, which, if I am not miſtaken, will not more than ſuffice for any worldly or other concerns, which you may have upon your mind to ſettle.—My mind is full of horror, cried the dying man, and I am incapable of preparing it for death.—He now fell into an agony, ac-

companied with a ſhower of tears; a cordial was adminiſtered, and he revived in a degree; when turning to the phyſician, who had his fingers upon his pulſe, he eagerly demanded of him, if he did not ſee that blood upon the feet-curtains of his bed. There was none to be ſeen, the phyſician aſſured him; it was nothing but a vapour of his fancy.——I ſee it plainly; ſaid Antitheüs, in the ſhape of a human hand: I have been viſited with a tremendous apparition. As I was lying ſleepleſs in my bed this night, I took up a letter of a deceaſed friend, to diſſipate certain thoughts that made me uneaſy. I believed him to be a great philoſopher, and was converted to his opinions: perſuaded by his arguments and my own experience that the diſorderly affairs of this evil world could not be adminiſtered by any wiſe, juſt, or provident being. I had brought myſelf to think no ſuch being could exiſt, and that a life, produced by chance, muſt terminate in annihilation: this is the reaſoning of that letter, and ſuch were the thoughts I was revolving in my mind, when the apparition of my dear friend preſented itſelf before me; and unfolding the curtains of my bed, ſtood at my feet, looking earneſtly upon me for a conſiderable ſpace of time. My heart ſunk within me; for his face was ghaſtly, full of horror, with an expreſſion of ſuch anguiſh as I can never deſcribe: his eyes were fixed upon me, and at length with a mournful motion of his head—Alas, alas! he cried, we are in a fatal error—and taking hold of the curtains with his hand, ſhook them violently and diſappeared.—This, I proteſt to you, I both ſaw and heard, and look! where the print of his hand is left in blood upon the curtains.

Antitheüs ſurvived the relation of this viſion very few hours, and died delirious in great agonies.

What a forſaken and diſconſolate creature is a man without religion!

Reader, whoſoever thou art, deceive not thyſelf; let not paſſion, or proſperity, or wit, or wantonneſs ſeduce thy reaſon to an attempt againſt truth. If thou haſt the faculties of a man, thou wilt never bring thyſelf to a fixed perſuaſion that there is no God: ſtruggle how thou wilt againſt the notion, there will be a moment when the glaring conviction will burſt upon thy mind. Now mark what follows—If there is a God, the government of the world is in that God; and this once admitted, the neceſſity of a future ſtate follows of conſequence. Aſk thyſelf then, what can be the purpoſes of that future ſtate; what, but thoſe of juſtice and retribution, to reward the good, and puniſh the evil? Our preſent

preſent life then is a life of probation, a ſtate of trial and of diſcipline, preparatory to that future ſtate. Now ſee what is fallen upon thee, and look well to thyſelf for the conſequences: thou haſt let the idea of a God into thy mind, becauſe indeed thou couldſt not keep it out, and religion ruſhes through the breach. It is natural religion hitherto, and no more: but no matter; there is enough even in natural religion to make thee tremble. Whither wilt thou now reſort for comfort, whither fly for refuge from the wrath to come? —Behold the aſylum is open, Chriſtianity is thy ſalvation and redemption: that, which natural religion hath ſhadowed out to thee in terrors, Chriſtianity will reveal in glory: it will clear up thy doubts, diſperſe thy fears, and turn thy hopes into certainty. Thy reaſonings about a future ſtate, which are but reaſonings, it will not only verify by divine authorities, but by poſitive proof, by viſible example, atteſteſt by witneſſes, confirmed by the evidence of the ſenſes, and uncontradicted by the hiſtory of ages. Now thou wilt know to thy comfort, that there is a Mediator gone before thee, who will help out thy imperfect atonement, when thou art brought to judgment in a future ſtate. Thou wilt indeed be told for certain, that this life is a ſtate of probation, and that thou ſhalt be brought to account for thine actions; but thou wilt be taught an eaſy leſſon of ſalvation; thou wilt be cheared with the mercies of thy God, and comforted with the aſſurance of pardon, if thou wilt heartily turn to repentance: thou wilt find that all this ſyſtem of religion is conformable to thoſe natural notions, which reaſon ſuggeſted to thee before, with this advantage, that it makes them clearer, purifies, refines, enlarges them; ſhuts out every diſmal proſpect, opens all that is delightful, and points a road to heaven through paths of peace and pleaſantneſs.

Obſerver.

232. JOHN, EARL OF ROCHESTER,

WAS a very great man every way; a great wit, a great ſcholar, a great poet, a great ſinner, and a great penitent. His lordſhip had advanced to uncommon heights of impiety, having been an advocate in the black cauſe of atheiſm, and an encomiaſt to Beelzebub. He had raked too to the very bottom of the lakes of debauchery, and been a ſatyriſt againſt virtue. But when he came to ſee and conſider his prodigious guilt and danger, what invectives did he uſe againſt himſelf, terming himſelf an ungrateful dog, and the vileſt wretch that the ſun ſhone upon;

wiſhing he had been a crawling leper in a ditch, a link-boy, or a beggar, or had lived in a dungeon, rather than offended God as he had done? He ſent awful meſſages to his copartners in ſin, and adviſed a gentleman of character, that came to viſit him in theſe words: O remember that you contemn God no more. He is an avenging God, and will viſit you for your ſins; and will, I hope, in mercy, touch your conſcience as he hath done mine. You and I have been friends and ſinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you. We have been all miſtaken in our conceits and opinions; our perſuaſions have been falſe and groundleſs, therefore God grant you repentance. And ſeeing the ſame gentleman the next day, he ſaid, Perhaps you were diſobliged by my plainneſs with you yeſterday: I ſpake the words of truth and ſobemeſs; and ſtriking his hand on his breaſt, added, I hope God will touch your heart.

He condemned that fooliſh and abſurd philoſophy which the world ſo much admired, propagated by the late Thomas Hobbs; which, he ſaid, had undone him, and many more of the beſt parts in the nation.

He commanded that his profane writings and obſcene pictures ſhould be burnt.

He wiſhed his ſon might never be a wit; which is, as he explained it, one of thoſe wretched creatures, who pride themſelves in abuſing God and religion.

He proteſted he would not commit any known ſin to gain a kingdom.

And for the admonition of others, he ſubſcribed the following recantation, and ordered it to be publiſhed, (viz.)

For the benefit of all thoſe whom I may have drawn into ſin by my example and encouragement, I leave to the world this my laſt declaration, which I deliver in the preſence of the great God, who knows the ſecrets of all hearts, and before whom I am now appearing to be judged: That from the bottom of my ſoul, I deteſt and abhor the whole courſe of my former wicked life; that I think I can never ſufficiently admire the goodneſs of God, who has given me a true ſenſe of my pernicious opinions and vile practices, by which I have hitherto lived without hope, and without God in the world; have been an open enemy to Jeſus Chriſt, doing the utmoſt deſpite to the Holy Spirit of grace: and that the greateſt teſtimony of my charity to ſuch, is, to warn them, in the name of God, as they regard the welfare of their immortal ſouls, no more to deny his being or his providence, or deſpiſe his goodneſs; no more to make a mock of ſin, or contemn

contemn the pure and excellent religion of my ever bleſſed Redeemer, through whoſe merits alone, I, one of the greateſt of ſinners, do yet hope for mercy and forgiveneſs. Amen.

Declared and ſigned in the preſence of Ann Rocheſter, Robert Parſons, June 19, 1680. J. ROCHESTER.

Woodward's Fair Warnings.

233. MONSIEUR VOLTAIRE.

THIS extraordinary man, during a long ſeries of years, was continually treating the Holy Scriptures as the Roman Catholics did John Huſs and Jerome of Prague. He diſtorts and diſfigures the beautiful face of truth, dreſſes up the Bible in a bear's ſkin, crowns it with caps and painted devils, and then entertains and diverts himſelf with the unſeemly figure.—But let candour judge, whether or not this is a conduct totally inconſiſtent with the profeſſion and principles of rational and immortal beings—of impartial ſearchers after truth—and men of education, veracity and ſolid ſenſe.—It is the glory of the Bible, ſays his excellent countryman, Paſcal, to have ſo unreaſonable men for its profeſſed enemies; and their oppoſition is of ſo little danger, that it ſerves to illuſtrate the principal truths which that divine book contains. For the main ſcope of Chriſtian faith is to eſtabliſh theſe two principles, the corruption of nature, and the redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. And theſe oppoſers, if they are of no uſe towards demonſtrating the truth of the redemption, by the ſanctity of their lives, yet are at leaſt admirably uſeful, in ſhewing the corruption of nature, by ſuch unnatural conduct and opinions.—

We ſhall do well to recollect here, that ridicule, though capable of miſleading the vulgar and unwary, cannot invalidate truth; that a bad man, with competent abilities, is oftentimes as capable of handling that dangerous weapon as a good one, and that there is nothing within the whole compaſs of nature, how excellent ſoever in itſelf, but may be repreſented in an unfavourable, and even ridiculous point of view. Milton introduces the devil, humouroufly enough to be ſure, though not, perhaps, very decoroufly, making himſelf and companions merry, at ſeeing the diſorder into which their helliſh enginry had driven Michael and his angelic hoſt. And the paſſage deſcribing this ſcene is a good illuſtration of the no leſs odious than blaſphemous character acted by this celebrated arch-infidel:

O friends, why come not on theſe victors proud?
Ere while they fierce were coming; and when we
To entertain them fair with open front
And breaſt (what could we more?) propoſed terms
Of compoſition, ſtrait they chang'd their minds,
Flew off, and into ſtrange vagaries fell,
As they would dance; yet for a dance they ſeem'd
Somewhat extravagant and wild, perhaps
For joy of offer'd peace: but I ſuppoſe,
If our propoſals once again were heard,
We ſhould compel them to a quick reſult.
To whom thus Belial in like gameſome mood:
Leader, the terms we ſent were terms of weight,
Of hard contents, and full of force urg'd home,
Such as we might perceive amus'd them all,
And ſtumbl'd many; for who receive them right,
Had need from head to foot well underſtand;
Not underſtood, this gift they have beſides,
They ſhew us when our foes walk not upright.
So they among themſelves in pleaſant vein
Stood ſcoffing.

But is it not worth while to enquire how this gameſome mood was ended?

—— The Son into terror chang'd
His count'nance too ſevere to be beheld,
And full of wrath bent on his enemies.
At once the Four ſpread out their ſtarry wings
With dreadful ſhade contiguous, and the orbs
Of his fierce chariot roll'd, as with the ſound
Of torrent floods, or of a numerous hoſt.
He on his impious foes right onward drove,
Gloomy as night; under his burning wheels
The ſtedfaſt empyrean ſhook throughout,
All but the throne itſelf of God. Full ſoon
Among them he arriv'd, in his right hand
Graſping ten thouſand thunders, which he ſent
Before him, ſuch as in their ſouls infix'd
Plagues; they aſtoniſh'd all reſiſtance loſt,
All courage; down their idle weapons dropt;
O'er ſhields and helms and helmed heads he rode
Of thrones and mighty ſeraphim proſtrate,
That wiſh'd the mountains now might be again
Thrown on them as a ſhelter from his ire.
Nor leſs on either ſide tempeſtuous fell
His arrows, from the fourfold-viſag'd Four
Diſtinct with eyes, and from the living wheels

Diſtinct

Diſtinct alike with multitude of eyes;
One Spirit in them rul'd, and every eye
Glar'd lightning, and ſhot forth pernicious fire
Among th' accurs'd, that wither'd all their ſtrength,
And of their wonted vigour left them drain'd,
Exhauſted, ſpiritleſs, afflicted, fall'n.
Yet half his ſtrength he put not forth, but check'd
His thunder in mid volley; for he meant
Not to deſtroy, but root them out of heaven:
The overthrown he rais'd, and as a herd
Of goats or timorous flock together throng'd
Drove them before him thunder-ſtruck, purſu'd
With terrors and with furies to the bounds
And cryſtal wall of heav'n, which opening wide,
Roll'd inward, and a ſpacious gap diſclos'd
Into the waſteful deep; the monſtrous ſight
Struck them with horror backward; but far worſe
Urg'd them behind, headlong themſelves they threw
Down from the verge of heav'n; eternal wrath
Burnt after them to the bottomleſs pit.

This ſame laughter-loving infidel, who has filled all Europe equally with his fame and the poiſon of his writings, after having ſpent three or fourſcore years in ſneering at the Bible; at laſt, like an errant bobadil, in the hour of danger, ſhrunk under the attack: and his puny fears impelled him againſt his will to make the following humiliating confeſſion and ſervile recantation, confirmed upon oath of ſeveral witneſſes who were preſent:

I believe firmly all that the catholic, apoſtolic, and Roman church believes and confeſſes. I believe in one God, in three perſons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, really diſtinguiſhed; having the ſame nature, the ſame divinity, and the ſame power: that the ſecond perſon was made man, called Jeſus Chriſt; who died for the ſalvation of all men; who has eſtabliſhed the holy church, to which it belongs to judge of the true ſenſe of the Holy Scriptures. I condemn likewiſe all the hereſies the ſaid church has condemned and rejected; likewiſe all perverted miſinterpretations which may be put on them. This true and catholic faith, out of which none can be ſaved, I profeſs and acknowledge to be the only true one; and I ſwear, promiſe, and engage myſelf to die in this belief by the grace of God. I believe and acknowledge alſo, with a perfect faith; all, and every one of the articles of the Apoſtles Creed. I declare, moreover, that I have made this confeſſion

confeſſion before the reverend Father Capuchin, previous to his confeſſing me.*

It becomes not us, perhaps, to ſay whether Voltaire was ſincere or not in this extraordinary confeſſion, or whether he was carrying on the joke a little longer, and in a manner ſomewhat more ſolemn. Certain it is, his end was without honour; and theſe awful words of Solomon ſeem to have been moſt dreadfully accompliſhed in him: "Becauſe I "have called, and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, "and no man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my "counſel, and would none of my reproof: I will alſo laugh "at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; "when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your deſtruction "cometh as a whirlwind; when diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh "upon you, then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not "anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find "me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuſe the "fear of the Lord: they would none of my counſel; they "deſpiſed all my reproof: therefore ſhall they eat of the "fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own de-"vices: for the turning away of the ſimple ſhall ſlay them; "and the proſperity of fools ſhall deſtroy them."

For, though it is not without uneaſy and reluctant feelings, that I have thought myſelf obliged to inſert an incident that may ſhock the ſenſations of delicacy and humanity; yet I conceive it would have been an injuſtice to the cauſe of Chriſtianity to have ſuppreſſed, in a work of this ſort, a circumſtance, that plainly indicates the remorſe and horror, the deſpair and frenzy of one of its greateſt enemies, at the cloſe of his life. And indeed it rarely happens, but that men of ſuch perverted and infectious principles are compelled in their laſt moments, if not before, to bear ſome unwilling teſtimony, or diſcover ſome remorſeful ſymptoms that ſtamp inconſiſtency upon their ingenious, but ill-deviſed works, and effectually prove the fallacy of the dangerous and blaſphemous ſyſtems they have uttered.

We are told, then, that Dr. Tronchin, having been ſent for in Voltaire's laſt illneſs, found him in the greateſt agonies, exclaiming with the utmoſt horror, I am abandoned by God and man! The Rector of the pariſh had juſt quitted the room (omni reinfecta), on a ſudden, before he could be prevented, he ſeized what was in the chamber pot, and ate it. This Dr. Tronchin related afterwards to all his acquaintance; and added, that he wiſhed all who had imbibed the irreligious tenets

* See the genuine Letters between him and the Archbiſhop of Anneci.

tenets of this unhappy man, could have been preſent at his laſt ſcene, as it muſt have been productive of the beſt effects. Several of the Coryphæi of the ſect endeavoured to prevail with the Doctor to ſuppreſs or ſoften what he ſaw and heard; but in vain. As long as he lived, he uniformly perſiſted in giving the ſame account.

A gentleman, then in France, adds, When Dr. Tronchin firſt came to Monſieur Voltaire, he ſaid, Doctor, I will give you half of what I am worth if you can give me ſix months life. The Doctor anſwered, Sir, you cannot live ſix weeks. He replied, Then I ſhall go to hell, and you will go with me.

And this is the hero of modern infidels!*

Some other accounts of the life and character of this celebrated infidel may not be unacceptable to the generality of my readers.

Overloaded with glory and wealth, he was not happy, becauſe he never could content himſelf with what he poſſeſſed. —On his arrival at Paris from Ferney, he had a violent hæmorrhage, which greatly impaired him. Some days before his laſt illneſs, the idea of approaching death tormented him. —At laſt, not being able to obtain ſleep, he took a large doſe of opium, which deprived him of his ſenſes.†—He confeſſed himſelf at the time he had the vomiting of blood, and even made a ſort of profeſſion of faith: this was ſuppoſed to be policy and illuſion, and ſerved only to ſhew the ſuppleneſs of this ſingular man; who was a Freethinker at London, a Carteſian at Verſailles, a Chriſtian at Nancy, and an Infidel at Berlin. In ſociety, he was alternately an Ariſtippus and a Diogenes. He made pleaſure the object of his reſearches; he enjoyed it, and made it the object of his praiſe; he grew weary of it, and turned it into ridicule. By the natural progreſs of ſuch a character, he paſſed from a moraliſt to a buffoon, from a philoſopher to an enthuſiaſt, from mildneſs to paſſion, from flattery to ſatire, from the love of money to the love of luxury, from the modeſty of a wiſe man to the vanity of an impious wit. It has been ſaid, that by his familiarity with the great, he indemnified himſelf for the conſtraint he was ſometimes under among his equals; that he had ſenſibility without affection; that he was voluptuous without paſſions, open without ſincerity, and liberal without generoſity. It has been ſaid, that, with perſons, who were jealous

* See Arminian Magazine for 1783, and Gentleman's Magazine for November 1782, page 529.

† The Author of this article in the Dictionary denies in one place the unhappineſs of Voltaire's death, but in a ſuch a manner as ſeems to confirm it.

jealous of his acquaintance, he began by politeneſs, went on with coldneſs, and uſually ended by diſguſt, unleſs perchance they were writers who had acquired reputation, or men in power, whom he had adroitneſs enough to attach to his intereſts. It has been ſaid, that he was ſtedfaſt to nothing by choice, but to every thing by irregular ſtarts of fancy. Theſe ſingular contraſts, ſays M. Peliſſon, are not leſs evident in his phyſical than in his moral character. It has been remarkable, that his phyſiognomy partook of thoſe of an eagle and an ape: and who can ſay, that this contraſt was not the principle of his predominant taſte for antitheſis? What an uncommon and perpetual change from greatneſs to meanneſs, from glory to contempt! How frequently has he combined the gravity of Plato with the legerdemain of Harlequin!——He poſſeſſed the moſt unbounded influence, and has brought about a melancholy revolution in wit and morals.

General Biographical Dictionary.

VOLTAIRE was inconſtant in his friendſhips, if any of his connexions ever deſerved that name.—He was reſtleſs and inconſtant in all his ways; had no fixed tenor of character or conduct; had fits of reaſon and principle, as well as of caprice and paſſion. His head was clear, his imagination was lively, and his heart, we fear, was rather corrupt; for he treated every thing with deriſion.—An exceſſive vanity, and boundleſs avarice, were always blending their impure effluvia with his rays of light.—

We would caſt a ſhade over his vices which were ſtriking;—let that deſpotic jealouſy which could bear no rival in literary fame—let that malignant irritability that made him ſwell with venom, like a hiſſing ſnake, againſt all contradiction and criticiſm—let that ungenerous bigotry which made him perſevere in, and even repeat his errors when they had been palpably expoſed—let all theſe be contemplated with compaſſion, if they cannot be entirely buried in oblivion.—He now reſts from his labours of animoſity and contention; and, grant it, heaven, that his works, in this part of his career, may not follow him!—We paſs over in ſilence the circumſtantial detail of his character and conduct with reſpect to religion and morals. We ſhall only obſerve, that his oppoſition to Chriſtianity was not only indecent and diſingenuous, but was, moreover, carried on with a degree of acrimony, ſpite, bitterneſs, and bigotry, which has not been perceivable in the writings of any deiſt, known to us in the preſent age. *Weſtminſter Magazine for* 1778.

Ever

Ever ſince Voltaire, ſays the learned and ingenious Dr. Beattie, ſtimulated by avarice, and other dotages incident to unprincipled old age, formed the ſcheme of turning a penny by writing three or four volumes yearly againſt the Chriſtian religion, he has dwindled from a genius of no common magnitude into a paltry book-maker; and now thinks he does great and terrible things, by retailing the crude and long exploded notions of free-thinkers of the laſt age, which, when ſeaſoned with a few miſtakes, miſrepreſentations, and ribaldries, of his own, form ſuch a meſs of falſhood, impiety, obſcenity, and other abominable ingredients, as nothing but the monſtrous maw of an illiterate infidel can either digeſt or endure.

A learned countryman of this ſame celebrated infidel, the Abbe Nonnotte, who has the character of a very moderate and candid writer, in a valuable work, entitled Les Erreurs de Voltaire, obſerves, That a judicious reader will immediately diſcover in peruſing Voltaire's works, that the author has no fixed principles; that he has no ſound logic; that he is often without true learning; always without diſcretion and a proper reſpect to things of the laſt importance. He will ſee through all thoſe lively ſallies of wit, thoſe bold reflections, and that varniſh which is ſo artfully ſpread over all his writings. Theſe are ornaments which may dazzle and ſurpriſe light and ſuperficial underſtandings incapable of reflection; but will make very little impreſſion on thoſe who are able to look farther and judge properly.

234. Rev. Mr. Anon.

SIR,

I was not long ſince called to viſit a poor gentleman, ere while of the moſt robuſt body, and of the gayeſt temper, I ever knew. But when I viſited him; Oh! how was the glory departed from him! I found him no more that ſprightly and vivacious ſon of joy, which he uſed to be; but languiſhing, pining away, and withering under the chaſtiſing hand of God. His limbs feeble and trembling: his countenance forlorn and ghaſtly: and the little breath he had left, ſobb'd out in ſorrowful ſighs! His body haſtening apace to the duſt, to lodge in the ſilent grave, the land of darkneſs and deſolation. His ſoul juſt going to God who gave it; preparing itſelf to wing away unto its long home; to enter upon an unchangeable and eternal ſtate. When I was come up into his chamber, and had ſeated myſelf on his bed, he firſt caſt a moſt wiſhful look upon me, and then began as well as he

was

was able to ſpeak:—Oh! that I had been wiſe, that I had known this, that I had conſidered my latter end. Ah! Mr. —— death is knocking at my doors: in a few hours more I ſhall draw my laſt gaſp; and then judgment, the tremendous judgment! How ſhall I appear, unprepared as I am, before the all-knowing, and omnipotent God. How ſhall I endure the day of his coming!—When I mentioned among many other things, that ſtrict holineſs, which he had formerly ſo ſlightly eſteemed, he replied with a haſty eagerneſs: Oh! that holineſs is the only thing I now long for. I have not words to tell you how highly I value it. I would gladly part with all my eſtate, large as it is, or a world to obtain it. Now my benighted eyes are enlightened, I clearly diſcern the things that are excellent. What is there in the place whither I am going but God? Or what is there to be deſired on earth but religion?—But if this God ſhould reſtore you to health, ſaid I, think you that you ſhould alter your former courſe?—I call heaven and earth to witneſs, ſaid he, I would labour for holineſs, as I ſhall ſoon labour for life. As for riches, and pleaſures, and the applauſes of men, I account them as droſs and dung, no more to my happineſs, than the feathers that lie on the floor. Oh! if the righteous judge would try me once more; if he would but reprieve, and ſpare me a little longer; in what a ſpirit would I ſpend the remainder of my days! I would know no other buſineſs, aim at no other end, than perfecting myſelf in holineſs. Whatever contributed to that; every means of grace; every opportunity of ſpiritual improvement, ſhould be dearer to me, than thouſands of gold and ſilver. But alas! why do I amuſe myſelf with fond imaginations? The beſt reſolutions are now inſignificant, becauſe they are too late. The day in which I ſhould have worked is over and gone, and I ſee a ſad, horrible night approaching, bringing with it the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever. Heretofore, woe is me! when God called, I refuſed; when he invited, I was one of them that made excuſe. Now therefore I receive the reward of my deeds; fearfulneſs and trembling are come upon me: I ſmart, and am in ſore anguiſh already; and yet this is but the beginning of ſorrows! It doth not yet appear what I ſhall be; but ſure I ſhall be ruined, undone, and deſtroyed with an everlaſting deſtruction;

This ſad ſcene I ſaw with mine eyes; theſe words, and many more, equally affecting, I heard with mine ears, and ſoon after attended the unhappy gentleman to his tomb.

Extract of a Letter to Richard Naſh, Eſq.

235. HONOURABLE

235. Honourable Fr. N——t.

THAT examples prevail above precepts can be no ſurpriſe to any one that conſiders the rarity of them, or that moſt of the ſenſes being at once employed, they ſhould make ſo ſtrong an impreſſion upon the brain, and ſo upon the underſtanding, according to the manner of human perception.

The preſent inſtance, whoſe relation I have undertaken, having made ſo deep an impreſſion upon my own mind, I could not think, but that if all men participate of the ſame nature as I do, they muſt be equally affected with it, ſome allowance being made for this, that what I myſelf ſaw and heard actually, I communicate by way of relation to others.

I am obliged, out of tenderneſs and reputation, to conceal the name of the family of this gentleman, who is the ſubject of the following diſcourſe, and could heartily wiſh, that my concealing it would make ſo many as do know it, to forget every thing but the example itſelf, that being only uſeful, the reſt ignominious: but I am afraid my wiſhes will prove ſucceſsleſs, there being four more divines, beſides myſelf, who were very frequently there, at the beginning of his ſickneſs, beſides ſeveral gentlemen and others, whoſe acquaintance, or deſign of doing good, might lead them thither.

This unhappy gentleman had in his youth time the advantage of a religious and virtuous education; in which it was obſervable, that he made a more conſiderable progreſs than was uſual for ſuch years, being very warm and active in all religious exerciſes: beſides, he was a great proficient in learning, being ſent up to the univerſity from the ſchool where he was educated, very perfect in the Latin and Greek tongues at ſixteen years of age; where he continued five years: his behaviour and deportment being ſuch, that all his friends and acquaintance looked upon him as an uncommon bleſſing, an ornament to his family. At the age of twenty-one he came up to town, and entered himſelf into the Inns of Court, deſigning to ſtudy the law; his friends and he concluding it neceſſary, that thoſe who have eſtates ſhould have at leaſt ſo much inſight in the law as to know how to preſerve them.

Oh that I could proceed with my character, or at leaſt abruptly break off; and ſay, *Here he died, ignorant of the town and its vices!* But alas! the ſcene is changed, and here we bring another perſon upon the ſtage, laughed and ridiculed out of his innocence and virtue, by new acquaintance, and for a long time together playing the hypocrite, aſſuming unto himſelf a degree of that profaneneſs and impiety he was innocent of, appearing more vile and baſe than he could ſud-

denly

denly bring himſelf to be, only to ſecure his reputation with his companions, and avoid the uneaſineſs of being a common jeſt. But this was not the only or chief method whereby he was brought to his apoſtaſy; for he had too much judgment, and was too well grounded to be ſhocked and altered with a bare laughter or a ridiculous grin. He would often ſay; Gentlemen, thoſe that pretend to reaſon cannot be ſo bewitched with the charms of mirth, as to think laughing a good argument to confute whatever may be ſaid: if religion be ſo unreaſonable a thing as you would perſuade me, by laughing at it, why do not ye give me ſome fair reaſon againſt it? Hereupon ſome of the oldeſt ſtanding would ſuggeſt, that Mahomet has more votaries than Chriſt; that that religion is not without its martyrs and confeſſors; that the wild Indians dare bravely die for their religion; that there is no nation, be it ever ſo barbarous, that gives us not ſome fine example of doing and ſuffering; that therefore it is not the excellency of any one religion, but the prejudices of all, that produces theſe effects: that it is the habit and cuſtom of education that creates the formidable notions of conſcience, heaven, hell, futurity, and the immortality of the ſoul; all which are but the politic inventions of prieſts and cunning magiſtrates, to enrich themſelves and keep the vulgar in awe, who are naturally ſuperſtitious and fearful; with a deal more to the ſame purpoſe. Such harangues as theſe did by little and little poiſon the principles of this poor gentleman, and mould him into the ſame leaven with themſelves; not only into the ſame judgment, but liberty of all profaneneſs, debauchery, and injuſtice, as far as he could act without the cognizance of the law. It will not be amiſs to add, that this gentleman was one of that club, which, within theſe laſt ſeven years, met together conſtantly, to lay down ſuch rules and methods, as that they might be critically wicked in every thing that they could, without the laws taking hold of them; and therefore the law itſelf was more particularly examined, what fallacies might be put upon it; where and in what caſes it did not provide againſt unheard of villanies; what ſubterfuges and evaſions there might be in its expoſition; with many more like horrid inſtances, which were all noted down as very uſeful diſcoveries for the new candidates of improved impiety.

But to proceed; this gentleman's ſenſe and education had furniſhed him with too much prudence to lay open himſelf to every body; he commonly kept a very fair correſpondence with his friends, and in all ſtrange places was very ſober and reſerved,

reſerved, prudence obliging him not to diſcover all he believed, to every body. Thus he lived ſeveral years, being as ſecretly wicked as all temptations, and the advantages of a good eſtate would ſuffer him: but as "the wicked do not live "out half their days" by reaſon of their intemperance and debaucheries, ſo this gentleman haſtened his diſmal period by the like courſes, falling deſperately ill on the thirtieth of November laſt, continuing ſo till the eighth of this inſtant December.

As ſoon as he found himſelf precipitated by his ill courſes into ſuch a dangerous ſickneſs, he began to be extremely ſtartled and amazed at the apprehenſions of death (for he believed he ſhould die) and in ſpite of all he could do, he could not forbear reflecting upon another life; and notwithſtanding all his fortifications to the contrary, he could not confute, or rid himſelf of, the expectation of a future retribution. Being thus diſtracted with his diſtemper and fears, he threw himſelf upon the bed, and diſcourſed with himſelf after this manner. Oh! what is the meaning of this tumultuous war in my breaſt? What argument is there now to aſſiſt me againſt matter of fact? Do I aſſert that there is no hell at all, and yet feel one in my boſom? Am I certain, that there is no heaven? when I am ſure there is a hell? that there is no after retributions, when I feel a preſent judgment? Do I affirm my ſoul to be as mortal as my body, when this languiſhes, and that is as vigorous as ever? Oh that any one could reſtore to me my ancient guard of piety and innocency! But it is too late. Wretch that I am, whither ſhall I fly from this breaſt, or what will become of me?

He had no ſooner ended, but in comes one of his old companions, to pay him a viſit; for he had heard that he was not well. How now, brother, ſays he? Why this melancholy look and poſture? You ſeem to be more concerned in your mind than body? Pray tell me what is the matter? The matter? replied the other, fixing a pair of ghaſtly eyes upon him: It is you, and the reſt of my companions, that have inſtilled theſe principles into me, which now, having moſt need of them, leave me in the agonies of deſpair and confuſion. What advice or comfort have you now to fortify me againſt my fearful expectations of another life? Are you certain that my ſoul is material and mortal? and that it will diſſolve with the body? I am ſo certain, replied the other, that I venture my whole upon it. Here I interrupted them by coming into the room, and applying myſelf to the ſick perſon: I told him, that I was a ſtranger to him, yet hearing

ing of his diſtemper, I thought it my duty to pay him a viſit, and give him what Chriſtian comfort and advice I was capable of. I thank you, replied the ſick perſon, and would deſire you to engage that gentleman that ſits there (meaning his friend), and prove that the ſoul is not matter, or mortal. That the ſoul is not matter, ſaid I, Des Cartes has proved in his method, by ſhewing that the ſoul is independent of matter. That matter itſelf cannot think, neither in the whole nor its parts, is evident enough from Mr. Lock's book on the Human Underſtanding. But after all, we, perhaps, can beſt prove it thus: Matter is by every philoſopher granted to be in its own nature indifferent to motion or reſt: that if it be in reſt it will lie eternally ſo, unleſs ſomething elſe move it; and that if any thing put it in motion, it will eternally move, were it not for the oppoſition of other matter, which clogs and retards its motion. But thoſe, that would have the ſoul to be a pure fine matter, ſay, that it firſt moves the animal ſpirits, they the nerves, and theſe a leg, an arm, &c. mechanically, as matter moves matter. Now thoſe that make the ſoul the firſt agent and mover, make matter to move itſelf, which is impoſſible, according to the above cited theſis, which will have matter to reſt eternally, unleſs it be moved by ſomething. But the ſoul does not move the body independent of matter, and matter cannot move unleſs it be firſt moved: therefore the ſoul is not matter, and conſequently not periſhable by attrition, tranſmutation, &c. But, gentlemen, added I, I hope there is no need of a lecture of this nature to either of you; for you look like creatures that have a ſhare in human nature, which has the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul innate with it. The ſick perſon made no other anſwer than a diſmal groan, as if his heart had broke; and his friend alſo made haſte out of the room, without bidding us God be with you. I was ſurprized at ſuch an effect, and deſired the ſick party to tell me the reaſon of his diſcontent, offering my aſſiſtance to remove it, if poſſible, by counſel, prayers, advice, or any way that lay in my power.

Alas, Sir, replied he, you have undeceived me, now it is too late: I was afraid of nothing ſo much as the immortality of my ſoul; now you have aſſured me of that, you have aſcertained me of a hell, of a fearful expectation of judgment, of a portion among thoſe that have apoſtatized from their religion, of the lot of atheiſts, and deniers of Chriſt: you have now ſealed my damnation, by giving an earneſt of it, I mean an awakened conſcience, that brings my ſins into my remembrance, reckoning up the numerous catalogue for which

which I muſt go and give an account. O apoſtate wretch, from how great hopes am I fallen! Oh that I had never known what religion had been, then had I never denied my Saviour, nor been ſo black an heir of perdition.—— I was ſo ſurprized at ſuch kind of expreſſions that I ſtood ſpeechleſs for a conſiderable time; for having received the character of a perſon that had imbibed ſome atheiſtical principles; I little expected ſuch a deſperate change, but rather that I ſhould have had an hard talk of it to make him conſider ſeriouſly of a future life: but, ſo ſoon as I could recollect myſelf, I ſaid: Sir, I would deſire you to take heed how you violate the mercy of God, and think ſo ſlightly of the ſufferings of Chriſt, as if they were not ſufficient for the redemption of the greateſt ſinner. This may be a deluſion of the devil, who would now hinder you from repentance and faith in Chriſt. I hope, if I have convinced you of the immortality of the ſoul, it is to a good end; for the way to cure a diſtemper is firſt to know it: if you had died ignorant of it, you had been miſerably undeceived in another world; whereas knowing it now, you have an opportunity and ſome time left to prepare for your welfare. To which he replied:

As to the mercies of God in Chriſt, I once knew and taſted what they are, which is now part of my curſe, in that I am more ſenſible in the loſs of them. They are, I will grant you, ſufficient to thoſe that have any ſhare in them; but what is that to me, who have denied Chriſt? who have daily crucified him afreſh, and put him to open ſhame? The devil has nothing to do with the torture I undergo; it is no deluſion of his, but the juſt judgment of God upon me; and your convictions are alſo part of my heavy judgment, in that you have given me a ſenſible horror of my ſin, by proving my ſoul immortal; whereas had I gone ſtraight to hell in my old damnable opinions, I had endured but one hell; whereas I now feel two: I mean not only an inexpreſſible torture which I carry in my breaſt, but an expectation of I know not what a change. Oh that I were in hell, that I might feel the worſt! And yet I dread to die, becauſe that worſt would never have an end.

All that he ſpoke, was with an air of ſuch horror and eagerneſs as can ſcarce be imagined; indeed it had ſuch effects on me, that I knew not what to anſwer: I trembled at the judgment of God, and I remember I wiſhed within myſelf that one or two of the looſeſt atheiſts in the age had been there, verily believing it would have put a ſtop in their impiety. The gentleman was got to bed, refuſing all ſuſte-

roar, and sweating through the violence of his torments, in the most prodigious manner that ever I saw or heard of. As soon as he was got to bed, I desired to pray by him, before I took my leave, which, with much reluctance he consented to. In the midst of prayer he groaned extremely, tossing and turning himself, as if he had been under the deepest agonies of death. When prayer was over, I asked him how he did, and why he groaned after such a rate in prayer-time? To which he answered, As the damned in hell, who lift up their eyes in torments, and behold afar off the joys in Abraham's bosom, have their torments thereby exceedingly enhanced, first by reflecting on their own misery, and then taking a prospect of the beatific vision they have lost; even so, I, who know myself to be hardened, and sealed up to damnation, hearing the prayers of the righteous, to which God Almighty's ears are always open, granting their requests; this encreases my torments, to think how I am excluded from such a privilege, and have no other portion left me, but blaspheming, weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever. Pray, Sir, said I, consider, that there is a vast deal of difference betwixt you and those that are in hell: they are lost irrevocably for evermore, without any opportunity of reprieve, or hopes of pardon; but you are yet alive, and have promises belonging to you in common with other sinners; Christ died for sinners, and God hath sworn by himself, that he "delights not in the death of a "sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness "and live;" and that "at what time soever a sinner re-"penteth from the evil of his ways," he shall receive pardon. To which he replied with his usual earnestness, I will grant you as much difference betwixt me and those that are in hell, as betwixt a common devil, and a devil incarnate. If they are irrevocably lost without opportunity of reprieve, or hopes of pardon, and I am yet alive, what then? what is the consequence? Not that the promises belong to me in common with other sinners, nor to any sinners, but such as repent and believe: if Christ died for sinners, it is for such as repent and believe; but though I would, I can do neither; I have outlived my day of grace, and am hardened, and turned reprobate: if God delights not in the death of sinners, it is of such sinners as repent and return unto him: but his justice will vindicate itself upon such obstinate, perverse sinners as I, who have denied his power and providence both in my words and actions; and now he has met with me for it; and oh! "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the

"living

"living God." If God was not againſt me I ſhould not value it, though all the legions of hell engaged me, though all the power and malice of men, joined in one complicated body to ſtudy and excerciſe the utmoſt barbarities that fleſh and blood could inflict upon me: but when an angry irreconcileable God looks upon his creature in wrath, and conſigns him over to his eternal vengeance and fury, this is intolerable, inexpreſſibly afflicting and grievous. Ah! "who "can dwell in everlaſting burnings?" Oh ye that have any hope, and have not yet paſt your day of grace, cry mightily to God, day and night; think no labour too much which ſecures you from the wrath of God. Oh! who can ſtand before him when he is angry? What ſtubble can reſiſt ſuch a conſuming fire? This, and more to the ſame purpoſe, he ſpake with ſo deep a concern, the tears trickling all the while down his cheeks, that no body in the room could refrain weeping; which he, perceiving, ſaid, And can ye weep at the image and bare relation of the effects of God's wrath? What then do you think I ſuffer, who actually be under the very weight of his fury? Refrain your tears for me; it is in vain; pity is no debt to me; nothing is ſo proper for me as ſome curſe to complete my miſery, and free me from the torments of my expectation. Here he pauſed a little, when looking towards the fire, he ſaid, Oh that I was to lie and broil upon that fire for a hundred thouſand years to purchaſe the favour of God, and be reconciled to him again. But it is a fruitleſs vain wiſh; millions of millions of years will bring me no nearer the end of my tortures, than one poor hour: O eternity! eternity! who can diſcover the abyſs of eternity! Who can properly paraphraſe upon the words "for ever and ever!"

I COULD not forbear reflecting on that paſſage of broiling upon the fire a hundred thouſand years to purchaſe the favour of God, and be again reconciled to him: How unproportionable was this poor man's concern to that of the common practice of the world, a great part of which will allow no time in days, weeks, years, to ſeek the face and favour of God? And amongſt thoſe that pretend to religion, how cooly and indifferently do they ſpend that time they ſet apart for private and public devotion? Were they ſenſible but for one minute what this wretched perſon endured, what a ſpur would it be to their devotion? And how careful would they be to make "their calling and election ſure?" How fearful, "leſt having a promiſe made them of entering into "reſt, any of them ſhould fall ſhort" through unbelief, and

ſo be fruſtrated of their ſhare and hopes of that glory which is to be revealed?

It now began to grow late, ſo I took my leave of him for that night, promiſing to renew my viſit, if it pleaſed God, the next day; when I found him ſtill in the ſame condition, as to his mind; but his body was much weakened by his continual ſweats, cauſed by the agonies he lay under. I found three or four divines with him, who had been at prayer, which they told me, had the ſame uneaſy effect upon him, as when I prayed with him the night before. One of the divines deſired him to conſider the example of St. Peter, who had denied his maſter with oaths and curſes, and yet was received again into favour. To which he replied (officiouſly againſt himſelf, as he had done the day before) It is true, St. Peter did deny his maſter, as I have done, but what then? His maſter had prayed for him, that his faith ſhould not fail, and being willing that he ſhould repent, he looked him into repentance, and aſſiſted him by his Holy Spirit to perfect it: now if Chriſt would aſſiſt me to repent, I ſhould do ſo too; but he hath juſtly withdrawn his impreſſions from me: I have ſo often crucified him afreſh, and put him to open ſhame; ſo often grieved that Holy Spirit, that God has taken it away from me, and in the room thereof has left me the ſpirit of impenitence and reprobation, and given me a certain earneſt of a fearful inheritance in another life.

He ſpake little more that day, for a deal of company preſſing in, it became troubleſome to him, and towards night orders were taken for the avoiding ſuch an inconvenience. There were four more divines in the room beſides, at ſix a clock; we all looked upon one another, not knowing what courſe to take, no text being offered in his favour, but what he readily turned another way: whilſt we were thus muſing, he cried out in a vehement affecting paſſion, How long, O Lord! ſhall thy wrath burn for ever againſt me? Shall thy eternal juſtice for ever exact upon a poor deſpicable worm? What is my value or worth that thou ſhouldſt pour out full vials of wrath upon me? Oh that thou wouldſt let go thy hand, for ever forget me, and let me fall into my firſt nothingneſs again! As my righteouſneſs could have profited thee nothing, ſo my impieties have done thee no hurt; therefore annihilate me, and let me periſh to nothing. Be not angry with me that I thus expoſtulate with thee: it will be but a little while but thy wrath will force the dreadfulleſt blaſphemies

blaſphemies from me, except thou prevent them. Oh that thou wouldſt take away my being and my miſery! Neither of them can add to, or diminiſh from, thy happineſs; therefore let them both ceaſe, and let my name be known no more: or if I muſt ſtill be, and be immortal, and thou wilt punish me, becauſe I have deſpiſed thee, let it ſuffice to be a privation of thyſelf, and let me paſs my eternity in a dream, without ever being awakened by the pangs of torment, without ever being diſturbed by the gnawing of "the worm "that dies not." But oh! what fruitleſs deſires are theſe? For I am expoſtulating with a God that has cloſed his ears, and will not hear; with a God that has for ever ſhut out my prayers, and only protracts my breath to be an example unto others! Oh ye rocks and mountains, that ye would hide me from the preſence of an incenſed God! But there is no flying from his preſence: what he has begun he will finiſh, he will extend his wrath againſt me for ever and ever!—Here ſome body knocked at the door, and it proved to be a penny-poſtman with a letter to this gentleman; which being told him; How, ſays he, a letter for me? A little longer, and I expect another ſort of a meſſenger: I am, added he, very quickly to give up my accounts of every ſecret action that I have done; and I have a mind to make an experiment of ſomething of the ſame nature, to ſee how I can bear it: and looking about the room he eſpied me: Pray, Sir, ſaid he, do me the favour to open and read this letter; the contents I know not; but I expect it to come from ſome of my old acquaintance. I deſired to be excuſed, alledging, that poſſibly there might be ſomething in it that might be improper to divulge. Nothing, nothing, replied he, can affect me now: I have no honour, no reputation, and what is yet worſe, no heaven to loſe, by this or any other act; therefore pray, Sir, oblige me, or I muſt trouble ſomebody elſe. Upon this I broke open the letter, deſigning firſt to take a curſory view of it, and then to proceed, or deſiſt, according as I found the contents; which, upon peruſal, I thought not impertinent to the preſent caſe, and therefore read as follows:

DEAREST SIR,

Underſtanding you are fallen dangerouſly ill, and that it has had a melancholy effect upon you, I could not, conſidering our ſtricter friendſhip, but endeavour, at leaſt, the removal of thoſe evils your mind may lie under; which, perhaps, is an office no leſs grateful, than making your body ſound and vigorous. Sickneſs and death are the common lot of mankind, and to repine and grieve at the

bearing of this lot, is to combat the laws of nature, and fight againſt impoſſibilities. What wiſe man repines at the heat in ſummer, or cold in winter, or troubles himſelf, that the ſun ever goes out of our hemiſphere all the night time? A common evil, that every body bears, ceaſes to be an evil, becauſe there is no one has a better fortune to compare with it; and without compariſon, nothing can be ſaid to be better or worſe: thus alſo a good made common palls into indifference from the ſame reaſons. But, perhaps, your melancholy ſuggeſts unto you, that it is a diſmal thing to launch out into an unknown abyſs, to be you know not where or what: I anſwer; I dream ſometimes of frightful things, and the ideas that I have of them, impreſs as afflicting reſentments upon my ſpirits, as if they were real; but when I awake all vaniſhes. Thus, if we will examine death, and its ſuppoſed conſequences, by the prejudices of a melancholy and diſtracted brain, we may be miſerable, proportionable to the height of our folly: but if by our reaſon we take a view of theſe formidable monſters, they grow tame and familiar to us. I would demand of him that aſks me, what eſtate I ſhall be in after death, what eſtate he was in before life? Pain and pleaſure will leave their impreſſions upon a human ſpirit: it is as natural as for wax to receive the impreſſion of that ſeal by which it is ſealed. Therefore if I was either happy or miſerable before I commenced humanity, I muſt ſtill retain ſome impreſſion of it: but I now do neither; therefore ſhall do neither hereafter. I came out of a ſtate of nothingneſs, and ſhall return into the ſame again; as the flame of an extinguiſhed candle diſſolves and loſeth itſelf in the circum-ambient air: even ſo the taper of life vaniſhes into pure æther, and is no more, when the laws of the union of the ſoul and body are violated and broken. Death itſelf is nothing; and after death there is nothing; and why ſhould I be afraid of nothing? Take courage, man, and either die like yourſelf, maſter of your fate and happineſs, ſo long as it is to be kept; or recover, and live worthy the character of a perſon that knows how either to live or die. So wiſhes

Your real friend and ſervant,

A. B.

I had no ſooner read this letter through, but he ſurprized us all with repeated diſmal groans, as if his ſoul had been ſtruggling under the laſt throws of ſeparation. We thought it not convenient to preſs for the reaſon of it, conſidering that human nature feels, or at leaſt ſuppoſes an eaſe by complaining of the evil it ſuffers; and it happened according to our

our expectations; for at length he broke out into theſe afflicting imprecations: Curſed be the day wherein I commenced ſuch a fatal friendſhip! Oh unhappy time, when firſt I imbibed theſe atheiſtical principles! when firſt I exchanged the Chriſtian faith for the creed of Spinoza and the Leviathan! when firſt I relinquiſhed all Revealed religion for the natural one, and the laſt for none at all!—Then caſting his eyes upon me, he ſaid, I am not able to write an anſwer to that letter, though I earneſtly deſire there ſhould be one; nor is it worth my while to get an Emanuenſis for that purpoſe, for I ſuppoſe I ſhall have no occaſion to write any more. I am alſo ſenſible that you might be better able to anſwer ſuch a letter than I, and yet my preſent circumſtances are ſuch, I being not only a party, but the diſmal ſubject matter myſelf, that what comes from me may make a deeper impreſſion upon the ſpirit of my friend, than what comes from a ſtrange hand; therefore you will oblige me, if you will only lend me your hand, and let me dictate; which I freely offering, he ordered a chair to be ſet on the other ſide of the bed, thinking it convenient to be as ſecret and free from noiſe and diverſion as poſſibly he could: and then he proceeded:

Sir,

Being not able to uſe my own, I have borrowed another hand to anſwer your's; poſſibly I may ſubſcribe myſelf. You ſay well, It is a grateſuller office to endeavour to remove the evils of the mind than of the body. What you urge of the common lot of mankind, as death and ſickneſs; I could wiſh were my caſe: but mine alas! is a diſcovery that I pay dearly for, viz. that deſpair and hell is the common lot of atheiſts. Now your arguments cannot reach my caſe, unleſs you firſt prove that atheiſm is as inevitable as death and ſickneſs, and that therefore the effects of it are to be borne patiently, unleſs a man will combat neceſſity and fight againſt the laws of fate. Your way of arguing is ſuch as I have uſed myſelf formerly; and I cannot but wonder now how I could think it concluſive: perhaps I never indeed thought of that, but was pleaſed with it, becauſe I wiſhed it to be true, and becauſe I ſaw it my intereſt that it ſhould be ſo. If you pleaſe I will juſt make a reflection or two upon what you have writ, and then give you my ſentiments of the whole matter. You ſay, that if we examine death and its ſuppoſed conſequences by our reaſon, thoſe formidable monſters grow tame and familiar: if by our reaſon you mean either the peculiar creed of atheiſts, or the common reaſon

of

of human nature; I am ſure thoſe monſters will be leſs tame and familiar the more you think of them: for ſince no reaſon diſcovers what an unexperienced death is, or the unknown change conſequent thereupon, how can we judge of things that we know not? Reaſon as long as you pleaſe upon things that you are ignorant of, and at laſt you will be as far from truth and ſatisfaction, if not farther, than when you firſt began; like him that demanded a conſiderable time to tell what God was; and when that was expired he demanded yet a greater; and being aſked why he did ſo, he replied, The more he thought, the leſs he knew of him. It might have been retorted on him, though the ſame hiſtory gives no account of it; Why then did he petition for means of greater ignorance and confuſion? Your argument is extreme weak about a pre-exiſtent and future ſtate; viz. I retain no impreſſion of happineſs or miſery that I had in a pre-exiſtent ſtate, therefore ſhall retain none in a future ſtate: How that is a conſequence in any rules of logic I ſee not. Next, you would have me believe upon your bare word, that death is nothing, and after death there is nothing. Pray how do you know either, having not yet tried? There are a great many that ſay the contrary. I have only concerned myſelf as to the rationality of your letter, that I might induce you to believe I am not melancholy, diſtracted, or prejudiced in my reaſon; and I would deſire you to believe it, that what I am going to ſay may not have the leſs credit, becauſe it comes from one under my circumſtances. It is truth, and whether you will believe me or no, you will at laſt find it to be ſo.

Here he groaned, and deſired a little intermiſſion, being not only weary with repeating ſo much, but at preſent dejected and confuſed with the unhappy truths he was about to tell his friend, and ſo he reſted himſelf for about half an hour: then calling to me again, he deſired we might proceed; which we did as follows:

If I could force you to believe me I would; all I can do is to deal with you as a reaſonable creature, by opening my breaſt to you, and then leaving you at liberty to act as you pleaſe. Whilſt we are in health and buſineſs we may ſeem to act contrary to our intentions, and plead for things we believe not; but when we come to die the vizard is taken off, and the man appears as he is, open and plain. This is my condition; therefore I can have neither intereſt nor any other motive in impoſing upon my friends.

Religion

Religion (I mean the Chriſtian) is no fictitious impoſture: heaven and hell are real, and the immortality of the ſoul is as certain as the exiſtence of the body. For a time we have officiouſly deluded and cheated one another of our religion and happineſs; and God, who will not always be deſpiſed by his creatures without taking notice of it, has choſen me out as an example to you all, and as a warning to the lazy and indifferent Chriſtian: But who, alas! can write their own tragedy without tears, or copy out the ſeal of their damnation, without the extremity of horror? That there is a God I know, becauſe I continually feel the effects of his wrath: that there is a hell, I am certain; having received the earneſt of my inheritance there, in my breaſt, where my tortures are infinitely ſhort of any expreſſion: that there is a natural conſcience, which is not the effect of a prejudiced education, I now feel with horror and amazement; being continually upbraided by it with the regiſtry of my impieties, and a bringing of all my ſins freſh into my remembrance. Why God has marked me out for an example of his wrath and vengeance rather than you, or any of our acquaintance, I preſume is, becauſe I am the greateſt Apoſtate, having been more religiouſly educated than any of you; and therefore done greater deſpite unto the Spirit of grace; and been the greateſt ſcandal to religion. Oh what a preſumptuous, egregious piece of folly is it for duſt and aſhes to contend with their Creator? to queſtion his juſtice, his power, nay, his very being? when at the ſame time, without this infinitely wiſe God, every ſuch vile wretch would immediately fall into its chaos again, being not able to exiſt one moment without him? What a vile ingratitude is it ſcurriloufly to reflect upon the Chriſtian religion, when the Author of it died to reconcile ſuch reflectors to himſelf? And if after all that he has done and ſuffered to make ſuch fools happy, they will ſtill deny him and deſpiſe the benefits of his redemption; what can be expected but that this interceſſor become an angry judge, and conſign his enemies over to the reward of their demerits? Do not miſtake yourſelf; it is not a light matter to queſtion and contend with the God of nature, to abuſe religion, and deny the Author of it, and what is yet the moſt of all, to apoſtatize and leave the way of righteouſneſs, as I have done. Behold, God hath met with me for it, after a long forbearance of ſeveral years in inveterate impiety and profaneneſs. Let me intreat you, by my example, to leave off your ſins by repentance. Who knoweth but God may yet receive you, and by me preach ſuch a lecture

lecture as may ſtop you in your courſe of wickedneſs? I ſpeak not this out of any love to virtue or hatred to vice; for I am hardened and impenitently reprobate, only herein I imitate Dives, who was unwilling his brethren ſhould come into the ſame place of torment with him. Make what uſe you pleaſe of this, only remember if it does not reclaim you, it will double your condemnation, and enhance your guilt, poſſibly to be overtaken in this preſent world as I am, with the juſt judgment of God: if not, be ſure you will be light on hereafter: which is all, and I wiſh I could ſay, enough, From

Your's, &c.

As ſoon as he had ſubſcribed his name, and the letter was ſealed, he deſired a porter might be called and ſent, for fear of a miſcarriage: which was done accordingly. And the night being far worn, we all took our leaves and left him, wiſhing him good reſt and a happier condition the next day: to which he replied, Gentlemen, I thank you; but my happineſs is at an end, and as for my reſt to night, all the eaſe I expect will be in wiſhing for the day, as in the day time I wiſh for the night; thus ſpending the little remainder of my miſerable moments in a fearful expectation of my diſſolution, and the diſmal account I am to make upon it. But, gentlemen, a good night to you, and remember my example, to confirm you in that religion I have diſowned, that ye may ſtand more cautiouſly by my fall, and ſecure the happineſs I have forfeited.

The next day came ſeveral of his friends out of the country, having had an account of his ſickneſs and diſtractions. When they came into the room, one of them applied himſelf to him, telling him, that he and ſeveral more of his relations were come on purpoſe to town to ſee him, and extreme ſorry to find him in ſuch a weak condition as he appeared (for now he was almoſt nothing but ſkin and bones, the agonies, that he lay under, doing the office of the quickeſt conſumption) to which he anſwered, I am obliged, out of common civility, to thank you all: but who are my relations? Our Saviour ſaid, "that ſuch only as did the will "of his heavenly Father were his relations:" I may alſo properly ſay, that none but the atheiſt, the reprobate, and all ſuch as do the work of the devil, are my relations. This little tye of fleſh and blood will be diſſolved in a moment; but the relation I have to the damned is permanent and laſting; the ſame lot, the ſame place of torments, the ſame exerciſes of blaſphemy, and the ſame eternity of horror, will be common to us all; ſo that the ſimilitude of torments,

place

place and duration, will join us in a very ſtrict union. His friends, who had only ſome report of a kind of diſtraction, were ſurprized to hear him deliver himſelf in ſuch terms, and began to enquire of ſome of us what was the matter that he talked at ſuch a rate; who replied, we could wiſh it were frenzy or diſtraction; but we were afraid of a much ſadder cauſe, viz. the ſenſe of hell and God's wrath upon him, which was ſo violent as to drive him into deſpair, and the utmoſt agonies and horror of mind, begging, if it might pleaſe God, the caſe might be altered before his death, which they were ſure could not be far off, if he proceeded as he had begun. He hearing them whiſper, and imagining the cauſe of it, called them all unto him, and ſaid: You may imagine me diſtracted or melancholy; I wiſh I were either; but it is part of my judgment, that I am not; no, my apprehenſion of perſons and things is rather more vigorous and quick than it was when I was in perfect health; and it is my curſe, becauſe I am thereby more ſenſible of the unhappineſs and the condition I am fallen into. Would you be informed why I am become a ſkeleton in three or four days? Why, my grief does continually extort ſome unhappy expreſſions from me? Know then that I have ſinned againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and done deſpite to the Spirit of grace; that I have deſpiſed my Maker, and denied my Redeemer; that, in ſhort, I have apoſtatized from the Chriſtian religion, and joined myſelf to the atheiſt and profane, and continued this courſe under many convictions, till my iniquity was ripe for vengeance, and the juſt judgment of God overtook me, when my ſecurity was the greateſt, and the checks of my conſcience the leaſt. Since I denied that ſalvation that comes by Chriſt Jeſus, there is no mediator or interceſſor for ſinners; if there be, who is he that can redeem my ſoul from hell, or give a ranſom for my life? No, no, the Scripture is certainly true, and that ſays: "If we ſin wilfully, after "we have received the knowledge of the truth, there re- "maineth no more ſacrifice for ſin, but a certain fearful look- "ing for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall "conſume the adverſary. There remaineth no more ſacri- "fice for ſin," that is the wound that pierces my ſoul: Chriſt Jeſus was the only expiatory ſacrifice that God would accept of; and I not accepting (I would ſay), and I deſpiſing this, there now remains no other for me to accept of, no other to make an atonement and ſatisfaction for me: "There is no other "name under heaven given among men whereby we may be "ſaved, but only the name of Jeſus:" and it is this Jeſus that

that I have reproached, ridiculed, and abuſed, in his members here: nor is this all, I have not been content to do this myſelf, but by my example have induced others to do the ſame. Methinks your breaſts are all open to me, and in the midſt of your pity and ſurprizals, you would bid me hope, believe, and return and ſupplicate that mercy I have abuſed; that Jeſus came to receive ſinners, and to bring them to repentance, with other things of this nature. I know that theſe are your thoughts, and by mentioning them I have ſaved you the labour. Alas, how fain would I hope and believe! Can a man in torments not deſire to be freed from them? No, aſſure yourſelves, I would upon any terms; but the diſpleaſure and wrath of God obſtruct the power of hoping and believing; and though I would, I can do neither: nor do I know what ſome divines mean, that ſay, He that deſires to hope, repent and believe, in ſome meaſure does it. I experience the contrary: a fruitleſs wiſhing that comes not to act, is no more but a conviction, which ſhall bring ſuch perſons under greater damnation. Would you have me to return and ſupplicate that mercy I have abuſed? Alas! how ſad is my caſe, that have no other hopes but what depend upon abuſed mercy? But, why ſaid I hopes when I have no hopes at all? My hopes are fruſtrate, and my expectations are cut off, and what remains behind? Why, I am bid to hope and believe. Oh what ſatire, what mockery and abuſe is this upon me, to find me in miſery, and bid me be happy, without affording me ſome power of being ſo! Indeed ſhould Jeſus Chriſt ſay ſo much to me, it would be ſome comfort; but for you to do it, is the ſame thing, as to bid a malefactor ſhake off his chains and fetters, and aſſume his liberty; or to call upon the dead to ariſe out of their graves, and challenge their eſtates and honors again. How idle is it, to bid the fire not to burn, when fuel is adminiſtered; to command the ſeas to be ſmooth and calm in the midſt of ſtorms? Such is my caſe, and ſuch are the comforts of my friends. But I am ſpent and can complain no more. Would to God the cauſe of my complaints would alſo ceaſe. The cauſe of my complaints! This renews my grief, and ſummons up the little ſtrength I have left to complain again, like an extinguiſhing flame that recollects at once all its alimentary matter for one great blaze before it expires. It is juſt ſo with me: but whither am I going? As he ſaid this, he fainted away, and lay in a ſort of ſwound for a conſiderable time: but by the help of ſome ſpirits we brought him to himſelf again, and as ſoon as he opened his eyes,

eyes, he ſaid, Oh cruel and unkind friends, to awake me from a dream in which I had a ceſſation from my tortures; but now they return again, and prey upon my ſoul like ſo many furies. This he ſpoke with ſo feeling and lively concern, that not one of his relations could refrain from tears, none of them being able to ſpeak to him for a conſiderable time after. You weep, ſays he, but your very tears come too late. Was I like another perſon that goes out of the world, it would have been one of my greateſt troubles to ſee you weep, or at leaſt, it would add much to my pains; for he muſt be unnatural and ſenſeleſs that could not be moved and troubled at the affliction of others, eſpecially his friends and relations; but the caſe is otherwiſe with me; my cup is full, and already runs over: the bitterneſs of my ſoul is as great as poſſible it can be in this world, and my heart is full of horror and anguiſh, and no grief can add unto mine, being already ſo great, that it is incapable of receiving any more. Perhaps, this may ſeem a paradox to you at firſt, but what think you of time and eternity? Can one add an hour to eternity, which comprehends and ſwallows all time? Can one add any thing to the wrath of God, which includes the fury of devils and men, this being derivative and dependent on that? And can any one add to my grief and tortures, who am fallen into the hands of the living God? No, no; reſerve your tears for your ſins, and caſt them not away ſo fruitleſsly upon one that is neither better nor worſe for them.

You may eaſily imagine what impreſſions ſuch ſayings as theſe made upon the ſpirits of his friends, who were almoſt overwhelmed with grief and amazement; with grief, at the lamentable ſtate of their kinſman, and with amazement at the dreadful judgment of God upon him. But in the midſt of their ſorrows they had the prudence to think of the reputation of their family, and to provide for as much ſecrecy as they poſſibly could in ſuch a caſe; for the rumour of a man in deſpair beginning to ſpread, they conveyed him by night to other lodgings: but he was grown ſo very weak, that notwithſtanding the care of thoſe who conveyed him in the chair, it had like to have proved fatal to him; for he fainted away ſeveral times: but they got him into his chamber, and to bed as ſoon as they could. After a little reſt he yet found ſo much ſtrength as to expreſs himſelf thus: I am not concerned to enquire whither you have brought me, or your reaſons for ſo doing; it had been ſomething if you had brought my perſon hither without my horrors and accuſing conſcience; or if you had changed my unhappy ſtate with

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my lodgings: but my torments are rather the greater than before; for I ſee that diſmal hour is approaching and juſt at hand, when I ſhall bid you all a ſad farewel. The doctors that had been with him in the beginning of his ſickneſs were again ſent for, and they yet declared they could do nothing, ſo long as the diſturbance of his mind was the cauſe of his weakneſs; only they ordered him ſome cordial juleps, which, they ſaid, might perhaps ſtrengthen his nature, ſo that he might live two or three days longer. My buſineſs called me away a day or two, and I came again upon Thurſday morning pretty early, the day of his death. When I came into the room, I enquired of his friends, how he had ſpent his time? who had been with him? what diſcourſe or expreſſions had dropt from him? And they told me, in general he had little company, and his expreſſions were much ſhorter than before, being now unable to ſpeak many words together: yet that what he did ſpeak, ſeemed to have more horror and deſpair in it than formerly. Afterwards I went to his bedſide, and ſaw perfect death in his face, mixt with ſuch amazement and anguiſh, that it was the ſaddeſt ſpectacle I ever ſaw in all my life-time. I aſked him how he did? To which he replied, Damned and loſt for-ever. I deſired him not to entertain ſuch a thought; the decrees of God were ſecret, and God might puniſh him thus in this life, to make him fit for a better. They are not, ſaid he, ſecret to me, but diſcovered for my greater torment, and my puniſhment here is for an example to others, and for an earneſt to me of my own damnation. Oh that there was no God! or that this God would ceaſe to be! for I am ſure he will never have mercy upon me. Alas, ſaid I, there is no contending with our Creator, therefore forbear ſuch words as may provoke him more. True, replied he, there is no contending: I wiſh there were a poſſibility of getting above God, that would be a heaven to me. I entreated him not to entertain ſuch a blaſphemy, for —— Here he interrupted me, ſaying, Read we not, in the Revelations, of thoſe that blaſphemed God becauſe of their pains? I am now of that number. Oh how do I envy the happineſs of Cain and Judas! But, replied I, you are yet alive, and do not feel the torments of thoſe that are actually in hell. To which he anſwered, This is either true or falſe; if it be true, what are my expectations, and how heavy will my torments be, if I feel not yet the uttermoſt? But I know that it is falſe, and that I now endure more than the ſpirits of the damned that are in hell; for I have the very ſame tortures upon my ſpirit as they have, beſides

ſides the torments I endure in my body. I believe that at the day of judgment, the torments of my mind and body will be both of them more intenſe; but as I am now, no ſpirit in hell endures what I do. How gladly would I change my condition for hell! And how earneſtly would I entreat of my angry judge to ſend me thither, if I was not afraid that he would out of his vengeance deny me? Here he cloſed his eyes a little, and began to talk idly and beſides himſelf, every now and then groaning and gnaſhing his teeth: but when he opened his eyes, he grew ſenſible again, and felt for his pulſe, ſaying, How lazily my minutes paſs on! When will be the laſt breath, the laſt pulſe, that ſhall beat my ſpirit out of this decayed manſion into thoſe deſired regions of death and hell? Oh I find it juſt at hand; and what ſhall I now ſay? I am now afraid again to die. Ah the forlorn hope, the deſtitute ſtate of an atheiſt that has no God to go to, nothing to fly to for peace and comfort! Here his ſpeech failed him again; and we all, believing him to be juſt a leaving the world, went to prayer; which threw him into an agony, in which, though he could not ſpeak perfectly, he made what noiſe he could to hinder himſelf from hearing, and turned away his face that he might not ſee the action; which we perceiving, recommended him to the mercy of God, and gave over. His ſpeech returned not again for a conſiderable time, but he fixt his ghaſtly eyes upon us, and by the air of his countenance ſhewed, that we had not a little diſobliged him. And as ſoon as he could ſpeak, he ſaid, Tygers and monſters, are ye alſo become devils to torment me, and give me a proſpect of heaven, to make my hell the more intolerable? Alas, Sir, replied I, what intereſt can we have in making you miſerable? It is our deſire of your recovery and reconciliation with God, that caſts us down at the throne of grace: if we muſt not ſeek aſſiſtance at the hand of God where elſe can we ſeek it? If God denies who elſe can give it? To which he replied, Ay, that is the wound; God is become my enemy, and there is none ſo ſtrong, as he to deliver me out of his hand: he conſigns me over to his eternal wrath and vengeance, and there is none that is able to redeem me. Was there another God as mighty as he, who could patronize my cauſe; or was I above, or independent of God, then I could act and diſpoſe of myſelf as I pleaſed; then would my horrors ceaſe, and the expectations and deſigns of my formidable enemy be fruſtrate: but this cannot be, for I——Here his voice failed him again, and he began to ſtruggle and gaſp for a little breath, which having

having recovered, with a groan ſo dreadful and loud, as if it had not been human, he cried out, Oh the inſufferable pangs of hell and damnation! and ſo died; death ſettling the viſage of his face in ſuch a form, as if the body, though dead, was ſenſible of the extremity of torments. How God diſpoſed of him we know not "ſecret things belong to the Lord," to us charity and hope; yet not ſo much as to make this no example to us; for ſuch inſtances are ſignalized on purpoſe to teach us fear and reverence, to judge ourſelves, and uſe the utmoſt diligence and care to make our calling and election ſure.

See a book entitled, The Second Spira.

This unhappy gentleman died at Weſtminſter, Dec. 8, 1692.

236. GREGENTIUS, ARCHBISHOP OF TEPTIRA.

IN the primitive times of Chriſtianity, there was a ſolemn diſputation held in the kingdom of the Homerites in the empire of Ethiopia, between this archbiſhop and Herbanus, a learned Jew, at the requeſt of the king of that place, before a very vaſt aſſembly of people; in the cloſe of which the Jew was ſo fully convinced that the Lord Jeſus Chriſt came from God, that he had no more to ſay, but that, ſince it could not be denied likewiſe, that Moſes came from God, the Chriſtians ſhould hear the former, and the Jews the latter: but if your Lord, ſaid he, will pleaſe to appear and ſhew us his pre-eminency, we will believe on him fully and abſolutely; to which all the Jews aſſented with loud voices, ſaying, Shew us Chriſt, and we will believe on him. The pious archbiſhop being greatly moved hereat, kneeled down and prayed the merciful Saviour of men to condeſcend to give to ſo many thouſands of the ancient ſtock of Abraham their demanded ſatisfaction: and in the concluſion of the prayer, the king and all the people ſaid, Amen: upon which a great earthquake followed, and the heavens opening in the eaſt, the Lord Jeſus appeared in ſuch a brightneſs as filled the Chriſtians with extreme joy, and the Jews with no leſs fear, and ſaid with a loud voice, Upon the prayers of the archbiſhop and the faithful, I appear before your eyes who was crucified by your fathers. Upon which Herbanus and all the Jews were ſtruck blind; and finding upon enquiry, that the Chriſtians were not ſo blinded, they requeſted them to pray to Chriſt to reſtore their ſight; which was done upon their receiving Chriſtian baptiſm, to the number of 50,000.

Bibliotheca Patrum, Mr. Joſeph Mede's Works, and Fair Warning.

N. B. He

N. B. He that is able to receive the above teſtimony, let him receive it. We have an account ſomewhat ſimilar in the converſion of St. Paul, and the late Colonel Gardiner.

237. A DYING PROSTITUTE.

A YOUNG man, ſcarcely nineteen, and at that time an apprentice to an eminent merchant in the city, had for ſome months unhappily indulged himſelf in every kind of licentiouſneſs, eſpecially with the moſt abandoned of the female ſex. He ſeldom neglected any opportunity of frequenting the moſt infamous brothels, during his maſter's excurſions to his country houſe. At one time, his whole attention was engroſſed by a moſt beautiful young woman not more than ſixteen years of age. On a certain day, which was Monday, he went with rapture to the infernal houſe ſhe was kept at; but how is it poſſible to expreſs the diſtraction and aſtoniſhment which ſeized him, when he was informed, the unhappy wretch died the preceding Friday evening, and that in ſo ſhocking a manner, that humanity muſt ſhudder at the bare imagination; and the boſoms of the guilty be chilled with terror at the thought! She, with great diſtreſs, declared on Friday morning, that ſhe knew herſelf to be ſtruck with death, and damned to all eternity. In her raving ſhe frequently cried out, that the devil told her ſo, and that he would drag her to endleſs torment at ſix o'clock. Her agonies were inexpreſſible, ſo that even the wretches, her companions and ſiſters in iniquity, whom ſhe earneſtly exhorted to repent, or they would aſſuredly follow her to the infernal pit, were ſo much affected at it as to mention a neceſſity for ſending for a clergyman: but the miſerable girl, with ſcreams of horror exclaimed, Nothing could ſave her, but the fatal ſentence was already pronounced, and that there was no poſſibility of forgiveneſs or eſcape. The wicked man who kept the houſe, deſired earneſtly to ſee her; but ſhe would by no means conſent to his requeſt. O tell him, (ſaid ſhe) that I curſe him in the bitterneſs of my ſoul, and wiſh, with my lateſt breath, that he may very ſoon follow me to endleſs miſery. I ſhall long for his arrival, that I myſelf may help to torment him. It is to him I owe my deſtruction. He firſt ſeduced me to guilt and ruin when I was but thirteen years of age. Perdition, no doubt, will be his portion, as well as of numbers beſides, who (like him) have laboured for the deſtruction of innocence and virtue. She ſeveral times jumped out of bed, and ſcreaming in a moſt dreadful manner, cried out, You ſhall not have me yet! it is not ſix

o'clock. She continued raving thus till the hour ſhe had ſo often mentioned: the clock ſtruck ſix, and ſhe expired.

Wills' Spiritual Regiſter.

238. LORD LIT——N.

THIS nobleman, no leſs remarkable for his corrupt morals and debauched life, than for his brilliant parts and maſterly elocution, having worked out all uncleanneſs with greedineſs, and inſatiably purſued his abandoned courſes even to the end, was warned of his approaching diſſolution, in a manner as uncommon and ſtriking, as his death was ſudden and awful. As he lay in bed, he was awaked out of his ſleep, (as himſelf deſcribed it) by a noiſe not unlike the fluttering of a bird, about the curtains of his bed. On opening his eyes, he ſaw the appearance of a woman (who is ſuppoſed by ſome, to have been the mother of one or more he had ſeduced, who died at this time of a broken heart) he was prodigiouſly ſhocked, and cried out, What do you want? why do you diſturb me? She anſwered, I am come to warn you of your diſſolution. He replied, What! ſhall I not live two months? To which ſhe made anſwer, No, you will die within three days. Throughout the day, he was obſerved to be much agitated in his mind; and told the ſtory to many of his friends that afternoon in the houſe of Lords. At length, Saturday, which was the third day, came; at breakfaſt-time, he appeared very penſive and diſturbed; but affected to carry it off, ſaying to thoſe that were with him, (who could not but obſerve the perturbation of his mind expreſſed by the features of his countenance) Why do you look ſo grave? what are you thinking about the ghoſt? I am well, very well, as ever I was in my life. But, (perhaps to divert his mind, and get rid of thoſe unwelcome thoughts) he invited company to dinner; and in the evening he ſaid to his party, A few hours more, and I ſhall jockey the ghoſt. At eleven o'clock he retired from the company. Some time after he began to undreſs for bed; whilſt his ſervant was preparing a rhubarb-draught, according to his uſual cuſtom at night, but having nothing to mix it, he went out of the room for a ſpoon; by the time he returned, his lordſhip was getting into bed; however, before the man could give him the medicine, he reclined his head on the pillow, fell into convulſions, and inſtantly expired. The cries of the ſervant alarmed the company; they flew to his aſſiſtance; but behold! all was over. It was almoſt twelve o'clock and lord L. was a dead man. Thus the event cor-

reſponded

responded with the warning his lordship had mentioned himself before hand to various persons; and his friends, who were in the house at the time, related it afterwards. A minister, who first told it me, had waited on one of those gentlemen, who related the fact as above recited: which was confirmed to me a few days afterwards, by a very respectable and religious person, a near relation of this noble lord.

All were astonished that heard it; and in spite of the infidelity of the age, every mouth was stopped. The fact confirmed the prediction, and was authenticated beyond dispute. But "if they hear not Moses and the prophets; neither "will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Wills' Spiritual Register.

239. MADAM DE BEAUCLAIR.

IT is well known to those persons who are acquainted with the English history, that the Duchess of Mazarine was mistress to King Charles the second, and Madam de Beauclair to King James the second. Between these two ladies subsisted an uncommon friendship; and entertaining some doubts concerning the immateriality of the soul, and the certainty of its existence after death, they agreed together, that on which ever of them the lot should fall to be first called from this world, she should return, if there was a possibility of doing so, and give the other an account in what manner she was disposed of. This promise, it seems, was often repeated; and the Dutchess happening to fall sick, and her life being despaired of by all about her, Madam Beauclair reminded her of what she expected from her: to which her Grace replied, She might depend upon her performance. These words passed between them not above an hour before the dissolution of that great lady, and were spoken before several persons who were in the room; but at that time they were far from comprehending the meaning of what they heard.

Some years after the Dutchess's decease, I happened, in a visit I made to Madam De Beauclair, to fall on the topic of futurity: she expressed her disbelief of it with a great deal of warmth. I took the liberty of offering some arguments to prove the reasonableness of depending on a life to come. She answered, that not all the world could say should ever persuade her to that opinion: and then she related to me the compact made between her and her dear departed friend, the Dutchess of Mazarine.

It was in vain I urged the ſtrong probability there was, that ſouls in another world, might not be permitted to perform the engagements they had entered into in this; eſpecially, when they were of a nature repugnant to the divine will: which, ſaid I, has manifeſtly placed a flaming ſword between human knowledge and the proſpect of that glorious Eden we hope by faith to be the inheritors of hereafter: therefore, added I, her Grace of Mazarine may be in poſſeſſion of all thoſe immenſe felicities which are promiſed to the virtuous; and even now interceding, that the dear partner of her heart may ſhare the ſame, yet be denied the privilege of imparting to you what ſhe is, or that ſhe exiſts at all.

Nothing I could ſay made the leaſt impreſſion; and I found, to my very great concern, that ſhe was become as much an advocate for the doctrine of non-exiſtence after death, as any of thoſe who had firſt propoſed it; on which, from that time forward, I avoided all diſcourſe with her on that head.

It was not, however, many months after we had this converſation, that I happened to be at the houſe of a perſon of condition, with whom, ſince the death of the Dutcheſs of Mazarine, Madam De Beauclair had the greateſt intimacy of any of her acquaintance. About nine o'clock one evening, as near as I can remember, a ſervant came haſtily into the room, and acquainted the lady I was with, that Madam De Beauclair had ſent to entreat ſhe would come that moment to her, adding, that if ever ſhe deſired to ſee her more in this world, ſhe muſt not delay her viſit.

So odd a meſſage might very well ſurprize the perſon to whom it was delivered; and not knowing what to think of it, ſhe aſked who brought it, and being told it was Madam De Beauclair's groom of the chambers, ordered he ſhould come in, and demanded of him if his lady were well, or if he knew of any thing extraordinary that had happened to her, which ſhould occaſion this haſty ſummons. To which he anſwered, that he was entirely incapable of telling her the meaning; only as to his lady's health, he neither ſaw nor heard her complain of any indiſpoſition.

Well then, ſaid the lady, a little out of humour, I deſire you will make my excuſe, as I have really a great cold, and am fearful the night air may encreaſe it; but to-morrow I will not fail to wait on her very early in the morning.

The man being gone, we were beginning to form ſeveral conjectures on this meſſage of Madam De Beauclair; but before

fore we had time to agree on what might be the moſt feaſible occaſion, he returned again, and with him Mrs. Ward, her woman, both ſeeming very much confuſed and out of breath.

O madam, cried ſhe, my lady expreſſes an infinite concern, that you refuſe this requeſt, which ſhe ſays will be her laſt; ſhe ſays, that ſhe is convinced of not being in a condition to receive your viſit to-morrow; but as a token of her friendſhip bequeaths you this little caſket, containing her watch, necklace, and ſome other jewels, which ſhe deſires you will wear in remembrance of her.

Theſe words were accompanied with the delivery of the legacy ſhe mentioned, and that as well as Mrs. Ward's words, threw us both into a conſternation we were not able to expreſs. The lady would fain have entered into ſome diſcourſe with Mrs. Ward concerning the affair; but ſhe evaded it by ſaying, ſhe had left only an under maid with Madam De Beauclair, and muſt return immediately; on which the lady cried all at once, I will go with you; there muſt be ſomething very uncommon certainly in this. I offered to attend her, being, as I well might, deſirous of getting ſome light into what at preſent appeared ſo myſterious.

In fine; we went that inſtant: but as no mention was made of me, and Madam De Beauclair might not, probably, be informed I was with the lady when her ſervant came, good manners and decency obliged me to wait in a lower apartment, unleſs ſhe gave leave for my admittance.

She was, however, no ſooner informed I was there, than ſhe deſired I would come up: I did ſo, and found her ſitting in an eaſy chair near her bedſide; and in my eyes, as well as all thoſe preſent, ſhe ſeemed in as perfect health as ever ſhe had been.

On our enquiring if ſhe felt any inward diſorder which ſhould give room for the melancholy apprehenſions her meſſage teſtified, ſhe replied in the negative; yet, ſaid ſhe, with a little ſigh, You will ſoon, very ſoon, behold me paſs from this world into that eternity which I once doubted, but am now aſſured of.

As ſhe ſpoke theſe laſt words ſhe looked full in my face, as it were to remind me of the converſation we frequently held together on that ſubject.

I told her I was heartily glad to find ſo great a change in her ladyſhip's ſentiments, but that I hoped ſhe had no reaſon to imagine the conviction would be fatal. She only anſwered with a gloomy ſmile; and a clergyman of her own

perſuaſion, whom ſhe had ſent for, that moment coming in, we all quitted the room, to leave him at liberty to exerciſe his function.

It exceeded not half an hour before we were called in again, and ſhe appeared, after having diſburdened her conſcience, to be more chearful than before: her eyes, which were as piercing as poſſible, ſparkled with an uncommon vivacity, and ſhe told us, ſhe ſhould die with the more ſatisfaction as ſhe enjoyed in her laſt moments the preſence of two perſons the moſt agreeable to her in this world, and in the next would be ſure of enjoying the ſociety of one, who in life had been the deareſt to her.

We were both beginning to diſſuade her from giving way to thoughts, which there ſeemed not the leaſt probability of being verified, when ſhe put a ſtop to what we were about to urge, by ſaying, Talk no more of that: my time is ſhort, and I would not have the ſmall ſpace allowed me to be with you waſted in vain deluſion: know, continued ſhe, I have ſeen my dear Dutcheſs of Mazarine: I perceived not how ſhe entered; but turning my eyes towards yonder corner of the room, I ſaw her ſtand in the ſame form and habit ſhe was accuſtomed to appear in when living. Fain would I have ſpoken, but had not the power of utterance. She took a little circuit round the chamber, ſeeming rather to ſwim than to walk: then ſtopped by the ſide of that Indian cheſt, and looking on me with her uſual ſweetneſs, Beauclair, ſaid ſhe, between the hours of twelve and one this night you will be with me. The ſurprize I was in at firſt being a little abated, I began to aſk ſome queſtions concerning that future world I was ſo ſoon to viſit, but on the opening of my lips for that purpoſe, ſhe vaniſhed from my ſight I know not how.

The clock was now very near ſtriking twelve, and as ſhe diſcovered not the leaſt ſymptoms of any ailment, we again aimed to remove all apprehenſions of a diſſolution; but we had ſcarce begun to ſpeak, when on a ſudden her countenance changed, and ſhe cried out, O! I am ſick at heart.—Mrs. Ward, who all this while had ſtood leaning on her chair, applied ſome drops, but to no effect; ſhe grew ſtill worſe, and in about half an hour expired, it being exactly the time the apparition had foretold.

I have been ſo particular in relating all the circumſtances of this affair, as well to prove I could not be deceived in it, as to ſhew, that Madam De Beauclair was neither vapouriſh nor ſuperſtitious, as many believe all are who pretend to ſee any thing ſupernatural. I am, indeed, very ready

to

to allow, that the force of imagination may impoſe upon the ſenſes, and that it frequently has done ſo, and that the ſtories told us in our infancy leave ideas behind them, which, in our riper years, are apt to make us fanciful: but in the caſe I have mentioned there could be nothing of all this. The lady was ſo far from any apprehenſions or prepoſſeſſions of that nature, that, on the contrary, ſhe looked upon them as ridiculous and abſurd, and could have been convinced by nothing but the teſtimony of her own eyes and ears.

View of the Inviſible World.

240. JOSEPH ADDISON, ESQ.

A PERSON who is terrified with the imagination of ghoſts and ſpectres is much more reaſonable, than one who contrary to the reports of all hiſtorians ſacred and profane, ancient and modern, and to the traditions of all nations, thinks the appearance of ſpirits fabulous and groundleſs. Could not I give myſelf up to this general teſtimony of mankind, I ſhould to the relations of particular perſons who are now living, and whom I cannot miſtruſt in other matters of fact. I might here add, that not only the hiſtorians, to whom we may join the poets, but likewiſe the philoſophers of antiquity have favoured this opinion. Lucretius himſelf, though by the courſe of his philoſophy he was obliged to maintain, that the ſoul did not exiſt ſeparate from the body, makes no doubt of the reality of apparitions, and that men have often appeared after their death. This I think very remarkable; he was ſo preſſed with the matter of fact which he could not have the confidence to deny, that he was forced to account for it by one of the moſt unphiloſophical notions that ever was ſtarted. He tells us, that the ſurfaces of all bodies are perpetually flying off from their reſpective bodies, one after another; and that theſe ſurfaces or the caſes that included each other whilſt they were joined in the body like the coats of an onion, are ſometimes ſeen entire when they are ſeparated from it; by which means we often behold the ſhapes and ſhadows of perſons who are either dead or abſent.

I ſhall diſmiſs this paper with a ſtory out of Joſephus, not ſo much for the ſake of the ſtory itſelf, as for the moral reflections with which the author concludes it, and which I ſhall here ſet down in his own words.——Glaphyra, the daughter of king Archelaus, after the death of her two firſt huſbands (being married to a third, who was brother to her firſt huſband, and ſo paſſionately in love with her, that he

turned

turned off his former wife to make room for this marriage) had a very odd kind of dream. She fancied that ſhe ſaw her firſt huſband coming towards her, and that ſhe embraced him with great tenderneſs; when in the midſt of the pleaſure which ſhe expreſſed at the ſight of him, he reproached her after the following manner: Glaphyra, ſays he, thou haſt made good the old ſaying, That women are not to be truſted. Was not I the huſband of thy virginity? Have I not children by thee? How couldſt thou forget our loves ſo far as to enter into a ſecond marriage, and after that into a third, nay, to take for thy huſband a man who has ſo ſhameleſſly crept into the bed of his brother? However, for the ſake of our paſſed loves, I ſhall free thee from thy preſent reproach, and make thee mine for ever. Glaphyra told this dream to ſeveral women of her acquaintance, and died ſoon after. I thought this ſtory might not be impertinent in this place, wherein I ſpeak of thoſe things: beſides that, the example deſerves to be taken notice of, as it contains a moſt certain proof of the immortality of the ſoul, and of divine providence. If any man thinks theſe facts incredible, let him enjoy his opinion to himſelf, but let him not endeavour to diſturb the belief of others, who by inſtances of this nature are excited to the ſtudy of virtue.

Spectator.

241. Rev. George Horne, D. D.

UPON the whole, Doctor, your meaning is good; but I think you will not ſucceed, this time. You would perſuade us, by the example of David Hume, Eſq; that atheiſm is the only cordial for low ſpirits, and the proper antidote againſt the fear of death. But ſurely, he who can reflect, with complacency, on a friend thus miſemploying his talents in his life, and then amuſing himſelf with Lucian, Whiſt, and Charon, at his death, may ſmile over Babylon in ruins; eſteem the earthquake, which deſtroyed Liſbon, an agreeable occurrence; and congratulate the hardened Pharoah, on his overthrow in the Red Sea. Drollery in ſuch circumſtances, is neither more nor leſs, than

Moody madneſs, laughing wild,
Amid ſevereſt woe.

Would we know the baneful and peſtilential influences of falſe philoſophy on the human heart? We need only contemplate them in this moſt deplorable inſtance of Mr. Hume. Theſe ſayings, Sir, may appear harſh; but they are ſalutary. And if departed ſpirits have any knowledge of what is paſſing upon

upon earth, that perſon will be regarded by your friend as rendering him the trueſt ſervices, who, by energy of expreſſion, and warmth of exhortation, ſhall moſt contribute to prevent his writings from producing thoſe effects upon mankind, which he no longer wiſhes they ſhould produce. Let no man deceive himſelf, or be deceived by others. It is the voice of eternal Truth, which crieth aloud, and ſaith to you, Sir, and to me, and to all the world—" He that " believeth on the Son, hath everlaſting life; and he that " believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life; but the wrath of " God abideth on him."

By way of contraſt to the behaviour of Mr. Hume, at the cloſe of a life, paſſed without God in the world, permit me, Sir, to lay before yourſelf, and the public, the laſt ſentiments of the truly learned, judicious, and admirable Hooker, who had ſpent his days in the ſervice of his Maker and Redeemer.

After this manner, therefore, ſpake the author of the Eccleſiaſtical Probity, immediately before he expired:—

I have lived to ſee, that this world is made up of perturbations; and I have been long preparing to leave it, and gathering comfort for the dreadful hour of making my account with God, which I now apprehend to be near. And though I have, by his grace, loved him in my youth, and feared him in mine age, and laboured to have a conſcience void of offence, towards him, and towards all men; yet, " if thou, Lord, ſhouldeſt be extreme to mark what I have " done amiſs, who can abide it?" And therefore, where I have failed, Lord, ſhew mercy to me, for I plead not my righteouſneſs, but the forgiveneſs of my unrighteouſneſs, through his merits, who died to purchaſe pardon for penitent ſinners. And ſince I owe thee a death, Lord, let it not be terrible, and then take thine own time; I ſubmit to it. " Let " not mine, O Lord, but thy will be done!"——God hath heard my daily petitions; for I am at peace with all men, and he is at peace with me. From ſuch bleſſed aſſurance I feel that inward joy, which this world can neither give, nor take from me. My conſcience beareth me this witneſs; and this witneſs makes the thoughts of death joyful. I could wiſh to live, to do the church more ſervice; but cannot hope it; for " my days are paſt, as a ſhadow that returns not."

His worthy Biographer adds——

More he would have ſpoken, but his ſpirits failed him; and, after a ſhort conflict between nature and death, a quiet ſigh put a period to his laſt breath, and ſo, he fell aſleep—And now he ſeems to reſt like Lazarus in Abraham's boſom.

Let

Let me here draw his curtain, till, with the moſt glorious company of the patriarchs and apoſtles, and the moſt noble army of martyrs and confeſſors, this moſt learned, moſt humble, and moſt holy man ſhall alſo awake to receive an eternal tranquility, and with it a greater degree of glory, than common Chriſtians ſhall be made partakers of!——

Doctor Smith, when the hour of his departure hence ſhall arrive, will copy the example of the believer, or the infidel, as it liketh him beſt. I muſt freely own, I have no opinion of that reader's head, or heart, who will not exclaim, as I find myſelf obliged to do ——

" Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my laſt " end be like his!" *Letter to Dr. Adam Smith.*

END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

BOOK

BOOK II.

PROOFS OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

INTRODUCTION.

IF great and learned names might be allowed to determine the momentous queſtion, whether the Bible be true or falſe; and a book to be deſired to make one truly wiſe, there could no longer remain any doubt concerning it. Men of genius and learning, men of integrity and honour, yea, many even amongſt the deiſts themſelves, as well as other infidels of all deſcriptions, in their more ſerious and ſolemn moments, uno conclamant ore, The Bible is true—it is the Word of God—its contents are infinitely important—it is the firſt and beſt of books—it ought to be had in the higheſt eſtimation, and read with the moſt profound reverence and awe.

But a prudent man will be very cautious how he reſts ſo important a concern upon the mere evidence of Teſtimony. Though he will rejoice to find ſo many of the firſt names that ever bleſt and adorned our world clearly on the ſide of Revelation; yet he will wiſh to ſee with his own eyes by what arguments they juſtify their belief, and on what ground his hopes for eternity are founded. In order to aſſiſt the young and inexperienced reader in his enquiries herein, and that our Compilation may not appear materially defective, I have collected together a variety of unanſwerable arguments, as I think for the abſolute truth, certainty, and excellence of the Moſaic and Chriſtian diſpenſations, together with ſome ſolid and judicious anſwers to ſeveral of the moſt

common

common objections of unbelievers. I pretend not to ſay, that every argument here produced is, alone, and of itſelf, unanſwerable; but I will ſay, with confidence, that the whole body of the ſubſequent evidence is ſuch as never has been, and never will be fairly anſwered, by any man whatever. I am aware that a ſmaller number of arguments might have been as agreeable to ſome readers; but I am not without hope, that the ſingle circumſtance of variety may have its uſe. The younger reader will hereby have an opportunity of ſeeing, at one view, by what arguments wiſe and good men have defended the Bible againſt the attacks and cavils of unbelievers, and will be at liberty to chuſe ſuch as are moſt agreeable to his own turn of mind. And while the arguments produced are conſidered as Proofs, the names and aſſertions which accompany them, will alſo rank as additional Teſtimonies in favour of the Sacred Writings.

But before we enter upon the Proofs for the truth and authenticity of the Bible, I thought it convenient to enlarge a little upon the importance of religion, the temper of mind which is neceſſary for the diſcovery of divine truth, and the degree of evidence that ought to be expected in divine matters: for without proper attention to theſe circumſtances all our reaſonings and arguments will be of very little avail.

SACRED

SACRED LITERATURE.

BOOK II.

Proofs of the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures.

I. MONSIEUR PASCAL.

A ſerious Expoſtulation with Unbelievers.

IT were to be wiſhed, that the enemies of religion would at leaſt bring themſelves to apprehend its nature, before they oppoſed its authority. Did religion make its boaſt of beholding God with a clear and perfect view, and of poſſeſſing him without covering or veil, the argument would bear ſome colour, when men ſhould alledge, that none of theſe things about them, do indeed afford this pretended evidence, and this degree of light. But ſince religion, on the contrary, repreſents men as in a ſtate of darkneſs, and of eſtrangement from God; ſince it affirms him to have withdrawn himſelf from their diſcovery, and to have choſen, in his word, the very ſtyle and appellation of Deus abſconditus; laſtly, ſince it employs itſelf alike in eſtabliſhing theſe two maxims, that God has left, in his church, certain characters of himſelf, by which they who ſincerely ſeek him, ſhall not fail of a ſenſible conviction; and yet that he has, at the ſame time, ſo far ſhaded and obſcured theſe characters, as to render them imperceptible to thoſe who do not ſeek him with their whole heart, what advantage is it to men, who profeſs themſelves negligent in the ſearch of truth to complain ſo frequently, that nothing reveals and diſplays it to them? For this very obſcurity, under which they labour,

and

and which they make an exception againſt the church, does itſelf evince one of the two grand points which the church maintains (without affecting the other) and is ſo far from overthrowing its doctrines, as to lend them a manifeſt confirmation and ſupport.

If they would give their objections any ſtrength, they ought to urge, that they have applied their utmoſt endeavour, and have uſed all means of information, even thoſe which the church recommends, without ſatisfaction. Did they expreſs themſelves thus, they would indeed attack religion in one of its chief pretenſions: but I hope to ſhew, in the following papers, that no rational perſon can ſpeak after this manner; and I dare aſſert, that none ever did. We know very well, how men under this indifferency of ſpirit, behave themſelves in the caſe: they ſuppoſe themſelves to have made the mightieſt effort towards the inſtruction of their minds, when they have ſpent ſome hours in reading the ſcriptures, and have aſked ſome queſtions of a clergyman concerning the articles of faith. When this is done, they declare to all the world, that they have conſulted books and men without ſucceſs. I ſhall be excuſed, if I refrain not from telling ſuch men, that this neglect of theirs is inſupportable. It is not a foreign or a petty intereſt, which is here in debate: we are ourſelves the parties, and all our hopes and fortunes are the depending ſtake.

The immortality of the ſoul is a thing which ſo deeply concerns, ſo infinitely imports us, that we muſt have utterly loſt our feeling, to be altogether cold and remiſs in our enquiries about it. And all our actions or deſigns, ought to bend ſo very different a way, according as we are either encouraged or forbidden, to embrace the hope of eternal rewards, that it is impoſſible for us to proceed with judgment and diſcretion, otherwiſe than as we keep this point always in view, which ought to be our ruling object, and final aim.

Thus is it our higheſt intereſt, no leſs than our principal duty, to get light into a ſubject on which our whole conduct depends. And therefore, in the number of wavering and unſatisfied men, I make the greateſt difference imaginable between thoſe who labour with all their force to obtain inſtruction, and thoſe who live without giving themſelves any trouble, or ſo much as any thought in this affair.

I cannot but be touched with a hearty compaſſion for thoſe who ſincerely groan under this diſſatisfaction; who look upon it as the greateſt of misfortunes, and who ſpare no pains to deliver themſelves from it, by making theſe reſearches their chief

chief employment, and moſt ſerious ſtudy. But as for thoſe, who paſs their life without reflecting on its iſſue, and who, for this reaſon alone, becauſe they find not in themſelves a convincing teſtimony, refuſe to ſeek it elſewhere, and to examine to the bottom, whether the opinion propoſed be ſuch as we are wont to entertain by popular ſimplicity and credulity, or as ſuch, though obſcure in itſelf, yet is built on ſolid and immoveable foundations, I conſider them after quite another manner. The careleſsneſs which they betray in an affair, where their perſon, their intereſt, their whole eternity is embarked, rather provokes my reſentment than engages my pity. Nay, it ſtrikes me with amazement and aſtoniſhment; it is a monſter to my apprehenſion. I ſpeak not this as tranſported with the pious zeal of a ſpiritual and rapturous devotion: on the contrary, I affirm, that the love of ourſelves, the intereſt of mankind, and the moſt ſimple and artleſs reaſon, do naturally inſpire us with theſe ſentiments; and that to ſee thus far, is not to exceed the ſphere of unrefined, uneducated men.

It requires no great elevation of ſoul, to obſerve, that nothing in this world is productive of true contentment; that our pleaſures are vain and fugitive, our troubles innumerable and perpetual: and that, after all, death, which threatens us every moment, muſt, in the compaſs of a few years (perhaps of a few days) put us into the eternal condition of happineſs, or miſery, or nothing. Between us and theſe three great periods, or ſtates, no barrier is interpoſed, but life, the moſt brittle thing in all nature; and the happineſs of heaven being certainly not deſigned for thoſe who doubt whether they have an immortal part to enjoy it, ſuch perſons have nothing left, but the miſerable chance of annihilation, or of hell.

There is not any reflexion which can have more reality than this, as there is none which has greater terror. Let us ſet the braveſt face on our condition, and play the heroes as artfully as we can; yet ſee here the iſſue which attends the goodlieſt life upon earth.

It is in vain for men to turn aſide their thoughts from this eternity which awaits them, as if they were able to deſtroy it by denying it a place in their imagination: it ſubſiſts in ſpite of them; it advanceth unobſerved; and death, which is to draw the curtain from it, will in a ſhort time infallibly reduce them to the dreadful neceſſity of being for ever nothing, or for ever miſerable.

We

We have here a doubt of the moſt affrighting conſequence, and which, therefore, to entertain, may be well eſteemed the moſt grievous of misfortunes: but, at the ſame time, it is our indiſpenſable duty not to lie under it, without ſtruggling for deliverance.

He then who doubts, and yet ſeeks not to be reſolved, is equally unhappy and unjuſt: but if withal he appears eaſy and compoſed, if he freely declares his indifference, nay, if he takes a vanity in profeſſing it, and ſeems to make this moſt deplorable condition the ſubject of his pleaſure and joy, I have not words to fix a name on ſo extravagant a creature. Where is the very poſſibility of entering into theſe thoughts and reſolutions? What delight is there in expecting miſery without end? What vanity in finding one's ſelf encompaſſed with impenetrable darkneſs? Or what conſolation in deſpairing for ever of a comforter?

To ſit down with ſome ſort of acquieſcence under ſo fatal an ignorance is a thing unaccountable beyond all expreſſion; and they who live with ſuch a diſpoſition, ought to be made ſenſible of its abſurdity and ſtupidity, by having their inward reflexions laid open to them, that they may grow wiſe by the proſpect of their own folly. For behold how men are wont to reaſon, while they obſtinately remain thus ignorant of what they are, and refuſe all methods of inſtruction and illumination.

Who has ſent me into the world I know not; what the world is I know not, nor what I am myſelf. I am under an aſtoniſhing and terrifying ignorance of all things. I know not what my body is, what my ſenſes, or my ſoul: this very part of me which thinks what I ſpeak, which reflects upon every thing elſe, and even upon itſelf, yet is as mere a ſtranger to its own nature, as the dulleſt thing I carry about me. I behold theſe frightful ſpaces of the univerſe with which I am encompaſſed, and I find myſelf chained to one little corner of the vaſt extent, without underſtanding why I am placed in this ſeat, rather than in any other; or why this moment of time given me to live, was aſſigned rather at ſuch a point, than at any other of the whole eternity which was before me, or of all that which is to come after me. I ſee nothing but infinities on all ſides, which devour and ſwallow me up like an atom, or like a ſhadow, which endures but a ſingle inſtant, and is never to return. The ſum of my knowleuge is, that I muſt ſhortly die; but that which I am moſt ignorant of is this very death, which I feel unable to decline.

As

As I know not whence I came, ſo I know not whither I go; only this I know, that at my departure out of the world, I muſt either fall for ever into nothing, or into the hands of an incenſed God, without being capable of deciding, which of theſe two conditions ſhall eternally be my portion. Such is my ſtate, full of weakneſs, obſcurity, and wretchedneſs. And from all this I conclude, that I ought, therefore, to paſs all the days of my life, without conſidering what is hereafter to befall me; and that I have nothing to do, but to follow my inclinations without reflexion or diſquiet, in doing all that, which, if what men ſay of a miſerable eternity prove true, will infallibly plunge me into it. It is poſſible I might find ſome light to clear up my doubts; but I ſhall not take a minute's pains, nor ſtir one foot in the ſearch of it. On the contrary, I am reſolved to treat thoſe with ſcorn and deriſion who labour in this enquiry and care; and, ſo to run without fear or foreſight, upon the trial of the grand event; permitting myſelf to be led ſoftly on to death, utterly uncertain as to the eternal iſſue of my future condition.

In earneſt, it is a glory to religion to have ſo unreaſonable men for its profeſſed enemies; and their oppoſition is of ſo little danger, that it ſerves to illuſtrate the principal truths which our religion teaches. For the main ſcope of Chriſtian faith is to eſtabliſh theſe two principles, the corruption of nature, and the redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. And theſe oppoſers, if they are of no uſe towards demonſtrating the truth of the redemption, by the ſanctity of their lives, yet are at leaſt admirably uſeful in ſhewing the corruption of nature, by ſo unnatural ſentiments and ſuggeſtions.

'Nothing is ſo important to any man as his own eſtate and condition; nothing ſo great, ſo amazing, as eternity. If, therefore, we find perſons indifferent to the loſs of their being, and to the danger of endleſs miſery, it is impoſſible that this temper ſhould be natural. They are quite other men in all other regards, they fear the ſmalleſt inconveniencies, they ſee them as they approach, and feel them if they arrive; and he who paſſeth days and nights in chagrin or deſpair, for the loſs of an employment, or for ſome imaginary blemiſh in his honour, is the very ſame mortal who knows that he muſt loſe all by death, and yet remains without diſquiet, reſentment, or emotion. This wonderful inſenſibility, with reſpect to things of the moſt fatal conſequence, in a heart ſo nicely ſenſible of the meaneſt trifles, is an aſtoniſhing prodigy, and unintelligible inchantment, a ſupernatural blindneſs and infatuation.

A man in a cloſe dungeon, who knows not whether ſentence of death has paſſed upon him, who is allowed but one hour's ſpace to inform himſelf concerning it, and that one hour ſufficient, in caſe it have paſſed, to obtain its reverſe, would act contrary to nature and ſenſe, ſhould he make uſe of this hour not to procure information, but to purſue his vanity or ſport. And yet ſuch is the condition of the perſons whom we are now deſcribing; only with this difference, that the evils with which they are every moment threatened, do infinitely ſurpaſs the bare loſs of life, and that tranſient puniſhment which the priſoner is ſuppoſed to apprehend: yet they run thoughtleſs upon the precipice, having only caſt a veil over their eyes, to hinder them from diſcerning it, and divert themſelves with the officiouſneſs of ſuch as charitably warn them of their danger.

Thus not the zeal alone of thoſe who heartily ſeek God, demonſtrates the truth of religion, but likewiſe the blindneſs of thoſe who utterly forbear to ſeek him, and who paſs their days under ſo horrible a neglect. There muſt needs be a ſtrange turn and revolution in human nature, before men can ſubmit to ſuch a condition, much more ere they can applaud and value themſelves upon it. For ſuppoſing them to have obtained an abſolute certainty, that there was no fear after death, but of falling into nothing, ought not this to be the ſubject rather of deſpair, than of jollity? And is it not therefore the higheſt pitch of ſenſeleſs extravagance, while we want this certainty, to glory in our doubt and diſtruſt?

And yet, after all, it is too viſible, that man has ſo far declined from his original nature, and as it were departed from himſelf, to nouriſh in his heart a ſecret ſeed-plot of joy, ſpringing up from the libertine reflexions. This brutal eaſe, or indolence, between the fear of hell, and of annihilation, carries ſomewhat ſo tempting in it, that not only thoſe who have the misfortune to be ſceptically inclined, but even thoſe who cannot unſettle their judgment, do yet eſteem it reputable to take up a counterfeit diffidence. For we may obſerve the largeſt part of the herd to be of this latter kind, falſe pretenders to infidelity, and mere hypocrites in atheiſm. There are perſons whom we have heard declare, that the genteel way of the world conſiſts in thus acting the bravo. This is that which they term throwing off the yoke, and which the greater number of them profeſs, not ſo much out of opinion, as out of gallantry and complaiſance.

Yet, if they have the leaſt reſerve of common ſenſe, it will

will not be difficult to make them apprehend, how miſerably they abuſe themſelves by laying ſo falſe a foundation of applauſe and eſteem. For this is not the way to raiſe a character, even with wordly men, who, as they are able to paſs a ſhrewd judgment on things, ſo they eaſily diſcern that the only method of ſucceeding in our temporal affairs, is to prove ourſelves honeſt, faithful, prudent, and capable of advancing the intereſt of our friends; becauſe men naturally love nothing but that which ſome way contributes to their uſe and benefit. But now what benefit can we any way derive from hearing a man confeſs that he has eaſed himſelf of the burden of religion; that he believes no God, as the witneſs and inſpector of his conduct; that he conſiders himſelf as abſolute maſter of what he does, and accountable for it only to his own mind? Will he fancy that we ſhall be hence induced to repoſe a greater degree of confidence in him hereafter? or to depend on his comfort, his advice, or aſſiſtance, in the neceſſities of life? Can he imagine us to take any great delight or complacency when he tells us, that he doubts whether our very ſoul be any thing more than a little wind and ſmoke? nay, when he tells it us with an air of aſſurance, and a voice that teſtifies the contentment of his heart? Is this a thing to be ſpoken of with pleaſantry? or ought it not rather be lamented with the deepeſt ſadneſs, as the moſt melancholic reflexion that can ſtrike our thoughts?

If they would compoſe themſelves to ſerious conſideration, they muſt perceive the method in which they are engaged to be ſo very ill choſen, ſo repugnant to gentility, and ſo remote even from that good air and grace which they purſue, that, on the contrary, nothing can more effectually expoſe them to the contempt and averſion of mankind, or mark them out for perſons defective in parts and judgment. And, indeed, ſhould we demand from them an account of their ſentiments, and of the reaſons which they have to entertain this ſuſpicion in religious matters, what they offered would appear ſo miſerably weak and trifling, as rather to confirm us in our belief. This is no more than what one of their own fraternity told them, with great ſmartneſs, on ſuch an occaſion, If you continue, (ſays he) to diſpute at this rate, you will infallibly make me a Chriſtian. And the gentleman was in the right: for who would not tremble to find himſelf embarked in the ſame cauſe, with ſo forlorn, ſo deſpicable companions?

And thus it is evident, that they who wear no more than the outward maſk of theſe principles, are the moſt unhappy counterfeits in the world; inaſmuch as they are obliged to

put a continual force and conſtraint on their genius, only that they may render themſelves the moſt impertinent of all men living.

If they are heartily and ſincerely troubled at their want of light, let them not diſſemble the diſeaſe. Such a confeſſion could not be reputed ſhameful; for there is really no ſhame, but in being ſhameleſs. Nothing betrays ſo much weakneſs of ſoul, as not to apprehend the miſery of man, while living without God in the world: nothing is a ſurer token of extreme baſeneſs of ſpirit, than not to hope for the reality of eternal promiſes: no man is ſo ſtigmatized a coward, as he that acts the bravo againſt heaven. Let them therefore leave theſe impieties to thoſe who are born with ſo unhappy a judgment, as to be capable of entertaining them in earneſt. If they cannot be Chriſtian men, let them, however, be men of honour: and let them, in concluſion, acknowledge, that there are but two ſorts of perſons, who deſerve to be ſtiled reaſonable, either thoſe who ſerve God with all their heart, becauſe they know him; or thoſe who ſeek him with all their heart, becauſe as yet they know him not.

If then there are perſons who ſincerely enquire after God, and who, being truly ſenſible of their miſery, affectionately deſire to be reſcued from it; it is to theſe alone that we can in juſtice afford our labour and ſervice, for their direction in finding out that light of which they feel the want.

But as for thoſe who live without either knowing God, or endeavouring to know him, they look on themſelves as ſo little deſerving their own care, that they cannot but be unworthy the care of others: and it requires all the charity of the religion which they deſpiſe, not to deſpiſe them to ſuch a degree, as even to abandon them to their own folly: but ſince the ſame religion obliges us to conſider them, while they remain in this life, as ſtill capable of God's enlightening grace; and to acknowledge it as very poſſible, that, in the courſe of a few days, they may be repleniſhed with a fuller meaſure of faith than we now enjoy; and we ourſelves, on the other ſide, fall into the depths of their preſent blindneſs and miſery; we ought to do for them, what we deſire ſhould be done to us in their caſe; to intreat them that they would take pity on themſelves, and would, at leaſt, advance a ſtep or two forward, if perchance they may come into the light. For which end it is wiſhed, that they would employ in the peruſal of this piece, ſome few of thoſe hours, which they ſpend ſo unprofitably in other purſuits. It is poſſible they may gain ſomewhat by the reading; at leaſt, they cannot be

be great lofers: but if any ſhall apply themſelves to it, with perfect ſincerity, and with an unfeigned deſire of knowing the truth, I deſpair not of their ſatisfaction, or of their being convinced by ſo many proofs of our divine religion, as they will here find laid together. *Thoughts on Religion.*

Rev. William Whiston, M. A.

Of the temper of mind which is neceſſary for the diſcovery of divine truth, and the degree of evidence that ought to be expected in divine matters, with an epitome of reaſons for the truth of the Holy Bible.

IF all our knowledge be derived from God, and if it has pleaſed God to require a certain degree of probity, ſerioufneſs, impartiality, and humility of mind, together with hearty prayers to him for his direction, bleſſing, and aſſiſtance; and a proper ſubmiſſion to him, before he will communicate his truths to men; I mean, at leaſt, communicate the ſame ſo as ſhall make a due impreſſion upon their minds, and turn to their real profit and edification, to their true improvement in virtue and happineſs; and if men at any time come to the examination either of the works or word of God, without that temper of mind, and without thoſe addreſſes for his aid, and ſubmiſſion to his will, which he has determined ſhall be the conditions of his communications to them; eſpecially if they come with the contrary diſpoſitions, with a wicked, partial, proud, and ludicrous temper, and with an utter diſregard to God, his providence, worſhip, and revelation; all their reſearches will come to nothing: if, I ſay, this be the caſe, as to divine knowledge, as I believe it is, it cannot but be highly neceſſary for us all to conſider of this matter beforehand, and to endeavour after the proper qualifications, before we ſet ourſelves about the main enquiries themſelves. If it has alſo pleaſed God to expect from us ſome more deference and regard for him, than for our poor fallible fellow-creatures here below, and to claim our belief and obedience, upon plain external evidence, that certain doctrines or duties are derived from him, without our being always let into the ſecrets of his government, or acquainted with the reaſons of his conduct, and alſo to expect that this plain external evidence be treated, as it is in all the other caſes of human determinations and judgments; I mean, that it be ſubmitted to and acquieſced in, when it appears to be ſuch as in all other caſes would be allowed to be ſatisfactory, and plainly ſuperior to what is alledged to the contrary; if, I ſay, this alſo be the caſe, as to

divine knowledge, as I believe it is; it will be very proper for us all to conſider of this matter beforehand alſo; that ſo we may not be afterward diſappointed, when in our future progreſs we do not always find that irreſiſtible and overbearing degree of evidence for certain divine truths, which in ſuch caſes is not to be had; which in truth is almoſt peculiar to the Mathematics: and the expectation of which is ſo common, though unjuſt, a pretence for infidelity among us.

As to the former of theſe enquiries, or that temper of mind which is neceſſary for the diſcovery of divine truth; it can certainly be no other than what the light of nature, and the conſciences of men influenced thereby dictate to us; thoſe, I mean, already intimated; ſuch as ſerioufneſs, integrity, impartiality, and prayer to God, with the faithful belief, and ready practice of ſuch truths and duties, as we do all along diſcover to be the word and will of God; together with ſuch a modeſty or reſignation of mind, as will reſt ſatisfied in certain ſublime points, clearly above our determination, with full evidence that they are revealed by God, without always inſiſting upon knowing the reaſons of the divine conduct therein immediately, before we will believe that evidence. Theſe are ſuch things as all honeſt and ſober men, who have naturally a ſenſe of virtue and of God, in their minds, muſt own their obligation to. We all know, by the common light of nature, till we eclipſe or corrupt it by our own wickedneſs, that we are to deal with the utmoſt fairneſs, honeſty, and integrity in all, eſpecially in religious matters; that we are to hearken to every argument, and to conſider every teſtimony without prejudice, or bias, and ever to pronounce agreeably to our convictions; that we are but weak, frail, dependent creatures; all whoſe faculties, and the exerciſe of them, are derived from God; that we ought therefore to exerciſe a due modeſty, and practice a due ſubmiſſion of mind in divine matters, particularly in the ſearch after the nature, and laws, and providence of our great Creator; a ſubmiſſion, I mean, not to human, but to divine authority, when once it ſhall be authenticly made known to us, that the humble addreſſing of ourſelves to God for his aid, direction, and bleſſing on our ſtudies and enquiries, is one plain inſtance of ſuch our ſubmiſſion to him; and that a ready compliance with divine revelation, and a ready obedience to the divine will, ſo far as we have clearly diſcovered it, is another neceſſary inſtance of the ſame humble regard to the divine Majeſty. Nor indeed, can any one who comes to theſe ſacred enquiries with the oppoſite diſpoſitions, of diſhoneſty, partiality

ality, pride, buffoonery, neglect of all divine worſhip, and contempt of all divine revelation, and of all divine laws, expect, even by the light of nature, that God ſhould be obliged to diſcover farther divine truths to him. Nor will a ſober perſon, duly ſenſible of the different ſtates of creator and creature, imitate Simon Magus, and his followers, in the firſt ages of the goſpel; and ſet up ſome metaphyſical ſubtilties, or captious queſtions, about the conduct of providence, as ſufficient to ſet aſide the evidence of confeſſed miracles themſelves; but will rather agree to that wiſe aphoriſm laid down in the law of Moſes, and ſuppoſed all over the Bible; "that ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God; but "things that are revealed, to us and to our children, that "we may do them." DEUT. xxix. 29. Now in order to the making ſome impreſſions upon men in this matter, and the convincing them, that all our diſcoveries are to be derived from God; and that we are not to expect his bleſſing upon our enquiries, without the foregoing qualifications, devotions, and obedience; give me leave here, inſtead of my own farther reaſoning, to ſet down from the ancient Jewiſh and Chriſtian writers, ſeveral paſſages which ſeem to me very remarkable, and very pertinent to our preſent purpoſe; not now indeed, as ſuppoſing any of thoſe obſervations of ſacred authority, but as very right in themſelves; very agreeable to the light of nature; and very good teſtimonies of the ſenſe of wiſe men in the ſeveral ancient ages of the world to this purpoſe. And I chooſe to do this the more largely here, becauſe I think this matter to be of very great importance; becauſe it ſeems to be now very little known or conſidered, at leaſt very little practiſed by ſeveral pretended enquirers into revealed religion; and becauſe the neglect hereof ſeems to me a main occaſion of the ſcepticiſm and infidelity of this age.

"The Lord ſpake unto Moſes, ſaying; See, I have called "by name Bezaleel, the ſon of Uri, the Son of Hur, of the "tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the Spirit of "God, in wiſdom, and in underſtanding, and in knowledge, "&c. And in the hearts of all that are wiſe-hearted, I have "put wiſdom, &c." Ex. xxxi. 1, 2, 3, 6.

"It ſhall come to paſs, if thou wilt not hearken unto the "voice of the Lord thy God, to obſerve to do all his com-"mandments, and his ſtatutes, which I command thee this "day, that all theſe curſes ſhall come upon thee, and overtake "thee;——the Lord ſhall ſmite thee with madneſs, and "blindneſs, and aſtoniſhment of heart; and thou ſhalt grope

"at

" at noon-day, as the blind gropeth in darkneſs." DEUT. xxviii. 15, 28, 29.

" The Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and " eyes to ſee, and ears to hear, unto this day"—DEUT. xxix. 4.

" Give thy ſervant an underſtanding heart, to judge thy " people; that I may diſcern between good and bad; for " who is able to judge this thy ſo great a people! And the " ſpeech pleaſed the Lord, that Solomon had aſked this " thing. And God ſaid unto him, Becauſe thou haſt aſked " this thing;—haſt aſked for thyſelf underſtanding to diſ- " cern judgment; behold I have done according to thy " words; lo, I have given thee a wiſe and an underſtanding " heart; ſo that there was none like thee before thee, neither " after thee ſhall any ariſe like unto thee.——And all Iſrael " heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and " they feared the king; for they ſaw that the wiſdom of God " was in him, to do judgment." 1 KINGS iii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 28.

" I ſaid, days ſhould ſpeak; and multitude of years ſhould " teach wiſdom. But there is a ſpirit in man; and the in- " ſpiration of the Almighty giveth them underſtanding." JOB xxxii. 7, 8.

" Behold in this thou art not juſt; I will anſwer thee, " that God is greater than man. Why doſt thou ſtrive " againſt him? For he giveth not account of any of his mat- " ters." JOB xxxiii. 12, 13.

" Surely it is meet to be ſaid unto God, I have born " chaſtiſement; I will not offend any more. That which I " ſee not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will " do no more." JOB xxxiv. 31, 32.

" God thundereth marvellouſly with his voice; great " things doth he which we cannot comprehend." JOB xxxvii. 5.

" With God is terrible majeſty. Touching the Almighty " we cannot find him out; he is excellent in power, and in " judgment, and in plenty of juſtice: he will not afflict.— " Men do therefore fear him: he reſpecteth not any that " are wiſe of heart." JOB xxxvii. 22, 23, 24.

" Who hath put wiſdom in the inward parts? Or who " hath given underſtanding unto the heart?" JOB xxxviii. 36.

" Then Job anſwered the Lord and ſaid; I know that thou " canſt do every thing, and that no thought can be with- " holden from thee.—Who is he that hideth counſel with- " out knowledge? Therefore have I uttered that I under- " ſtood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew " not." JOB xlii. 1, 2, 3.

" I have

" I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now " mine eye ſeeth thee.—Wherefore I abhor myſelf, and re- " pent in duſt and aſhes." Job xlii. 5, 6.

" The meek will he guide in judgment: the meek will " he teach his way." Psalm xxv. 9.

" The ſecret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and " he will ſhew them his covenant." Psalm xxv. 14.

" Thou through thy commandments haſt made me wiſer " than mine enemies; for they are ever with me. I have " more underſtanding than all my teachers, for thy teſtimo- " nies are my meditation. I underſtand more than the an- " cients, becauſe I keep thy precepts. Through thy pre- " cepts I get underſtanding; therefore I hate every falſe " way." Psalm cxix. 98, 99, 100, 104.

" Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; " neither do I exerciſe myſelf in great matters, or in things " too high for me." Psalm cxxxi. 1.

" The Lord giveth wiſdom: out of his mouth cometh " knowledge and underſtanding." Prov. ii. 6.

" Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to " thine own underſtanding. In all thy ways acknowledge " him, and he ſhall direct thy paths." Prov. iii. 5, 6.

" The froward is abomination to the Lord: but his ſecret " is with the righteous." Prov. iii. 32.

" God giveth to a man that is good in his ſight, wiſdom, " and knowledge, and joy." Eccles. ii. 26.

" God hath made every thing beautiful in his time: alſo " he hath ſet the world in their heart; ſo that no man can " find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to " the end." Eccles. iii. 11.

" Then I beheld all the work of God, that a man cannot " find out the work that is done under the ſun; becauſe " though a man labour to ſeek it out: yet he ſhall not find " it; yea further, though a wiſe man think to know it, yet " ſhall he not be able to find it." Eccles. viii. 17.

" As for theſe four children, God gave them knowledge " and ſkill in all learning and wiſdom." Dan. i. 17.

" None of the wicked ſhall underſtand, but the wiſe ſhall " underſtand." Dan. xii. 10.

" Who is wiſe and he ſhall underſtand theſe things; pru- " dent, and he ſhall know them: for the ways of the Lord " are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them: but the tranſ- " greſſors ſhall fall therein." Hos. xiv. 9.

" And the angel that was ſent unto me, whoſe name was " Uriel, gave me an anſwer, and ſaid, thy heart hath gone

" too

" too far in this world: and thinkeſt thou to comprehend
" the way of the Moſt High?" 2 Esd. iv. 1, 2.

" He ſaid moreover unto me; thine own things, and ſuch
" as are grown up with thee, canſt thou not know; how
" ſhould thy veſſel then be able to comprehend the way of
" the Higheſt." 2 Esd. iv. 10, 11.

" They that dwell upon the earth may underſtand nothing;
" but that which is upon the earth: and he that dwelleth
" above the heavens, may only underſtand the thing that are
" above the height of the heavens; &c." 2 Esd. iv. 21.

" Into a malicious ſoul wiſdom ſhall not enter, nor dwell
" in the body that is ſubject unto ſin, &c." Wisd. i. 41. &c.

" Their own wickedneſs hath blinded them." Wisd. ii. 21.

" As for the myſteries of God, they know them not."
Wisd. ii. 22.

" Wherefore I prayed, and underſtanding was given me:
" I called upon God, and the ſpirit of wiſdom came to me."
Wisd. vii. 7.

" It is God that leadeth unto wiſdom, and directeth the
" wiſe. For in his hand are both we and our words; all
" wiſdom alſo, and knowledge of workmanſhip." Wisd.
vii. 15, 16.

" When I perceived that I could not otherwiſe obtain
" wiſdom, except God gave her me; (and that was a point
" of wiſdom alſo, to know whoſe gift ſhe was) I prayed un-
" to the Lord, and beſought him, and with my whole heart
" I ſaid," Wisd. viii. 21

" Give me wiſdom that ſitteth by thy throne, and reject
" me not from among thy children. For I thy ſervant, and
" ſon of thine handmaid, am a feeble perſon, and of a ſhort
" time, and too young for the underſtanding of judgment
" and laws. For though a man be never ſo perfect among
" the children of men, yet if thy wiſdom be not with him,
" he ſhall be nothing regarded." Wisd. ix. 4, 5, 6.

" Hardly do we gueſs aright at things that are upon earth;
" and with labour do we find the things that are before us:
" but the things that are in heaven who hath ſearched out?"
Wisd. ix. 9.

" All wiſdom cometh from the Lord, and is with him for
" ever.——She is with all fleſh according to his gift; and
" he hath given her to them that love him." Ec. i. 1, 10.

" If thou deſire wiſdom, keep the commandments, and
" the Lord ſhall give her unto thee. For the fear of the
" Lord is wiſdom and inſtruction; and faith and meekneſs
" are his delight." Ec. i. 26, 27.

" Myſteries

" Myſteries are revealed unto the meek.——Seek not out " the things that are too hard for thee; neither ſearch the " things that are above thy ſtrength. But what is com- " manded thee, think thereupon with reverence; for it is " not needful for thee to ſee the things that are in ſecret." Ec. iii. 19, 21, 22.

" Let thy mind be upon the ordinances of the Lord, and " meditate continually in his commandments. He ſhall " eſtabliſh thine heart, and give thee wiſdom at thine own " deſire." Ec. vi. 37.

" Wiſdom, knowledge, and underſtanding of the law, are " of the Lord. Love, and the way of good works, are from " him. Error and darkneſs had their beginning together " with ſinners." Ec. xi. 15, 16.

" Fooliſh men ſhall not attain unto wiſdom; and ſinners " ſhall not ſee her. For ſhe is far from pride; and men that " are liars cannot remember her." Ec. xv. 7, 8.

" He that keepeth the law of the Lord getteth the un- " derſtanding thereof; and the perfection of the fear of the " Lord is wiſdom." Ec. xxi. 11.

" As his ways are plain unto the holy, ſo are they ſtumb- " ling-blocks unto the wicked." Ec. xxxix. 24.

" The Lord hath made all things, and to the godly hath " he given wiſdom." Ec. xliii. 33.

" If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of the doc- " trine whether it be of God, or whether I ſpeak of myſelf." John vii. 17.

" O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and " knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, " and his ways paſt finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.

" If any of you lack wiſdom, let him aſk of God, that " giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it " ſhall be given him.—Every good gift, and every perfect " gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of " lights." James i. 5, 17.

Now from all this evidence, and much more that might be alledged, it is apparent, that the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religions always ſuppoſe, that there muſt be a due temper of mind in the enquirers, or elſe the arguments for thoſe religions will not have their due effect. That the courſe of God's providence deſigns hereby to diſtinguiſh between the well-diſpoſed, the meek, the humble, and the pious, which are thoſe whom the common light of nature declares may expect the divine bleſſing on their ſtudies of this ſort; and the ill-diſpoſed, the obſtinate, the proud, and the impious; which

which are thoſe whom the ſame common light of nature aſſures us may expect the divine malediction on the ſame: and that 'tis not for want of convincing and ſatisfactory evidence in the buſineſs of revelation, but becauſe many men come with perverſe, ſceptical, and wicked diſpoſitions, that they fail of ſatisfaction therein. Accordingly, I think, it is true in common obſervation, that the virtuous and the religious, I mean thoſe that are ſuch according to natural conſcience, do rarely, if ever, fail on their enquiries to embrace and acquieſce in both the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations, and that the debauched and profane do as ſeldom fail on their enquiries to reject and ridicule them. Which different ſucceſs of the ſame examination, agrees exactly with the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and is the very ſame which muſt be true, in caſe thoſe Scriptures be true alſo; and is, by conſequence, a conſiderable confirmation of their real verity and inſpiration. And certainly, he that conſiders his own weakneſs and dependance on God, and that all truth and evidence muſt come originally from him, will by natural judgment and equity pronounce, that he who expects the divine bleſſing and illumination, in points of ſuch vaſt conſequence, as thoſe of revelation moſt certainly are, ought above all things to purify his will, and rectify his conduct in ſuch points as all the world knows to be the Will of God; and to addreſs himſelf to the Divine Majeſty with due fervency and ſeriouſneſs, for his aid and aſſiſtance, before he can juſtly promiſe himſelf ſucceſs in ſo great and momentous an undertaking.

But then, as to the ſecond enquiry, or the degree of evidence that ought to be expected in religious matters, it ſeems to me very neceſſary to ſay ſomewhat upon this ſubject alſo, before we come to our main deſign. For as on the one ſide it is a great error in all caſes to expect ſuch evidence as the nature of the ſubject renders impoſſible; ſo is it as weak on the other ſide, to lay the ſtreſs of important truths on ſuch evidence, as is in its own nature unſatisfactory and precarious: or to aſſert with great aſſurance what can no way be proved, even by that ſort of evidence which is proper for the ſubject in debate. An inſtance of the firſt ſort we have in Autolicus, an Heathen, in his debates with Theophilus of Antioch; who appears weakly to have inſiſted upon ſeeing the God of the Chriſtians, ere he would believe his exiſtence; while one of the known attributes of that God is, that he is inviſible. And almoſt equally prepoſterous would any philoſophic ſceptic now be, who ſhould require the ſight of the air in which we breathe, before he would believe that there

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was ſuch an element at all. Whereas it is clear, that the air may be demonſtrated to be ſufficiently ſenſible and real, by a thouſand experiments; while yet none of thoſe experiments can render it viſible to us: juſt as the exiſtence of a ſupreme being may be demonſtrated by innumerable arguments, although none of thoſe arguments imply even the poſſibility of his being properly ſeen by any of his creatures. But then, that we may keep a mean here, and may neither on one ſide, expect in our religious enquiries, overbearing, or ſtrictly mathematic evidence, ſuch as is impoſſible to be denied or doubted of by any; which would render the conſtant deſign of providence, already ſtated, entirely ineffectual, and force both good and bad to be believers, without any regard to their qualifications and temper of mind: Nor on the other ſide, may we depend on ſuch weak and precarious arguments, as are not really ſufficient or ſatisfactory to even fair, honeſt, and impartial men. I intend here to conſider, what that degree of evidence is which ought to be inſiſted on; without which we are not, and with which we are obliged to acquieſce in divine matters. Now this degree of evidence I take to be that, and no other, which upright judges are determined by in all the important affairs of eſtate and life that come before them: and according to which, they ever aim to give ſentence in their courts of judicature. I chooſe to inſtance in this judicial evidence, and theſe judicial determinations eſpecially, becauſe the perſons concerned in ſuch matters are, by long uſe, and the nature of their employment, generally ſpeaking, the beſt and moſt ſagacious diſcoverers of truth, and thoſe that judge the moſt unbiaſſedly and fairly, concerning ſufficient or inſufficient evidence of all others. Such upright judges then, never expect ſtrictly undeniable, or mathematic evidence; which they know is, in human affairs, abſolutely impoſſible to be had: they don't require that the witneſſes they examine ſhould be infallible, or impeccable, which they are ſenſible would be alike wild and ridiculous; yet do they expect full, ſufficient, or convincing evidence; and ſuch as is plainly ſuperior to what is alledged on the other ſide: and they require that the witneſſes they believe, be, ſo far as they are able to diſcover, of a good character, upright, and faithful. Nor do they think it too much trouble to uſe their utmoſt ſkill and ſagacity in diſcovering where the truth lies; how far the witneſſes agree with or contradict each other; and which way the ſeveral circumſtances may be beſt compared, ſo as to find out any forgery, or detect any knavery which may be ſuſpected in any branches of the evidence before them.

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They do not themſelves pretend to judge of the reality or obligation of any ancient laws, or acts of parliament, from their own meer gueſſes or inclinations, but from the authenticneſs of the records which contain them, and though they are not able always to ſee the reaſon, or occaſion, or wiſdom of ſuch laws, or acts of parliament; yet do they, upon full external evidence that they are genuine, allow and execute the ſame: as conſidering themſelves to be not legiſlators, but judges; and owning that ancient laws, and ancient facts, are to be known not by gueſſes or ſuppoſals, but by the production of ancient records, and original evidence for their reality. Nor in ſuch their procedure do they think themſelves guilty in their ſentences, if at any time afterwards they diſcover that they have been impoſed upon by falſe witneſſes, or forged records; ſuppoſing, I mean, that they are conſcious, that they did their utmoſt to diſcover the truth, and went exactly by the beſt evidence that lay before them; as knowing they have done their duty, and muſt in ſuch a caſe be blameleſs before God and man, notwithſtanding the miſtake in the ſentences themſelves. Now this is that procedure which I would earneſtly recommend to thoſe that have a mind to enquire to good purpoſe into revealed religion: that after they have taken care to purge themſelves from all thoſe vices which will make it their great intereſt that religion ſhould be falſe; after they have reſolved upon honeſty, impartiality, and modeſty, which are virtues by the law of nature; after they have devoutly implored the divine aſſiſtance and bleſſing on this their important undertaking; which is a duty likewiſe they are obliged to by the ſame law of nature; that after all this preparation, I ſay, they will ſet about the enquiry itſelf, in the very ſame manner that has been already deſcribed, and that all our upright judges proceed by in the diſcovery of truth. Let them ſpare for no pains, but conſult all the originals, whenever they can come at them; and let them uſe all that diligence, ſagacity, and judgment, which they are maſters of, in order to ſee what real external evidence there is for the truth of the facts on which the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religions do depend. I here ſpeak of the truth of facts, as the ſureſt way to determine us in this enquiry; becauſe all the world, I think, owns, that if thoſe facts be true, theſe inſtitutions of religion muſt alſo be true, or be derived from God; and that no particular difficulties, as to the reaſons of ſeveral laws, or the conduct of providence in ſeveral caſes, which thoſe inſtitutions no where pretend to give us a full account of, can be ſufficient to ſet aſide the convincing

convincing evidence which the truth of ſuch facts brings along with it. For example: Thoſe who are well ſatisfied of the truth of the Moſaic hiſtory; of the ten miraculous plagues with which the God of Iſrael ſmote the Egyptians; of the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red ſea, while the Iſraelites were miraculouſly conducted through the ſame; and of the amazing manner wherein the decalogue was given by God to that people at mount Sinai; will for certain, believe that the Jewiſh religion was in the main derived from God, though he ſhould find ſeveral occaſional paſſages in the Jewiſh ſacred books, which he could not account for, and ſeveral ritual laws given that nation, which he could not gueſs at the reaſons why they were given them. And the caſe is the very ſame as to the miraculous reſurrection, and glorious aſcenſion of our bleſſed Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt, with regard to the New Teſtament: on which account I reckon that the truth of ſuch facts is to be principally enquired into, when we have a mind to ſatisfy ourſelves in the verity of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religions. And if it be alledged that ſome of theſe facts are too remote to afford us any certain means of diſcovery at this diſtance of time; I anſwer, That then we are to ſelect ſuch of thoſe facts as we can examine, and to ſearch into the acknowledgement or denial of thoſe that are ancienter, in the oldeſt teſtimonies now extant; into the effects and conſequences, and ſtanding memorials of ſuch facts in after ages, and how far they were real, and allowed to be ſo; and in ſhort, we are to determine concerning them, by the beſt evidence we can now have; and not let a bare ſuſpicion, or a wiſh that things had been otherwiſe overbalance our real evidence of facts in any caſe whatſoever. I do not mean that our enquirer is to have no regard to internal characters, or the contents of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations; or that he is not to examine into that alſo in the general, before he admits even the proof from miracles themſelves; becauſe what pretended miracles ſoever are wrought, for the ſupport of idolatry, or wickedneſs; for the eſtabliſhment of notions contrary to the divine attributes, or of an immoral, or profane, or cruel religion, though they may prove ſuch a religion to be ſupernatural, yet will they only prove that it comes from wicked dæmons, or evil ſpirits, and not from a God of purity and holineſs, and ſo will by no means prove it divine, or worthy of our reception. But then, it is, for the main, ſo well known, that the Jewiſh and Chriſtian inſtitutions do agree to the divine attributes, and do tend to purity, holineſs, juſtice and charity; and are oppoſite to all

all immorality, profaneneſs, and idolatry, that I think there will not need much examination in ſo clear a caſe; and that, by conſequence, our main enquiry is to be as to the truth of the facts thereto relating. And in this caſe, I fear not to invite all our ſceptics and unbelievers, to uſe their greateſt nicety, their entire ſkill, their ſhrewdeſt abilities, and their utmoſt ſagacity in this enquiry; being well aſſured from my own obſervations in this matter, that the proper reſult of ſuch an exact hiſtorical enquiry will be as plainly and evidently on the ſide of revealed religion.

There is ſuch an inimitable air of ſincerity, honeſty, and impartiality, in the ſacred hiſtorians; the ancient profane teſtimonies ſtill extant do ſo generally atteſt to, and confirm the facts, ſo far as they are concerned; the moſt ancient predictions have been all along ſo exactly and wonderfully fulfilled; the characters of the Meſſias in the Old Teſtament have been ſo particularly anſwered in the New; our Lord's own predictions, and thoſe of St. Paul and St. John have been all along hitherto ſo ſurpriſingly accommpliſhed, the epiſtles of the apoſtles, and the hiſtory and ſufferings of them and of their immediate ſucceſſors, do ſo fully confirm the miracles and circumſtances belonging to the firſt times of the Goſpel; that he who acquaints himſelf originally with theſe things, if he come with an untainted and honeſt mind, cannot eaſily be other than a believer and a Chriſtian.

I cannot but heartily wiſh, for the common good of all the ſceptics and unbelievers of this age, that I could imprint in their minds all that real evidence for natural and for revealed religion that now is, or during my paſt enquiries has been upon my own mind thereto relating; and that their temper of mind were ſuch as that this evidence might afford them as great ſatisfaction as it has myſelf.—But though this entire communication of the evidence that is, or has been in my own mind, for the certainty of natural religion, and of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian inſtitutions, be, in its own nature, impoſſible; yet, I hope, I may have leave to addreſs myſelf to all, eſpecially to the ſceptics and unbelievers of our age; to do what I am able for them in this momentous concern; and to lay before them, as briefly and ſeriouſly as I can, a conſiderable number of thoſe arguments which have the greateſt weight with me, as to the hardeſt part of what is here deſired and expected from them; I mean the belief of revealed religion, or of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian inſtitutions, as contained in the books of the Old and New Teſtament.——But to

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wave farther preliminaries, ſome of the principal reaſons which make me believe the Bible to be true are the following:

1. The Bible lays the law of nature for its foundation; and all along ſupports and aſſiſts natural religion; as every true revelation ought to do.

2. Aſtronomy, and the reſt of our certain mathematic ſciences, do confirm the accounts of Scripture; ſo far as they are concerned.

3. The moſt ancient and beſt hiſtorical accounts now known, do, generally ſpeaking, confirm the accounts of Scripture; ſo far as they are concerned.

4. The more learning has encreaſed, the more certain in general do the Scripture accounts appear, and its difficult places are more cleared thereby.

5. There are, or have been generally, ſtanding memorials preſerved of the certain truths of the principal hiſtorical facts, which were conſtant evidences for the certainty of them.

6. Neither the Moſaical law, nor the Chriſtian religion, could poſſibly have been received and eſtabliſhed without ſuch miracles as the ſacred hiſtory contains.

7. Although the Jews all along hated and perſecuted the prophets of God: yet were they forced to believe they were true prophets, and their writings of divine inſpiration.

8. The ancient and preſent ſtate of the Jewiſh nation are ſtrong arguments for the truth of their law, and of the Scripture prophecies relating to them.

9. The ancient and preſent ſtates of the Chriſtian church are alſo ſtrong arguments for the truth of the Goſpel, and of the Scripture prophecies relating thereto.

10. The miracles whereon the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religion are founded; were of old owned to be true by their very enemies.

11. The ſacred writers, who lived in times and places ſo remote from one another, do yet all carry on one and the ſame grand deſign, viz. that of the ſalvation of mankind, by the worſhip of, and obedience to the one true God, in and through the king Meſſiah; which, without a divine conduct, could never have been done.

12. The principal doctrines of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian religion are agreeable to the moſt ancient traditions of all other nations.

13. The difficulties relating to this religion are not ſuch as affect the truth of the facts, but the conduct of providence, the reaſons of which the ſacred writers never pretended fully to know, or to reveal to mankind.

14. Natural religion, which is yet ſo certain in itſelf, is not without ſuch difficulties, as to the conduct of providence, as are objected to revelation.

15. The ſacred hiſtory has the greateſt marks of truth, honeſty, and impartiality, of all other hiſtories whatſoever; and withal has none of the known marks of knavery and impoſture.

16. The predictions of Scripture have been ſtill fulfilled in the ſeveral ages of the world whereto they belong.

17. No oppoſite ſyſtems of the univerſe, or ſchemes of divine revelation, have any tolerable pretences to be true, but thoſe of the Jews and Chriſtians.

Theſe are the plain and obvious arguments which perſuade me of the truth of the Jewiſh and Chriſtian revelations.

Works, paſſim.

3. Lord Forbes.

The Divine Legation of Moſes.

THE evidence the Jews had to believe the ſeveral matters related by Moſes, preceding the deliverance from Egypt, was, ſo far as we know, no more than Moſes's word; whoſe credit was ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, by the teſtimonies given to him by the Deity; but; at the ſame time, it is not certain that they had not ſome diſtinct tradition concerning theſe things. But, as to his authority, and the authority of the laws and inſtitutions given by him, they had, and their children, and we who take it from their children, have the ſtrongeſt evidence the nature of the thing is capable of. For,

1. The whole people, an infinite multitude, were witneſſes of all the miracles wrought preceding the deliverance from Egypt, and of the final miracle that atchieved their deliverance; in memory whereof, the paſſover, an annual ſolemnity, was inſtituted, with the ſtrongeſt injunctions, to acquaint their children with the cauſe of that obſervance, and to mark that night throughout all their generations for ever.

2. The whole people were witneſſes to the miracle in paſſing the Red Sea, and ſung that hymn which Moſes compoſed on that occaſion, which was preſerved for the uſe of their children.

3. The whole people were witneſſes to the dreadful promulgation of the law from Sinai, with which they were alſo to acquaint their children; and the feaſt of Pentecoſt was annually to be obſerved on the day on which that law was given; beſides that the very tables in which the ten commands were written, were depoſited in the Ark, and remained, at

at leaſt, till the building of Solomon's temple, and probably till the deſtruction of it.

4. The whole people were witneſſes to the many miracles wrought, during the ſpace of forty years, in the wilderneſs; to the pillar of fire and cloud, to the manna, quails, &c. a ſample of the manna remained to future generations; and they were directed to relate what they ſaw to their children.

5. The whole people were witneſſes to the framing and building of the Ark, and Tabernacle; they were all contributors to it; they ſaw the cloud fill and reſt upon it, and they aſſiſted at the ſervices performed there; and, to commemorate this, as well as their ſojourning in tents in the wilderneſs, the annual feaſt of Tabernacles was appointed, which in ſucceeding years, they were to explain to their children.

As theſe things were abſolutely ſufficient to ſatisfy the children of Iſrael, then in being, touching the authority and obligation of this law, ſeveral things were added to enforce the obſervance, and to preſerve the memory and evidence of what was to be obſerved.

1. The law was by Moſes, at the command of God, put into writing, for the greater certainty, as well as all the directions for making the Ark, the Cherubim, the Tabernacle, the prieſt's garments, &c. and all the rules of government, judicature, &c. with every other circumſtance revealed, for directing the faith and the conduct of the nation.

2. The law was to be preſerved, peruſed, and attended to, in the moſt careful manner; the prieſts, who were to judge in queſtions relating to it, muſt be well verſed in it; the king, who was to rule over the nation, was to write out a copy of it for himſelf, and to peruſe it continually; and the people were to write out paſſages of it, and to wear them by way of ſigns, upon their hands, and of frontlets, between their eyes, and to write them upon the poſt of their doors, &c. And they were to teach their children the moſt notable parts of it, and particularly to inſtruct them in the miracles attending the deliverance from Egypt, as they ſat in their houſe; as they walked by the way, as they lay down, and as they roſe up, &c.

3. Beſides the authority that promulgated the law, there was a ſolemn covenant and agreement between God and the people, whereby the people became bound to keep, preſerve, and obſerve this law, and all that was contained in it: and God became bound to be the God of the Iſraelitiſh people, to protect, and proſper them: and this covenant, towards the end of their ſojourning in the wilderneſs, was ſolemnly renewed.

4. The particulars of this covenant, upon God's part, were, to give the people the good land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, to preſerve, and protect them in it; to give them perpetual indurance, and victory over their and his enemies; to proſper them in all their labours; to give them the increaſe of their fields, and flocks; and to make them a great, a happy, and a flouriſhing people; on condition that they kept and obeyed his law.

5. The particulars, on the part of the people, were, to ſerve Jehovah, and no other God, in the way directed by the law; to preſerve, obſerve, and obey the law carefully and exactly; and, if they failed or tranſgreſſed, to ſubmit and conſent to the ſevere ſanction of the law and covenant, which, in many inſtances, was, to individuals tranſgreſſing, death, (to be cut off from the people), and to the bulk of the people, deſtruction, captivity, diſperſion, blindneſs, madneſs, &c. beſides the forfeiture of all the good promiſes.

6. Beſides the other bleſſings, and pre-eminences, God was, by ſome ſpecial viſible ſymbol of his preſence, to reſide continually with the people; firſt, in the Tabernacle, which was made in the wilderneſs for that end, and afterwards in the temple; whence he was to give judgment and directions, and to anſwer prayers, and accept of vows.

7. This covenant was alſo reduced into writing and was the tenure by which the Iſraelites held the land of Canaan, and on which all their hopes were founded: wherefore it muſt in all generations be conſidered by them as a thing of no ſmall moment.

As God was the head of this ſtate, and as the people held immediately their land of him; ſo he made ſeveral regulations for holding that property, that are very remarkable.

1. The land was by his command divided into twelve lots, one for each tribe; and they were put in poſſeſſion accordingly, to the exclusion of the tribe of Levi, who for their portion had no more than what attended the ſervice of God's houſe, and ſome cities with ſuburbs, diſperſed amongſt other tribes.

2. Not only were the deſcendants of each tribe to enjoy, in excluſion of other tribes, their own lot, but the particular fields and parcels, within each tribe, were to remain for ever with the reſpective families that firſt poſſeſſed them, and on failure of the iſſue of the poſſeſſor, to the neareſt of that family: hence all lands ſold returned at the jubilee to the proprietor, or his neareſt a-kin; he who had a right to revenge blood might redeem.

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3. This right of blood, depending upon knowledge of deſcent and genealogy, made it abſolutely neceſſary for the children of Iſrael to keep very exact records and proofs of their deſcent; not to mention the expectation they had of ſomething, ſurpriſingly ſingular from the many promiſes made to Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, that the bleſſing to mankind ſhould ſpring from their Seed; and, in tracing their genealogy, we ſee they were very critical, upon their return from Babylon: ſo that, before their records were diſturbed by the captivity, it could not well be otherwiſe, but that every body of any note amongſt the Jews could tell you the name of his anceſtor, who firſt had the family-poſſeſſion, in the days of Joſhua, and how many degrees, and by what deſcent he was removed from him. And as theſe firſt poſſeſſors, purſuant to the cuſtom of the nation, muſt have been deſcribed by their father's name, 'tis highly probable, they could have quoted by name that anceſtor who ſaw the miracles in Egypt, who ſaw the law given, who entered into the covenant, and who contributed to the ſetting up the Ark and Tabernacle.

4. The very ſurpriſing care taken by the Deity to keep the breed of the Jews pure and genuine, by the proofs of virginity, and by the miraculous waters of jealouſy, is a circumſtance that merits attention, and will eaſily induce a belief that deſcent and birth was a matter much minded amongſt them. And,

5. The appointment and obſervance of the ſabbatical year, and, after the ſeventh ſabbatical year, a year of jubilee, for the general releaſe of debts, lands, &c. is a circumſtance of great moment, not only as theſe notable periods were uſeful towards the eaſy computation of time, but as it made enquiry into titles, and conſequently genealogy, neceſſary every fiftieth year; and as the ceſſation from culture, every ſeventh year gave continual occaſions for the Deity's diſplaying his power in increaſing the crop of the ſixth, purſuant to his promiſe.

Now, taking theſe circumſtances together under conſideration, could any human precaution have provided more means to keep up the memory and evidence of any fact? Could this have been done by human foreſight or force? Has any thing like to it ever been in the world beſides?

What could tend more to perpetuate the memory of any event, than to deliver a whole people, by public glorious miracles, from intolerable ſlavery? To publiſh a very extraordinary ſyſtem of laws immediately from heaven? To put this law in writing together with the covenant for the obeying it? To make the tenure of the eſtates depend on the original

diviſion of the land, to men who ſaw the miracles, and firſt took poſſeſſion, and on the proximity of relation, by deſcent to them? To appoint a return of lands every fiftieth year, which ſhould give perpetual occaſion to canvaſs thoſe deſcents? To order a ſabbath every ſeventh year for the land, the loſs of which ſhould be ſupplied by the preceding year's increaſe? And to ſelect a whole tribe conſiſting of many thouſands, to be the guardians, in ſome degree the judges and the executors of this law; who were barred from any portion of the land, in common with their brethren, and were contented with the contributions that came from the other tribes, without any fixed portion amongſt them? This muſt keep up the belief and authority of that law amongſt the deſcendants of that people, or nothing could: and if ſuch a belief, under all theſe circumſtances, prevailed amongſt a people ſo conſtituted, that belief could not poſſibly proceed from impoſture; becauſe the very means provided, for proof of the truth, are ſo many checks againſt any poſſibility of impoſition.

If any man will ſuggeſt that the law of the Jews is no more than human invention, and that the book of the law is a forgery; let him ſay when it was impoſed upon that people, or at what period it could have poſſibly been impoſed upon them, ſo as to gain belief, later than the period they mention, and under other circumſtances than thoſe they relate.

Could the whole people have been perſuaded at any one period, by any impoſtor, that they were told ſeverally by their fathers, and they by theirs, that the law was given with ſuch circumſtances, and under ſuch promiſes, and threats, if they were not really told ſo; or that they, throughout all their generations, had worn certain paſſages of the law by way of frontlets and ſigns, if it had not really been ſo?

Could the whole people have been perſuaded to ſubmit to the pain of death, upon all the offences which the law makes capital, unleſs their fathers had done ſo, upon the evidence of the authority of that law?

Could the whole people have been perſuaded that they had kept exact genealogies, in order to entitle them to the bleſſing, and to the inheritances ſeverally, unleſs they actually had done ſo?

Could the whole people believe that they had kept paſſovers, feaſts of tabernacles, &c. down from the date of the law, commemorative of the great events they relate to, unleſs they had really done ſo?

Could the children of Iſrael have been impoſed on to receive an Ark, and a Tabernacle, then forged, and a compleat

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ſet of ſervice and liturgy, as deſcending from Moſes by the direction of God, unleſs that Ark and that ſervice had come to them from their anceſtors, as authorized by God?

Could the whole people have ſubmitted to pay tithe, firſt fruits, &c. upon any feigned revelation? Or, could the tribe of Levi, without divine authority, have ſubmitted, not only to the being originally without a portion in Iſrael, but to the being incapable of any, in hopes of the contributions of the people; which however large when the whole twelve tribes ſerved at the ſame temple, became very ſcanty when ten of them withdrew their allegiance from heaven?

Could ever the book of the law, if conſigned to the Levites, and promulgated, have been loſt, ſo as to give room for new fictions? Or could a book of the law have been forged, if there was none precedent, and put upon the people, as a book that had been delivered to the Levites by Moſes? If no book at all ever was delivered by him to them, what authority could be pretended for ſuch a book?

Had a book been to be forged, in order to be received by the people, could it have contained ſo many ſcandalous reflexions and accuſations againſt the people, and ſo many fatal threats and predictions concerning them? and, if it had been ſo framed, could it have been received as authentic?

If the law, &c. was forged, it muſt have been before the days of David: becauſe by the ſacred hymns, in his time, the publication of the law is celebrated, and the law was obſerved: and yet the time between the entry of Iſrael into the land, and the reign of David, being but about four hundred years, is too ſhort a ſpace for forgetting the real manner of the entry, and forging another, to be received by a people, whoſe genealogy was ſo fixed, and whoſe time was reckoned by ſuch periods.

If the book of the law was not forged before the reign of David, it could not poſſibly be forged after, unleſs the whole hiſtory of the kingdom, the tabernacle, the temple, and all the ſacred hymns and prophecies, are looked upon as one compleat fiction; becauſe the tabernacle, the temple, the œconomy of the kingdom, the ſacred hymns and all the other writings ſaid to be ſacred, bear formal relation to the law.

But, that all theſe things were not ſuppoſitious, is evident from the anxious zeal that poſſeſſed the Jews who returned from the captivity; from their ſolicitude to reſtore the city, the temple and the ſacred ſervice; from their ſtrict examination of their genealogies, and ſcrupulous care to comply with the law,

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The ſpace between the captivity and the return was ſo ſhort, that ſome who ſaw the firſt temple, ſaw alſo the ſecond, and many who were themſelves, or at leaſt whoſe fathers had been, officers in the firſt temple, returned to the ſervice of the ſecond: ſo that it is utterly impoſſible that the hiſtory, the liturgy, the ſervice of the Jews, preceding the return ſhould be a fiction, at leaſt that it ſhould be a fiction earlier than the return.

And the ſtory of this nation, from that period, falls in ſo much with the hiſtory of the reſt of the world; their ſacred books have been ſo ſoon after that tranſlated, and they have been ſo famous for the tenaciouſneſs of their laws, that there is no poſſibility of ſuſpecting that their law and hiſtory was forged later than the return. And, if it is granted, that the devotions, the precepts, the inſtitutions, and rites and ceremonies of this law, and the great lines of their hiſtory, are not forged; one needs, as to the preſent conſideration, be but little ſolicitous concerning the accuracy of the copy of the books of the law, and of the other ſacred books; and whether there may not have have been ſome miſtake and interpolations. It is not with one or one hundred words or ſentences we have to do; it is with the ſyſtem of the ſacrificature, and the other religious laws and ſervices of the Jews, and with the political eſtabliſhment of their theocratical government, and the authority for the eſtabliſhment of both, that we have, at preſent, concern.

For, if ſuch a ſyſtem of religious ſervices and ceremonies was revealed and commanded by God, if, for the greater certainty, it was reduced into writing by Moſes, by divine direction; if ſuch a model of government was framed, as is manifeſtly calculated for keeping up the obſervance of thoſe ſervices, and preſerving the memory of the inſtitution, and keeping up the authority of the book wherein it was recorded; and if the nation, to whom this inſtitution was delivered, have preſerved it accordingly: compleat evidence thence ariſes to us of the divinity of the inſtitution; and leads to a demonſtrative proof of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, to which all the emblematical inſtitutions tend, and in which they center.

Thoughts concerning Religion.

4. Bishop Wilkins.

THE Old Teſtament hath, by the general conſent of learned men, all the marks of pureſt antiquity; there being nothing in the world which in this reſpect is equal to it, or which

which may pretend to be compared with it; all other the moſt anicent monuments of antiquity coming ſhort of it by many ages. It was written in the firſt and moſt ancient language; from which the very alphabets and letters of all other languages were derived.

This book contains, as the moſt ancient, ſo the moſt exact ſtory of the world, the propagation of men, and the diſperſing of families into the ſeveral parts of the earth.

And though this book were written in ſeveral ages and places, by ſeveral perſons; yet doth the doctrine of it accord together, with a moſt excellent harmony, without any diſſonance or inconſiſtency.

And for the manner of delivering the things contained in it, 'tis ſo ſolemn, reverend and majeſtic, ſo exactly ſuited to the nature of things, as may juſtly provoke our wonder and acknowledgement of its divine original.

And as for the New Teſtament; thoſe various correſpondences, which it bears to the chief things of the Old Teſtament, may ſufficiently evidence that mutual relation, dependance and affinity which there is between them. That in ſuch an age there was ſuch a man as Chriſt, who preached ſuch a doctrine, wrought many miracles, ſuffered an ignominious death, and was afterwards worſhipped as God, having abundance of diſciples and followers, at firſt chiefly amongſt the vulgar, but a while after, amongſt ſeveral of the moſt wiſe and learned men; who in a ſhort ſpace of time did propagate their belief and doctrine into the moſt remote parts of the world: I ſay, all this is for the truth of the matter of fact, not ſo much as doubted or called into queſtion, by Julian, or Celſus, or the Jews themſelves, or any other of the moſt avowed enemies of Chriſtianity. But we have it by as good certainty as any rational man can wiſh or hope for, that is, by univerſal teſtimony, as well of enemies as friends.

And if theſe things were ſo, as to the matter of fact, the common principles of nature will aſſure us, that 'tis not conſiſtent with the nature of the Deity, his truth, wiſdom or juſtice, to work ſuch miracles in confirmation of a lie or impoſture.

Nor can it be reaſonably objected that theſe miracles are now ceaſed; and we have not any ſuch extraordinary way to confirm the truth of our religion. 'Tis ſufficient that they were upon the firſt plantation of it, when men were to be inſtituted and confirmed in that new doctrine. And there may be as much of the wiſdom of providence in the forbearing them now, as in working them then: it being not reaſonable

reasonable to think that the universal laws of nature by which things are to be regularly guided in their natural course, should frequently, or upon every little occasion, be violated or disordered.

To which may be added that wonderful way whereby this religion hath been propagated in the world, with much simplicity and infirmity in the first publishers of it; without arms, or faction, or favour of great men, or the persuasions of philosophers or orators; only by a naked proposal of plain evident truth, with a firm resolution of suffering and dying for it, by which it hath subdued all kind of persecutions and oppositions, and surmounted whatever discouragement or resistance could be laid in its way, or made against it.

The excellency of the things contained in the Gospel are also so suitable to a rational being, as no other religion or profession whatsoever hath thought of, or so expressly insisted upon.

Some of the learned Heathens have placed the happiness of man in the external sensual delights of this world.

Others of the wiser Heathen have spoken sometimes doubtfully concerning a future state, and therefore have placed the reward of virtue, in the doing of virtuous things. Virtue is its own reward. Wherein, though there be much of truth, yet it doth not afford encouragement enough for the vast desires of a rational soul.

Others who have owned a state after this life, have placed the happiness of it in gross and sensual pleasures, feasts and gardens, and company, and other such low and gross enjoyments.

Whereas the doctrine of Christianity doth fix it upon things that are much more spiritual and sublime; the beatific vision, a clear unerring understanding, a perfect tranquility of mind, a conformity to God, a perpetual admiring and praising of him; than which the mind of man cannot fancy any thing that is more excellent or desirable.

As to the duties that are enjoined in reference to divine worship, they are so full of sanctity and spiritual devotion, as may shame all the pompous solemnities of other religions, in their costly sacrifices, their dark wild mysteries, and external observances. Whereas this refers chiefly to the holiness of the mind, resignation to God, love of him, dependence upon him, submission to his will, endeavouring to be like him.

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And as for the duties of the fecond table, which concern our mutual converſation towards one another, it allows nothing that is hurtful or noxious, either to ourſelves or others; forbids all kind of injury or revenge; commands to overcome evil with good; to pray for enemies and perſecutors; doth not admit of any mental, much leſs any corporal uncleanneſs; doth not tolerate any immodeſt or uncomely word or geſture; forbids us to wrong others in their goods and poſſeſſions, or to miſpend our own; requires us to be very tender both of our own and other men's reputation: in brief, it enjoins nothing but what is helpful, and uſeful, and good for mankind. Whatever any philoſophers have preſcribed concerning their moral virtues of temperance, and prudence, and patience, and the duties of ſeveral relations, is here enjoined, in a far more eminent, ſublime and comprehenſive manner: beſides ſuch examples and incitations to piety as are not to be paralleled elſewhere: the whole ſyſtem of its doctrines being tranſcendently excellent, and ſo exactly conformable to the higheſt pureſt reaſon, that in thoſe very things wherein it goes beyond the rules of moral philoſophy, we cannot in our beſt judgment but conſent and ſubmit to it.

In brief; it doth in every reſpect ſo fully anſwer the chief ſcope and deſign of religion in giving all imaginable honour and ſubmiſſion to the Deity, promoting the good of mankind, ſatisfying and ſupporting the mind of man with the higheſt kind of enjoyments, that a rational ſoul can wiſh or hope for, as no other religion or profeſſion whatſoever can pretend unto.—

Infidels pretend want of clear and infallible evidence for the truth of Chriſtianity; than which nothing can be more abſurd and unworthy of a rational man. For let it be but impartially conſidered; what is it, that ſuch men would have? Do they expect mathematical proof and certainty in moral things? Why, they may as well expect to ſee with their ears, and hear with their eyes: ſuch kind of things being altogether as diſproportioned to ſuch kind of proofs, as the objects of the ſeveral ſenſes are to one another. The arguments or proof to be uſed in ſeveral matters are of various and different kinds, according to the nature of the things to be proved. And it will become every rational man to yield to ſuch proofs, as the nature of the thing which he enquires about is capable of: and that man is to be looked upon as froward and contentious, who will not reſt ſatisfied in ſuch kind of evidence as is counted ſufficient, either by all others, or by moſt, or by the wiſeſt men.

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If we ſuppoſe God to have made any revelation of his will to mankind, can any man propoſe or fancy any better way for conveying down to poſterity the certainty of it, than that clear and univerſal tradition which we have for the hiſtory of the Goſpel? And muſt not that man be very unreaſonable, who will not be content with as much evidence for an ancient book or matter of fact, as any thing of that nature is capable of? If it be only infallible and mathematical certainty that can ſettle his mind, why ſhould he believe that he was born of ſuch parents, and belongs to ſuch a family? 'Tis poſſible men might have combined together to delude him with ſuch a tradition. Why may he not as well think, that he was born a prince and not a ſubject, and conſequently deny all duties of ſubjection and obedience to thoſe above him? There is nothing ſo wild and extravagant, to which men may not expoſe themſelves by ſuch a kind of nice and ſcrupulous incredulity.

Whereas, if to the enquiries about religion a man would but bring with him the ſame candour and ingenuity, the ſame readineſs to be inſtructed, which he doth to the ſtudy of human arts and ſciences, that is, a mind free from violent prejudices and a deſire of contention; it can hardly be imagined, but that he muſt be convinced and ſubdued by thoſe clear evidences, which offer themſelves to every inquiſitive mind, concerning the truth of the principles of religion in general, and concerning the divine authority of the Holy Scriptures, and the Chriſtian religion.

Natural Religion, paſſim.

5. Rev. Moses Lowman.

Chief deſign, and principal intention of the civil government of the Hebrews.

TO lay down a true plan of the Hebrew government, it will be requiſite previouſly to conſider, what particular views the lawgiver might have in it. If any particular ends were deſigned, to promote which the plan of the government itſelf was to be adjuſted; thoſe deſigns will help to explain many parts and conſtitutions of the government, as it will ſhew the great wiſdom of the legiſlator, which has made the plan in its ſeveral parts moſt fit, and proper to ſerve, and ſecure thoſe ends.

The Hebrew government appears not only deſigned to ſerve the common and general ends of all good governments; to

to protect the property, liberty, safety, and peace of the several members of the community, in which the true happiness and prosperity of national societies will always consist; but moreover to be an holy people to Jehovah, and a *kingdom* of priests. For thus Moses is directed to tell the children of Israel, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and "how I bore you on eagles wings, and brought you unto "myself. Now therefore if ye will hear my voice indeed, "and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar trea-"sure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. "and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy "nation." We learn what this covenant was in a further account of it. "Ye stand this day all of you before the "Lord your God, your captains of your tribes, your elders "and your officers, and all the men of Israel; that you "should enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and "into his oath which the Lord thy God maketh with thee "this day; that he may establish thee to-day for a people "unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he "hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, "to Abraham, Isaac and to Jacob: for ye know," adds Moses, "how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt, and how we "came through the nations which ye passed by; and ye "have seen their abominations and their idols, wood and "stone, silver and gold which were among them, lest there "should be among you, man, or woman, or family, or tribe, "whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God "to go and serve the Gods of these nations."

Without any enquiry into the critical meaning of these expressions severally, every one may easily see this general intention of them; that the covenant of Jehovah with the Hebrew people, and their oath by which they bound their allegiance to Jehovah their God and King, was, that they should receive and obey the laws which he should appoint as their supreme governor, with a particular engagement to keep themselves from the idolatry of the nations round about them, whether the idolatry they had seen while they dwelt in the land of Egypt, or had observed in the nations by which they passed into the promised land. In keeping this allegiance to Jehovah, as their immediate and supreme Lord, they were to expect the blessings of God's immediate and particular protection in the security of their liberty, peace, and prosperity, against all attempts of their idolatrous neighbours; but if they should break their allegiance to Jehovah, or forsake the covenant of Jehovah, by going and serving

other

other God's, and worſhipping them, then they ſhould forfeit theſe bleſſings of God's protection, and the anger of Jehovah ſhould be kindled againſt the land, to bring upon it all the curſes that are written in this book.

The true ſenſe then of this ſolemn tranſaction; between God and the Hebrew nation, which may be called the original contract of the Hebrew government, is to this purpoſe: If the Hebrews would voluntarily conſent to receive Jehovah for their Lord and King, to keep his covenant and laws, to honour and worſhip him as the one true God, in oppoſition to all idolatry; then, though God as ſovereign of the world rules over all the nations of the earth, and all the nations are under the general care of his providence, he would govern the Hebrew nation by peculiar laws of his particular appointment, and bleſs it with a more immediate and particular protection; he would ſecure to them the invaluable privileges of the true religion, together with liberty, peace and proſperity, as a favoured people above all other nations. It is for very wiſe reaſons you may obſerve, that temporal bleſſings and evils are made ſo much uſe of in this conſtitution, for theſe were the common and prevailing enticements to idolatry; but by thus taking them into the Hebrew conſtitution, as rewards to obedience, and puniſhments of diſobedience, they became motives to true religion, inſtead of encouragements to idolatry.

The idolatrous nations worſhipped ſubordinate beings, whom they owned ſubject to the Supreme; but they believed they had the immediate direction of the bleſſings of life; that they gave health, long life, fruitful ſeaſons, plenty, and proſperity. This we are told by Maimonides, was a doctrine taught by the Sabians in their books, as well as in their inſtructions to the people.

One of the oldeſt of the prophets has ſo fully expreſſed this reaſon of the Hebrew conſtitution, that we need no further evidence of it. "For their mother hath played the "harlot, ſhe that conceived them hath done ſhamefully; "for ſhe ſaid, I will go after my lovers, that give me my "bread and my water, my wool, and my flax, mine oil, and "my drink. For ſhe did not know that I gave her corn, and "wine, and oil, and multiplied her ſilver and gold, which "they prepared for Baal. Therefore will I return, and take "away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the ſea-"ſon thereof; and will recover my wool and my flax, given "to cover her nakedneſs."

The prophet Jeremiah gives the ſame reaſon why the Jews fell into the idolatrous practice of burning incenſe to the

queen

queen of heaven: "But we will certainly do whatſoever
" thing goeth forth out of our own mouths to burn incenſe
" unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings
" unto her, as we have done; we, and our fathers, our kings
" and our princes in the cities of Judah, and in the ſtreets of
" Jeruſalem; for then had we plenty of victuals, and were
" well, and ſaw no evil; but ſince we left off to burn in-
" cenſe to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offer-
" ings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been
" conſumed by the ſword and by the famine."

This common doctrine of idolatry, that the ſeveral bleſſings of life came from ſome dæmon or idol, to whom the authority and power of beſtowing temporal bleſſings were committed, was of ſo general and powerful influence, that it became the wiſdom of an inſtitution deſigned to preſerve the faith and worſhip of the one true God, againſt idolatry, to aſſert that God was the author of every bleſſing of life, that he had not parted with the adminiſtration of providence, or given over the diſpoſal of thoſe bleſſings to any ſubordinate beings whatſoever; ſo that health, long life, plenty and all kinds of proſperity, were to be ſought for, from him; as his gift, and only from his bleſſing and protection.

Whoever has juſt notions of the great evils of idolatry to the diſhonour of the ſupreme Sovereign and Governour of the world, to the corruption of the eſſential principles of true religion and virtuous practice, as idolatry directed ſo many barbarous, immoral and inhuman rites, and encouraged ſuch enormous acts of vice, as acts of religion, of which ſome or other of the idols they worſhipped were examples, and were eſteemed to patronize them; it will appear to them a deſign worthy the goodneſs, as well as the wiſdom of God, to put ſome ſtop to ſuch a dangerous evil: eſpecially when it was ſo general and prevailing, that all fleſh had corrupted its way, and all the nations of the earth were running eagerly into it. Even the Egyptians, a people ſo famed for wiſdom and good underſtanding, were as ſenſeleſs and as corrupt in their idolatry, as any of their neighbours. The Hebrews themſelves, whatever former care had been taken to preſerve the knowledge of the true God, and true religion in the family of Abraham, were ſo addicted to this common corruption of religion, and were ſo ready to fall into it, that there ſeemed no other way left to put any ſtop to the progreſs of idolatry any where, or to preſerve the true religion in any people, but by ſome conſtitution formed on this plan, and which might effectually carry on this deſign in the ſeveral parts of it.

And

And this the goodneſs and wiſdom of God made a principal deſign in the conſtitution of the Jewiſh government.

More effectually to anſwer this chief deſign, there was another ſubordinate intention in the conſtitution of this government. It was of no ſmall conſequence to keep this nation ſeparate from other nations, and from ſuch intercourſe with idolaters as might end in an apoſtacy from their own religion to the idolatry of their neighbours. There is then a law in general given by Moſes, in which he is directed to ſay in God's name to the children of Iſrael, "I am the Lord "your God, after the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein "ye dwelt, ſhall ye not do; and after the doings of the land "of Canaan whither I bring you ſhall ye not do; neither "ſhall ye walk in their ordinances, ye ſhall do my judg-"ments and keep my ordinances to walk herein; I am "Jehovah your God."

Further, Moſes having recited the many and great abominations committed by the Canaanites, on the loſs of the right knowledge of the one true God and of the true religion; and through the corruption of idolatrous doctrines and practices, it is added; "Defile not ye yourſelves in any of theſe things: "for in all theſe the nations are defiled, which I caſt out before you." And again; "therefore ſhall ye keep mine ordinance "that ye commit not any one of theſe abominable cuſtoms "which were committed before you, that ye defile not your-"ſelves therein, I am Jehovah your God." For the ſame purpoſe it is repeated; "and ye ſhall not walk in the manners of the "nations which I caſt out before you, for they committed "all theſe things, and therefore I abhorred them; but I "have ſaid unto you, ye ſhall inherit their land, and I will "give it unto you to poſſeſs it; a land that floweth with "milk and honey. I am the Lord your God which hath "ſeparated you from other people, and ye ſhall be holy unto "me; for I the Lord am holy, and have ſeparated you from "other people that ye ſhould be mine."

It had appeared by notorious examples, how eaſily the Hebrews themſelves were to be enticed into idolatry, by frequenting the company of idolaters, and by converſing too much and too familiarly with them, while Iſrael abode in Shittim; "the people began to commit whoredom with the "daughters of Moab, and they called the people to the "ſacrifice of their Gods; and the people did eat, and bowed "down to their Gods:" ſo eaſy was the paſſage from feaſting with them on their ſacrifices, to joining with them in their idolatry. "Thus Iſrael joined himſelf to Baal-peor."

Such

Such an example of prevailing idolatry, is juſtly given, as a ſufficient reaſon for a careful ſeparation of the Hebrew people from idolatrous neighbours, in order to prevent ſo very dangerous temptations in future times. Moſes therefore thus exhorts Iſrael, " Your eyes have ſeen what the Lord " did, becauſe of Baal-peor, the Lord thy God hath deſ- " troyed them from among you; but ye that did cleave " unto the Lord your God, are alive, every one of you this " day. Behold I have taught you ſtatutes and judgments, " even as the Lord my God commanded me, that you " ſhould do ſo in the land whither ye go to poſſeſs it. Keep " therefore and do them, for that is your wiſdom and your un- " derſtanding, in the ſight of all the nations which ſhall hear " of all theſe ſtatutes, and ſay, ſurely this great nation is a " great and underſtanding people."

Among the laws here ſpoken of, there are ſome, the wiſdom of which appear principally, if not ſolely, as they were choſen and commanded to this end, to ſeparate the Hebrews from their idolatrous neighbours, by a prohibition of every idolatrous right. The law itſelf for prohibiting inter-marriages with idolaters expreſsly gives this reaſon for it, " Neither ſhall you make marriages with them, thy daughter " thou ſhalt not give unto his ſon, nor his daughter ſhalt " thou take unto thy ſon; for they will turn away thy ſon " from following me, that they may ſerve other Gods; ſo " will the anger of the Lord be kindled againſt you and deſ- " troy thee ſuddenly."

Many other laws which at firſt view ſeem to be of ſmall importance and concern, for the enacting of which ſome look for no reaſon at all, but the alone will of the law-giver, will appear in this view, of concern and importance, ſufficient for the wiſdom of God to take notice of, when he gave his laws to this nation. The moſt judicious of the Hebrew doctors, has very well explained ſeveral of the Moſaical laws upon this ſingle conſideration.

He gives this general reaſon for many laws, that they were made to keep men from idolatry, and ſuch falſe opinions as are a-kin to idolatry; ſuch as the pretences to incantations, divinations, foretelling things by the ſtars, or by the poſſeſſion of ſome ſpirit or demon, or conſulting with ſuch perſons. He farther juſtly obſerves, that ſuch things as are ſuppoſed to be effected by any magic actions, or are founded on any diſpoſitions or influences of the ſtars, neceſſarily induce men to reverence and worſhip them. He obſerves many of the magic rites conſiſted in certain geſtures, actions, or the uſe of certain words, and mentions ſeveral examples of

ſuch ſuperſtitions; among the reſt a remarkable rite to prevent a ſtorm of hail.

However trifling ſome of the Moſaical laws may appear at firſt view, and unworthy the wiſdom of God to enact them as laws; yet the caſe will appear quite otherwiſe, when they are conſidered as neceſſary proviſions againſt the danger of idolatry.

The law, for inſtance, that appoints, "Ye ſhall not round "the corners of your heads, neither ſhalt thou mar the cor- "ners of thy beard," will thus appear directions of importance, when it was to prevent a magical cuſtom of the idolatrous prieſts, who made this ſort of cutting off their hair and beards eſſential to their worſhip; and uſed them as things of conſequence, in order to procure from their idols the ſeveral bleſſings they deſired and prayed for. A prohibition of ſuch idolatrous and magical ceremonies was not ſo trivial, or below the care of a wiſe lawgiver, who had a deſign in the conſtitution of the Hebrew government, to keep that people from all idolatrous cuſtoms.

In like manner we may eaſily perceive a reaſon why the law ſhould direct, "Neither ſhall a garment of linen and "woollen come upon thee;" when we underſtand, that ſuch mixed garments of linen and woollen were the proper habits of idolatrous prieſts; and which, according to the profeſſed doctrines of their idolatrous worſhip, were ſuppoſed to have ſome powerful magical virtue in them.

For the ſame reaſon we can eaſily underſtand the wiſdom of appointing by law, that "the woman ſhall not wear that "which appertaineth unto a man, neither ſhall a man put on "a woman's garment; for all that do ſo are abomination to the "Lord thy God;" when it was an idolatrous conſtitution of their neighbours, as Maimon found it in a magic book, that men ought to ſtand before the ſtar of Venus in the flowered garments of women; and women were to put on the armour of men before the ſtar of Mars, as biſhop Patrick on the place truly repreſents its meaning.

The ſame idolatrous cuſtom is obſerved by Macrobius, that men worſhipped Venus in women's habits, and women in the habits of men.

There is no reaſon then, we ſee, to imagine that theſe laws, which were to diſtinguiſh the Hebrew people from the idolatrous nations were made only out of hatred to their neighbours and to all their cuſtoms and manners, good or bad, innocent as well as idolatrous. It appears on the contrary to be plainly quite another reaſon; it was from a wiſe care of their preſervation from ſuch idolatrous cuſtoms, as there was very great reaſon to fear, would prove a dangerous temptation to lead them

them into idolatry, and which were hardly to be used without it. All reflections, with how much confidence soever on the Hebrew laws, as if they were established upon no better motives than the hatred of their neighbours, will appear in this view groundless, and without all foundation, when the true reason shall appear so wise, so plain, and so natural.

These two views then, to preserve in the Hebrew nation the knowledge and worship of the one true God, and to preserve it from the spreading evils of idolatry, by separating it from the society of idolaters, by forbidding all use of idolatrous rites and customs, may be looked upon as considerable intentions in the constitution; according to which, we are to examine and to judge of the equity and wisdom of the constitution itself. Neither of which can be so well judged of, without taking these intentions into consideration. If we regard the Hebrew constitution, only as an institution of religion and religious worship, or only as a civil polity and a form of civil government, we shall widely mistake the true nature of it. It is evident beyond question, the Mosaical account of it represents it a theocracy, in which Jehovah is God, and King; and in which the true worship of the only true God was to be preserved against idolatry, and the nation in obedience to the laws of this institution, should enjoy liberty, peace, prosperity and happiness in the protection of a wise and powerful government.

It may be proper to observe here, that these designs appear in themselves worthy the wisdom and the goodness of God; that he should take care in some proper way to put a stop to so prevailing a course of idolatry. If the design shall appear in itself manifestly wise and good, the proper means to effect it will appear to be equitable, wise and good also. Some seem not to perceive, at least are not willing to own this. The more fully then to make us sensible of it, let us briefly observe some of the many great evils of idolatry, which this Hebrew constitution was intended and formed to prevent.

One of the chief and most influencing principles of idolatry, was a false persuasion that the temporal blessings of life, health, length of days, fruitful seasons, victory in wars, and such advantages, were to be expected and sought for as the gifts of some inferior and subordinate beings, as guardians of mortal men; or from secret influences of the stars, and heavenly bodies, supposed inhabited, and animated by some powerful beings, or Gods, whose protection and favour were to be obtained by the use of some magical ceremonies, gestures and words, or by some senseless or some barbarous rites of worship.

Thus men came not only to loſe the true knowledge of the one, only God, and of his immediate providence, and that all theſe bleſſings could therefore come from him alone, who was beſt pleaſed and beſt worſhipped by virtue, goodneſs, righteouſneſs and true holineſs; but they became neceſſarily vicious and corrupt in practice, as well as principle. They came to think they were not to expect the bleſſings of life from the favour of the one true God, a Being himſelf of infinite purity, righteouſneſs and goodneſs, by reverencing and by imitating him; but from the favour of a Jupiter, who with all his fine titles is repreſented in his hiſtory, to have been as intemperate, as luſtful, and as wicked as any the worſt of men; or from a Mercury, a patron of thieves and robbers; or from a Bacchus, the god of intemperance and drunkenneſs; or from a Venus, the patroneſs of all manner of uncleanneſs, and debauchery.

The known principles and the moſt ſacred ceremonies and myſteries in the idolatrous worſhip of ſuch deities, actually ſhewed what encouragement was given to all manner of vice. They extinguiſhed all religious principles of moral virtue and goodneſs, and gave additional ſtrength to men's natural inclinations, to intemperance, luſt, fraud, violence, and every kind of unrighteouſneſs and debauchery. The Phalli, and the Mylli, known religious rites in the worſhip of Bacchus, Oſiris, and Ceres, were ſuch obſcene ceremonies, that modeſty forbids to explain them. It may be ſufficient to mention the known cuſtom of virgins before marriage, ſacrificing their chaſtity to the honour of Venus, as a laſcivious Goddeſs, as the hiſtorian expreſſes it, leſt ſhe alone ſhould appear laſcivious. A cuſtom, according to the hiſtorian, which was eſpecially uſed in Cyprus, which was in the neighbourhood of Canaan.

Idolatry had introduced another moſt cruel cuſtom of human ſacrifices. This prevailed among the Phenicians, the Tyrians, and the Carthaginians, a Tyrian colony; on which in human cuſtom the forementioned hiſtorian makes this remark, that they uſed a bloody and wicked rite of religion, as a remedy. They offered men for ſacrifices, and brought young children to the altars, at an age that uſually moves the compaſſion of an enemy; and endeavoured to obtain the favour of the gods by the blood of thoſe, for whoſe lives prayers were more generally uſed to be made to the gods.

This cruel cuſtom, how inhuman ſoever, ſuch were the evil effects of idolatry, ſoon became almoſt univerſal; and ſpread itſelf among the Greeks, the Gauls, and the German nations.

Among the Canaanites it was a known cuſtom to offer their children to Moloch, likely the ſame idol with Adramaleck

meleck and Anameleck. Some learned men have indeed been willing to believe, that paſſing thro' the fire to Moloch, might mean a ſort of purification, rather than actual burning them in the fire; but beſides the teſtimony of hiſtorians in general to the practice of other nations, the Scriptures plainly mean conſuming them to death by fire. So it is deſcribed by the prophet Ezekiel; "And have cauſed their ſons whom "they bare unto me, to paſs thro' the fire to devour them." Did they cauſe them to paſs through the fire, only to purify them, and to preſerve them alive? No, certainly; but to devour or conſume them. The ſame prophet elſewhere determines this meaning "Thou haſt ſlain my children and "delivered them to cauſe them to paſs through the fire." It is charged as an act of idolatry in Ahaz, that he cauſed his ſon to paſs through the fire, according to the abomination of the Heathen. This is explained in another place, that "he "burned his children in the fire after the abomination of the "Heathen." And it is expreſſly ſaid of Adrameleck, and Anameleck, the idols of Sepharvaim, that "they burned "their children in the fire to them."

If we conſider the many other abominable immoralities of the Canaanites, by which they defiled themſelves, as they are enumerated in the prohibition of them to the Hebrew nation, we may eaſily perceive, that a nation which had defiled themſelves in ſo many and ſo great abominations, did well deſerve an exemplary puniſhment from the righteous judge of the earth; that it was wiſe, as well as juſt, to ſhew in their puniſhment, that their idols were not as they imagined and falſely believed, the givers of long life, peace, and wordly proſperity; but that the one true God was alone the ſupreme diſpoſer of all the bleſſings of providence; and that none of the idol gods, in whom they truſted, could ſave them out of his hand, or deliver them, when God ſhould viſit their iniquities.

May we not alſo perceive a kind deſign, in giving ſome remarkable inſtances of providence, for the puniſhment of ſo groſs immoralities, the effects of idolatrous principles and practice, and for the encouragement of ſuch acknowledgement and worſhip of the true God, as was the beſt preſervative againſt theſe abominations, by ſome obſervable inſtances of particular protection and favour; to let ſuch worſhippers of the true God know, that by keeping themſelves from thoſe abominations, the natural and uſual effects of idolatry, they were to hope for the continuance of ſuch particular protection and favour in all after-times?

Hence it may appear, the ſeverity with which the Hebrew hiſtory acquaints us, the Canaanites were puniſhed, and the title whereby the Hebrews held their land, whom God caſt out before them, were no ways inconſiſtent, with the juſtice, or wiſdom, or goodneſs of God, as ſome have inſinuated. The queſtion is really brought to this one point, Whether ſuch abominable immoralities, as followed naturally and univerſally from their idolatrous principles, and forms of worſhip, were not highly criminal; ſo criminal as to deſerve a puniſhment? that it became the juſtice and wiſdom of the Governour of the world to put ſome ſtop to them, to prevent them in ſome meaſure by forming and eſtabliſhing a conſtitution in which the knowledge and worſhip of the one true God ſhould be preſerved in oppoſition to idolatry, a perpetual ſource of innumerable vices and immoralities. Idolatry, you ſee then, appears in the natural fruits of it, not only an error of the underſtanding, not at all a matter of harmleſs ſpeculation, but a fountain of very dangerous immoralities, which led men naturally and even with the encouragements of religion, into intemperance, uncleanneſs, murders, and many vices, inconſiſtent with the proſperity and peace of ſociety, as well as with the happineſs of private perſons. When God ſhall puniſh ſuch iniquities, he puniſhes men for their wickedneſs, not for their errors. He puniſhes men for ſuch wickedneſs, as deſerves to be puniſhed, whatever pretended principles or real dictates of conſcience it may proceed from. No man ſure, can reaſonably account it injuſtice in a government to puniſh ſodomy, beſtiality, or the frequent murder of innocent children, what pretences ſoever men ſhould make to conſcience or religion, in vindication of them. The moſt unnatural ſins were countenanced by the myſteries of idolatrous worſhip; the uſe of that obſcene ceremony the Phalli, owed its original to the memory of the ſin againſt nature, and to the hiſtory of a god hallowing it by his own act. Can any man reaſonably call ſuch a reſtraint of vice perſecution, when not to endeavour by all means to reſtrain it, would argue a great neglect, weakneſs, and folly, in any adminiſtration of government whatſoever.

If then the puniſhment for ſo heinous crimes and immoralities will be juſt and wiſe in itſelf, which way can any man find out, to make it unjuſt or unwiſe in the ſupreme Governour of the world? How can it be unjuſt in him, to appoint ſuch perſons as he ſhall think moſt fit, to execute ſuch righteous judgment by his commiſſion? The common rights of nations, and any perſonal claim of the Hebrews, are altogether

gether out of this queſtion; the hiſtory plainly ſhews, they made no perſonal or national claim at all to the land of Canaan; but that God caſt out the people before them, for all their abominations; that it was not their own power, but the hand of God, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and into the promiſed land. So that the whole is conſidered as the immediate act of God himſelf, for the proof of which the hiſtory gives a long ſeries of miracles, in Egypt, at the Red-Sea, for many years in the wilderneſs, at the taking of Jericho, and ſettling the Hebrew nation in the poſſeſſion of the promiſed land.

And here let us juſtly obſerve, that this very way of puniſhing the Canaanites for their many great abominations by the Hebrew nation, to whom God gave the poſſeſſion of their land, has ſome peculiar marks of wiſdom, which may ſhew it fit to be preferred to many other ways; ſuch as peſtilential diſtempers, fire from heaven, or a flood, ways in which God hath puniſhed the wickedneſs of the world in former times. For this was a very fit means for the cure, as well as the puniſhment of idolatry, to deſtroy the root of theſe great evils, as well as to execute righteous judgment on thoſe who had committed them. This was a deſign every way worthy the wiſdom and goodneſs of God. Sure then, no ways inconſiſtent with his juſtice. The protection of the Hebrew nation, and the favour of God to them as a peculiar people, was a viſible and ſtanding confutation of idolatry; it ſhewed, that Jehovah, the one true God, the King of Iſrael, had himſelf an immediate hand in the adminiſtration of particular providence; that he had not given it out of his own hands into the hands of any inferior beings whatſoever, which error was the great foundation of idolatry. It further ſhewed the power of Jehovah the true God, manifeſted in the protection of his people, ſuperior to the power of all the idols of the Heathen; and that none of the falſe gods they worſhipped could be compared to Jehovah.

This is a queſtion then not to be argued from the common rights of men, and nations; for no ſuch rights, either of invaſion or conqueſt, are ſo much as pretended to in the moſt diſtant manner. We ſee the only point in queſtion, is, what are the rights of God's ſupreme authority? What is conſiſtent with the wiſdom of his government, how far he may puniſh the greateſt immoralities with temporal evils? Aſk the Sacred Hiſtory it will tell you, the Hebrews ſet up no title to the land of Canaan, either civil or religious in their own right; it only makes the rights of the ſovereign of the world

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as extenſive as the rights of the chief magiſtrates in every government are allowed by the laws of nature and nations to be over their own ſubjects. The Scriptures on this queſtion only aſſert, that God gave a commiſſion to execute his ſentence, which was either a forfeiture of lands, or life, for a long commiſſion of crimes, that deſervedly incurred the forfeiture of both.

Whether the Hebrew nation had really ſuch a commiſſion from God, or no; whether they were truly directed by divine oracle; whether ſuch wonders were really wrought before their eyes, and ſuch unqueſtionable inſtances of divine favour and protection in a long ſeries for many years, as the Hebrew hiſtory relates: theſe are all queſtions of fact. But in all ſuch queſtions general and abſtract reaſonings can have no place, where the facts themſelves are naturally and morally poſſible, as every one may perceive they are in this caſe. If the ſupreme Governour of the world has a right to give ſuch commiſſion, if it is not unjuſt to uſe the hands of men, inſtead of a plague or fire from heaven, to puniſh the wickedneſs of men, the only queſtion that can remain in ſuch a caſe as this, whether in fact the Hebrew nation did really receive ſuch a commiſſion from Jehovah, or no: Thus far then the whole will reſt upon the evidence of the Moſaic revelation; and there I ſhall leave it, it not being the deſign of this diſſertation to enter into an argument, in which many, as I apprehend, have already given ſo full ſatisfaction.

Civil Government of the Hebrews.

5. THE ABBE LE PLUCHE.

Reaſons for the prohibition of hog's fleſh among the Jews.

THE great uſe which the Gentiles made of the hog-kind in their ſacrifices, was the reaſon why Moſes in a ſpecial manner included it among the prohibited and unclean kinds. As this animal is fit for nothing but to be eaten; there is no abſtinence that brought upon the Jews more reproach and ridicule than that: but of all their forbearances it proved to be the fitteſt to prevent their being guilty of idolatry.

The ſervices of the ox, the milk of the cow, and the wool of the ſheep, have always cauſed the blood of theſe animals to be ſpared. Men fed upon and ſacrificed them, but never in a prodigal manner. They had, on the contrary, at all times, and on all occaſions, recourſe to the hog-kind, to be able to find at a minute's warning a victim of no exceſſive price, and a fleſh that might be eaten immediately after a ſacrifice,

ſacrifice, which a caſe either foreſeen or unforeſeen might have rendered neceſſary. There was in every town a known place appointed for that purpoſe, where they expoſed to ſale hogs deſigned for ſacrifice, and purpoſely viſited and warranted free from all manner of unwholeſomeneſs; ſacri, ſinceri.

For inſtance, the habit of imitating antiquity on the moſt diſtinguiſhed occaſions, has cauſed the ſacrificing of hogs to be faithfully preſerved in all treaties of alliance. Virgil and Livy ſupply us with the proof of this in the firſt treaties of the Latins and the Romans.

The ſame animal was commonly offered to the Lares, or domeſtic gods. Horace ſays that he will not allow his houſe-keeper Phidyle to offer them any thing more than a ſow. He only permits her to join to it a handful of corn from the laſt harveſt:

——Thure placaris, et hornâ
Fruges Lares, avidâque porca.

What muſt he have done, if theſe ſacrifices, which were repeated every new moon, had coſt him an ox, or only a goat? That, together with the other running ſolemnities would have been ſufficient to have undone him in a year or two.

The hog was alſo the victim in rural ſacrifices, in the luſtrations or rural proceſſions, and others of frequent uſe.

—— Ceres avidæ gaviſa eſt ſanguine porcæ. Ovid.
—— Saginati lus trabant
Compita porci.——Propert.

When any body was diſordered in his health, the firſt act of devotion was recurring to this ever ready ſacrifice. In the play of Plautus intitled, The Menæchmei, where two twin-brothers perfectly alike meet together in the ſame town, after a long ſeparation, and without being as yet informed of their being come to the ſame place, that one of the two, who is but juſt landed at Epidamnus, chances to meet with his brother's cook; the latter takes him for his maſter, and tells him the repaſt he has ordered is ready, and that the company may go into their dinner. At theſe words ſeemingly deſtitute of ſenſe, Menæchmei, who fancies that the man who ſpeaks to him is crack-brained, aſks what at Epidamnus is the price of thé hogs deſigned for the ſacrifices;—Becauſe he has actually met with a man who wants that remedy.

Reſponde mihi, adoleſcens, quibus hic pretiis væneunt porci ſacri, ſinceri?

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In ſhort, this animal, which was every where at hand, was the victim of all places, perſons, and ſeaſons. Every body ſacrificed it without any apparatus: and inſtead of inviting to it their friends and relations, they ſent part of the blood and fat, or part of the fleſh to the perſons they wiſhed to aſſociate to the merit of the good work. This diſtribution of the hog killed in a family does ſtill ſubſiſt among the common people, although the intention has been ſuppreſſed.

It was avarice, a contempt of the law of Moſes, and a deſire to ſupply the idolaters with victims, that cauſed whole herds to be fed in Galilee. Whence the occaſion is plain of Chriſt's permitting the diſorder that cauſed theſe herds to fling themſelves head-long into the lake of Genezareth.

As nothing was more univerſal and more daily than the cuſtom of ſacrificing a hog, and the occaſion of taking a ſhare in it, by accepting part of the meats that had been conſecrated to the idols, prohibiting the uſe of that meat to the Hebrews, was guarding them continually againſt idolatry, and the refuſing to eat any, was an ever freſh renouncing of all foreign worſhips.

One might, by comparing the cuſtoms of the Hebrews with thoſe of the ancient Heathens, more and more perceive the judiciouſneſs of the intentions of the law, which were to put every where a fence or partition-wall between idolatry and that nation, which was infinitely inclined to it. But the little we have ſeen of it, is ſufficiently evident, and frees us from the neceſſity of entering into reſearches, the luxuriancy of which might be tireſome to a mind already ſatisfied.

Truth of the Goſpel demonſtrated.

6. Rev. E. Harwood. D. D.

That there was ſuch a Perſon as Jeſus Chriſt.

THAT in the Auguſtan age there flouriſhed in Judæa an extraordinary perſon called Jeſus Chriſt, is a fact better ſupported and authenticated, than that there lived ſuch men as Cyprus, Alexander, and Julius Cæſar. For there are more hiſtorical monuments to atteſt his exiſtence and character, and infinitely more numerous and inconteſtible veſtiges in the preſent day to prove that there was ſuch a perſon as Chriſt, than that there ever lived in paſt ages ſuch potent monarchs and illuſtrious conquerors. As certainly as Chriſtianity is now exiſting in the world, ſo certainly did its founder and publiſher ſometime exiſt. The public monuments, which the renowned heroes of antiquity left behind, are long

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ſince periſhed: the magnificent palaces they built, the ſuperb ſtructures they reared, the grand temples and mauſoleums they erected, the opulent cities they founded, are now no more. Few remaining viſible traces are left of the battles they fought, the empires they eſtabliſhed, the ſyſtems of laws they compiled, and the univerſal devaſtation they once ſpread around them. The kingdoms, they once conquered, have, by the inſtability of human condition, undergone many revolutions, have repeatedly loſt and repeatedly gained their liberty, and experienced all thoſe reverſes to which terreſtrial glory is ſubjected. The curious traveller explores large regions in ſearch of ſtanding records of the greatneſs of former princes, traverſes immenſe countries, once the ſeat of ſcience and liberty, now the abode of barbariſm and ſlavery, once ſwarming with inhabitants, and variegated with unnumbered towns and villages, now a dreary inhoſpitable ſolitude: and even ſearches, but in vain, for cities and temples and palaces in the very ſituation where they once ſtood. Babylon is now fallen! Perſepolis and Ecbatana are no more! and travellers have long diſputed, but not been able to aſcertain, the ſite of ancient Nineveh, "that exceeding great city of "three days journey." Few are the preſent ſignatures in minor Aſia and India, of Alexander's victorious arms, few are the ſtanding memorials in Gaul and Britain to evince that there was ſuch a perſon as Julius Cæſar, who ſubdued the one, and invaded the other. But that there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, who lived, died, and roſe again, and founded a ſpiritual empire of religion, the preſent ſtate of all the republics and kingdoms in Europe demonſtrates. The cuſtoms and uſages, that obtain in every nation, neceſſarily imply a cauſe and reaſon, to which they owe their origin, and ſuppoſe a date, from which they commenced. Religious inſtitutions univerſally regarded, religious ſolemnities univerſally celebrated, lead the enquiring mind through paſt ages to the period at which they began; to the perſon or perſons who eſtabliſhed them; and to the ſources from which they flowed. All national uſages are public monuments of facts; and are ſtanding proofs, through all ſucceſſive times, that the perſons whoſe memory they thus embalm, and the events, whoſe importance they thus record, once actually exiſted. We ſee great numbers of vaſt and populous kingdoms around us, all unanimouſly agreed in baptiſing their offspring "in the name "of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:" in commemorating the author and finiſher of their faith by the memorials of bread and wine; in worſhipping the Deity through a mediator

tor; in appropriating the firſt day of the week to religious worſhip; and in ſolemnizing the nativity, death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion of the author of their religion. How ſhall we account for inſtitutions and uſages univerſally received in Europe, and univerſally practiſed by all the various churches, ſects, and denominations every where exiſting? They were not inſtituted in the preſent age; they did not commence in the times of our immediate anceſtors: we find we can follow the ſacred ſtream even beyond its ſource into ages, when no ſuch cuſtoms prevailed, when there was no ſuch religion as Chriſtianity, and when Pagan idolatry and Judaiſm univerſally reigned. As certainly, therefore, as the preſent ſtate of the Jews, their tenets, their ceremonious obſervances, their peculiar cuſtoms, their diſperſion into all the nations of the world, yet remaining a diſtinct ſeparate body through all the infinite changes and revolutions that affect kingdoms and communities, is an inconteſtible proof, that there was ſuch a legiſlator as Moſes; ſo certain is the concluſion from the ſtated ſolemn rites, that now univerſally obtain among all Chriſtian countries, that there once flouriſhed ſuch a lawgiver as Jeſus Chriſt, who founded that religion, ſo many nations have eſpouſed, and who inſtituted thoſe ſolemnities and cuſtoms we ſee univerſally obſerved by all who profeſs his goſpel.

That the Evangeliſts have written a true hiſtory.

WE have the ſame reaſon to believe that the Evangeliſts have given us a true hiſtory of the life and tranſactions of Jeſus, as we have to believe that Xenophon and Plato have given us a faithful and juſt narrative of the character and doctrines of the excellent Socrates. The ſacred writers were, in every reſpect, qualified for giving a real circumſtantial detail of the life and religion of the perſon whoſe memoirs they have tranſmitted down to us. They were the ſelect companions and familiar friends of the hero of the ſtory. They had free and liberal acceſs to him at all times. They attended his public diſcourſes, and in his moments of retirement, he unboſomed his whole ſoul to them without diſguiſe. They were daily witneſſes of his ſincerity and goodneſs of heart. They were ſpectators of the amazing operations he performed, and of the ſilent unoſtentatious manner in which he performed them. In private he explained to them the doctrines of his religion in the moſt familiar endearing converſe, and gradually initiated them into the principles of his goſpel,

goſpel, as their Jewiſh prejudices admitted. Some of theſe writers were his inſeparable attendants from the commencement of his public miniſtry to his death, and could give the world as true and faithful a narrative of his character and inſtructions, as Xenophon was enabled to publiſh of the life and philoſophy of Socrates. If Plato hath been deemed in every reſpect qualified to compoſe an hiſtorical account of the behaviour of his maſter in his impriſonment, of the philoſophic diſcourſes he addreſſed to his friends, before he drank the poiſonous bowl, as he conſtantly attended him in thoſe unhappy ſcenes, was preſent at thoſe mournful interviews: in like manner was the apoſtle John equally fitted for compiling a juſt and genuine narration of the laſt conſolatory diſcourſes our Lord delivered to his dejected followers, a little before his laſt ſufferings, and of the unhappy exit he made, with its attendant circumſtances, of which he was a perſonal ſpectator. The foundation of theſe things cannot be invalidated without invalidating the faith of hiſtory. No writers have enjoyed more propitious, few have ever enjoyed ſuch favourable opportunities for publiſhing juſt accounts of perſons and things as the evangeliſts. Moſt of the Greek and Roman hiſtorians lived long after the perſons they immortalize, and the events they record: The ſacred writers commemorate actions they ſaw, diſcourſes they heard, perſecutions they ſupported, deſcribe characters with which they were familiarly converſant, and tranſactions and ſcenes in which they themſelves were intimately intereſted. The pages of their hiſtory are impreſſed with every feature of credibility. An artleſs ſimplicity characterizes all their writings. Nothing can be farther from vain oſtentation and popular applauſe. No ſtudied arts to dreſs up a cunningly deviſed fable. No vain declamation after any miracle of our Saviour they relate. They record theſe aſtoniſhing operations with the ſame diſpaſſionate coolneſs, as if they had been common tranſactions, without that oſtentatious rodomontade, which impoſtors and enthuſiaſts univerſally employ. They give us a plain unadorned narration of theſe amazing feats of ſupernatural power; ſaying nothing previouſly to raiſe our expectation, or after their performance breaking forth into any exclamation; but leaving the reader to draw the concluſion. The writers of theſe books are diſtinguiſhed above all the authors who ever wrote accounts of perſons and things, for their ſincerity and integrity. Enthuſiaſts and impoſtors never proclaim to the world the weakneſs of their underſtanding, and the defects of their character. The Evangeliſts honeſtly acquaint

acquaint the reader with the lowneſs of their ſtation, the indigence of their circumſtances, the inveteracy of their national prejudices, their dulneſs of apprehenſion, their weakneſs of faith, their ambitious views, and the warm contentions they agitated among themſelves. They even tell us how they baſely deſerted their maſter, by a ſhameful precipitate flight, when he was ſeized by his enemies: and that, after his crucifixion, they had all again returned to their former ſecular employments: for ever reſigning all the hopes they had once fondly cheriſhed, and abandoning the cauſe in which they had ſo long been engaged, notwithſtanding all the proofs that had been exhibited, and the conviction they had before entertained that Jeſus was the Meſſiah, and that his religion was from God. A faithful picture this, held up to the reader, for him to contemplate the true features of the writer's mind. Such men as theſe were as far from being deceived themſelves, as they were incapable of impoſing a falſehood upon others. The ſacred regard they had for truth appears in every thing they relate. They mention, with many affecting circumſtances, the obſtinate unreaſonable incredulity of one of their aſſociates; not convinced but by ocular and ſenſible demonſtration. They might have concealed from the world their own faults and follies: or if they had choſen to mention them, might have alledged plauſible reaſons to ſoften and extenuate them. But they related, without diſguiſe, events and facts juſt as they happened, and left them to ſpeak their own language. So that to reject a hiſtory thus circumſtanced, and impeach the veracity of writers furniſhed with theſe qualifications for giving the juſteſt accounts of perſonal characters and tranſactions, which they enjoyed the beſt opportunities for accurately obſerving and knowing, is an affront offered to the reaſon and underſtanding of mankind, a ſoleciſm againſt the laws of truth and hiſtory; would, with equal reaſon, lead men to diſbelieve every thing related in Herodotus, Thucydides, Diodorus Siculus, Livy, and Tacitus, to confound all hiſtory with fable and fiction, truth with falſhood, and veracity with impoſture, and not to credit any thing how well ſoever atteſted; that there were ſuch kings as the Stuarts, or ſuch places as Paris and Rome, becauſe we are not indulged with ocular conviction of them. The truth of the Goſpel hiſtory reſts upon the ſame baſis with the truth of other ancient books, and its pretenſions are to be impartially examined by the ſame rules by which we judge of the credibility of all other hiſtorical monuments. And if we compare

pare the merit of the ſacred writers, as hiſtorians, with that of other writers, we ſhall be convinced, that they are inferior to none who ever wrote, either with regard to knowledge of perſons, acquaintance with facts, candor of mind, and reverence for truth.

At the time of Chriſt's appearance the expectation of an illuſtrious perſon was general.

ABOUT the time of our Saviour's appearance, there was an univerſal expectation of the illuſtrious advent of a great prince. The atteſtation of Suetonius is very expreſs. There prevailed over all the Eaſt an old and conſtantly received opinion, that it was decreed by the Fates, that ſomebody about that time, ſhould proceed from Judæa, and obtain univerſal empire. This prediction, ſays the hiſtorian, was accompliſhed in Veſpaſian, but the Jews applying it to themſelves, excited a rebellion. In almoſt the very ſame words Tacitus, when mentioning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, cites this prophecy: Moſt of the Jews were firmly perſuaded that there was an expreſs declaration in the ancient books of their prieſts, that at that very time the Eaſt ſhould gain the aſcendency, and ſomebody from Judæa acquire univerſal dominion. And he obſerves that this illuſtrious prediction had taken ſuch warm poſſeſſion of the common people among the Jews, that they were not compelled to reſign their dependance on this prophecy but by a ſeries of calamities. The ancient books of the prieſts, which this hiſtorian mentions, were undoubtedly the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament, which contain theſe expreſs predictions, which at that time excited univerſal attention. A clear proof of this, from the atteſtation of Pagan writers, how general and how ardent the expectation was of the ſpeedy advent of the Meſſiah. Joſephus bears his teſtimony to the prevalence of this univerſal perſuaſion. What principally excited them, ſays he, to this war, was an ambiguous oracle found in their ſacred writings to this purport, That about that time a certain perſon ſhould ariſe from their country and rule over the univerſe. This prediction they embraced as ſolely regarding themſelves, and many of their wiſe men were deceived in their application of it; this oracle being accompliſhed in Veſpaſian, who in Judæa was created emperor. It appears from the New Teſtament how prevalent the expectation at that time was, that there would very ſpeedily riſe an illuſtrious prince to ſway the ſceptre of univerſal monarchy. This was what they expected, who waited for

for the conſolation of Iſrael, and for redemption in Jeruſalem. This was what incited the Jews to flock, with ſuch eager and impatient ſteps, to John's baptiſm, in ſuch prodigious crowds, from all parts of Judæa. This was what engaged the clergy to interrogate him with ſuch ardent hopes and vehement earneſtneſs, whether he was the great Meſſiah, the Chriſt of God, whoſe appearance they ſo paſſionately expected. "We fond-"ly imagined," ſaid the diſciples who were going to Emmaus, ſunk in dejection and deſpair, "that this was the "perſon who ſhould have redeemed Iſrael," that is, have redeemed Judæa from its ſubjection to the Romans, and made Jeruſalem the ſeat and centre of univerſal empire. This national perſuaſion had taken ſuch univerſal poſſeſſion of their minds, that after his reſurrection they were tranſported to think that now he would certainly vindicate his country from its ſervitude to Rome, aſſume the regal title, and erect a grand and glorious kingdom. "Lord! wilt thou at this "time reſtore the kingdom to Iſrael?" Theſe big hopes in the Jewiſh nation were all kindled, and this general expectation at this period was excited by the predictions of the ancient prophets; ſome of whom had accurately marked the preciſe time in which this illuſtrious perſon would make his appearance particularly the period of Daniel's ſeventy weeks, or 490 years, was now complete: which reckoning from the ſeventh year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, who iſſued the decree to rebuild the temple, to the birth of Chriſt, exactly makes the period of years mentioned. No wonder, therefore, that from the calculation of theſe weeks, in particular, the Jews at that very time ſhould found their expectation of this great event, and wait the appearance of their Meſſiah with all the ardor of the fondeſt national hopes, indulging their imaginations with the warmeſt deſires of his perſon and government, and antedating the bliſs and felicity of that magnificent empire they ſhould ſee ſo ſoon erected and eſtabliſhed.

Many ancient prophecies received their accompliſhment in Chriſt.

MANY expreſs prophecies clearly pre-ſignified the coming of Chriſt, and received their accompliſhment in him. These predictions were delivered at various times, and in divers manners, as ſeemed beſt to the divine underſtanding, to animate the faith and hopes of his diſtinguiſhed people, and to chear their minds with the happy proſpect of that glorious æra. A clearer and clearer intimation is given of this illuſtrious

illuſtrious period, the moſt illuſtrious in the annals of the world, through all the intermediate ages from the creation to the redemption of mankind. "God hath an immenſely "large progreſſive ſcheme, arranged in a regular beautiful "ſeries, by his all-comprehenſive mind, conſiſting of many "intermediate parts, before the plot unravels and finally "winds up into one great and conſiſtent whole." Adam is not expelled from paradiſe, without the aſſurance, not obſcurely hinted, of a deſcendant from him, who in future time would reſcue the human race from the now incurred penalty of death. The illuſtrious patriarchs, in ſucceſſive time, were divinely aſſured, "that in their ſeed all the "nations of the earth ſhall be bleſſed." In following ages, Moſes, under a divine afflatus, declared to Iſrael, "that God "would raiſe up for them a prophet like unto him," and ſolemnly adjured them to embrace and obey him; denouncing the heavieſt calamities that would involve their nation, if they rejected this divine meſſenger. In ſubſequent times the prophets were authorized and ſent, one after another, proclaiming to the Jewiſh people the glad tidings of this approaching event. Language they exhauſt in ſublime deſcriptions of the bleſſedneſs of thoſe happy future days; in celebrating the exalted dignity of the Meſſiah's perſon, the felicity of thoſe who ſhould ſee him, the empire of righteouſneſs he ſhould eſtabliſh, and the triumphs his goſpel would ſpread in all the regions of the world. No hiſtorical records that could be drawn up forty or fifty years after the crucifixion of Chriſt, could give a more accurate and juſt account of the perſon and character of Chriſt, the nature of his religion, the ſublimity of his doctrine, the ignominy of his death, the propagation of his goſpel, and the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, than theſe prophecies, though delivered five hundred years before the events happened to which they referred. None of the apoſtles and companions of Chriſt could have compoſed a more faithful compendious abridgment of the life and death and reſurrection of Jeſus, and the ſubſequent promulgation of his goſpel, than what is contained in the fifty-third chapter of Iſaiah. No ſooner did Philip give the true explication of this very prophecy to the eunuch, who was reading it, and interrogated him concerning its meaning; and ſhow its exact and ſole accompliſhment in the life and character of the late Jeſus, but he was convinced of the truth of Chriſtianity, and was baptized into the profeſſion of it. The predictions of Daniel are ſo far from being wrapped up in the ambiguity of prophecy, that they ſeem to be plain hiſtorical narrative, and Porphyry was ſure they were written after the event. All theſe various prophecies,

delivered in various revolving periods, concentered in Jeſus Chriſt: and the encreaſing light of them, from age to age, was like that of the juſt man, which ſhone with greater and greater luſtre, until the perfect day of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, at laſt, burſt in all its heavenly ſplendors upon a benighted world.

The theology and morals of the New Teſtament are worthy of God.

THE theology and morals taught in theſe books are infinitely worthy of God, and perfective of the virtue and happineſs of a rational creature. The notions we are taught to form of the divinity are ſuch as are agreeable to the firſt dictates and principles of natural religion, and which the mind approves as juſt and rational. The goſpel leads us to cheriſh the moſt exalted ideas of the peerleſs majeſty of the one ſupreme God, the great creator and governor of the univerſe, from whom all beings originally proceeded, and to whoſe glory all things ultimately conſpire. It repreſents this Being under the moſt amiable character, to engage our affection, and attract our love to him: that we and ours are perpetually under the ſuperintendency of his paternal guardianſhip and care: that he is ever diſpoſed to direct our enquiries, ſecure us from error, illuminate our minds, and ſupply our wants, and that he watches over our beſt intereſts and happineſs, with all the anxiety and affection that diſtinguiſh parental tenderneſs: that all rational creatures are the offspring of this good Being, who makes the wiſeſt and beſt proviſion for their happineſs, both in time and eternity: that the providence of God is univerſal, and extends to every individual in the whole ſyſtem of beings: that not a ſparrow falls to the ground, or an hair from our head, without the cognizance of the Almighty: that if God regularly ſupplies the returning wants of the brute creation, and clothes a tranſient flower with ſuch inimitable beauty, much more are rational creatures the objects of his providential care. It leads us to conceive how infinitely dear the human race is to God, whoſe recovery and happineſs was the object of his concern, and whoſe redemption and ſalvation, a principle of love and compaſſion for them induced him, by a gracious interpoſition, to effectuate and ſecure. It repreſents him as a pure ſpirit, not to be worſhipped with ſuperſtitious foppery, ſplendid decorations, magnificent fabrics, and the pomp and pageantry of proud external ſhew: but that the worſhip he requireth, conſiſts in the devotion of the mind, and in the oblation of pure and holy affections. It teaches us, that we are not to conceive of God as a being whom we can prevail with to act contrary to his all-wiſe intentions,

cations, by the dint of teizing and importunity, and by ſuch noiſy and clamorous repetitions and extravagancies as the Heathens uſed in their worſhip. The love of God it enjoins upon us as the firſt and great commandment: that this great principle ſhould fill and poſſeſs all our powers, and influence the whole of our conduct: that we ſhould aſpire after the neareſt conformity to the Deity our imperfection can attain, and imitate him in doing good. It repreſents him as continually preſent with us, the ſpectator of our conduct, and the intimate witneſs of the principles that actuate us. It teaches us the great duty of reſignation to him from every argument and motive that can affect an ingenuous dependent creature, by informing us, that all the diſpenſations of God to us are founded in infinite wiſdom and goodneſs, that the corrections of his rod are ſalutary, that all afflictions are his meſſengers, that he knows what allotments are beſt for us, and will finally prove moſt perfective of our virtue and happineſs. So that piety to God, as taught in the Goſpel, is a moſt amiable, engaging, rational, venerable principle, worthy ſuch a being as man to pay to the Divinity. The worſhip here preſcribed hath a noble ſimplicity in it worthy the Deity, who is pure and perfect mind and intelligence, and the adoration, love and imitation of him here enjoined, are ſuch as greatly exalt the human character, and ennoble and dignify the heart of the rational worſhipper.

The relative and ſocial duties the Goſpel inculcates are ſuch as neceſſarily reſult from our natural and civil connections, and ſuch as reaſon tells us any ſyſtem of morality, eſtabliſhed by the ſanction of a divine authority, muſt contain.

Man is a ſocial being, and his happineſs is dependent on the virtuous exerciſe and diſcharge of the ſocial duties. To give us the compleat fruition of this happineſs the Goſpel lays us under the ſtrongeſt obligations to be good parents, good children, good neighbours, good maſters, good ſervants, good ſubjects and members of ſociety. It teaches us to conſider ourſelves as intimately allied to all our fellow-men by the endearing bonds of one common nature. That in the love of God and our neighbour is virtually comprized the whole moral law. That we are not to confine our benevolent regards to the narrow circle of our friends, relations, and aquaintance, or ſolely to that party and community to which we belong, but to diffuſe them to the utmoſt verge of God's rational creation. In the parable of the Samaritan we are taught to look upon every one as our neighbour who is in diſtreſs, however he may differ from us in religious ſenti-

ments, and whatever unhappy prejudices, on account of nation, party, or opinion, we may have entertained againſt him. It enjoins ſtrict juſtice in our dealings with others, to do to others as we ourſelves ſhould expect were we in their circumſtances, and they in ours; to make reſtitution when we have injured them, and generouſly to forgive thoſe who have offered us injurious and contumelious uſage. It recommends benevolence and charity as the perfection of virtue, the glory of human nature, and the diſtinguiſhing badge of its profeſſors. Its tendency is to extirpate from the human body, envy, pride, malice, revenge, malevolence, and every principle and paſſion deſtructive of the harmony and happineſs of human life, and ſubverſive of the noble ſatisfactions of true ſelf enjoyment. To ſuch a pitch of perfection does it tend to exalt our nature, and carry human virtue, that it commands us to love even our enemies, and inſtead of revenging an injury, to forgive the authors, and pray that God would forgive them. So that the morality of the Goſpel is in every inſtance, ſo pure and ſublime, ſo perfective of the harmony and happineſs of domeſtic, ſocial, and civil life; ſo worthy the great and good parent of all rational beings, that our ideas cannot form any revelation from God to contain a more excellent and perfect ſyſtem of conjugal, parental, filial, relative, ſocial duties, than what the New Teſtament comprizes, and enjoins as the great rule of life, and the ſtandard of our moral behaviour and conduct.

Chriſtianity tends alſo to improve and exalt human nature, with regard to the exerciſe of ſelf-government and perſonal virtue. Its grand object and aim is to poſſeſs us with real goodneſs of heart, and to give us all the fruition flowing from this invaluable poſſeſſion. It is the ſtudy and ambition of its great Author to purify the human heart from every corrupt and corrupting affection, and to make us aſſert the ſuperiority of the rational and intellectual over the animal and ſenſual part of our nature; to make reaſon preſide and the inferior appetites obey; to purge the mental eye from the films of vicious prejudices and paſſions, and to poſſeſs all its powers with the ſacred love of holineſs and virtue. Temperance, chaſtity, ſelf-government, moderation in our deſires, contentment in our ſituation, ſubmiſſion to God in our afflictions, an unruffled tranquility and mildneſs of diſpoſition, an unaffected humility, a mutual condeſcenſion, an amiable probity and candour of mind, a ſimplicity of manners, and a conſcientious rectitude and integrity of principle, are the great duties it enforces and recommends by every motive and argument,

argument, by every inſinuating form of addreſs, and by every conſideration that can excite us to cultivate and improve what is truly excellent and amiable, to adorn our minds with the nobleſt attainments, and to purſue and ſecure the ultimate dignity and perfection of the rational character. Thus is the morality of the Goſpel worthy of God to publiſh, and, when ſhining in a living character, evinces itſelf to be the ſupreme glory and felicity of human nature.

The Pagan ſyſtems of morality were defective in many capital and eſſential articles. They wanted, moreover, many arguments and motives to enforce the practice of their duty. The offices taught in theſe deficient erroneous ſyſtems had not the explicit ſanction of a divine authority to ſeal and ratify them: were not urged from conſiderations of the omnipreſence, fear, and love of God, or preſſed upon the conſcience by arguments derived from the awful ſolemnities of future retributions. The goſpel is the only ſcheme that hath given morality its final perfection by the additional ſanctions which it hath annexed to it, and by all its cogent motives and powerful incentives, which muſt be irreſiſtible by every ſerious, ingenuous, and well-diſpoſed mind. What conſtitutes the ſupreme excellence and glory of the Goſpel is its pure and perfect morality, tending to make human nature what God deſigned it ſhould be, leading us to the imitation of God in his rectitude and holineſs, and fitting us for the eternal fruition of him in thoſe ſacred manſions, into which nothing that is impure and defiled will be admitted. And it is obſervable, that in order to convey theſe uſeful leſſons of moral inſtruction to the human heart through the propereſt vehicle, and to make the remembrance and impreſſion of them moſt durable and permanent, they are not ranged in a methodical ſyſtematic form, and detailed in a dry unintereſting ſeries of didactic dulneſs. Theſe great rules of life are interſperſed and interwoven, not without deſign, into the body of this divine ſyſtem; ſometimes are delivered as ſhort ſententious maxims; ſometimes are inſerted in the beginning, middle, or end of a diſcourſe; ſometimes form the moral of a parable; ſometimes are taught by a familiar example. There is great wiſdom in this method of conveying inſtruction to men; for, a ſhort moral ſtory, or fable, is never forgotten, and virtue, exemplified in real life, hath the moſt powerful attractions, and ſeldom fails to make indelible impreſſions. The Goſpel hath, therefore, every thing in it with regard to its ſcheme of religion and morality to demonſtrate it to be "the wiſdom of God and the power of God,"

to be an explicit revelation from the eternal ſource of light and truth, and to have every ſignature, as to its moral injunctions, and the method of communicating and enforcing theſe inſtructions, which we can ſuppoſe a divine hand to impreſs upon any ſyſtem of duties.

The doctrines of the New Teſtament are preſumptive arguments of its being a divine revelation.

THE aſſurances and diſcoveries this volume comprizes are preſumptive evidences of its being a divine revelation. What ſyſtem of human philoſophy ever taught ſo clearly the doctrine of an univerſal and particular providence, comprehending at once the boundleſs immenſity of the univerſe, yet ſuperintending every diſtinct, ſeparate being in the whole ſcope of the creation. A generous mind cannot but deteſt the impiety, and lament the ignorance of the Heathens when they talk on this ſubject. The Epicureans made the greateſt banter and ridicule of the notion of God's governing the world. They thought the little affairs of mortals were a great deal too mean and deſpicable for the notice and inſpection of the immortal gods. The vaſt fabric of the world, it ſeems, was formed by a fortuitous concourſe of atoms, and is governed and preſerved by an original eſtabliſhment of cauſe and effect. They taught that the gods were perpetually reclining on the clouds in ſupine inactive eaſe, and that their tranquility was not diſcompoſed by the government of the world, buſineſs, which they thought altogether unworthy of a god. The Stoics, who were the moſt zealous aſſertors of the doctrine of a divine providence, made it only extend to ſome detached parts, not to the whole community of nature. Their wiſe man had its protection, but the untaught vulgar neither enjoyed, nor deſerved to enjoy, its interpoſitions. Some taught that there was a general providence, that governed the ſeveral ſpecies and orders of being, and maintained them in their beauty and harmony, but that it did not extend to the individuals of thoſe orders. They thought the gods ſuperintended matters of the greateſt importance, ſuch as placing a governor over a nation, and conſerving the order of a whole collective body of men, but that they did not ſtoop to the low concerns of private families and particular perſons. Alas! how far are ſuch principles as theſe from adminiſtring conſolation! How dark and gloomy is ſuch a ſcheme of religion which is thus defective in one of the moſt capital articles!

ticles! If I am not an object of God's providence, as the philosophers cannot assure me I am, what principles can I have to support me in an hour of adversity and pain! Or of what avail is it to me that God governs the whole universe, if I am exempted from his particular protection! How uncomfortable are these tenets when they are compared with that scheme of providence so clearly taught in the divine pages of our blessed religion, which assures us that we and all our interests are under the perpetual cognizance and direction of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness.

The assurance of the divine placability, and his remission of atrocious guilt upon repentance is another grateful doctrine in favour of the divinity of our religion. By consulting the books which are written by those who only enjoyed the light of reason, we find how perplexed and embarassed they were in their reasonings on this article, how far repentance would avail to reinstate persons in the divine favour! An Heathen prince is introduced in the prophet Micah, overwhelmed with a penetrating sense of his atrocious crimes, distracted with the dire thought that the divine judgments were deservedly impending over his devoted head, anxious to avert God's anger, dubious in what way he can appease it, at last breaking forth into this passionate exclamation, the language of conscious guilt and gloomy despair.—"Wherewith "shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high "God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with "calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thou- "sands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? "Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of "my body, for the sin of my soul?" This is the language of uninstructed, uncultivated reason under these unhappy circumstances. These are the sentiments of a guilty gloomy mind, ominously foreboding the wretchedness of its future destiny; a stranger to that transporting assurance in which we Christians are so happy, the total absolution of all past guilt upon genuine repentance and reformation of life. How far the divine forgiveness would, or would not, extend, was a question in the satisfactory decision of which the Heathens were greatly embarrassed. Some asserted that great enormities, often repeated and persisted in for the major part of human life, left a total inaptitude and inability upon the mind for virtuous practice and virtuous pleasure, and consequently would never be forgiven. Others, as Plato, and Virgil, declared, that though men repented of their vices in this life, yet it was necessary they should undergo a severe discipline

pline on account of them in an intermediate ſtate of correction; be hung up to the winds to take out the moral ſtains their ſouls had contracted, or diſciplined in the fire to purge and purify all the remaining blemiſhes, and when, after theſe wholeſome temporary ſeverities, they came forth, from this windy and fiery trial, pure and immaculate, they were then admitted to the complete bleſſedneſs of the Elyſian fields. They were led to infer theſe inflictions in this intermediate ſtate, becauſe they ſaw true penitents in this life, ſuffer for their former vices long after they had renounced and abandoned them. How far the divine clemency would extend; whether the whole collective ſum of vice would at once be expunged, or only part of it; whether, in particular, thoſe vices would be totally forgiven which had prematurely impaired and deſtroyed the noble fabric of God, the human body, or had totally debilitated the mind for virtue, were ſubjects which human reaſon found great difficulty to determine. It is therefore, a favourable preſumption that the Chriſtian religion hath the infinitely good and merciful God for its author, which publiſhes to every ſincere penitent the abſolute entire remiſſion of his former tranſgreſſions, how heinous, atrocious and aggravated ſoever; and aſſures him, upon his deliberate amendment and reformation, of the clemency, favour and acceptance of God. My reader will have a full conception of the happineſs of ſuch a grateful aſſurance as this, and conſequently how worthy it is of the compaſſionate father of the univerſe to proclaim to the world in any revelation he is pleaſed to give to mankind, if for one moment he conſidered what a ſcene of melancholy diſtreſs and gloom the preſent life would be, without a full perſuaſion of the divine forgiveneſs of our numerous crimes, and how diſmal and ominous our proſpects muſt be into futurity; to be placed in a ſtate where by the frailty of our nature, the imperfection of our virtue, and the weakneſs of our beſt reſolutions, we often contract guilt, wound our conſciences, and incur the divine diſpleaſure, and yet be deprived of the full aſſurance of the divine placability, not have one chearful ray of light ſatisfactorily to conſole the mind, and diſpel its cruel doubts concerning its extent! But under the Goſpel ſcheme all theſe perplexing difficulties vaniſh. Ten thouſand talents, the greateſt ſum of guilt ſuppoſeable, are at once generouſly forgiven, and the immenſe debt for ever cancelled.

With every rational intelligent perſon it muſt alſo greatly recommend this religion, when claiming its original from God, to conſider the divine aſſiſtance it offers to human virtue.

me. One of the greateſt encouragements that any ſcheme of religion can offer to its votaries with regard to the ſucceſsful practice of morality, is the full perſuaſion that if we ſtudy to cultivate and improve our rational intellectual powers, and to acquire the pleaſures and habits of virtue, we ſhall certainly enjoy the divine concurrence. That God will not ſuffer my imperfect virtue to ſtruggle, alone, through the dangerous paths of life, that he will not abandon me in an hour of adverſity and ſorrow to derive all my conſolation from myſelf. and ſuffer me to enjoy no ray of light and hope but what my labouring mind can give me, is an aſſurance that infuſes into the human heart the nobleſt conſcious ſatisfactions. In this fundamental article the ſyſtem of Heathen morals was greatly defective. Some of their wiſe men taught the world to expect no divine aſſiſtances in the practice of virtue. The virtuous man, it ſeems, had no occaſion for them, and the low illiterate vulgar were infinitely unworthy the expence of divine interpoſitions. Man muſt derive virtue from himſelf. Man was ſelf-ſufficient to his own felicity. Their wiſe and perfect man, had no ſuch things as wants and defects about him: he was equal to Jupiter himſelf in the all-ſufficiency and conſummate happineſs of his nature. The religion of Jeſus teaches us to form more modeſt and diffident, and conſequently more rational and juſt notions of human nature, and ſhews us our intimate dependence on the Deity for all the functions and enjoyments of natural and moral life. This divine philoſophy teaches us, what the principles and dictates of reaſon teach us, that we are not ſelf-ſufficient to our own virtue and to our own happineſs, that we are frail and indigent, ſurrounded with temptations, and expoſed to ſorrows and ſufferings innumerable, that in theſe exigencies God will not deſert a ſincere mind to the weak efforts of its own imperfect virtue, but will, by his gracious concurrence, guard it from vice and error, illuminate it with heavenly light, kindle devout affections, invigorate its powers, ſuggeſt holy reſolutions, and by his divine agency and co-operation confirm and eſtabliſh it in the principles and practice of virtue. Such a doctrine is worthy of God, and worthy to form a neceſſary article in any religion which claims a divine original. Such an aſſurance as this is a moſt powerful incentive to the reſolution of amendment and to the practice of all virtue, and muſt have all its weight upon the ingenuity of every rational being. For, if in the undertaking of any work of conſiderable labour and difficulty, we eſteem it a great happineſs to be aſſured that we ſhall be aſſiſted in the execution of

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it by wiſe and benevolent perſons, whoſe aid and endeavours concurring with our own will enſure ſucceſs, how much more muſt it incite and encourage us to engage and perſevere in a religious life, to be aſſured, that God will co-operate with our virtuous reſolutions, enable us to ſurmount every impediment, carry us through the difficulties and dangers that infeſt our path, confirm us in the habits of piety and holineſs, and finally crown us with eternal life and bleſſedneſs. Such is the ſtrength of Chriſtian principles, and the perfection of Chriſtian doctrine.

The clear revelation of a future ſtate is a very ſtrong argument in favour of the divine authority and credibility of the Chriſtian religion. Concerning a future ſtate we find a great variety of opinions among thoſe who had only the light of reaſon to aid their enquiries. The moſt learned and eminent philoſophers the Heathen world ever produced, expreſs themſelves, in general, with great heſitation and diffidence on this momentous ſubject. A great part of them thought the grave terminated all our exiſtence. Others made a future ſtate conſiſt in pleaſures altogether unworthy of a rational and immortal ſoul. Some of the moſt diſtinguiſhed among them believed that ſuch imperfect beings as we are would not be admitted immediately after death into the regions of purity and happineſs, but firſt previouſly go through a neceſſary proceſs of rigorous correction and diſcipline, before they could be worthily introduced into the pure and holy ſeats of Elyſium. They were likewiſe in great uncertainty with regard to the nature of this ſtate, and the happineſs men would enjoy in it. Heroes and conquerors, ſome imagined, would there amuſe themſelves in marſhalling and arranging viſionary armies: kings and princes in governing and regulating ideal ſtates: lawgivers and philoſophers in compiling ſyſtems of laws for imaginary republics: poets, painters, muſicians, in cultivating their reſpective arts: and all orders and claſſes of mortals, in thoſe happy manſions amuſe and recreate themſelves in following the ſame occupations and ſtudies, in which they once delighted. Others imagined this happineſs would not be ſtrictly eternal, but that theſe ſpirits, after a flight of many ages, would be brought down to Lethe's ſtream; drink its oblivious waters: animate a mortal body; and for ever loſe all remembrance of what they once were. What ideal, viſionary, fantaſtic, contemptible reveries are theſe? yet indulged by the wiſeſt and beſt men that Pagan ages ever produced. O how different is that ſtate of immortality after which the Goſpel teaches its profeſſors to aſpire!

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With what clearneſs and certainty doth it exhibit it before us in all its grand and ſtriking importance! The vail, that once interpoſed, is now drawn aſide, and the glories of a bleſſed futurity ſpread before us in one vaſt, various, and boundleſs proſpect. What Heathen virtue always wanted to give it its juſt weight and efficacy with mankind, our Saviour hath given it. Every ſyſtem of religious and moral truths muſt be defective in a very eſſential point, that either makes no mention of a future ſtate, or mentions it in obſcure, dubious, and ambiguous terms. Chriſtianity is the perfection of all religion, for by bringing immortality to light it hath completely given all thoſe additional ſanctions to the practice of virtue, which all former ſyſtems of philoſophy wanted.

The poſitive inſtitutions of the New Teſtament an argument of its divine truth.

IT is alſo much to the honour of Chriſtianity that its poſitive rites are ſo few, and ſo obvious to the meaneſt capacities. Chriſtianity is not a religion that is loaded with ſuperſtitious ornaments and oſtentatious decorations. It is not like the Pagan ſuperſtition, or like the Moſaic inſtitution, full of external parade and pageantry, diſplaying a pompous glitter and glare of embelliſhment and ſhew; gilded ſuperb temples, fuming with ſteams of incenſe, and filled with odoriferous gales, wafted from lofty altars ſmoaking with aromatic ſpices. The church which Chriſt erected, is not like the ſpacious magnificent domes in ancient times, filled with pompous ſacrifices, with hecatombs of victims; hundreds of prieſts employed, ſome in dedicating the animal, ſome in ſlaying it according to the forms preſcribed, others in inſpecting the entrails, and prognoſticating happy or unhappy events to the votary, others in burning parts of the victim upon the ſacred altar, and placating the reſentment of their offended deities by a thouſand wild and enthuſiaſtic extravagancies. A beautiful elegant ſimplicity of worſhip characterizes the goſpel. It is a religion that is diveſted of all vain pomp and pageantry, requiring from its votaries no ſacrifice but that of a good heart and a good life. The goſpel is like its founder, plain and unaffected; hath, like its author, nothing external to dazzle and aſtoniſh; it recommends itſelf as he did, by its internal native goodneſs, excellence and worth. The Chriſtian's God is a ſpirit, and his true accepted worſhippers are thoſe who worſhip him with the devotion of the mind. The Chriſtian's God requires

quires not to be placated by coſtly oblations, expenſive offerings and clouds of fragrant perfume, as the gods the ancient heathens worſhipped, and the gods which are now worſhipped in the populous countries of India, Tartary and China, or which are now worſhipped in the immenſe regions of Africa, and the extenſive tracts of America, require from their votaries. The religion of Jeſus is ſtripped of all this fantaſtic ornament. The yoke of this mild inſtitution is eaſy, and its burden is light. The poſitive rites it ordains are only four, baptiſm, the Lord's ſupper, the inſtitution of the ſabbath, and worſhipping God through a mediator. The firſt is a ſimple initiation into the ſociety of its profeſſors by the expreſſive emblem of water, which denotes purity. The ſecond is a plain ſymbolical commemoration of the death of its founder, on the baſis of which event its whole fabric is ſupported. The third inſtitution is every way fitted to keep alive in our minds a conſtant animating ſenſe of our obligations to God and Chriſt, and of our duty to ourſelves and others, by calling our minds from the diſtraction of ſecular cares, and poſſeſſing them with an affecting ſenſe of their everlaſting intereſts. The fourth appointment tends to inſpire us with the moſt venerable ideas of the majeſty and goodneſs of God, and of the benevolence and love of that exalted Being, through whom we are permitted this free and liberal acceſs to the Deity. Theſe inſtituted rites and appointments conſpire to add a ſuitable dignity and glory to the Chriſtian religion, recommend it to our acceptance as a moſt mild and merciful diſpenſation, eaſy in its performance, worthy the ſpiritual nature and perfections of the divinity, and containing the beſt moral means for accompliſhing the wiſeſt and nobleſt ends.

Miracles a proof of the divine authority of the New Teſtament.

THE miracles related in this book are ſo circumſtanced as to preclude all reaſonable doubt of their reality, and add the ſtrongeſt confirmation to its divine authority. They are ſuch operations as tranſcend all human power to effect them, or any ſuppoſed art of magic or impoſture to perform. Curing the moſt inveterate diſorders by a ſingle touch, or a ſingle word, and inſtantaneouſly reſtoring thoſe whoſe maladies had baffled all the power of medicine, to perfect health in a moment. Giving ſight to the born blind; expelling obſtinate leproſy; making thoſe who wanted a limb, perfect; thoſe who

who were bowed double, ſtraight; thoſe who ſhook with the palſy, robuſt; nerving the withered arm with ſtrength; reſtoring the inſane to reaſon, and the dead to life. Theſe ſupernatural operations were not wrought in a few inſtances; with heſitation and diffidence; but every week and every day were witneſſes to numerous inſtances of them, for a ſucceſſive ſeries of years; ſo that all ſuſpicion of human management, compact and juggle, was for ever precluded. Nor were theſe aſtoniſhing actions performed in ſequeſtered cells and ſolitudes, cautiouſly ſhunning the light of truth, and the ſcrutiny of officious enquirers. They were exhibited in the face of day; before infinite multitudes; and ſubmitted, without any parade and oſtentation, to their calm and deliberate examination. The ſcene of them was laid in the villages, towns, and metropolis of Judæa; they were wrought on the moſt public theatre, before immenſe numbers that crowded from all parts; friends and enemies indiſcriminately. Thouſands attended who would have rejoiced to have detected the impoſture of them, and ſcrutinized them, and the perſons on whom they were wrought with the niceſt ſubtilty and ſtricteſt accuracy, to explore the falſhood and fallacy of them. The perſons who had experienced theſe miraculous effects, and had been cured of blindneſs, of the leproſy, of the palſy, or raiſed from the dead, lived many years afterwards the public monuments of them: carrying about with them, in their own perſons, the full conviction of theſe amazing operations. They were, moreover, wrought in profeſſed atteſtation to the divine miſſion and character of thoſe by whom they were performed, and in confirmation of the doctrine they delivered. They were not vainly and oſtentatiouſly laviſhed to ſatisfy an idle curioſity, and to catch the vain breath of popular applauſe. The power with which they were endowed was not employed in performing uſeleſs tricks and dexterous feats of idle ſkill, to amuſe and aſtoniſh a gazing populace. They were all exerted in works of humanity and beneficence; in freeing the diſeaſed from long and incurable diſtempers, and reſtoring them to eaſe and enjoyment. Neither were they wrought in confirmation of the popular religion; to exalt a national eſtabliſhment, and aggrandize the country that profeſſed it: but in direct oppoſition to it, and contrary to all the inveterate prejudices and warm prepoſſeſſions of the illuſtrious and great, as well as the whole body of the people. The adverſaries, alſo, of this religion, who lived in, or near theſe times, never once attempted to invalidate or diſprove them: they allowed, they were forced to allow their reality.

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The facts they did not deny, they laboured to account for them from the art of magic, and a pretended confederacy and compact with Beelzebub, the prince of the dæmons. Another circumſtance too, which confirms the truth and validity of theſe miracles is, that great numbers of perſons, who were ſpectators of them, were convinced by them, notwithſtanding the ſtrongeſt prejudices they had formed againſt the religion theſe atteſted: and in conſequence of their conviction, embraced the Goſpel from the moſt indubitable perſuaſion of its truth, inviolably adhered to the profeſſion of it, and ſealed their belief of it with their blood. The perſons, moreover, who delivered to to us the accounts of theſe miracles, who were eye-witneſſes of them, who were endowed with a power of affecting them, and were enabled to communicate this power to others, were men of the greateſt probity and integrity, gave all the proofs and evidences that rational beings can do; of their conſcientious ſincerity, perſiſted in their teſtimony to the divine authority and truth of the Goſpel with inflexible conſtancy, and met perſecution and death itſelf, in all the horrors with which bigotry and ſuperſtition could clothe them, with a heroiſm and greatneſs of ſoul that human philoſophy never equalled.

The prophecies of Chriſt a confirmation of the truth of the New Teſtament.

THE predictions of Jeſus Chriſt add the ſtrongeſt confirmation to the divinity of his miſſion, and the truth of his religion. It is evident to every one who reads the life of Chriſt in the four Evangeliſts, with what circumſtantial exactneſs he predicted his own ſufferings and death, his being treacherouſly delivered up into the hands of thoſe who thirſted for his blood, by one of thoſe he had ſelected to be his familiar friends and companions, by an act of the baſeſt perfidy; his being apprehended, abuſed with every wanton inſult, mangled with ſcourges, ſpit upon, nailed to a croſs, and the third day after this ignominious, tragical exit, raiſed to life. He mentioned, by name, the perſon who would perpetrate this atrocious deed, long before he himſelf had formed his infernal purpoſe. He predicted the moſt improbable thing in the world, at that time, that a number of illiterate Galilæans and obſcure fiſhermen ſhould be brought before kings and princes, and deliver apologies in defence of their religion, before the moſt illuſtrious and dignified perſonages.

ſonages. Upon Peter's openly declaring his full perſuaſion that he was the Meſſiah, he declared, that upon him, as a firm and immoveable rock, he would erect the Chriſtian church, and the gates of hell ſhould not prevail againſt it. He predicted what we have ſeen fully verified, though at the time it was ſpoken, it would almoſt have exceeded all the power of credulity to have believed ſuch an event poſſible, that a religion taught by a poor and deſpiſed Jew, attended by a poor and deſpiſed company of illiterate peaſants, and formed in the boſom of one of the moſt poor and deſpiſed countries in the world, ſhould overturn the two greateſt religious eſtabliſhments the ſun ever beheld, and ſpread its triumphs to the utmoſt boundaries of the world. His diſciples, to whom he diſcloſed his heart, who were the companions of his private retirements, whoſe affections were knit to him by the firmeſt ties, and who made the ſtrongeſt proteſtations, that though they ſhould be devoted to certain death with him, they would never abandon him; notwithſtanding all their repeated aſſeverations, dictated at that time by the greateſt ſincerity and love, yet he plainly told them he knew they would all deſert him by a precipitate flight. He expreſſly predicted his own reſurrection after lying in the grave three days: his going into Galilee after that event: his aſcenſion into heaven: and the ſubſequent effuſion of the Holy Spirit upon them, to endow them with miraculous gifts and ſpiritual powers, and to enable them to propagate his religion in the world. He foretold the exit which Peter would make, and that John would ſurvive the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. But the moſt illuſtrious of our Saviour's prophecies, and which will remain an everlaſting monument, through all future ages, of the truth of the Chriſtian religion is his minute and circumſtantial prediction of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, the total ſubverſion of their civil and eccleſiaſtical polity, and their conſequent diſperſion into all nations. In all the annals of hiſtory there is not a more remarkable paſſage than this prophecy of our Saviour, concerning the miſerable fate of Jeruſalem, and the tragical cataſtrophe of his country. Though delivered forty years before the dire event, yet it preſents the reader with a minute hiſtorical detail of the future invaſion of Judæa by the Romans: the rapidity with which this was done, deſcribed by lightning darting from one extremity of heaven to the other, at one vaſt ſweep, in a moment: the providential eſcape of the Chriſtians from theſe overwhelming calamities: their beſieging Jeruſalem, caſting up a trench, drawing lines of circumvallation around it:

it: the dreadful famine that raged in the city, the mutual maſſacres and aſſaſſinations of the citizens: the total demolition of the temple: the dreadful ruin of Jeruſalem; and the miſerable captivity of the Jews. Declaring at the ſame time he ſpoke this prediction, a declaration the moſt improbable to be verified in ſo ſhort a time, as the Jews were then happy in the friendſhip and protection of Rome; that that very generation would live to ſee his words fully verified. And he who carefully reads this moſt diſtinguiſhed prophecy of our Lord, and afterwards diligently compares it with the account which the Jewiſh hiſtorian hath left us of the ſiege and deſtruction of Jeruſalem, would be diſpoſed to believe that Joſephus was a Chriſtian, and, as he was a ſpectator of theſe tragical events, that he publiſhed a faithful hiſtorical commentary on our Lord's prophecy, for the confirmation of all ages in the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

Other hiſtorical facts, collateral evidences of the truth of the Goſpel hiſtory.

THE public theatre on which theſe ſcenes were tranſacted, and the public hiſtorical facts that are mentioned and appealed to in theſe writings, are a very great confirmation of the credibility and truth of the Goſpel hiſtory. The public tranſactions which the authors of theſe books record, and which might eaſily have been refuted and diſproved, had they been falſe, are the following. Herod the Great was the ſovereign of Judæa, when this illuſtrious perſon was uſhered into the world. A number of eaſtern philoſophers came to Jeruſalem, deſiring to be informed of the place that would be honoured with his birth. Herod, upon this convened the Sanhedrim, where in public council, its learned members deliberated upon this queſtion; the bloody maſſacre of all the infants in Bethlehem. Archelaus, Herod's ſucceſſor, is mentioned. Auguſtus then filled the imperial throne. Quirinius was governor of Syria. Judæa a province of Rome. An edict was iſſued by the emperor, that all Judæa ſhould be enrolled. Simeon taking the infant in his arms, publicly in the temple, and in a flood of tranſport, before all the people, paſſionately wiſhed for his own immediate diſſolution, now his eyes had ſeen the ſalvation of Iſrael, and the light of the world. His public converſation with the Rabbies in the temple, when he was twelve years old. The commencement of John's public miniſtry is fixed in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, Pontius Pilate being then governor of Judæa, Herod, tetrarch of

of Galilee, his brother Phillip, of Ituræa, and Trachonitis, Lyſanias of Abylene, and Annas and Caiphas, high prieſts. The inceſtuous marriage of Herod with Herodias, his brother Phillip's wife; the impriſonment of John for his remonſtrances againſt this adulterous commerce; the decollation of the Baptiſt, and the circumſtances of it are ſpecified. The trial, condemnation, and crucifixion of Chriſt, facts of the moſt public nature, are recorded. The darkneſs at mid-day, from twelve to three in the afternoon, which inveloped the whole land of Judæa, and an hiſtorical account of which, publiſhed in the very age in which it happened, would have been an inſult upon the world, if it had been falſe, is a public appeal to all mankind, which was never contradicted. The written accounts of theſe princes, who were contemporaries with Chriſt, and of theſe public tranſactions which happened in his time, are an inconteſtible proof of the hiſtorical truth of theſe records, and an incontrovertible monument of the veracity and faith of this hiſtory. It was a public theatre on which our Lord's actions were diſplayed. In the face of day; at the moſt frequented feſtivals; in the capital; in the temple; before Herod and Pontius Pilate witneſſing a good confeſſion. Add to this that the accounts of theſe tranſactions were publiſhed very near the times in which they happened, but were never ſhewn to be inaccurate and falſe.

I have confined myſelf to the national acts and illuſtrious perſons, that in the writings of the four evangeliſts only, appear on the public ſtage: but if we include the external evidences of this kind to the truth of the Goſpel hiſtory, recorded in the Acts of the apoſtles, they form ſuch a cloud of witneſſes to the truth of our religion as muſt, one would think, be irreſiſtible to every attentive and intelligent mind.

The age in which Chriſtianity made its appearance was learned and inquiſitive.

IT was a providential circumſtance for the honour and credit of the Chriſtian religion, that the age, in which it was promulgated, was not barbarous and uncivilized. Had Chriſtianity been nurſed in times when the god of dulneſs and darkneſs held univerſal empire: when Gothic and Vandalian ignorance reigned triumphant: when erudition and learning, and a taſte for knowledge and enquiry were held in univerſal diſrepute and contempt: in future more enlightened ages, it might have been decried as a cunningly deviſed fable and fiction, that owed its origin and eſtabliſhment to nothing but

the fabulous times in which it firſt made its appearance, and to the credulity of an ignorant group of kings, and prieſts, and people. But the Auguſtan, was the moſt learned and polite age the world ever ſaw. The love of arts and ſciences, and literature, was the univerſal paſſion. The many celebrated poets, hiſtorians, and philoſophers, who then flouriſhed, had diffuſed an ambition for mental improvement, and circulated a taſte for literature among all orders and claſſes of men in all the provinces of that vaſt empire. They vied with each other, who could produce the moſt perfect piece, who could carry philoſophy and morals to their higheſt perfection, and cultivate the powers of the human mind with moſt ſucceſs. Another happy circumſtance was, that peace had now extended her olive o'er the world; on which account, in the long reign of Auguſtus, a literary intercommunity was eſtabliſhed through all the provinces of his immenſe dominions, and the moſt favourable opportunity afforded for the ſucceſsful ſtudy of philoſophy and the inveſtigation of truth. This happy diſtinguiſhed æra of univerſal concord and peace, ſo favourable to the muſes, ſaw genius produce all its ſtores, the human mind diſplay all her ample powers, and the nobleſt monuments of fame begun and finiſhed, that ever adorned the republic of letters. And it is to the everlaſting honour of Chriſtianity that it roſe, flouriſhed, and eſtabliſhed itſelf in this learned, inquiſitive, and diſcerning age; amidſt that univerſal paſſion, which then prevailed, for philoſophy and knowledge, and made a moſt rapid and amazing progreſs through that immenſe empire to its remoteſt limits at a time when the world was in its moſt civilized ſtate, and in an age that was more univerſally diſtinguiſhed for ſcience and erudition than any one prior or ſubſequent period the world ever ſaw.

The Teſtimony of adverſaries and Heathens to the principal facts in the New Teſtament.

THE truth of the principal facts recorded in this hiſtory is corroborated by the teſtimony of adverſaries and Heathens. To the innocence of our Saviour's character we have an illuſtrious atteſtation in Judas; and it is not without its juſt intended ſignification, that the Evangeliſts have related this remarkable circumſtance: who, when he ſaw his maſter capitally condemned, an event he never expected, ruſhed like one diſtracted into the temple, threw down the wages of corruption before the prieſts and rulers, and with great emotion, publicly

publicly told them, he had betrayed innocent blood. This is the teſtimony of an enemy, and ought much to be regarded. It hath great moment alſo with regard to his irreproachable character, that his judge when ſitting on the tribunal, took water and publicly waſhed his hands before all the multitude, ſolemnly declaring, "I am innocent of the blood of this "juſt perſon." Suetonius mentions him by name, and ſays that Claudius expelled from Rome thoſe who adhered to his cauſe. Tacitus records the progreſs the Chriſtian religion had made: the violent death its founder had ſuffered: that he flouriſhed under the reign of Tiberius: that Pilate was then procurator of Judæa: and that the original author of this profeſſion was Chriſt. The excellent Pliny, who lived in Trajan's reign, and attained ſome of the higheſt honours in the ſtate, in one of his letters to the emperor, written not above forty years after the death of St. Paul, exhibits before us an amiable picture of the doctrine of the Chriſtians, and the purity and ſanctity of their manners. It was their cuſtom, ſays he, to meet before light, on a ſtated day, and mutually to recite an hymn to Chriſt as a God, binding themſelves by a ſolemn oath, not for the purpoſe of any thing wicked, but on the contrary, never to be guilty of any fraud, of any theft, or of any debauchery, never to falſify their word, never to deny a truſt when they were called upon to deliver it up. After which it was their cuſtom to ſeparate, and then meet again to eat in common an harmleſs meal. The ſame honourable teſtimony Celſus gives of the Chriſtians, and acknowledges, that there were modeſt, temperate, and intelligent perſons among them. The ſame celebrated deiſt, who lived in the ſecond century, ſpeaks of the author of the Chriſtian religion as having lived but a very few years before his time, and mentions the principal facts in the Goſpel hiſtory relative to the birth, life, doctrine, miracles, death and reſurrection of Chriſt; declaring he had copied the account from the writings of the evangeliſts. He quotes theſe books, and makes extracts from them, as being compoſed by the diſciples and companions of Jeſus, and under the names they now bear. He acknowledges the miracles which Jeſus wrought, by which he engaged great multitudes to adhere to him as the Meſſiah: that they were really performed he never diſputes: he attributes them to our Saviour's profound ſkill in the magic art, which he learned in Egypt. What teſtimony, ſays Euſebius, would you deem more valid and credible than the atteſtation of an enemy? But ſuch an atteſtation you have on record in theſe words, in the third book

of Porphyry's treatiſe entitled, Of the philoſophy from oracles: The greatneſs of that divine power he poſſeſſed is clearly ſeen, by every lover of truth, from its own energy. Oracles concerning Chriſt, What I am going to relate, ſays he, may by ſome perhaps be deemed a prediction. The gods openly avowed Chriſt to be a moſt pious perſon, and an immortal being, and make honourable mention of his memory. And concerning thoſe, who propoſed to the oracle this queſtion, Whether Chriſt was a god? the anſwer it returned, he ſays, was the following: That the ſoul, after the diſſolution of the body, is immortal, every one, who is diſtinguiſhed for wiſdom knows; but the ſoul of that man, meaning Chriſt, is moſt eminently adorned with piety. You ſee, therefore, continued Porphyry, that the oracles acknowledge Chriſt to be a very pious perſon, and that his ſoul, equally with thoſe of other good perſons, obtained an happy immortality after death: which ſoul the injudicious Chriſtians worſhip. To thoſe, who enquired of the oracle, Why Chriſt ſuffered ſuch a violent death?—It returned this reſponſe: The body of the pious is always expoſed to trivial injuries, but their ſouls repoſe in the celeſtial manſions. After citing theſe oracles, Porphyry adds: Chriſt, therefore, was a pious perſon, and was conveyed into the heavens, as other pious men, wherefore thou oughteſt not to caſt any aſperſions on his character, but generouſly to commiſerate the folly of men. Theſe, ſays Euſebius, are the words of Porphyry. Was Chriſt therefore a deceiver? Let even the favourable expreſſions of one of your own writers diſguſt you; for you have, in this paſſage, the public teſtimony of one of your own party, that our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt was no impoſtor, no ſorcerer, but a devout, a moſt virtuous, and wiſe man, and an inhabitant of the heavenly ſeats. Julian, who flouriſhed about the middle of the fourth century, produces no counter evidence in refutation of the truth of the Goſpel hiſtory, though he mentions the names of all the four evangeliſts; never attempts to diſprove the authenticity of their writings; or to deny the reality of our Saviour's miracles. Jeſus did nothing, ſays he, worthy fame, unleſs any can imagine that curing the lame and blind, and exerciſing dæmons in the villages of Bethſaida and Bethany are ſome of the greateſt works: and the greateſt works they certainly are, infinitely ſurpaſſing all human power and abilities, and demonſtrating the perſon who performs ſuch ſupernatural operations, to be divine. He acknowledges that Jeſus had a ſovereign power over impure ſpirits; that he walked on the ſurface of the deep; and

and expelled dæmons. That the power of working miracles and effecting ſupernatural cures was enjoyed by Jeſus Chriſt, the Jews never deny; but ridiculouſly attribute the poſſeſſion of this ſecret to the right pronunciation of the ineffable name, which they ſay, he clandeſtinely ſtole out of the temple: or they impute it to the magic art, which he learned in Egypt, and exerciſed with greater dexterity than any other impoſtor ever did. Lampridius informs us that Alexander Severius would have erected a temple in honour of Jeſus Chriſt, had not ſome of the ſenators remonſtrated againſt it. In Nero's time, which was a little more than thirty years after our Saviour's crucifixion, Tacitus ſays there was a great multitude of Chriſtians in Rome: and he gives a circumſtantial and ſhocking account of the ingenious torments, and excruciating deaths, to which they were ſubjected. Even Lucian bears his teſtimony to the influence the Goſpel principles had in making its profeſſors deſpiſe death, and ſays, that Chriſt an illuſtrious perſon, who was crucified in Paleſtine, was the original publiſher of this new religion. Thus all the inveterate enemies of Chriſtianity unite in giving an honourable ſuffrage to the character of Chriſt, to the reality of his miracles, the authenticity of the writings of the evangeliſts, and to the rapid progreſs of the Chriſtian religion.

The Goſpel is enforced by the moſt venerable authority.

THE authority alſo, by which this ſyſtem of religion and morals is enforced, is the moſt venerable, and was abſolutely neceſſary to give its injunctions their proper weight and moment with mankind. When our Saviour had ended his ſermon on the mount, it is obſerved, "that the multitude was "aſtoniſhed at his doctrine," and the reaſon of this effect is alledged: "becauſe he taught them as one having authority," cloathed with a divine commiſſion, and ſolemnly addreſſing them in the name and authority of the great God. It is not enough to crowd together in a volume a number of detached maxims and moral ſentiments, to be the rule and guide of life, and from various authors to compile a number of ſayings and reflections into a body of theology and morals: all this is uſeleſs and inſignificant, if this ſyſtem, at laſt, is not recommended by an authority proper to give it its due weight and validity as the ſtandard of human conduct. For does the ſaying of ſuch a philoſopher ſtamp it with any authority? Is it enough to enforce it, as an univerſal principle of con-

duct, that ſuch an eminent ſage ſaid ſo and ſo, when others, as wiſe, ſaid and did the very contrary? All the didactic precepts and leſſons of uſeful inſtruction the wiſe ancients ever delivered, in a great meaſure loſe their efficacy, in the reformation of mankind, by their having no other authority to ſeal and ſanctify them but what was merely human. Socrates was ſo convinced of this, that he paſſionately wiſhes for a future meſſenger from heaven, authorized with proper credentials, to teach men morality with greater efficacy than he had done. A well atteſted divine authority was greatly wanting to give the dogmata of human philoſophy their proper ſeal and ſanction. The Platonic, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, the Epicurean philoſophy widely differed. Where muſt the common people in Heathen countries go for inſtruction? Their wiſe and eminent ſages were divided; their aſſertions and names did not give their reſpective ſyſtems any proper validity. Some of their ſyſtems were atheiſtical and deteſtable: ſome viſionary and romantic. What power had theſe philoſophers to reclaim and reform the world? What authority could they plead, except the authority of their ſpeculative dreams and ideal reveries, to enforce their doctrines, and gain them a general reception among men? What good effects did the philoſophy of Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Antonius produce in the lives and morals of the bulk of mankind? Did they ever make converts of a ſingle country, or a ſingle village. We find that moſt of the philoſophers and lawgivers of antiquity were obliged to have recourſe to pious frauds, and to falſify and counterfeit the authority of ſome of their deities, in order to give their laws and injunctions a proper moment and weight with the people. How infinitely, therefore, hath the Chriſtian religion the advantage of theſe motley heterogeneous bodies of human philoſophy, which is ſealed with the ſignet of the great God, and ratified and confirmed by the moſt venerable and ſacred authority of him who came from heaven inveſted with a divine commiſſion to reform and inſtruct the world.

The life of Chriſt a great recommendation of the Chriſtian religion.

A GREAT recommendation of Chriſtianity is, the life and character of its author. The very beſt inſtructions that ever were delivered, and the nobleſt ſyſtem of religious and moral duty that ever was compiled, muſt neceſſarily fall into contempt, if the life of the author be a ſatire upon his own precepts. If a public teacher do not exemplify, in his own practice,

practice, the virtues he enjoins upon others, both his perſon and his ſyſtem will univerſally and moſt deſervedly be deſpiſed. Of what avail is ingenious ſpeculation, and a judicious body of didactic rules, if they do not ſhine in the life and converſation of the moraliſt. Cicero's complaint is well known. Who is there of all the philoſophers, ſays he, whoſe practical principles, temper, and conduct, were conformable to right reaſon? Who ever regarded his philoſophy as a law and rule of life, and not rather as an oſtentation of his ability and learning? Whoever obeyed his own inſtructions, and made his precepts the model of his own daily practice? So far from this, that many of them were ſlaves to luſt, many to pride, many to avarice. And if the lives of theſe profeſſed inſtructors were thus immoral and profligate, their rules and directions, however ſolemnly delivered, or pleaſingly written, muſt neceſſarily loſe all their influence. It is to the glory of the Chriſtian religion that the life of its author was a faithful commentary upon his own inſtructions. His temper and diſpoſition were the brighteſt illuſtration of his own precepts. He exhibited to the world, in his own character, what an amiable and divine ſcheme Chriſtianity is, when it hath taken full poſſeſſion of the heart, the ſource of action, and actuates all the principles and affections of the human mind. It was ſaid of the excellent Socrates, that his whole life was but one uniform ſeries of devotion to God. With much greater juſtice our Saviour deſerves this honourable eulogy. The ſun in his daily courſe, ſaw him indefatigably employed in working beneficent miracles and delivering divine inſtructions, and the ſtars, in the ſilent watches, beheld him ſpend the whole night in prayer to God! Often he would, in his daily benevolent offices, and amidſt his pious labours, pour forth a fervent ejaculation to God. "Father, I thank thee, that thou haſt hid theſe "things from the wiſe and prudent, and haſt revealed them "to babes; even ſo, Father, it ſeemed good in thy ſight!" His philanthropy and love of mankind was without bounds. Studying their beſt intereſts, diſpelling their errors, freeing their bodies from painful maladies, adminiſtering conſolation, and communicating uſeful and ſaving inſtruction, was the ſupreme ambition and ſole felicity of his life. It was his divine character: it is comprized in a few words: "he went about "doing good." The lives of many of the Jewiſh prophets and the Pagan philoſophers, are, through the common imperfection of frail humanity, chequered with many unhappy defects. But the life of Chriſt is a perfect copy of the great divine

divine original, fullied with no blemiſh, ſtained with no fault and foible, pure and ſacred as heaven, ſpotleſs and immaculate as innocence, breathing nothing but devotion to God, and benevolence to man. He was actuated by no ambition, but the god-like ambition of doing good: he aſpired after no diſtinction, but the diſtinction of being uſeful: he deſired to eſtabliſh no empire, but the empire of truth and righteouſneſs. Humble in his deportment, meek and modeſt in his converſe, entering the pooreſt cottage to free a poor parent, child, or ſervant, from an incurable diſtemper. Infinitely above the meanneſs of pride, and the low groveling paſſions of worldly glory and oſtentation. Deſtitute of the comforts and elegancies of life, and content to be ſo. Never murmuring and repining at the diſpenſations of providence, but chearfully acquieſcing in the divine allotments. Calm and ſerene under the moſt abuſive and contumelious treatment, when he was reviled, not reviling again, when he ſuffered, not threatening, but committing himſelf to him who judgeth righteouſly. Ever expreſſing the tendereſt pity and the moſt generous commiſeration for the frailties and imperfections of our nature, pouring out his ſympathetic ſorrow for the hardneſs of men's hearts, their averſion to truth, and their indiſpoſedneſs to conſult and ſecure their everlaſting welfare. Tearing off the hypocrite's maſk with holy rage and indignation, and exhibiting to the world, in his own perſon, a ſincerity, candour, and greatneſs of ſoul, illuſtrious beyond all example. Thus our Saviour lived; illuſtriouſly diſtinguiſhed for his dutiful ſubjection to his earthly parents; diſtinguiſhed for his love and affection to his native country, which he ſtrove to reclaim and convert, and expreſſed his generous grief, in a flood of tears, that their obſtinacy had defeated all his deſigns: diſtinguiſhed for private friendſhip, having ſelected one from among the reſt of his companions, of a temper and diſpoſition, one may ſuppoſe, moſt ſimilar to his own, whom he honoured with a peculiar affection: diſtinguiſhed for his heavenly mindedneſs, for his love of mankind, for his contempt of glory and grandeur, for his ambition to do good, for ſelf-government, moderation, affability, meekneſs, patience, and every virtue that can adorn human nature and form a perfect character. Nor did this conſummate perfection of character merely ſhine forth in the common ſcenes of public and private life, but in his laſt ſufferings and death they appear moſt conſpicuous. View him in the garden of Gethſemanè, with the full immediate proſpect of the impending ſtorm: human nature overwhelmed at

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the approaching ſcenes, and feeling all the horrors of mental agony and dejection: ſweating, as it were, great drops of blood: yet in this dire diſtreſs repoſing a perfect ſubmiſſion in God, and expreſſing this ſubmiſſion in terms, which no heart can read without great emotion. "Father, if this cup "may not paſs from me except I drink it, thy will be done!" Patiently ſubmitting to be apprehended by a band of ruffians, to be dragged before an unjuſt tribunal, to be abuſed with every cruel inſult, to be hoodwinked, ſpit upon, arrayed in robes of mock royalty, torn with ſcourges, confined in a priſon, nailed to a croſs between two thieves. Amidſt all this ſcene not uttering one repining thought, ſuſtaining all the ignominy, inſult, and torture, that the malice of his perſecutors could inflict, with ſerene unmoved compoſure, perfectly reſigned to God, and voluntarily ſurrendering his life a victim in the cauſe of truth, and ſealing his religion with his blood. Chearfully embracing ſuch a death with all its horrors, if by ſuch a death he could give a public witneſs to the truth, and by ſpontaneouſly ſacrificing his life in the cauſe of his religion, thereby give a public ſanction to its veracity, and ſtamp that divine ſyſtem, he had been authorized to teach men, with its complete and ultimate confirmation. Such an amiable, conſiſtent, and abſolutely perfect character, conjoined with ſuch a fair and faultleſs model of Theology and Ethics, mutually illuſtrate each other, and reflect the greateſt ſplendor and dignity upon each other, with which we can ſuppoſe any rules of human duty to come recommended and enforced.

The character of the apoſtles a ſtrong preſumptive argument of the truth of Chriſtianity.

THE character of the apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of the Goſpel is a ſtrong preſumptive argument of the truth of the Chriſtian revelation. If the writings of an author be the faithful picture of his heart, theſe books have all the features of veracity that truth can impreſs. If one may judge from their hiſtory, the apoſtles, of all men, ſeem leaſt to have been actuated by a ſecular ſpirit, the love of pleaſure, of riches, and worldly diſtinction. Avarice and intereſt could not ſway them, for they voluntarily abandoned all their temporal connections, and embarked in a cauſe, which the world regarded as to the laſt degree wretched and deplorable. They exiled themſelves from the protection and boſom of their native ſoil, left all the charities of father, ſiſter, brother, and openly eſpouſed

eſpouſed a religion that was every where ſpoken againſt, to crush which in its infancy all the principalities and powers of the world ſtood armed, the magiſtrate in every region unſheathed his ſword, popular prejudice and ſuperſtition collected all its fury, and the whole Pagan and Jewiſh hierarchy ſtood ready to overwhelm it with the whole accumulated weight of their authority and vengeance. They might have lived happy in their humble retreat, of all the world unknowing and unknown, in a ſequeſtrated and obſcure receſs, following the occupation of their anceſtors, far from the malice and perſecution of the world: but the force of truth and the power of conviction impelled them to bid an everlaſting farewel to the world, to diſſolve all the bonds of the tendereſt union, and tearing themſelves at once from the embraces of their neareſt and deareſt relatives, and from all the endearments of home, conſanguinity and country, to proclaim to mankind the evidences and doctrines of the Chriſtian religion, though bonds, impriſonments and death in every region awaited them. How can theſe things be accounted for, but from the force of truth, and the fulleſt mental perſuaſion, that the cauſe, in which they were engaged, was the cauſe of God, and that they were acting under a divine authority and commiſſion. What encomiums do we find in their writings upon ſimplicity and godly ſincerity? what ſolemn appeals to God for their integrity and veracity? and what denunciations of divine vengeance pronounced againſt inſincerity and diſſimulation, againſt thoſe who are ſwayed by filthy lucre, who adulterate and corrupt truth, and handle the word of God deceitfully? And could all theſe pathetic exhortations to ſincerity and probity, all theſe proteſtations of a ſacred and inviolable love for truth, all this vehemence againſt hypocriſy, flow from an heart, whoſe whole ſtudy it was to palm a pious fraud upon mankind, and who only aſſumed this ſpecious diſguiſe the better to deceive and dupe the world? Was there ever ſuch an amiable, uniform virtuous conſiſtency in the character of impoſtors? Did ever an impoſtor expoſe his perſon to ſuch imminent dangers, exchange worldly reputation, competence and eaſe, for diſgrace, contempt and death, and ſolely actuated by the love of God and truth traverſe ſuch an immenſe tract of country, reviled, ſcorned, inſulted, in every town and village, in which he delivered his credentials? Impoſture is ever upon the reverſe, courts gloomy retirement, cautiouſly ſhuns the rays of truth and enquiry, deals in little tricks, and is ever an inconſiſtent, multiform, motley, diſcordant, diſſimilar thing. Whereas truth

truth openly invites the inſpection of the world, comes forth into the light that its nature and deeds may be made manifeſt, and publicly exhibits herſelf in the face of day in an artleſs undiſguiſed manner. The bleſſed apoſtles, with liberal and undaunted fortitude, delivered their teſtimony before kings and princes, prieſt and magiſtrate, before the moſt illuſtrious and dignified perſonages, not aſhamed of the cauſe they had eſpouſed, but openly ſubmitting its evidences to a free and impartial examination. Their minds were ſo penetrated with a conviction of the truth of the Goſpel, that they eſteemed it their diſtinguiſhed honour and privilege to ſeal their atteſtation to it by their ſufferings, and bleſſed God that they were accounted worthy to ſuffer reproach and ſhame for their profeſſion. "Paſſing through honour and diſhonour, through "evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true." Never dejected, never intimidated by any ſorrows and ſufferings they ſupported, but when ſtoned, impriſoned, and perſecuted in one city flying to another, and there preaching the Goſpel with intrepid boldneſs and heaven-inſpired zeal. Patient in tribulation, fervent in ſpirit, rejoicing under perſecution, calm and compoſed under calumny and reproach, praying for their enemies, when in dungeons chearing the ſilent hours of night with hymns of praiſe to God. Meeting death itſelf in the moſt dreadful forms with which perſecuting rage could dreſs it, with a ſerenity and exultation the Stoic philoſophy never knew. In all theſe public ſcenes ſhowing to the world an heart infinitely above what men vulgarly ſtyle great and happy, infinitely remote from ambition, the luſt of gold, and a paſſion for popular applauſe, working with their own hands to raiſe a ſcanty ſubſiſtence for themſelves that they might not be burdenſome to the ſocieties they had formed, holding up to all, with whom they converſed, in the bright faithful mirror of their own behaviour, the amiableneſs and excellency of the religion they taught, and in every ſcene and circumſtance of life diſtinguiſhed for their devotion to God, their unconquered love of mankind, their ſacred regard for truth, their ſelf-government, moderation, humanity, ſincerity, and every divine, ſocial and moral virtue that can adorn and exalt a character. Nor are there any features and characters of enthuſiaſm in the writings they have left us. We meet with no frantic fervours indulged, no monkiſh abſtraction from the world recommended, no maceration of the body countenanced, no unnatural inſtitutions eſtabliſhed, no vain flights of fancy cheriſhed, no abſurd and irrational doctrines taught, no diſobedience to any forms of human

human government encouraged, but all civil eſtabliſhments and ſocial connections ſuffered to remain in the ſame ſtate they were before Chriſtianity. So far do they appear from being actuated by a blind, undiſtinguiſhing, mechanical impulſe of enthuſiaſtic heat and rapture, that their writings have all the marks of a mind that was under the influence of ſound reaſon, ſolid underſtanding, and cool deliberate judgment, and are eminently diſtinguiſhed for that which enthuſiaſts univerſally lay ſo little ſtreſs upon, and generally affect ſo much to deſpiſe, the neceſſity of good works, the improvement of the mind, the uſe of reaſon, the inveſtigation of truth, the careful examination of the evidences of religion, and the abſolute connection between our preſent moral conduct and our future reward. So far were the apoſtles from being enthuſiaſts, and inſtigated by a wild undiſcerning religious phrenſy to ruſh into the jaws of death, when they might have honourably and lawfully eſcaped it, that we find them, when they could, without wounding their conſciences, legally extricate themſelves from perſecution and death, taking advantage of adventitious circumſtances, as St. Paul ingeniouſly did at Athens, pleading their privileges as Roman citizens, diverting the rage of their enemies from them by artfully throwing a bone of contention among them, and appealing to Cæſar's ſupreme juriſdiction. Thus lived, wrote and died the apoſtles: propagating what they were convinced, upon the fulleſt evidence, was truth, with indefatigable induſtry, exemplifying the principles and tendency of the Goſpel by all the charms of a perſonal conduct, and by their illuſtrious piety, their diſintereſtedneſs, and their contempt of death, ſhewing that the Chriſtian religion was from God, and publicly ſealing its ſacred truth and divinity with their blood.

The rapid progreſs of the Goſpel at its publication an argument of its divine authority.

THE rapid and aſtoniſhing progreſs which Chriſtianity made in the world in a very few years after its publication, is an irrefragable argument of its divine authority and truth. According to the common courſe of things, how infinitely incredible was it, that the religion taught by an obſcure perſon, in an obſcure ſtation, in an obſcure country, ſhould, in ſo little a time, have ſo univerſal a diffuſion, and penetrate to the utmoſt boundaries of the Roman empire! According to all preſent appearances, how romantic and viſionary would the

the aſſertion of a private Jew ſeem to a philoſopher, who ſhould declare, that the principles of the ſect he had founded ſhould be preached to every creature under heaven! That a miſerable company of fiſhermen, from a country that was deſpicable to a proverb, without learning, and without intereſt, ſhould penetrate into the heart of ſo many various nations, ſhould eſtabliſh their tenets in the boſom of the largeſt cities, and gain converts to their principles in their courts of ſovereigns and princes, is a truth not to be accounted for on any principle but that of a ſignal divine interpoſition in their favour. Many illuſtrious miracles, undoubtedly, they performed, but the amazing propagation of religion by ſuch inſtruments, was the greateſt of miracles that ever was effected. Jewiſh and Pagan ſuperſtition ſtood confederated to cruſh their cauſe in its birth; the ax of the civil magiſtrate, abetted by the hierarchy, was every where uplifted againſt them; the populace, inviolably attached to the national worſhip, by nature fond of religious pomp, and by cuſtom the dupes of prieſtcraft, ſtood armed with all their collected force and fury to extirpate this hereſy from the world: yet, notwithſtanding all this oppoſition from prieſt and people, though it was every where ſpoken againſt, and the world regarded it as the moſt miſerable cauſe that ever was promulgated, hundreds and thouſands were converted by a ſermon, and this deſpiſed religion, propagated by ſuch deſpiſed inſtruments, flew from one country to another, throughout the whole extent of the Roman dominions, with the rapidity, with which lightning darts, at one immenſe ſweep, through all the intervening ſpace, from one extremity of heaven to another. "They "wreſtled not merely againſt fleſh and blood," the common prejudices of mankind, "but againſt principalities "and powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this "world, againſt ſpiritual wickedneſs in high places." How few and inconſiderable were the number of converts whom Socrates, or Plato, or Cicero, or Seneca made. Their tenets were circumſcribed within the narrow circle of their diſciples, their ſelect friends, and a few diſtinguiſhed geniuſes of refined taſte, of great leiſure, and poſſeſſed of a turn of mind congenial to philoſophic enquiry, and metaphyſical ſpeculation. What influence had the tenets of theſe eminent ſages upon the bulk of mankind? A ſingle city, a town, a village, they never brought over to their diſtinguiſhing principles, nor engaged them to live conformably to their doctrine. Notwithſtanding the ſhining treaſures of knowledge and erudition they poſſeſſed, notwithſtanding all the

powers

powers of eloquence with which they adorned and enforced their principles, and notwithſtanding all the intereſt and influence they enjoyed, both from the ſuperiority of their own perſonal authority and dignity in the ſtate, and from the countenance of the moſt illuſtrious and powerful men who lived in the age in which they flouriſhed, yet what ſlight and partial effects did all their united learning and eloquence produce among men! How far were they from promoting any general reformation in the world! How far from deriving any conſiderable benefit upon the minds, tempers, and morals of the multitude! How ſlow alſo were theſe ſeveral ſpecies of philoſophy in their progreſs; far from meeting any conſiderable reception in the age, in which they were publiſhed, and migrating from country to country with ſlow and timid ſteps, gaining only admirers among the philoſophic few. But the religion of Jeſus, like the city of Rome, from the loweſt beginning very ſoon encreaſed to an immenſe magnitude, and the ſame age, which ſaw it confined in the narrow limits of the ſmalleſt province, ſaw it fill the whole amplitude of the Roman territories. The apoſtles, and their fellow-labourers, before their deceaſe (and it ought to be remembered, in order to have a proper idea of the aſtoniſhing velocity with which Chriſtianity advanced, that few of its firſt publiſhers died a natural death) eſtabliſhed ſocieties of Chriſtians in Judæa, Samaria, Crete, Cyprus, Italy, Greece, Macedonia, Minor Aſia, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia; in the cities Cæſarea, Rome, Athens, Corinth, Theſſalonica, Philippi, Antioch, Epheſus, and in many other regions, towns, and cities. In all this immenſe tract of country, which they travelled, every where declaring, that the perſon, whoſe religion they taught, had been deſpiſed by his own countrymen, and crucified by the Romans! And what is more even than this; preaching a religion, and meeting with wonderful ſucceſs in preaching it, that was contrary to the pleaſures and paſſions of mankind, that laid an embargo upon all ſenſual indulgences, that indiſpenſably required from its profeſſors, temperance, ſelf-denial, and inviolable purity and ſanctity of manners, and was diametrically repugnant to the prevailing principles and maxims of thoſe times. It is wonderful, beyond all example, that a few illiterate Galileans, iſſuing from an obſcure corner of a diſtant Roman province, unlearned and unſupported, ſhould, in no long time, overturn the two greateſt eſtabliſhments that ever were erected in the world, and triumph over all the confederated power of every nation, that univerſally aſſociated to oppoſe them.

them. Such an aſtoniſhing and ſudden revolution in the religious and moral ſtate of the world, produced by ſuch agents, could be effected by nothing leſs than a moſt ſignal interpoſition of God, endowing theſe his meſſengers with ſupernatural powers, and viſibly ſupporting them in the cauſe in which they were engaged.

Great numbers of illuſtrious and learned men embraced the Goſpel.

THAT in the firſt ages, in which Chriſtianity was publiſhed, ſuch numbers of eminent and learned perſons embraced it, is a ſtrong collateral evidence of its credibility and truth. Greece and Italy were then the ſeats of learning and ſcience, and a love of literature and philoſophy was become generally faſhionable. Yet notwithſtanding this reigning paſſion, Chriſtianity made an amazing progreſs in theſe learned and civilized countries, and in a few years eſtabliſhed itſelf, in all the capital cities and towns ſo celebrated for the ſtudy of wiſdom and the improvement of the polite arts. Antioch, Theſſalonica, Corinth, Athens, ſaw Chriſtianity flouriſh amongſt all the ſects and ſyſtems of their renowned philoſophy. Nor could imperial Rome, the ſeat and centre of univerſal monarchy and univerſal learning, exclude it. It formed itſelf in her boſom, and penetrated into the very palace of the emperor. Nor can it be ſaid that it was only the untaught vulgar, and the credulous ſuperſtitious multitude that caught and ſpread the contagion, for ſome of the moſt eminent perſons, diſtinguiſhed for their rank both in the ſtate and in the republic of letters, were convinced by its evidences, and publicly embraced it, though by embracing it they were conſcious they ſhould incur the cenſures and reproaches of the world, be deemed to have fixed an indelible ſtain upon the luſtre of their birth, and the ſplendor of their families and ſtations, and forfeit many worldly privileges and emoluments. No doubt perſons of their ſagacity, penetration and diſcernment, would explore the evidences of this novel religion with the greateſt acuteneſs and preciſion, prejudiced in its diſfavour, as it had all external appearances, from the ignominious exit of its author, and the poverty and wretchedneſs of its preachers, to rivet their prejudices. But great is the force of truth in whatever garb it attires itſelf. Upon every virtuous and well diſpoſed mind it hath power irreſiſtible. It is to the everlaſting honour and credit of the Goſpel, that it can name among the liſts of its

early

early converts, ſuch men as Sergius Paulus, proconſul of Cyprus, Dionyſius, a member of the ſenate of Areopagus, Eraſtus, treaſurer of Corinth, and even the emperor's domeſtics. And in Judæa, the ſacred hiſtorians inform us, that great numbers of the moſt eminent and illuſtrious of that nation, believed Jeſus to be a divine meſſenger, though they did not chooſe publicly to avow their belief; that an illuſtrious member of the Jewiſh Sanhedrim was not only convinced himſelf, but endeavoured to convince others, and that many of the clergy aſſented to the truth of Chriſtianity. The conduct of theſe illuſtrious perſons, who, by their eminent ſtation and learned education, were in the beſt manner qualified to judge of its evidences, and who profeſſed their full conviction of its truth, when it had not the ſanction of any civil authority to eſtabliſh it, or any allurements of riches and power to recommend it, nor any thing to offer them, but public diſhonour and diſgrace, reflects an eternal luſtre both upon their characters who eſpouſed it, and upon the credentials that ſupported it. In proceſs of time great numbers of the moſt diſtinguiſhed rank and eminence for their dignity and abilities, notwithſtanding they had been educated in other religions, notwithſtanding the inveterate prejudices they had once conceived againſt the Chriſtian religion, notwithſtanding the ſacrifice they were obliged to make at its altar, of all their former ſenſual gratifications and indulgences, and notwithſtanding the immediate forfeiture of the affections of their friends and families, and the infamy and reproach they incurred, yet, to their everlaſting honour, being open to conviction and overcome by the power of truth, relinquiſhed their former erroneous ſyſtems, deſerted the national ſuperſtition, diſpelled their former prejudices, tore themſelves from the pleaſures and profits of the world, and in every country embraced Chriſtianity, and were afterwards, both in reſpect of learning and virtue, its diſtinguiſhed ornament and glory. Many of the ancient apologiſts were perſons of good learning, and well acquainted with the Heathen writers, and the Heathen philoſophy. The account they give of themſelves is; That they were brought up in the belief of that religion which was tranſmitted down to them by their anceſtors; that they had entertained the ſtrongeſt prejudices in favour of Paganiſm and the principles on which this ſyſtem was erected; that being trained up in the ſchools of philoſophy and in early life imbued with the love of truth and enquiry, being habituated to this exerciſe, they had carefully canvaſſed and examined the nature, doctrine,

trine, and tendency of the Gospel; and upon such deliberate and impartial examination were firmly persuaded it was a divine revelation. Justin Martyr, whose passion for truth was boundless, and who had carefully examined all the various opinions and principles of all the sects of philosophy, upon a diligent investigation of the evidences and excellence of the Gospel, received the fullest conviction of its divine authority, and in a flood of transport exclaims: This, have I found to be the only true and useful philosophy? Athenagoras, an Athenian philosopher, had entertained so unfavourable an opinion of the Christian religion, that he was determined to write against it: but upon an intimate enquiry into the facts on which it was supported, in the course of his collecting materials for his intended publication, he was convinced by the blaze of evidence in its favour, and turned his designed invective into an elaborate apology. Arnobius, a man of great learning and excellent judgment, who embraced Christianity in the reign of Diocletian, speaking of the amazing rapidity with which the Christian religion spread its triumphs in the world, observes, That persons of the first abilities and learning, orators, professors of the belles lettres, rhetoricians, lawyers, physicians, who had penetrated all the secret recesses of philosophy, despising the principles in which they had once confided, took up their rest in the philosophy of Jesus. Undoubtedly persons of their erudition and discernment would have been able to have detected and exposed any flaws in its original facts and evidences, were it possible any such could have been discovered; and persons of their integrity and probity would have discarded it with horror and contempt, if upon bringing its credentials to the test of truth and history, it should have appeared to them to have been supported on nothing better than credulity and enthusiasm, and upon scrutinizing and sifting its nature and story, it should have evinced itself to be nothing but a cunningly devised fable, invented by an artful impostor in the wilds of Judæa, and propagated in the world by a wretched company of deluded enthusiasts. But Christianity approving itself to these eminent philosophers in those ancient times, as it hath done, in our days, to the Bacons, the Boyles, the Lockes, the Addisons, and the Newtons, to be the cause of God, and the wisdom of God, is a public monument of all ages. That Christianity will bear the severest scrutiny, that it is founded on truth, and the more accurately it is viewed in every light, in which learning and genius can

view it, the more ſtrong and ſtriking will the heavenly flame of all its united evidences appear.

The effects, which the Goſpel produced on the minds of men, a proof of its divine truth.

THE effect this religion produced upon the minds and morals of mankind is a public and ſignal teſtimony of its divine veracity and excellence. Every one knows that at the time when Chriſtianity was publiſhed, the world was ſunk in deplorable and almoſt univerſal idolatry, ſuperſtition and immorality. "The whole world," as the ſacred writers metaphorically expreſs it, "lay in wickedneſs, was become "guilty before God, and were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins." This religion, riſing in all its divine ſplendor upon a benighted world, and ſhining with all its heavenly radiance amidſt this baleful gloom of general profligacy and depravity, did ſoon, in a very conſiderable degree, diſpel the miſts of error and vice in which mankind were involved, and repreſent their duty and happineſs in the ſtrongeſt point of view. It awakened men's attention to it by its ſolemn proclamations, which it ſounded in the ears of all, to repent and reform, for a day was approaching in which God would ſummon all the human race before his dread tribunal. It uttered the moſt pathetic exhortations to all, enforced by the moſt affecting arguments, immediately to relinquiſh their former abandoned purſuits, to forſake the ſenſual and immoral practices and habits in which they had hitherto lived, and to let the preſent moment be the happy date of an entire renovation of heart and life. To deter the world from that unbounded diſſoluteneſs and licentiouſneſs, in which they ſhameleſsly indulged themſelves, they ſtrongly repreſented to them the denunciations of the Almighty againſt ſuch atrocious crimes, and the dreadful puniſhment that God would aſſuredly inflict upon all impenitent and incorrigible ſinners. This awakening doctrine corroborated by miracles, confirmed by ſuch indubitable evidences of its truth, and enforced by the example of thoſe who delivered it, had all its effect. It opened the mental eye which ſuperſtition had blinded, it turned men from darkneſs to light, from Satan to God, and transformed them, by the renewing of their minds, to approve and obey the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. What a wonderful reformation Chriſtianity produced in the world, and what an amazing effect it had upon the lives

lives and morals of men, we have a faithful portrait held up by the apoſtle for us to contemplate, that we and all future ages may ſee what power the Goſpel, at its firſt publication, had to reclaim and reform a depraved world. Corinth was the ſeat of effeminacy and ſoftneſs. The morals of that polite and celebrated city were to the laſt degree corrupt. It was here Comus held his court, and the goddeſs of pleaſure ſwayed her ſceptre. Corinth was the region of debauchery and profligacy, and its inhabitants trod an eternal round of amuſement, diverſion, voluptuouſneſs and univerſal diſſipation. The apoſtle, at his coming, found the city diſſolved in theſe abandoned purſuits: but in a little time Chriſtianity produced a different face of things. Hear how he deſcribes the ſtate in which he found Corinth at his firſt arrival in that place; and the ſtate in which he left it. "Neither forni-
"cators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor
"abuſers of themſelves with mankind, nor thieves, nor co-
"vetous, nor drunkards, nor extortioners, ſhall inherit the
"kingdom of God: and ſuch were ſome of you formerly;
"but now you are waſhed, but now you are ſanctified, now
"you are juſtified in the name of the Lord Jeſus, and by
"the ſpirit of our God." What leſs than a religion ſupported by God and confirmed by miracles could effect ſuch an amazing change in ſo profligate and depraved a city? The Chriſtian religion, wherever it ſpread its triumphs, diffuſed alſo the triumphs of piety and holineſs. The primitive Chriſtians were not leſs famous for the perſecutions they ſuſtained than the irreproachable characters they ſupported. Many are the teſtimonies to their harmleſs inoffenſive lives, to their fervent devotion, their inviolable probity and integrity, and to their purity and ſanctity of manners. Heathens bear an honourable teſtimony to their innocence, and the firſt apologiſts are full of ſolemn and public appeals to the Roman emperor and ſenate, to whom they publicly addreſſed their defences of Chriſtianity, for the ſtrict morals and unblamable converſation of the profeſſors of the Goſpel; even publicly reſting the truth of their religion upon the holineſs of their lives who embraced it, and calling upon them to produce any thing ſcandalous and immoral in the public or private conduct of thoſe who called themſelves Chriſtians.

What influence the Goſpel had upon the minds of men, appears from that heroic fortitude and that magnanimity, great beyond all example, with which they ſupported the moſt ingenious tortures that the wit and rage of their perſecutors could inflict, and the moſt cruel and lingering deaths

which their enemies could make them die. Such a firm perſuaſion and full conviction poſſeſſed their minds that their religion was divine, that the immortality it offered was no fable, and the bleſſedneſs it promiſed was a great and glorious reality, that they went to the ſtake, to the racks, and wheels, and engines of their perſecutors, with a fortitude and intrepidity human philoſophy never boaſted, ſupported the trial with a calm and ſerene compoſure; and appeared in the midſt of ſuch a death, with joy and exultation impreſſed on their countenance. The bravery and greatneſs of ſoul with which the martyrs ſuffered and died had all its effects upon the ſpectators, excited great numbers to enquire into the principles of a religion which had ſuch power and force in cauſing its profeſſors thus to triumph over the greateſt of human evils; and the reſult of ſuch an enquiry, excited by ſuch an event, was conviction. Juſtin Martyr tells us, that what firſt engaged him to enquire into the grounds and principles of the Chriſtian religion was, the ſeeing its profeſſors ſupport their ſufferings with that invincible firmneſs and conſtancy, which all the various ſects of philoſophy had never been able to inſpire. Whence, but from God, could a religion have its origin, which could make men perſiſt and glory in the profeſſion of it, though every human evil menaced them; to diſavow and openly abjure their belief of which, no ſufferings could ever impel them, and who, inſtead of renouncing it, when by renouncing it they might have eſcaped all this ignominy, ſuffering and torture, and lived in eaſe, credit, and affluence, choſe rather to endure a great fight of affliction, to be made a gazing ſtock to angels and men, both by public reproaches and afflictions, taking joyfully the ſpoiling of their goods, and reſigning every domeſtic endearment, every ſecular advantage, and life itſelf, knowing in themſelves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring ſubſtance. Chriſtianity hath, moreover, produced the happieſt effects upon the mind in ſoftening its ferocity and humanizing the heart. The very genius and tendency of this bleſſed religion is to inſpire its profeſſors with mercy, love, compaſſion, benevolence, and the moſt kind and generous affections. This its ſelecteſt influence it hath ſhed upon whole ſocieties, communities, and nations, of thoſe who have embraced it. From the Chriſtian world, that barbarous and deteſtable practice, ſo prevalent in Heathen countries, of expoſing infants on mountains and in woods, moſt miſerably to periſh, is for ever baniſhed. To treat with politeneſs and humanity unhappy captives in war, who, in Pagan times, were ſometimes

butchered

butchered in cold blood, ſometimes put into mines to drudge for life, but generally ſold for ſlaves, is an eſtabliſhed cuſtom among all Chriſtian nations. Human ſacrifices ſlain to placate the Divinity, ſo common in Heathen countries, are now for ever ceaſed. The Goſpel hath refined the morals, ſweetened the diſpoſitions, and harmonized the minds, of large collective bodies and vaſt populous nations, and by the cement of its benevolent conciliating principles hath united them to each other in the bonds of a generous and endearing philanthropy, and engaged them to interweave humanity and mercy even in crowns of laurel that are dipped in blood. How ſuperior Chriſtians are in point of morals to all Pagan countries, however civilized by arts and ſciences, and impartial compariſon will evince. The beſt modern accounts of the morality of China prove the aſſertion of Leibnitz to be falſe and groundleſs, who declared that inſtead of our ſending miſſionaries over to China to teach them religion, they ought rather to ſend miſſionaries over to us to teach the Europeans morality. The Goſpel hath done ſignal and diſtinguiſhed ſervice in forming the manners both of individuals and of nations, in having extirpated many cruel and abominable uſages, which always reigned, and now reign, in Heathen nations, in having civilized a very large extent of the globe, and inſpiring men every where with humane and ſocial affections. Theſe happy fruits and effects, as they are the faireſt harveſt any religion coming from God can raiſe, ſo they obtain more generally, I am convinced, than the ſuggeſtions of uncharitableneſs, and the voice of infidelity, would perſuade us. For great numbers in every Chriſtian nation, I believe, though loſt in ſilence and oblivion among the buſy ſcenes of this world, make conſcience of diſcharging their Chriſtian duties, tread, through this tranſitory life, a regular path of Chriſtian virtue, tho' of all the world unknowing and unknown, and in acts of fervent devotion, in benevolent affections, in well governed paſſions, in an amiable uniform tenor of temperance, moderation and contentment, and in the joyful expectation of an happy immortality, exemplify the power, force, and divinity of the Chriſtian principles.

The preſent ſtate of the Jews an argument in favour of the truth of Chriſtianity.

THE preſent ſtate of the Jews is a wonderful confirmation of the truth of the Chriſtian religion. This is a ſtanding permanent miracle, perpetuated through a ſeries of many ſucceſſive ages, to our times. The Aſſyrians, Babylonians,

Carthaginians, Macedonians, are now no more. Their names have long ſince been ſwallowed up and confounded with thoſe of their conquerors. But in this diſtinguiſhed inſtance we ſee the vanquiſhed for many ages ſurvive the victors, and remain a diſtinct ſeparate community and body among all the various nations into which they are ſcattered. We know this people to ſubſiſt in very conſiderable numbers, in almoſt all the nations of the world, and though the univerſal banter, deriſion and contempt of every nation, though fleeced, plundered, perſecuted by every nation in which they ſojourn, yet every where exiſting as a large, opulent, and flouriſhing body. We ſee them retain the ſame veneration for their ancient lawgiver and his laws, they ever retained, and practiſing the peculiar rites and ceremonies of their religion with the ſame punctilious and ſcrupulous exactneſs they ever obſerved. The author of our religion expreſsly declared that Jeruſalem ſhould be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and both ancient and modern hiſtory ſets its ſeal to the truth of this account; and aſſures us it hath lain in this deplorable condition for above ſeventeen hundred years. The author of our religion predicted, that, after the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by the Romans, the Jews ſhould be diſperſed into all nations. We ſee the diſperſion of this people, otherwiſe unaccountable, and cannot but acknowledge, that the evidence of a religion which contains ſuch a prophecy, made at a time when there were no appearances of ſuch a diſperſion, much leſs of its ſubſiſting for ſuch a long ſeries of ages, is continually encreaſing, and receiving acceſſion to its credentials from the accumulation of every additional period of revolving years. How can we account for this melancholy ſtate of the once favourite and diſtinguiſhed people of God? They have now experienced, not ſeventy, but ſeventeen hundred years of captivity! They have now no divine meſſenger, as formerly, to conſole their ſorrows, no prophet to give them an happy proſpect of their return, no deliverer to vindicate them into liberty, and reconduct them to the land of their anceſtors; they continue unſettled vagabonds, the jeſt and proverb of the world. There muſt be ſome ſignal event, from which one muſt date theſe remarkable calamities, ſome horrid national crime, ſome time or other perpetrated, which purſues them and their children, and ſome future cataſtrophe to which this remarkable preſervation of them as a diſtinct people in all the nations of the world, muſt refer, and which providence deſigned ſhould unravel this perplexed and intricate plot. And he who conſiders how exactly the predictions of Jeſus were fulfilled in the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the extermination

extermination of the Jews: who ſees his prophecies now fulfilling in the world, with regard to the preſent ſtate of this remarkable people: who alſo reflects that there will come a time when all Iſrael will be ſaved, and, according to the prophecies, return to their country, and that whenever this event ſhall happen, there is nothing to detain them, no poſſeſſions to retard them a moment, no civil and ſocial connections with other nations to fix them in any country; muſt collect from what is already accompliſhed, and is now accompliſhing, the ſtrongeſt external proof in favour of the truth of the Chriſtian religion, and with equal aſſurance perſuade himſelf, from the predictions already verified, that the other parts of them will, in due time, receive their accompliſhment.

The ſubſequent corruptions of the Chriſtian religion an argument of its truth.

A GREAT argument in favour of the truth of Chriſtianity, ariſes from thoſe corruptions which it predicts that men would in ſubſequent ages introduce into its doctrine and worſhip. Who that had lived in thoſe days, when Chriſtianity was forming and ſtruggling under all the incumbent weight of Jewiſh bigotry and Pagan perſecution, could from the ſtate of things, poſſibly have conjectured, that in future times ſuch a monſter as popery would ever have been nurſed and foſtered in its boſom? That a riſing ſect, every where vilified and outraged, would ever give birth to a tyrant, who would ſit and ſwell in the temple of God, claim the title of God, and wave a ſceptre of univerſal ſpiritual empire. Who, that beheld the low eſtate of the Chriſtian church in thoſe wretched times, could ever have divined, that a remarkable character would one day ariſe out of it, who ſhould eſtabliſh a vaſt monarchy, whoſe appearance would be "after "the working of Satan, with all power and ſigns and "lying wonders, and with all the deceivableneſs of un-"righteouſneſs;" that this perſon would "oppoſe and exalt "himſelf above all that is called God;" and that when a certain impediment and obſtacle was removed, he would oſtentatiouſly reveal himſelf to the world in all the pomp and grandeur of his impiouſly aſſumed authority. How picturesque and ſtriking a repreſentation is this of the pope, and of thoſe falſe miracles and that deluſive juggle and artifice, with which the popiſh religion ſupports itſelf. What human mind, however ſagacious and acute in diſcernment, could ever have conceived that the pure religion of Jeſus ſhould ſo far have been vitiated and depraved as to ſanctify the moſt ſuperſti-

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tious practices; that men, in future time, who believed and embraced it, ſhould yet ſo far depart from its ſimplicity as to "give heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and the doctrine of dæmons, "forbidding to marry, commanding abſtinence from certain "kinds of food, tho' God created it to be received with "thankſgiving." The exiſtence of popery, that moſt daring and monſtrous corruption of the purity and ſimplicity of the Goſpel, which no human penetration could have foreſeen, and which is pourtrayed with ſuch an accuracy and exactneſs that no one can fail of recogniſing the face, is a great confirmation and ſtanding monument of the truth of the Goſpel, and demonſtrates thoſe perſons to have been divinely inſpired who wrote theſe books, and circumſtantially predicted future events and future corruptions of religion, infinitely beyond the reach of all conception and diſcernment merely human.

On the State of the World at Chriſt's appearance.

PROFANE as well as ſacred hiſtory informs us that the age in which Chriſtianity made its appearance, was enormouſly impious, profligate and corrupt. The Jews, at that time, were a race of hypocrites. All orders, diſtinctions, and degrees among them, had, as it were, unanimouſly agreed that religion was a farce, and that its eſſence conſiſted in nothing but grimace and foppery, pomp and oſtentation. They were loſt ſo far to all ſenſe of public decency as to convert even their temple into a market, and ſuffer its ſacred courts to ſerve the convenient purpoſes of the moſt ſordid and deſpicable traffic. Such was the unexampled oſtentation and hypocriſy of their doctors and rabbies, that they made public proclamation, by the ſound of a trumpet, when they diſtributed charity, and would kneel down at the corners of crowded ſtreets, and there pour out their devotion, with no other view but to draw upon them the eyes of the ſuperſtitious multitude, and make themſelves admired and applauded as patterns of heavenly-mindedneſs. Their ultimate object, in all the acts of religion they performed, was to be ſeen of men, and ſecure the vain breath of popular applauſe. For this purpoſe their great men lengthened the fringes of their garments to an enormous ſize, wore their phylacteries moſt oſtentatiouſly broad, paraded in the market and in all places of public concourſe in long flowing robes, regaling on the fumes of incenſe which ſervile adulation offered, and ſwelling with the pompous titles with which they were addreſſed. The whole nation ſeems to have been infected with ſpiritual pride, the

the moſt odious and deteſtable ſpecies of pride. They ſacrificed every thing to ſhew and pageantry. They would devour widow's houſes, deprive the friendleſs widow and the deſtitute orphan of their juſt property, and yet all the while aſſume the moſt mortified appearance, disfigure their faces that they might appear to men to faſt, uſe affectedly long prayers, and, though they would not heſitate a moment to infringe the ſtrongeſt moral obligations, juſtice, judgment, mercy and truth, would yet at the ſame time, obſerve, with the moſt ſcrupulous and punctilious exactneſs, all the little ceremonious tricks about the tithe of mint, aniſe and cummin, and the ridiculous traditionary maxims of their rabbinical anceſtors. Every thing was venal. The high-prieſthood was ſet to ſale. Nothing but hypocriſy and ſelf-intereſt ſwayed them. They were torn into ſeveral religious factions, and ſplit into ſects and parties, which, agreeably to the national acrimony and the innate complexional virulence and choler of this people, purſued each other with the moſt implacable fury and deadly hatred. How univerſally depraved and abandoned the Jewiſh nation was at this time, appears from the following teſtimony of Joſephus. Both publicly and privately, ſays this hiſtorian, they were univerſally corrupt. They vied which ſhould paſs each other in impiety againſt God, and injuſtice towards men. The great men harraſſed the people, and the people ſtudied to ruin the great. In one word, ſays he in another place, there never was a city that ſuffered ſuch calamities, nor a race of men from the foundation of the world that ever was more profligate and abandoned. The following paſſage in the ſame writer is a celebrated one. I cannot forbear, ſays he, declaring my opinion, though the declaration fills me with great emotion and regret, that if the Romans had delayed to come againſt theſe wretches, the city would either have been ingulphed by an earthquake, overwhelmed by a deluge, or deſtroyed by fire from heaven, as Sodom was: for that generation was far more enormouſly wicked than thoſe who ſuffered theſe calamities.

A moſt hideous and horrid picture preſents itſelf to our view, when we ſurvey the ſtate of the Heathens at that time. It is impoſſible to conceive human nature more degraded and abaſed. The deities they worſhipped were monſters of cruelty, luſt and drunkenneſs. Their Jupiter is repreſented as a compound of luſt and luxury, omnipotence and revenge, to be inſtigated by fury which nothing could placate, and by libidinous deſires which nothing could ſatiate. Riot and revel in honour of Bacchus was publicly countenanced. Proſtitutions

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in honour of Venus had the ſanction of the ſtate. How many lovely infants did the Carthaginians ſacrifice to their implacable god Moloch? How many human victims in times of public danger, did they immolate to appeaſe the reſentment of the offended gods? And what was the moſt deplorable conſequence with regard to morals, mankind, as is natural, imitated the objects of their worſhip in what they eſteemed their excellencies! They juſtified the moſt criminal and atrocious exceſſes by the example of their gods, and vindicated the practice of debauchery, luxury, fraud, and intemperance, by the lives and actions of the eſtabliſhed objects of their adoration. They believed in the exiſtence of many co-ordinate deities. Tertullian tells us their Jupiters amounted to three hundred. The number of their inferior gods was infinite. There were deities, according to the vulgar eſtimation, that preſided over every diſtinct nation, every diſtinct city, every inconſiderable town, every grove, every river, every fountain. Athens was full of ſtatues, dedicated to different deities. Rome, from political principles, adopted all the gods, whom all the various nations reſpectively worſhipped, and thought to eternize her empire by crowding all the immortal powers into the capital. They erected temples and fanes to all the paſſions, diſeaſes, fears, and evils that infeſt human life. There were, according to Varro, no leſs than three hundred different ſentiments about the ſupreme good and higheſt felicity of mortals. The Epicureans, who taught that the world was formed by a caſual concourſe of atoms, that the government of the world was buſineſs infinitely beneath the dignity of God, and that ſenſual pleaſure was man's chief good, were the moſt flouriſhing ſect, had the greateſt number of noble and dignified perſonages who eſpouſed it, as among the Jews, the Sadducees, whoſe diſtinguiſhing tenets were, that there was no future ſtate, angel, or ſpirit, but that the ſoul periſhes with the body, had by far the greateſt number of the illuſtrious and opulent, who adopted this ſyſtem. Conſiderable numbers, alſo, of the philoſophers and great men among the Heathens, about the time of the Goſpel's publication, courted the gloom of ſcepticiſm, profeſſed to doubt of every thing, denied there was any ſuch thing as certainty attainable from any moral reaſonings, and that it was abſolutely impoſſible to determine on which ſide, not truth, for they did not pretend to inveſtigate and diſcover truth, but even on what ſide the greateſt probability lay. Great numbers made the notion of an over-ruling and particular providence the ſubject of their banter and ridicule,

ridicule, and derided the ſuperſtitious vulgar opinion of a future ſtate: and thoſe, who believed the immortality of the ſoul, made its happineſs conſiſt in gratifications and indulgences, infinitely unworthy a rational ſpirit. In theſe wretched times it was alſo very cuſtomary to expoſe children, and to ſuffer thoſe, who were maimed or illegitimate, to periſh with hunger on mountains and in foreſts, or to be devoured by birds or beaſts of prey. It is amazing that Plato deems this inhuman cuſtom proper, and lawful in particular caſes. Debauchery was the predominant vice in that age, and to procure abortion was publicly avowed as a duty in many inſtances. Suicide was in faſhion, and many of the moſt eminent philoſophers ſet their ſeal to its lawfulneſs. A careful peruſal of the firſt, ſecond, and third chapters of the Romans, will give my reader a full idea of the horrid impiety and univerſal profligacy both of the Jews and Gentiles in that age. In all the paſt annals of the world never was there a fitter ſeaſon for the divine interpoſition to reform and reclaim mankind, to recover them from their polytheiſm, idolatry, and wickedneſs, and to give them a pure and perfect ſyſtem of religion and morals.

In all points of doctrine and duty, the books of the New Teſtament have deſcended to us in their original integrity.

THE writings, which contain this revelation, have not been corrupted in any one eſſential inſtance of doctrine and duty, but in this capital reſpect have deſcended to our times in their primitive ſtate and original purity. When the books of the New Teſtament were firſt publiſhed to the world, it is natural to think that the Chriſtians would entertain the higheſt eſteem and reverence for writings which delivered an authentic hiſtory of the life and doctrines of Jeſus, and for records which contained a divine revelation. Every one would be deſirous of poſſeſſing ſuch an invaluable treaſure, and of tranſcribing it with the greateſt accuracy and utmoſt fidelity. Copies of theſe books would ſoon be multiplied without number, univerſally diſſeminated in the whole extent of the Chriſtian world, and appear in as many tranſlations as there were languages ſpoken by its profeſſors. So that it would very ſoon be rendered abſolutely impoſſible that theſe books ſhould be depraved and adulterated in any one important paſſage, or even in any one important word or phraſe. For theſe ſacred records being univerſally regarded as the ſupreme ſtandard of truth, and the meaſure of all religious

ligious opinions, it would be impoſſible that any man, or body of men, ſhould corrupt and falſify them in any fundamental article, ſhould foiſt into them even a ſingle expreſſion to favour their peculiar dogmata, or eraſe from them any ſentence, without being detected by thouſands. A book, juſtly eſteemed ſo venerable and ſacred by every individual of ſuch an immenſe body as the Chriſtians ſoon formed, was, leaſt of all, obnoxious to pious frauds, and to be tampered with by the raſh and profane hand of ſect and ſyſtem, to ſerve a cauſe. Some ſlight and trivial alterations, indeed, in later ages, have been transferred into the text from tranſlations, or introduced through the negligence of tranſcribers; but they have ſoon been detected and proſcribed. For it could not be, at any one time, that any the ſmalleſt additions ſhould be made, or any the ſmalleſt words ſuppreſſed, without being diſcovered. For to theſe books men were continually appealing: theſe books all Chriſtians were continually peruſing and conſulting: theſe books all ſocieties publicly read, and publicly and privately regarded as the ſupreme infallible rule of faith and doctrine. Beſides, almoſt immediately upon the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity there aroſe various ſects who formed themſelves into different ſocieties under their reſpective leaders, which always regarded each other with a jealous eye. Theſe ſeveral parties watched over the Scriptures, to which they all mutually appealed, with an ever wakeful vigilance and penetration, which not the leaſt alteration could poſſibly have eſcaped. Theſe religious diſputes and conteſts have proved an happy means of preſerving the Scriptures in their original purity, incorrupt and unadulterated; for it is impoſſible that in any one age the whole Chriſtian world could have combined to new-model and adjuſt theſe books to their ſentiments, becauſe there never was an age in which all the Chriſtians were unanimouſly agreed in the ſame ſyſtem of doctrine and articles of belief. Different opinions have always prevailed, and ever will prevail, and every different denomination hath ſtudied and will for ever ſtudy, to juſtify its mode of faith by the common ſupreme ſtandard of ſcriptural infallibility. Moreover, the citations made from theſe writings in all the religious books that have been compoſed by different men in different centuries of the church from the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, through all the intermediate times to the preſent, perfectly agree and harmonize with the Sacred Original in our hands, and are an inconteſtable proof that this Divine Volume hath, in every great eſſential, been tranſmitted down to us in its primitive purity

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and original integrity. The citations from the New Teſtament in the writings of the primitive Chriſtians in the firſt centuries are ſo numerous, that from the various ſcattered paſſages in their books, if collected, there would be formed almoſt the whole body of the goſpels and epiſtles: and though theſe citations were, moſt commonly, made from memory, yet always with regard to the ſenſe and meaning, and moſt commonly with regard to the words and order of the words, they correſpond with the original records from which they were extracted. An irrefragable argument this, how pure and ſincere theſe Sacred Monuments have always been preſerved. And though of late years many pious perſons, who have not attended to theſe things, have been alarmed, and many infidels, who triumph in any thing that they imagine tends to depreciate and invalidate the Chriſtian religion, have exulted at the diſcovery of thirty thouſand various readings in the New Teſtament, yet every critic and ſcholar, who is competently qualified to judge in this ſubject, knows that this is a moſt favourable and happy ſtate of things. The more that copies are multiplied, and the more numerous that tranſcripts and tranſlations from the original are, the more likely is the true text, and the true original reading to be inveſtigated and aſcertained. The moſt correct and accurate ancient books we now have, are thoſe of which we have the moſt manuſcripts; and the moſt depraved, mutilated, and inaccurate editions of old authors that are now in our hands, are thoſe of which we have the feweſt, perhaps but a ſingle manuſcript. This formidable number, as it is thought by ſome, of various lections in the New Teſtament, principally converſant in particles, in ſpelling proper names, in the ſubſtitution of ſynonymous expreſſions, and the tranſpoſition of the order of words, only demonſtrates that theſe books had been often tranſcribed, and afford us the happieſt and beſt opportunity, by a careful and judicious collation, for determining, fixing and eſtabliſhing the original reading. Not to mention, that the providence of God, who was at ſuch an expence, if I may ſo expreſs it, in giving this revelation and ratifying its truth by the death of his beloved Son, and who, from eternal ages, deſigned that this religion ſhould conſtitute the faith and hope of ſuch infinite numbers of his rational and immortal creatures, and, at laſt, become the religion of the whole world, would moſt certainly never permit its divine beauty and celeſtial form to be fully and totally obſcured in the depravity and darkneſs of any age or nation, but would preſerve it, in every eſſential and fundamental article of doctrine

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and duty, from being altered and corrupted by pious frauds; and by his Almighty power and gracious ſuperintendence ever continue to make its ſacred ſtreams to flow from one ſucceſſive age to another in their original clearneſs, fulneſs, and uſefulneſs, free from the pollutions of irrational enthuſiaſm and mercenary ſuperſtition, and uncontaminated with the ſeveral baſe admixtures of any human modes, ſentiments and ſyſtems. *Introduction to the New Teſtament.*

7. Rev. Jonathan Dickinson.

General view of the evidences of Chriſtianity.

WHAT evidence do you deſire or want of the truth of Chriſtianity? Conſider, Sir; conſult your books and your friends. Make your demands as large as you or they can contrive; and whatever rational evidence you are pleaſed to aſk for, ſhall be at your ſervice. I have myſelf, with particular application, been conſidering what reaſonable evidence can poſſibly be conſulted or deſired, which the glorious God has not already given us, in confirmation of the Chriſtian inſtitution; and I find nothing wanting, which we are capable of receiving. And I cannot but preſume, that if you likewiſe would impartially, and in earneſt, put yourſelf upon the ſame enquiry, you muſt meet with a full and complete ſatisfaction.

You will certainly acknowledge, that the great Creator is capable, ſome way or other, to communicate his will to intelligent beings, with ſufficient evidence that the revelation is from him. Now what I deſire of you is, to ſit down, and conſult upon ſome ſuch means of doing this, as would ſtrike your mind with the ſtrongeſt conviction, obviate all your doubts; and give the fulleſt confirmation of the divine original of ſuch a revelation. When you are come to a point, conſider the credentials of Chriſtianity: and ſee whether you can find what you yourſelf would demand, and what you ſuppoſe moſt likely to give you ſatisfaction.

Would you expect from ſuch a revelation, a reaſonable account of our firſt original? Look into the Moſaic hiſtory of the creation; and there you will find, how the world, and how yourſelf originally ſprung from the divine fiat; and in what manner we are the offſpring of God.

Would you expect a narrative of ſuch circumſtances of God's diſpenſations towards us from the beginning, as would be correſpondent with our conſtant experience and obſervation? The ſame hiſtory will inform you of thoſe irregular affections,

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and vitiated appetites and paſſions, which every man finds in himſelf; and which have brought ſuch deſtruction and miſery upon the world, in its ſucceſſive periods, ſince Adam's fall.

Would you expect that there ſhould be early intimations of the method of our recovering from the ſtate of ſin and guilt, which we had brought ourſelves into by our apoſtacy? You will there alſo find the gracious promiſe, "that the ſeed "of the woman ſhall break the ſerpent's head:" and deliver us from the deadly effects of his malicious temptation.

Would you deſire to find a particular prediction of the promiſed Saviour, by whom we are to obtain a redemption; his lineage and deſcent, the time, place, and manner of his birth, the circumſtances of his life, death, and reſurrection, a particular deſcription of the nature, the ſubjects, and the continual progreſs of his kingdom? Read the prophecies of the Old Teſtament; and read the hiſtory in the New; and you will find ſuch a correſpondence and agreement, as will afford you matter of the fulleſt ſatisfaction, that they are both from God.

Would you expect, that there ſhould be ſome means to keep the promiſed Saviour in the continued view of God's people, before his actual and perſonal manifeſtation; and to keep alive their faith and hope in him? What were all their ſacrifices, their legal purifications, their prieſthood, and all their long train of rites and ceremonies, but inſtitutions purpoſely adapted to that end?

Would you expect repeated and renewed teſtimonies from heaven, to the profeſſing people of God, that their religion was from him; and that their faith and hope excited by theſe typical inſtitution, were built upon a ſure foundation? Such were the miracles frequently wrought among them, the manifeſtation of the divine preſence in the Shechinah, their Urim and Thummim, their frequent oracles, their ſucceſſion of prophets, whoſe predictions reſpecting the Jews themſelves and the nations round about them, were continually fulfilled and fulfilling before their eyes; and the accompliſhment of many of them are apparently open and viſible to us alſo.

Would you ſuppoſe, that near the predicted time of our Saviour's appearance, not only the Jewiſh nation but all others that were acquainted with their ſacred books, would live in raiſed expectations of this great and wonderful event? You will find in the goſpels, in Joſephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius, that this was the caſe in fact.

Would

Would you expect, that when the Saviour did appear, he would by the holineſs and beneficence of his life, and by numerous, open, and uncontested miracles, give ſuch atteſtation to his divine miſſion, as would be ſufficient evidence, that he was indeed the Meſſiah ſo frequently predicted, and ſo earneſtly expected? Don't the ſacred hiſtorians anſwer your higheſt expectations in this reſpect? In them you find, that the dead were raiſed, the ſick healed, the maimed reſtored to the uſe of their limbs, the ſight of the blind recovered, the deaf brought to their hearing, the lepers cleanſed, the demons ejected, and in a word, that the whole time of his miniſtry was a continued ſucceſſion of the moſt beneficent and aſtoniſhing miracles: miracles as ſurpriſing in their nature as their number, ſuch as vaſtly exceeded the power of all created beings; and were therefore the ſtrongeſt teſtimony from heaven, that this Saviour moſt certainly was what he profeſſed himſelf to be.

Would you expect that this Saviour ſhould verify his divine miſſion to future times, by prophecies of ſucceeding events? Don't the evangeliſts afford you many inſtances of ſuch predictions, which have been clearly and fully accompliſhed? In theſe hiſtorians you will find, how they foretold the treaſon of Judas, the ſhameful fall of Peter, with the flight of all his diſciples, in that gloomy, dreadful night, "when the ſhepherd was ſmitten, and the ſheep ſcattered." In theſe you will find, how he foretold the time and manner of his death, the term of his continuance in the grave, with his glorious reſurrection and aſcenſion. You will there alſo find him foretelling the miſſion, divine inſpiration, miraculous powers, and glorious ſucceſs of his apoſtles, and their fellow-labourers in the goſpel miniſtry. Theſe hiſtorians do likewiſe ſet before you, his particular prediction of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, and the abolition of the temple, with the prodigies which preceded, the tribulation which accompanied, and the diſperſion of the Jewiſh nation which followed that amazing deſolation. And don't it ſurpriſe you to find from Joſephus, that the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the twenty-firſt chapter of Luke, are more like a hiſtory than a prophecy of that dreadful event? If you ſhould yet further expect ſome predictions from him, that extend to the preſent times, and are now viſibly accompliſhed before your eyes; has he not foretold, and do you not find it true, that Jeruſalem ſhall continue to be "trodden down "of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be ful-"filled?"

Would

Would you expect, that when this Messiah, according to the prophecies concerning him, was cut off, he should "declare himself the Son of God with power, by his resur-"rection from the dead?" And has it not appeared true, that no precaution by sealing his tomb, and setting a guard over it, could prevent his triumph over the grave, and his appearing to a great number of his disciples, and frequently and familiarly conversing with some of them for forty days together; and finally ascending up to heaven before their eyes?

Would you expect that his disciples should be extraordinarily and peculiarly qualified for their great work; and sent forth to the nations with sufficient credentials to confirm their testimony, and make their doctrines credible? What greater furniture can you possibly suppose needful in such a case, than for a number of unlearned men and women, to be instantaneously endued with an intimate and familiar acquaintance with all sorts of languages; and (not as pretended by some Energumens and the modern French prophets, have their organs of speech improved by the devil, in pronouncing languages which they did not understand, but) capable constantly and familiarly to converse with every nation in their own proper speech; and with great propriety to write, and transmit to posterity the history and religion of their Lord and Master, in a foreign language which they had never learned. Can you, Sir, possibly imagine a greater and brighter display of the immediate agency and omnipotent power of the glorious Author of our beings, than thus at once to enlarge the mind, and furnish it with such an amazing extent of knowledge, "while God himself has "borne them witness, with signs and wonders, and with di-"vers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to "his own will?"

Suppose you should see some unlearned rustics, with whom you are acquainted, pretending to a new revelation, and confirming their pretences, by speaking familiarly all the languages of Europe, by healing the sick and decrepid with a word, raising the dead to life, and striking men dead by a word, revealing the secrets of other men's hearts, communicating these and such like powers to others, by the imposition of their hands; and declaring to you, that it was not by their own power or holiness that they performed these works; should you find the strictest holiness and conformity to the divine nature, joined with these miraculous powers; would you not believe the truth of these pretentions? Would you not acknowledge, that God was in them of a truth?

Would you expect that thoſe men, who were ſent out to preach and propagate a new religion in the world, ſhould themſelves be inſpired with a prophetic ſpirit, and capable to foretel future events? And is not this alſo viſibly fact in the caſe before us? Have they not diſtinctly foretold the ſtate and fate of the church in all its periods, until the conſummation of all things? Don't we ourſelves ſee their predictions exactly and circumſtantially verified, with reſpect to the riſe, reign and rage of Antichriſt; and with reſpect to the Jews ſtill continuing a diſtinct people, and remaining in their unbelief, until God ſhall again graft them into the olive-tree, from whence they have been cut off?

Would you expect, that the Meſſiah ſhould proſper and ſucceed thoſe diſciples, whom he ſhould ſend out to propagate the Goſpel among the nations, by the converſion of multitudes to the faith?

And do we not find in fact, that he has aſſiſted a few mean and unlearned fiſhermen, without riches or power, art or eloquence, to triumph over all the prejudices in men's minds, againſt the doctrines of the croſs, over all the bitter oppoſition of the rulers of the world, all the riveted prepoſſeſſions amongſt both Jews and Gentiles to their ancient religion, and all the learning of Greece and Rome, and to bring ſo great a part of the world into a profeſſed ſubjection to the croſs of Chriſt!

Would you expect, that the religion of ſuch a Saviour ſhould be every way worthy of God, agreeable to all his glorious perfections, and every way ſuitable for man, perfective of his nature, and adapted to his welfare, in every ſtation, relation, and capacity that he ſuſtains in this world, as well as to his eternal intereſt in the world to come? All this, I think, is what the deiſts themſelves are forced to allow.

Would you expect ſome apparent influence of this religion upon the hearts and lives of thoſe who ſincerely profeſs it, and who commit their ſouls and eternal intereſts into the hands of this Saviour? And don't you yourſelf ſee this continually exemplified? Don't every body ſee, that they who cordially receive the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for their prince and ſaviour are diſtinguiſhed from the reſt of the world, by the exerciſe of love both to God and man?

Is not the change wrought in the hearts and lives of ſuch viſible to every obſerver, in the bleſſed fruits of holineſs, righteouſneſs, charity and beneficence? This change they themſelves

themſelves profeſs to have experienced, by their exerciſe of faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. This experience they juſtify to the world, by the ſteady conduct of their lives. And thus the great Redeemer approves himſelf indeed the great phyſician of ſouls, by recovering all from their ſpiritual maladies, who apply to him, and depend upon him for a cure.

Would you expect a conſiſtent and harmonious ſcheme of religion through all the parts of divine revelation? And is it not wonderful to obſerve, how the New Teſtament every way anſwers the deſign of the Old; and how all the numerous writers of theſe ſacred books, notwithſtanding their very different manner of writing, the very diſtant ages in which they wrote, and the very different circumſtances of the church, in their reſpective times of writing, have yet all taught the ſame doctrines, all deſcribed the ſame dangers, and all pointed out the ſame way to eternal ſalvation!

Thus, Sir, I have ſet before you, in the cloſeſt and moſt connected view, ſome brief hints of the credentials of Chriſtianity.

I know you are capable of extending your demands yet further; and of propoſing ſomething elſe that may ſtill ſerve to reflect new light upon the Chriſtian revelation; and there is yet much more at your ſervice, when you'll be pleaſed to make your demands. You muſt, however, in the mean time allow me the freedom to ſay, that the evidence now in view is ſufficient to fill the mind of every unprejudiced perſon with a neceſſary and infallible certainty of the truth we are enquiring after. Deliberately conſider each of theſe arguments ſeparately and particularly; conſider them all in their connection and relation to each other, and then try whether you can refuſe your aſſent to the goſpel of Chriſt.

There is, I am ſenſible, one objection ready to offer itſelf to your mind againſt all this; and that is, how do I know, that the great and principal facts, upon which Chriſtianity is eſpecially built, may be depended upon as certainly true? How do I know the congruity of the prophecies with the event? How do I know the miraculous conception of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the atteſtation of the angels to his birth; or that he wrought ſuch miracles in confirmation of his divine miſſion; and that he roſe again from the dead, and aſcended up to heaven? How do I know that his apoſtles were inſpired with ſuch extraordinary and divine gifts; or that they performed ſuch miraculous operations?

To this I anſwer, that ſome of the evidences which I have offered are what directly, upon the firſt view, you may know,

and cannot but know, to be certainly and infallibly true, if you will but open your eyes to obſerve them. You do certainly know, that human nature is dreadfully corrupted and vitiated; that it is oppoſite to the holineſs and purity of the Divine Being; and that there is therefore great neceſſity of a Saviour to bring us to God, and to rectify our depraved nature. You may certainly know, that there are great variety of predictions of ſuch a Saviour, diſperſed through the whole Old Teſtament: and that the whole nation of the Jews always did, and ſtill do, from thence live in raiſed expectations of a Meſſiah. You may certainly know, that there were a great number of rites and ceremonies religiouſly obſerved and practiſed among the Jews; and that ſacrificing, in particular, was not only enjoined upon them, but early and generally practiſed among all nations. For none of which things can there be any manner of reaſon given or imagined, unleſs they were types and adumbrations of an expected Saviour. You may certainly know, that the time prefixed in the Jewiſh prophecies for the manifeſtation of the Meſſiah, was the very time in which, by the concurring teſtimony both of the friends and enemies of Chriſtianity, the Lord Jeſus did appear. You may certainly know, that the Jewiſh prophets did foretel a ſuffering Saviour, "a Saviour that ſhould "be wounded for our tranſgreſſions, bruiſed for our iniquities, that ſhould make his ſoul an offering for ſin; and "that ſhould be cut off, but not for himſelf:" and you are equally certain from all other hiſtorians, as well as from the evangeliſts, that our Lord Jeſus did undergo ſuch opprobry, miſery and death as was foretold of the Meſſiah by the prophets. You may certainly know, that it was, foretold in the prophets, "that the ſceptre ſhould not depart from Judah, "and a lawgiver from between his feet, until the coming of "the Meſſiah;" but after his death, the Jewiſh ſacrifices ſhould ceaſe, and their holy city and ſanctuary be deſtroyed and made deſolate: and that the event does aſſure us, that the circumſtances of the Jewiſh nation did exactly anſwer to theſe prophecies, both before and after the death of Jeſus Chriſt. You may certainly know, both by the Jewiſh and Chriſtian prophecies that under the Goſpel diſpenſation the Jews were to be rejected of God; and to continue deſpiſed and diſperſed among all nations: but the Gentiles to come to the light of the Meſſiah, and ſee his righteouſneſs and glory: and that the event is agreeable to the prediction. You may certainly know, that the rise of Antichriſt was predicted to be after the fall of the Roman empire, when that could no longer let

or

or reſtrain him; that he ſhould appear under the guiſe of a miniſter of religion, in the temple of God; that he ſhould pretend to all power and ſigns, and lying wonders; that he ſhould make war with the ſaints, and overcome them: that he ſhould reſide in the great city, that was then built upon ſeven mountains, and reigned over the kings of the earth, which was true of the city of Rome only. And you may conſider whether all this is not true of the Pope and the Roman papacy. You may certainly know the amazing progreſs of the goſpel in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, in the face of the moſt formidable and powerful oppoſitions; and its continuing progreſs againſt all the attempts of its Heathen and papal enemies. You may know the excellencies of its doctrines, and the glorious effects it hath upon the hearts and lives of true believers. You may know (as, bleſſed be God, multitudes do know by experience) how it conquers men's corruptions, changes their natures. pacifies their conſciences, fills their ſouls with light and joy, ſtrengthens them againſt temptations, ſweetens the afflictions of life, and fortifies them againſt all the pains and terrors of death. And you alſo may know, that this goſpel is the goſpel of Chriſt, and conſequently that theſe wonderful effects, which ſo apparently carry a divine ſignature upon them, are produced by him. All theſe things, and others of a like nature, which might be mentioned, are immediately open to our view, moſt viſible and certain; and one would think that theſe alone would ſatisfy the mind of a ſerious and impartial inquirer into the truth of Chriſtianity. And eſpecially when theſe are accompanied with ſuch other credentials of our holy religion, which (though not ſo directly in view, yet) by neceſſary conſequence give us the ſame aſſurance and certainty of the truth.

But it is time I ſhould come more directly to anſwer the objection; and to ſhew you, how it may by neceſſary conſequence be known, that the facts upon which Chriſtianity principally depends, are certainly true.

You yourſelf muſt own, it is impoſſible that thoſe doctrines can be falſe, which are atteſted by ſo many and ſuch kind of miracles, as are ſaid to be wrought by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles. For God cannot ſet his ſeal to a lie; nor confirm a horrible impoſture, by his immediate atteſtation from heaven.

You muſt own, that it is impoſſible for the apoſtles, and other witneſſes of theſe miraculous operations, to be themſelves deceived, while they had all the means of certainty in

the caſe before us, that ever any man had in any caſe whatſoever.

You muſt likewiſe own, that it is impoſſible for a great number of ſober, judicious, and, apparently, honeſt men, to ſpend their lives in a continued conſpiracy againſt their own eaſe, comfort, honour, life, and eternal welfare, for no other motive but to deceive the world, and bring eternal ruin upon themſelves and their fellow-creatures, as theſe muſt have done, if they knew thoſe facts to be falſe, which they publiſhed at their peril, and ſealed with their blood.

You muſt alſo own, that it was impoſſible to deceive the world about them, at the time when theſe facts were done, by reporting that ſuch miraculous operations were openly performed before them all, which none of them knew any thing about.

You will certainly own, it is impoſſible that they could deceive the churches to whom they wrote, by vain pretences, that each one of theſe had themſelves the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, ſuch as tongues, miracles, healing, prophecy, and the like, when every one of them knew that there was nothing in it.

You muſt in like manner own it impoſſible for ſuch multitudes of people, for ſo long a tract of time, to be impoſed upon by pretences of miraculous operations; and none of them ever detect the impoſture, ſo much as in one ſingle inſtance while all of them had the opportunity of doing it when they pleaſed, if the facts had not been true.

Can you imagine it any ways poſſible, that ſuch multitudes in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, in ſuch diſtant countries and nations, ſhould conſpire together to acknowledge theſe facts, and the doctrines founded on them, at the peril of their lives; and no man among theſe profeſſors themſelves, or among the heretics and apoſtates that fell away from them, ſhould diſcover the fraud either living or dying?

You will certainly own it utterly impoſſible, that ſo many thouſands, in ſo many lands, could with joy and chearfulneſs ſubmit to ſuch poor and afflicted lives, and to ſuch cruel and barbarous deaths, as were the common lot of the firſt Chriſtians, in confirmation of a religion, founded upon facts which they knew to be falſe.

And you muſt acknowledge it alſo altogether impoſſible, at any time after theſe facts were pretended to be done, to palm the hiſtory of them upon the world, if it was falſe; and to perſuade ſo many nations to receive it for truth. It were impoſſible to perſuade any nation, and much more all the early nations of Chriſtendom, that at ſome diſtant forgotten age there

there were a number of men that came among them, taught them the doctrines of Chriſtianity, confirmed the ſame by miracles, baptized them in the faith, and eſtabliſhed a ſettled order of the miniſtry in their churches: from which time they have all of them profeſſed the Chriſtian faith, had the New Teſtament in their hands, and enjoyed a continued ſucceſſion of miniſters and ordinances. Let an attempt of this kind be made upon our Indians, and try if any one man among them can be impoſed upon to believe theſe things.

To this I may add, that it is abſolutely impoſſible, at any one time, to have obtruded the Inſpired Writings upon the world, if they were indeed ſpurious; and to have made all the Chriſtian nations believe, that theſe were written in the apoſtolic age, ſpeedily tranſlated into divers languages, publicly kept, and publicly read and preached in their churches; that they and their fathers before them had always reverenced and eſteemed them as the rule of their lives, and their guide to eternal happineſs. What ſucceſs, but ſcorn and deriſion, could be hoped for from ſuch an attempt?

I may once more ſubjoin to all this, that it is at leaſt highly improbable, that the early writers againſt Chriſtianity ſhould never deny theſe facts, if they were not notoriouſly true, when they could not want advantages to detect any fraud or deceit that can poſſibly be ſuppoſed in a caſe of this kind. And it is yet more improbable, that any of the adverſaries of Chriſtianity ſhould confirm the truth of theſe facts, as we find ſome of them do, if they had not been moſt apparently and undoubtedly true.

And now, Sir, what can be wanting, what can you demand or deſire more to confirm you in the faith of Chriſtianity? It is eſtabliſhed upon the veracity of God himſelf; upon thoſe facts, by which he has from heaven atteſted to the truth of it; and theſe facts are verified by evidences which cannot poſſibly deceive us. By believing therefore, "we ſet "to our ſeal that God is true: but he that believeth not, "maketh him a liar; becauſe he believeth not the record "that God gave of his Son."

You may perhaps tell me, that if you had ſeen theſe miracles yourſelf, you would have believed them.

But has not every body elſe the ſame claim to this ſort of ſatisfaction as you; and the ſame reaſon to deſire to be eye and ear-witneſſes of miraculous operations? At this rate miracles would ceaſe to be miraculous, they would become common and familiar things, and no longer ſtrike the mind with

with any conviction at all, any more than the ebbing and flowing of the ſea, the riſing and ſetting of the ſun; or any ſuch diſplays of the divine power, in the common courſe of providence.

Upon the whole, there is no evidence wanting, to leave the unbeliever inexcuſable. There is evidence every way ſufficient to ſatisfy the mind of an impartial enquirer after truth. And it is impoſſible for any man in the world to imagine any means of confirmation in this important truth, ſuperior to what is herein ſet before you. How unreaſonable would it therefore be, to require more evidence in a caſe, wherein we have already as much as we are poſſibly capable to receive. *Letters on Religion.*

8. Bishop Newton.

The fulfilment of the Moſaical prophecies concerning the Jews an unanſwerable argument for the truth of the Bible.

IT is obſervable that the prophecies of Moſes abound moſt in the latter part of his writings. As he drew nearer his end, it pleaſed God to open to him larger proſpects of things. As he was about to take leave of the people, he was enabled to diſcloſe unto them more particulars of their future ſtate and condition. The deſign of this work will permit us to take notice of ſuch only as have ſome reference to theſe later ages; and we will confine ourſelves principally to the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy, the greater part whereof we may ſee accompliſhed in the world at this preſent time.

This great prophet and lawgiver is here propoſing at large to the people the bleſſings for obedience, and the curſes for diſobedience: and indeed he had foretold at ſeveral times and upon ſeveral occaſions, that they ſhould be happy or miſerable in the world, as they were obedient or diſobedient to the law that he had given them. And could there be any ſtronger evidence of the divine original of the Moſaical law? and hath not the interpoſition of providence been wonderfully remarkable in their good or bad fortune? and is not the truth of the prediction fully atteſted by the whole ſeries of their hiſtory from their firſt ſettlement in Canaan to this very day? But he is larger and more particular in recounting the curſes than the bleſſings, as if he had a preſcience of the people's diſobedience, and foreſaw that a larger portion and longer continuation of the evil would fall to their ſhare, than of the good. I know that ſome critics make a diviſion of theſe prophecies, and imagine that one part relates to the former

former captivity of the Jews, and to the calamities which they ſuffered under the Chaldæans; and that the other part relates to the latter captivity of the Jews, and to the calamities which they ſuffered under the Romans: but there is no need of any ſuch diſtinction: there is no reaſon to think that any ſuch was intended by the author; ſeveral prophecies of the one part as well as of the other have been fulfilled at both periods, but they have all more amply been fulfilled during the latter period; and there cannot be a more lively picture than they exhibit, of the ſtate of the Jews at preſent.

1. We will conſider them with a view to the order of time, rather than the order wherein they lie; and we may not improperly begin with this paſſage, ver. 49, "The Lord ſhall "bring a nation againſt thee from far, from the end of the "earth, as ſwift as the eagle flieth, a nation whoſe tongue "thou ſhalt not underſtand;" and the Chaldæans might be ſaid to come from far, in compariſon with the Moabites, Philiſtines, and other neighbours, who uſed to infeſt Judea. Much the ſame deſcription is given of the Chaldæans by Jeremiah, (5. 15.) "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from "far, O houſe of Iſrael, ſaith the Lord: it is a mighty na-"tion, it is an ancient nation, a nation whoſe language thou "knoweſt not, neither underſtandeſt what they ſay." He compares them in like manner to eagles. (Sam. 4. 19.) "Our "perſecutors are ſwifter than the eagles of the heaven: they "purſued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in "the wilderneſs." But this deſcription cannot be applied to any nation with ſuch propriety as to the Romans. They were truly brought from far, from the end of the earth. Veſpaſian and Adrian, the two great conquerors and deſtroyers of the Jews, both came from commanding here in Britain. The Romans too for the rapidity of their conqueſts might very well be compared to eagles, and perhaps not without an alluſion to the ſtandard of the Roman armies, which was an eagle: and their language was more unknown to the Jews than the Chaldee.

2. The enemies of the Jews are farther characteriſed in the next verſe. "A nation of fierce countenance, which ſhall "not regard the perſon of the old, nor ſhow favour to the "young." Such were the Chaldæans; and the ſacred hiſtorian ſaith expreſsly, (2 Chron. 36. 17.) "that for the wicked-"neſs of the Jews God brought upon them the king of the "Chaldees, who ſlew their young men with the ſword, in "the houſe of their ſanctuary, and had no compaſſion upon "young man or maiden, old man, or him that ſtooped for "age;

" age; he gave them all into his hand." Such alſo were the Romans: for when Veſpaſian entered Gadara, Joſephus ſaith, that he ſlew all man by man, the Romans ſhowing mercy to no age, out of hatred to the nation, and remembrance of their former injuries. The like ſlaughter was made at Gamala, for nobody eſcaped beſides two women, and they eſcaped by concealing themſelves from the rage of the Romans. For they did not ſo much as ſpare young children, but every one at that time ſnatching up many caſt them down from the citadel.

Their enemies were alſo to beſiege and take their cities, ver. 52. " And he ſhall beſiege thee in all thy gates, until " thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou truſt-" edſt, throughout all thy land. So Shalmaneſer king of " Aſſyria came up againſt Samaria, and beſieged it, and at " the end of three years they took it." (2 Kings 18. 9, 10.) " So did Sennacherib king of Aſſyria come up againſt all the " fenced cities of Judah, and took them:" (Ib. ver. 13.) and Nebuchadnezzar and his captains took and ſpoiled Jeruſalem, burnt the city and temple, " and brake down the walls of " Jeruſalem round about." (Ib. 25, 10.) So likewiſe the Romans, as we may read in Joſephus's hiſtory of the Jewiſh war, demoliſhed ſeveral fortified places, before they beſieged and deſtroyed Jeruſalem. And the Jews may very well be ſaid to have truſted in their high and fenced walls, for they ſeldom ventured a battle in the open field They confided in the ſtrength and ſituation of Jeruſalem, as the Jebuſites, the former inhabitants of the place, had done before them: (2 Sam. 5, 6, 7.) inſomuch that they are repreſented ſaying (Jer. 21, 13.) " Who ſhall come down againſt us? or who ſhall enter " into our habitation?" Jeruſalem was indeed a very ſtrong place, and wonderfully fortified both by nature and art, according to the deſcription of Tacitus as well as of Joſephus: and yet how many times was it taken? It was taken by Shiſhak king of Egypt, by Nebuchadnezzar, by Antiochus Epiphanes, by Pompey, by Soſius and Herod, before its final deſtruction by Titus.

4. In theſe ſieges they were to ſuffer much, and eſpecially from famine, " in the ſtraitneſs wherewith their enemies " ſhould diſtreſs them," ver. 53, &c. And accordingly when the king of Syria beſieged Samaria, " there was a great famine " in Samaria; and behold they beſieged it, until an aſs's " head was ſold for fourſcore pieces of ſilver, and the fourth " part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of ſilver." (2 Kings 6, 25.) And when Nebuchadnezzar beſieged Jeruſa-

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lem, " the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no " bread for the people of the land." (2 Kings 25. 3.) And in the laſt ſiege of Jeruſalem by the Romans there was a moſt terrible famine in the city, and Joſephus hath given ſo melancholy an account of it, that we cannot read it without ſhuddering. He ſaith particularly, that women ſnatched the food out of the very mouths of their huſbands, and ſons of their fathers, and (what is moſt miſerable) mothers of their infants: and in another place he ſaith, that in every houſe, if there appeared any ſemblance of food, a battle enſued, and the deareſt friends and relations fought with one another, ſnatching away the miſerable proviſions of life: ſo literally were the words of Moſes fulfilled, ver. 54, &c. the man's " eye ſhall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of " his boſom, and towards his children, becauſe he hath no- " thing left him in the ſiege, and in the ſtraitneſs wherewith " thine enemies ſhall diſtreſs thee in all thy gates," and in like manner the woman's " eye ſhall be evil towards the huſ- " band of her boſom, and towards her ſon, and towards her " daughter."

5. Nay it was expreſsly foretold, that not only the men, but even the women ſhould eat their own children. Moſes had foretold the ſame thing before, Levit. 26. 29, " Ye " ſhall eat the fleſh of your ſons, and the fleſh of your " daughters ſhall ye eat." He repeats it here ver. 53, " And " thou ſhalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the fleſh of thy " ſons and of thy daughters;" and more particularly ver. 56, &c. " The tender and delicate woman among you, who " would not adventure to ſet the ſole of her foot upon the " ground, for delicateneſs and tenderneſs—ſhe ſhall eat her " children for want of all things ſecretly in the ſiege and " ſtraitneſs, wherewith thine enemies ſhall diſtreſs thee in " thy gates." And it was fulfilled about 600 years after the time of Moſes among the Iſraelites, when Samaria was beſieged by the king of Syria, and two women agreed together, the one to give up her ſon to be boiled and eaten today, and the other to deliver up her ſon to be be dreſſed and eaten tomorrow, and one of them was eaten accordingly. (2 Kings 6. 28, 29.) It was fulfilled again about 900 years after the time of Moſes among the Jews in the ſiege of Jeruſalem before the Babyloniſh captivity; and Baruch thus expreſſeth it, (2. 1, &c.) " The Lord hath made good his word, which he " pronounced againſt us, to bring upon us great plagues, " ſuch as never happened under the whole heaven, as it " came to paſs in Jeruſalem, according to the things that

" were

" were written in the law of Moſes, that a man ſhould eat " the fleſh of his own ſon, and the fleſh of his own daugh- " ter:" and Jeremiah thus laments it in his Lamentations, (4. 10.) " The hands of the pitiful women have ſodden their " own children, they were their meat in the deſtruction of " the daughter of my people." And again it was fulfilled above 1500 years after the time of Moſes in the laſt ſiege of Jeruſalem by Titus, and we read in Joſephus particularly of a noble woman's killing and eating her own ſucking child. Moſes ſaith, " The tender and delicate woman among you, " who would not adventure to ſet the ſole of her foot upon " the ground, for delicateneſs and tenderneſs:" and there cannot be a more natural and lively deſcription of a woman, who was according to Joſephus illuſtrious for her family and riches. Moſes ſaith, " ſhe ſhall eat them for want of all " things:" and according to Joſephus ſhe had been plun- dered of all her ſubſtance and proviſions by the tyrants and ſoldiers. Moſes ſaith, that ſhe ſhould do it " ſecretly;" and according to Joſephus, when ſhe had boiled and eaten half, ſhe covered up the reſt, and kept it for another time. At ſo many different times and diſtant periods hath this prophecy been fulfilled; and one would have thought that ſuch diſ- treſs and horror had almoſt tranſcended imagination, and much leſs that any perſon could certainly have foreſeen and foretold it.

6. Great numbers of them were to be deſtroyed, ver. 62. " And ye ſhall be left few in number, whereas ye were, as " the ſtars of heaven for multitude." Now not to mention any other of the calamities and ſlaughters which they have undergone, there was in the laſt ſiege of Jeruſalem by Titus an infinite multitude, ſaith Joſephus, who periſhed by fa- mine: and he computes, that during the whole ſiege, the number of thoſe who were deſtroyed by that and by the war amounted to eleven hundred thouſand, the people being aſ- ſembled from all parts to celebrate the paſſover: and the ſame author hath given us an account of 1240490 deſtroyed in Jeruſalem and other parts of Judea, beſides 90200 made pri- ſoners; as Baſnage has reckoned them up from that hiſtorian's account. Indeed there is not a nation upon earth, that hath been expoſed to ſo many maſſacres and perſecutions. Their hiſtory abounds with them. If God had not given them a promiſe of a numerous poſterity, the whole race would many a time have been extirpated.

7. They were to be carried into Egypt, and ſold for ſlaves at a very low price, ver. 68. " And the Lord ſhall bring " thee

" thee into Egypt again, with ſhips: and there ye ſhall be " ſold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and " no man ſhall buy you." They had come out of Egypt triumphant, but now they ſhould return thither as ſlaves. They had walked through the ſea as dry land at their coming out, but now they ſhould be carried thither in ſhips. They might be carried thither in the ſhips of the Tyrian or Sidonian merchants, or by the Romans who had a fleet in the Mediterranean: and this was a much ſafer way of conveying ſo many priſoners, than ſending them by land. It appears from Joſephus, that in the reigns of the two firſt Ptolemies many of the Jews were ſlaves in Egypt. And when Jeruſalem was taken by Titus, of the captives who were above 17 years he ſent many bound to the works in Egypt; thoſe under 17 were ſold; but ſo little care was taken of theſe captives, that eleven thouſand of them periſhed for want. And we learn from St. Jerome, that after their laſt overthrow by Adrian, many thouſands of them were ſold, and thoſe who could not be ſold, were tranſported into Egypt, and periſhed by ſhipwreck or famine, or were maſſacred by the inhabitants.

8. They were to be rooted out of their own land, ver. 63. " And ye ſhall be plucked from off the land whither thou " goeſt to poſſeſs it." They were indeed plucked from off their own land, when the ten tribes were carried into captivity by the king of Aſſyria, and other nations were planted in their ſtead; and when the two other tribes were carried away captive to Babylon; and when the Romans took away their place and nation; beſides other captivities and tranſportations of the people. Afterwards, when the Emperor Adrian had ſubdued the rebellious Jews, he publiſhed an edict forbidding them upon pain of death to ſet foot in Jeruſalem, or even to approach the country round about it. Tertullian and Jerome ſay, that they were prohibited from entering into Judea. From that time to this their country hath been in the poſſeſſion of foreign lords and maſters, few of the Jews dwelling in it, and thoſe only of a low ſervile condition. Benjamin of Tudela in Spain, a celebrated Jew of the twelfth century, travelled into all parts to viſit thoſe of his own nation, and to learn an exact ſtate of their affairs: and he hath reported, that Jeruſalem was almoſt entirely abandoned by the Jews. He found there not above two hundred perſons, who were for the moſt part dyers of wool, and who every year purchaſed the privilege of the monopoly of that trade. They lived all together under David's tower, and made there a very little figure. If Jeruſalem had ſo few Jews in it, the

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reſt of the holy land was ſtill more depopulate. He found two of them in one city, twenty in another, moſt whereof were dyers. In other places there were more perſons; but in upper Galilee, where the nation was in greateſt repute after the ruin of Jeruſalem, he found hardly any Jews at all. A very accurate and faithful traveller of our own nation, who was himſelf alſo in the holy land, ſaith that it is for the moſt part now inhabited by Moors and Arabians; thoſe poſſeſſing the valleys, and theſe the mountains. Turks there be few: but many Greeks with other Chriſtians of all ſects and nations, ſuch as impute to the place an adherent holineſs. Here are alſo ſome Jews, yet inherit they no part of the land, but in their own country do live as aliens.

9. But they were not only to be plucked off from their own land, but alſo to be diſperſed into all nations, ver. 25. "And thou ſhalt be removed in all the kingdoms of the "earth;" and again ver. 64. "And the Lord ſhall ſcatter "thee among all people, from one end of the earth even "unto the other." Nehemiah (1. 8, 9.) confeſſeth that theſe words were fulfilled in the Babyloniſh captivity; but they have more amply been fulfilled ſince the great diſperſion of the Jews by the Romans. What people indeed have been ſcattered ſo far and wide as they? and where is the nation, which is a ſtranger to them, or to which they are ſtrangers? They ſwarm in many parts of the Eaſt, are ſpread through moſt of the countries of Europe and Afric, and there are ſeveral families of them in the Weſt Indies. They circulate through all parts, where trade and money circulate; and are, as I may ſay, the brokers of the whole world.

10. But though they ſhould be ſo diſperſed, yet they ſhould not be totally deſtroyed, but ſtill ſubſiſt as a diſtinct people, as Moſes had before foretold. Levit. 26. 44, "And "yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, "I will not caſt them away, neither will I abhor them, to "deſtroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with "them." The Jewiſh nation, like the buſh of Moſes, hath been always burning, but is never conſumed. And what a marvellous thing is it, that after ſo many wars, battles, and ſieges, after ſo many fires, famines, and peſtilences, after ſo many rebellions, maſſacres, and perſecutions, after ſo many years of captivity, ſlavery, and miſery, they are not deſtroyed utterly, and though ſcattered among all people, yet ſubſiſt as a diſtinct people by themſelves? Where is any thing comparable to this to be found in all the hiſtories, and in all the nations under the ſun?

11. However,

11. However, they ſhould ſuffer much in their diſperſion, and ſhould not reſt long in any place, ver. 65, "And among "theſe nations ſhalt thou find no eaſe, neither ſhall the ſole "of thy foot have reſt." They have been ſo far from finding reſt, that they have been baniſhed from city to city, from country to country. In many places they have been baniſhed, and recalled, and baniſhed again. We will only juſt mention their great baniſhments in modern times, and from countries very well known. In the latter end of the thirteenth century they were baniſhed from England by Edward 1ſt. and were not permitted to return and ſettle again till Cromwell's time. In the latter end of the fourteenth century they were baniſhed from France (for the ſeventh time, ſays Mezeray) by Charles 6th; and ever ſince they have been only tolerated, they have not enjoyed entire liberty, except at Metz where they have a ſynagogue. In the latter end of the fifteenth century they were baniſhed from Spain by Ferdinand and Iſabella; and according to Mariana, there were an hundred and ſeventy thouſand families, or as ſome ſay, eight hundred thouſand perſons who left the kingdom: moſt of them paid dearly to John 2. for a refuge in Portugal, but within a few years were expelled from thence alſo by his ſucceſſor Emanuel. And in our own time, within theſe few years, they were baniſhed from Prague by the queen of Bohemia.

12. They ſhould be "oppreſſed and ſpoiled evermore;" and their "houſes" and "vineyards," their "oxen" and "aſſes" ſhould be taken from them, and they ſhould "be "only oppreſſed and cruſhed alway," ver. 29, &c. And what frequent ſeizures have been made of their effects in almoſt all countries? how often have they been fined and fleeced by almoſt all governments? how often have they been forced to redeem their lives with what is almoſt as dear as their lives, their treaſure? Inſtances are innumerable. We will only cite an hiſtorian of our own, who ſays that Henry 3d. always polled the Jews at every low ebb of his fortunes. One Abraham, who was found delinquent, was forced to pay ſeven hundred marks for his redemption. Aaron, another Jew, proteſted, that the king had taken from him at times thirty thouſand marks of ſilver, beſides two hundred marks of gold, which he had preſented to the queen. And in like manner he uſed many others of the Jews. And when they were baniſhed in the reign of Edward 1ſt. their eſtates were confiſcated, and immenſe ſums thereby accrued to the crown.

13. "Their

13. "Their ſons and their daughters ſhould be given unto "another people," ver. 32. And in ſeveral countries, in Spain and Portugal particularly, their children have been taken from them by order of the government to be educated in the popiſh religion. The fourth council of Toledo ordered, that all their children ſhould be taken from them for fear they ſhould partake of their errors, and that they ſhould be ſhut up in monaſteries, to be inſtructed in the Chriſtian truths. And when they were baniſhed from Portugal, the king, ſays Mariana, ordered all their children, under 14 years of age, to be taken from them, and baptized: a practice not at all juſtifiable, adds the hiſtorian, becauſe none ought to be forced to become Chriſtians, nor children to be taken from their parents.

14. "They ſhould be mad for the ſight of their eyes "which they ſhould ſee," ver. 34. And into what madneſs, fury, and deſperation have they been puſhed by the cruel uſage, extortions, and oppreſſions which they have undergone? We will alledge only two ſimilar inſtances, one from ancient, and one from modern hiſtory. After the deſtruction of Jeruſalem by Titus, ſome of the worſt of the Jews took refuge in the caſtle of Maſada, where being cloſely beſieged by the Romans, they at the perſuaſion of Eleazar their leader, firſt murdered their wives and children; then ten men were choſen by lot to ſlay the reſt; this being done, one of the ten was choſen in like manner to kill the other nine, which having executed he ſet fire to the place, and then ſtabbed himſelf. There were nine hundred and ſixty who periſhed in this miſerable manner; and only two women, and five boys eſcaped by hiding themſelves in the aqueducts under ground. Such another inſtance we have in our Engliſh hiſtory. For in the reign of Richard the firſt, when the people were in arms to make a general maſſacre of them, fifteen hundred of them ſeized on the city of York to defend themſelves; but being beſieged they offered to capitulate, and to ranſome their lives with money. The offer being refuſed, one of them cried in deſpair, that it was better to die courageouſly for the law, than to fall into the hands of the Chriſtians. Every one immediately took his knife, and ſtabbed his wife and children. The men afterwards retired into the king's palace, which they ſet on fire, in which they conſumed themſelves with the palace and furniture.

15. "They ſhould ſerve other gods, wood and ſtone," ver. 36, and again ver. 64, "they ſhould ſerve other gods, which "neither they nor their fathers had known, even wood and "ſtone."

"ſtone." ver. 36; and again ver 64, "they ſhould ſerve "other gods, which neither they nor their fathers had known, "even wood and ſtone." And is it not too common for the Jews in popiſh countries to comply with the idolatrous worſhip of the church of Rome, and to bow down to ſtocks and ſtones rather than their effects ſhould be ſeized and confiſcated? Here again we muſt cite the author, who hath moſt ſtudied, and hath beſt written their modern hiſtory, and whom we have had occaſion to quote ſeveral times in this diſcourſe. The Spaniſh and Portugal Inquiſitions, ſaith he, reduce them to the dilemma of being either hypocrites or burnt. The number of theſe diſſemblers is very conſiderable; and it ought not to be concluded, that there are no Jews in Spain or Portugal, becauſe they are not known: they are ſo much the more dangerous, for not only being very numerous, but confounded with the eccleſiaſtics, and entering into all eccleſiaſtical dignities. In another place he ſaith, The moſt ſurpriſing thing is, that this religion ſpreads from generation to generation, and ſtill ſubſiſts in the perſons of diſſemblers in a remote poſterity. In vain the great lords of Spain make alliances, change their names, and take ancient ſcutcheons; they are ſtill known to be of Jewiſh race, and Jews themſelves. The convents of monks and nuns are full of them. Moſt of the canons, inquiſitors, and biſhops proceed from this nation. This is enough to make the people and clergy of this country tremble, ſince ſuch ſort of churchmen can only profane the ſacraments, and want intention in conſecrating the hoſt they adore. In the mean time Orobio, who relates the fact, knew theſe diſſemblers. He was one of them himſelf, and bent the knee before the ſacrament. Moreover he brings proofs of his aſſertion, in maintaining, that there are in the ſynagogue of Amſterdam, brothers and ſiſters and near relations to good families of Spain and Portugal; and even Franciſcan monks, Dominicans, and Jeſuits, who come to do penance, and make amends for the crime they have committed in diſſembling.

16. "They ſhould become an aſtoniſhment, a proverb, "and a by-word among all nations," ver. 37. And do we not hear and ſee this prophecy fulfilled almoſt every day? is not the avarice, uſury, and hard-heartedneſs of a Jew grown proverbial? and are not their perſons generally odious among all ſorts of people? Mohammedans, Heathens, and Chriſtians, however they may diſagree in other points, yet generally agree in vilifying, abuſing, and perſecuting the Jews. In moſt places where they are tolerated, they are obliged to live in a ſeparate quarter by themſelves, (as they did here in the

old Jewry) and to wear ſome badge of diſtinction. Their very countenances commonly diſtinguiſh them from the reſt of mankind. They are in all reſpects treated, as if they were of another ſpecies. And when a great maſter of nature would draw the portrait of a Jew, how deteſtable a character hath he repreſented in the perſon of his Jew of Venice!

17. Finally, "their plagues ſhould be wonderful, even "great plagues, and of long continuance," ver. 59. And have not their plagues continued now theſe 1700 years? Their former captivities were very ſhort in compariſon: and Ezekiel and Daniel propheſied in the land of the Chaldæans: but now they have no true prophet to foretel an end of their calamities, they have only falſe Meſſiahs to delude them and aggravate their misfortunes. In their former captivities they had the comfort of being conveyed to the ſame place; they dwelt together in the land of Goſhen, they were carried together to Babylon: but now they are diſperſed all over the face of the earth. What nation hath ſuffered ſo much, and yet endured ſo long? what nation hath ſubſiſted as a diſtinct people in their own country, ſo long as theſe have done in their diſperſion into all countries? and what a ſtanding miracle is this exhibited to the view and obſervation of the whole world!

Here are inſtances of prophecies, of prophecies delivered above three thouſand years ago, and yet as we ſee fulfilling in the world at this very time: and what ſtronger proofs can we deſire of the divine legation of Moſes? How theſe inſtances may affect others, I know not; but for myſelf I muſt acknowledge, they not only convince, but amaze and aſtoniſh me beyond expreſſion. They are truly, as Moſes foretold they would be, "a ſign and a wonder for ever," ver. 45, 46. "Moreover all theſe curſes ſhall come upon thee, and "ſhall purſue thee and overtake thee, till thou be deſtroyed; "becauſe thou hearkenedſt not unto the voice of the Lord "thy God, to keep his commandments, and his ſtatutes "which he commanded thee: and they ſhall be upon thee "for a ſign and for a wonder, and upon thy ſeed for ever."

Diſſertations on the Prophecies.

9. Bishop Stillingfleet.

THE incomparable excellency which is in the Sacred Scriptures, will fully appear, if we conſider the matters contained in them under this threefold capacity. 1. As matters of divine revelation. 2. As a rule of life. 3. As containing that covenant of grace which relates to man's eternal happineſs.

1. Conſider

1. Conſider the Scripture generally, as containing in it matters of divine revelation, and therein the excellency of the Scriptures appears in two things. 1. The matters which are revealed. 2. The manner wherein they are revealed.

1. The matters which are revealed in Scripture, may be conſidered theſe three ways. 1. As they are matters of the greateſt weight and moment. 2. As matters of the greateſt depth and myſterioufneſs. 3. As matters of the moſt univerſal ſatisfaction to the minds of men.

1. They are matters of the greateſt moment and importance for men to know. The wiſdom of men is moſt known by the weight of the things they ſpeak; and therefore that wherein the wiſdom of God is diſcovered, cannot contain any thing that is mean and trivial; they muſt be matters of the higheſt importance, which the Supreme Ruler of the world vouchſafes to ſpeak to men concerning: and ſuch we ſhall find the matters which God hath revealed in his word to be, which either concern the rectifying our apprehenſions of his nature, or making known to men their ſtate and condition, or diſcovering the way whereby to avoid eternal miſery. Now which is there of theſe three, which ſuppoſing God to diſcover his mind to the world, it doth not highly become him to ſpeak to men of?

1. What is there which doth more highly concern men to know, than God himſelf? or what more glorious and excellent object could he diſcover than himſelf to the world? There is nothing certainly which ſhould more commend the Scriptures to us, than that thereby we may grow more acquainted with God; that we may know more of his nature, and all his perfections, and many of the great reaſons of his actings in the world. We may by them underſtand with ſafety what the eternal purpoſes of God were as to the way of man's recovery by the death of his Son; we may there ſee and underſtand the great wiſdom of God; not only in the contrivance of the world, and ordering of it, but in the gradual revelations of himſelf to his people, by what ſteps he trained up his church till the fulneſs of time was come; what his aim was in laying ſuch a load of ceremonies on his people of the Jews; by what ſteps and degrees he made way for the full revelation of his will to the world by ſpeaking in theſe laſt days by his Son, after he had ſpoke at ſundry times and divers manners by the prophets, &c. unto the fathers. In the Scriptures we read the moſt rich and admirable diſcoveries of divine goodneſs, and all the ways and methods he uſeth in alluring ſinners to himſelf, with what majeſty he commands, with what

condeſcenſion he intreats, with what importunity he woos men's ſouls to be reconciled to him, with what favour he embraceth, with what tenderneſs he chaſtiſeth, with what bowels he pitieth thoſe who have choſen him to be their God! With what power he ſupporteth, with what wiſdom he directeth, with what cordials he refreſheth the ſouls of ſuch who are dejected under the ſenſe of his diſpleaſure, and yet their love is ſincere towards him! With what profound humility, what holy boldneſs, what becoming diſtance, and yet what reſtleſs importunity do we therein find the ſouls of God's people addreſſing themſelves to him in prayer! With what chearfulneſs do they ſerve him, with what confidence do they truſt him, with what reſolution do they adhere to him in all ſtreights and difficulties, with what patience do they ſubmit to his will in their greateſt extremities! How fearful are they of ſinning againſt God, how careful to pleaſe him, how regardleſs of ſuffering, when they muſt chooſe either that or ſinning, how little apprehenſive of men's diſpleaſure, while they enjoy the favour of God! Now all theſe things which are ſo fully and pathetically expreſſed in Scripture, do abundantly ſet forth to us the exuberancy and pleonaſm of God's grace and goodneſs towards his people, which makes them delight ſo much in him, and be ſo ſenſible of his diſpleaſure. But above all other diſcoveries of God's goodneſs, his ſending his Son into the world to die for ſinners, is that which the Scripture ſets forth with the greateſt life and eloquence. By eloquence, I mean not an artificial compoſure of words, but the gravity, weight, and perſuaſiveneſs of the matter contained in them. And what can tend more to melt our frozen hearts into a current of thankful obedience to God, than the vigorous reflection of the beams of God's love through Jeſus Chriſt upon us? Was there ever ſo great an expreſſion of love heard of! nay, was it poſſible to be imagined, that that God who perfectly hates ſin, ſhould himſelf offer the pardon of it, and ſend his Son into the world to ſecure it to the ſinner, who doth ſo heartily repent of his ſins, as to deny himſelf, and take up his croſs and follow Chriſt! Well might the apoſtle ſay, "This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy "of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world "to ſave ſinners." How dry and ſapleſs are all the voluminous diſcourſes of philoſophers, compared with this ſentence! How jejune and unſatisfactory are all the diſcoveries they had of God and his goodneſs, in compariſon of what we have by the Goſpel of Chriſt! Well might Paul then ſay, "That he "determined to know nothing but Chriſt and him crucified."

Chriſt

Chriſt crucified is the library which triumphant ſouls will be ſtudying in to all eternity. This is the only library which is the true ἰατρεῖον ψυχῆς, that which cures the ſoul of all its maladies and diſtempers; other knowledge makes men's minds giddy and flatulent; this ſettles and compoſes them; other knowledge is apt to ſwell men into high conceits and opinions of themſelves; this brings them to the trueſt view of themſelves, and thereby to humility and ſobriety; other knowledge leaves men's hearts as it found them; this alters them and makes them better. So tranſcendent an excellency is there in the knowledge of Chriſt crucified above the ſublimeſt ſpeculations in the world.

And is not this an ineſtimable benefit we enjoy by the Scripture, that therein we can read and converſe with all theſe expreſſions of God's love and goodneſs, and that in his own language? Shall we admire and praiſe what we meet with in Heathen philoſophers, which is generous and handſome; and ſhall we not adore the infinite fulneſs of the Scriptures, which run over with continued expreſſions of that and a higher nature? What folly is it to magnify thoſe lean kine, the notions of philoſophers, and to contemn the fat, the plenty and fulneſs of the Scriptures? If there be not far more valuable and excellent diſcoveries of the divine nature and perfections; if there be not far more excellent directions and rules of practice in the Sacred Scriptures, than in the ſublimeſt of all the philoſophers, then let us leave our full ears, and feed upon the thin. But certainly no ſober and rational ſpirit that puts any value upon the knowledge of God, but on the ſame account that he doth prize the diſcourſes of any philoſophers concerning God, he cannot but ſet a value of a far higher nature on the Word of God. And as the goodneſs of God is thus diſcovered in Scripture, ſo is his juſtice and holineſs: we have therein recorded the moſt remarkable judgments of God upon contumacious ſinners, the ſevereſt denunciations of a judgment to come againſt all that live in ſin, the exacteſt precepts of holineſs in the world; and what can be deſired more to diſcover the holineſs of God, than we find in Scripture concerning him? If therefore acquaintance with the nature, perfection, deſigns of ſo excellent a being as God is, be a thing deſirable to human nature, we have the greateſt cauſe to admire the excellency and adore the fulneſs of the Scriptures which gives ſo large, rational, and compleat account of the being and attributes of God. And which tends yet more to commend the Scriptures to us, thoſe things which the Scripture doth moſt

fully diſcover concerning God, do not at all contradict thoſe prime and common notions which are in our natures concerning him, but do exceedingly advance and improve them, and tend the moſt to regulate our conceptions and apprehenſions of God, that we may not miſcarry therein, as otherwiſe men are apt to do. For it being natural to men ſo far to love themſelves, as to ſet the greateſt value upon thoſe excellencies which they think themſelves moſt maſters of: thence men came to be exceedingly miſtaken in their apprehenſions of a deity, ſome attributing one thing as a perfection, another a different thing, according to their humours and inclinations. Thus imperious ſelf-willed men are apt to cry up God's abſolute power and dominion as his greateſt perfection; eaſy and ſoft-ſpirited men his patience and goodneſs; ſevere and rigid men his juſtice and ſeverity: every one according to his humour and temper, making his god of his own complexion: and not only ſo, but in things remote enough from being perfections at all, yet becauſe they are ſuch things as they prize and value, they ſuppoſe of neceſſity they muſt be in God, as is evident in the Epicureans ἀταραξία, by which they exclude providence, as hath already been obſerved. And withal conſidering how very difficult it is for one who really believes that God is of a pure, juſt, and holy nature, and that he hath grievouſly offended him by his ſins, to believe that this God will pardon him upon true repentance: it is thence neceſſary that God ſhould make known himſelf to the world, to prevent our miſconceptions of his nature, and to aſſure a ſuſpicious, becauſe guilty creature, how ready he is to pardon iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin, to ſuch as unfeignedly repent of their follies, and return unto himſelf. Though the light of nature may dictate much to us of the benignity and goodneſs of the divine nature, yet it is hard to conceive that that ſhould diſcover further than God's general goodneſs to ſuch as pleaſe him: but no foundation can be gathered thence of his readineſs to pardon offenders, which being an act of grace, muſt alone be diſcovered by his will. I cannot think the ſun, moon, and ſtars are ſuch itinerant preachers, as to unfold unto us the whole counſel and will of God in reference to man's acceptance with God upon repentance. It is not every ſtar in the firmament can do that which the ſtar once did to the wiſe men, lead them unto Chriſt. The ſun in the heavens is no Parelius to the ſun of righteouſneſs. The beſt aſtronomer will never find the day ſtar from on high in the reſt of his number. What St. Auſtin ſaid of Tully's works,

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is true of the whole volume of the creation. There are admirable things to be found in them: but the name of Chriſt is not legible there. The work of redemption is not engraven on the works of providence; if it had, a particular divine revelation had been unneceſſary, and the apoſtles were ſent on a needleſs errand, which the world had underſtood without their preaching, viz. "That God was in Chriſt reconciling "the world unto himſelf, not imputing to men their treſ-"paſſes, and hath committed to them the miniſtry of recon-"ciliation." How was the word of reconciliation committed to them, if it were common to them with the whole frame of the world? and the apoſtle's quære elſewhere might have been eaſily anſwered, How can men hear without a preacher? For then they might have known the way of ſalvation, without any ſpecial meſſengers ſent to deliver it to them. I grant that God's long-ſuffering and patience is intended to lead men to repentance, and that ſome general collections might be made from providence of the placability of God's nature, and that God never left himſelf without a witneſs of his goodneſs in the world, being kind to the unthankful, and doing good, in giving rain and fruitful ſeaſons. But though theſe things might ſufficiently diſcover to ſuch who were apprehenſive of the guilt of ſin, that God did not act according to his greateſt ſeverity, and thereby did give men encouragement to hearken out and enquire after the true way of being reconciled to God; yet all this amounts not to a firm foundation for faith as to the remiſſion of ſin, which doth ſuppoſe God himſelf publiſhing an act of grace and indemnity to the world, wherein he aſſures the pardon of ſin to ſuch as truly repent and unfeignedly believe his holy Goſpel. Now is not this an ineſtimable advantage we enjoy by the Scriptures, that therein we underſtand what God himſelf hath diſcovered of his own nature and perfections, and of his readineſs to pardon ſin upon thoſe gracious terms of faith and repentance, and that which neceſſarily follows from theſe two, hearty and ſincere obedience?

2. The Scriptures give the moſt faithful repreſentation of the ſtate and condition of the ſoul of man. The world was almoſt loſt in diſputes concerning the nature, condition, and immortality of the ſoul before divine revelation was made known to mankind by the goſpel of Chriſt; but "life and "immortality was brought to light by the goſpel," and the future ſtate of the ſoul of man, not diſcovered in an uncertain Platonical way, but with the greateſt light and evidence from that God who hath the ſupreme diſpoſal of ſouls, and therefore

therefore beſt knows and underſtands them. The Scriptures plainly and fully reveal a judgment to come, in which God will judge the ſecrets of all hearts, when every one muſt give an account of himſelf unto God, and God will call men to give an account of their ſtewardſhip here of all the receipts they have had from him, and the expences they have been at, and the improvements they have made of the talents he put into their hands. So that the goſpel of Chriſt is the fulleſt inſtrument of the diſcovery of the certainty of the future ſtate of the ſoul, and the conditions which abide it, upon its being diſlodged from the body. But this is not all which the Scripture diſcovers as to the ſtate of the ſoul; for it is not only a pro-pective-glaſs, reaching to its future ſtate, but it is the moſt faithful looking glaſs, to diſcover all the ſpots and deformities of the ſoul: and not only ſhews where they are, but whence they came, what their nature is, and whither they tend. The true original of all that diſorder and diſcompoſure which is in the ſoul of man, is only fully and ſatisfactorily given us in the Word of God. The nature and working of this corruption in man, had never been ſo clearly manifeſted, had not the law and will of God been diſcovered to the world; that is the glaſs whereby we ſee the ſecret workings of thoſe bees in our hearts, the corruptions of our natures; that ſets forth the folly of our imaginations, the unrulineſs of our paſſions, the diſtempers of our wills, and the abundant deceitfulneſs of our hearts. And it is hard for the moſt Elephantine ſinner (one of the greateſt magnitude) ſo to trouble theſe waters, as not therein to diſcover the greatneſs of his own deformities. But that which tends moſt to awaken the drowſy, ſenſeleſs ſpirits of men, the Scripture doth moſt fully deſcribe the tendency of corruption, "that the wages of ſin is death," and the iſſue of continuance in ſin will be the everlaſting miſery of the ſoul, in a perpetual ſeparation from the preſence of God, and undergoing the laſhes and ſeverities of conſcience to all eternity. What a great diſcovery is this of the faithfulneſs of God to the world, that he ſuffers not men to undo themſelves without letting them know of it before hand, that they might avoid it! God ſeeks not to entrap mens ſouls, nor doth he rejoice in the miſery and ruin of his creatures, but fully declares to them what the conſequence and iſſue of their ſinful practices will be, aſſures them of a judgment to come, declares his own future ſeverity againſt contumacious ſinners, that they might not think themſelves ſurpriſed, and that if they had known there had been ſo great danger in ſin, they would

would never have been ſuch fools as for the ſake of it to run into eternal miſery. Now God to prevent this, with the greateſt plainneſs and faithfulneſs, hath ſhewed men the nature and danger of all their ſins, and aſks them before hand what they will do in the end thereof; whether they are able to bear his wrath, and wreſtle with everlaſting burnings? if not, he bids them bethink themſelves of what they have done already, and repent and amend their lives, leſt iniquity prove their ruin, and deſtruction overtake them, and that without remedy. Now if men have cauſe to prize and value a faithful monitor, one that tenders their good, and would prevent their ruin, we have cauſe exceedingly to prize and value the Scriptures, which give us the trueſt repreſentation of the ſtate and condition of our ſouls.

3. The Scripture diſcovers to us the only way of pleaſing God and enjoying his favour. That clearly reveals the way (which man might have ſought for to all eternity without particular revelation) whereby ſins may be pardoned, and whatever we do may be acceptable unto God. It ſhews us that the ground of our acceptance with God, is through Chriſt, whom he hath made "a propitiation for the ſins of the "world," and who alone is the true and living way, whereby we may "draw near to God with a true heart, in full aſſur-"ance of faith, having our hearts ſprinkled from an evil "conſcience." Through Chriſt we underſtand the terms on which God will ſhew favour and grace to the world, and by him we have ground of a παῤῥησια acceſs with freedom and boldneſs unto God. On his account we may hope not only for grace to ſubdue our ſins, reſiſt temptations, conquer the devil and the world; but having "fought this good fight "and finiſhed our courſe, by patient continuance in well "doing, we may juſtly look for glory, honour, and immor-"tality," and that "crown of righteouſneſs which is laid up "for thoſe who wait in faith," holineſs, and humility for the appearance of Chriſt from heaven. Now what things can there be of greater moment and importance for men to know, or God to reveal, than the nature of God, and ourſelves, the ſtate and condition of our ſouls, the only way to avoid eternal miſery and enjoy everlaſting bliſs!

The Scriptures diſcover not only matters of importance, but of the greateſt depth and myſterioufneſs. There are many wonderful things in the law of God, things we may admire, but are never able to comprehend. Such are the eternal purpoſes and decrees of God, the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the manner

ner of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the ſouls of men, which are all things of great weight and moment for us to underſtand and believe that they are, and yet may be unſearchable to our reaſon, as to the particular manner of them.

The Scripture comprehends matters of the moſt univerſal ſatisfaction to the minds of men; though many things do much exceed our apprehenſions, yet others are moſt ſuitable to the dictates of our nature. As Origen bid Celſus ſee, εἰ μὴ τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἡμῶν τοῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοίαις ἀρχήθεν συναγορεύοιτο, μετατίθηται τὰς εὐγνωμόνως ἀκούσας τῶν λεγομένων, whether it was not the agreeableneſs of the principles of faith with the common notions of human nature, which prevailed moſt upon all candid and ingenuous auditors of them. And therefore as Socrates ſaid of Heraclitus's books, What he underſtood was excellent, and therefore he ſuppoſed that which he did not underſtand was ſo too: ſo ought we to ſay of the Scriptures: if thoſe things which are within our capacity be ſo ſuitable to our natures and reaſons, thoſe cannot contradict our reaſon which yet are above them. There are many things which the minds of men were ſufficiently aſſured that they were, yet were to ſeek for ſatisfaction concerning them, which they could never have had without divine revelation. As the nature of true happineſs, wherein it lay, and how to be obtained, which the philoſophers were ſo puzzled with, the Scriptures give us full ſatisfaction concerning it. True contentment under the troubles of life, which the Scripture only acquaints us with the true grounds of; and all the preſcriptions of Heathen moraliſts fall as much ſhort of, as the directions of an empiric do of a wiſe and ſkilful phyſician. Avoiding the fears of death, which can alone be through a grounded expectation of a future ſtate of happineſs which death leads men to, which cannot be had but through the right underſtanding of the Word of God. Thus we ſee the excellency of the matters themſelves contained in this revelation of the mind of God to the world.

As the matters themſelves are of an excellent nature, ſo is the manner wherein they are revealed in the Scriptures; and that,

1. In a clear and perſpicuous manner; not but there may be ſtill ſome paſſages which are hard to be underſtood, as being either prophetical, or conſiſting of ambiguous phraſes, or containing matters above our comprehenſion; but all thoſe things which concern the terms of man's ſalvation, are delivered with the greateſt evidence and perſpicuity. Who cannot underſtand what theſe things mean, "What doth "the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love "mercy

" mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"—that " with-
" out faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God"—that " with-
" out holineſs none ſhall ſee the Lord"—that " unleſs we
" be born again we can never enter into the kingdom of
" heaven:" theſe and ſuch like things are ſo plain and clear, that it is nothing but mens ſhutting their eyes againſt the light can keep them from underſtanding them; God intended theſe things as directions to men; and is he not able to ſpeak intelligibly when he pleaſes? He that made the tongue, ſhall he not ſpeak ſo as to be underſtood without an infallible interpreter? eſpecially when it is his deſign to make known to men the terms of their eternal happineſs? Will God judge men at the great day for not believing thoſe things which they could not underſtand? Strange, that ever men ſhould judge the Scriptures obſcure in matters neceſſary, when the Scripture accounts it ſo great a judgment for men not to underſtand them. " If our goſpel be hid, it is hid to them that are loſt;
" in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds
" of them which believe not, leſt the light of the glorious
" goſpel of Chriſt ſhould ſhine unto them." Sure Lot's door was viſible enough, if it were a judgment for the men of Sodom not to ſee it; and the Scriptures then are plain and intelligible enough, if it be ſo great a judgment not to underſtand them.

2. In a powerful and authoritative manner; as the things contained in Scripture do not ſo much beg acceptance as command it; in that the expreſſions wherein our duty is concerned, are ſuch as awe men's conſciences and pierce to their hearts and to their ſecret thoughts; all things are open and naked before this Word of God; every ſecret of the mind and thought of the heart lies open to its ſtroke and force; " it
" is quick and powerful, ſharper than a two-edged ſword,
" piercing to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and
" of the joints and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts
" and intents of the heart." The word is a teleſcope to diſcover the great luminaries of the world, the truths of higheſt concernment to the ſouls of men, and it is ſuch a microſcope as diſcovers to us the ſmalleſt atom of our thoughts, and diſcerns the moſt ſecret intents of the heart. And as far as this light reacheth, it comes with power and authority, as it comes armed with the majeſty of that God who reveals it, whoſe authority extends over the ſoul and conſcience of man in its moſt ſecret and hidden receſſes.

3. In a pure and unmixed manner; in all other writings how good ſoever, we have a great mixture of droſs and gold together;

together; here is nothing but pure gold, diamonds without flaws, ſuns without ſpots. The moſt current coins of the world have their alloys of baſer metals, there is no ſuch mixture in divine truths; as they all come from the ſame author, ſo they all have the ſame purity. There is a Urim and Thummim upon the whole Scripture, light and perfection in every part of it. In the Philoſophers we may meet, it may be, with ſome ſcattered fragments of purer metal, amidſt abundance of droſs and impure ore; here we have whole wedges of gold, the ſame vein of purity and holineſs running through the whole book of Scriptures. Hence it is called "the form "of ſound words;" here have been no huckſters to corrupt and mix their own inventions with divine truths.

4. In an uniform and agreeable manner. This I grant is not ſufficient of itſelf to prove the Scriptures to be divine, becauſe all men do not contradict themſelves in their writings, but yet here are ſome peculiar circumſtances to be conſidered in the agreeableneſs of the parts of Scripture to each other, which are not to be found in mere human writings. 1. That this doctrine was delivered by perſons who lived in different ages and times from each other. Uſually one age corrects another's faults, and we are apt to pity the ignorance of our predeceſſors, when it may be our poſterity may think us as ignorant, as we do them. But in the Sacred Scripture we read not one age condemning another; we find light ſtill increaſing in the ſeries of times in Scripture, but no reflections in any time upon the ignorance, or weakneſs of the precedent; the dimmeſt light was ſufficient for its age, and was a ſtep to further diſcovery. Quintilian gives it as the reaſon of the great uncertainty of Grammar rules, quia non analogia dimiſſa cœlo formam loquendi dedit; that which he wanted as to Grammar, we have as to divine truths; they are delivered from heaven, and therefore are always uniform and agreeable to each other.

2. By perſons of different intereſts in the world. God made choice of men of all ranks to be inditers of his oracles, to make it appear it was no matter of ſtate policy or particular intereſt which was contained in his word, which perſons of ſuch different intereſts, could not have agreed in as they do. We have Moſes, David, Solomon, perſons of royal rank and quality; and can it be any mean thing, which theſe think it their glory to be penners of? We have Iſaiah, Daniel, and other perſons of the higheſt education and accompliſhments, and can it be any trivial thing which theſe employ themſelves in? We have Amos, and other prophets

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in the Old Teſtament, and the apoſtles in the New, of the meaner ſort of men in the world, yet all theſe join in concert together; when God tunes their ſpirits, all agree in the ſame ſtrain of divine truths, and give light and harmony to each other.

3. By perſons in different places and conditions; ſome in proſperity in their own country, ſome under baniſhment and adverſity, yet all agreeing in the ſame ſubſtance of doctrine; of which no alteration we ſee was made either for the flattery of thoſe in power, or for avoiding miſeries and calamities. And under all the different diſpenſations before, under, and after the law, though the management of things was different, yet the doctrine and deſign was for ſubſtance the ſame in all. All the different diſpenſations agree in the ſame common principles of religion; the ſame ground of acceptance with God, and obligation to duty was common to all, though the peculiar inſtances wherein God was ſerved might be different according to the ages of growth in the church of God. So that this great uniformity conſidered in theſe circumſtances, is an argument that theſe things came originally from the ſame Spirit, though conveyed through different inſtruments to the knowledge of the world.

5. In a perſuaſive and convincing manner: and that theſe ways, 1. Bringing divine truths down to our capacity, clothing ſpiritual matter in familiar expreſſions and ſimilitudes, that ſo they might have the eaſier admiſſion into our minds. 2. Propounding things as our intereſt, which are our duty: thence God ſo frequently in Scripture, recommends our duties to us under all thoſe motives which are wont to have the greateſt force on the minds of men; and annexeth gracious promiſes to our performance of them; and thoſe of the moſt weighty and concerning things. Of grace, favor, protection, deliverance, audience of prayers, and eternal happineſs, and if theſe will not prevail with men, what motives will? 3. Courting us to obedience, when he might not only command us to obey but puniſh preſently for diſobedience. Hence are all thoſe moſt pathetical and affectionate ſtrains we read in Scripture: "O that there were ſuch a heart "within them, that they would fear me and keep all my "commandments always, that it might go well with them, "and with their children after them!—Woe unto thee, O "Jeruſalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it "once be?—Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for "why will ye die, O houſe of Iſrael? How ſhall I give thee "up, Ephraim? how ſhall I deliver thee, Iſrael? how ſhall I

"make

" make thee as Admah? how ſhall I ſet thee as Zeboim?—
" Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kind-
" led together.—O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, how often would
" I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth
" her chickens under her wings, and ye would not?" What majeſty and yet what ſweetneſs and condeſcenſion is there in theſe expreſſions? What obſtinacy and rebellion is it in men for them to ſtand out againſt God, when he thus comes down from his throne of majeſty and woos rebellious ſinners to return unto him that they may be pardoned? Such a matchleſs and unparralleled ſtrain of rhetoric is there in the Scripture, far above the art and inſinuations of the moſt admired orators. Thus we ſee the peculiar excellency of the manner wherein the matters contained in Scripture are revealed to us: thus we have conſidered the excellency of the Scripture, as it is a diſcovery of God's mind to the world.

The Scriptures may be conſidered as a rule of life, or as a law of God, which is given for the government of the lives of men, and therein the excellency of it lies in the nature of the duties, and the encouragements to the practice of them.

1. In the nature of the duties required, which are moſt becoming God to require, moſt reaſonable for us to perform.

1. Moſt becoming God to require, as they are moſt ſuitable and agreeable to the divine nature, the imitation of which in our actions is the ſubſtance of our religion. Imitation of him in his goodneſs and holineſs, by our conſtant endeavours of mortifying ſin and growing in grace and piety. In his grace and mercy by our kindneſs to all men, forgiving the injuries men do unto us, doing good unto our greateſt enemies. In his juſtice and equity, by doing as we would be done by, and keeping a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards men. The firſt takes in the duties of the firſt, the other the duties of the ſecond table. All acts of piety towards God, are a part of juſtice; for as Tully ſaith, Quid aliud eſt pietas niſi juſtitia adverſus deos? And ſo our loving God with our whole hearts, our entire and ſincere obedience to his will, is a part of natural juſtice; for thereby we do but render unto God that which is his due from us as we are his creatures. We ſee then the whole duty of man, the fearing God and keeping his commandments, is as neceſſary a part of juſtice, as the rendering to every man his own is.

2. They are moſt reaſonable for us to perform, in that 1. Religion is not only a ſervice of the reaſonable faculties which

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are employed the moſt in it, the commands of the Scripture reaching the heart moſt, and the ſervice required being a ſpiritual ſervice, not lying in meats and drinks, or any outward obſervations, but in a ſanctified temper of heart and mind, which diſcovers itſelf in the courſe of a Chriſtian's life: but 2. The ſervice itſelf of religion is reaſonable; the commands of the goſpel are ſuch, as no man's reaſon which conſiders them, can doubt of the excellency of them. All natural worſhip is founded from the dictates of nature, all inſtituted worſhip on God's revealed will; and it is one of the prime dictates of nature, that God muſt be univerſally obeyed. Beſides, God requires nothing but what is apparently man's intereſt to do; God prohibits nothing but what will deſtroy him if he doth it; ſo that the commands of the Scriptures are very juſt and reaſonable.

2. The encouragements are more than proportionable to the difficulty of obedience. God's commands are in themſelves eaſy, and moſt ſuitable to our natures. What more rational for a creature than to obey his Maker? All the difficulty of religion ariſeth from the corruption of nature. Now God to encourage men to conquer the difficulties ariſing thence, hath propounded the ſtrongeſt motives, and moſt prevailing arguments to obedience. Such are the conſiderations of God's love and goodneſs manifeſted to the world by ſending his Son into it to die for ſinners, and to give them an example which they are to follow, and by his readineſs thro' him to pardon the ſins, and accept the perſons of ſuch who ſo receive him as to walk in him; and by his promiſes of grace to aſſiſt them in the wreſtling with the enemies of their ſalvation. And to all theſe add that glorious and unconceivable reward which God hath promiſed to all thoſe who ſincerely obey him, and by theſe things we ſee how much the encouragements over-weigh the difficulties, and that none can make the leaſt pretence that there is no motive ſufficient to downweigh the troubles which attend the exerciſe of obedience to the will of God. So that we ſee what a peculiar excellency there is in the Scriptures as a rule of life, above all the precepts of mere moraliſts, the foundation of obedience being laid deeper in man's obligation to ſerve his Maker, the practice of obedience being carried higher in thoſe moſt holy precepts which are in Scripture, the reward of obedience being incomparably greater than what men are able to conceive, much leſs to promiſe or beſtow.

The excellency of the Scriptures appears as they contain in them a covenant of grace, or the tranſactions between God

God and man in order to his eternal happineſs. The more memorable any tranſactions are, the more valuable are any authentic records of them. The Scriptures contain in them the Magna Charta of heaven, an act of pardon with the royal aſſent of heaven, a proclamation of good-will from God towards men; and can we then ſet too great a value on that which contains all the remarkable paſſages between God and the ſouls of men, in order to their felicity, from the beginning of the world? Can we think, ſince there is a God in the world of infinite goodneſs, that he ſhould ſuffer all mankind to periſh inevitably without his propounding any means for eſcaping of eternal miſery? Is God ſo good to men as to this preſent life; and can we think, if man's ſoul be immortal, that he ſhould wholly neglect any offer of good to men as to their eternal welfare? Or is it poſſible to imagine that man ſhould be happy in another world without God's promiſing it, and preſcribing conditions in order to it? If ſo, then this happineſs is no free gift of God, unleſs he hath the beſtowing and promiſing of it? and man is no rational agent, unleſs a reward ſuppoſe conditions to be performed in order to the obtaining it; or man may be bound to conditions which were never required of him; or if they muſt be required, then there muſt be a revelation of God's will, whereby he doth require them: and if ſo, then there are ſome records extant of the tranſactions between God and man, in order to his eternal happineſs: for what reaſon can we have to imagine that ſuch records, if once extant, ſhould not continue ſtill, eſpecially ſince the ſame goodneſs of God is engaged to preſerve ſuch records, which at firſt did cauſe them to be indicted? Suppoſing then ſuch records extant ſomewhere in the world of theſe grand tranſactions between God and men's ſouls, our buſineſs is brought to a period; for what other records are there in the world that can in the leaſt vie with the Scriptures, as to the giving ſo juſt an account of all the tranſactions between God and men from the foundation of the world? which gives us all the ſteps, methods and ways whereby God hath made known his mind and will to the world, in order to man's eternal ſalvation? It remains only then that we adore and magnify the goodneſs of God in making known his will to us, and that we ſet a value and eſteem on the Scriptures, as the only authentic inſtruments of that Grand Charter of peace, which God hath revealed in order to man's eternal happineſs. *Origines Sacræ.*

10. Rev. Vicessimus Knox, M. A.

All the learning, at present in the world, is owing to the Bible.

MANY among those who have made the greatest pretensions to learning, have professed themselves enemies to Revelation. It is not, indeed, difficult to account for their rejection of a religion which is all humility, and by no means calculated to please such as consider the applause of men as the most valuable object, and who pride themselves on the infallibility of their own intellects. To the bold, the conceited, and the half-learned pretender to philosophy, who is weak enough to think his reason commensurate to every object which falls under its notice, that system, which requires the exercise of faith more than of reason, appears, as the Scriptures themselves observe, foolishness. Pride, and a very silly kind of pride, such, indeed, as arises from narrow views of things, and an ignorance of human nature, is the foundation of infidelity

It is, however, no less ungrateful, than foolish and wicked, in the sons of learning, to devote their abilities to the extermination of the national religion. For it is really true, that all the ancient learning which now remains, was preserved by some peculiar circumstances attending the propagation of Christianity; and, I believe, it will be thought very probable, that if the ancient languages, and the books written in them, had been entirely lost, the civilized nations of Europe would still have continued in a state of darkness and barbarism. Real superstition would then, indeed, have reigned triumphant; and the philosopher, as he calls himself, who is now writing down Christianity, would have been trembling at witches and goblins, spells and enchantments. He makes use of that very light, which has directed his steps in the paths of learning, to discover the most probable means of extinguishing the source of all illumination.

I was led into this train of reflections by the perusal of a charge of a late very learned archdeacon of London, in which he evinces, that our Saviour spoke most truly in more senses than one, when he said of himself, "I am the light of the "world."

When any species of literary industry is considered as a duty founded on religion, care will be taken to preserve those parts of literature, which, from the indolence and infirmity of the human mind, might have been lost amidst revolutions, persecutions, distress and the fury of conquest. In every difficulty, the Christians fled for comfort to their Scriptures,

and watched over them with peculiar vigilance. The Septuagint preſerved, in the worſt times, a knowledge of Greek; and the Latin tranſlations, which were multiplied with avidity, reſcued the Latin language from a total oblivion. Joſephus was ſtudied, and therefore preſerved by the Chriſtians more carefully than by the Jews; and the neceſſity of Greek for the underſtanding of the New Teſtament, cauſed that language not only to be ſaved from the ravages of time, but alſo to be ſtudied with devout attention.

The fathers of the church wrote in Greek during three centuries; and at a time when the Latin language was gradually decaying, the Latin fathers contributed ſomething to its reſtoration; and wrote, as well as their coeval writers among the Pagans, not indeed with Auguſtan elegance, but ſtill well enough to preſerve a ſkill in the conſtruction and vocabulary of the language.

A conſiderable knowledge of hiſtory, and ſomething of chronology and philoſophy, was neceſſary in ſtudying and defending the Scriptures, even in the earlieſt ages; and many Chriſtians appeared well ſkilled in theſe parts of learning, at a time when they were generally neglected. Religion and conſcience operated as a ſtimulus, when all other motives were inſufficient to retard the mind in its ſwift progreſs down the declivity.

With a view, and ſolely with a view, to enable eccleſiaſtics to read and underſtand the Scriptures, even in the moſt diſmal night of ignorance, there were ſome places of inſtruction in cathedrals and monaſteries, in which the embers of literature, if we may venture to uſe that expreſſion, were preſerved from total extinction; in which a ſpark lay latent, which was one day to relume a light to lighten the univerſe.

The little learning of thoſe unfortunate ages, though it did not enable the perſons who poſſeſſed it to taſte and underſtand the beauties of the ancient poets and philoſophers, yet gave them ſome idea of the value of books in general, and enabled them to tranſcribe, with tolerable accuracy, even what they did not accurately underſtand. Thus were thoſe ineſtimable treaſures of all elegance and pleaſing knowledge, the old Greek and Latin authors, handed down to ages more bleſſed; to thoſe who were able to unlock them, and pour out their riches for the general utility. Nor are we indebted to the Chriſtians for the claſſics only; but alſo for the Roman law, and the codes of Juſtinian and Theodoſius. Books, which were deſtroyed by ignorant and angry kings and conquerors, found a ſafe aſylum in religious houſes; and even

Monkery,

Monkery, which has been juſtly reprobated as one of the follies of human nature, became, under the direction of Providence, the inſtrument of many of thoſe bleſſings which now contribute greatly to the happineſs and dignity of an enlightened empire.

The revival of learning, as it is termed, or its emanſipation from churches and monaſteries, and general diffuſion over the world, is greatly owing to the efforts of eccleſiaſtics. There aroſe, in that auſpicious morning, a conſtellation of polite and profound Chriſtian ſcholars, whoſe effulgence has ſcarcely been out-ſhone by any ſucceeding luminaries in the literary horizon.

The beſt ſcholars of modern times, not only in theology, but in every part of human learning, have been Chriſtian divines. They were led by their purſuit of religious knowledge, into the collateral paths of philoſophy, philology, and all elegant and uſeful literature.

It is to the piety of Chriſtians that we owe the venerable foundations of ſchools and colleges; thoſe inſtitutions, which, though they have often been perverted, have ſtill kept the light burning like the veſtal fire, and handed the torch from one generation to another like the runners in the torch-race. It was the love of Chriſt which taught thoſe towers to riſe on the banks of the Cam and the Iſis, and planted ſeminaries of learning in every conſiderable town throughout the kingdom.

To the Goſpel, then, ſays the learned divine who ſuggeſted this ſubject, and to thoſe who embraced it, are due our grateful acknowledgments for the learning that is at preſent in the world. The infidels, educated in Chriſtian countries, owe that learning they have to Chriſtianity, and act the part of thoſe brutes, which, when they have ſucked the dam, turn about and ſtrike her. *Eſſays.*

II. MONSIEUR FENELON.

The prevalence of Chriſtianity an argument of its divinity.

THE eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian religion among men is the greateſt of all miracles. In ſpite of all the power of Rome; in ſpite of all the paſſions, intereſts, and prejudices of ſo many nations; ſo many philoſophers; ſo many different religions; twelve poor fiſhermen, without art, without eloquence, without power, publiſh and ſpread their doctrine throughout the world. In ſpite of a perſecution for three centuries, which ſeemed every moment ready to extinguiſh it; in ſpite of continued and innumerable martyrdoms of perſons of all conditions, ſexes, and countries; the truth in

the end triumphs over error, purſuant to the predictions both of the old and new law. Let any one ſhew ſome other religion, which has the ſame marks of a divine protection.

A powerful conqueror may eſtabliſh, by his arms, the belief of a religion, which flatters the ſenſuality of men; a wiſe legiſlator may gain himſelf attention and reſpect by the uſefulneſs of his laws; a ſect in credit, and ſupported by the civil power, may abuſe the credulity of the people: all this is poſſible: but what could victorious, learned, and ſuperſtitious nations ſee, to induce them ſo readily to Jeſus Chriſt, who promiſed them nothing in this world but perſecutions and ſufferings; who propoſed to them the practice of a morality, to which all darling paſſions muſt be ſacrificed. Is not the converſion of the world to ſuch a religion, without miracles, a greater and more credible one, than even the greateſt of thoſe which ſome refuſe to believe?

Chriſtian's Magazine.

12. Mr. Humphrey Detton.

A ſummary of arguments for the truth of the Goſpel.

He that well conſiders the force of thoſe arguments which are brought to eſtabliſh the truth of the Chriſtian religion; that ſees how they all (though drawn from different topics) conſpire in the moſt perfect manner, to convince the world of the divine original of this faith; would ſcarce think it poſſible, that the reaſon and underſtanding of mankind ſhould ever oppoſe it; will therefore conclude there is ſomething more than pure infidelity at the bottom, and that they are not mere ſcruples of the mind which create ſo long and violent contention.

If he thinks on the excellency of the precepts of the Chriſtian religion, he finds them of the fitteſt nature poſſible to perſuade him to receive it as the contrivance of heaven. They are all ſo worthy of God, ſo beneficial and improving to human nature, and ſo conducive to the welfare and happineſs of ſociety.

When he conſiders the ſtrange and ſpeedy propagation of this faith through the world, with its triumph over the wit and policy, the force and malice of its formidable enemies; and all this accompliſhed by ſuch methods, as the reaſon of mankind would have pronounced the moſt fooliſh and abſurd: he ſees here the over-ruling hand of God, which alone could give it ſuch aſtoniſhing ſucceſſes, by thoſe very ways and means from which its utter confuſion was to be expected.

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The exact accompliſhment of expreſs and unqueſtionable prophecies, concerning the moſt remarkable events of the world, is a ſolemn appeal to all reaſonable nature, whether that revelation be not truly divine, which contains ſuch plain and wonderful predictions.

Laſtly, The miracles wrought by Jeſus Chriſt and his apoſtles, in confirmation of this faith and doctrine, are ſuch proofs of the near concern which heaven had therein; that he who conſiders them, and at the ſame time calls Chriſtianity an impoſture, muſt either take pains to avoid knowing the finger of God, when he ſees it, or elſe do infinitely worſe, by aſcribing the manifeſt effects thereof to mean artifice, or diabolical power.

From theſe topics the truth of Chriſtianity has been ſo ſubſtantially argued, and ſo clearly proved; that, by all the rules of right reaſon in uſe amongſt mankind, it is rendered plainly abſurd and irrational to reject it. One need not wiſh to ſee an adverſary reduced to worſe extremities, than one of thoſe arguments well managed and preſſed home would reduce him to; provided he were kept from excurſions, and obliged to return no anſwers but what were directly to the purpoſe. *Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection.*

13. Archbishop Synge.

The facts related in the Evangeliſts may be depended on.

THAT there was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus of Nazareth, in Galilee, in the time of Tiberius Cæſar, the Roman empepor; that he he had a company of poor men for his diſciples; that he and his diſciples went about the country of Judea, teaching and preaching; that he was put to death upon the croſs, after the Roman manner, under Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea; that after his death, his diſciples went about into all, or moſt parts of the then known world, teaching and preaching, that this Jeſus was the Chriſt, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world, and that he was riſen from the dead, and gone into heaven; that in a few years they converted a very great number of people, in all places to this belief; that the profeſſors of this belief were called Chriſtians; that they were moſt cruelly perſecuted, and many thouſands of them put to death, and that with the moſt exquiſite torments, for no other reaſon, but becauſe they were Chriſtians; that theſe perſecutions were ſeveral times renewed againſt them, for the ſpace of about three hundred years; and yet, for all this, that the number of Chriſtians daily encreaſed, and that not only idiots and

unlearned men, but great ſcholars and philoſophers were converted to Chriſtianity, even in the times of perſecution; all this, being merely matter of fact, was never yet denied by the greateſt enemies of Chriſtian religion. And, indeed, theſe things are ſo abundantly teſtified by the hiſtories, and other writings of thoſe times; and have been ſo generally received for truth, as well by the oppoſers as believers of Chriſtianity, by a conſtant, univerſal, and uninterrupted tradition, from thoſe days, even unto this time; that a man may as well deny the truth of any, or of all, the hiſtories of the world, as of this. *Gentleman's Religion.*

14. Rev. Jeremiah Seed, M. A.

Superiority of the Goſpel to all other writings an argument of its truth.

TO what was it owing, that the Jewiſh writers ſhould have ſuch lovely and great ideas of God, and ſuch juſt notions of the worſhip due to him, far above any thing which we meet with in the writings of the greateſt lights of the Heathen world; every one of which either patronized idolatry, or fell into errors of worſe conſequence? Can it be accounted for by the force of natural or human aſſiſtances? No, the eminent philoſophers of Athens and Rome equalled them, it is certain, in natural abilities, and exceeded them confeſſedly in the ſuperſtructures of acquired knowledge, and all the advantages of a refined education. It muſt be therefore owing to ſome ſupernatural or divine helps; and none, but he, in whom are contained all the treaſures of wiſdom, could have enriched their minds to ſuch a degree, and furniſhed ſuch a vaſt expence of thought. If Judæa was enobled by theſe exalted notions, of which other nations, who were ſunk into the dregs of polytheiſm and idolatry, were deſtitute; if the kindly dew of heaven deſcended on this fleece only, while all the earth around betrayed a want of refreſhing moiſture; this was the Lord's doing, and ought to be marvellous in our eyes.

Had God revealed himſelf to the Greeks, or ſome other nation famed for their curious reſearches into every branch of literature, and for the depths of wiſdom and policy; thoſe truths, which were ſo many emanations from the great fountain of light, would have been looked upon as the reſult of their penetration, and their own diſcoveries: but by communicating his will to a people of no inventive and enterprizing genius, of no enlarged reach and compaſs of thought; ſuch ſuſpicions are avoided, and the proofs of a revelation more

more conſpicuous and illuſtrious. And this may be one reaſon among others, why at a time, when the reſt of the world were bigoted to ſuperſtition, idolatry, and a falſe religion, God ſingled out this nation in that point not ſo corrupt as others, to be the guardian and depoſitary of the true.

If nothing recommended the Scripture but this ſingle conſideration, that all thoſe collected beams of ſpiritual light center in it alone, which were widely diffuſed amidſt a variety of treatiſes, and loſt amidſt a crowd of palpable abſurdities; even this would be no improbable argument of its divinity: but this is not all: let us, in order to compile an adequate unerring ſtandard of religious truths, take in all the aſſiſtances we can get from all the philoſophers in Greece, from Tully at Rome, nay even from Confucius as far as China; and yet, after all, the ſcheme will be defective in what the Scriptures have recommended, a pure rational worſhip of God only in ſpirit and in truth, a fulneſs of pardon for every ſin upon repentance, and the nobleneſs of the rewards hereafter. The love of God will not be required in ſo high a degree, as it is in the Scriptures; nor enforced by ſo ſtrong a motive as our Saviour's dying for mankind has done; nor our charity and love to the diſtreſſed recommended by ſo powerful an incentive, as that our Redeemer has made them his repreſentatives, and will place to his own account, whatever was done for his ſake to them.

One may challenge any man to produce before Chriſtianity, among the Heathen world, ſuch a complete ſyſtem of morality, reaching all the duties of life, without any defect; and full without overflowing, or any redundancy, as the Scriptures contain.—And it is needleſs to tell any man of plain ſenſe, that there muſt be always a proportion between the cauſe and the effect. Now, if we exclude the divine power, what proportion can we find between the cauſes of Chriſtianity, and Chriſtianity itſelf? Chriſtianity is a religion, which has diſabuſed the world, and reſcued it from thoſe many vicious practices, ſuch as the expoſing of infants, polygamy, &c. which were univerſally defended among the Pagans, and from human ſacrifices, and from innumerable abominable and brutal rites; a religion ſo perfective of human nature, and ſo expreſſive of the divine; that we want ideas to carry us to a conception of any thing beyond it. And who were the authors or cauſes of this religion? Why, a ſet of men bred up in low life to mean employments, which cramp the native powers of the mind. And can we ſeriouſly think, that a ſet of unlettered, unenterpriſing men could

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open ſeveral rich mines of truth, which had eſcaped the laborious reſearches of the profoundeſt ſcholars, and the happy ſagacity of the moſt penetrating wits?

Since therefore every effect muſt have a competent and proportionable cauſe; and ſince the ſuppoſed natural cauſes and authors of Chriſtianity conſidered as mere men excluſive of divine inſpiration, were plainly unequal to the taſk, nor could ever have brought to light ſuch doctrines, as exceeded whatever the philoſophers before had done; though, laying aſide their dregs, we ſhould draw off the very flower and ſpirit of their writings: it is evident, we muſt have recourſe to ſome ſupernatural and adequate cauſe which intereſted itſelf in this affair. And to whom, but to the Father of Light, in whom there is no darkneſs at all, can we be indebted, that now perſons of the ſlendereſt capacities may view thoſe elevated and beneficial truths in the ſtrongeſt point of light, which the fineſt ſpirits of the Gentile world could not before fully aſcertain; that our meaneſt mechanics, with a moderate ſhare of application, may have juſter and fuller notions of God's attributes, of eternal happineſs, of every duty reſpecting their Maker, mankind and themſelves; than the moſt diſtinguiſhed ſcholars among the Heathens could attain to, after a life laid out in painful reſearches?

Works.

15. Rev. Thomas Lally, M. A.

A well-diſpoſed mind muſt embrace the Goſpel.

GOD has taken care to unite in the evangeliſts and apoſtles all that is capable of making an impreſſion upon a well-diſpoſed mind, and form a compleat, a perfect, and full perſuaſion. They are all cotemporaries, ocular witneſſes, well inſtructed in all things, in which they themſelves had a great and intereſting ſhare. They are in great number, and though they have written ſeparately, in different times and places, they are perfectly unanimous in the fundamental and chief circumſtances. It is notwithſtanding evident, by the differences that have been obſerved, that they wrote not by agreement, and that it is truth alone which has united them. They ſpeak of themſelves, of their ignorance, of their weakneſſes, of their faults, with an unparalleled ingenuouſneſs. They are contented to write with ſimplicity naked facts, without taking any advantage from them, without explaining thoſe which ſeemed to need it, without making any reflections upon thoſe which intereſt themſelves the moſt, and without mixing in their narration either complaints, invectives,

tives, or exhortations, though they appear full of zeal, and write not, but to ſpread over the world the faith of the goſpel. In a word, they expoſe themſelves to all, ſuffer all, and this to atteſt the truth of what they write. They all equally offer themſelves to death, and ſeveral amongſt them, lay down their lives to give the laſt ſanction to their words. And they teach all thoſe who hear them, to die for the ſame truths, and preſerve, without alteration, the books wherein they are written. If there has been any thing of this nature ſince the beginning of the world; if there be any facts amongſt thoſe that are the moſt certain and inconteſtible, which have the ſame proofs and characteriſtics of truth; if it be poſſible, in not believing the evangeliſts, to believe any thing on the teſtimony of men; we may then indeed doubt of the hiſtory of the goſpel; for there is no compariſon betwixt its certainty and that of all ſuch facts as depend on the veracity of writers. *Principles of the Chriſtian Religion.*

16. Mr. Bate.

Suitableneſs of the Goſpel to the preſent ſtate of man.

HEREIN appears to lie the diſtinguiſhing excellence of Chriſtianity, that it comes home to men's boſoms and conſciences; it tells them what once they were, and what they now are, and they feel the truth in both caſes: their ſenſe of grandeur and innocence points them to the one, while their meanneſs and miſery convince them of the other. And thus it reflects men to themſelves; and they decry at the ſame time, as in a mirror, their original and preſent ſtate. This is a kind of perſonal revelation, and ſeems to carry its own evidence. Nor does it leave them here to a merely ſpeculative diſcovery; it offers aſſiſtance to their weakneſs, and remedies to their imperfections. In other ſyſtems, the law of obedience is either reduced and levelled with the depravity of human nature; or if preſerved in a degree of purity, no ſufficient help is afforded in order to fulfil it, nor relief in caſe of failure: and thus man is either degraded to a beaſt, or mocked with unattainable perfection. But the Chriſtian religion ſeems equally to correſpond to his wants and his dignity, diſplaying a law of conſummate holineſs anſwering to his original ſtate, and, at the ſame time, affording interior aſſiſtance and an adequate atonement, calculated for his preſent condition of impotence and guilt. And upon theſe grounds it would appear, that Chriſtianity might ſafely lodge

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its appeal with every individual, and leave him to try its truth and importance by his own heart and situation.

Chinese Fragment.

17. Bishop Porteus.

Various reasonings in favour of Christianity.

GOD only knows, and God only can tell, whether he will forgive, and upon what terms he will forgive the offences done against him; what mode of worship he requires; what helps he will afford us; and what condition he will place us in hereafter. All this God actually has told us in the gospel. It was to tell us this, he sent his Son into the world, whose mission was confirmed by the highest authority, by signs from heaven, and miracles on earth; whose life and doctrine are delivered down to us by the most unexceptionable witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood; who were too curious and incredul[illegible] to be themselves imposed upon, too honest and sincere, too plain and artless, to impose upon others.

What then can be the reason that men still refuse to see, and persist in "loving darkness rather than light?" They will tell you perhaps that it is because the gospel is full of incredible mysteries; but our Saviour tells you, and he tells you much truer, that it is "because their deeds are evil." The mysteries and difficulties of the gospel can be no real objection to any man that considers what mysteries occur, and what insuperable objections may be started, in almost every branch of human knowledge; and how often we are obliged in our most important concerns to decide and to act upon evidence, incumbered with far greater difficulties than any that are to be found in Scripture. If we can admit no religion that is not free from mystery, we must, I doubt, be content without any religion. Even the religion of nature itself, the whole constitution both of the natural and the moral world, is full of mystery; and the greatest mystery of all would be, if, with so many irrefutible marks of truth, Christianity should at last prove false. It is not then because the gospel has too little light for these men that they reject it, but because it has too much. For "every one that doth evil hateth "the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds "should be reproved." The light of the gospel is too prying and inquisitive for such an one. It reveals certain things which he could wish to conceal from all the world, and it pursues from himself. Nor is this all; it not only reveals, but it reproves them. It strikes him with an evidence he cannot bear; an evidence not only of its own truth, but of his

his unworthy conduct. The gospel does indeed offend him; but it is not his understanding, it is his conscience, that is shocked; he could easily credit what it requires him to believe; but he cannot, or rather he will not, practice what it commands him to do.

It is plain that such a man cannot possibly admit a revelation that condemns him; and it is as plain that the man of virtue cannot spurn the hand that is graciously stretched out to reward him. If he is a truly virtuous man, that is, one who sincerely labours to know his duty, and sincerely intends to perform it, he cannot but wish for more light to guide him in the investigation, more assistance to support him in the discharge of it, more happiness to crown his perseverance in it, than bare reason alone can afford him. This is what all the best and wisest Heathens most ardently desired, what nature has been continually looking out for with the utmost eagerness of expectation. When with a mind thus disposed he sits down to examine the gospel, suggest to me the least shadow of a reason why he should reject it. He finds in it a religion, pure, holy, and benevolent, as the God that gave it. He finds not only its moral precepts, but even its sublimest mysteries, calculated to promote internal sanctity, vital piety, universal philanthropy. He finds it throughout so great and noble, so congenial to the finest feelings, and most generous sentiments of his soul; that he cannot but wish it may be true; and never yet, I believe, did any good man wish it to be true, but he actually found it so. He sees in it every expectation of nature answered, every infirmity supported, every want supplied, every terror dissipated, every hope confirmed; nay, he sees that God "has done exceeding abundantly above all that he could either ask or think;" that he has given him, what reason could hardly have the idea of, eternal happiness in a life to come.

It is not a matter of indifference whether you embrace Christianity or not. Though reason could answer all the purposes of revelation, which is far, very far from being the case, yet you are not at liberty to make it your sole guide, if there be such a thing as a true revelation. We are the subjects of the Almighty; and whether we will acknowledge it or not, we live, and cannot but live, under his government. His will is the law of his kingdom. If he has made no express declaration of his will, we must collect it as well as we can from what we know of his nature and our own. But if he has expressly declared his will, that is the law we are to be governed by. We may indeed refuse to be governed by it;

it; but it is at our peril if we do; for if it proves to be a true declaration of his will, to reject it is rebellion.

But to reject or receive it, you may alledge, is not a thing in your own power. Belief depends not on your will, but your underſtanding. And will the righteous judge of the earth condemn you for want of underſtanding? No; but he may and will condemn you for the wrong conduct of your underſtanding. It is not indeed in your power to believe whatever you pleaſe, whether credible or incredible; but it is in your power to conſider thoroughly, whether a ſuppoſed incredibility be real or only apparent. It is in your power to beſtow a greater or leſs degree of attention on the evidence before you. It is in your power to examine it with an earneſt deſire to find out the truth, and a firm reſolution to embrace it wherever you do find it; or on the contrary, to bring with you a heart full of incorrigible depravity, or invincible prepoſſeſſions. Have you then truly and honeſtly done every thing that is confeſſedly in your power, towards forming a right judgment of revelation? Have you ever laid before yourſelf in one view the whole collective evidence of Chriſtianity? The conſiſtence, harmony, and connection, of all its various parts; the long chain of prophecies undeniably compleated in it; the aſtoniſhing and well-atteſted miracles that attended it; the perfect ſanctity of its author; the purity of its precepts; the ſublimity of its doctrines; the amazing rapidity of its progreſs; the illuſtrious company of confeſſors, ſaints, and martyrs, who died to confirm its truth; together with an infinite number of collateral proofs and ſubordinate circumſtances, all concurring to form ſuch a body of evidence, as no other truth in the world can ſhew; ſuch as muſt neceſſarily bear down, by its own weight and magnitude, all trivial objections to particular parts? Surely theſe things are not trifles; ſurely they at leaſt demand ſeriouſneſs and attention. Have you then done the goſpel this common piece of juſtice? Have you ever ſat down to conſider it with impartiality and candour; without any favourite vice or early prejudice, without any fondneſs for applauſe, or novelty, or refinement, to miſlead you? Have you examined it with the ſame care and diligence, that you would examine a title to an eſtate? Have you enquired for proper books? Have you read the defences of revelation as well as the attacks upon it? Have you in difficult points applied for the opinion of wiſe and learned friends; juſt as you would conſult the ableſt lawyers when your property was concerned, or the moſt ſkilful phyſicians when your life was at ſtake. If you

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can truly ſay, that you have done all theſe things; if you have faithfully beſtowed on theſe enquiries, all the leiſure and abilities you are maſter of, and called in every help within your reach, there is little danger of any material doubts remaining upon your mind.——St. John's affection for his departed friend did not terminate with his life. It was continued after his crucifixion, to his memory, his character, and his religion. After a long life ſpent in teaching and ſuffering for that religion, he concluded it with a work of infinite utility, the reviſal of the three goſpels already written, and the addition of his own to ſupply what they had omitted. With this view principally he gives us ſeveral of our Saviour's diſcourſes with his diſciples, which are no where elſe to be met with; and it is very obſervable, that theſe, as well as the many other occurrences of his life, which he introduces as ſupplemental to the other evangeliſts, are ſuch as ſet his beloved maſter in the moſt amiable and graceful point of view, ſuch as a favourite diſciple would be moſt likely to ſelect, and moſt diſpoſed to enlarge upon. Of this kind, for inſtance, are our Saviour's diſcourſe with the woman of Samaria; the cure of the infirm man at the pool of Bethesda; the acquittal of the woman taken in adultery; the deſcription of the good ſhepherd and his ſheep; the affecting hiſtory of Lazarus; the condeſcending and expreſſive act of waſhing his diſciples feet; his inimitably tender and conſolatory diſcourſe to them juſt before his ſuffering; his moſt admirable prayer on the ſame occaſion; and his pathetic recommendation of his ſheep to St. Peter after his reſurrection. Theſe paſſages are to be found only in St. John's goſpel, and whoever reads them with attention will diſcover in them plain indications not only of a heaven-directed hand, but of a feeling and a grateful heart, ſmitten with the love of a departed friend, penetrated with a ſenſe of his diſtinguiſhed kindneſs, perfectly well informed and thoroughly intereſted, in every tender ſcene that it deſcribes, ſoothing itſelf with the recollection of little domeſtic incidents and familiar converſations, and tracing out not only the larger and more obvious features of the favourite character, but even thoſe finer and more delicate ſtrokes in it, which would have eluded a leſs obſerving eye, or leſs faithful memory, than thoſe of a beloved companion and friend.—

Our divine lawgiver ſhowed his wiſdom equally in what he enjoined, and what he left unnoticed. He knew exactly, what no Pagan philoſopher ever knew, where to be ſilent and where to ſpeak.——

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That which principally attracts our notice in St. John's writings, and in his conduct, is, a ſimplicity and ſingleneſs of heart, a fervent piety, an unbounded benevolence, an unaffected modeſty, humility, meekneſs, and gentleneſs of diſpoſition. Theſe are evidently the great characteriſtic virtues that took the lead in his ſoul, and break forth in every page of his goſpel and his epiſtles.——To know what friendſhip really is, we muſt look for it in that ſacred repoſitory of every thing great and excellent, the goſpel of Chriſt.——

Our Saviour has aſſured us that he will conſider every real Chriſtian as united to him by cloſer ties than even thoſe of friendſhip. This aſſurance is given us in one of thoſe noble ſtrains of eloquence which are ſo common in the Sacred Writings. Our Lord being told that his mother and his brethren ſtood without, deſiring to ſpeak with him, he gives a turn to this little incident, perfectly new, and inexpreſſibly tender and affectionate. "Who is my mother, and who "are my brethren? And he ſtretched forth his hands to- "wards his diſciples, and ſaid, Behold my mother and my "brethren! For whoſoever ſhall do the will of my Father "which is in heaven, the ſame is my brother, and ſiſter, "and mother." *Sermons, paſſim.*

18. Rev. Wm. Smith, D. D.

Sublime views of the Goſpel.

THE further we puſh our enquiries into nature, the more we ſhall be convinced of the greatneſs of its author, and the inſufficiency of unenlightened reaſon. We ſhall find many things of the utmoſt importance for us to know, which yet will baffle all our efforts, and elude our moſt eager reſearches. The creation and various revolutions of the world, the fall and redemption of man, the laſt judgment and an immortality to come, are ſubjects in which no human wiſdom could inſtruct us, unleſs the Lord had been pleaſed to reveal himſelf concerning him.

And yet what is all the philoſophy in the world compared to a knowledge in theſe points? Where is its ſublimity, or what is its ſignificancy to us, if it affords us no infallible rule of duty at preſent, and no ground of hope hereafter? If it leaves us in the dark concerning our own original, the means of ſalvation from ſin and miſery, and the immortal ſtate of our ſouls in the untried periods of eternity?

What joy, then, muſt it yield a ſincere enquirer, to be ſufficiently informed upon theſe important ſubjects, by a revelation from God himſelf? Can he neglect or deſpiſe ſuch

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an awful ſyſtem? Or will he not rather take it to his boſom, ſearch into its depths, and reverence it as "containing the "words of eternal life," and being the richeſt legacy which heaven could give, or earth receive?

Such a revelation and ſuch a legacy are the Scriptures of God. In all the ſimplicity of truth and beauties of majeſty, they deliver thoſe rules by which we are to live here and be judged hereafter. Containing doctrines the moſt rational and exalted, precepts the moſt humane and important, a ſtyle the moſt rich and perſuaſive, abounding in all the variety of tropes and figures, and ſharper than a two-edged ſword, the Scriptures are calculated to ſeize and purify the affections; to enlighten and exalt the underſtanding; to alarm and rouſe the conſcience; to confirm our hopes and remove our fears; to baniſh ſuperſtition and caſt down the idols of the nations; to mitigate lawleſs power and humanize the rage of barbariſm; and to call men off from a vain dependance on external ceremonies, to a truſt in the living God, obedience to his moral laws, repentance for paſt offences, an acceptable and manly devotion of heart, a longing after immortality, an union with the divine nature, and an exaltation to the life of angels and felicity unſpeakable!

Every thing which human reaſon would deſire to be informed in, is fully brought to light in the goſpel. Here the origin, connexions and duties of man are amply deſcribed! Here his departure from his firſt innocence and rectitude, the degradation of his nature, and all the marvellous workings of omnipotence to reclaim and ſave him, are diſtinctly recorded! Here we ſee the prophets propheſying for his ſake, the old world drowned, another fitted up, and laſt of all the Lord of glory deſcending from heaven, to accompliſh the amazing plan of redemption, and reſtore him to the divine favour! Here alſo life and immortality are brought to light, and the future diſplayed! Here the ſolemnity of the laſt judgment, and the aſtoniſhing ſcenes of the general conſummation, are laid before us! Here death is diſarmed of his ſting, and the grave of victory! Here the gates of heaven are ſet open—and, oh! what an unutterable weight of glory, thro' all the ages of eternity.—

Say, then, ye wiſe ones of the earth! ye ſages, ye philoſophers, or by whatever other names ye would be called! ſay now, what is the amount of your knowledge, if it reſolves you not on ſuch ſubjects as theſe? Can an acquaintance with human ſcience render you indifferent to ſuch an exalted ſyſtem of heavenly wiſdom as this? Surely not. The one will

will only inflame your thirſt for the other, and make you purſue it as the finiſhing and moſt durable part of the whole.

For, "whether there be tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; or whe-"ther there be knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away." This vain world itſelf, all its gay ſcenes, every thing that we account wiſe or curious in it, ſhall come to an end and pleaſe no more: but the ſublime ſubjects of the goſpel will ſtill be new. They will be the object of our endleſs enquiries, and conſtitute a philoſophy, the marvellous of which eternity cannot exhauſt, nor the longeſt periods of duration bring to decay.

Diſcourſes on public Occaſions.

19. Rev. John Hodge.

Want of human learning in our Saviour an argument for the Goſpel.

"HOW knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" This was the objection made to Jeſus by ſome of thoſe that heard him; and which gave occaſion to this vindication of his character and claims. But ſurely that itſelf which occaſioned the difficulty might naturally have ſuggeſted the anſwer. Was his doctrine what he had not received from others, nor had learnt from men, by any of the then known methods of inſtruction? It was the leſs likely it ſhould be an invention of his own. And whoſe then muſt it be, but his that ſent him, and from whom he declared he received it? Was his family mean, his education obſcure? Were his circumſtances ſtrait and narrow? Was he well known to have enjoyed none of the ordinary advantages for inſtruction and improvement? Whence then the wiſdom that appeared in his teaching, as well as his power to do ſuch ſurprizing works? Whence could he have either the one or the other, but from above? Whence elſe could it be, that the poor deſpiſed carpenter of Nazareth taught ſo excellent and divine a doctrine; a doctrine in every part ſo worthy the God whom he calls its author; a doctrine ſo far ſuperior to every thing ever taught before him by the moſt learned ſages among the Gentiles? And where among either of them will be found an inſtitution ſo excellent in itſelf, ſo pure in its views, ſo divine in its tendency, ſo harmonious and conſiſtent in all its parts, ſo well adapted to reform the world, and better mankind, as this religion of the deſpiſed Jeſus? It claims to be from heaven, and not of man. Allow the claim and all is eaſy: nor is there any thing but what is at once accounted for. On any other ſuppoſition you meet with unſurmountable difficulties. You muſt without any reaſon charge him, whoſe whole life

life afforded nothing but marks of eminent integrity, with being the moſt deliberate and pernicious of impoſtors: and you muſt, at the ſame time, ſuppoſe one of the meaneſt of mankind, and entirely unaſſiſted too, capable of framing by himſelf a doctrine far ſurpaſſing all others, and more worthy of God, than any the world had ever heard before.

Sermons on the Evidences of Chriſtianity.

20. AUTHOR OF THE WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.

Learning and Probity of Mind neceſſary in reading the Bible.

IF it be reaſonable to believe the Bible to contain the Word of God, it muſt be reaſonable alſo to believe it of perfection proportionable to the Author; and then certainly it muſt be advanced beyond all our objection. For to thoſe who except to the ſtyle, the incoherence, the contradictions, or whatever elſe in Scripture; I ſhall only aſk this one queſtion, whether it be not much more poſſible that they, who can pretend to be nothing above fallible men, may misjudge, than that the infallible God ſhould dictate any thing juſtly liable to thoſe charges? I am ſure they muſt depart as much from reaſon as religion, to affirm the contrary. But alas, inſtead of this implicit ſubmiſſion to God's Word, men take up explicit prejudices againſt it; condemn it without ever examining the truth of the allegation. 'Tis certain, that in a writing of ſuch antiquity, whoſe original language has idioms and phraſes ſo peculiar, whoſe country had cuſtoms ſo differing from the reſt of the world; 'tis impoſſible to judge of it without reference to all thoſe circumſtances. Add to this, that the Hebrew has been a dead language for well nigh two thouſand years, no where in common uſe; nor is there any other ancient book now extant in it, beſides thoſe of the Old Teſtament.

Now of thoſe many who defame Holy Writ, how few are there that have the induſtry to enquire into thoſe particulars? And when for want of knowledge, ſome paſſages ſeem improper, or perhaps contradictory; the Scripture muſt bear the blame of their ignorance, and be accuſed as abſurd and unintelligible, becauſe themſelves are ſtupid and negligent. It were therefore methinks but a reaſonable propoſal, that no man ſhould arraign it, till they have uſed all honeſt diligence, taken in all probable helps for the underſtanding it: and if this might be obtained, I believe moſt of its accuſers would, like thoſe of the woman in the Goſpel, drop away, as conſcious of their own incompetency; the loudeſt out-cries that are made againſt it, being commonly of thoſe who fall upon

it only as a faſhionable theme of diſcourſe, and hope to acquire themſelves the reputation of wits by thus charging God fooliſhly. But he that would candidly and uprightly endeavour to comprehend before he judges, and to that end induſtriouſly uſe thoſe means which the providence of God by the labours of pious men hath afforded him, will certainly find cauſe to acquit the Scripture of thoſe imputations which our bold critics have caſt upon it. I do not ſay that he ſhall have all the obſcurities of it perfectly cleared to him; but he ſhall have ſo many of them as is for his real advantage, and ſhall diſcern ſuch reaſons why the reſt remain unfathomable, as may make him not only juſtify, but celebrate the wiſdom of the Author.

Yet this is to be expected only upon the forementioned condition, namely, that he comes with ſincere and honeſt intentions; for as for him that comes to the Scripture with deſign, and wiſhes to find matter of cavil and accuſations; there is little doubt but that ſpirit of impiety and profaneneſs which ſent him thither, will meet him there as a ſpirit of deluſion and occecation. That prince of the air will caſt ſuch miſts, raiſe ſuch black vapours, that, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, "the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt ſhall "not ſhine unto him." Indeed, were ſuch a man left only to the natural efficacy of prejudice, that is of itſelf ſo blinding, ſo infatuating a thing, as commonly fortifies againſt all conviction. We ſee it in all the common inſtances of life; men's very ſenſes are often enſlaved by it: the prepoſſeſſion of a ſtrong fancy will make the objects of ſight or hearing appear quite different from what they are. But in the preſent caſe, when this ſhall be added to ſatanical illuſions, and both left to their operations by God's withdrawing his illuminating grace, the caſe of ſuch a man anſwers the deſcription of Scripture, "They have eyes and ſee not, ears have they "and hear not." And that God will ſo withdraw his grace, we have all reaſon to believe; he having promiſed it only to the meek, to thoſe who come with malleable ductile ſpirits, to learn, not to deride or cavil. St. Peter tells us that "the "unlearned and unſtable wreſt the Scripture to their own "deſtruction:" and if God permit ſuch to do ſo, much more will he the proud and malicious.

I ſay not this, to deter any from the ſtudy of Holy Scripture, but only to caution them, to bring a due preparation of mind along with them; God's Word being like a generous ſovereign medicament, which, if ſimply and regularly taken, is of the greateſt benefit, but if mixt with poiſon, ſerves only to

to make that more fatally operative. To conclude; he that would have his doubts ſolved concerning Scripture, let him follow the method our bleſſed Lord has deſcribed: let him "do the will of God, and then he ſhall know of the doctrine "whether it be of God." Let him bring with him a probity of mind, a willingneſs to aſſent to all convictions he ſhall there meet with, and then he will find grounds ſufficient to aſſure him that it is God's Word, and conſequently to be received with all the ſubmiſſion and reverence, that its being ſo exacts. *Lively Oracles.*

21. Rev. Alexander Catcott, M. A.

Hiſtory of the univerſal deluge attended with all poſſible evidence.

WHAT weight the teſtimonies I have produced concerning the Deluge ought to have, the reader will beſt judge: teſtimonies ſo numerous, ſo various, ſo diſconcerted, and yet ſo connected, is it poſſible that they can deceive? Could all nations conſpire with all nations, and all ages with all ages, to impoſe upon themſelves and their poſterity? Could the religion of the true God, and the religion of the Syrian goddeſs! the Jews, and the Heathens that hated them! Moſes and Melo his enemy! tradition conſpire with hiſtory, and hiſtory with mythology! men of all characters, complexions, conditions, and perſuaſions! Plutarch with Beroſus, Benjamin the Jew with Chryſoſtom, and Lucian with both! Plato with Pliny, and Dio with Falconerius! the imaginations of poets, and the experiments of naturaliſts! antiquity, poetry, philoſophy, and philology! wiſdom and folly! truth, and fiction! regions unknown to one another! the Greeks, and the Hottentots! the Perſians and the Banians! Aſia with the iſles of the Gentiles! and America with both! all conſpire to eſtabliſh one univerſal deluſion! And all nature join in the atteſtation; produce all her animals, and all her vegetables, all her heights, and all her depths, her mountains, her vales, her levels, to vouch one univerſal lie, with all the irreſiſtable evidence of truth? *Treatiſe on the Deluge.*

22. Bishop Butler.

Difficulties in the Word of God to be expected, with the duty of examining its evidence.

ORIGEN has obſerved with ſingular ſagacity, that he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of nature, may well expect to find the ſame ſort of difficulties in it, as are found in the conſtitution of

nature. And in a like way of reflection it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God upon account of theſe difficulties, may, for the very ſame reaſon, deny the world to have been from him.——

Chriſtianity being ſuppoſed either true or credible, it is unſpeakable irreverence, and really the moſt preſumptuous raſhneſs, to treat it as a light matter. It can never juſtly be eſteemed of little conſequence, till it be poſitively ſuppoſed falſe. Nor do I know a higher and more important obligation which we are under, than that, of examining moſt ſeriouſly into the evidence of it, ſuppoſing its credibility; and of embracing it, upon ſuppoſition of its truth.

Analogy.

N. B. This book of biſhop Butler's, for capable readers, has not its equal, perhaps, in any language.

23. Rev. Samuel Davies, M. A.

Manner in which the Goſpel-hiſtory is written an argument of its truth.

I CANNOT but take notice of that matchleſs ſimplicity that appears in the hiſtory of Chriſt and his apoſtles. The evangeliſts write in the artleſs, calm, and unguarded manner, which is natural to perſons confident of the undeniable truth of what they aſſert. They do not write with that ſcrupulous caution which would argue any fear that they might be confuted. They ſimply relate the naked facts, and leave them to ſtand upon their own evidence. They relate the moſt amazing, the moſt moving things, with the moſt cool ſerenity, without any paſſionate exclamations, and warm reflections: for example, they relate the moſt aſtoniſhing miracles, in the moſt ſimple, and as it were, careleſs manner, without breaking out and celebrating the divine power of Chriſt. In the ſame manner they relate the moſt tragical circumſtances of his condemnation and death, calmly mentioning matter of fact, without any invectives againſt the Jews, without any high elogys upon Chriſt's innocence, without any rapturous celebrations of his grace in ſuffering all theſe things for ſinners, and without any tender lamentations over their deceaſed maſter. It is impoſſible for a heart ſo deeply impreſſed with ſuch things, as theirs undoubtedly was, to retain this diſpaſſionate ſerenity, unleſs laid under ſupernatural reſtraints; and there appears very good reaſons for this reſtraint upon them, viz. that the goſpel hiſtory might carry intrinſic evidences of its ſimplicity and artleſs impartiality: and that it might appear adapted to convince

convince the judgments of men, and not merely to raiſe their paſſions. In this reſpect, the goſpel hiſtory is diſtinguiſhed from all hiſtories in the world. And can we think ſo plain, ſo undiſguiſed, ſo artleſs a compoſure, the contrivance of deſigning impoſtors? Would not a conſciouſneſs that they might be detected keep them more upon their guard, make them more ready to anticipate and confute objections, and take every artifice to recommend their cauſe, and prepoſſeſs the reader in its favour? *Sermons.*

24. BISHOP SHERLOCK.

The information the Goſpel gives moſt deſirable.

THE Chriſtian revelation has ſuch pretences, at leaſt, as may make it worthy of a particular conſideration: it pretends to come from heaven; to have been delivered by the Son of God; to have been confirmed by undeniable miracles and propheſies; to have been ratified by the blood of Chriſt and his apoſtles, who died in aſſerting its truth: it can ſhew likewiſe an innumerable company of martyrs and confeſſors: its doctrines are pure and holy, its precepts juſt and righteous; its worſhip is a reaſonable ſervice, refined from the errors of idolatry and ſuperſtition, and ſpiritual like the God who is the object of it: it offers the aid and aſſiſtance of heaven to the weakneſs of nature; which makes the religion of the goſpel to be as practicable, as it is reaſonable: it promiſes infinite rewards to obedience, and threatens eternal puniſhment to obſtinate offenders; which makes it of the utmoſt conſequence to us ſoberly to conſider it, ſince every one who rejects it ſtakes his own ſoul againſt the truth of it.——

Look into the Goſpel; there you will find every reaſonable hope of nature, nay every reaſonable ſuſpicion of nature, cleared up, and confirmed, every difficulty anſwered and removed. Do the preſent circumſtances of the world lead you to ſuſpect that God could never be the author of ſuch corrupt and wretched creatures as men now are? Your ſuſpicions are juſt and well founded. "God made man upright;" but through the temptation of the devil ſin entered, and death and deſtruction followed after.

Do you ſuſpect, from the ſucceſs of virtue and vice in this world, that the providence of God does not interpoſe to protect the righteous from violence, or to puniſh the wicked? The ſuſpicion is not without ground. God leaves his beſt ſervants here to be tried oftentimes with affliction and ſorrow, and permits the wicked to flouriſh and abound. The call of

the goſpel is not to honour and riches here, but to take up our croſs and follow Chriſt.

Do you judge, from comparing the preſent ſtate of the world with the natural notion you have of God, and of his juſtice and goodneſs, that there muſt needs be another ſtate in which juſtice ſhall take place? You reaſon right; and the goſpel confirms the judgment. God has appointed a day to judge the world in righteouſneſs: then thoſe who mourn ſhall rejoice, thoſe who weep ſhall laugh, and the perſecuted and afflicted ſervants of God ſhall be heirs of his kingdom.

Have you ſometimes miſgivings of mind? Are you tempted to miſtruſt this judgment, when you ſee the difficulties which ſurround it on every ſide; ſome which affect the ſoul in in its ſeparate ſtate, ſome which affect the body in its ſtate of corruption and diſſolution? Look to the goſpel: there theſe difficulties are accounted for; and you need no longer puzzle yourſelf with dark queſtions concerning the ſtate, condition, and nature of ſeparate ſpirits, or concerning the body, however to appearance loſt and deſtroyed; for the body and ſoul ſhall once more meet to part no more, but to be happy for ever. In this caſe the learned cannot doubt, and the ignorant may be ſure, that 'tis the man, the very man himſelf, who ſhall riſe again: for an union of the ſame ſoul and body is as certainly the reſtoration of the man, as the dividing them was the deſtruction.

Would you know who it is that gives this aſſurance? 'Tis one who is able to make good his word; one who loved you ſo well as to die for you; yet one too great to be held a priſoner in the grave. No; he roſe with triumph and glory, the firſt-born from the dead, and will in like manner call from the duſt of the earth all thoſe who put their truſt and confidence in him.

But who is this, you'll ſay, who was ſubject to death, and yet had power over death? How could ſo much weakneſs and ſo much ſtrength meet together? That God has the power of life, we know; but then he cannot die: that man is mortal, we know; but then he cannot give life.

Conſider; does this difficulty deſerve an anſwer, or does it not? Our bleſſed Saviour lived among us in a low and poor condition, expoſed to much ill treatment from his jealous countrymen: when he fell into their power, their rage knew no bounds: they reviled him, inſulted him, mocked him, ſcourged him, and at laſt nailed him to a croſs, where by a ſhameful and wretched death he finiſhed a life of ſorrow and affliction. Did we know no more of him than this, upon

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what ground could we pretend to hope that he will be able to ſave us from the power of death? We might ſay with the diſciples, "We truſted this had been he who ſhould have ſaved "Iſrael;" but he is dead, he is gone, and all our hopes are buried in his grave.

If you think this ought to be anſwered, and that the faith of a Chriſtian cannot be a reaſonable faith, unleſs it be able to account for this ſeeming contradiction; I beſeech you then never more complain of the goſpel for furniſhing an anſwer to this great objection, for removing this ſtumbling block out of the way of our faith. He was a man, and therefore he died. He was the Son of God, and therefore he roſe from the dead, and will give life to all his true diſciples. He it was who formed this world and all things in it, and for the ſake of man was content to become man, and to taſte death for all, that all through him may live. This is a wonderful piece of knowledge which God has revealed to us in his goſpel; but he has not revealed it to raiſe our wonder, but to confirm and eſtabliſh our faith in him to whom he hath committed all power, "whom he hath appointed heir of all "things."

Had the goſpel required of us to expect from Chriſt the redemption of our ſouls and bodies, and given us no reaſon to think that Chriſt was endowed with power equal to the work, we might juſtly have complained; and it would have been a ſtanding reproach, that Chriſtians believe they know not what. But to expect redemption from the Son of God, the reſurrection of our bodies from the ſame hand which at firſt created and formed them, are rational and well-founded acts of faith; and it is the Chriſtian's glory, that he knows in whom he has believed.

That the world was made by the Son of God, is a propoſition with which reaſon has no fault to find: that he who made the world ſhould have power to renew it to life again, is highly conſonant to reaſon. All the myſtery lies in this, that ſo high and great a perſon ſhould condeſcend to become man, and ſubject to death, for the ſake of mankind. But are we fit perſons to complain of this tranſcendent myſterious love? or, does it become us to quarrel with the kindneſs of our bleſſed Lord towards us, only becauſe it is greater than we can conceive? No; it becomes us to bleſs and to adore this exceeding love, by which we are ſaved from condemnation, by which we expect to be reſcued from death; knowing that the power of our bleſſed Lord is equal to his love, and that he is "able to ſubdue all things to himſelf."

Chriſt

Chriſt and Mahomet compared.

GO to your natural religion, lay before her Mahomet and his diſciples arrayed in armour and in blood, riding in triumph over the ſpoils of thouſands and ten thouſands, who fell by his victorious ſword. Shew her the cities which he ſet in flames, the countries which he ravaged and deſtroyed, and the miſerable diſtreſs of all the inhabitants of the earth. When ſhe has viewed him in this ſcene, carry her into his retirements, ſhew her the prophet's chamber, his concubines and wives, and let her ſee his adulteries, and hear him alledge revelation and his divine commiſſion to juſtify his luſts and his oppreſſions. When ſhe is tired with this proſpect, then ſhew her the bleſſed Jeſus, humble and meek, doing good to all the ſons of men, patiently inſtructing the ignorant and the perverſe. Let her ſee him in his moſt retired privacies, let her follow him to the mount and hear his devotions and ſupplications to God. Carry her to his table, to view his poor fare and hear his heavenly diſcourſe. Let her ſee him injured but not provoked; let her attend him to the tribunal, and conſider the patience with which he endured the ſcoffs and reproaches of his enemies. Lead her to his croſs, and let her view him in the agonies of death, and hear his laſt prayer for his perſecutors, "Father, forgive them, for they "know not what they do." When natural religion has viewed both, aſk which is the prophet of God?——But her anſwer we have already had, when ſhe ſaw part of this ſcene through the eyes of the Centurion who attended at the croſs; by him ſhe ſaid, "Truly this was the Son of God."——

Different ends of religion and infidelity.

COULD I repreſent to you the different ſtates of good and bad men: could I give you the proſpect which the bleſſed martyr St. Stephen had, and ſhew you the bleſſed Jeſus at the right hand of God, ſurrounded with angels, and "the "ſpirits of juſt men made perfect:" could I open your ears to hear the never-ceaſing hymns of praiſe, which the bleſſed above "ſing to Him that was, and is, and is to come; to "the Lamb that was ſlain, but liveth forever:" could I lead you through the unbounded regions of eternal day, and ſhew the mutual and ever-blooming joys of ſaints who are at reſt from their labours, and live forever in the preſence of God! or could I change the ſcene, and unbar the iron gates of hell, and carry you, through ſolid darkneſs, to "the fire that "never goes out," and to "the worm that never dies:" could I ſhew you the apoſtate angels faſt bound in eternal chains,

chains, or the ſouls of wicked men overwhelmed with torment and deſpair: could I open your ears to hear the deep itſelf groan with the continual cries of miſery; cries which can never reach the throne of mercy, but return in ſad echoes, and add even to the very horrors of hell! could I thus ſet before you the different ends of religion and infidelity, you would want no other proof to convince you, that nothing can recompenſe the hazard men run of being forever miſerable through unbelief. *Sermons, paſſim.*

25. Rev. Richard Bentley, D. D.

The abſurdity and madneſs of infidelity.

IF a perſon that had a fair eſtate in reverſion, which in all probability he would ſpeedily be poſſeſſed of, and of which he might reaſonably promiſe to himſelf a long and happy enjoyment, ſhould be aſſured by ſome ſkilful phyſician, that in a very ſhort time he would inevitably fall into a diſeaſe which would ſo totally deprive him of his underſtanding and memory, that he ſhould loſe the knowledge of all things without him, nay all conſciouſneſs and ſenſe of his own perſon and being: if, I ſay, upon a certain belief of this indication, the man ſhould appear over-joyed at the news, and be mightily tranſported with the diſcovery and expectation, would not all that ſaw him be aſtoniſhed at ſuch behaviour? Would they not be forward to conclude, that the diſtemper had ſeized him already, and even then the miſerable creature was become a mere fool and an idiot? Now the carriage of our atheiſts is infinitely more amazing than this; no dotage ſo infatuate, no phrenſy ſo extravagant as theirs. They have been educated in a religion that inſtructed them in the knowledge of a Supreme Being; a Spirit moſt excellently glorious, ſuperlatively powerful, and wiſe, and good, Creator of all things out of nothing; that hath endued the ſons of men, his peculiar favourites, with a rational ſpirit, and hath placed them as ſpectators in this noble theatre of the world, to view and applaud theſe glorious ſcenes of earth and heaven, the workmanſhip of his hands; that hath furniſhed them in general with a ſufficient ſtore of all things, either neceſſary or convenient for life; and, particularly to ſuch as fear and obey him, hath promiſed a ſupply of all wants, a deliverance and protection from all dangers: that they that ſeek him, ſhall want no manner of thing that is good. Who, beſides his munificence to them in this life, "hath ſo loved the world, that "he ſent his only-begotten Son, the expreſs image of his "ſubſtance," and partaker of his eternal nature and glory,

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to bring life and immortality to light, and to tender them to mankind upon fair and gracious terms; that if they ſubmit to his eaſy yoke, and light burden, and obſerve his commandments, which are not grievous, he then gives them the promiſe of eternal ſalvation; he hath reſerved for them in heaven "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and "that fadeth not away;" he hath prepared for them an unſpeakable, unconceivable perfection of joy and bliſs, things that "eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have en-"tered into the heart of man." What a delightful raviſhing hypotheſis of religion in this? And in this religion they have had their education. Now let us ſuppoſe ſome great profeſſor in atheiſm to ſuggeſt to ſome of theſe men, that all this is mere dream and impoſture; that there is no ſuch excellent being, as they ſuppoſe, that created and preſerves them; that all about them is dark ſenſeleſs matter, driven on by the blind impulſes of fatality and fortune; that men firſt ſprung up, like muſhrooms, out of the mud and ſlime of the earth; and that all their thoughts, and the whole of what they call ſoul, are only the various action and repercuſſion of ſmall particles of matter, kept a-while a moving by ſome mechaniſm and clock-work, which finally muſt ceaſe and periſh by death. If it be true then (as we daily find it is) that men liſten with complacency to theſe horrid ſuggeſtions; if they let go their hope of everlaſting life with willingneſs and joy; if they entertain the thoughts of final perdition with exultation and triumph; ought they not to be eſteemed moſt notorious fools, even deſtitute of common ſenſe, and abandoned to a callouſneſs and numbneſs of ſoul?

What then, is heaven itſelf, with its pleaſures for evermore, to be parted with ſo unconcernedly? Is a crown of righteouſneſs, a crown of life, to be ſurrendered with laughter? Is an exceeding and eternal weight of glory too light in the balance againſt the hopeleſs death of the atheiſt, and utter extinction? *Sermons.*

26. PROFESSOR MICHAELIS.

The books of the New Teſtament could not have been forged in the dark ages.

SOME adverſaries of the Chriſtian doctrine have been ſo bold and ſhameleſs as to deny in a lump the antiquity claimed by each of the New Teſtament books, i. e. to deny that they were written in the firſt century, by the writers to whom they are aſcribed. Toland is charged with having betrayed a ſuſpicion of this ſort in his life of Milton: but in his

Amyntor,

Amyntor, or defence of the life of Milton, he diſavows his having meant the writings, which we receive as inſpired, by the words upon which the charge is grounded. But an anonymous Italian, ventured, in a letter to Le Clerc to throw out the following ſuſpicion: It is poſſible that in the fifth century, about the time when the Goths over-ran Italy, four men of ſuperior underſtanding might unite in inventing and forging the writings of the apoſtles, as well as of the fathers, and falſify ſome paſſages of Joſephus and Suetonius, in order to introduce into the world, by the means of this fraud, a new and more rational religion.

Theſe four men, who muſt have been very converſant in the Jewiſh theology, and Heathen antiquity, are here charged with the immenſe labour of forging the writings of the fathers, and of inventing that diverſity of ſtyle and ſentiment, by which they were diſtinguiſhed from each other. But it would not have been ſafe for our ſceptic, to attribute to them a leſs laborious enterprize. His credulity, which in the preſent age men commonly affect to call by the name of unbelief, would have been ſhocked by the teſtimony of the fathers had he confined his imputation of forgery to the apoſtles. Le Clerc returned a ſtrong and ſenſible anſwer to his letter, in his Bibleotheque ancienne et moderne, tom. xxi. p. 440.

However, there are very few unbelievers among Chriſtians, who have thrown out this ſuſpicion againſt the writings of the apoſtles; and indeed it is ſo manifeſtly groundleſs, that whoever does throw it out, muſt be impudently invincible by truth and argument. For,

1. The ſtyle of the apoſtles is ſo different, that their epiſtles could not without great difficulty be written by the ſame hand. St. Paul is uniform in all his epiſtles; his manner is plainly different from that of other writers, and very difficult to be imitated. At leaſt all the epiſtles to which his name is prefixed are the work of one hand. St. John again is totally different from him; and whoever writes in a ſtyle like that of St. Paul, cannot imitate the ſtyle of St. John.

2. In order to invent writings, and aſcribe them to perſons who lived ſome centuries ago, it is neceſſary to have an underſtanding and judgment, and a knowledge of hiſtory and antiquity beyond the powers of man, elſe the inventor muſt commit frequent errors. Now the writings of the New Teſtament are unexceptionable in this reſpect. The better we are acquainted with Jewiſh and Heathen antiquity, with the hiſtory of the Romans, and the ancient geography of Paleſtine,

Paleſtine, the face of which country was totally changed by the conqueſts of the Romans; the more clearly we diſcern their agreement with the New Teſtament, even in ſome circumſtances ſo minute, that probably they would have eſcaped the moſt artful and moſt circumſpect impoſture. The commentators abound with obſervations from antiquity, which may ſerve to exemplify this: the learned Dr. Lardner in particular has done eminent ſervice in this reſpect.

3. The moſt ancient fathers, even thoſe who were contemporary with the apoſtles, Clemens Romanus, for inſtance, and Ignatius, quote the books of the New Teſtament, and aſcribe them to the apoſtles. We muſt therefore either ſuppoſe with the Italian abovementioned, that all the writings of the fathers for ſome centuries were forged: a ſuſpicion which may be more effectually removed by medicinal applications than by the force of argument; or we muſt admit the books of the New Teſtament, which they quote, to be in fact as ancient as they are pretended to be.

4. There are ſome very old verſions of the New Teſtament; the Latin at leaſt, ſeems to have been done ſo early as in the firſt century after the birth of Chriſt; and it is highly probable that the Syriac verſion is not leſs ancient.

Is it poſſible to ſuppoſe, that ſome centuries after Chriſt, when the Hebrew tongue was not underſtood in the weſtern church, either ſome blind chance proved ſo fortunate, or the cunning of ſome Italian impoſtures was attended with ſo much thought and learning, as to add to the credibility of the writings forged for the apoſtles, by an extempore Latin verſion full of Hebrew idioms, and by a Syriac interpretation? not to mention the Gothic tranſlation of Ulphilas, which, beſides, was done before the irruption of the Goths into Italy.

But if theſe writings are as ancient as they are pretended to be, they certainly carry with them an undeniable and indelible mark of their divine original: for the epiſtles refer to certain miraculous gifts, which are ſaid to have been imparted by the impoſition of hands, and to have been conferred by God, in confirmation of the oral and written doctrine of the apoſtles. If theſe epiſtles are ancient and genuine, and written by St. Paul to the churches to which they are addreſſed, then none can deny theſe miracles. The matter is important enough to merit further attention.

St. Paul's firſt epiſtle to the Theſſalonians is addreſſed to a church which was hardly founded, to which he had not preached the goſpel more than three Sabbath days, Acts

xvii. 2.

xvii. 2. He had been obliged to quit this church abruptly, on account of an impending perſecution, ver. 10. and being apprehenſive leſt the perſecution ſhould cauſe ſome to waver in the faith, he lays before them, in the three firſt chapters, arguments to prove the truth of his goſpel. The firſt of theſe arguments is, that which confirmed his doctrine at Theſſalonica, chap. i. 6—10. "For our goſpel," ſays he, "came not to you in word only, but alſo in power, and in "the Holy Ghoſt." Power is an expreſſion made uſe of elſewhere in the New Teſtament to ſignify miraculous acts. Admit him only to have been a rational man, and we cannot ſuppoſe him to write this to an infant church, if no member thereof had ever ſeen a miracle of his, or received a miraculous gift, of the Holy Ghoſt, by the impoſition of his hands.

He appeals to the ſame proof, in his firſt epiſtle to the Corinthians, who were extremely diſſatisfied with him and his manner of teaching, 1. Cor. ii. 4. "My ſpeech, and "my preaching, was not with enticing words of man's wiſ- "dom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit, and of power." The ſpirit is a word he elſewhere uſes to ſignify the extraordinary gifts of the "ſpirit," ſuch as the gift of tongues, &c. —The Hebrews were on the point of falling off from Chriſtianity, yet he confidently tells them how great their condemnation will be, if they deny a doctrine, to which God had borne "Witneſs with ſigns and wonders, and gifts of the "Holy Ghoſt." Heb. ii. 4. and chap. vi. 4. 5. He remonſtrates to them, that they had been "made partakers of "the Holy Ghoſt, and had taſted the powers of the world "to come." In like manner he endeavours to convince the Galatians, who had deſerted the pure doctrine of the goſpel, that the law of Moſes was aboliſhed; by putting to them this queſtion, "Received ye the ſpirit by the works of the law, "or by the hearing of faith?" Gal. iii. 2. Is it poſſible, that a deceiver of a ſound underſtanding, ſuch as St. Paul's epiſtles ſhew him to have poſſeſſed, ſhould refer the enemies of his religion, of his office, and of the doctrines which diſtinguiſhed him from other ſects of his religion, not only to the miracles which he pretends to have wrought, but to miraculous gifts which he pretends to have communicated to them, if they had it in their power to anſwer, that they knew nothing of theſe miraculous gifts?

In the 12th, 13th, and 14th chapters of the firſt to the Corinthians, he reprehends the abuſe of certain miraculous gifts of tongues, and preſcribes a better application of them. If he actually wrote this to the Corinthians, and they

they had no miraculous gifts, no knowledge of foreign tongues, then St. Paul is not an impoſtor but a madman, which, I apprehend, is not the charge of unbelievers againſt him.

But if theſe miracles be true, then the doctrine, and the book in confirmation of which they were wrought, are divine; and the more certainly ſo, as there is no room for deception. A juggler may perſuade me, that he performs miracles, but he can never perſuade me, and a whole body of men of ſound intellects, that he has communicated to us the gift of working miracles, and ſpeaking foreign languages, unleſs we can work the miracles, and ſpeak the languages.

Lectures on the New Teſtament.

27. ARNOBIUS.

Rapid progreſs of the Goſpel an argument of its truth.

IS not this an argument for our faith, that in ſo little a a ſpace of time, the ſacraments of Chriſt's great name are diffuſed over the world? That orators, grammarians, rhetoricians, lawyers, phyſicians, and philoſophers, men of great genius, love our religion, deſpiſing thoſe things wherein before they truſted? Slaves will rather ſuffer torments for their maſters, wives ſooner part with their huſbands, and children rather be diſinherited by their parents, than abandon the Chriſtian faith.

Contra Gentes.

28. REV. GEORGE BENSON, D. D.

Seriouſneſs in our enquiries highly becoming.

MEN may, if they pleaſe, in an impious and profane manner, ridicule ſerious things, and endeavour to turn into jeſt the hopes of the righteous man, the tortures of the confeſſor, and the agonizing pains of the expiring martyr. But theſe are are not matters to be jeſted with. Eternity is too ſerious and important an affair for banter and ridicule. The nature and evidence of true religion are of moment enough to induce all virtuous and thinking men carefully to examine into them, and let them have their proper weight and influence. I hope, living and dying, they will ever be things of the laſt conſequence with me. And I heartily wiſh they may be ſo to others alſo.

Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity.

29. MR. JOHN GROSE, F. A. S.

The Scriptures abound with internal marks of truth.

FROM the Moſaic to the Chriſtian diſpenſation, there is an indiſſoluble connection of circumſtances. In the former,

former, man is deſcribed in his primeval ſtate of innocence, with that brevity, which characteriſes this inſpired hiſtorian. His deviation from the immediate injunctions of his Maker, and in conſequence of that, a total depravation of manners, is deſcribed with that natural ſimplicity which is the invariable attendant of truth. The promulgation of the law, a ſyſtem reaſonable and juſt, is repreſented with a majeſty ſuitable to the divine legiſlator. In this decalogue there is nothing contrary to reaſon, or repugnant to the laws of civil ſociety; but when oppoſed to thoſe of Lycurgus, they not only claim our ſuperior reverence and eſteem, but our acknowledgment of their divine authority.——

The ſelf-denying doctrines, the illuſtrious examples, the unadorned ſimplicity, yet native elegance of the Scripture language, are no inconſiderable proofs of its divine authority.

Ethics rational and theological.

30. Bishop Pearson.

The wiſdom and truth of God may be depended on.

IT is moſt infallibly certain, that God, being infinitely wiſe, cannot be deceived; being infinitely good cannot deceive; and upon theſe two immovable pillars ſtandeth the authority of the teſtimony of God. For ſince we cannot doubt of the witneſs of any one, but by queſtioning his ability, as one who may be ignorant of that which he affirmeth, and ſo deceived; or by excepting againſt his integrity, as one who may affirm that which he knoweth to be falſe, and ſo have a purpoſe to deceive us: where there is no place for either of theſe exceptions, there can be no doubt of the truth of the teſtimony. But where there is an intrinſical repugnancy of being deceived in the underſtanding, and of deceiving in the will, as there certainly is in the underſtanding and will of God, there can be no place for either of theſe exceptions, and conſequently there can be no doubt of the truth of that which God teſtifieth.

On the Creed.

31. Rev. Dr. Powell.

Recapitulation of Scripture evidence.

IT appears, that the cleareſt rules of criticiſm, the ſtrongeſt hiſtorical teſtimony; the whole force of written evidence, of private and public records; the atteſtation given to the miracles of our religion by greater numbers than ever concurred in any other facts; by friends and enemies; by friends, who

who openly confeſſed them againſt their intereſts, and perſiſted in their confeſſion even againſt the terrors of death; by enemies who were forced to believe them againſt their prejudices, and to admit the facts whilſt they denied the plaineſt conſequences of them; that all this accumulated evidence gives us ſuch an aſſured confidence in the reports of the evangeliſts, as may not improperly be expreſſed by ſaying, "We know that their teſtimony is true."

Diſcourſes on various Subjects.

32. Rev. Samuel Werenfels.

Contents of the Goſpel compared with its Author.

DOTH a lad ſay or write ſuch things as are manifeſtly above his reach and capacity? We immediately conclude they are not his own, but that he muſt have received them from ſome one of greater abilities and furniture. Doth he own it was from his maſter he received them, with whoſe known character, genius and ſtyle they manifeſtly agree? We never ſuſpect, but that he hath told us the very truth.—How evidently was this the caſe of the bleſſed Jeſus? He delivers a doctrine ſo excellent, its equal is not to be found in the writings of the wiſeſt philoſophers; a doctrine whoſe perfection and excellence is confeſſedly far above the reach of perſons of his rank in life, eſpecially when deſtitute of every advantage of learned education. Whence now muſt this be derived? Aſk him; he aſſures you it was from God himſelf. What reaſon can there be for queſtioning the truth of it? When indeed we cannot deny the doctrine to be in every part worthy of God, and know he had no aſſiſtance from, nor indeed any correſpondence with, the wiſe and learned.

Works.

33. Lord Barrington.

Advantages of oppoſition to the Goſpel.

WE have ſeen more attacks againſt the facts and doctrines of Chriſtianity in our age, than perhaps there have been in any. It is what muſt be expected when there is liberty for free enquiry. But, inſtead of doing our religion any harm, it will, as all objections do to truth, of this or any other kind, make them ſtand the ſtronger. It has a natural tendency to put us all on ſtudying the religion of Chriſt better, and on dropping every thing that we have turned and twiſted, and as it were incorporated with it, that ſo we may hold his religion itſelf the faſter, and be leſs liable to have it wreſted from us.

Miſcellanea Sacra.

34. Rev.

34. Rev. William Nicholls, D. D.

Character of believers an argument for the truth of the Bible.

THE learned and ſober gentlemen of the nation have the greateſt veneration for Chriſtianity, and endeavour to conform their lives to its moſt excellent precepts: now theſe are the men that are of the greateſt compaſs of thought and application of mind, and all other ways beſt qualified to detect the cheat of Chriſtianity, if there were any in it. But theſe, after having examined the grounds of the goſpel, do acquieſce in it, and practice it; and Chriſtianity is oppoſed, for the moſt part, only by ſome unthinking debauchees, that are ſo far from examining the truth of Chriſtianity, that they hardly hear any thing of it, but what is profanely ſaid againſt it in playhouſes and in taverns. Now, if ſomething was not the matter more than ordinary, why ſhould not the deiſt ſhew as much reſpect to the Chriſtian religion, as thoſe wiſe and ſober gentlemen? They underſtand, and read, and think, as well as they, only they are not ſo vicious.

Eſſay on the Contempt of the World.

35. Monsieur Crousaz.

General rejection of the Goſpel in the firſt ages a proof of its truth.

CONSIDERING the ſtate of things in the beginning of the goſpel, it is no way aſtoniſhing, that a multitude of perſons did not receive it, though they had abundant reaſons for believing it when propoſed to them. It would really be much more amazing, and ſomething truly unaccountable, that, in thoſe times, even a ſmall number ſhould be determined to believe it, and have courage enough publicly to profeſs it, if they had not been aſſured of its truth and divinity, by ſuch proofs as put it beyond all reaſonable doubt.

Sermons.

36. Bishop Chandler.

Difficulties in the Scriptures juſtify not our unbelief.

IT is not ground enough, for rejecting a revelation, that we are not able to anſwer all the difficulties, that may be raiſed againſt ſome part of it, if the whole be otherwiſe well atteſted. To form a compleat judgment, all the evidence ſhould be brought into one view, and the objections to any part, compared with the ſtrength of the whole. To thoſe that proceed this way with impartiality, in examination of Chriſtianity, I am confident, that whatever objection appears ſingly to have weight, will prove light in balance with the

entire proofs. And any branch of evidence remaining unſhaken, the foundation ought to be ſuppoſed ſure.

Defence of Chriſtianity.

37. Bishop Hurd.

The Extent, Object, and End of the prophetic ſcheme.

IF we look into the writings of the Old and New Teſtament we find, firſt, That prophecy is of a prodigious extent; that it commenced from the lapſe of man, and reaches to the conſummation of all things; that, for many ages, it was delivered darkly, to few perſons, and with large intervals from the date of one prophecy to that of another; but, at length, became more clear, more frequent, and was uniformly carried on in the line of one people, ſeparated from the reſt of the world, among other reaſons aſſigned, for this principally, to be the repoſitory of the Divine Oracles; that, with ſome intermiſſion, the ſpirit of prophecy ſubſiſted among that people, to the coming of Chriſt; that he himſelf and his apoſtles exerciſed this power in the moſt conſpicuous manner; and left behind them many predictions, recorded in the books of the New Teſtament, which profeſs to reſpect very diſtant events, and even run out to the end of time, or, in St. John's expreſſion, to that period, "when the myſtery of God ſhall be perfected."

2. Further, beſides the extent of this prophetic ſcheme, the dignity of the perſon, whom it concerns, deſerves our conſideration. He is deſcribed in terms, which excite the moſt auguſt and magnificent ideas. He is ſpoken of, indeed, ſometimes as being "the ſeed of the woman," and as "the "ſon of man;" yet ſo as being at the ſame time of more than mortal extraction. He is even repreſented to us, as being ſuperior to men and angels; as far above all principality and power, above all that is accounted great, whether in heaven or in earth; as the word and wiſdom of God; as the eternal Son of the Father; as "the heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds;" as "the brightneſs of his glory, "and the expreſs image of his perſon."

We have no words to denote greater ideas, than theſe; the mind of man cannot elevate itſelf to nobler conceptions. Of ſuch tranſcendent worth and excellence is that Jeſus ſaid to be, to whom all the prophets bear witneſs!

3. Laſtly, the declared purpoſe, for which the Meſſiah, prefigured by ſo long a train of prophecy, came into the world, correſponds to all the reſt of the repreſentation. It was not to deliver an oppreſſed nation from civil tyranny, or to

to erect a great civil empire, that is, to atchieve one of thoſe acts, which hiſtory accounts moſt heroic. No; it was not a mighty ſtate, a victor people—

Non res Romanæ perituraque regna—that was worthy to enter into the contemplation of this divine perſon. It was another and far ſublimer purpoſe, which he came to accompliſh; a purpoſe, in compariſon of which, all our policies are poor and little, and all the performances of man as nothing. It was to deliver a world from ruin; to aboliſh ſin and death; to purify and immortalize human nature; and thus, in the moſt exalted ſenſe of the words, to be the Saviour of all men, and the bleſſing of all nations.

There is no exaggeration in this account. I deliver the undoubted ſenſe, if not always the very words of Scripture.

Conſider then to what this repreſentation amounts. Let us unite the ſeveral parts of it, and bring them to a point. A ſpirit of prophecy pervading all time—characterizing one perſon, of the higheſt dignity—and proclaiming the accompliſhment of one purpoſe, the moſt beneficent, the moſt divine, that imagination itſelf can project.—Such is the Scriptural delineation, whether we will receive it or no, of that œconomy, which we call prophetic!

And now then (if we muſt be reaſoning from our ideas of fit and right, to the rectitude of the divine conduct) let me aſk, in one word, whether, on the ſuppoſition that it ſhould ever pleaſe the moral Governor of the world to reveal himſelf by prophecy at all, we can conceive him to do it, in a "manner," or for "ends," more worthy of him? Does not the "extent" of the ſcheme correſpond to our beſt ideas of that infinite Being, to whom all duration is but a point, and to whoſe view all time is equally preſent? Is not the "object" of this ſcheme, "the Lamb of God that was ſlain from the "foundation of the world," worthy, in our conceptions, of all the honour that can be reflected upon him by ſo vaſt and ſplendid an œconomy? Is not the "end" of this ſcheme ſuch as we ſhould think moſt fit for ſuch a ſcheme of prophecy to predict, and for ſo divine a perſon to accompliſh?

You ſee, every thing here is of a piece; all the parts of this diſpenſation are aſtoniſhingly great, and perfectly harmonize with each other. *Sermons on the Prophecies.*

38. Bishop Hallifax.

Our philoſophical principles muſt be learnt from the book of nature, our religious from the book of Grace.

IN order to attain right conceptions of the conſtitution of Nature, as laid before us in the volume of Creation, we are not to aſſume hypotheſes and notions of our own, and from them, as from eſtabliſhed principles, to account for the ſeveral phænomena that occur; but we are to begin with the effects themſelves, and from theſe, diligently collected in a variety of well-choſen experiments, to inveſtigate the cauſes which produce them. By ſuch a method, directed and improved by the helps of a ſublime geometry, we may reaſonably hope to arrive at certainty in our phyſical enquiries, and on the baſis of fact and demonſtration may erect a ſyſtem of the world, that ſhall be true, and worthy of its author. Whereas, by purſuing a contrary path, our conjectures at the beſt will be precarious and doubtful; nor can we ever be ſure that the moſt ingenious theories we can frame are any thing more than a well-invented and conſiſtent fable.

With the ſame caution we are to proceed in examining the conſtitution of Grace, as unfolded to our view in the volume of Redemption. Here alſo we are not to excogitate conceits and fancies of our own, and then diſtort the expreſſions of holy writ, to favour our miſſhapen imaginations; but we are firſt to advert to what God has actually made known of himſelf in the declarations of his word; and from this, carefully interpreted by the rules of ſound criticiſm and logical deduction, to elicit the genuine doctrines of revelation. By ſuch an exertion of our intellectual powers, aſſiſted and enlightened by the aids which human literature is capable of furniſhing, we may advance with eaſe and ſafety in our knowledge of the divine diſpenſations, and on the rock of Scripture may build a ſyſtem of religion, that ſhall approve itſelf to our moſt enlarged underſtandings, and be equally ſecured from the injuries and inſults of enthuſiaſts and unbelievers. On the other hand, previouſly to determine from our own reaſon what it is fit for a being of infinite wiſdom to do, and from that pretended fitneſs to infer that he has really done it, is a mode of procedure that is little ſuited to the imbecility of our mental faculties, and ſtill leſs calculated to lead us to an adequate comprehenſion of the will or works of heaven. *Diſcourſes on the Prophecies.*

39. Armand

39. Armand de Bourbon, Prince of Conti.

Greatneſs indiſpoſes us for the reception of the Goſpel.

THE obſtacles to the practice of the goſpel which attend greatneſs are almoſt infinite: but of theſe there are four principal ones.

The goſpel recommends nothing ſo much as humility; but greatneſs diſpoſes to pride.

The goſpel requires a continual penitence; but this ſtate is full of ſoftneſs and delicacy.

The goſpel teaches us that it is abſolutely neceſſary to love our neighbour, to be compaſſionate of his ſufferings, and to apply ourſelves to his relief; but greatneſs is apt to give us a contempt of our neighbour, an inſenſibility or unconcernedneſs for his condition.

The goſpel and the whole Scriptures teach and repreſent to us ſinful man, condemned to labour and ſufferings; but this ſtate incites a man to nothing but pleaſure, idleneſs and ſloth.

A great man then ſeeing himſelf environed with ſo many obſtacles to his ſalvation, inſtead of being perſuaded that he is happier than other men, ought firmly to believe that he is more miſerable; and to implore the mercy of God to grant him that grace which expels the poiſon of greatneſs, and is able to vanquiſh all its malignity. *Works.*

40. John Gregory, M. D. F. R. S.

Infidelity a mark of a perverted underſtanding.

ABSOLUTE infidelity or ſettled ſcepticiſm in religion we acknowledge is no proof of want of underſtanding or a vicious diſpoſition, but is certainly a very ſtrong preſumption of the want of imagination and ſenſibility of heart, and of a perverted underſtanding. Some philoſophers have been infidels, few men of taſte and ſentiment. Yet the examples of Lord Bacon, Mr. Locke, and Sir Iſaac Newton, among many other firſt names in philoſophy, are a ſufficient evidence that religious belief is perfectly compatible with the cleareſt and moſt enlarged underſtanding.

Comparative View of the State and Faculties of Man with thoſe of the Animal World.

41. Rev. Samuel Clark, D. D.

The excellent morals of the Goſpel a proof of its divinity.

BESIDES the many other evidences the Holy Scripture carries in it of a divine original, there are eſpecially remarkable the ſublimity, excellency and reaſonableneſs of the

doctrines it teaches; the wiſdom, holineſs, and perfection of the rules of life it lays down; and the ſtrength and efficacy of thoſe ſanctions, with which it inforces its precepts.

Scripture Promiſes.

42. Rev. George Travis, M. A.

Challenge to the enemies of Chriſtianity.

YOU have, Sir, throughout the whole of your publications, ſeemed to ſnatch, with avidity, at every occaſion, apt, or unapt, of leſſening the power of Chriſtianity over the human mind. You have not, indeed, attempted to produce this effect by open impeachments of the external evidences of its truth (for thoſe would have been ſpeedily confuted) or by direct charges againſt the internal purity of its doctrines (for thoſe would have confuted themſelves): but you have endeavoured to effectuate your purpoſe by indirect machinations. You have, artfully enough, ſuggeſted ambiguous inſinuations, where you durſt not hazard a poſitive accuſation. You have laboured to raiſe a ſneer, where you durſt not riſk an argument.——If this charge be not juſt, if either your own text, or my comment, hath wronged you, do juſtice to yourſelf. You have the remedy in your own power. Favour the public with your ſyſtems of Theology, and Morals. Delineate them at full length. Deſcribe them at large. Stand forth in the open field. The world is weary of ſeeing you fight ſo long in ambuſh. Walk no more forth with your ſtiletto in the twilight. Seek your adverſary honourably, with your naked ſword, in the face of day. Aſpire to the credit of Toland, and Tindal, of Chubb, and Morgan, of Vanini, and Spinoza, by a direct attempt to break this Yoke of the Goſpel. Take to yourſelf the honours of Rouſſeau, at leaſt, and give us the Creed of "your" Savoyard Curate alſo. Aſſume the diſtinction of Voltaire, and favour us with "your" Dictionnaire Philoſophique Portatif. Diſtinguiſh the grounds of your oppoſition to Chriſtianity, with plainneſs, and perſpicuity.—Chriſtianity calls you to the teſt, dares you to the onſet; it being her ſupreme wiſh, her only prayer, where ſhe hath any enemies, that ſhe may, like the Grecian warrior, ſo well deſcribed by the Grecian Bard, be permitted to confront her adverſaries in open day. She challenges your ſtricteſt ſcrutiny. She loveth not "darkneſs rather than light, becauſe her deeds "are evil;" ſhe "hateth not the light, leſt her works ſhould be "reproved:" but ſhe "doeth the truth," and therefore wiſheth to come "to the light, that her deeds may be made "manifeſt, that they are wrought in God."

Letters to Gibbon.

43. Dr.

43. Dr. Goldsmith.

The deiſtical writers have been completely refuted by learned Chriſtians.

I would entreat the polemic divine, in his controverſy with the deiſts, to act rather offenſively than to defend; to puſh home the grounds of his belief, and the impracticability of theirs, rather than to ſpend time in ſolving the objections of every opponent. It is ten to one, ſays a late writer on the art of war, but that the aſſailant who attacks the enemy in his trenches, is always victorious.

Yet, upon the whole, our clergy might employ themſelves more to the benefit of ſociety, by declining all controverſy, than by exhibiting even the profoundeſt ſkill in polemic diſputes; their conteſts with each other often turn on ſpeculative trifles; and their diſputes with the deiſts are almoſt at an end, ſince they can have no more than victory; and that they are already poſſeſſed of; as their antagoniſts have been driven into a confeſſion of the neceſſity of revelation, or an open avowal of atheiſm. To continue the diſpute longer would only endanger it: the ſceptic is ever expert at puzzling a debate which he finds himſelf unable to continue; and, like an Olympic boxer, generally fights beſt when undermoſt.

Eſſays.

44. Rev. James Saurin.

Compariſon between Heatheniſm and Chriſtianity.

The apoſtle ſaith, "After the world by wiſdom knew "not God, it pleaſed God to ſave believers by the fooliſh-"neſs of preaching." That is to ſay, ſince the mere ſyſtems of reaſon were eventually inſufficient for the ſalvation of mankind; and ſince it was impoſſible that their ſpeculations ſhould obtain the true knowledge of God; God took another way to inſtruct them: he revealed by preaching of the goſpel what the light of nature could not diſcover, ſo that the ſyſtem of Jeſus Chriſt, and his apoſtles, ſupplied all, that was wanting in the ſyſtems of the ancient philoſophers.

But, it is not in relation to the ancient philoſophers only, that we mean to conſider the propoſition in our text; we will examine it alſo in reference to modern philoſophy. Our philoſophers know more than all thoſe of Greece knew: but their ſcience, which is of unſpeakable advantage, while it contains itſelf within its proper ſphere, becomes a ſource of errors, when it is extended beyond it. Human reaſon now lodgeth itſelf in new entrenchments, when it refuſeth to ſubmit to the faith. It even puts on new armour to attack it, after it hath invented new methods of ſelf-defence. Under pretence

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that natural ſcience hath made greater progreſs, revelation is deſpiſed. Under pretence that modern notions of God the Creator are purer than thoſe of the ancients, the yoke of God the Redeemer is broken off. We are going to employ the remaining part of this diſcourſe in juſtifying the propoſition of St. Paul in the ſenſe, that we have given it: we are going to endeavour to prove, that revealed religion hath advantages infinitely ſuperior to natural religion: that the greateſt geniuſſes are incapable of diſcovering by their own reaſon all the truths neceſſary to ſalvation: and that it diſplays the goodneſs of God, not to abandon us to the uncertainties of our own wiſdom, but to make us the rich preſent of revelation.

We will enter into this diſcuſſion, by placing on the one ſide a philoſopher contemplating the works of nature: on the other, a diſciple of Jeſus Chriſt receiving the doctrines of revelation. To each we will give four ſubjects to examine: the attributes of God: the nature of man: the means of appeaſing the remorſe of conſcience: and a future ſtate. From their judgments on each of theſe ſubjects evidence will ariſe of the ſuperior worth of that revelation, which ſome minute philoſophers affect to deſpiſe, and above which they prefer that rough draught, which they ſketch out by their own learned ſpeculations.

1. Let us conſider a diſciple of natural religion, and a diſciple of revealed religion, meditating on the attributes of God. When the diſciple of natural religion conſiders the ſymmetry of this univerſe; when he obſerves that admirable uniformity, which appears in the ſucceſſion of ſeaſons, and in the conſtant rotation of night and day; when he remarks the exact motions of the heavenly bodies; the flux and reflux of the ſea, ſo ordered that billows, which ſwell into mountains, and ſeem to threaten the world with an univerſal deluge, break away on the ſhore, and reſpect on the beach the command of the Creator, who ſaid to the ſea, "hitherto "ſhalt thou come, but no farther, and here ſhall thy proud "waves be ſtayed:" when he attends to all theſe marvellous works, he will readily conclude, that the Author of nature is a being powerful and wiſe. But when he obſerves winds, tempeſts, and earthquakes, which ſeem to threaten the reduction of nature to its primitive chaos; when he ſees the ſea overflow its banks, and burſt the enormous moles, that the induſtry of mankind had raiſed; his ſpeculations will be perplexed, he will imagine, he ſees characters of infirmity among ſo many proofs of creative perfection, and power.

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When he thinks, that God, having enriched the habitable world with innumerable productions of infinite worth to the inhabitant, hath placed man here as a ſovereign in a ſuperb palace; when he conſiders how admirably God hath proportioned the divers parts of the creation to the conſtruction of the human body, the air to the lungs, aliments to the different humours of the body, the medium, by which objects are rendered viſible, to the eyes, that, by which ſounds are communicated, to the ears; when he remarks how God hath connected man with his own ſpecies, and not with animals of another kind; how he hath diſtributed talents, ſo that ſome requiring the aſſiſtance of others, all ſhould be mutually united together; how he hath bound men together by inviſible ties, ſo that one cannot ſee another in pain without a ſympathy, that inclines him to relieve him: when the diſciple of natural religion meditates on theſe grand ſubjects, he concludes that the Author of nature is a beneficent being. But, when he ſees the innumerable miſeries, to which men are ſubject; when he finds, that every creature, which contributes to ſupport, contributes at the ſame time to deſtroy us; when he thinks, that the air, which aſſiſts reſpiration, conveys epidemical diſeaſes, and imperceptible poiſons; that aliments, which nouriſh us, are often our bane; that the animals, that ſerve us, often turn ſavage againſt us; when he obſerves the perfidiouſneſs of ſociety, the mutual induſtry of mankind in tormenting each other; the arts, which they invent to deprive one another of life; when he attempts to reckon up the innumerable maladies, that conſume us; when he conſiders death, which bows the loftieſt heads, diſſolves the firmeſt cements, and ſubverts the beſt-founded fortunes: when he makes theſe reflections, he will be apt to doubt, whether it be goodneſs, or the contrary attribute, that inclineth the Author of our being to give us exiſtence. When the diſciple of natural religion reads thoſe reverſes of fortune, of which hiſtory furniſheth a great many examples; when he ſeeth tyrants fall from a pinnacle of grandeur; wicked men often puniſhed by their own wickedneſs, the avaricious puniſhed by the objects of their avarice, the ambitious by thoſe of their ambition, the voluptuous by thoſe of their voluptuouſneſs; when he perceives, that the laws of virtue are ſo eſſential to public happineſs, that without them ſociety would become a banditti, at leaſt, that ſociety is more or leſs happy, or miſerable, according to its looſer or cloſer attachment to virtue; when he conſiders all theſe caſes, he will probably conclude, that the Author of this univerſe is a juſt and holy being

being. But, when he ſees tyranny eſtabliſhed, vice enthroned, humility in confuſion, pride wearing a crown, and love to holineſs ſometimes expoſing people to many and intolerable calamities; he will not be able to juſtify God, amidſt the darkneſs in which his equity is involved in the government of the world.

But, of all theſe myſteries, can one be propoſed, which the Goſpel doth not unfold; or, at leaſt, is there one, on which it doth not give us ſome principles, that are ſufficient to conciliate it with the perfections of the Creator, how oppoſite ſoever it may ſeem?

Do the diſorders of the world puzzle the diſciple of natural religion, and produce difficulties in his mind? With the principles of the Goſpel I can ſolve them all. When it is remembered, that this world hath been defiled by the ſin of man, and that he is, therefore, an object of divine diſpleaſure; when the principle is admitted, that the world is not now what it was, when it came out of the hands of God; and that in compariſon with its priſtine ſtate, it is only a heap of ruins, the truly magnificent, but actually ruinous heap of an edifice of incomparable beauty, the rubbiſh of which is far more proper to excite our grief for the loſs of its primitive grandeur, than to ſuit our preſent wants. When theſe reflections are made, can we find any objections, in the diſorders of the world, againſt the wiſdom of our Creator?

Are the miſeries of man, and is the fatal neceſſity of death, in contemplation? With the principles of the Goſpel, I ſolve the difficulties, which theſe ſad objects produce in the mind of the diſciple of natural religion. If the principles of Chriſtianity be admitted, if we allow, that the afflictions of good men are profitable to them, and that, in many caſes, proſperity would be fatal to them; if we grant, that the preſent is a tranſitory ſtate, and that this momentary life will be ſucceeded by an immortal ſtate; if we recollect the many ſimilar truths, which the Goſpel abundantly declares; can we find, in human miſeries, and in the neceſſity of dying, objections againſt the goodneſs of the Creator?

Do the proſperities of bad men, and adverſities of the good, confuſe our ideas of God? With the principles of the Goſpel, I can remove all the difficulties, which theſe different conditions produce in the mind of the diſciple of natural religion. If the principles of the Goſpel be admitted, if we be perſuaded, that the tyrant, whoſe proſperity aſtoniſheth us, fulfils the counſel of God; if eccleſiaſtical hiſtory aſſure us, that Herods, and Pilates, themſelves contributed to the

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eſtabliſhment of that very Chriſtianity, which they meant to deſtroy; eſpecially, if we admit a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments; can the obſcurity, in which providence hath been pleaſed to wrap up ſome of its deſigns, raiſe doubts about the juſtice of the Creator?

In regard, then, to the firſt object of contemplation, the perfection of the nature of God, revealed religion is infinitely ſuperior to natural religion; the diſciple of the firſt religion is infinitely wiſer than the pupil of the laſt.

II. Let us conſider theſe two diſciples examining the nature of man, and endeavouring to know themſelves. The diſciple of natural religion cannot know mankind; he cannot perfectly underſtand the nature, the obligations, the duration of man.

1. The diſciple of natural religion can only imperfectly know the nature of man, the difference of the two ſubſtances, of which he is compoſed. His reaſon, indeed, may ſpeculate the matter, and he may perceive that there is no relation between motion and thought, between the diſſolution of a few fibres and violent ſenſations of pain, between an agitation of humours and profound reflections; he may infer from two different effects, that there ought to be two different cauſes, a cauſe of motion, and a cauſe of ſenſation, a cauſe of agitating humours, and a cauſe of reflecting, that there is body, and that there is ſpirit.

But, in my opinion, thoſe philoſophers, who are beſt acquainted with the nature of man, cannot account for two difficulties, that are propoſed to them, when, on the mere principles of reaſon, they affirm, that man is compoſed of the two ſubſtances of matter and mind. I aſk, firſt, Do ye ſo well underſtand matter, are your ideas of it ſo complete, that ye can affirm, for certain, it is ſuſceptible of nothing more than this, or that? Are ye ſure that it implies a contradiction to affirm, it hath one property, which hath eſcaped your obſervation? And, conſequently, can ye actually demonſtrate, that the eſſence of matter is incompatible with thought? Since, when ye cannot diſcover the union of an attribute with a ſubject, ye inſtantly conclude, that two attributes, which ſeem to you to have no relation, ſuppoſe two different ſubjects: and ſince ye conclude that extent and thought compoſe two different ſubjects, body and ſoul, becauſe ye can diſcover no natural relation between extent and thought; if I diſcover a third attribute, which appears to me entirely unconnected with both extent and thought, I ſhall have a right, in my turn, to admit three ſubjects in man; matter,

matter, which is the ſubject of extent, mind, which is the ſubject of thought, and a third ſubject, which belongs to the attribute, that ſeems to me to have no relation to either matter, or mind. Now I do know ſuch an attribute: but I do not know to which of your two ſubjects I ought to refer it: I mean ſenſation. I find it in my nature, and I experience it every hour. But I am altogether at a loſs, whether I ought to attribute it to body, or to ſpirit. I perceive no more natural and neceſſary relation between ſenſation and motion, than between ſenſation and thought.

There are, then, on your principle, three ſubſtances in man, one the ſubſtratum, which is the ſubject of extenſion, another, which is the ſubject of thought, and a third, which is the ſubject of ſenſation: or rather, I ſuſpect, there is only one ſubſtance in man, which is known to me very imperfectly, to which all theſe attributes belong, and which are united together, although I am not able to diſcover their relation.

Revealed religion removes theſe difficulties, and decides the queſtion. It tells us, that there are two beings in man, and, if I may expreſs myſelf ſo, two different men, the material man, and the immaterial man. The Scriptures ſpeak, on theſe principles, thus; "The duſt ſhall return to the earth "as it was," this is the material man: "The ſpirit ſhall re-"turn to God who gave it," this is the immaterial man." "Fear not them which kill the body," that is to ſay, the material man: "fear him, which is able to deſtroy the "ſoul," that is, the immaterial man. "We are willing to "be abſent from the body," that is from the material man: "and to be preſent with the Lord," that is to ſay, to have the immaterial man diſembodied. "They ſtoned Stephen," that is, the material man: "calling upon God, and ſaying, "Lord Jeſus receive my ſpirit," that is to ſay, receive the immaterial man.

2. The diſciple of natural religion can obtain only an imperfect knowledge of the obligations, or duties of man. Natural religion may indeed conduct him to a certain point, and tell him, that he ought to love his benefactor, and various ſimilar maxims. But is natural religion, think ye, ſufficient to account for that contrariety, of which every man is conſcious, that oppoſition between inclination and obligation? A very ſolid argument, I grant, in favour of moral rectitude ariſeth from obſerving, that, to whatever degree a man may carry his ſin, whatever efforts he may make to eradicate thoſe ſeeds of virtue from his heart, which nature has ſown there, he cannot forbear venerating virtue, and recoiling at vice.

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This is certainly a proof, that the Author of our being meant to forbid vice, and to enjoin virtue. But is there no room for complaint? Is there nothing ſpecious in the following objection? As, in ſpite of all my endeavours to deſtroy virtuous diſpoſitions, I cannot help reſpecting virtue, ye infer, that the Author of my being intended, I ſhould be virtuous: ſo, as, in ſpite of all my endeavours to eradicate vice, I cannot help loving vice, have I not reaſon for inferring, in my turn, that, the Author of my being deſigned, I ſhould be vicious; or, at leaſt, that he cannot juſtly impute guilt to me for performing thoſe actions, which proceed from ſome principles, that were born with me? Is there no ſhew of reaſon in this famous ſophiſm? Reconcile the God of nature with the God of religion. Explain how the God of religion can forbid what the God of nature inſpires; and how he, who follows thoſe dictates, which the God of nature inſpires, can be puniſhed for ſo doing by the God of religion.

The Goſpel unfolds this myſtery. It attributes this ſeed of corruption to the depravity of nature. It attributeth the reſpect, that we feel for virtue, to the remains of the image of God, in which we were formed, and which can never be entirely effaced. Becauſe we were born in ſin, the Goſpel concludes, that we ought to apply all our attentive endeavours to eradicate the ſeeds of corruption. And, becauſe the image of the Creator is partly eraſed from our hearts, the Goſpel concludes, that we ought to give ourſelves wholly to the retracing of it, and ſo to anſwer the excellence of our extraction.

3. A diſciple of natural religion can obtain only an imperfect knowledge of the duration of man, whether his ſoul be immortal, or whether it be involved in the ruin of matter. Reaſon, I allow, advanceth ſome ſolid arguments in proof of the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul. For what neceſſity is there for ſuppoſing, that the ſoul, which is a ſpiritual, indiviſible, and immaterial being, that conſtitutes a whole, and is a diſtinct being, although united to a portion of matter, ſhould ceaſe to exiſt, when its union with the body is diſſolved? A poſitive act of the Creator is neceſſary to the annihilation of a ſubſtance. The annihilating of a being, that ſubſiſts, requireth an act of power ſimilar to that, which gave it exiſtence at firſt. Now, far from having any ground to believe, that God will cauſe his power to intervene to annihilate our ſouls, every thing, that we know, perſuadeth us, that he himſelf hath engraven characters of immortality on them, and that he will preſerve them for ever. Enter into thy heart, frail creature! ſee, feel, conſider thoſe

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grand ideas, thoſe immortal deſigns, that thirſt for exiſting, which a thouſand ages cannot quench, and in theſe lines and points behold the finger of thy Creator writing a promiſe of immortality to thee. But, how ſolid ſoever theſe arguments may be, however evident in themſelves, and ſtriking to a philoſopher, they are objectionable, becauſe they are not popular, but above vulgar minds, to whom the bare terms, ſpirituality and exiſtence, are entirely barbarous, and convey no meaning at all.

Moreover, the union between the operations of the ſoul, and thoſe of the body, is ſo cloſe, that all the philoſophers in the world cannot certainly determine, whether, the operations of the body ceaſing, the operations of the ſoul do not ceaſe with them. I ſee a body in perfect health, the mind, therefore, is ſound. The ſame body is diſordered, and the mind is diſconcerted with it. The brain is filled, and the ſoul is inſtantly confuſed. The briſker the circulation of the blood is, the quicker the ideas of the mind are, and the more extenſive its knowledge. At length death comes, and diſſolves all the parts of the body; and how difficult is it to perſuade one's ſelf, that the ſoul, which was affected with every former motion of the body, will not be diſſipated by its entire diſſolution!

Are they the vulgar only, to whom philoſophical arguments for the immortality of the ſoul appear deficient in evidence? Do not ſuperior geniuſes require, at leaſt, an explanation of what rank ye aſſign to beaſts, on the principle, that nothing capable of ideas and conceptions, can be involved in a diſſolution of matter? Nobody would venture to affirm now, in an aſſembly of philoſophers, what was ſome time ago maintained with great warmth, that beaſts are mere ſelf-moving machines. Experience ſeems to demonſtrate the falſity of the metaphyſical reaſonings, that have been propoſed in favour of this opinion; and we cannot obſerve the actions of beaſts, without being inclined to infer one of theſe two conſequences: either the ſpirit of man is mortal, like his body; or the ſouls of beaſts are immortal, like thoſe of mankind.

Revelation diſſipates all our obſcurities, and teacheth us clearly, and without a may-be, that God willeth our immortality. It carries our thoughts forward to a future ſtate, as to a fixed period, whither the greateſt part of the promiſes of God tend. It commandeth us, indeed, to conſider all the bleſſings of this life, the aliments, that nouriſh us, the rays, which enlighten us, the air, that we breathe, ſceptres, crowns,

crowns, and kingdoms, as effects of the liberality of God, and as grounds of our gratitude. But, at the same time, it requireth us to surmount the most magnificent earthly objects. It commandeth us to consider light, air, and aliments, crowns, sceptres, and kingdoms, as unfit to constitute the felicity of a soul created in the image of the blessed God, and with whom the blessed God hath formed a close and intimate union. It assureth us, that an age of life cannot fill the wish of duration, which it is the noble prerogative of an immortal soul to form. It doth not ground the doctrine of immortality on metaphysical speculations, nor on complex arguments, uninvestigable by the greatest part of mankind, and which always leave some doubts in the minds of the ablest philosophers. The Gospel grounds the doctrine on the only principle that can support the weight, with which it is encumbered. The principle, which I mean, is the will of the Creator, who, having created our souls at first by an act of his will, can either eternally preserve them, or absolutely annihilate them, whether they be material, or spiritual, mortal, or immortal, by nature. Thus the disciple of revealed religion doth not float between doubt and assurance, hope and fear, as the disciple of nature doth. He is not obliged to leave the most interesting question, that poor mortals can agitate, undecided; whether their souls perish with their bodies, or survive their ruins. He does not say, as Cyrus said to his children; I know not how to persuade myself, that the soul lives in this mortal body, and ceaseth to be, when the body expires. I am more inclined to think, that it requires after death more penetration and purity. He doth not say, as Socrates said to his judges; And now we are going, I to suffer death, and ye to enjoy life. God only knows which is the best. He doth not say as Cicero said, speaking on this important article; I do not pretend to say, that what I affirm is as infallible as the Pythian oracle, I speak only by conjecture. The disciple of revelation, authorized by the testimony of Jesus Christ, "who hath brought life "and immortality to light through the Gospel;" boldly affirms, "Though our outward man perish, yet the inward "man is renewed day by day. We, that are in this taber-"nacle, do groan, being burdened; not for that we would "be uncloathed, but cloathed upon, that mortality might "be swallowed up of life. I know whom I have believed, "and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that, which I "have committed unto him, against that day."

III. We are next to consider the disciple of natural religion, and

and the diſciple of revealed religion, at the tribunal of God as penitents ſoliciting for pardon. The former cannot find, even by feeling after it, in natural religion, according to the language of St. Paul, the grand mean of reconciliation, which God hath given to the church; I mean the ſacrifice of the croſs. Reaſon, indeed, diſcovers, that man is guilty, as the confeſſions, and acknowledgments, which the Heathens made of their crimes, prove. It diſcerns, that a ſinner deſerves puniſhment, as the remorſe and fear, with which their conſciences were often excruciated, demonſtrate. It preſumes, indeed, that God will yield to the entreaties of his creatures, as their prayers, and temples, and altars teſtify. It even goes ſo far as to perceive the neceſſity of ſatisfying divine juſtice, this their ſacrifices, this their burnt offerings, this their human victims, this the rivers of blood, that flowed on their altars, ſhew.

But, how likely ſoever all theſe ſpeculations may be, they form only a ſyſtematic body without a head; for no poſitive promiſe of pardon from God himſelf belongs to them. The myſtery of the croſs is entirely inviſible; for only God could reveal that, becauſe only God could plan, and only he could execute that profound relief. How could human reaſon, alone, and unaſſiſted, have diſcovered the myſtery of redemption, when, alas! after an infallible God hath revealed it, reaſon is abſorbed in its depth, and needs all its ſubmiſſion to receive it, as an article of faith?

But that, which natural religion cannot attain, revealed religion clearly diſcovers. Revelation exhibits a God-Man, dying for the ſins of mankind, and ſetting grace before every penitent ſinner: grace for all mankind. The ſchools have often agitated the queſtions, and ſometimes very indiſcreetly, Whether Jeſus Chriſt died for all mankind, or only for a ſmall number? Whether his blood were ſhed for all, who hear the goſpel, or for thoſe only, who believe it? We will not diſpute theſe points now: but we will venture to affirm, that there is not an individual of all our hearers, who hath not a right to ſay to himſelf; If I believe, I ſhall be ſaved; I ſhall believe, if I endeavour to believe. Conſequently, every individual hath a right to apply the benefits of the death of Chriſt to himſelf. The goſpel reveals grace, that pardons the moſt atrocious crimes, thoſe that have the moſt fatal influences. Although ye have denied Chriſt with Peter, betrayed him with Judas, perſecuted him with Saul; yet the blood of a God-Man is ſufficient to obtain your pardon, if ye be in the covenant of redemption. Grace, which is acceſ-

ſible

ſible at all times, at every inſtant of life. Wo be to you, my brethren; Wo be to you, if, abuſing this reflection, ye delay your return to God till the laſt moments of your lives, when your repentance will be difficult, not to ſay impracticable and impoſſible! But, it is always certain, that God every inſtant opens the treaſures of his mercy, when ſinners return to him by ſincere repentance. Grace, capable of terminating all the melancholy thoughts, that are produced by the fear of being abandoned by God in the midſt of our race, and of having the work of ſalvation left imperfect. For, after he hath given us a preſent ſo magnificent, what can he refuſe? "He that ſpared not his own ſon, but delivered him up for "us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all "things?" Grace, ſo clearly revealed in our Scriptures, that the moſt accurate reaſoning, hereſy the moſt extravagant, and infidelity the moſt obſtinate, cannot enervate his declarations. For, the death of Chriſt may be conſidered in different views: it is a ſufficient confirmation of his doctrine; it is a perfect pattern of patience, it is the moſt magnanimous degree of extraordinary excellencies, that can be imagined: but the goſpel very ſeldom preſents it to us in any of theſe views, it leaves them to our own perception; but when it ſpeaks of his death, it uſually ſpeaks of it as an expiatory ſacrifice. Need we repeat here a number of formal texts, and expreſs deciſions on this matter? Thanks be to God, we are preaching to a Chriſtian auditory, who make the death of the Redeemer the foundation of faith! The goſpel, then, aſſureth the penitent ſinner of pardon. Zeno, Epicurus, Pythagoras, Socrates, Porch, Academy, Lycæum, what have ye to offer to your diſciples, equal to this promiſe of the goſpel?

IV. But that, which principally diſplays the prerogatives of the Chriſtian above thoſe of the philoſopher, is an all-ſufficient proviſion againſt the fear of death. A compariſon between a dying Pagan and a dying Chriſtian will ſhew this. I conſider a Pagan, in his dying-bed, ſpeaking to himſelf what follows. On which ſide ſoever I conſider my ſtate, I perceive nothing but trouble and deſpair. If I obſerve the fore-runners of death, I ſee awful ſymptoms, violent ſickneſs, and intolerable pain, which ſurround my ſick-bed, and are the firſt ſcenes of the bloody tragedy. As to the world, my deareſt objects diſappear; my cloſeſt connections are diſſolving; my moſt ſpecious titles are effacing; my nobleſt privileges are vaniſhing away; a diſmal curtain falls between my eyes and all the decorations of the univerſe. In regard to

my body, it is a maſs without motion, and life; my tongue is about to be condemned to eternal ſilence; my eyes to perpetual darkneſs; all the organs of my body to entire diſſolution; and the miſerable remains of my carcaſe to lodge in the grave, and to become food for the worms. If I conſider my ſoul, I ſcarcely know whether it be immortal; and could I demonſtrate its natural immortality, I ſhould not be able to ſay, whether my Creator would diſplay his attributes in preſerving, or in deſtroying it; whether my wiſhes for immortality be the dictates of nature, or the language of ſin. If I conſider my paſt life, I have a witneſs within me, atteſting that my practice hath been leſs than my knowledge, how ſmall ſoever the latter hath been; and that the abundant depravity of my heart hath thickened the darkneſs of my mind. If I conſider futurity, I think, I diſcover through many thick clouds a future ſtate; my reaſon ſuggeſts, that the Author of nature hath not given me a ſoul ſo ſublime in thought, and ſo expanſive in deſire, merely to move in this little orb for a moment: but this is nothing but conjecture; and, if there be another œconomy after this, ſhould I be leſs miſerable than I am here? One moment I hope for annihilation, the next I ſhudder with the fear of being annihilated; my thoughts and deſires are at war with each other, they riſe, they reſiſt, they deſtroy one another. Such is the dying Heathen. If a few examples of thoſe, who have died otherwiſe, be adduced, they ought not to be urged in evidence againſt what we have advanced; for they are rare, and very probably deceptive, their outward tranquility being only a concealment of trouble within. Trouble is the greater for confinement within, and for an affected appearance without. As we ought not to believe, that philoſophy hath rendered men inſenſible of pain, becauſe ſome philoſophers have maintained that pain is no evil, and have ſeemed to triumph over it: ſo neither ought we to believe, that it hath diſarmed death in regard to the diſciples of natural religion, becauſe ſome have affirmed, that death is not an object of fear. After all, if ſome Pagans enjoyed a real tranquility at death, it was a groundleſs tranquility, to which reaſon contributed nothing at all.

O! how differently do Chriſtians die! How doth revealed religion triumph over the religion of nature in this reſpect! May each of our hearers be a new evidence of this article! The whole, that troubles an expiring Heathen, revives a Chriſtian in his dying bed.

Thus

Thus ſpeaks the dying Chriſtian. When I conſider the awful ſymptoms of death, and the violent agonies of diſſolving nature, they appear to me as medical preparations, ſharp, but ſalutary; they are neceſſary to detach me from life, and to ſeparate the remains of inward depravity from me. Beſide, I ſhall not be abandoned to my own frailty: but my patience and conſtancy will be proportional to my ſufferings, and that powerful arm, which hath ſupported me through life, will uphold me under the preſſure of death. If I conſider my ſins, many as they are, I am invulnerable; for I go to a tribunal of mercy, where God is reconciled, and juſtice is ſatisfied. If I conſider my body, I perceive, I am putting off a mean and corruptible habit, and putting on robes of glory. Fall, fall ye imperfect ſenſes, ye frail organs, fall houſe of clay into your original duſt; ye will be "ſown in corruption, but raiſed in incorruption; ſown in diſhonour, but raiſed in glory; ſown in weakneſs, but raiſed in power." If I conſider my ſoul, it is paſſing, I ſee, from ſlavery to freedom. I ſhall carry with me that, which thinks and reflects. I ſhall carry with me the delicacy of taſte, the harmony of ſounds, the beauty of colours, the fragrance of odoriferous ſmells. I ſhall ſurmount heaven and earth, nature and all terreſtrial things, and my ideas of all their beauties will multiply and expand. If I conſider the future œconomy, to which I go, I have, I own, very inadequate notions of it: but my incapacity is the ground of my expectation. Could I perfectly comprehend it, it would argue its reſemblance to ſome of the preſent objects of my ſenſes, or its minute proportion to the preſent operations of my mind. If worldly dignities and grandeurs, if accumulated treaſures, if the enjoyments of the moſt refined voluptuouſneſs, were to repreſent to me celeſtial felicity, I ſhould ſuppoſe, that, partaking of their nature, they partook of their vanity. But, if nothing here can repreſent the future ſtate, it is becauſe that ſtate ſurpaſſeth every other. My ardour is increaſed by my imperfect knowledge of it. My knowledge, and virtue, I know, will be perfected; I know I ſhall comprehend truth, and obey order; I know, I ſhall be free from all evils, and in poſſeſſion of all good; I ſhall be preſent with God, I know, and with all the happy ſpirits, who ſurround his throne; and this perfect ſtate, I am ſure, will continue for ever and ever.

Such are the all-ſufficient ſupports, which revealed religion affords againſt the fear of death. Such are the meditations of a dying Chriſtian; not of one, whoſe whole Chriſtianity conſiſts of dry ſpeculations, which have no influence over

his practice: but of one, who applies his knowledge to relieve the real wants of his life.

Chriſtianity, then, we have ſeen, is ſuperior to natural religion, in theſe four reſpects. To theſe we will add a few more reflections in farther evidence of the ſuperiority of revealed religion to the religion of nature.

1. The ideas of the ancient philoſophers concerning natural religion were not collected into a body of doctrine. One philoſopher had one idea, another ſtudious man had another idea; ideas of truth and virtue, therefore lay diſperſed. Who doth not ſee the pre-eminence of revelation, on this article? No human capacity either hath been, or would ever have been equal to the noble conception of a perfect body of truth. There is no genius ſo narrow, as not to be capable of propoſing ſome clear truth, ſome excellent maxim: but to lay down principles, and to perceive at once a chain of conſequences, theſe are the efforts of great geniuſſes; this capability is philoſophical perfection. If this axiom be inconteſtible, what a fountain of wiſdom does the ſyſtem of Chriſtianity argue? It repreſents us, in one lovely body, of perfect ſymmetry, all the ideas, that we have enumerated. One idea ſuppoſeth another idea; and the whole is united in a manner ſo compact, that it is impoſſible to alter one particle without defacing the beauty of all.

2. Pagan philoſophers never had a ſyſtem of natural religion comparable with that of modern philoſophers, although the latter glory in their contempt of revelation. Modern philoſophers have derived the cleareſt and beſt parts of their ſyſtems from the very revelation, which they affect to deſpiſe. We grant, the doctrines of the perfections of God, of providence, and of a future ſtate, are perfectly conformable to the light of reaſon. A man, who ſhould purſue rational tracks of knowledge to his utmoſt power would diſcover, we own, all theſe doctrines: but it is one thing to grant, that theſe doctrines are conformable to reaſon; and it is another to affirm, that reaſon actually diſcovered them. It is one thing to allow, that a man, who ſhould purſue rational tracks of knowledge to his utmoſt power, would diſcover all theſe doctrines; and it is another to pretend, that any man hath purſued theſe tracks to the utmoſt, and hath actually diſcovered them. It was the goſpel, that taught mankind the uſe of their reaſon. It was the goſpel, that aſſiſted men to form a body of natural religion. Modern philoſophers avail themſelves of theſe aids; they form a body of natural religion

gion by the light of the gospel, and then they attribute to their own penetration what they derive from foreign aid.

3. What was most rational in the natural religion of the Pagan philosophers was mixed with fancies and dreams. There was not a single philosopher, who did not adopt some absurdity, and communicate it to his disciples. One taught, that every being was animated with a particular soul, and on this absurd hypothesis he pretended to account for all the phænomena of nature. Another took every star for a god, and thought the soul a vapour, that passed from one body to another, expiating in the body of a beast the sins that were committed in that of a man. One attributed the creation of the world to a blind chance, and the government of all events in it to an inviolable fate. Another affirmed the eternity of the world, and said, there was no period in eternity, in which heaven and earth, nature and elements, were not visible. One said, every thing is uncertain; we are not sure of our own existence; the distinction between just and unjust, virtue and vice, is fanciful, and hath no real foundation in the nature of things. Another made matter equal to God; and maintained, that it concurred with the supreme Being in the formation of the universe. One took the world for a prodigious body, of which he thought God was the soul. Another affirmed the materiality of the soul, and attributed to matter the faculties of thinking and reasoning. Some denied the immortality of the soul, and the intervention of providence; and pretended, that an infinite number of particles of matter, indivisible, and indestructible, revolved in the universe; that from their fortuitous concourse arose the present world; that in all this there was no design; that the feet were not formed for walking, the eyes for seeing, nor the hands for handling. The gospel is light without darkness. It hath nothing mean; nothing false; nothing that doth not bear the characters of that wisdom, from which it proceeds.

4. What was pure in the natural religion of the Heathens was not known, nor could be known to any but philosophers. The common people were incapable of that penetration and labour, which the investigating of truth, and the distinguishing of it from that falshood, in which, passion and prejudice had enveloped it required. A mediocrity of genius, I allow, is sufficient for the purpose of inferring a part of those consequences from the works of nature, of which we form the body of natural religion: but none, but geniusses of the first order, are capable of kenning those distant consequences, which are infolded in darkness. The bulk of mankind

wanted a ſhort way proportional to every mind. They wanted an authority, the infallibility of which all mankind might eaſily ſee. They wanted a revelation founded on evidence plain and obvious to all the world. Philoſophers could not ſhew the world ſuch a ſhort way: but revelation hath ſhewed it. No philoſopher could aſſume the authority, neceſſary to eſtabliſh ſuch a way: it became God alone to dictate in ſuch a manner, and in revelation he hath done it. *Sermons.*

45. Rev. Richard Baxter.

The Goſpel ſuperior to the writings of the Heathens in oratory.

OBJECTION to the Holy Scriptures. If Chriſt were the Son of God, and his apoſtles inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt, and the Scriptures were God's Word, they would excel all other men and writings in all true rational worth and excellency; whereas Ariſtotle excelleth them in logic and philoſophy, and Cicero and Demoſthenes in oratory, and Seneca in ingenious expreſſions of morality, &c.

Anſwer. You may as well argue, that Ariſtotle was no wiſer than a minſtrel, becauſe he could not fiddle ſo well; or than a painter, becauſe he could not limn ſo well; or than a harlot, becauſe he could not dreſs himſelf ſo neatly. Means are to be eſtimated according to their fitneſs for their ends. Chriſt himſelf excelled all mankind, in all true perfections; and yet it became him not to exerciſe all men's arts, to ſhew that he excelleth them. He came not into the world to teach men architecture, navigation, medicine, aſtronomy, grammar, muſic, logic, rhetoric, &c. and therefore ſhewed not his ſkill in theſe. The world had ſufficient helps and means for theſe in nature. It was to ſave men from ſin and hell, and bring them to pardon, holineſs and heaven, that Chriſt was incarnate, and that the apoſtles were inſpired, and the Scriptures written: and to be fitted to theſe ends, is the excellency to be expected in them: and in this they excel all perſons and writings in the world. As God doth not ſyllogize or know by our imperfect way of ratiocination, but yet knoweth all things better than ſyllogizers do; ſo Chriſt hath a more high and excellent kind of logic and oratory, and a more apt and ſpiritual and powerful Style, than Ariſtotle, Demoſthenes, Cicero, or Seneca. He ſhewed not that ſkill in methodical healing, which Hyppocrates and Galen ſhewed: but he ſhewed more and better ſkill, when he could heal with a word, and raiſe the dead, and had the power of life and death; ſo did he bring more convincing evidence than Ariſtotle, and perſuaded more powerfully than Demoſthenes

thenes or Cicero. And though this kind of formal learning was below him, and below the inſpired meſſengers of his Goſpel, yet his inferior ſervants (an Aquinas, a Scotus, an Ockam, a Scaliger, a Ramus, a Gaſſendus) do match or excel the old philoſophers, and abundance of Chriſtians equalize or excel a Demoſthenes or Cicero, in the trueſt oratory. *Reaſons of the Chriſtian Religion.*

46. Rev. John Edwards, B. D.

Obſcurities in the Scriptures no proof of their not being genuine.

THAT there are obſcurities and difficulties in Holy Writ is acknowledged by all perſons that are converſant in the Sacred Volume. And truly, if we conſider things aright, we ſhall find, this is not unworthy either of God or of his Holy Word. Not of God himſelf, who indited the Sacred Scriptures; for he hath moſt wiſely ordered, that there ſhould be ſome things obſcure and myſterious in them, to create a becoming reverence, and to let us know, that theſe writings are not penned after an ordinary manner. Theſe clouds and darkneſs are ſuitable to the majeſty of heaven; they are proper to beget in us humility, and mean thoughts of ourſelves, to convince us of the ſhallowneſs of our intellects, to ſhew us how ſhort-ſighted we are, to give check to our preſumption, to quaſh our towering conceits of our knowledge, to ſuperſede our vain boaſting, to repel our vaunting pride and inſolence. They are ſerviceable alſo to rebuke our ſloth and negligence, to provoke our care and ſtudy, and to excite our utmoſt diligence. Thus it hath pleaſed God to exerciſe the underſtandings of men, and to make trial of their induſtry by theſe difficult paſſages which occur in Scripture. If all places were eaſy, this book would be liable to contempt, and there would be no room left for our diligent ſearch and enquiry. But now at every reading of it we ſtill find ſomething to employ our underſtandings afreſh, and to improve our moſt inquiſitive faculties. Here our minds may be perpetually buſied; here is enough to entertain our greateſt leiſure and moſt earneſt ſtudy. Here are many myſteries to be unfolded, many depths to be fathomed, many abſtruſities, both in the things and in the words that convey the notice of them to our minds, to be diſcovered: ſo that to the greateſt ſtudent and moſt ambitious enquirer, that will happen which the Son of Sirach ſaith in another caſe, "When a man hath "done, then he beginneth." Here are not only fords and ſhallows which we may eaſily wade through, but here are unpaſſable

paſſable depths and abyſſes. It hath ſeemed good to the wiſe governor of the world, that there ſhould be in the Holy Scripture ſome things hard to be underſtood, that hereby the excellency of theſe ſacred writings might appear, and that by this means it might be ſeen of what univerſal uſe they are: for thoſe places which are plain and clear are fitted to ordinary capacities, and thoſe other portions which are deep and intricate are the proper entertainment of the learned; and thus the whole book is calculated for the general benefit of all. St. Chryſoſtom hath ſummed it up thus very briefly: All paſſages in Scripture are not plain and perſpicuous, leſt we ſhould be lazy; nor are all obſcure, leſt we ſhould deſpond. This excellent tempering of the ſacred writ is a high commendation of it, and is no other than the wiſe contrivance of heaven.

And as this obſcurity of ſome parts of Scripture is not unworthy of God himſelf, ſo neither is it any diſparagement to his ſacred word. For we muſt know, that this difficulty happens from the very nature of the things themſelves, which are here recorded. It cannot be otherwiſe but that ſome portions of Scripture muſt be dark and obſcure, and conſequently muſt labour under different and contrary expoſitions, becauſe they were written ſo long ago, and contain in them ſo many old cuſtoms and uſages, ſo many relations concerning different people, ſo many and various idioms of tongues, ſuch diverſity of ancient expreſſions, laws, and manners of all nations in the world. It is unreaſonable to expect that we ſhould exactly underſtand all theſe. It is not to be wondered at, that theſe occaſion doubts, difficulties, miſtakes. And it is certain, that the being ignorant of ſome of theſe, is no blemiſh, either to the ſacred writings, or to the perſons who read and ſtudy them. Suppoſe I do not know what the houſe of Aſuppim is, 1 Chron. 26. 15. or what kind of trees the Almug or Algum trees are, 1 Kings 10. 12. 1 Chron. 20. 8. or who are meant by the Gammadim, Ezek. 27. 11. What though I am not ſo well ſkilled in the Jewiſh modes and faſhions, as to tell what kind of women's ornament the houſes of the ſoul are, in Iſ. 3. 20. or what particular idols or Pagan deities Gad and Meni are, Iſ. 65. 11. or which of the Heathen gods is meant by Chiun or Remphan, Amos 5. 26. Acts 7. 43. Some of the moſt learned expoſitors and critics have confeſſed their ignorance as to theſe places of ſcripture; particularly upon the laſt of them our profound antiquary, Selden, hath theſe deſpairing words: For my part I perceive my blindneſs to be ſuch, that I can ſee nothing at all! And to the ſame purpoſe this admirable perſon ſpeaks concerning

concerning ſeveral other paſſages in Scripture, as of Niſhroc, Nergal, and other idols mentioned there, the origin and meaning of which names are hid from us. Many other reaſons might be alledged of the real or ſeeming difficulty of ſome places, namely, the ſublimity of the matter, the ambiguity and different ſignifications of the words, the inadvertency of expoſitors, and ſometimes their unſkilfulneſs, and oftentimes their wilful deſigning to pervert the words, in order to the maintaining ſome opinions or practices which they adhere to. But no man of a ſedate mind and reaſon can think, that the Scriptures themſelves are diſparaged by theſe difficulties and miſtakes; for they are not arguments of the Scripture's imperfection, but of man's. Beſides, theſe obſcurities, which are accompanied with the various ways of rendering ſome expreſſions, and determining the ſenſe, are no proof of the imperfection of this holy book, becauſe in matters of faith and manners, which are the main things we are concerned in, and for which the Bible was chiefly writ, theſe writings are plain and intelligible. All neceſſary and fundamental points of religion are ſet down here in ſuch expreſſions as are ſuitable to the capacities of the moſt ſimple and vulgar. God hath graciouſly condeſcended to the infirmities of the meaneſt and moſt unlearned by ſpeaking to them in theſe writings after the manner of men, and by propounding the greateſt myſteries in a familiar ſtyle and way. The Scripture, ſo far as it relates to our belief and practice, is very eaſy and plain, yea, much plainer than the gloſſes and comments upon it oftentimes are. In a word, moſt of the places of Scripture call not for an interpreter, but a practiſer. As for other paſſages, which are obſcure and intricate, but which are very few in reſpect of thoſe that are plain, they were deſigned, as hath been already ſuggeſted, to employ our more inquiſitive and elaborate thoughts, and to whet our induſtry in the ſtudying of this holy volume; that at laſt, when we have the happineſs of retrieving the loſt ſenſe of the words, and reſtoring them to their genuine meaning, we may the more prize our acqueſt which hath coſt us ſome pains. Or, if after all our attempts we cannot reach the true meaning, we have reaſon to entertain reverend thoughts of thoſe difficult texts of Scripture; and to perſuade ourſelves, that they are worthy of the divine Enditer, though our weak minds cannot comprehend them. If human authors delight to darken their writings ſometimes, and it is accounted no blemiſh, ſurely we may conclude, that the myſteries of the ſacred and inſpired ſtyle are rather an enhancement

hancement than a diminution of its excellency. Shall we not think it fit to deal as fairly with the ſacred code, as Socrates did with Heraclitus' writings, that is, not only pronounce ſo much as we underſtand of them to be excellent and admirable, but believe alſo, that what we do not underſtand is ſo too? It is certainly an undeniable truth, that neither the wiſdom of God, nor the credit of this inſpired book, are impaired by any difficulties we find in it.

The Bible ſuperior to all other books.

IN what other writings can we deſcry thoſe excellencies which we find in the Bible? None of them can equal it in antiquity; for the firſt penman of the Sacred Scripture hath the ſtart of all philoſophers, poets and hiſtorians, and is abſolutely the ancienteſt writer extant in the world. No writings are equal to theſe of the Bible, if we mention only the ſtock of human learning contained in them. Here linguiſts and philologiſts may find that which is to be found no where elſe. Here rhetoricians and orators may be entertained with a more loſty eloquence, with a choicer compoſure of words, and with a greater variety of ſtyle, than any other writers can afford them. Here is a book, where more is underſtood than expreſſed, where words are few, but the ſenſe is full and redundant. No books equal this in authority, becauſe it is the Word of God himſelf, and dictated by an unerring Spirit. It excels all other writings in the excellency of its matter, which is the higheſt, nobleſt, and worthieſt, and of the greateſt concern to mankind. Laſtly, the Scriptures tranſcend all other writings in their power and efficacy.—

Wherefore, with great ſeriouſneſs and importunity I requeſt the reader that he would entertain ſuch thoughts and perſuaſions as theſe, that Bible-Learning is the higheſt accompliſhment, that this book is the moſt valuable of any upon earth, that here is a library in one ſingle volume, that this alone is ſufficient for us, though all the libraries in the world were deſtroyed.

Enquiry into 4 remarkable Texts, and a Diſcourſe on the Authority, Style, and Perfection of Scripture.

47. JOHN DRYDEN, ESQ.

All the religious knowledge in the world derived from Revelation.

DEISM, or the principles of natural worſhip, are only the faint remnants or dying flames of revealed religion in the poſterity of Noah; and our modern philoſophers, nay, and ſome

ſome of our philoſophiſing divines have too much exalted the faculties of our ſouls, when they have maintained that by their force, mankind has been able to find out that there is one ſupreme agent or intellectual being which we call God; that praiſe and prayer are his due worſhip; and the reſt of thoſe deducements, which I am confident are the remote effects of revelation, and unattainable by our diſcourſe, I mean as ſimply conſidered, and without the benefit of divine illumination. So that we have not lifted up ourſelves to God by the weak pinions of our reaſon, but he has been pleaſed to deſcend to us; and what Socrates ſaid of him, what Plato writ, and the reſt of the Heathen philoſophers of ſeveral nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the ſun of it was ſet in the race of Noah. That there is ſomething above us, ſome principle of motion, our reaſon can apprehend, though it cannot diſcover what it is by its own virtue. And indeed 'tis very improbable, that we, who by the ſtrength of our faculties cannot enter into the knowledge of any being, not ſo much as of our own, ſhould be able to find out by them that Supreme Nature, which we cannot otherwiſe define than by ſaying it is infinite; as if infinite were definable, or infinity a ſubject for our narrow underſtanding. They who would prove religion by reaſon, do but weaken the cauſe which they endeavour to ſupport. It is to take away the pillars from our faith, and prop it only with a twig; it is to deſign a tower like that of Babel, which, if it were poſſible, as it is not, to reach heaven, would come to nothing by the confuſion of the workmen. For every man is building a ſeveral way; impotently conceited of his own model, and of his own materials. Reaſon is always ſtriving, always at a loſs; and of neceſſity it muſt ſo come to paſs, while it is exerciſed about that which is not its proper object. Let us be content at laſt to know God by his own methods; at leaſt ſo much of him as he is pleaſed to reveal to us in the Sacred Scriptures. To apprehend them to be the Word of God, is all our reaſon has to do; for all beyond it is the work of faith, which is the ſeal of heaven impreſſed upon our human underſtanding. *Preface to Religio Laici.*

48. Dr. Smollett.

Ridicule in religious matters inexcuſable.

THE unbounded freedom and licentiouſneſs of raillery and ridicule is become of late years ſo faſhionable among us, and hath already been attended with ſuch fatal and deſtructive conſequences, as to give a reaſonable alarm to all friends of virtue.

virtue. Writers have roſe up within this laſt century, who have endeavoured to blend and confound the colours of good and evil, to laugh us out of our religion, and undermine the very foundations of morality. The character of the ſcoffer hath by an unaccountable favour and indulgence met not only with pardon, but approbation, and hath therefore been almoſt univerſally ſought after and admired. Ridicule hath been called the teſt of truth, and, as ſuch, has been applied indiſcriminately to every ſubject.

But in oppoſition to all the puny followers of Shafteſbury and Bolingbroke, all the laughing moraliſts of the laſt age, and of all the ſneering ſatyriſts of this, I ſhall not ſcruple to declare, that I look on ridicule as an oppreſſive and arbitrary tyrant, who, like death, throws down all diſtinction; blind to the charms of virtue, and deaf to the complaints of truth; a bloody Moloch, who delights in human ſacrifice, who loves to feed on the fleſh of the poor, and to drink the tear of the afflicted; who doubles the weight of poverty by ſcorn and laughter, and throws the poiſon of contempt into the cup of diſtreſs to embitter the draught.

Truth, ſay the Shafteſburians, cannot poſſibly be an object of ridicule, and therefore cannot ſuffer by it; to which the anſwer is extremely obvious. Truth, naked, undiſguiſed, cannot, we will acknowledge with them, be ridiculed; but truth, like every thing elſe, may be miſrepreſented: it is the buſineſs of ridicule therefore to diſguiſe her; to dreſs her up in a ſtrange and fantaſtic habit; and when this is artfully performed, it is no wonder that the croud ſhould ſmile at her deformity.

The nobleſt philoſopher and the beſt moraliſt in the Heathen world, the great and immortal Socrates, fell a ſacrifice to this pernicious talent. Ridicule firſt miſrepreſented, and afterwards deſtroyed him. The deluded multitude condemned him, not for what he was, but for what he appeared to be, an enemy to the religion of his country.

The folly and depravity of mankind will always furniſh out a ſufficient fund for ridicule; and when we conſider how vaſt and ſpacious a field the little ſcene of human life affords for malice and ill nature, we ſhall not ſo much wonder to ſee the lover of ridicule rejoicing in it. Here he has always an opportunity of gratifying his pride, and ſatiating his malevolence. From the frailties and abſurdities of others, he forms a wreath to adorn his own brow; gathers together with all his art the failings and imperfections of others, and offers them up a ſacrifice to ſelf-love. The loweſt and moſt abandoned

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of mankind can ridicule the moſt exalted beings; thoſe who never could boaſt of their own perfection,

Nor raiſe their thoughts beyond the earth they tread,
Even theſe can cenſure, thoſe can dare deride
A Bacon's avarice, or a Tully's pride.

It were well indeed for mankind, if ridicule would confine itſelf to the frailties and imperfections of human nature, and not extend its baleful influence over the few good qualities and perfections of it. But there is not, perhaps, a virtue to be named, which may not by the medium through which it is ſeen, be diſtorted into a vice. The glaſs of ridicule reflects things not only darkly, but falſely alſo: it alſo diſcolours the objects before it ventures to repreſent them to us. The pureſt metal, by the mixture of a baſe alloy, ſhall ſeem changed to the meaneſt. Ridicule in the ſame manner will cloath prudence in the garb of avarice, call courage raſhneſs, and brand good nature with the name of prodigality; will laugh at the compaſſionate man for his weakneſs, the ſerious man for his preciſeneſs, and the pious man for his hypocriſy.

Modeſty is one of virtue's beſt ſupports; and it is obſervable, that wherever this amiable quality is moſt eminently conſpicuous, ridicule is always ready to attack and overthrow it. The man of wit and humour is never ſo happy as when he can raiſe the bluſh of ingenuous merit, or ſtamp the marks of deformity and guilt on the features of innocence and beauty. Thus may our perfections conſpire to render us both unhappy and contemptible.

The lover of ridicule will, no doubt, plead in the defence of it, that his deſign is to reclaim and reform mankind; that he is liſted in the ſervice of virtue, and engaged in the cauſe of truth; but I will venture to aſſure him, that the allies he boaſts of diſclaim his friendſhip, and deſpiſe his aſſiſtance. Truth deſires no ſuch ſoldier to fight under his banner; virtue wants no ſuch advocate to plead for her. As it is generally exerciſed, it is too great a puniſhment for ſmall faults, too light and inconſiderable for great ones: the little foibles and blemiſhes of a character deſerve rather pity than contempt; the more atrocious crimes call for hatred and abhorrence. Thus we ſee, that in one caſe the medicine operates too powerfully, and in the other is of no effect.

I might take this opportunity to add, that ridicule is not always contented with ravaging and deſtroying the works of man, but boldly and impiouſly attacks thoſe of God; enters even into the ſanctuary, and profanes the temple of the Moſt-High. A late noble writer has made uſe of it to aſperſe

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the characters and deſtroy the validity of the writers of both the Old and the New Teſtament; and to change the ſolemn truths of Chriſtianity into matter of mirth and laughter. The books of Moſes are called by him fables and tales, fit only for the amuſement of children; and St. Paul is treated by him as an enthuſiaſt, an idiot, and an avowed enemy to that religion which he profeſſed. One would not ſurely think that there was any thing in Chriſtianity ſo ludicrous as to raiſe laughter, or to excite contempt; but on the contrary, that the nature of its precepts, and its own intrinſic excellence would, at leaſt, have ſecured it from ſuch indignities.

Nothing gives us a higher opinion of thoſe ancient Heathens whom our modern bigots are ſo apt to deſpiſe, than that air of piety and devotion which runs through all their writings; and though the Pagan theology was full of abſurdities and inconſiſtencies, which the more refined ſpirits among their poets and philoſophers muſt have doubtleſs have deſpiſed, rejected, and contemned, ſuch was their reſpect and veneration for the eſtabliſhed religion of their country, ſuch their regard to decency and ſeriouſneſs, ſuch their modeſty and diffidence in affairs of ſo much weight and importance, that we very ſeldom meet with jeſt or ridicule on ſubjects which they held thus ſacred and reſpectable.

The privilege of publicly laughing at religion, and the profeſſion of it, of making the laws of God, and the great concerns of eternity, the objects of mirth and ridicule, was reſerved for more enlightened ages; and denied the more pious Heathens, to reflect diſgrace and ignominy on the Chriſtian æra.

It hath indeed been the fate of the beſt and pureſt religion in the world to become the jeſt of fools; and not only, with its divine Founder, to be ſcourged and perſecuted, but with him to be mocked and ſpit at, trampled on and deſpiſed. But to conſider the dreadful conſequences of ridicule on this occaſion, will better become the divine than the eſſayiſt; to him therefore I ſhall refer it, and conclude this eſſay by obſerving, that after all the undeſerved encomiums ſo laviſhly beſtowed upon this child of wit and malice, ſo univerſally approved and admired, I know of no ſervice the pernicious talent of ridicule can be of, unleſs it be to raiſe the bluſh of modeſty, and put virtue out of countenance; to enhance the miſeries of the wretched, and poiſon the feaſt of happineſs; to inſult man, affront God; to make us, in ſhort, hateful to our fellow-creatures, uneaſy to ourſelves, and highly diſpleaſing to the Almighty. *Elegant Extracts.*

49. REV.

49. Rev. J. C. Knowles, A. B.

Folly and Danger of Unbelief.

THE conſequence of a diſbelief and rejection of our Saviour's doctrines in all likelihood will prove ſo terrible, that it muſt be the higheſt pitch of madneſs to rely and venture our all upon it. Before a man ſhould dare to give himſelf to the ways of ſin, he ought to have an abſolute certainty, that he is at no time to be accountable for it; otherwiſe he runs ſuch fearful hazards, as every prudent man would be careful to avoid: for were the arguments produced, equally ſtrong in ſupport of the negative, as the affirmative ſide of the queſtion; nay! could we ſuppoſe ſome degree of probability in favour of his infidelity; this would be far too little, in a caſe of ſuch infinite importance and of ſo tender a nature as the loſs of a ſoul. If it is not as clear as demonſtration can make it; if upon the whole there remains the leaſt reaſon for diffidence or doubt, no wiſe man would purſue any courſe, however pleaſing, which for all he can determine, may ſhortly terminate in endleſs miſery. But when the goſpel verities are ſo credibly atteſted, that no unprejudiced mind can withhold its aſſent from them; when the duties ſet forth are agreeable to our reaſonable natures; and the futurity aſcertained therein, ſuch as our own minds forebode, and the general ſentiments of mankind agree in; there ſeems no room for incredulity here; and nothing but extreme perverſeneſs and blindneſs of heart, could prevail with any man, to wiſh or to think them falſe, and to expoſe his ſoul to never-ceaſing torments, without ſo much as a well-grounded conjecture, to countenance his error and practice.——

If the preſent ſcene of action is all that is allotted us; if death which diſſolves our frame, puts a period to our being forever; if that which is ſo wonderful in its operations, which thinks and reflects, which judges, accuſes and acquits, is of the ſame common maſs with the brute creation; we have yet the ſatisfaction in the mean time to think that we behave like men; that we are ſerviceable in our generation, and have nothing to fear beyond the grave. If there is no future life and bleſſedneſs prepared for us, but all the evangelical promiſes prove nothing but pompous parade; we are however ſure of this, that there is no miſery awaits us; and we have ſo acted our part, that we may march off the ſtage with triumph and applauſe; men, when we are gone, will revere our memories, and mention our names with reſpect. The bittereſt enemies to the Chriſtian religion can threaten its friends

friends with nothing worſe than this; and though it muſt be confeſſed to be ſhocking to a mind, that indulges the pleaſing hopes, and fond deſires of immortality and glory; yet how infinitely ſhort of that inconceivable wretchedneſs, which, ſuppoſing Chriſtianity to be true, its vilifyers and deſpiſers inevitably incur? When the ſoul, inſtead of dying with the body, as their fears would incline them to wiſh, ſhall ſurvive the mortality of its companion, and wing its reluctant flight, into the boundleſs regions of eternity: when death, inſtead of cancelling the remembrance of their evil doings, and burying all in an eternal oblivion, ſhall introduce them before the awful tribunal of their incenſed and almighty Judge; "who ſhall execute judgment upon all, and convince "all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly "deeds, which they have ungodly committed, and of all "their hard ſpeeches, which ungodly ſinners have ſpoken "againſt him."

Whether, upon this fair compariſon does the condition of the infidel or the believer appear more eligible? Whether does it ſeem more prudent to refuſe to comply with what Chriſtianity preſcribes, becauſe it is poſſible there may be no hereafter ſtate; or heartily to conform to its excellent preſcripts, becauſe it is more than probable there will be one? Dreadful is the hazard we run in the former caſe; but in the latter we run none at all: for if we are pious and virtuous we are ſure either not to be—or to be eternally bleſſed: but if we are unholy and vicious, we have every thing but experience to convince us, that we ſhall not only live forever, but live too in the moſt inſupportable tortures of remorſe and pain. And whether it is reconcileable with common prudence to make ſuch a choice as may ſubject them to ſo dreadful a cataſtrophe, I ſhall ſubmit to their own cool reaſon to determine. *Sermons.*

50. ANON.

The weakneſs of infidels, with the unbeliever's creed.

THE publication of Lord Bolingbroke's poſthumous works has given new life and ſpirit to free-thinking. We ſeem at preſent to be endeavouring to unlearn our catechiſm, with all that we have been taught about religion, in order to model our our faith to the faſhion of his lordſhip's ſyſtem. We have now nothing to do, but to throw away our Bibles, turn the churches into theatres, and rejoice that an act of parliament now in force, gives us an opportunity of getting rid of the clergy by tranſportation. I was in hopes the extraordinary

extraordinary price of thoſe volumes would have confined their influence to perſons of quality. As they are placed above extreme indigence and abſolute want of bread, their looſe notions would have carried them no farther than cheating at cards, or perhaps plundering their country: but if theſe opinions ſpread among the vulgar, we ſhall be knocked down at noon-day in our ſtreets, and nothing will go forward but robberies and murders.

The inſtances I have lately ſeen of free-thinking in the lower part of the world, make me fear, they are going to be as faſhionable and as wicked as their betters. I went the other night to the Robin Hood, where it is uſual for the advocates againſt religion to aſſemble and openly avow their infidelity. One of the queſtions for the night was—Whether lord Bolingbroke had not done greater ſervices to mankind by his writings, than the Apoſtles or Evangeliſts?—As this ſociety is chiefly compoſed of lawyers' clerks, petty tradeſmen, and the loweſt mechanics, I was at firſt ſurprized at ſuch amazing erudition among them. Toland, Tindal, Collins, Chubb, and Mandeville, they ſeemed to have got by heart. A ſhoe-maker harangued his five minutes upon the excellence of the tenets maintained by lord Bolingbroke; but I ſoon found that his reading had not been extended beyond the idea of a patriot king, which he had miſtaken for a glorious ſyſtem of free-thinking. I could not help ſmiling at another of the company, who took pains to ſhew his diſbelief of the goſpel by unſainting the apoſtles, and calling them by no other title than plain Paul or plain Peter. The proceedings of this ſociety have indeed almoſt induced me to wiſh that (like the Roman Catholics) they were not permitted to read the Bible, rather than that they ſhould read it only to abuſe it.

I have frequently heard many wiſe tradeſmen ſettling the moſt important articles of our faith over a pint of beer. A baker took occaſion from Canning's affair to maintain, in oppoſition to the Scriptures, that man might live by bread alone, at leaſt that woman might; for elſe, ſaid he, how could the girl have been ſupported for a whole month by a few hard cruſts? In anſwer to this, a barber-ſurgeon ſet forth the improbability of that ſtory; and thence inferred, that it was impoſſible for our Saviour to have faſted forty days in the wilderneſs. I lately heard a midſhipman ſwear that the Bible was all a lie; for he had ſailed round the world with lord Anſon, and if there had been any Red Sea he muſt have met with it. I know a brick-layer, who, while he was working by line and

rule, and carefully laying one brick upon another, would argue with a fellow-labourer that the world was made by chance; and a cook, who thought more of his trade, than his Bible, in a diſpute concerning the miracles, made a pleaſant miſtake about the firſt, and gravely aſked his antagoniſt what he thought of the ſupper at Cana.

This affectation of free-thinking among the lower claſs of people, is at preſent happily confined to the men. On Sundays, while the huſbands are toping at the ale-houſe, the good women, their wives, think it their duty to go to church, ſay their prayers, bring home the text, and hear the children their catechiſm. But our polite ladies are, I fear, in their lives and converſations little better than free-thinkers. Going to church, ſince it is now no longer the faſhion to carry on intrigues there, is almoſt wholly laid aſide: and I verily believe, that nothing but another earthquake can fill the churches with people of quality. The fair ſex in general are too thoughtleſs to concern themſelves in deep enquiries into matters of religion. It is ſufficient that they are taught to believe themſelves angels. It would therefore be an ill compliment, while we talk of the heaven they beſtow, to perſuade them into the Mahometan notion, that they have no ſouls; though, perhaps, our fine gentlemen may imagine, that by convincing a lady that ſhe has no ſoul, ſhe will be leſs ſcrupulous about the diſpoſal of her body.

The ridiculous notions maintained by free thinkers in their writings, ſcarce deſerve a ſerious refutation; and perhaps the beſt method of anſwering them would be to ſelect from their works all the abſurd and impracticable notions, which they ſo ſtiffly maintain in order to evade the belief of the Chriſtian religion. I ſhall here throw together a few of their principal tenets, under the contradictory title of

The Unbeliever's Creed.

I believe that there is no God, but that matter is God, and God is matter; and that it is no matter whether there is any God or no.

I believe alſo, that the world was not made; that the world made itſelf; that it had no beginning; that it will laſt for ever, world without end.

I believe that a man is a beaſt, that the ſoul is the body, and the body is the ſoul; and that after death there is neither body nor ſoul.

I believe that there is no religion; that natural religion is the only religion; and that all religion is unnatural. I believe not in Moſes; I believe in the firſt philoſophy; I believe not

not the Evangeliſts; I believe in Chubb, Collins, Toland, Tindal, Morgan, Mandeville, Woolſton, Hobbes, Shafteſbury; I believe in lord Bolingbroke; I believe not St. Paul.

I believe not revelation; I believe in tradition; I believe in the Talmud; I believe in the Alcoran; I believe not the Bible; I believe in Socrates; I believe in Confucius; I believe in Sanconiathan; I believe in Mahomet; I believe not in Chriſt.

Laſtly, I believe in all unbelief. *Connoiſſeur.*

51. Bishop Taylor.

A moral demonſtration of the truth of the Chriſtian religion.

THIS diſcourſe, of all the diſputables in the world, ſhall require the feweſt things to be granted; even nothing but what was evident; even nothing but the very ſubject of the queſtion, viz. That there was ſuch a man as Jeſus Chriſt; that he pretended ſuch things, and taught ſuch doctrines: for he that will prove theſe things to be from God, muſt be allowed that they were from ſomething or other.

But this poſtulate I do not aſk for need, but for order's ſake and art; for what the hiſtories of that age reported as a public affair, as one of the moſt eminent tranſactions of the world, that which made ſo much noiſe, which cauſed ſo many changes, which occaſioned ſo many wars, which divided ſo many hearts, which altered ſo many families, which procured ſo many deaths, which obtained ſo many laws in favour, and ſuffered ſo many reſcripts in the diſfavour, of itſelf; that which was not done in a corner, but was thirty-three years and more in acting; which cauſed ſo many ſects, and was oppoſed by ſo much art, and ſo much power that it might not grow, which filled the world with noiſe, which effected ſuch great changes in the bodies of men by curing the diſeaſed, and ſmiting the contumacious or the hypocrites, which drew ſo many eyes, and filled ſo many tongues, and employed ſo many pens, and was the care and the queſtion of the whole world at that time, and immediately after; that which was conſigned by public acts and records of courts, which was in the books of friends and enemies, which came accompanied and remarked with eclipſes and ſtars and prodigies of heaven and earth; that which the Jews even in ſpite and againſt their wills confeſſed, and which the witty adverſaries intending to overthrow, could never ſo much as challenge of want of truth in the matter of fact and ſtory; that which they who are infinitely concerned that it ſhould not be

believed, or more, that it had never been, do yet only labour to make appear not to have been divine: certainly, this thing is so certain that it was, that the defenders of it need not account it a kindness to have it presupposed; for never was any story in the world that had so many degrees of credibility, as the story of the person, life, and death, of Jesus Christ: and if he had not been a true prophet, yet that he was in the world, and said and did such things, cannot be denied; for even concerning Mahomet we make no question but he was in the world, and led a great part of mankind after him, and what was less proved we infinitely believe: and what all men say, and no man denies, and was notorious in itself, of this we may make further inquiries whether it was all that which it pretended; for that it did make pretences and was in the world, needs no more probation.

But now, whether Jesus Christ was sent from God and delivered the will of God, we are to take accounts from all the things of the world which were on him, or about him, or from him.

Considerations respecting the Person of Jesus Christ.

I. CONSIDER, first, his person: he was foretold by all the prophets: he, I say, for that appears by the event, and the correspondencies of their sayings to this person: he was described by infallible characterisms, which did fit him, and did never fit any but him; for, when he was born, then was the fulness of time, and the Messias was expected at the time when Jesus did appear, which gave occasion to many of the godly then to wait for him, and to hope to live till the time of his revelation: and they did so, and with a spirit of prophecy, which their own nation did confess and honour, glorified God at the revelation: and the most excellent and devout persons that were conspicuous for their piety did then rejoice in him, and confess him; and the expectation of him at that time was so public and famous, that it gave occasion to divers impostors to abuse the credulity of the people, in pretending to be the Messias; but not only the predictions of the time, and the perfect Synchronisms, did point him out, but at his birth a strange star appeared, which guided certain Levantine princes and sages to the inquiry after him; a strange star, which had an irregular place and an irregular motion, that came by design, and acted by counsel, the counsel of the almighty guide, it moved from place to place, till it stood just over the house where the babe did

did ſleep; a ſtar, of which the Heathen knew much, who knew nothing of him; a ſtar, which Chalcidius affirmed to have ſignified the deſcent of God for the ſalvation of man; a ſtar, that guided the wiſe Chaldees to worſhip him with gifts (as the ſame diſciple of Plato does affirm, and) as the holy Scriptures deliver; and this ſtar could be no ſecret; it troubled all the country; it put Herod upon ſtrange arts of ſecurity for his kingdom, it effected a ſad tragedy accidentally, for it occaſioned the death of all the little babes in the city, and voiſinage of Bethlehem: but the birth of this young child, which was thus glorified by a ſtar, was alſo ſignified by an angel, and was effected by the holy Spirit of God, in a manner which was in itſelf ſupernatural; a virgin was his mother, and God was his father, and his beginning was miraculous; and this matter of his birth of a virgin was proved to an intereſted and jealous perſon, even to Joſeph, the ſuppoſed father of Jeſus; it was affirmed publicly by all his family, and by all his diſciples, and publiſhed in the midſt of all his enemies, who by no artifice could reprove it; a matter ſo famous, that when it was urged as an argument to prove Jeſus to be the Meſſias, by the force of a prophecy in Iſaiah, "A "Virgin ſhall conceive a Son," they who obſtinately refuſed to admit him, did not deny the matter of fact, but denied that it was ſo meant by the prophet, which, if it were true, can only prove that Jeſus was more excellent than was foretold by the prophets, but that there was nothing leſs in him than was to be in the Meſſias; it was a matter ſo famous, that the Arabian phyſicians, who can affirm no ſuch things of their Mahomet, and yet not being able to deny it to be true of the holy Jeſus, endeavour to alleviate and leſſen the thing, by ſaying, It is not wholly beyond the force of nature, that a virgin ſhould conceive; ſo that it was on all hands undeniable, that the mother of Jeſus was a virgin, a mother without a man.

This is that Jeſus, at whoſe preſence, before he was born, a babe in his mother's belly alſo did leap for joy, who was alſo a perſon extraordinary himſelf, conceived in his mother's old age, after a long barrenneſs, ſignified by an angel in the temple, to his father officiating his prieſtly office, who was alſo ſtruck dumb for his not preſent believing: all the people ſaw it, and all his kindred were witneſſes of his reſtitution, and he was named by the angel, and his office declared to be the fore-runner of the holy Jeſus; and this alſo was foretold by one of the old prophets; for the whole ſtory of this divine perſon is a chain of providence and wonder, every link of

which is a verification of a prophecy, and all of it is that thing which, from Adam to the birth of Jeſus, was pointed at and hinted by all the prophets, whoſe words in him paſſed perfectly into the event.

This is that Jeſus, who, as he was born without a father, ſo he was learned without a maſter; he was a man without age, a doctor in a child's garment, diſputing in the ſanctuary at twelve years old. He was a ſojourner in Egypt, becauſe the poor babe, born of an indigent mother, was a formidable rival to a potent King; and this fear could not come from the deſign of the infant, but muſt needs ariſe from the illuſtrioufneſs of the birth, and the prophecies of the child, and the ſayings of the learned, and the journey of the wiſe men, and the decrees of God; this journey and the return were both managed by the conduct of an angel and a divine dream, for to the Son of God all the angels did rejoice to miniſter.

This bleſſed perſon, made thus excellent by his father, and glorious by miraculous conſignations, and illuſtrious by the miniſtry of heavenly ſpirits, and proclaimed to Mary and to Joſeph by two angels, to the ſhepherds by a multitude of the heavenly hoſt, to the wiſe men by a prophecy and by a ſtar, to the Jews by the ſhepherds, to the Gentiles by the three wiſe men, to Herod by the doctors of the law, and to himſelf perfectly known by the inchaſing his human nature in the boſom and heart of God, and by the fulneſs of the Spirit of God, was yet pleaſed for thirty years together to live an humble, a laborious, a chaſte and a devout, a regular and an even, a wiſe and an exemplar, a pious and an obſcure life, without complaint, without ſin, without deſign of fame, or grandeur of ſpirit, till the time came that the cleſts of the rock were to open, and the diamond give its luſtre, and be worn in the diadems of kings, and then this perſon was wholly admirable; for he was uſhered into the world by the voice of a loud crier in the wilderneſs, a perſon auſtere and wiſe, of a ſtrange life, full of holineſs and full of hardneſs, and a great preacher of righteouſneſs, a man believed by all the people that he came from God, one who in his own nation gathered diſciples publicly, and (which amongſt them was a great matter) he was the doctor of a new inſtitution, and baptized all the country; yet this man, ſo great, ſo revered, ſo followed, ſo liſtened to by king and people, by doctors and by idiots, by Phariſees and Sadducees, this man preached Jeſus to the people, pointed

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out the Lamb of God, told that he muſt increaſe, and himſelf from all that fame muſt retire to give him place; he received him to baptiſm, after having with duty and modeſty declared his own unworthineſs to give, but rather a worthineſs to receive baptiſm from the holy hands of Jeſus; but at the ſolemnity God ſent down the Holy Spirit upon his holy Son, and by a voice from heaven, a voice of thunder (and God was in that voice) declared that this was his Son, and that he was delighted in him.

This voice from heaven was ſuch, ſo evident, ſo certain a conviction of what it did intend to prove, ſo known and accepted as the way of divine revelation under the ſecond temple, that at that time every man that deſired a ſign honeſtly, would have been ſatisfied with ſuch a voice; it being the teſtimony, by which God made all extraordinaries to be credible to his people, from the days of Ezra, to the death of the nation; and that there was ſuch a voice, not only then, but divers times after, was as certain, and made as evident, as things of that nature can ordinarily be made. For it being a matter of fact, cannot be ſuppoſed infinite, but limited to time and place, heard by a certain number of perſons, and was as a clap of thunder upon ordinary accounts, which could be heard but by thoſe who were within the ſphere of its own activity; and reported by thoſe to others, who are to give teſtimony, as teſtimonies are required, which are credible under the teſt of two or three diſintereſted, honeſt, and true men; and, though this was done in the preſence of more, and oftener than once, yet it was a divine teſtimony but at firſt, but is to be conveyed by the means of men; and, as God thundered from heaven at the giving of the law (though that he did ſo, we have notice only from the books of Moſes, received from the Jewiſh nation,) ſo he did in the days of the Baptiſt, and ſo he did to Peter, James, and John, and ſo he did in the preſence of the Phariſees and many of the common people; and, as it is not to be ſuppoſed that all theſe would join their divided intereſts, for and againſt themſelves, for the verification of a lie; ſo, if they would have done it, they could not have done it without reproof of their own parties, who would have been glad by the diſcovery only to diſgrace the whole ſtory. But, if the report of honeſt and juſt men ſo reputed, may be queſtioned for matter of fact, or may not be accounted ſufficient to make faith, when there is no pretence of men to the contrary, beſides, that we can have no ſtory tranſmitted to us, no records kept, no acts of courts, no narratives of the days of old, no traditions of our fathers;

ſo there could not be left in nature any uſual inſtrument, whereby God could after the manner of men declare his own will to us, but either we ſhould never know the will of heaven upon earth, or it muſt be, that God muſt not only tell it once but always, and not only always to ſome men, but always to all men; and then, as there would be no uſe of hiſtory, or the honeſty of men, and their faithfulneſs in telling any act of God in declaration of his will, ſo there would be perpetual neceſſity of miracles, and we could not ſerve God directly with our underſtanding; for there would be no ſuch thing as faith, that is, of aſſent without conviction of underſtanding, and we could not pleaſe God with believing, becauſe there would be in it nothing of the will, nothing of love and choice; and that faith which is, would be like that of Thomas, to believe what we ſee or hear, and God ſhould not at all govern upon earth, unleſs he did continually come himſelf; for thus, all government, all teachers, all apoſtles, all meſſengers would be needleſs, becauſe they could not ſhew to the eye what they told to the ears of men; and it might as well be diſbelieved in all courts and by all princes, that this was not the letter of a prince, or the act of a man, or the writing of his hand, and ſo all human intercourſe muſt ceaſe, and all ſenſes, but the eye, be uſeleſs as to this affair, or elſe to the ear all voices muſt be ſtrangers but the principal, if, I ſay, no reports ſhall make faith. But it is certain, that when theſe voices were ſent from heaven and heard upon earth, they prevailed amongſt many that heard them not, and diſciples were multiplied upon ſuch accounts; or elſe it muſt be that none, that did hear them, could be believed by any of their friends and neighbours; for, if they were, the voice was as effective at the reflex and rebound, as in the direct emiſſion, and could prevail with them that believed their brother or their friend, as certainly as with them that believed their own ears and eyes.

I need not ſpeak of the vaſt numbers of miracles which he wrought; miracles, which were not more demonſtrations of his power, than of his mercy; for they had nothing of pompouſneſs and oſtentation, but infinitely of charity and mercy, and that permanent and laſting and often: he opened the eyes of the blind, he made the crooked ſtraight, he made the weak ſtrong, he cured fevers with the touch of his hand, and an iſſue of blood with the hem of his garment, and ſore eyes with the ſpittle of his mouth and the clay of the earth; he multiplied the loaves and fiſhes, he raiſed the dead to life, a young maiden, the widow's ſon of Naim, and Lazarus, and

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caſt out devils by the word of his mouth, which he could never do, but by the power of God. For Satan does not caſt out Satan, nor a houſe fight againſt itſelf, if it means to ſtand long; and the devil could not help Jeſus, becauſe the holy Jeſus taught men virtue, called them from the worſhipping devils, taught them to reſiſt the devil, to lay aſide all thoſe abominable idolatries by which the devil doth rule in the hearts of men: he taught men to love God, to fly from temptations to ſin, to hate and avoid all thoſe things of which the devil is guilty; for Chriſtianity forbids pride, envy, malice, lying, and yet affirms that the devil is proud, envious, malicious, and the father of lies; and therefore, wherever Chriſtianity prevails, the devil is not worſhipped, and therefore, he that can think that a man without the power of God could overturn the devil's principles, croſs his deſigns, weaken his ſtrength, baffle him in his policies, befool him and turn him out of poſſeſſion, and make him open his own mouth againſt himſelf, as he did often, and confeſs himſelf conquered by Jeſus, and tormented, as the oracle did to Auguſtus Cæſar, and the devil to Jeſus himſelf; he, I ſay, that thinks a mere man can do this, knows not the weakneſſes of a man, nor the power of an angel; but he that thinks this could be done by compact, and by conſent of the devil, muſt think him to be an intelligence without underſtanding, a power without force, a fool and a ſot to aſſiſt a power againſt himſelf, and to perſecute the power he did aſſiſt, to ſtir up the world to deſtroy the Chriſtians, whoſe Maſter and Lord he did aſſiſt to deſtroy himſelf; and, when we read that Porphyrius an Heathen, a profeſſed enemy to Chriſtianity, did ſay, Ἰησοῦ τιμομένου τὶς θεῶν δημοσίας ὠφελείας ἐν ἡσθείη, that ſince Jeſus was worſhipped, the gods could help no man, that is, the gods which they worſhipped; the poor baffled enervated dæmons: he muſt either think that the devils are as fooliſh as they are weak, or elſe, that they did nothing towards this declination of their power; and therefore that they ſuffer it by a power higher than themſelves, that is, by the power of God in the hand of Jeſus.

But, beſides that God gave teſtimony from heaven concerning him, he alſo gave this teſtimony of himſelf to have come from God, becauſe that "he did God's will;" for he that is a good man and lives by the laws of God and of his nation, a life innocent and ſimple, prudent and wiſe, holy and ſpotleſs, unreproved and unſuſpected, he is certainly by all wiſe men ſaid in a good ſenſe to be the ſon of God; but he who does well and ſpeaks well, and calls all men to glorify and

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ſerve God, and ſerves no ends but of holineſs and charity, of wiſdom of hearts and reformation of manners, this man carries great authority in his ſayings, and ought to prevail with good men in good things, for good ends, which is all that is here required.

But his nature was ſo ſweet, his manners ſo humble, his words ſo wiſe and compoſed, his comportment ſo grave and winning, his anſwers ſo ſeaſonable, his queſtions ſo deep, his reproof ſo ſevere and charitable, his pity ſo great and merciful, his preachings ſo full of reaſon and holineſs, of weight and authority, his converſation ſo uſeful and beneficent, his poverty great but his alms frequent, his family ſo holy and religious, his and their employment ſo profitable, his meekneſs ſo incomparable, his paſſions without difference, ſave only where zeal or pity carried him on to worthy and apt expreſſions, a perſon that never laughed, but often wept in a ſenſe of the calamities of others; he loved every man and hated no man, he gave counſel to the doubtful, and inſtructed the ignorant, he bound up the broken hearts, and ſtrengthened the feeble knees, he relieved the poor, and converted the ſinners, he deſpiſed none that came to him for relief, and as for thoſe that did not, he went to them; he took all occaſions of mercy that were offered him, and went abroad for more; he ſpent his days in preaching and healing, and his nights in prayers and converſation with God: he was obedient to laws and ſubject to princes, though he was the Prince of Judæa in right of his mother, and of all the world in right of his father; the people followed him, but he made no conventions; and when they were made, he ſuffered no tumults; when they would have made him a king, he withdrew himſelf; when he knew they would put him to death, he offered himſelf; he knew men's hearts, and converſed ſecretly, and gave anſwer to their thoughts and prevented their queſtions; he would work a miracle rather than give offence, and yet ſuffer every offence rather than ſee God his father diſhonoured; he exactly kept the law of Moſes, to which he came to put a period, and yet choſe to ſignify his purpoſe only by doing acts of mercy upon their ſabbath, doing nothing which they could call a breach of a commandment, but healing ſick people, a charity, which themſelves would do to beaſts, and yet they were angry at him for doing it to their brethren.

In all his life, and in all his converſation with his nation, he was innocent as an angel of light; and when, by the greatneſs of his worth, and the ſeverity of his doctrine, and the charity of his miracles, and the noiſes of the people, and

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his immenſe fame in all that part of the world, and the multitude of his diſciples, and the authority of his ſermons, and his free reproof of their hypocriſy, and his diſcovery of their falſe doctrines and weak traditions, he had branded the reputation of the vicious rulers of the people, and they reſolved to put him to death, they who had the biggeſt malice in the world, and the weakeſt accuſations, were forced to ſupply their want of articles againſt him by making truth to be his fault, and his office to be his crime, and his open confeſſion of what was aſked him to be his article of condemnation; and yet after all this they could not perſuade the competent judge to condemn him, or to find him guilty of any fault, and therefore they were forced to threaten him with Cæſar's name, againſt whom then they would pretend him to be an enemy, though in their charge they neither proved, nor indeed laid it againſt him; and yet to whatſoever they objected he made no return, but his ſilence and his innocence were remarkable and evident, without labour and reply, and needed no more argument, than the ſun needs an advocate to prove, that he is the brighteſt ſtar in the firmament.

Well, ſo it was, they crucified him; and, when they did, they did as much put out the eye of heaven, as deſtroy the Son of God: for, when with an incomparable ſweetneſs, and a patience exemplar to all ages of ſufferers, he endured affronts, examinations, ſcorns, inſolencies of rude ungentle tradeſmen, cruel whippings, injurious, unjuſt, and unreaſonable uſages from thoſe whom he obliged by all the arts of endearment and offers of the biggeſt kindneſs, at laſt he went to death, as to the work which God appointed him, that he might become the world's ſacrifice, and the great example of holineſs, and the inſtance of repreſenting by what way the world was to be made happy (even by ſufferings and ſo entering into heaven); that he might (I ſay) become the Saviour of his enemies, and the elder brother to his friends, and the Lord of Glory, and the fountain of its emanation. Then it was, that God gave new teſtimonies from heaven: the ſun was eclipſed all the while he was upon the croſs, and yet the moon was in the full; that is, he loſt his light, not becauſe any thing in nature did inveſt him, but becauſe the God of nature (as a Heathen at that very time confeſſed, who yet ſaw nothing of this ſad iniquity) did ſuffer. The rocks did rend, the veil of the temple divided of itſelf and opened the incloſures, and diſparked the ſanctuary, and made it pervious to the Gentiles eye; the dead aroſe, and appeared in Jeruſalem

ſalem to their friends, the Centurion and divers of the people ſmote their hearts, and were by theſe ſtrange indications convinced that he was the Son of God. His garments were parted, and lots caſt upon his inward coat, they gave him vinegar and gall to drink, they brake not a bone of him, but they pierced his ſide with a ſpear, looking upon him whom they had pierced; according to the prophecies of him, which were ſo clear and deſcended to minutes and circumſtances of his paſſion, that there was nothing left by which they could doubt whether this were he or no who was to come into the world: but after all this, that all might be finally verified, and no ſcruple left, after three days burial, a great ſtone being rolled to the face of the grave, and the ſtone ſealed, and a guard of ſoldiers placed about it, he aroſe from the grave, and for forty days together converſed with his followers and diſciples, and beyond all ſuſpicion was ſeen of five hundred brethren at once, which is a number too great to give their conſent and teſtimony to a lie, and, it being ſo publicly and confidently affirmed at the very time it was done, and for ever after urged by all Chriſtians, uſed as the moſt mighty demonſtration, proclaimed, preached, talked of, even upbraided to the gainſayers, affirmed by eye-witneſſes, perſuaded to the kindred and friends and the relatives and companions of all thoſe five hundred perſons who were eye-witneſſes, it is infinitely removed from a reaſonable ſuſpicion; and at the end of thoſe days was taken up into heaven in the ſight of many of them, as Elias was in the preſence of Eliſha.

Now he, of whom all theſe things are true, muſt needs be more than a mere man; and, that they were true, was affirmed by very many eye-witneſſes, men, who were innocent, plain men, men that had no bad ends to ſerve; men, that looked for no preferment by the thing in this life; men, to whom their maſter told they were to expect not crowns and ſceptres, not praiſe of men or wealthy poſſeſſions, not power and eaſe, but a voluntary caſting away care and attendance upon ſecular affairs, that they might attend their miniſtry; poverty and priſons, trouble and vexation, perſecution and labour, whippings and baniſhment, bonds and death; and for a reward they muſt ſtay till a good day came, but that was not to be at all in this world; and, when the day of reſtitution and recompenſe ſhould come, they ſhould never know till it came, but upon the hope of this and the faith of Jeſus, and the word of God ſo taught, ſo conſigned, they muſt rely wholly and for ever.

Now

Now let it be conſidered, how could matters of fact be proved better? and how could this be any thing, but ſuch as to rely upon matters of fact? what greater certainty can we have of any thing that was ever done which we ſaw not, or heard not, but by the report of wiſe and honeſt perſons? eſpecially, ſince they were ſuch whoſe life and breeding was ſo far from ambition and pompouſneſs, that, as they could not naturally and reaſonably hope for any great number of proſelytes, ſo the fame that could be hoped for amongſt them, as it muſt be a matter of their own procuring, and conſequently uncertain, ſo it muſt needs be very inconſiderable, not fit to outweigh the danger and the loſs, nor yet at all valuable by them whoſe education and pretences were againſt it? Theſe we have plentifully. But if theſe men are numerous and united, it is more. Then we have more; for ſo many did affirm theſe things which they ſaw and heard, that thouſands of people were convinced of the truth of them: but then, if theſe men offer their oath, it is yet more, but yet not ſo much as we have, for they ſealed thoſe things with their blood; they gave their life for a teſtimony; and what reward can any man expect, if he gives his life for a lie? who ſhall make him recompenſe, or what can tempt him to do it knowingly? but, after all, it is to be remembered, that as God hates lying, ſo he hates incredulity; as we muſt not believe a lie, ſo neither ſtop up our eyes and ears againſt truth; and what we do every minute of our lives in matters of little and of great concernment, if we refuſe to do in our religion, which yet is to be conducted as other human affairs are, by human inſtruments and arguments of perſuaſion, proper to the nature of the thing, it is an obſtinacy, that is as contrary to human reaſon, as it is to divine faith.

Theſe things relate to the perſon of the holy Jeſus, and prove ſufficiently that it was extraordinary, that it was divine, that God was with him, that his power wrought in him; and therefore that it was his will which Jeſus taught, and God ſigned. But then if nothing of all this had been, yet even the doctrine itſelf proves itſelf divine and to come from God.

Conſiderations reſpecting the doctrine of Jeſus Chriſt.

II. FOR it is a doctrine perfective of human nature, that teaches us to love God and to love one another, to hurt no man, and to do good to every man; it propines to us the nobleſt, the higheſt, and the braveſt pleaſures of the world; the

the joys of charity, the reſt of innocence, the peace of quiet ſpirits, the wealth of beneficence, and forbids us only to be beaſts and to be devils; it allows all that God and nature intended, and only reſtrains the excreſcencies of nature, and forbids us to take pleaſure in that which is the only entertainment of devils, in murders and revenges, malice and ſpiteful words and actions; it permits corporal pleaſures, where they can beſt miniſter to health and ſocieties, to conſervation of families and honour of communities; it teaches men to keep their words, that themſelves may be ſecured in all their juſt intereſts, and to do good to others, that good may be done to them; it forbids biting one another, that we may not be devoured by one another; and commands obedience to ſuperiors, that we may not be ruined in confuſion; it combines governments, and confirms all good laws, and makes peace, and oppoſes and prevents wars where they are not juſt, and where they are not neceſſary. It is a religion that is life and ſpirit, not conſiſting in ceremonies and external amuſements, but in the ſervices of the heart, and the real fruit of lips and hands, that is, of good words and good deeds; it bids us to do that to God which is agreeable to his excellencies, that is, worſhip him with the beſt thing we have, and make all things elſe miniſter to it; it bids us do that to our neighbour, by which he may be better: it is the perfection of the natural law, and agreeable to our natural neceſſities, and promotes our natural ends and deſigns: it does not deſtroy reaſon, but inſtructs it in very many things, and complies with it in all; it hath in it both heat and light, and is not more effectual than it is beauteous: it promiſes every thing that we can deſire, and yet promiſes nothing but what it does effect; it proclaims war againſt all vices, and generally does command every virtue; it teaches us with eaſe to mortify thoſe affections which reaſon durſt ſcarce reprove, becauſe ſhe hath not ſtrength enough to conquer; and it does create in us thoſe virtues which reaſon of herſelf never knew, and after they are known, could never approve ſufficiently: it is a doctrine, in which nothing is ſuperfluous or burdenſome; nor yet is there any thing wanting, which can procure happineſs to mankind, or by which God can be glorified: and, if wiſdom, and mercy, and juſtice, and ſimplicity, and holineſs, and purity, and meekneſs, and contentedneſs, and charity, be images of God and rays of divinity, then that doctrine, in which all theſe ſhine ſo glorioufly, and in which nothing elſe is ingredient, muſt needs be from God; and

that

that all this is true in the doctrine of Jeſus needs no other probation, but the reading the words.

For, that the words of Jeſus are contained in the goſpels, that is, in the writings of them who were eye-witneſſes and ear-witneſſes of the actions and ſermons of Jeſus, is not at all to be doubted; for in every ſect we believe their own records of doctrine and inſtitution: for it is madneſs to ſuppoſe the Chriſtians to pretend to be ſervants of the laws of Jeſus, and yet to make a law of their own which he made not: no man doubts but that the Alcoran is the law of Mahomet, that the Old Teſtament contains the religion of the Jews; and the authority of theſe books is proved by all the arguments of the religion, for all the arguments perſuading to the religion are intended to prove no other, than is contained in thoſe books; and, theſe having been for fifteen hundred years and more, received abſolutely by all Chriſtian aſſemblies, if any man ſhall offer to make a queſtion of their authority, he muſt declare his reaſons, for the diſciples of the religion have ſufficient preſumption, ſecurity and poſſeſſion, till they can be reaſonably diſturbed; but, that now they can never be, is infinitely certain, becauſe we have a long, immemorial, univerſal tradition that theſe books were written in thoſe times, by thoſe men whoſe names they bear, they were accepted by all churches at the very firſt notice, except ſome few of the later, which were firſt received by ſome churches, and then conſented to by all; they were acknowledged by the ſame, and by the next age for genuine, their authority publiſhed, their words cited, appeals made to them in all queſtions of religion, becauſe it was known and confeſſed that they wrote nothing but that they knew, ſo that they were not deceived; and to ſay, they would lie, muſt be made to appear by ſomething extrinſical to this inquiry, and was never ſo much as plauſibly pretended by any adverſaries, and it being a matter of another man's will, muſt be declared by actions, or not at all.

But, beſides, the men, that wrote them, were to be believed, becauſe they did miracles, they wrote prophecies, which are verified by the event, perſons were cured at their ſepulchres, a thing ſo famous that it was confeſſed even by the enemies of the religion: and, after all, that which the world ought to rely upon, is the wiſdom and the providence, and the goodneſs of God; all which it concerned to take care that the religion, which himſelf ſo adorned and proved by miracles and mighty ſigns, ſhould not be loſt, nor any falſe writings be obtruded inſtead of true, leſt, without our fault, the will of God become impoſſible to be obeyed.

But

But to return to the thing: all thoſe excellent things, which ſingly did make famous ſo many ſects of philoſophers, and remarked ſo many princes of their ſects, all them united, and many more, which their eyes, ὄμμαΐα νυκτερίδων, dark and dim, could not ſee, are heaped together in this ſyſtem of wiſdom and holineſs. Here, are plain precepts full of deepeſt myſtery; here, are the meaſures of holineſs and approaches to God deſcribed; obedience and conformity, mortification of the body, and elevations of the ſpirit, abſtractions from earth, and arts of ſociety, and union with heaven, degrees of excellencies, and tendencies to perfection, imitations of God, and converſations with him; theſe are the heights and deſcents. upon the plain grounds of natural reaſon, and natural religion; for there is nothing commanded but what our reaſon by nature ought to chooſe, and yet nothing of natural reaſon taught but what is heightened and made more perfect by the Spirit of God; and, when there is any thing in the religion, that is againſt fleſh and blood, it is only when fleſh and blood is againſt us, and againſt reaſon, when fleſh and blood either would hinder us from great felicity, or bring us into great miſery: to conclude, it is ſuch a law, that nothing can hinder men to receive and entertain, but a pertinacious baſeneſs and love to vice, and none can receive it but thoſe who reſolve to be good and excellent; and, if the holy Jeſus had come into the world with leſs ſplendor of power and mighty demonſtrations, yet, even the excellency of what he taught, makes him alone fit to be the maſter of the world.

Conſiderations reſpecting the effect, and the inſtruments, of Chriſt's religion.

III. BUT then let us conſider what this excellent perſon did effect; and with what inſtruments he brought ſo great things to paſs. He was to put a period to the rites of Moſes, and the religion of the temple, of which the Jews were zealous even unto pertinacy; to reform the manners of all mankind, to confound the wiſdom of the Greeks, to break in pieces the power of the devil, to deſtroy the worſhip of all falſe gods, to pull down their oracles, and change their laws, and by principles wiſe and holy to reform the falſe diſcourſes of the world.

But ſee what was to be taught, A trinity in the unity of the Godhead, τρία ἓν καὶ ἓν τρία, that is the Chriſtian arithmetic, Three are one, and one are three, ſo Lucian in his Philopatris, or ſome other, derides the Chriſtian doctrine; ſee

ſee their philoſophy, Ex nihilo nihil fit. No: Ex nihilo omnia, all things are made of nothing; and a man-god and a god-man, the ſame perſon finite and infinite, born in time, and yet from all eternity the Son of God, but yet born of a woman, and ſhe a maid, but yet a mother; reſurrection of the dead, re-union of ſoul and body; this was part of the Chriſtian phyſicks or their natural philoſophy.

But then certainly 'their moral was eaſy and delicious.' It is ſo indeed, but not to fleſh and blood, whoſe appetites it pretends to regulate or to deſtroy, to reſtrain or elſe to mortify: "faſting and penance, and humility, loving our "enemies, reſtitution of injuries, and ſelf-denial, and tak-"ing up the croſs, and loſing all our goods, and giving "our life for Jeſus:" as the other was hard to believe, ſo this is as hard to do.

But for whom and under whoſe conduct was all this to be believed, and all this to be done, and all this to be ſuffered? Surely, for ſome glorious and mighty Prince, whoſe ſplendor as far outſhines the Roman empire, as the jewels of Cleopatra outſhined the ſwaddling clothes of the babe at Bethlehem. No, it was not ſo neither. For all this was for Jeſus, whom his followers preached; a poor babe, born in a ſtable, the ſon of a carpenter, cradled in a cratch, ſwaddled in poor clouts; it was for him whom they indeed called a God, but yet whom all the world knew, and they themſelves ſaid, was whipped at a poſt, nailed to a croſs; he fell under the malice of the Jews his countrymen, and the power of his Roman lords, a cheap and a pitiful ſacrifice, without beauty and without ſplendor.

The deſign is great, but does not yet ſeem poſſible; but therefore let us ſee what inſtruments the Holy Jeſus choſe, to effect theſe ſo mighty changes, to perſuade ſo many propoſitions, to endear ſo great ſufferings, to overcome ſo great enemies, to maſter ſo many impoſſibilities which this doctrine and this law from this Maſter were ſure to meet withal.

Here, here it is that the Divinity of the power is proclaimed. When a man goes to war, he raiſes as great an army as he can to out-number his enemy; but, when God fights, three hundred men, that lap like a dog, are ſufficient; nay, one word can diſſolve the greateſt army. He that means to effect any thing muſt have means of his own proportionable; and if they be not, he muſt fail, or derive them from the mighty. See then with what inſtruments the holy Jeſus ſets upon this great reformation of the world.

Twelve men of obſcure and poor birth, of contemptible trades and quality, without learning, without breeding; theſe men were ſent into the midſt of a knowing and wiſe world, to diſpute with the moſt famous philoſophers of Greece, to out-wit all the learning of Athens, to out-preach all the Roman orators; to introduce into a newly-ſettled empire, which would be impatient of novelties and change, ſuch a change as muſt deſtroy all their temples, or remove thence all their gods: againſt which change all the zeal of the world, and all the paſſions, and all the ſeeming pretences which they could make, muſt needs be violently oppoſed: a change, that introduced new laws, and cauſed them to reverſe the old, to change that religion under which their fathers long did proſper, and under which the Roman empire obtained ſo great a grandeur, for a religion, which in appearance was ſilly and humble, meek and peaceable, not apt indeed to do harm, but expoſing men to all the harm in the world, abating their courage, blunting their ſwords, teaching peace and unactiveneſs, and making the ſoldiers arms in a manner uſeleſs, and untying their military girdle: a religion, which contradicted their reaſons of ſtate, and erected new judicatories, and made the Roman courts to be ſilent and without cauſes; a religion, that gave countenance to the poor and pitiful (but in a time when riches were adored, and ambition eſteemed the greateſt nobleneſs, and pleaſure thought to be the chieſeſt good) it brought no peculiar bleſſing to the rich or mighty, unleſs they would become poor and humble in ſome real ſenſe or other; a religion, that would change the face of things, and would alſo pierce into the ſecrets of the ſoul, and unravel all the intrigues of hearts, and reform all evil manners, and break vile habits into gentleneſs and counſel: that ſuch a religion in ſuch a time, preached by ſuch mean perſons, ſhould triumph over the philoſophy of the world, and the arguments of the ſubtle, and the ſermons of the eloquent, and the power of princes, and the intereſt of ſtates, and the inclinations of nature, and the blindneſs of zeal, and the force of cuſtom, and the pleaſures of ſin, and the buſy arts of the devil, that is, againſt wit, and power, and money, and religion, and wilfulneſs, and fame, and empire, which are all the things in the world that can make a thing impoſſible; this, I ſay, could not be by the proper force of ſuch inſtruments; for no man can ſpan heaven with an infant's palm, nor govern wiſe empires with diagrams.

It

It were impudence to ſend a footman to command Cæſar to lay down his arms, to diſband his legions, and throw himſelf into Tyber, or keep a tavern next to Pompey's theatre; but, if a ſober man ſhall ſtand alone, unarmed, undefended, or unprovided, and ſhall tell that he will make the ſun ſtand ſtill, or remove a mountain, or reduce Xerxes's army to the ſcantling of a ſingle troop, he that believes he will and can do this, muſt believe he does it by a higher power, than he can yet perceive; and ſo it was in the preſent tranſaction. For that the holy Jeſus made inviſible powers to do him viſible honours, that his apoſtles hunted the dæmons from their tripods, their navels, their dens, their hollow pipes, their temples, and their altars; that he made the oracles ſilent, as Lucian, Porphyry, Celſus, and other Heathens confeſs; that, againſt the order of new things, which let them be never ſo profitable or good do yet ſuffer reproach, and cannot prevail unleſs they commence in a time of advantage and favour; yet, that this ſhould flouriſh like the palm by preſſure, grow glorious by oppoſition, thrive by perſecution, and was demonſtrated by objections, argues a higher cauſe than the immediate inſtrument. Now how this higher cauſe did intervene, is viſible and notorious: the apoſtles were not learned, but the holy Jeſus promiſed that he would ſend down wiſdom from above, from the father of ſpirits; they had no power, but they ſhould be inveſted with power from on high; they were ignorant and timorous, but he would make them learned and confident, and ſo he did: he promiſed that in a few days he would ſend the Holy Ghoſt upon them, and he did ſo; after ten days they felt and ſaw glorious immiſſion from heaven, lights of moveable fire ſitting upon their heads, and that light did illuminate their hearts, and the mighty ruſhing wind inſpired them with a power of ſpeaking divers languages, and brought to their remembrances all that Jeſus did and taught, and made them wiſe to conduct ſouls, and bold to venture, and prudent to adviſe, and powerful to do miracles, and witty to convince gainſayers, and hugely inſtructed in the ſcriptures, and gave them the ſpirit of government, and the ſpirit of prophecy.

This thing was ſo public, that at the firſt notice of it three thouſand ſouls were converted on that very day, at the very time when it was done; for it was certainly a viſible demonſtration of an inviſible power, that ignorant perſons, who were never taught, ſhould in an inſtant ſpeak all the languages of the Roman empire; and indeed this thing was ſo neceſſary to be ſo, and ſo certain that it was ſo, ſo public and ſo evi-

dent, and ſo reaſonable, and ſo uſeful, that it is not eaſy to ſay whether it was the indication of a greater power, or a greater wiſdom; and now the means was proportionable enough to the biggeſt end: without learning, they could not confute the learned world; but therefore God became their teacher: without power, they could not break the devil's violence, but therefore God gave them power: without courage, they could not conteſt againſt all the violence of the Jews and Gentiles; but therefore God was their ſtrength, and gave them fortitude: without great caution and providence, they could not avoid the traps of crafty perſecutors; but therefore God gave them caution, and made them provident, and, as Beſeleel and Aholiab received the ſpirit of God, the ſpirit of underſtanding to enable them to work excellently in the Tabernacle, ſo had the apoſtles to make them wiſe for the work of God and the miniſtries of this diviner tabernacle, which God pitched, not man.

Immediately upon this, the apoſtles, to make a fulneſs of demonſtration and an undeniable conviction, gave the ſpirit to others alſo, to Jews and Gentiles and to the men of Samaria, and they ſpake with tongues and propheſied; then they preached to all nations, and endured all perſecutions, and cured all diſeaſes, and raiſed the dead to life, and were brought before tribunals, and confeſſed the name of Jeſus, and convinced the blaſphemous Jews out of their own prophets, and not only prevailed upon women and weak men, but even upon the braveſt and wiſeſt. All the diſciples of John the Baptiſt, the Nazarenes and Ebionites, Nicodemus and Joſeph of Arimathea, Sergius the preſident, Dionyſius an Athenian Judge, and Polycarpus, Juſtinus and Irenæus, Athenagoras and Origen, Tertullian and Clemens of Alexandria, who could not be ſuch fools as, upon a matter not certainly true but probably falſe, to unravel their former principles, and to change their liberty for a priſon, wealth for poverty, honour for diſreputation, life for death, if by ſuch exchange they had not been ſecured of truth and holineſs and the will of God.

But, above all theſe, was Saul, a bold and a witty, a zealous and learned young man, who, going with letters to perſecute the Chriſtians of Damaſcus, was by a light from heaven called from his furious march, reproved by God's angel for perſecuting the cauſe of Jeſus, was ſent to the city, baptized by a Chriſtian miniſter, inſtructed and ſent abroad; and he became the prodigy of the world, for learning and zeal, for preaching and writing, for labour and ſufferance, for government

government and wiſdom; he was admitted to ſee the holy Jeſus after the Lord was taken into heaven, he was taken up into Paradiſe, he converſed with angels, he ſaw unſpeakable rays of glory; and beſides that himſelf ſaid it, who had no reaſon to lie, who would get nothing by it here but a conjugation of troubles, and who ſhould get nothing by it hereafter if it were falſe; beſides this, I ſay, that he did all thoſe acts of zeal and obedience for the promotion of the religion, does demonſtrate he had reaſon extraordinary for ſo ſudden a change, ſo ſtrange a labour, ſo frequent and incomparable ſufferings: and therefore, as he did and ſuffered ſo much upon ſuch glorious motives, ſo he ſpared not to publiſh it to all the world, he ſpake it to kings and princes, he told it to the envious Jews; he had partners of his journey, who were witneſſes of the miraculous accident; and in his publication he urged the notoriouſneſs of the fact, as a thing not feigned, not private, but done at noon-day under the teſt of competent perſons; and it was a thing that proved itſelf, for it was effective of a preſent, a great, and a permanent change.

But now it is no new wonder, but a purſuance of the ſame conjugation of great and divine things, that the fame and religion of Jeſus was with ſo incredible a ſwiftneſs ſcattered over the face of the habitable world, from one end of the earth unto the other; it filled all Aſia immediately, it paſſed preſently to Europe, and to the furtheſt Africans; and all the way it went it told nothing but an holy and an humble ſtory, that he who came to bring it into the world, died an ignominious death, and yet this death did not take away their courage, but added much: for they could not fear death for that maſter, whom they knew to have for their ſakes ſuffered death, and came to life again. But now infinite numbers of perſons of all ſexes, and all ages, and all countries, came in to the Holy crucifix; and he that was crucified in the reign of Tiberius, was in the time of Nero, even in Rome itſelf, and in Nero's family by many perſons eſteemed for a God; and it was upon public record that he was ſo acknowledged; and this was by a Chriſtian, Juſtin Martyr, urged to the ſenate, and to the emperors themſelves, who if it had been otherwiſe could eaſily have confuted the bold allegation of the Chriſtian, who yet did die for that Jeſus who was ſo ſpeedily reputed for a God; the croſs was worn upon breaſts, printed in the air, drawn upon foreheads, carried on banners, put upon crowns imperial; and yet the Chriſtians were ſought for to puniſhments, and exquiſite puniſhments ſought forth for them; their goods were confiſcate, their

names odious, priſons were their houſes, and ſo many kinds of tortures invented for them that Domitius Ulpianus hath ſpent ſeven books in deſcribing the variety of tortures the poor Chriſtian was put to at his firſt appearing; and yet, in deſpite of all this, and ten thouſand other objections and impoſſibilities, whatſoever was for them made the religion grow, and whatſoever was againſt them made it grow; if they had peace, the religion was proſperous; if they had perſecution, it was ſtill proſperous: if princes favoured them, the world came in, becauſe the Chriſtians lived holily; if princes were incenſed, the world came in, becauſe the Chriſtians died bravely. They ſought for death with greedineſs, they deſired to be grinded in the teeth of lions; and with joy they beheld the wheels and the bended trees, the racks and the gibbets, the fires and the burning irons, which were like the chair of Elias to them, inſtruments to carry them to heaven, into the boſom of their beloved Jeſus.

Who would not acknowledge the divinity of this perſon, and the excellency of this inſtitution, that ſhould ſee infants to weary the hands of hangmen for the teſtimony of Jeſus; and wiſe men preach this doctrine for no other viſible reward, but ſhame and death, poverty and baniſhment? and hangmen converted by the blood of martyrs, ſpringing upon their faces, which their impious hands and cords have ſtrained through their fleſh? who would not have confeſſed the honour of Jeſus, when he ſhould ſee miracles done at the tombs of martyrs, and devils tremble at the mention of the name of Jeſus, and the world running to the honour of the poor Nazarene, and kings and queens kiſſing the feet of the poor ſervants of Jeſus? could a Jew fiſherman and a publican effect all this, for the ſon of a poor maiden of Judæa? can we ſuppoſe all the world, or ſo great a part of mankind, can conſent by chance, or ſuffer ſuch changes for nothing? or for any thing leſs than this? The ſon of the poor maiden was the Son of God: and the fiſhermen ſpake by a divine ſpirit; and they catched the world with holineſs and miracles, with wiſdom and power bigger than the ſtrength of all the Roman legions. And what can be added to all this, but this thing alone to prove the divinity of Jeſus? He is a God, or at leaſt is taught by God, who can foretel future contingencies; and ſo did the holy Jeſus, and ſo did his diſciples.

Our bleſſed Lord, while he was alive, foretold that after his death his religion ſhould flouriſh more than when he was alive: he foretold perſecutions to his diſciples; he foretold the miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt to be in a very few days after

after his aſcenſion, which within ten days came to paſs; he propheſied that the fact of Mary Magdalene, in anointing the head and feet of her Lord, ſhould be public and known as the goſpel itſelf, and ſpoken of in the ſame place; he foretold the deſtruction of Jeruſalem and the ſigns of its approach, and that it ſhould be by war, and particularly after the manner of prophets, ſymbolically, named the nation ſhould do it, pointing out the Roman eagles; he foretold his death, and the manner of it, and plainly before-hand publiſhed his reſurrection, and told them it ſhould be the ſign to that generation, viz. the great argument to prove him to be the Chriſt; he propheſied that there ſhould ariſe falſe Chriſts after him, and it came to paſs to the extreme great calamity of the nation; and laſtly, he foretold that his beloved diſciple St. John ſhould tarry upon the earth till his coming again, that is, to his coming to judgment upon Jeruſalem; and that his religion ſhould be preached to the Gentiles, that it ſhould be ſcattered over all the world, and be received by all nations; that it ſhould ſtay upon the face of the earth till his laſt coming to judge all the world, and that "the gates of hell ſhould not be able to prevail "againſt his Church;" which prophecy is made good thus long, till this day, and is as a continual argument to juſtify the divinity of the author: the continuance of the religion helps to continue it, for it proves that it came from God, who foretold that it ſhould continue; and therefore it muſt continue, becauſe it came from God; and therefore it came from God, becauſe it does and ſhall for ever continue according to the word of the holy Jeſus.

But, after our bleſſed Lord was entered into glory, the diſciples alſo were prophets. Agabus foretold the dearth that was to be in the Roman empire in the days of Claudius Cæſar, and that St. Paul ſhould be bound at Jeruſalem: St. Paul foretold the entering-in of Hereticks into Aſia after his departure; and he and St. Peter and St. Jude, and generally the reſt of the apoſtles, had two great predictions, which they uſed not only as a verification of the doctrine of Jeſus, but as a means to ſtrengthen the hearts of the diſciples, who were ſo broken with perſecution: the one was, that there ſhould ariſe a ſect of vile men, who ſhould be enemies to religion and government, and cauſe a great apoſtacy, which happened notoriouſly in the ſect of the Gnoſtics, which thoſe three apoſtles and St. John notoriouſly and plainly do deſcribe: and the other was, that although the Jewiſh nation did mightily oppoſe the religion, it ſhould be but for a while,

for

for they ſhould be deſtroyed in a ſhort time, and their nation made extremely miſerable; but, for the Chriſtians, if they would fly from Jeruſalem and go to Pella, there ſhould not a hair of their head periſh: the verification of this prophecy the Chriſtians extremely longed for, and wondered it ſtayed ſo long, and began to be troubled at the delay, and ſuſpected all was not well, when the great proof of their religion was not verified; and, while they were in thoughts of heart concerning it, the ſad catalyſis did come, and ſwept away eleven hundred thouſand of the nation; and from that day forward the nation was broken in pieces with intolerable calamities: they are ſcattered over the face of the earth, and are a vagabond nation, but yet, like oil in a veſſel of wine, broken into bubbles but kept in their own circles; and they ſhall never be an united people, till they are ſervants of the holy Jeſus; but ſhall remain without prieſt or temple, without altar or ſacrifice, without city or country, without the land of promiſe, or the promiſe of a bleſſing, till our Jeſus is their high Prieſt, and the Shepherd to gather them into his fold: and this very thing is a mighty demonſtration againſt the Jews by their own prophets; for when Iſaiah, and Jeremiah, and Malachi, had propheſied the rejection of the Jews and the calling of the Gentiles, and the change of the old law, and the introduction of a new by the Meſſias; that this was he, was therefore certain, becauſe he taught the world a new law, and preſently after the publication of this, the old was abrogate, and not only went into deſuetude, but into a total abolition among all the world; and for thoſe of the remnant of the ſcattered Jews who obſtinately blaſpheme, the law is become impoſſible to them, and they placed in ſuch circumſtances, that they need not diſpute concerning its obligation; for it being external and corporal, ritual and at laſt made alſo local, when the circumſtances are impoſſible, the law, that was wholly ceremonial and circumſtantial, muſt needs paſs away: and when they have loſt their prieſthood, they cannot retain the law, as no man takes care to have his beard ſhaved, when his head is off.

And it is a wonder to conſider how the anger of God is gone out upon that miſerable people, and that ſo great a blindneſs is fallen upon them; it being evident and notorious that the Old-Teſtament was nothing but a ſhadow and umbrage of the New; that the prophecies of that are plainly verified in this; that all the predictions of the Meſſias are moſt undeniably accompliſhed in the perſon of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo that they cannot with any plauſibleneſs or colour be turned

ed any other way, and be applied to any other perſon, although the Jews make illiterate allegations, and prodigious dreams, by which they have fooled themſelves for ſixteen hundred years together, and ſtill hope without reaſon, and are confident without revelation, and purſue a ſhadow while they quit the glorious body; while, in the mean time, the Chriſtian prays for his converſion, and is at reſt in the truth of Jeſus, and hath certain unexpreſſible confidences and internal lights, claraties of the Holy Spirit of God, and loves to the holy Jeſus produced in his ſoul that he will die when he cannot diſpute, and is ſatisfied and he knows not how, and is ſure by comforts, and comforted by the excellency of his belief, which ſpeaks nothing but holineſs, and light and reaſon, and peace and ſatisfactions infinite, becauſe he is ſure that all the world can be happy if they would live by the religion of Jeſus, and that neither ſocieties of men nor ſingle perſons can have felicity but by this; and that therefore God, who ſo decrees to make men happy, hath alſo decreed that it ſhall for ever be upon the face of the earth, till the earth itſelf ſhall be no more. Amen.

Conſiderations on the weak Pretences of other Religions.

IV. NOW, if againſt this vaſt heap of things any man ſhall but confront the pretences of any other religion, and ſee how they fail both of reaſon and holineſs, of wonder and divinity, how they enter by force, and are kept up by human intereſts, how ignorant and unholy, how unlearned and pitiful are their pretences; the darkneſſes of theſe muſt add great eminency to the brightneſs of that.

For the Jews religion, which came from heaven, is therefore not now to be practiſed, becauſe it did come from heaven, and was to expire into the Chriſtian, it being nothing but the image of this perfection: and the Jews needed no other argument but this, that God hath made theirs impoſſible now to be done; for he that ties to ceremonies and outward uſages, temples and altars, ſacrifices and prieſts, troubleſome and expenſive rites and figures of future ſignification, means that there ſhould be an abode and fixt dwelling, for theſe are not to be done by an ambulatory people; and therefore, ſince God hath ſcattered the people into atoms and crumbs of ſociety, without temple or prieſt, without ſacrifice or altar, without Urim or Thummim, without prophet or viſion, even communicating with them no way but by ordinary providence, it is but too evident, that God hath nothing

to

to do with them in the matter of that religion; but that it is expired, and no way obligatory to them or pleaſing to him, which is become impoſſible to be acted: whereas, the Chriſtian religion is as eternal as the ſoul of a man, and can no more ceaſe than our ſpirits can die, and can worſhip upon mountains and caves, in fields and churches, in peace and war, in ſolitude and ſociety, in perſecution and in ſun-ſhine, by night and by day, and be ſolemnized by clergy and laity in the eſſential parts of it, and is the perfection of the ſoul, and the higheſt reaſon of man, and the glorification of God.

But for the Heathen religions, it is evidently to be ſeen, that they are nothing but an abuſe of the natural inclination which all men have to worſhip a God, whom becauſe they know not, they gueſs at in the dark; for that they know there is and ought to be ſomething that hath the care and providence of their affairs. But the body of their religion is nothing but little arts of governments, and ſtratagems of princes, and devices to ſecure the government of new uſurpers, or to make obedience to the laws ſure, by being ſacred, and to make the yoke that was not natural, pleaſant by ſomething that is. But yet, for the whole body of it, who ſees not, that their worſhippings could not be ſacred, becauſe they were done by ſomething that is impure? They appeaſed their gods with adulteries and impure mixtures, by ſuch things which Cato was aſhamed to ſee, by gluttonous eatings of fleſh, and impious drinkings, and they did litare in humano ſanguine, they ſacrificed men and women and children to their dæmons, as is notorious in the rites of Bacchus Omeſta amongſt the Greeks, and of Jupiter, to whom a Greek and a Greekeſs, a Galatian and a Galateſs, were yearly offered; in the anſwers of the oracles to Calchas, as appears in Homer and Virgil. Who ſees not, that crimes were warranted by the example of their immortal gods; and that what did diſhonour themſelves, they ſang to the honour of their gods, whom they affirmed to be paſſionate and proud, jealous and revengeful, amorous and luſtful, fearful and impatient, drunken and ſleepy, weary and wounded? that the religions were made laſting by policy and force, by ignorance, and the force of cuſtom; by the preferring an inveterate error, and loving of a quiet and proſperous evil; by the arguments of pleaſure, and the correſpondencies of ſenſuality; by the fraud of oracles, and the patronage of vices; and becauſe they feared every change as an earthquake, as ſuppoſing overturnings of their old error to be the everſion of their well-

eſtabliſhed

eſtabliſhed governments? And it had been ordinarily impoſſible that ever Chriſtianity ſhould have entered, if the nature and excellency of it had not been ſuch as to enter like rain into a fleece of wool, or the ſun into a window, without noiſe or violence, without emotion and diſordering the political conſtitution, without cauſing trouble to any man but what his own ignorance or peeviſhneſs was pleaſed to ſpin out of his own bowels; but did eſtabliſh governments, ſecure obedience, made the laws firm, and the perſons of princes to be ſacred; it did not oppoſe force by force, nor ſtrike princes for juſtice; it defended itſelf againſt enemies by patience, and overcame them by kindneſs; it was the great inſtrument of God to demonſtrate his power in our weakneſſes, and to do good to mankind by the imitation of his excellent goodneſs.

Laſtly, he that conſiders concerning the religion and perſon of Mahomet; that he was a vicious perſon, luſtful and tyrannical; that he propounded incredible and ridiculous propoſitions to his diſciples; that it entered by the ſword, by blood and violence, by murder and robbery; that it propounds ſenſual rewards, and allures to compliance by bribing our baſeſt luſts; that it conſerves itſelf by the ſame means it entered; that it is unlearned and fooliſh, againſt reaſon, and the diſcourſes of all wiſe men; that it did no miracles, and made falſe prophecies; in ſhort, that in the perſon that founded it, in the article it perſuades, in the manner of prevailing, in the reward it offers, it is unholy and fooliſh and rude: it muſt needs appear to be void of all pretence; and that no man of reaſon can ever be fairly perſuaded by arguments, that it is the daughter of God, and came down from heaven.

CONCLUSION.

SINCE therefore there is ſo nothing to be ſaid for any other religion, and ſo very much for Chriſtianity, every one of whoſe pretences can be proved, as well as the things themſelves do require, and as all the world expects ſuch things ſhould be proved; it follows, that the holy Jeſus is the Son of God; that his religion is commanded by God, and is that way by which he will be worſhipped and honoured; and that "there is no other name under heaven "by which we can be ſaved, but only the name of the "Lord Jeſus."

Ductor Dubitantium.

53. BISHOP

53. Bishop Watson.

To the Sceptics and Infidels of the age.

Gentlemen,

SUPPOSE the mighty work accompliſhed, the croſs trampled upon, Chriſtianity every where proſcribed, and the religion of nature once more become the religion of Europe; what advantage will you have derived to your country, or to yourſelves, from the exchange? I know your anſwer—you will have freed the world from the hypocriſy of prieſts, and the tyranny of ſuperſtition.—No; you forget that Lycurgus, and Numa, and Odin, and Mango-Copac, and all the great legiſlators of ancient or modern ſtory, have been of opinion, that the affairs of civil ſociety could not well be conducted without ſome religion; you muſt of neceſſity introduce a prieſthood, with, probably, as much hypocriſy; a religion, with, aſſuredly, more ſuperſtition, than that which you now reprobate with ſuch indecent and ill-grounded contempt. But I will tell you, from what you will have freed the world; you will have freed it from its abhorrence of vice, and from every powerful incentive to virtue; you will, with the religion, have brought back the depraved morality, of Paganiſm; you will have robbed mankind of their firm aſſurance of another life; and thereby you will have deſpoiled them of their patience, of their humility, of their charity, of their chaſtity, of all thoſe mild and ſilent virtues, which (however deſpicable they may appear in your eyes) are the only ones, which meliorate and ſublime our nature; which Paganiſm never knew, which ſpring from Chriſtianity alone, which do or might conſtitute our comfort in this life, and without the poſſeſſion of which, another life, if after all there ſhould happen to be one, muſt be more vicious and more miſerable than this is, unleſs a miracle be exerted in the alteration of our diſpoſition.

Perhaps you will contend, that the univerſal light of reaſon, that the truth and fitneſs of things, are of themſelves, ſufficient to exalt the nature, and regulate the manners of mankind. Shall we never have done with this groundleſs commendation of natural law? Look into the firſt chapter of Paul's epiſtle to the Romans, and you will ſee the extent of its influence over the Gentiles of thoſe days; or if you diſlike Paul's authority, and the manners of antiquity; look into the more admired accounts of modern voyagers; and examine its influence over the Pagans of our own times, over the ſenſual inhabitants of Ottaheitè, over the cannibals of New Zeland,

Zeland, or the remorſeleſs ſavages of America. But theſe men are Barbarians.—Your law of nature, notwithſtanding, extends even to them:—but they have miſuſed their reaſon; —they have then the more need of, and would be the more thankful for that revelation, which you, with an ignorant and faſtidious ſelf ſufficiency deem uſeleſs.—But, they might of themſelves, if they thought fit, become wiſe and virtuous. —I anſwer with Cicero, Ut nihil intereſt, utrum nemo valeat, an nemo valere poſſit; ſic non intelligo quid interſit, utrum nemo ſit ſapiens, an nemo eſſe poſſit.

Theſe however, you will think, are extraordinary inſtances; and that we ought not from theſe, to take our meaſure of the excellency of the law of nature; but rather from the civilized ſtates of China and Japan, or from the nations which flouriſhed in learning and in arts, before Chriſtianity was heard of in the world. You mean to ſay, that by the law of nature, which you are deſirous of ſubſtituting in the room of the goſpel, you do not underſtand thoſe rules of conduct, which an individual, abſtracted from the community, and deprived of the inſtitution of mankind, could excogitate for himſelf; but ſuch a ſyſtem of precepts, as the moſt enlightened men of the moſt enlightened ages, have recommended to our obſervance. Where do you find this ſyſtem? We cannot meet with it in the works of Stobæus, or the Scythian Anacharſis; nor in thoſe of Plato, or of Cicero, nor in thoſe of the emperor Antoninus, or the ſlave Epictetus; for we are perſuaded, that the moſt animated conſiderations of the πρεπον, and the honeſtum, of the beauty of virtue, and the fitneſs of things, are not able to furniſh, even a Brutus himſelf, with permanent principles of action; much leſs are they able, to purify the polluted receſſes of a vitiated heart, to curb the irregularities of appetite, or reſtrain the impetuoſity of paſſion in common men. If you order us to examine the works of Grotius, or Puffendorf, of Burlamaqui, or Hutchinſon, for what you underſtand by the law of nature; we apprehend that you are in a great error, in taking your notions of natural law, as diſcoverable by natural reaſon, from the elegant ſyſtems of it, which have been drawn up by Chriſtian Philoſophers; ſince they have all laid their foundations, either tacitly or expreſſly, upon a principle derived from revelation. A thorough knowledge of the being and attributes of God: and even thoſe amongſt yourſelves, who, rejecting Chriſtianity ſtill continue Theiſts, are indebted to revelation (whether you are either aware of, or diſpoſed to acknowledge the debt,

debt, or not) for thoſe ſublime ſpeculations concerning the deity, which you have fondly attributed to the excellency of your own unaſſiſted reaſon. If you would know the real ſtrength of natural reaſon, and how far it can proceed in the inveſtigation or inforcement of moral duties; you muſt conſult the manners and the writings of thoſe, who have never heard of either the Jewiſh or the Chriſtian diſpenſation, or of thoſe other manifeſtations of himſelf, which God vouchſafed to Adam and to the patriarchs, before and after the flood. It would be difficult perhaps any where, to find a people entirely deſtitute of traditionary notices concerning a deity, and of traditionary fears or expectations of another life; and the morals of mankind may have, perhaps, been no where quite ſo abandoned, as they would have been, had they been left wholly to themſelves in theſe points: however it may be lamented, that though the generality of mankind have always had ſome faint conceptions of God, and his providence; yet they have been always greatly inefficacious in the production of good morality, and highly derogatory to his nature, amongſt all the people of the earth, except the Jews and Chriſtians; and ſome may perhaps be deſirous of excepting the Mahometans, who derive all that is good in their Koran from Chriſtianity.

The laws concerning juſtice, and the reparation of damages, concerning the ſecurity of property, and the performance of contracts; concerning, in ſhort, whatever affects the well being of civil ſociety, have been every where underſtood with ſufficient preciſion; and if you chooſe to ſtile Juſtinian's code, a code of natural law, though you will err againſt propriety of ſpeech, yet you are ſo far in the right, that natural reaſon diſcovered, and the depravity of human nature compelled human kind, to eſtabliſh by proper ſanctions the laws therein contained; and you will have moreover Carneades, no mean philoſopher, on your ſide; who knew of no law of nature, different from that which men had inſtituted for their common utility; and which was various according to the manners of men in different climates, and changeable with a change of times in the ſame. And in truth, in all countries where Paganiſm has been the eſtabliſhed religion, though a philoſopher may now and then have ſtepped beyond the paltry preſcript of civil juriſprudence, in his purſuit of virtue; yet the bulk of mankind have ever been contented with that ſcanty pittance of morality, which enabled them to eſcape the laſh of civil puniſhment: I call it a ſcanty pittance; be-

cauſe

cauſe a man may be intemperate, iniquitous, impious, a thouſand ways a profligate and a villain, and yet elude the cognizance, and avoid the puniſhment of civil laws.

I am ſenſible, you will be ready to ſay, what is all this to the purpoſe? though the bulk of mankind may never be able to inveſtigate the laws of natural religion, nor diſpoſed to reverence their ſanctions when inveſtigated by others, nor ſolicitous about any other ſtandard of moral rectitude, than civil legiſlation; yet the inconveniences which may attend the extirpation of Chriſtianity, can be no proof of its truth. — I have not produced them, as a proof of its truth; but they are a ſtrong and concluſive proof, if not of its truth, at leaſt of its utility; and the conſideration of its utility, may be a motive to yourſelves for examining, whether it may not chance to be true; and it ought to be a reaſon with every good citizen, and with every man of ſound judgment, to keep his opinions to himſelf, if from any particular circumſtances in his ſtudies or in his education, he ſhould have the misfortune to think that it is not true. If you can diſcover to the riſing generation, a better religion than the Chriſtian, one that will more effectually animate their hopes, and ſubdue their paſſions, make them better men, or better members of ſociety, we importune you to publiſh it for their advantage; but till you can do that, we beg of you, not to give the reins to their paſſions, by inſtilling into their unſuſpicious minds your pernicious prejudices: even now, men ſcruple not, by their lawleſs luſt, to ruin the repoſe of private families, and to fix a ſtain of infamy on the nobleſt: even now, they heſitate not, in lifting up a murderous arm againſt the life of their friend, or againſt their own, as often as the fever of intemperance ſtimulates their reſentment, or the ſatiety of an uſeleſs life excites their deſpondency: even now, whilſt we are perſuaded of a reſurrection from the dead, and of a judgment to come, we find it difficult enough to reſiſt the ſolicitations of ſenſe, and to eſcape unſpotted from the licentious manners of the world: But what will become of our virtue, what of the conſequent peace and happineſs of ſociety, if you perſuade us, that there are no ſuch things? in two words, — you may ruin yourſelves by your attempt, and you will certainly ruin your country by your ſucceſs.

But the conſideration of the inutility of your deſign, is not the only one, which ſhould induce you to abandon it; the argument a tuto ought to be warily managed, or it may tend to the ſilencing our oppoſition to any ſyſtem of ſuperſtition, which has had the good fortune to be ſanctified by public

public authority; it is, indeed, liable to no objection in the preſent caſe; we do not, however, wholly rely upon its cogency. It is not contended, that Chriſtianity is to be received, merely becauſe it is uſeful: but becauſe it is true. This you deny, and think your objections well grounded; we conceive them originating in your vanity, your immorality, or your miſapprehenſion. There are many worthleſs doctrines, many ſuperſtitious obſervances, which the fraud or folly of mankind have every where annexed to Chriſtianity, (eſpecially in the church of Rome,) as eſſential parts of it; if you take theſe ſorry appendages to Chriſtianity, for Chriſtianity itſelf, as preached by Chriſt, and by the apoſtles; if you confound the Roman, with the Chriſtian religion, you quite miſapprehend its nature; and are in a ſtate ſimilar to that of men, (mentioned by Plutarch, in his treatiſe of ſuperſtition); who flying from ſuperſtition, leapt over religion, and ſunk into downright atheiſm.—Chriſtianity is not a religion very palatable to a vuluptuous age; it will not conform its precepts to the ſtandard of faſhion; it will not leſſen the deformity of vice by lenient appellations; but calls keeping, whoredom; intrigue, adultery; and duelling, murder; it will not pander the luſt, it will not licence the intemperance of mankind; it is a troubleſome monitor to a man of pleaſure; and your way of life may have made you quarrel with your religion.—As to your vanity, as a cauſe of your infidelity, ſuffer me to produce the ſentiments of M. Bayle upon that head; if the deſcription does not ſuit your character, you will not be offended at it; and if you are offended with its freedom, it will do you good. ‘ This inclines me to believe, that libertines, ‘ like Des-Barreaux, are not greatly perſuaded of the truth ‘ of what they ſay. They have made no deep examination; ‘ they have learned ſome few objections, which they are ‘ perpetually making a noiſe with; they ſpeak from a prin- ‘ ciple of oſtentation, and give themſelves the lie in the ‘ time of danger.—Vanity has a greater ſhare in their diſ- ‘ putes, than conſcience; they imagine, that the ſingula- ‘ rity and boldneſs of the opinions which they maintain, ‘ will give them the reputation of men of parts:—by de- ‘ grees, they get a habit of holding impious diſcourſes; and ‘ if their vanity be accompanied by a voluptuous life, their ‘ progreſs in that road is the ſwifter.’

The main ſtreſs of your objections, reſts not upon the inſufficiency of the external evidence to the truth of Chriſtianity; for few of you, though you may become the future ornaments

ments of the ſenate, or of the bar, have ever employed an hour in its examination; but it reſts upon the difficulty of the doctrines, contained in the New Teſtament: they exceed, you ſay, your comprehenſion; and you felicitate yourſelves, that you are not yet arrived at the true ſtandard of orthodox faith,—credo quia impoſſibile. You think, it would be taking a ſuperfluous trouble, to enquire into the nature of the external proofs, by which Chriſtianity is eſtabliſhed; ſince, in your opinion, the book itſelf carries with it its own refutation. A gentleman as acute, probably, as any of you; and who once believed, perhaps, as little as any of you, has drawn a quite different concluſion from the peruſal of the New Teſtament; his book (however exceptionable it may be thought in ſome particular parts) exhibits, not only a diſtinguiſhed triumph of reaſon over prejudice, of Chriſtianity over deiſm; but it exhibits, what is infinitely more rare, the character of a man, who has had courage and candour enough to acknowledge it.

But what if there ſhould be ſome incomprehenſible doctrines in the Chriſtian religion; ſome circumſtances, which in their cauſes, or their conſequences, ſurpaſs the reach of human reaſon; are they to be rejected upon that account? You are, or would be thought, men of reading, and knowledge, and enlarged underſtandings; weigh the matter fairly; and conſider whether revealed religion be not, in this reſpect, juſt upon the ſame footing, with every other object of your contemplation. Even in mathematics, the ſcience of demonſtration itſelf, though you get over its firſt principles, and learn to digeſt the idea of a point without parts, a line without breadth, and a ſurface without thickneſs; yet you will find yourſelves at a loſs to comprehend the perpetual approximation of lines, which can never meet; the doctrine of incommenſurables, and of an infinity of infinites, each infinitely greater, or infinitely leſs, not only than any finite quantity, but than each other. In phyſics, you cannot comprehend the primary cauſe of any thing; not of the light, by which you ſee; nor of the elaſticity of the air, by which you hear; nor of the fire, by which you are warmed. In phyſiology, you cannot tell, what firſt gave motion to the heart; nor what continues it; nor why its motion is leſs voluntary, than that of the lungs; nor why you are able to move your arm, to the right or left, by a ſimple volition: you cannot explain the cauſe of animal heat; nor comprehend the principle, by which your body was at firſt formed, nor by which it is ſuſtained, nor by which it will be reduced to earth. In natural religion, you cannot comprehend the

eternity or omnipreſence of the deity; nor eaſily underſtand, how his preſcience can be conſiſtent with your freedom, or his immutability with his government of moral agents; nor why he did not make all his creatures equally perfect; nor why he did not create them ſooner: In ſhort, you cannot look into any branch of knowledge, but you will meet with ſubjects above your comprehenſion. The fall and the redemption of human kind, are not more incomprehenſible, than the creation and the conſervation of the univerſe; the infinite author of the works of providence, and of nature, is equally inſcrutable, equally paſt our finding out in them both. And it is ſomewhat remarkable, that the deepeſt inquirers into nature, have ever thought with moſt reverence, and ſpoken with moſt diffidence, concerning thoſe things, which in revealed religion, may ſeem hard to be underſtood; they have ever avoided that ſelf-ſufficiency of knowledge, which ſprings from ignorance, produces indifference, and ends in infidelity. Admirable to this purpoſe, is the reflection of the greateſt mathematician of the preſent age, when he is combating an opinion of Newton's, by an hypotheſis of his own, ſtill leſs defenſible than that which he oppoſes: — Tous les jours que je vois de ces eſprits-forts, qui critiquent les verites de notre religion, et s'en mocquent meme avec la plus impertinente ſuffiſance, je pence, chetifs mortel! combien et combien des choſes ſur leſquels vous raiſonnez ſi legerement, ſont elles plus ſublimes, et plus elevés, que celles ſur leſquelles le grand Newton s'egare ſi groſſierement.

Plato mentions a ſet of men, who were very ignorant, and thought themſelves ſupremely wiſe; and who rejected the argument for the being of a God, derived from the harmony and order of the univerſe, as old and trite; there have been men, it ſeems, in all ages, who in affecting ſingularity, have overlooked truth: an argument, however, is not the worſe for being old; and ſurely it would have been a more juſt mode of reaſoning, if you had examined the external evidence for the truth of Chriſtianity, weighed the old arguments from miracles, and from prophecies, before you had rejected the whole account from the difficulties you met with in it. You would laugh at an Indian, who in peeping into a hiſtory of England, and meeting with the mention of the Thames being frozen, or of a ſhower of hail, or of ſnow, ſhould throw the book aſide, as unworthy of his further notice, from his want of ability to comprehend theſe phænomena.

In conſidering the argument from miracles, you will ſoon be convinced, that it is poſſible for God to work miracles; and

and you will be convinced, that it is as poſſible for human teſtimony, to eſtabliſh the truth of miraculous, as of phyſical or hiſtorical events; but before you can be convinced that the miracles in queſtion, are ſupported by ſuch teſtimony as deſerves to be credited, you muſt inquire at what period, and by what perſons, the books of the Old and New Teſtament were compoſed; if you reject the account, without making this examination, you reject it from prejudice, not from reaſon.

There is, however, a ſhort method of examining this argument, which may, perhaps, make as great an impreſſion on your minds, as any other. Three men of diſtinguiſhed abilities, roſe up at different times, and attacked Chriſtianity with every objection which their malice could ſuggeſt, or their learning could deviſe; but neither Celſus in the ſecond century, nor Porphyry in the third, nor the emperor Julian himſelf in the fourth century, ever queſtioned the reality of the miracles related in the goſpels. Do but you grant us what theſe men (who were more likely to know the truth of the matter, than you can be) granted to their adverſaries, and we will very readily let you make the moſt of the magic, to which, as the laſt wretched ſhift, they were forced to attribute them. We can find you men, in our days, who from the mixture of two colourleſs liquors, will produce you a third as red as blood, or of any other colour you deſire; et dicto citius, by a drop reſembling water, will reſtore the tranſparency; they will make two fluids coaleſce into a ſolid body; and from the mixture of liquors colder than ice, will inſtantly raiſe you a horrid exploſion, and a tremendous flame: theſe, and twenty other tricks they will perform, without having been ſent with our Saviour to Egypt to learn magic; nay, with a bottle or two of oil, they will compoſe the undulations of a lake; and by a little art, they will reſtore the functions of life to a man, who has been an hour or two under water, or a day or two buried in the ſnow: but in vain will theſe men, or the greateſt magician that Egypt ever ſaw, ſay to a boiſterous ſea, "Peace, be ſtill;" in vain will they ſay to a carcaſe rotting in the grave, "Come forth;" the winds and the ſea will not obey them, and the putrid carcaſe will not hear them. You need not ſuffer yourſelves to be deprived of the weight of this argument, from its having been obſerved, that the Fathers have acknowledged the ſupernatural part of Paganiſm; ſince the Fathers were in no condition to detect a cheat, which was ſupported both by the diſpoſition of the people, and the power of the civil magiſ-

trate; and they were, from that inability, forced to attribute to infernal agency what was too cunningly contrived to be detected, and contrived for too impious a purpose, to be credited as the work of God.

With respect to prophecy, you may, perhaps, have accustomed yourselves to consider it, as originating in Asiatic enthusiasm, in Chaldean mystery, or in the subtle stratagem of interested priests; and have given yourselves no more trouble concerning the predictions of sacred, than concerning the oracles of Pagan history. Or, if you have ever cast a glance upon this subject, the dissensions of learned men concerning the proper interpretation of the revelation, and other difficult prophecies, may have made you rashly conclude, that all prophecies were equally unintelligible; and more indebted for their accomplishment, to a fortunate concurrence of events, and the pliant ingenuity of the expositor, than to the inspired foresight of the prophet. In all that the prophets of the Old Testament have delivered, concerning the destruction of particular cities, and the desolation of particular kingdoms, you may see nothing but shrewd conjectures, which any one acquainted with the history of the rise and fall of empires, might certainly have made: and as you would not hold him for a prophet, who should now affirm, that London or Paris would afford to future ages, a spectacle just as melancholy, as that which we now contemplate, with a sigh, in the ruins of Agrigentum or Palmyra; so you cannot persuade yourselves to believe, that the denunciations of the prophets against the haughty cities of Tyre or Babylon, for instance, proceeded from the inspiration of the deity. There is no doubt, that by some such general kind of reasoning, many are influenced to pay no attention to an argument, which, if properly considered, carries with it the strongest conviction.

Spinoza said, That he would have broken his atheistic system to pieces, and embraced without repugnance, the ordinary faith of Christians, if he could have persuaded himself of the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead; and I question not, that there are many disbelievers, who would relinquish their deistic tenets, and receive the gospel, if they could persuade themselves, that God had ever so far interfered in the moral government of the world, as to illumine the mind of any one man with the knowledge of future events. A miracle strikes the senses of the persons who see it, a prophecy addresses itself to the understandings of those who behold its completion; and it requires, in many cases, some

ſome learning, in all ſome attention, to judge of the correſpondence of events with the predictions concerning them. No one can be convinced, that what Jeremiah and the other prophets foretold of the fate of Babylon, that it ſhould be beſieged by the Medes; that it ſhould be taken, when her mighty men were drunken, when her ſprings were dried up; and that it ſhould become a pool of water, and ſhould remain deſolate for ever; no one, I ſay, can be convinced, that all theſe, and other parts of the prophetic denunciation, have been minutely fulfilled, without ſpending ſome time in reading the accounts, which profane hiſtorians have delivered down to us concerning its being taken by Cyrus; and which modern travellers have given us of its preſent ſituation.

Porphyry was ſo perſuaded of the coincidence between the prophecies of Daniel and the events, that he was forced to affirm the prophecies were written after the things propheſied of had happened; another Porphyry has, in our days, been ſo aſtoniſhed at the correſpondence between the prophecy concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, as related by St. Matthew, and the hiſtory of that event, as recorded by Joſephus; that, rather than embrace Chriſtianity, he has ventured to aſſert (contrary to the faith of all eccleſiaſtical hiſtory, the opinion of the learned of all ages, and all the rules of good criticiſm) that St. Matthew wrote his Goſpel after Jeruſalem had been taken and deſtroyed by the Romans. You may from theſe inſtances perceive the ſtrength of the argument from prophecy; it has not been able indeed to vanquiſh the prejudices of either the antient or the modern Porphyry; but it has been able to compel them both, to be guilty of obvious falſehoods, which have nothing but impudent aſſertions to ſupport them.

Some over-zealous interpreters of ſcripture have found prophecies in ſimple narrations, extended real predictions beyond the times and circumſtances to which they naturally were applied, and perplexed their readers with a thouſand quaint alluſions and allegorical conceits; this proceeding has made unthinking men pay leſs regard to prophecy in general; there are ſome predictions however, ſuch as thoſe concerning the preſent ſtate of the Jewiſh people, and the corruption of Chriſtianity, which are now fulfilling in the world; and which, if you will take the trouble to examine them, you will find of ſuch an extraordinary nature, that you will not perhaps heſitate to refer them to God as their author; and if you once become perſuaded of the truth of any one miracle, or of the completion of any one prophecy,

you will reſolve all your difficulties (concerning the manner of God's interpoſition, in the moral government of our ſpecies, and the nature of the doctrines contained in revelation) into your own inability fully to comprehend the whole ſcheme of divine providence.

We are told however, that the ſtrangeneſs of the narration, and the difficulty of the doctrines contained in the New Teſtament, are not the only circumſtances which induce you to reject it; you have diſcovered, you think, ſo many contradictions, in the accounts which the Evangeliſts have given of the life of Chriſt, that you are compelled to conſider the whole as an ill-digeſted and improbable ſtory. You would not reaſon thus upon any other occaſion; you would not reject as fabulous the accounts given by Livy and Polybius of Hannibal and the Carthaginians, though you ſhould diſcover a difference betwixt them in ſeveral points of little importance. You cannot compare the hiſtory of the ſame events as delivered by any two hiſtorians, but you will meet with many circumſtances, which, though mentioned by one, are either wholly omitted or differently related by the other; and this obſervation is peculiarly applicable to biographical writings: But no one ever thought of diſbelieving the leading circumſtances of the lives of Vitellius or Veſpaſian, becauſe Tacitus and Suetonius did not in every thing correſpond in their accounts of theſe emperors; and if the memoirs of the life and doctrines of M. de Voltaire himſelf, were ſome twenty or thirty years after his death, to be delivered to the world by four of his moſt intimate acquaintance; I do not apprehend that we ſhould diſcredit the whole account of ſuch an extraordinary man, by reaſon of ſome ſlight inconſiſtencies and contradictions, which the avowed enemies of his name might chance to diſcover in the ſeveral narrations. Though we ſhould grant you then, that the Evangeliſts had fallen into ſome trivial contradictions, in what they have related concerning the life of Chriſt; yet you ought not to draw any other inference from our conceſſion, than that they had not plotted together, as cheats would have done, in order to give an unexceptionable conſiſtency to their fraud. We are not however diſpoſed to make you any ſuch conceſſion; we will rather ſhew you the futility of your general argument, by touching upon a few of the places, which you think are moſt liable to your cenſure.

You obſerve, that neither Luke, nor Mark, nor John have mentioned the cruelty of Herod in murdering the infants of Bethlehem; and that no account is to be found of this matter

ter in Joſephus, who wrote the life of Herod; and therefore the fact recorded by Matthew is not true.—The concurrent teſtimony of many independent writers concerning a matter of fact, unqueſtionably adds to its probability; but if nothing is to be received as true, upon the teſtimony of a ſingle author, we muſt give up ſome of the beſt writers, and diſbelieve ſome of the moſt intereſting facts of antient hiſtory.

According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there was only an interval of three months, you ſay, between the baptiſm and crucifixion of Jeſus; from which time, taking away the forty days of the temptation, there will only remain about ſix weeks for the whole period of his public miniſtry; which laſted however, according to St. John, at the leaſt above three years.—Your objection fairly ſtated ſtands thus; Matthew, Mark, and Luke, in writing the hiſtory of Jeſus Chriſt, mention the ſeveral events of his life, as following one another in continued ſucceſſion, without taking notice of the times in which they happened; but is it a juſt concluſion from their ſilence, to infer that there really were no intervals of time between the tranſactions which they ſeem to have connected? Many inſtances might be produced from the moſt admired biographers of antiquity, in which the events are related, as immediately conſequent to each other, which did not happen but at very diſtant periods: we have an obvious example of this manner of writing in St. Matthew; who connects the preaching of John the Baptiſt with the return of Joſeph from Egypt, though we are certain, that the latter event preceded the former by a great many years.

John has ſaid nothing of the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper; the other Evangeliſts have ſaid nothing of the waſhing of the diſciples' feet:—What then? are you not aſhamed to produce theſe facts, as inſtances of contradiction? if omiſſions are contradictions, look into the hiſtory of the age of Louis the fourteenth, or into the general hiſtory of M. de Voltaire, and you will meet with a great abundance of contradictions.

John, in mentioning the diſcourſe which Jeſus had with his mother and his beloved diſciple, at the time of his crucifixion, ſays, that ſhe, with Mary Magdalene, ſtood near the croſs; Matthew, on the other hand, ſays, that Mary Magdalene and the other women were there, beholding afar off: this you think a manifeſt contradiction; and ſcoffingly inquire, whether the women and the beloved diſciple, which were near the croſs, could be the ſame with thoſe, who ſtood far from the croſs?—It is difficult not to tranſgreſs the bounds of moderation and good manners, in anſwering ſuch ſophiſtry;

ſophiſtry; what! have you to learn, that though the Evangeliſts ſpeak of the crucifixion, as of one event, it was not accompliſhed in one inſtant, but laſted ſeveral hours? And why the women, who were at a diſtance from the croſs, might not, during its continuance, draw near the croſs; or from being near the croſs, might not move from the croſs, is more than you can explain to either us, or yourſelves. And we take from you your only refuge, by denying expreſsly, that the different Evangeliſts, in their mention of the women, ſpeak of the ſame point of time.

The Evangeliſts, you affirm, are fallen into groſs contradictions, in their accounts of the appearances, by which Jeſus manifeſted himſelf to his diſciples, after his reſurrection from the dead; for Matthew ſpeaks of two, Mark of three, Luke of two, and John of four. That contradictory propoſitions cannot be true, is readily granted; and if you will produce the place, in which Matthew ſays, that Jeſus Chriſt appeared twice, and no oftener, it will be further granted, that he is contradicted by John, in a very material part of his narration; but till you do that, you muſt excuſe me, if I cannot grant, that the Evangeliſts have contradicted each other in this point; for to common underſtandings it is pretty evident, that if Chriſt appeared four times, according to John's account, he muſt have appeared twice, according to that of Matthew and Luke, and thrice, according to that of Mark.

The different Evangeliſts are not only accuſed of contradicting each other, but Luke is ſaid to have contradicted himſelf; for in his goſpel he tells us, that Jeſus aſcended into heaven from Bethany, and in the Acts of the Apoſtles, of which he is the reputed author, he informs us, that Jeſus aſcended from Mount Olivet.—Your objection proceeds either from your ignorance of geography, or your ill will to Chriſtianity; and upon either ſuppoſition, deſerves our contempt: be pleaſed, however, to remember for the future, that Bethany was not only the name of a town, but of a diſtrict of Mount Olivet adjoining to the town.

From this ſpecimen of the contradictions, aſcribed to the hiſtorians of the life of Chriſt, you may judge for yourſelves, what little reaſon there is to reject Chriſtianity upon their account; and how ſadly you will be impoſed upon (in a matter of more conſequence to you than any other) if you take every thing for a contradiction, which the uncandid adverſaries of Chriſtianity think proper to call one.

Before I put an end to this addreſs, I cannot help taking notice of an argument, by which ſome philoſophers have of late

late endeavoured to overturn the whole ſyſtem of revelation: and it is the more neceſſary to give an anſwer to their objection, as it is become a common ſubject of philoſophical converſation, eſpecially amongſt thoſe, who have viſited the continent. The objection tends to invalidate, as is ſuppoſed, the authority of Moſes; by ſhewing, that the earth is much older, than it can be proved to be from his account of the creation, and the ſcripture chronology. We contend, that ſix thouſand years have not yet elapſed, ſince the creation; and theſe philoſophers contend, that they have indubitable proof of the earth's being at the leaſt fourteen thouſand years old; and they complain, that Moſes hangs as a dead weight upon them, and blunts all their zeal for inquiry.

The Canonico Recupero, who, it ſeems, is engaged in writing the hiſtory of mount Etna, has diſcovered a ſtratum of lava, which flowed from that mountain, according to his opinion, in the time of the ſecond Punic war, or about two thouſand years ago; this ſtratum is not yet covered with ſoil, ſufficient for the production of either corn or vines; it requires then, ſays the Canon, two thouſand years, at leaſt, to convert a ſtratum of lava into a fertile field. In ſinking a pit near Jaci, in the neighbourhood of Etna, they have diſcovered evident marks of ſeven diſtinct lavas, one under the other; the ſurfaces of which are parallel, and moſt of them covered with a thick bed of rich earth; now, the eruption, which formed the loweſt of theſe lavas (if we may be allowed to reaſon, ſays the Canon, from analogy,) flowed from the mountain at leaſt fourteen thouſand years ago.—It might be briefly anſwered to this objection, by denying, that there is any thing in the hiſtory of Moſes repugnant to this opinion concerning the great antiquity of the earth; for though the riſe and progreſs of arts and ſciences, and the ſmall multiplication of the human ſpecies, render it almoſt to a demonſtration probable, that man has not exiſted longer upon the ſurface of this earth, than according to the Moſaic account; yet, that the earth was then created out of nothing, when man was placed upon it, is not, according to the ſentiments of ſome philoſophers, to be proved from the original text of ſacred ſcripture; we might, I ſay, reply, with theſe philoſophers, to this formidable objection of the Canon, by granting it in its fulleſt extent; we are under no neceſſity, however, of adopting their opinion, in order to ſhew the weakneſs of the Canon's reaſoning. For in the firſt place, the Canon has not ſatisfactorily eſtabliſhed his main fact, that the lava in queſtion, is the identical lava, which Diodorus Siculus mentions

tions to have flowed from Etna, in the second Carthaginian war; and in the second place, it may be observed, that the time necessary for converting the lavas into fertile fields, must be very different, according to the different consistencies of the lavas, and their different situations, with respect to elevation or depression; to their being exposed to winds, rains, and to other circumstances; just as the time, in which the heaps of iron slag (which resembles lava) are covered with verdure, is different at different furnaces, according to the nature of the slag, and situation of the furnace; and something of this kind is deducible from the account of the Canon himself; since the crevices of this famous stratum are really full of rich, good soil, and have pretty large trees growing in them.

But if all this should be thought not sufficient to remove the objection, I will produce the Canon an analogy, in opposition to his analogy, and which is grounded on more certain facts. Etna and Vesuvius resemble each other, in the causes which produce their eruptions, and in the nature of their lavas, and in the time necessary to mellow them into soil fit for vegetation; or if there be any slight difference in this respect, it is probably not greater than what subsists between different lavas of the same mountain. This being admitted, which no philosopher will deny, the Canon's analogy will prove just nothing at all, if we can produce an instance of seven different lavas (with interjacent strata of vegetable earth) which have flowed from mount Vesuvius, within the space, not of fourteen thousand, but of somewhat less than seventeen hundred years; for then, according to our analogy, a stratum of lava may be covered with vegetable soil, in about two hundred and fifty years, instead of requiring two thousand for the purpose. The eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed Herculaneum and Pompeii, is rendered still more famous by the death of Pliny, recorded by his nephew, in his letter to Tacitus; this event happened in the year 79; it is not yet then quite seventeen hundred years, since Herculaneum was swallowed up: but we are informed by unquestionable authority, that 'the matter which covers the ancient 'town of Herculaneum, is not the produce of one eruption 'only; for there are evident marks, that the matter of six 'eruptions has taken its course over that which lies immediately above the town, and was the cause of its destruction. 'These strata are either of lava or burnt matter, with veins 'of good soil betwixt them.'—I will not add another word upon this subject; except that the bishop of the diocese, was not much out in his advice to Canonico Recupero—to take care,

care, not to make his mountain older than Moſes; though it would have been full as well, to have ſhut his mouth with a reaſon, as to have ſtopped it with the dread of an eccleſiaſtical cenſure.

You perceive, with what eaſe a little attention will remove a great difficulty; but had we been able to ſay nothing, in explanation of this phænomenon, we ſhould not have acted a very rational part, in making our ignorance the foundation of our infidelity, or ſuffering a minute philoſopher to rob us of our religion.

Your objections to revelation, may be numerous; you may find fault with the account, which Moſes has given of the creation and the fall; you may not be able to get water enough for an univerſal deluge; nor room enough in the ark of Noah, for all the different kinds of aërial and terreſtrial animals; you may be diſſatisfied with the command for ſacrificing of Iſaac, for plundering the Egyptians, and for extirpating the Canaanites; you may find fault with the Jewiſh œconomy, for its ceremonies, its ſacrifices, and its multiplicity of prieſts; you may object to the imprecations in the Pſalms, and think the immoralities of David, a fit ſubject for dramatic ridicule; you may look upon the partial promulgation of Chriſtianity, as an inſuperable objection to its truth; and waywardly reject the goodneſs of God toward yourſelves, becauſe you do not comprehend, how you have deſerved it more than others; you may know nothing of the entrance of ſin and death into the world, by one man's tranſgreſſion; nor be able to comprehend the doctrine of the croſs and of redemption by Jeſus Chriſt; in ſhort, if your mind is ſo diſpoſed, you may find food for your ſcepticiſm in every page of the Bible, as well as in every appearance of nature; and it is not in the power of any perſon, but yourſelves, to clear up your doubts; you muſt read, and you muſt think for yourſelves; and you muſt do both with temper, with candour, and with care. Infidelity is a rank weed; it is nurtured by our vices, and cannot be plucked up as eaſily as it may be planted: your difficulties, with reſpect to revelation, may have firſt ariſen, from your own reflection on the religious indifference of thoſe, whom from your earlieſt infancy, you have been accuſtomed to revere and imitate; domeſtic irreligion may have made you willing hearers of libertine converſation; and the uniform prejudices of the world, may have finiſhed the buſineſs at a very early age; and left you to wander through life without a principle to direct your conduct, and to die without hope. We are far from wiſhing you

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to truſt the word of the clergy for the truth of your religion; we beg of you to examine it to the bottom, to try it, to prove it, and not to hold it faſt unleſs you find it good. Till you are diſpoſed to undertake this taſk, it becomes you to conſider with great ſerioufneſs and attention, whether it can be for your intereſt to eſteem a few witty ſarcaſms, or metaphyſical ſubtleties, or ignorant miſrepreſentations, or unwarranted aſſertions, as unanſwerable arguments againſt revelation; and a very ſlight reflection will convince you, that it will certainly be for your reputation, to employ the flippancy of your rhetoric, and the poignancy of your ridicule, upon any ſubject, rather than upon the ſubject of religion.

I take my leave with recommending to your notice, the advice which Mr. Locke gave to a young man, who was deſirous of becoming acquainted with the doctrines of the Chriſtian religion. 'Study the holy ſcripture, eſpecially the 'New Teſtament: Therein are contained the words of eter-'nal life. It has God for its author; Salvation for its end; 'and Truth without any mixture of error for its matter.'

I am, &c.

Apology for Chriſtianity.

54. Rev. George Horne, D. D.

Anſwers to a variety of objections made by unbelievers to the Holy Scriptures.

LETTER I.

SINCE the appearance of the unbelieving fraternity among us, in theſe latter days, they have been celebrated for many extraordinary qualities; but their characteriſtic virtue, I think, has been modeſty. A remarkable inſtance of this virtue has manifeſted itſelf in their conduct reſpecting the publication of a certain edifying pamphlet, entitled 'Doubts 'of the infidels; or queries relative to ſcriptual incon-'ſiſtencies and contradictions—Submitted to the conſideration 'of the bench of biſhops—By a weak Chriſtian.' It ſtole abroad in ſo humble and reſerved a manner, without the name of printer, or vender, that it was a long time before I heard there was ſuch a pamphlet in being. Informed, however, by a friend, that there certainly was ſuch a thing, and that he had actually ſeen it, I made application to ſeveral booksellers of note in town; but they declared, they knew nothing of the matter. As I am one of thoſe who love to learn what is ſtirring, I was not to be eaſily put by; and there-

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fore reſted not, till I had made myſelf maſter of a copy. Happy in my prize, with my hand upon my pocket, I betook myſelf immediately home, and, having provided the impleiment neceſſary for the purpoſe, began to open the leaves.

In the proceſs of this operation, the firſt words that caught my eye were the following in p. v. of the epiſtle dedicatory to my lords the biſhops—' Inner chambers of the ' holy Inquiſition—Whips, cords, pullies, ſcrews, wheels, ' iron crows, and red hot pincers.' Having no predilection for good things of this particular kind, I reſumed my work, determining not to peep any more, till I came to the top of p. 20. where my attention was again forcibly arreſted by the expreſſions—' Ripping women with child, daſhing infants to ' pieces againſt the rocks, and broiling men to death with ' ſlow fires.'

I now laid down the pamphlet, and conſidered with myſelf, what had happened lately among us, to occaſion this lamentable yelping. Sometimes I thought the archbiſhop of York, in the courſe of his laſt viſitation, muſt have wedged ſome northern hereſiarch under the ſcrew, and with one turn of the machine, to the great diverſion of the company, cracked all the bones in his ſkin, like the claws of a lobſter. At other times I concluded (though no mention had been made of it in the Morning Chronicle) that his grace of Canterbury had invited the biſhops to dine with him upon a roaſted infidel, whipped to death by his chaplains. That one of theſe events had taken place, there ſeemed to be little doubt, tho' it was impoſſible to ſay which.

I finiſhed, however, my taſk of leaf opening, and began to read regularly; when I found that a deed had been done ſtill more atrocious and petrifying than either of the above; for that, by an act of parliament procured by theſe ſame bloody-minded prelates of ours, the infidels are now obliged, on a Sunday evening, to blaſpheme in private!

This is a falling off, to which my memory furniſhes me with nothing ſimilar, unleſs it be the ſtory of a man, much given to the uſe of the long-bow, who aſſerted, one morning, to his family, that he had juſt ſeen forty couple of dogs running through the yard. It being denied that ſo many were kept in the country, 'Nay,' cried he, 'I am ſure there were ' twenty.' The audience ſtill continuing ſceptical, ' Why, ' then,' ſaid he, with perfect gravity, ' it was our little brown ' cur!'

For ſuch ' cruel, barbarous, and inhuman uſage,' theſe gentlemen are determined, it ſeems, to have their revenge upon

upon the church, and really think themſelves able, at this time of day, to write revelation out of the world, in a twelve-penny pamphlet!—Take this whole buſineſs together, and it is enough to make the weeping philoſopher laugh.

In the thirty ſections of their pamphlet, they have produced a liſt of difficulties to be met with in reading the Old and New Teſtament. Had I been aware of their deſign, I could have enriched the collection with many more, at leaſt as good, if not a little better. But they have compiled, I dare ſay, what they deemed the beſt, and in their own opinion preſented us with the eſſence of infidelity in a thumb phial, the very fumes of which, on drawing the cork, are to ſtrike the bench of biſhops dead at once.

Let not the unlearned Chriſtian be alarmed, 'as though 'ſome ſtrange thing had happened to him,' and modern philoſophy had diſcovered arguments to demoliſh religion, never heard of before. The old ornaments of deiſm have been 'broken off,' upon the occaſion, 'and caſt into the fire, and 'there came out this calf.' Theſe ſame difficulties have been again and again urged and diſcuſſed in public; again and again weighed and conſidered by learned and ſenſible men, of the laity as well as of the clergy, who have by no means been induced by them to renounce their faith.

Indeed, why ſhould they? For is any man ſurpriſed, that difficulties ſhould occur in the books of ſcripture, thoſe more eſpecially of the Old Teſtament? Let him reflect upon the variety of matter on which they treat; the diſtance of the times to which they refer; the wide difference of ancient manners and cuſtoms from thoſe of the age in which we live; the very imperfect knowledge we have of theſe, as well as of the language in which they are deſcribed; the conciſeneſs of the narratives, ſufficient for the purpoſe intended, but not for gratifying a reſtleſs curioſity; above all, the errors and defects of tranſlations.

Many and painful are the reſearches ſometimes neceſſary to be made, for ſettling points of this kind. Pertneſs and ignorance may aſk a queſtion in three lines, which it will coſt learning and ingenuity thirty pages to anſwer. When this is done, the ſame queſtion ſhall be triumphantly aſked again, the next year, as if nothing had ever been written upon the ſubject. And as people in general, for one reaſon or another, like ſhort objections better than long anſwers, in this mode of diſputation (if it can be ſtyled ſuch) the odds muſt ever be againſt us; and we muſt be content with thoſe for our friends who have honeſty and erudition, candour and patience, to ſtudy both ſides of the queſtion—Be it ſo. In

In the mean time, if we are called upon ſeriouſly for ſatisfaction on any point, it is our duty to give the beſt in our power. But our adverſaries will permit us to obſerve, that the way they are pleaſed to take (the way, I mean, of doubts and difficulties) is the longeſt way about; and I much fear they will never find it the ſhorteſt way home. For if they really have determined with themſelves, not to become Chriſtians, till every difficulty that may be ſtarted concerning the revealed diſpenſations of God, or any part of them, be fully cleared up, I will fairly tell them, that, I apprehend, they muſt die deiſts. I will likewiſe farther tell them, that if they ſhould reſolve not to believe in the exiſtence of God, till every objection can be ſolved, relative to the works of creation, and the courſe of his providence, I verily believe they muſt die atheiſts. At leaſt, I will not undertake their converſion, in either caſe. For in the firſt place, whether the ſolution be ſatisfactory to themſelves, none but themſelves can be the judges; and their prejudices will not ſuffer them to judge fairly. In the ſecond place, if they produce an hundred objections, and we can ſolve ninety nine of them, that which remains unſolved will be deemed a plea ſufficient to juſtify their continuing in incredulity. In the third place, it is impoſſible in the nature of things, that we ſhould be equal to the ſolution of every difficulty, unleſs we were well acquainted with many points of which it has pleaſed God to keep us in ignorance, till the laſt day ſhall open and unfold them. Nay, in ſome inſtances, it is impoſſible, unleſs we could ſee and know, as God himſelf ſees and knows.

But it is an axiom in ſcience, that difficulties are of no weight againſt demonſtrations. The exiſtence of God once proved, we are not, in reaſon, to ſet that proof aſide, becauſe we cannot at preſent account for all his proceedings. The divine legation of Moſes, and that of Jeſus Chriſt, ſtand upon their proper evidence, which cannot be ſuperſeded and nullified by any pretended or real difficulties occurring in the Jewiſh and Chriſtian diſpenſations. If we can ſolve the difficulties, ſo much the better; but if we cannot, the evidence is exactly where it was. Upon that evidence is our faith founded, and not upon the ability of any man, or ſet of men, to explain particular portions of ſcripture, and to anſwer the objections which may be made to them. Otherwiſe, our faith, inſtead of reſting on the power of God, would reſt on the weakneſs of man, and might be ſubverted every day. Now the evidence that may be produced for the divine miſſions of Moſes and of Jeſus Chriſt, is ſuch as never was produced in favour

favour of any others laying claim to divine miſſions, ſince the world began; and it is ſuch as no perſon can reject, without being obliged to believe a ſeries of abſurdities and impoſſibilities, that, in any other caſe, would choke the faith of the greateſt bigot in Chriſtendom: which is bringing the matter as near to demonſtration as a matter of this kind is capable of being brought, or as any reaſonable being would deſire it to be brought.

This much being premiſed, to prevent miſtakes, I ſhall proceed in the next letter to the conſideration of the firſt ſection, the ſubject of which is that of miracles.

LETTER II.

THE ſubſtance of this ſection, thrown into an argumentative form, ſtands thus—'Miracles are not wrought now; 'therefore they never were wrought at all.'

One would wonder how the premiſes and the concluſion could be brought together. No man would in earneſt aſſert the neceſſity of miracles being repeated, for the confirmation of a revelation, to every new generation, and to each individual of which it is compoſed. Certainly not. If they were once wrought, and duly entered on record, the record is evidence ever after. This reaſoning holds good, reſpecting them, as well as other facts; and to reaſon otherwiſe, would be to introduce univerſal confuſion.

It is ſaid, 'They are things in their own nature far 'removed from common belief.'

They are things which do not happen every day, to be ſure. It were abſurd, from the very nature of them, to expect that they ſhould. But what reaſon can there be for concluding, from thence, that none ever were wrought? Why ſhould it be thought a thing more incredible, that the ruler of the world ſhould interpoſe, upon proper occaſions, to controul the operations of nature, than that he ſhould direct them, in ordinary? It is not impoſſible that a teacher ſhould be ſent from God. It may be neceſſary that one ſhould be ſent. If one be ſent, he muſt bring credentials, to ſhew that he is ſo ſent; and what can thoſe credentials be, but miracles, or acts of almighty power, ſuch as God only can perform?—In the caſe of Jeſus, common ſenſe ſpake by the mouth of the Jewiſh ruler, and all the ſophiſtry in the world cannot invalidate or perplex the argument—"Maſter, thou art a teacher come from God; for no man "can do the miracles which thou doeſt, except God be with "him."

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—'They (miracles) require ſomething more than the 'uſual teſtimony of hiſtory for their ſupport.'

Why ſo? if they may be wrought, and good reaſons are aſſigned for their having been wrought upon any particular occaſion, 'the uſual teſtimony of hiſtory' is ſufficient to evince that they were wrought. But the truth is, that they have 'ſomething more than the uſual teſtimony of hiſtory;' they have much more; for no facts in the world ever were atteſted by ſuch an accumulated weight of evidence, as we can produce on behalf of the miracles recorded of Moſes and Chriſt; inſomuch that the mind of any perſon tolerably well informed concerning them, till ſteeled againſt conviction by the prejudices of infidelity, revolts at the very idea of their being accounted forgeries.

P. 3. 'When Livy ſpeaks of ſhields ſweating blood, of 'its raining hot ſtones, and the like, we juſtly reject and 'diſbelieve the improbable aſſertions.'

Doubtleſs. But what compariſon can be properly inſtituted between theſe hearſay ſtories concerning Pagan prodigies, and a ſeries of miracles, like thoſe openly and publicly wrought, for years together, in the face of the world, by Moſes and by Chriſt? The hiſtorical facts related by Livy may be true, whatever becomes of his prodigies; but, in the other caſe, the miracles are interwoven with, and indeed conſtitute, the body of the hiſtory. No ſeparation can poſſibly be made; the whole muſt be received, or the whole muſt be rejected.

P. 3. 'Neither is any credit given to the wonderful ac-'count of curing diſeaſes by the touch, ſaid to be poſſeſſed 'by Mr. Greatrix, though we find it in the Philoſophical 'Tranſactions.'

Mr. Greatrix's general method of curing diſeaſes was not, as I remember, ſimply and inſtantaneouſly by the touch, but by the operation of ſtroking the part affected, and that long continued, or frequently repeated. Sometimes, it is ſaid, this ſtroking ſucceeded, and ſometimes it failed. If (as we are informed in a note) Boyle, Wilkins, Cudworth, and other great men, atteſted the fact, that there were perſons who found themſelves relieved by this new device, undoubtedly there were ſuch perſons. But whether this relief were temporary; whether it were owing in any, or what degree, to the working of the imagination, or to a real phyſical change effected by the application of a warm hand, or any particular temperament in the conſtitution of the ſtroker—theſe are points, which the reader may find diſcuſſed in Mr. Boyle's letter to Henry

Stubbe, written upon the occaſion, in which he reproves Stubbe, as he well might, for ſuppoſing there was any thing neceſſarily and properly miraculous in the affair. Mr. Valentine Greatrix, by all accounts, was an honeſt, harmleſs, melancholy country gentleman, of the kingdom of Ireland, who after having gained great reputation by ſtroking in England, returned to paſs his latter days quietly and peaceably in his native country, and was heard of no more. He had no new doctrine to promulgate, pretended to no divine miſſion, and, I dare ſay, never thought of his cures being employed to diſcredit thoſe of his Saviour. The wonders reported to have been wrought formerly by Apollonius Tyaneus, and more lately at the tomb of Abbé Paris, have been applied to the ſame purpoſe.—But their day is over—and now all depends upon poor Mr. Valentine Greatrix!

P. 3. 'The miracles of the Old Teſtament were all per-
'formed in thoſe ages, of which we have no credible hiſtory.'

Pardon me—There cannot be a more credible hiſtory than that of Moſes; ſince it is impoſſible that he could have written, or the Iſraelites received his hiſtory, had it not been true. Would he, think you, have called them together, and told them, to their faces, they had all heard and ſeen ſuch and ſuch wonders, when every man, woman and child in the company knew they had never heard or ſeen any thing of the kind? What? Not one honeſt ſoul to cry out prieſtcraft, and impoſture! Let theſe gentlemen try their hands in this way. They have often been requeſted to do it. Let one of them aſſemble the good people of London and Weſtminſter, and tell them, that on a certain day and hour, he divided the Thames, and led them on dry ground over to Southwark; appealing to them for the truth of what he ſays. I ſhould like to ſee the event of ſuch an appeal. There are many ſuch appeals recorded of Moſes to his nation; and the book, in which theſe appeals are ſo recorded, contains the municipal law by which that nation has been governed, from the days of Moſes to the diſſolution of their polity. This is a fact, without a parallel upon earth; and let any man produce an hypotheſis to account for it, conſiſtently with the idea of Moſes being a deceiver, which will abide the teſt of common ſenſe for five minutes. If the deiſts can reaſon us out of our faith, let them do ſo: but we are not weak enough, as yet, to be ſneered, or ſcoffed out of it.

P. 3.

P. 3. ‘ What reply can be made to thoſe who affirm, ‘ that miracles have always been confined to the early and ‘ fabulous ages?’

The reply is eaſy—that miracles were performed, by Chriſt and his apoſtles, in the age of all others eſteemed the moſt polite and learned; and that the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, in thoſe days, never thought of denying the facts. It was a piece of aſſurance reſerved for theſe latter times.

—‘ That all nations have had them; but that they diſ- ‘ appeared in proportion as men became enlightened, and ‘ capable of diſcovering impoſture.’

Many nations have had them, true or falſe; the falſe diſappeared, when diſcovered to be ſo; but the true will abide for ever. The Jewiſh rulers had their ſenſes about them, as much as other people; and thoſe ſenſes ſharpened to the utmuſt, by envy and malice. Yet were they obliged to confeſs —“ This man doth many miracles.”—It may be added, that had there been no genuine miracles, there would have been no counterfeits.

Upon the whole—in this ſection, on ſo leading an article, the infidels have made no conſiderable progreſs. Rather, they can hardly be ſaid, in the nautical phraſe, to have got under way.

LETTER III.

OUR infidels ſeem inclined to deny, that Moſes was the author of the books which go under his name. To this purpoſe, they obſerve (and the obſervation is certainly a judicious one) that he could not have written the account of his own death, which occurs in the laſt chapter of Deuteronomy. There are likewiſe, as we all very well know, a few other paſſages, here and there, allowed both by Jews and Chriſtians to have been inſerted ſince his time. But theſe will never prevent us from looking upon him as the author of the Pentateuch, any more than a few interpolated paſſages in the works of Joſephus prevent us from aſcribing thoſe works to that author. The Pentateuch and the inſtitutions it preſcribes have been in being ever ſince the days of Moſes: how, when, and by whom, could they have been forged?

But they themſelves do not build much on this part of their performance; for they ſay, p. 4. ‘ Suppoſing theſe ‘ and other objections of the like nature to be removed’—which they therefore ſuppoſe may be removed—‘ the ‘ ſcripture is frequently contradictory with regard to facts.’

Perhaps not. At leaſt we muſt have ſome proof; and ſo, in their own words, vide infra.

—' And repreſents the all-wiſe Creator as angry, repent-
' ing, unjuſt, arbitrary, and'—in ſhort—' as a dæmon.'

That it repreſents him " as angry and repenting," is true; it likewiſe " repreſents him as coming down, and going up"—all in condeſcenſion to our capacities, and " after the manner " of men," as every child knows among us. Nor can we ſpeak of the deity in any other manner, if we would ſpeak intelligibly to the generality of mankind.—That the ſcripture ſhould repreſent God as ' unjuſt, arbitrary, and a dæmon,' is very bad indeed. Let us hope better things than theſe of the ſcripture, however. When the ſeveral charges are brought forward, we muſt endeavour to anſwer them. And notwithſtanding the jokes of theſe gentlemen about the pillory, one or other of us, I am afraid, will be found to deſerve it.

P. 5. ' Did God create light before the ſun?'

Moſt aſſuredly. Why not? When the orb of the ſun was formed on the fourth day, it became the appointed receptacle of light, from whence that glorious fluid was to be diſpenſed, for the benefit of the ſyſtem. Before the formation of the ſolar orb, light was ſupported in action by ſome other means, as ſeemed good to the Creator. The earth might be made to revolve by the ſame agency, and then another queſtion is anſwered; ' How could time be divided into days, before the ' creation of the ſun; ſince a day is the time between ſun riſe ' and ſun riſe?'

P. 5. ' How could God divide the light from darkneſs, ' ſince darkneſs is nothing but the mere privation of light?'

The light was divided from the darkneſs, as it is now, by the interpoſition of the earth. This is plain, becauſe it follows, " God called the light day, and the darkneſs he " called night." Day was the ſtate of the hemiſphere, on which light irradiated; and night was the ſtate of the oppoſite hemiſphere, on which reſted the ſhadow projected by the body of the earth. I ſee no abſurdity in all this. But may not the aſſertion, that ' darkneſs is only the mere privation of ' light,' be controverted? When Moſes ſays, that " darkneſs " was upon the face of the deep," he did not mean that nothing was there. Of the darkneſs in Egypt it is ſaid, that it " might be felt." And if the fire at the ſolar orb could be ſuddenly extinguiſhed, would not the whole body of the celeſtial fluid inſtantly become a torpid congealed maſs, and bind the creation in chains of adamant? At

the

the beginning, " light was formed out of darkneſs;" and therefore may not the truth be this? In ſcripture language, may not light be the celeſtial fluid, in a certain condition, and a certain degree of motion; and darkneſs the ſame fluid in a different condition, and without that degree of motion, or when ſuch motion is interrupted by the interpoſition of an opake body? A room, for example, is full of light. Cloſe the ſhutters, and that light inſtantly diſappears. But what is become of it? It is not annihilated. No: the ſubſtance, which occaſioned the ſenſation of light to the eye, is ſtill preſent, as before, but occaſions that ſenſation no longer. Let philoſophers conſider, and determine.

P. 5. ' How could the firmament be created, ſince there ' is no firmament, and the falſe notion of its exiſtence is no ' more than an imagination of the antient Grecians?'

Never again let critics, while they live, undertake to cenſure the writings of an author, before they underſtand ſomething of the language in which he wrote. The Greek verſion of the LXX has indeed given us the word στερεωμα, which has produced in our tranſlation the correſponding word firmament. But theſe terms by no means furniſh us with the true idea of the original word, which is derived from a verb ſignifying, to ſpread abroad, expand, enlarge, make thin, &c. The proper rendering then is, the expanſion. But expanſion of what? Doubtleſs, of the celeſtial fluid before mentioned, of light, air, æther, or whatever you pleaſe to call it. In ſcripture it is ſtyled the heavens.—" Who " ſtretcheth out the heavens like a curtain!—That ſtretch- " eth out the heavens as a curtain, and ſpreadeth them out " as a tent to dwell in." How far this expanſion of the heavens extends, is another queſtion. That portion of it diffuſed around the earth is well known by the name of the atmoſphere; and its force may at any time be felt by the hand, when laid on the aperture of an exhauſted receiver. Sir Iſaac Newton appears to have thought, that it might reach to the orb of Saturn, and beyond, even through all the celeſtial ſpaces. It ſeems to go out from one part of the ſyſtem, and circulate to the other, and nothing is hidden from its influence; to be in every place, and to poſſeſs powers which nothing is able to withſtand. The Royal Society, by its late worthy preſident, earneſtly requeſted Dr. Prieſtley to make enquiry after this ſame wonderful ſubſtance; ſo that, by and by, it is likely, we may hear more of it; and gentlemen may by degrees be induced to entertain a more favourable opinion of the Jewiſh legiſlator; as it

is faid of a great man, fome years ago, that having, in the decline of life, accidentally dipped into a Bible, he declared, 'he found Moſes to be a clever fellow; and if he had met 'with him a little ſooner, he did not know but he might 'have read him through.'

P. 6. 'How ſhall we explain the buſineſs of the tree of 'knowledge of good and evil, and of a tree of life?—'

As my lords the biſhops have kindly taken ſo much pains to bring the infidels into a good way of ſpending their Sunday evenings at home, I think it would not be amiſs, if they were, now and then, at ſuch times, to read a ſermon. Let me therefore recommend to them four diſcourſes, by the preſent Dean of Canterbury, on the creation of man, the garden of Eden, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge. It may appear, perhaps, that the Moſaic hiſtory is not neceſſarily ſo pregnant with abſurdities, as they are apt to ſuppoſe; but that a rational account may be given of man's primæval ſtate, as there deſcribed, and of that trial, to which he was ſubjected by his maker.

In another part of the pamphlet, p. 39. it is objected to us, 'that Adam was threatened with death on the day of 'his tranſgreſſion, but lived at leaſt 800 years afterwards.'

The execution of the ſentence, then, was reſpited, in conſideration of his repentance, agreeably to the proceedings of God with his deſcendants, both individuals and communities, in numberleſs inſtances upon record. Tranſgreſſion rendered him mortal, and his life from thenceforward was a gradual progreſs, through labour, pain, and ſorrow, towards death.

LETTER III.

P. 3. 'IS the account, of the fall of man, in the book of 'Geneſis, phyſical, or allegorical?'

I apprehend it to be an hiſtorical narrative of what really paſſed in the garden of Eden. With regard to the parties concerned, there is no diſpute concerning three of them, the Creator, the man, and the woman. But there appears a fourth, whoſe nature and character it has been thought not ſo eaſy to aſcertain. He is called the ſerpent; but is throughout repreſented as an intelligent being, and treated as ſuch. He proves himſelf alſo to be the tempter. Can we doubt, for one moment, who this being is? The ſerpent, the old ſerpent, the dragon, are the appellations beſtowed in the New Teſtament, upon the great adverſary of mankind, the

tempter,

tempter, the deceiver, the accuſer, the murderer. One queſtion remains, whether, upon the occaſion before us, he aſſumed the form of the natural ſerpent, or be only deſcribed under the name, and by imagery and expreſſions borrowed from the correſponding nature and qualities of that creature, and applied to him, by analogy? Either way, it is beyond all controverſy, with us who believe the ſcriptures, that he is the principal agent in the whole affair: he is all along intended, and addreſſed; on him was the weight and force of the tremendous ſentence to light; between his ſeed and that of the woman was the enmity to ſubſiſt; and his head was to be finally cruſhed by victorious Meſſiah. However Chriſtians may have differed in their interpretation of particular words and phraſes, this is the ſubſtance of what always has been, and always muſt be maintained among them, upon the ſubject. If all be confined to the natural ſerpent, or beaſt of the field, the account muſt then be, as Dr. Middleton contends, an apologue, or fable, with a moral couched under it. But the writers of the New Teſtament ever refer to it as true hiſtory, and invariably declare ſatan to have been the ſerpent, who "through his ſubtilty deceived Eve." The account of man's redemption is no apologue, but true hiſtory, built upon and preſuppoſing the truth and reality of his temptation and fall, effected by the wiles of his enemy; who, for that reaſon, was to be cruſhed, together with his works, by the power of the Redeemer. As to the change wrought in the natural ſerpent after the fall (a ſubject on which the infidels divert themſelves more than they will divert any body elſe) no man can deny that a change might take place; and no man can preciſely aſcertain the nature of ſuch change, unleſs he knew the form in which that ſpecies of creatures was originally made. Nor does the ſentence (ſo far as it may relate to the natural ſerpent) imply, that he ſhould chuſe duſt for his food, or that it ſhould be his only food. They who grovel in duſt, muſt ſometimes come in for a mouthful. The expreſſion intimates to us the very loweſt degree of proſtration, humiliation, and the moſt abject wretchedneſs, ſimilar to that other of the prophet, "His enemies ſhall lick the duſt."—Let gentlemen take care, that they are not of the number. The hiſtory of man's fall is no fable, and will hereafter be found no jeſt.

P. 6.—'A tree of life which God was obliged to guard 'by cherubim and a flaming ſword, leſt man ſhould eat of 'the fruit, and become immortal?'

The paſſage here alluded to has long been a ſubject of ridicule among unbelievers. It may, perhaps, ceaſe to be ſo, when

when the following particulars are duly weighed and conſidered——

1. There is no reaſon in the world for ſuppoſing the cherubim here mentioned to have been different from thoſe deſcribed at large, as exhibited in viſion to Ezekiel, figures of which were placed in the tabernacle and temple. Moſes ſays, "God placed cherubim." The people for whom he wrote were perfectly well acquainted with the nature, form, and deſign of them. The prophet, upon beholding them in viſion, declares, "I knew that they were the cherubim."

2. The words rendered in our tranſlation, "A flaming "ſword turning every way," may, and, it is apprehended, ought to be rendered, 'A devouring fire, turning, or rol-'ling upon itſelf;' as the cherubim, which Ezekiel ſaw, are ſaid to have ſtood in the midſt of a fire "catching, or in-"folding itſelf." The expreſſions are equivalent, and correſpond exactly.

3. This body of fire, generally attended by, and ſubſiſting in a cloud, is ſtyled "the glory of the Lord;" and always accompanied the appearance of the cherubim."

4. The moſt ancient expoſitions left in the world, which are the two Jewiſh Targums, paraphraſe the verſe thus; "And he thruſt out the man, and cauſed the glory of his "preſence to dwell of old, at the eaſt of the garden of Eden, "above the two cherubim."

5. If ſuch be the real import of the paſſage, and it relate only to the manifeſtation of the divine preſence, by it's well known ſymbol, above or between the cherubim, may we not fairly and reaſonably conclude, that the deſign of ſuch manifeſtation, at the eaſt of the garden of Eden, was the ſame as it was confeſſedly afterwards, in the tabernacle and temple; namely, to reveal the will of God for the conduct of his people; to accept the ſacrifices offered to him; and favourably to regard the prefigurative atonement made by "the ſprinkling "of blood, without which there was (after the fall) no re-"miſſion?" And all this was done "to keep, or preſerve, "the way to the tree of life," immortality being now the object of a new covenant, with other conditions. There were good reaſons why our firſt parent ſhould not be ſuffered, in the ſtate to which he had reduced himſelf, to "put forth "his hand, and take, and eat." The diſpenſation of Eden was at an end. Old ſacraments were aboliſhed, and new ones were to be inſtituted. In the ſpirit of repentance and faith the delinquents were to wait, 'till one happier man ſhould 'regain the bliſsful ſeat,' and "open the kingdom of "heaven

" heaven to all believers;" himself the true tree of life in the paradise of God.

To the learned and candid of all denominations these remarks are submitted. If there be any thing in them, the text in question, which has been so long the butt of infidels, and the stumbling block of believers, not only becomes cleared of its difficulties, but throws a light and a glory on the whole patriarchal dispensation.

LETTER IV.

P. 7. 'THE account of the flood is very embarrassing.'

Possibly it may—There was a great deal done in a little time; and neither these gentlemen nor myself were present to see how it was done.

Ibid. 'From whence came the water?'

From the place to which it returned, and in which it has remained (God be praised) ever since. The globe of the earth, as the scriptures inform us, is a shell, or hollow sphere, inclosing within it a body of waters, styled " the great deep," or abyss. The earth, at the creation, was covered on all sides with water, which, at the command of God, retired to this abyss beneath, from whence, at the same command, it came forth in the days of Noah; and having performed its task, was again dismissed, as before. " The fountains of the great " deep," by the divine power, were " broken up;" gravity for a time was suspended, or overcome; the waters were violently thrown upwards into the atmosphere, and descended in torrents and cataracts of rain. If we measure the circumference of the earth, and gauge its contents, we shall find water enough, I dare say, to answer every purpose mentioned in the book of Genesis. The shells, and other marine bodies, deposited in the bowels and on the tops of the highest mountains, all the world over, afford sufficient evidence, that the waters have been there. If any one can give a better account than Moses has done, when and how they came there, e'en let us have it. A learned and respectable person expresses his surprise, that the shell fish should transport themselves from the bed of the ocean, where they were much better accommodated, to so uncomfortable a situation as the summit of a barren mountain. Alas, worthy Sir, it was no party of pleasure! Whenever they took the journey, depend upon it, it was—' upon compulsion, Hal!'

P. 8. —' Neither can we easily persuade infidels, that ' the windows of heaven were opened, while they know it ' has no windows.'

They

They can know nothing of the matter, till they know the meaning of the phraſe, and its uſage in the ſcriptures, where the heavens are ſaid to be opened when it rains, and ſhut when rain is withholden, and the like. What is more common than ſuch modes of expreſſion are in all languages? Suppoſe, to deſcribe an uncommon fall of rain, I ſhould ſay 'the ſluices of heaven were opened;' would it not be the height of abſurdity to reply, that 'the ſluices of heaven 'cannot be opened, becauſe it has no ſluices?' Every body knows the expreſſion to be metaphorical. But the truth is, that the original word does not ſignify windows, according to the modern idea, but rather cleſts, fiſſures, paſſages: theſe were opened, the clouds were rent, as we ſay. The waters riſing from beneath met the rains deſcending from above, and, uniting their forces, they deluged the world.

P. 7. 'It (the flood) ceaſed not by annihilation of the 'waters, but they were evaporated by a wind.'

There was no occaſion for annihilating the waters. They returned to the place from whence they came: And as to the wind, which God cauſed to paſs over the earth, it was not intended merely to evaporate, but, like that which moved upon the chaos at the creation, to ſeparate the waters from the earth, and carry them down to their former habitation. We have no adequate idea, perhaps, of this element the air, and of what mighty things it can effect, when employed in full force by its Creator.

P. 8. 'It ſeems ſtrange, that ſo vaſt an aſſemblage of 'animals could be incloſed in an ark, or cheſt.'

—But why, cheſt? The Hebrew word is uſed only for this ark of Noah, and that in which the child Moſes was committed to the Nile; both hollow veſſels, conſtructed to float upon the waters. But there was ſomething pleaſant in the notion of the whole animal world being ſhut up in a cheſt; and the temptation was not to be reſiſted.

—'Which had but one window (which window was kept 'ſhut for more than five months) without being ſtifled for 'want of air.'

All this, the infidels ſay, 'ſeems ſtrange'—it does ſo; but it is not more ſtrange, than true. That air would be neceſſary to ſupport the life of the creatures incloſed in the ark, was as well known to him who enjoined it to be built, as it can be to them. Our concluſion therefore is, that either a proper ſupply of it was conveyed in ſome manner from without, or elſe the air within, by means natural or preternatural, was preſerved in a ſtate fit for reſpiration.

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There might be various contrivances in and about the ark, which are not mentioned in ſo conciſe a hiſtory. The general facts, of which it concerned us to be informed, are theſe two; that the world was deſtroyed by a flood; and that one family, with a number of animals ſufficient to repleniſh the earth, was preſerved in a veſſel conſtructed for that purpoſe.

It is aſked farther, how the ſmall family in the ark could give due attendance to the wants of ſo many creatures; and how the carnivorous animals were ſupplied with food proper for them?

Many more queſtions of a like kind might eaſily be aſked, if one were to ſet one's wits to work upon the ſubject. But it ſhould be conſidered, that the author who relates this tranſaction, relates it to have been carried on under the immediate direction and inſpection of God. By divine power the creatures were brought to Noah, and the fierce diſpoſitions of the wild kind over-ruled and mollified, that they might live quietly and peaceably with one another, and with thoſe of the tame ſort, for the time appointed. Otherwiſe, inſtead of aſking, how they were taken care of and fed in the ark, it ſhould firſt have been aſked, how they came into it, or ſtayed a ſingle moment in it, before the flood began?—When 'the wolf thus dwelt with the lamb, the lion might 'eat hay like the ox.'—We ſhould not recur to miracles upon every occaſion; but if the event under conſideration took place at all, it muſt, from the very nature of it, have been miraculous, and out of the common courſe, as it is ſaid to have been.' Some means of preſerving the fiſh might therefore be provided by their maker, notwithſtanding the dilemma to which the learned and reſpectable writer above-mentioned hath reduced us. 'The water at the deluge '(ſays he) was either freſh, or ſalt: now the ſea-fiſh could 'not have lived in the former, nor the river-fiſh in the lat-'ter.'—Cloſe and clever!

P. 9. It is argued in the 8th ſection, that according to the laws of reflection and refraction, eſtabliſhed in the ſyſtem of nature, the phænomenon of the rainbow muſt have been produced, as at preſent, in certain circumſtances, from the beginning of the world; and therefore could not have been firſt ſet in the cloud, as a token of God's covenant with man, after the flood.

But do the words neceſſarily imply, that the rainbow had never appeared before? Rather, perhaps, the contrary. The following paraphraſe of the paſſage is ſubmitted, as a juſt and natural

natural one. 'When, in the common courſe of things, I 'bring a cloud over the earth, under certain circumſtances, 'I do ſet my bow in it. That bow ſhall be from henceforth a 'token of the covenant I now make with you to drown the 'earth no more by a flood. Look upon it, and remember 'this covenant. As certainly as the bow is formed, by the 'operation of phyſical cauſes, in the cloud, and as long as it 'continues to be thus formed, ſo certainly and ſo long ſhall 'my covenant endure, ſtanding faſt for evermore, as this 'faithful witneſs in heaven.' Jacob, we are told, 'took a 'ſtone, and ſet it up for a pillar, and ſaid, This pillar be wit-'neſs.' God, in like manner (if we may ſo expreſs it) 'took the rainbow, and ſaid, this bow be witneſs.' Neither the ſtone nor the rainbow were new created for the purpoſe. When the Jews behold the rainbow, they bleſs God, who remembers his covenant, and is faithful to his promiſe. And the tradition of this its deſignation to proclaim comfort to mankind was ſtrong among the Heathen; for according to the mythology of the Greeks, the rainbow was the daughter of wonder, 'a ſign to mortal men,' and regarded, upon its appearance, as the meſſenger of the celeſtial deities. Can we any where find a more ſtriking inſtance of the ſublime, than in the following ſhort deſcription of it? "Look upon the "rainbow, and praiſe him who made it: very beautiful it is "in the brightneſs thereof: it compaſſeth the heaven about "with a glorious circle; and the hands of the Moſt High "have bended it!"

LETTER V.

P. 10. 'WHAT anſwer ſhall we give to thoſe who are 'inclined to deny that an all-powerful and juſt God could 'make uſe of the moſt unjuſtifiable means to attain his great 'purpoſe of aggrandizing the poſterity of Abraham?'

The anſwer, without doubt, muſt be, either that the means in queſtion (all circumſtances duly known and conſidered) were not unjuſtifiable; or, that they were uſed by man, and only permitted by God. For men often make uſe of means to attain their own purpoſes, by which they unwittingly become the inſtruments of carrying into execution the counſels of God; yet are they not hereby juſtified in the uſe of ſuch means. All the actions of holy men of old, related in ſcripture, are not to be deemed blameleſs, becauſe related in ſcripture, or becauſe related of them; though there may often have been circumſtances, imperfectly known at this diſtance

of

of time, which rendered them leſs blameable than they now appear to be; and therefore they are not to be judged of, without great caution and circumſpection. Theſe, perhaps, are in no inſtances more neceſſary, for that reaſon, to be obſerved, than in reviewing thoſe parts of ſacred ſtory, which relate to the birthright and bleſſing of the ancient patriarchs.

Ibid. 'Could this benevolent and juſt Being approve of 'the ungenerous advantage which Jacob took over his faint 'and hungry brother?'

That the crime of Eſau, in being ſo ready to part with his birthright, was of a more atrocious nature than at firſt ſight it may ſeem to have been, is evident from the remark ſubjoined in the narrative; "thus Eſau deſpiſed his birthright;" as alſo from his being ſtigmatiſed by St. Paul with an epithet denoting profaneneſs, and impiety, qualities which were therefore manifeſted in the act of lightly and wantonly parting with the birthright, and thoſe high and heavenly privileges annexed to it—I ſay, lightly and wantonly; becauſe, though he returned faint and hungry from the field, there could be no danger of his ſtarving in his father's houſe. He parted with it, as men often do now, for the ſake of gratifying a liquoriſh appetite towards that which was his brother's, 'for one morſel of meat,' one particular diſh, which he vehemently affected. There was no reaſon why a privilege thus rejected ſhould be again conferred. Like the Jews, in an inſtance ſomewhat ſimilar, he 'judged himſelf unworthy.' He caſt it from him, and it became another's—With regard to the part borne by Jacob, in buying what Eſau was thus ready to ſell, there ſeems no neceſſity for pronouncing him faultleſs. The fact is related like many others, without approbation or cenſure; and the deſigns of God were accompliſhed by the free agency of man. To his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth, reſpecting this and every other action of his life.

Ibid. 'Could this omnipotent and upright ſpirit adopt 'no method of diſtinguiſhing his favourite Jacob, but that 'of fraud and lies, by which he deprived the ſame unſuſ-'pecting brother of his father's bleſſing?'

The following conſiderations may aſſiſt in directing us to form a right judgment of this matter.

1. The propoſition of deceiving Iſaac originated not with Jacob, but with Rebekah. Jacob remonſtrated againſt it, as likely to bring a curſe upon him, rather than a bleſſing; nor would conſent to perform his part, till ſhe engaged to take all the blame on herſelf—"On me be thy curſe, my ſon; only "obey my voice."

2. From

2. From this ſpeech, and from the earneſtneſs and ſolicitude diſcovered by Rebekah, it may not unfairly be preſumed, that ſhe had ſome ſpecial reaſon for what ſhe did; that Iſaac was about to take a wrong ſtep in a concern of great moment, which ought to be prevented, and could be prevented by no other means.

3. The rectitude of Rebekah's judgment ſeems evidently to have been recognized and allowed by Iſaac, at the concluſion of the matter. For though he had bleſſed Jacob, intending to bleſs Eſau, yet, as if recollecting himſelf, he confirmed and ratified that bleſſing in the ſtrongeſt terms; "Yea, "and he ſhall be bleſſed." Still farther—at ſending him away, he again repeated the benediction, in the moſt ſolemn and affecting manner; "God give thee the bleſſing of Abra-"ham!" It is hard to aſſign any other reaſon, why, if ſo diſpoſed, upon diſcovering the fraud, he might not have reverſed the proceeding. Nay, by the kind meeting of the brothers afterwards, one ſhould be inclined to ſuppoſe, that Eſau himſelf acquieſced at length in the propriety of what had been done.

4. If ſuch were the caſe, Iſaac was only deceived into what was right, and what himſelf acknowledged to be ſo, in the concluſion. The deception was like thoſe often practiſed by phyſicians for the benefit of their patients; and caſuiſts muſt decide upon it in the ſame manner. The offence of Jacob is certainly alleviated, if not entirely taken off, by the circumſtance of Rebekah pledging herſelf to bear the blame; as the conduct of Rebekah ſeems juſtified by that of Iſaac ratifying and confirming to Jacob the bleſſing originally intended for Eſau. Upon the whole, if there were an offence, it was one that might be forgiven; and if God, notwithſtanding, continued to bleſs Jacob, he did forgive it, and had reaſons for ſo doing.

Ibid. 'In ſhort, how ſhall we juſtify God for the continual diſtinction he is ſaid to have beſtowed on a people, 'who from their own annals appear to have been unparalleled for cruelty, ingratitude, inurbanity, &c.'

The article of cruelty, for proof of which we are referred, in a note, to the acts of Joſhua, may be deferred till we come profeſſedly to conſider thoſe acts. Their ingratitude towards God their Saviour was indeed flagrant; but perhaps might be matched elſewhere. As to the charge of inurbanity, it was brought againſt them by Voltaire, who ſpake of them as 'a wretched nation, ever ignorant, and vulgar, and ſtrangers 'to the arts.' The following reply was made to him.

When

When the infidels ſhall have duly conſidered it, we ſhall hope to be favoured with their ſentiments upon it.

'Does it become you, a writer of the 18th century, to 'charge the ancient Hebrews with ignorance? A people, 'who, while your barbarous anceſtors, whilſt even the 'Greeks and Latins, wandering in the woods, could ſcarcely 'procure for themſelves cloathing and a ſettled ſubſiſtence, 'already poſſeſſed all arts of neceſſity, and ſome of mere 'pleaſure; who not only knew how to feed and rear cattle, 'till the earth, work up wood, ſtone, and metals, weave 'cloaths, dye wool, embroider ſtuffs, poliſh and engrave on 'precious ſtones, but who, even then, adding to manual arts 'thoſe of taſte and refinement, ſurveyed land, appointed 'their feſtivals according to the motions of the heavenly bo- 'dies, and ennobled their ſolemnities by the pomp of cere- 'monies, by the ſound of inſtruments, muſic, and dancing; 'who even then committed to writing the hiſtory of the ori- 'gin of the world, that of their own nation, and their an- 'ceſtors: who had poets and writers ſkilled in all the ſciences 'then known, great and brave commanders, a pure worſhip, 'juſt laws, a wiſe form of government; in ſhort, the only 'one of all ancient nations, that has left us authentic monu- 'ments of genius and of literature. Can this nation be 'juſtly charged with ignorance and inurbanity?'

LETTER VI.

P. 11. 'UNBELIEVERS affirm, that a juſt God could 'not puniſh Pharaoh for an hardneſs of heart, of which he 'himſelf (God) was evidently the cauſe.'

When we meet with an aſſertion apparently contrary to all the truth and equity in the world, it is but common juſtice to any writer, human or divine, to ſuppoſe, that we miſtake his meaning, and that the expreſſion employed to convey it is capable of an interpretation different from that which may at firſt preſent itſelf. We cannot, for a moment, imagine, that God ſecretly influences a man's will, or ſuggeſts any wicked ſtubborn reſolution to his mind, and then puniſhes him for it. We are therefore to conſider, by what other means, not incompatible with his nature and attributes, he may be ſaid, in a certain ſenſe, and without impropriety, to harden a man's heart.

There are many ways by which we may conceive this effect to be wrought, without running into the abſurdity and impiety abovementioned. The heart may be hardened by thoſe very

very reſpites, miracles, and mercies, intended to ſoften it; for if they do not ſoften it, they will harden it—God is ſometimes ſaid to do that which he permits to be done by others, in the way of judgment and puniſhment; as when his people rejected his own righteous laws, he is ſaid to have 'given them' the idolatrous ones of their Heathen neighbour, 'ſtatutes that were not good'—The heart may be hardened by his withdrawing that grace it has long reſiſted; men may be given up to a reprobate mind; as they would not ſee when they poſſeſſed the faculty of ſight, the uſe of that faculty may be taken from them, and they may be abandoned to blindneſs. But all this is judicial, and ſuppoſes previous voluntary wickedneſs, which it is deſigned to puniſh. The caſe of Pharaoh is exactly that of the Jews. God is ſaid to have "blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts." But how? as it is here repreſented? Would he do this to his own people? Was he the cauſe of their rejecting their Meſſiah; Or does he—can he—intend to ſay that he was ſo; Let us hear no more of this, for the ſake of common ſenſe and common honeſty, if ſuch things are yet left among us.

But it is aſſerted, that when the objection is urged by unbelievers, 'we (Chriſtians) uſually anſwer, that the potter has 'power over the clay, to faſhion it as he liſts;' to which the infidels in the gaiety of their hearts triumphantly reply, that 'if the clay in the hands of the potter were capable of happineſs and miſery, according to the faſhion impreſſed on it, 'the potter muſt be malevolent and cruel, who can give the 'preference to inflicting pain inſtead of happineſs.'

The ſimilitude of the potter is employed by St. Paul: but it does not ſtand exactly in his writings, as it does in the pamphlet before us. By him it is adduced in proof of one ſingle point only, that when men are become ſinners, and obſtinate ſinners, God has a right of dealing with them according to his pleaſure, and as may beſt anſwer the purpoſes of his diſpenſations, reſpecting others, as well as themſelves. The compariſon is firſt uſed by God himſelf (Jer. xviii.) and applied to the power by him exerciſed of deſtroying or preſerving an offending people, as they ſhould either continue in ſin, or repent and amend. It is applied preciſely in the ſame manner by St. Paul, (Rom. ix.) to ſhew (as appears by the verſes immediately following), that God might, without injuſtice, deal with the Jews, as he had before dealt with an hardened Pharaoh; and for the ſame reaſon; becauſe they had refuſed to hearken to his voice, as Pharaoh had done. He might reſerve them for a more ſignal deſtruction

deſtruction, which would diſplay his glory, and forward the converſion of the nations; while, at the ſame time, he ſhewed the riches of his mercy to ſuch, whether Jews or Gentiles, as embraced the goſpel; whom he owned as the ſpiritual ſeed of Abraham, and his peculiar people. Whoever will condeſcend with candour and attention to peruſe Dr. Whitby's Annotations on Rom. ix. cannot, I think, have the ſhadow of a doubt left on his mind, reſpecting either the drift of St. Paul's reaſoning, or the truth of it.

P. 12. 'We know it is our duty to believe that Aaron's 'miracle was performed by the power of God; but we are 'at a loſs to diſcover, by what power the magicians per-'formed theirs.'

It is a pleaſure to me to find theſe gentlemen ſolicitous about the performance of their duty; and therefore, let me addreſs to them a word of conſolation and encouragement. Be not ſwallowed up by over much uneaſineſs, as touching this matter. Reſt ſatisfied that whatever may be determined concerning the wonders wrought by the magicians, whether they are ſuppoſed to have been wrought in ſeality, or appearance only; by legerdemain, or the power of evil ſpirits, through the permiſſion of God, willing to make his power known in this grand conteſt — either way, the argument drawn from miracles, in ſupport of revelation, will remain in its full ſtrength. The ſuperiority of the God of Iſrael was manifeſted, and the conteſt yielded by the adverſaries, who could not protect themſelves or their friends from the maladies and plagues inflicted by omnipotence. Whatever the magicians did, or however they did it, it appeared evidently, they might as well have done nothing. Mankind can never be enſnared by pretences of this ſort, when they ſee ſuch pretences controlled and over-ruled by a ſuperior power.—You are men of too much ſenſe, I am ſure, to be found on the ſide of Jannes and Jambres, or to take a retainer from Simon Magus.

P. 13. 'Where did the magicians find water to practiſe 'their art upon, ſince Aaron had already turned it all into 'blood?'

Not all, gentlemen, by your leave. The Egyptians not being able to drink of the water of the river, "digged round "about it (as you are told) for water to drink." And, depend upon it, they found ſome, or it had been very bad with them indeed.—But the truth is, that nothing is more common among writers, both ſacred and profane, than the uſe of the word all, not in an abſolute, but a relative, or

comparative ſenſe, as implying many, ſome of all ſorts, &c. By adverting to this ſimple and obvious conſideration, you might have ſpared yourſelves the trouble of labouring in vain, through three or four pages, to be witty on the ſubject of Pharaoh's cattle being killed more than once, and ſuch like pleaſant conceits.—Theſe are poor piddling doings; but we ſhall have ſome flaſhing, by and by, to make amends.

P. 15. 'Some weak believers are in doubt, whether ſo 'mean, ſo ungenerous, and ſo diſhoneſt an act, as borrow-'ing the jewels of the Egyptians, without any intention of 'returning them, did not rather originate in that diſpoſi-'tion, which characterizes the Jews to this day, than in the 'command of the juſt God, who certainly could need no 'ſuch tricks to accompliſh his intentions.'

Much reaſon have we to wiſh, that ſome one among the unbelievers would take the pains to acquire a moderate ſtock of Hebrew, that ſo he "might have to give," upon ſuch occaſions as theſe, "to him that needeth." For that the Iſraelites, in the proper ſenſe of the Engliſh word, borrowed theſe jewels, or gave the Eygptians reaſon to expect a return of them, does by no means appear from the original, to which a man, when he is diſpoſed to play the critic upon an author, ſhould always have recourſe, if he be ſolicitous to deſerve the character of an honeſt man, and a ſcholar. The general ſignification of the word is to aſk, to require, to demand. In the three texts relative to this tranſaction, LXX, and in the two former, the vulgate, render it by a term of ſimilar import. It is ſaid, "the Iſraelites ſpoiled the Egyptians;" they took theſe jewels, veſſels, &c. and the Egyptians gave them, as the ſpoil of a conquered enemy, glad to eſcape with life, and to diſmiſs a much injured people; they took theſe ſpoils, as wages due, and with-holden, for immenſe labour undergone; as a recompence for long and cruel oppreſſion; ſome of them, probably, as inſignia of the vanquiſhed Egyptian deities, to be afterwards employed in the ſervice of the true God, whom Egypt, as well as Iſrael, ought to have acknowledged and adored; who, as the great Lord and Proprietor of all things in heaven and earth, taketh from one, and giveth to another, according to his good pleaſure, founded evermore in wiſdom, truth, and righteouſneſs; who at the beginning foretold, that the Egyptians ſhould be ſpoiled, and when the time came, directed his people ſo to ſpoil them. "God gave them favour:" the act was his, and the Iſraelites were inſtruments only in his hands.—If men are pleaſed to concern themſelves at all with the hiſtory, they muſt take the whole, as it ſtands, neither

ther blaming thoſe on whom no blame can properly fall, nor accuſing their maker of iniquity, who can be guilty of none, but at a future day, to the confuſion of all his blaſphemers, will be fully " juſtified in his ſaying, and clear when he is " judged."

One cannot but bleſs oneſelf to ſee how ready theſe writers are, at every turn, to give ſentence againſt the people of God, in favour of their enemies; as if they emulated the fame of a ſet of worthies in the fifth century, called Cainites; who, having reprobated the Saviour of the world, his prophets, and apoſtles, are ſaid to have adopted into the catalogue of their ſaints, and paid eſpecial honours to the memories of—Cain, Korah, Dathan, Eſau, the Sodomites, and Judas Iſcariot.

As to their intimation, at p. 17. that, becauſe Egypt was a country interſected by canals, there never were any horſes or chariots in it, they ought for this to take their part in the next general flogging, at Weſtminſter ſchool. During the operation, perhaps, the captain of the ſchool will be enjoined by the maſter to read aloud the following ſhort paſſage from Rollin's ancient hiſtory—' foot, horſe, and chariot-races ' were performed in Egypt with wonderful agility, and the ' world could not ſhew better horſemen than the Egyptians.'

In the next letter we ſhall proceed to the conſideration of a topic entirely new—Balaam's aſs.

LETTER VII.

THE firſt difficulty here is, ' Why God ſhould be angry ' with Balaam for going, when he had given him leave to ' go?'

To be ſure, all circumſtances continuing the ſame, it would be ſtrange—it would be paſſing ſtrange. But if circumſtances varied, the divine conduct might vary too. " Go," ſays God, but—obſerve—" the word which I ſhall ſay unto thee, " that ſhalt thou do." Balaam ſeems to have ſet out with a reſolution to obey; for like a man, and like an honeſt man, he had boldly and nobly ſaid, " If Balak would give me his " houſe-full of ſilver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word " of the Lord my God, to do leſs or more." However, it is poſſible, that upon the road, either by the perſuaſive arguments of the princes of Moab who accompanied him, or by the wicked ſuggeſtions of his own deceitful heart, an alteration had taken place in his mind, and intereſt had gained the aſcendant over duty. I ſay, this is poſſible: conſidering his

character, it is probable: but a paſſage in the hiſtory itſelf ſeems to make it certain. " I went out to withſtand thee, be- " cauſe thy way is perverſe before me." But what way? Not merely his journey, for he had leave to take it, conditionally. Way muſt neceſſarily be underſtood in its moral acceptation. Something was wrong in the courſe of his thoughts, his imaginations, in his deſign and intention, now changed from what they were at ſetting out. " The fooliſhneſs (or wicked- " neſs) of man perverteth his way." Therefore God was angry, not, as it is in our tranſlation, "'becauſe he went," but ' as he was going—while he was on the road.' Upon Balaam's humbling himſelf, and offering to return, leave of proceeding is again granted, but with a ſignificant repetition of the original proviſo—" Only the word that I ſhall ſpeak " unto thee, that thou ſhalt ſpeak."—' Go on; but remem- ' ber, to me your heart is open, your deſires are known. If ' you betray your truſt, the drawn ſword of the angel waits ' to puniſh your duplicity as it ought to be puniſhed.'—This appears to be a fair and reaſonable ſolution of the firſt difficulty.

As to the ſecond, it is obſerved, p. 17. that ' the aſs ex- ' hibited a ſpecimen of penetration and prudence, of which ' the aſſes of modern times ſeem to be diveſted.'

The obſervation brings to my mind one made upon the ſubject ſome years ago, by that father of the faithleſs, Dr. Tindal. ' What a number of ideas muſt Balaam's aſs have ' (ſays he) to be able to reaſon with her maſter, when ſhe ſaw ' and knew an angel?'—Will theſe gentlemen do me the favour to accept Dr. Waterland's anſwer?—' Now, as to the ' number of ideas which the aſs muſt have; I believe ſhe had ' as many as aſſes commonly have: and he may pleaſe to ' count them at his leiſure, for his own amuſement.'—If they have ever an anatomiſt among them, I dare ſay he could very eaſily demonſtrate, from the configuration of its organs, the impoſſibility of the creature's ſpeaking at all. And his demonſtration would be juſt as much to the purpoſe, as Tindal's queſtion. The plain truth is this—If it pleaſed God to take this particular method of ' rebuking the pro- ' phet's madneſs,' the ſevereſt philoſophy cannot queſtion his power to produce ſounds articulate and ſignificant, either with the organs of any animal, or without them. A voice proceeding from a dumb creature was made, upon this occaſion, to teach a leſſon ſimilar to that deduced, upon another, from the example of the ſame creature—" The ox " knoweth his owner, and the aſs his maſter's crib; but man

" doth

" doth not know—a prophet doth not conſider." If it be objected, that the occaſion was not worthy; that it was not dignus vindice nodus; we ſhall certainly take the liberty to think that God Almighty was a much better judge of that matter than the infidels can poſſibly be, even were they ten times wiſer than they are. The whole tranſaction, in which Balaam bore ſo conſpicuous a part, is of very great moment, and the hiſtory which relates it, full of deep inſtruction, as well as abounding in the beautiful and ſublime.

A predeceſſor of theſe gentlemen, Mr. Chubb, I remember, called the Supreme Being to a very ſevere account for his conduct reſpecting the Canaanites; and they ſeem diſpoſed to do the ſame, in a bitter, ſarcaſtical, canting ſection, p. 19, &c. the drift of which is to compare the Iſraelites in Canaan to the Spaniards in Mexico, and repreſent the former as the more deteſtable people of the two. The objection will perhaps be obviated, and its futility evinced, by propoſing the few following queries.

1. Has not the Almighty a ſovereign right over the lives and fortunes of his creatures?

2. May not the iniquity of nations become ſuch, as to juſtify him in deſtroying thoſe nations?

3. Is he not free to chuſe the inſtruments by which he will effect ſuch deſtruction?

4. Is there more injuſtice or cruelty in his effecting it by the ſword, than by famine, peſtilence, whirlwind, deluge, or earthquake?

5. When theſe latter means are employed, do not women, children, and cattle, periſh with the men?

6. Does not God take away thouſands of children every day, and perhaps more than half the ſpecies, under ten years of age?

7. Does not the circumſtance of a divine commiſſion entirely alter the ſtate of the caſe, and diſtinguiſh the Iſraelites from the Spaniards, as much as a warrant from the magiſtrate diſtinguiſhes the executioner from the murderer?

8. May not men be aſſured of God's having given them ſuch a commiſſion?

9. Were not the Iſraelites thus aſſured; and is there not at this day inconteſtable evidence upon record, that they were ſo?

This is a fair and regular diſtribution of the ſubject into its ſeveral parts. Whenever the infidels ſhall find themſelves in a humour to diſcuſs all or any of them, we muſt conſider what they may offer farther upon this topic.

P. 18. They cite the following paſſage from Judges, 1. 19. "The Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabi-"tants of the mountain: but could not drive out the inha-"bitants of the valley, becauſe they had chariots of iron." They ſubjoin—'It is difficult to conceive how the Lord of 'heaven and earth, who had ſo often changed the order, and 'ſuſpended the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, in favour of his 'people, could not ſucceed againſt the inhabitants of a 'valley, becauſe they had chariots of iron!'

At the end of this ſentence is placed only a ſingle note of admiration. There ought to have been at leaſt half a dozen; for never was any thing more truly wonderful! The 'dif-'ficulty of conceiving it is very great indeed!' So great, that one ſhould have thought, for very pity's ſake, our adverſaries would have looked about them a little, to ſee whether they underſtood the text, and whether there were no poſſible way of bringing us off. As they have not been kind enough to do it for us, we muſt e'en try what we can do for ourſelves.

We apprehend, then, in the firſt place, that when it is ſaid, "He drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but "could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley;" the antecedent is Judah, not Jehovah; becauſe Jehovah had often diſplayed much more eminent inſtances of his power; and he that effected the greater, could certainly have effected the leſs. In the ſecond place, though it pleaſed God to give ſucceſs to Judah in one inſtance, it does not neceſſarily follow, that therefore he ſhould give it in all. So that there is no more abſurdity in the paſſage, than there would be in the following ſpeech, if ſuch had been addreſſed to the ſovereign by one of his commanders returned from America—'By 'the bleſſing of God upon your Majeſty's arms, we over-'came general Greene in the field; but we could not attack 'general Waſhington, becauſe he was too ſtrongly intrenched 'in his camp.' There is no reaſon, therefore, for ſuppoſing, that 'the Jews conſidered the God of Iſrael their 'protector as a local divinity; who was in ſome inſtances 'more, and in others leſs powerful, than the gods of their 'enemies.'

Nor is it altogether 'thus that David in many places com-'pares the Lord with other Gods:' ſince he compares him with them, only to ſet him above them; as ſufficiently appears by the paſſage quoted—"The Lord is a great God, "and a great king above all gods." In the Heathen world there were "gods many, and lords many." An Iſraelite acknowledged

acknowleged one only God, the maker of heaven and earth, and of all the ſuppoſed deities that were therein. " All the " gods of the Heathen (ſo ſtiled by them) are but idols; but " it is the Lord that made the heavens."

Such, as an Iſraelite, muſt have been the ſentiments of Jephthah, as well as David; and therefore the citation from his addreſs to the king of the Ammonites will avail nothing to the purpoſe for which it is adduced—" Wilt thou not " poſſeſs that, which Chemoſh thy god giveth thee to poſ- " ſeſs? So whomſoever the Lord our God ſhall drive out " from before us, them will we poſſeſs." It cannot ſeriouſly be thought, that Jephthah, a judge in Iſrael, intended to acknowlege the real divinity of the Ammonitiſh idol, Chemoſh. No: the argument is evidently of the kind which logicians ſtyle argumentum ad hominem, an argument formed upon the principles of the adverſaries, and therefore concluſive to them.—' You deem yourſelves entitled to any ' poſſeſſion, acquired, as you imagine, by the aſſiſtance of ' him whom you call your god, and cannot reaſonably ex- ' pect us to yield that, which we know the Lord our God ' has awarded to us.' Jephthah, in a negociation with the Ammonites, had no occaſion to diſcuſs the ſubject of their idolatry, or tell them what he thought of Chemoſh; but ſtates the matter according to their own ideas, ſuppoſing them, for a moment, to be true, though he believed them to be falſe; as is done every day.

Voltaire has amuſed himſelf much with this text, and between one and another of his manifold publications, kept it up like a ſhuttle-cock. He ſtruggles hard for it—but in vain. ' The words of ſcripture (ſays he) are not, Thou thinkeſt ' thou haſt a right to poſſeſs, &c. but expreſsly, " Thou " haſt a right to poſſeſs, &c." ' for that is the true interpre- ' tation of the Hebrew words, otho thiraſch.' Ay, my little man, ſo it is, according to the Vulgate—" Tibi jure debentur." But any modern ſchoolboy would have informed thee better, and told thee, that the words, in very deed, denote neither more nor leſs than, ' Thou wilt poſſeſs it.'—Are we to give up our Bible, and pin our faith upon the ſleeve of ſuch a man as this?

After Balaam's aſs, the Canaanites, and Chemoſh, one naturally expects—and lo, ſhe is at hand—

THE WITCH OF ENDOR.

It was not unuſual among us here in England ſome years ago, for an old woman, if ſhe had the misfortune to live at the corner of a common, to be ſuſpected of witchcraft, and

toſſed

toſſed into a horſepond, to ſee whether ſhe would ſink, or ſwim. To put an end to ſuch ridiculous barbarities, as well as ſome others of a more ſerious and ſolemn kind, the legiſlature of Great Britain very wiſely ordained, by an act of 9 G. II. ch. 5. that no perſon ſhould in future be vexed, or proſecuted, under that notion; and that whoever pretended to any thing of the kind, ſhould, on conviction, be adjudged to the pillory.—Theſe gentlemen have their fears, upon this occaſion, for the authority of the Bible. I cannot ſay, for my part, that I feel any ſuch apprehenſions.

P. 23. 'The witch of Endor, and the Jewiſh law, both 'prove by divine argument (whatever that may be) the ex-'iſtence of ſuch profeſſors, though, like miracles, they have 'now ceaſed to appear.'

But the non-exiſtence of miracles at preſent is no proof that they never exiſted; for they moſt certainly once did exiſt, if evidence be evidence. The argument therefore is full in their own teeth; and there might be witches, as well as poſſeſſed perſons, formerly, though there may be none now. The Bible may yet be true, and (bleſſed be God) the parliament not infidel. They 'deplore the infidelity of that parliament.' Bold words theſe, indeed! I would not have ſaid ſuch things of any parliament, for the world—They are apprehenſive of perſecution—Let them take more care another time.

It appears by the Jewiſh law, that there were then men and women, who, in the language of our tranſlation, are ſtyled 'diviners, obſervers of times, enchanters, witches, charm-'ers, conſulters with familiar ſpirits, wizards and necro-'mancers.' Theſe practices are ſaid to be 'the abominations 'of the Heathen;' and we know they were continued, lower down, among the Greeks and Romans, whoſe philoſophers were ſometimes puzzled how to determine concerning them. With the idolatry of their neighbours, the Iſraelites frequently adopted theſe its appendages. That there was in them much of juggling and impoſture, may be true; but that all was ſo, is more than many wiſe and learned men have thought proper, upon a due conſideration of the matter, to aſſert; becauſe, that there are no evil ſpirits, or that mankind never had any communication with them, are negatives, not eaſily proved.

Reſpecting the tranſaction at Endor, the caſe, in few words, ſtands thus. Convinced by proper evidence of the authority of the book in which it is related, we of courſe believe (having, as we judge, good reaſon to believe) that the ſeveral incidents happened, as they are there ſaid to have happened.

pened. By what power or agency they were brought about, or how the buſineſs was conducted, is another queſtion, which we muſt endeavour to ſolve, if we can do it; if not, it muſt remain as it is, being confeſſedly to us, at this diſtance, of an obſcure and difficult nature.

That God ſhould permit evil ſpirits, employed by a wretched woman, to ſummon, at pleaſure, his departed ſervants from the other world, is not to be imagined. It remains therefore, either that the whole affair of Samuel's appearance was a contrivance; or that, by the interpoſition of God, there was a real appearance, which the enchantreſs did not expect, nor could have effected. The ſurpriſe and alarm occaſioned in her ſeem to point us this way, and there are two inſtances recorded in ſcripture of a proceeding ſomewhat ſimilar.

When king Balak had recourſe to ſorceries and divinations, hoping to procure ſome relief, or fair promiſes at leaſt from them, God himſelf interpoſed, and ſo over-ruled Balaam and all his divinations, that Balak could obtain no favourable anſwer from them, but quite the reverſe.

In like manner, when king Ahaziah had ſent to conſult Baalzebub, the dæmon of Ekron, to know whether he ſhould recover of the ſickneſs he then lay under, hoping, no doubt, to obtain a favourable anſwer there, as probably he might have done; God himſelf took care to anticipate the anſwer by Elijah the prophet, who aſſured the meſſengers, meeting them by the way, that their maſter Ahaziah ſhould not recover, but ſhould ſurely die.

Thus, probably, was it in the caſe of Saul: when he hoped for a kind anſwer from Samuel, and, it is likely, would have had a very favourable one from ſome pretended Samuel, God was pleaſed to diſappoint both the ſorcereſs and him, by ſending the true Samuel, with a true and faithful meſſage, quite contrary to what the woman and Saul had expected: which ſo confounded and diſordered him, that he inſtantly fell into a ſwoon, and could no longer bear up againſt the bitter agonies of his mind.

The ſenſe of the Jewiſh church, about 300 years before Chriſt, is given by the author of the book of Eccleſiaſticus, when, ſpeaking of Samuel, he ſays thus—"After his death he pro-
"pheſied, and ſhewed the king his end, and lifted up his
"voice from the earth in prophecy, to blot out the wicked-
"neſs of the people." This author plainly enough ſuppoſed, that it was Samuel himſelf who appeared in perſon, and propheſied to king Saul.*

* See Chandler on the witch of Endor in his life of David.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

WE come now to ſome obſervations on the character and conduct of David. And here, the extracts are more ſcanty, than one ſhould have expected, from Meſſrs. Bayle, Morgan, and Co. or rather from the laſt retailer of this kind of ware, the hiſtorian of the man after God's own heart.

P. 21. David is ſcoffed at for his cruelty towards the Ammonites, ſhewn by "putting them under ſaws and under harrows of iron," &c.

Whatever the words in the original may ſignify, it ſeems but reaſonable to conclude, that if David inflicted on theſe people puniſhments extraordinarily ſevere, there muſt have been an extraordinary cauſe. We read in the book of Judges, that the men of Judah "purſued after Adoni-bezek, and "caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes." Had nothing more been related, this would have appeared a ſtrange inſtance of ſavage and wanton barbarity. But what ſays the ſuffering prince himſelf?—"Threeſcore and ten "kings having their thumbs and great toes cut off, gathered "their meat under my table; as I have done, ſo God hath "requited me." The cruelties practiſed by the Ammonites upon others might be returned, by the juſt judgment of heaven, upon themſelves. There is no ground for ſuppoſing that David treated them worſe than they would have treated the Hebrews, or than priſoners of war were treated in thoſe times: and Dr. Chandler, it is apprehended, has given very good reaſons why the paſſage ſhould be rendered in the manner following.—'He brought forth the inhabitants, and put 'them to the ſaw, and to iron mines, and iron axes, and 'tranſported them to the brick-kiln,' 'or rather to the brick-'frame, and hod, to make and carry bricks;' that is, he reduced them to ſlavery, and put them to the moſt ſervile employments. See Chandler's Life of David, vol. II. p. 227. —a book, which ſhould be carefully peruſed by thoſe who are diſpoſed to favour us with any freſh diſquiſitions on the ſubject of it.—But we muſt proceed to David's ſentence on the Amalekite.

The two accounts of the manner of Saul's death, one given in the courſe of the hiſtory, at the cloſe of the firſt book of Samuel, the other by the Amalekite, at the beginning of the ſecond, are ſo different, that 'one of them (the 'infidels ſay, p. 26.) muſt be falſe.' Very well; ſuppoſe it ſo to be, and what then? Why then, they put the following reſolution of the difficulty into the mouth of their Tom-fool of a Chriſtian, as they call him. 'To this we can only anſwer,

'as

' as it becomes the faithful in all ſuch caſes of ſeeming contra-
' diction; namely, that they were both written by the pen of
' inſpiration, conſequently muſt both be true, however con-
' tradictory or abſurd they may ſeem to mere human reaſon.'
—Well ſaid, Tom!

But let me aſk theſe gentlemen, what mortal, beſides themſelves, Tom's elder brethren, ever imagined the Amalekite to have been inſpired, when he told his ſtory to David?—An idle pick-thank fellow, who ſtripped Saul of his diadem and bracelets, and ran away full ſpeed with them to David, to let him know that all was ſafe, his old enemy was fallen, and he had put him out of his pain! David ſaw through the character of the man, and, from his forward officiouſneſs in the affair, probably concluded, he had taken ſome undue advantage of Saul in his wounded ſtate, and ſlain him, on purpoſe that he might find favour with his ſucceſſor in the kingdom, by bringing him all this good news. " As the Lord liveth who
" hath redeemed my ſoul out of all adverſity (ſays he upon
" another occaſion) when one told me, ſaying, behold Saul is
" dead (thinking to have brought good tidings) I took hold
" of him, and ſlew him in Ziklag, who thought that I would
" have given a reward for his tidings."

But whether David ſuſpected it, or not, as the narrative of Saul's death given in the courſe of the hiſtory is true, the ſtory told by the Amalekite is certainly falſe in ſome particulars, which are inconſiſtent with that narrative. Nay, it is not probable, if indeed it be poſſible, that the main circumſtance of all ſhould have been true.—Saul deſires his armour-bearer to kill him, who refuſes; he falls upon his ſword; and the ſervant, ſeeing his maſter dead, does the ſame. Now, where is the interval, or opening, for the ſcene between Saul and the Amalekite to take place? Or would the armour-bearer, who refuſed to kill Saul, ſtand by, and ſuffer an Amalekite to kill him?—But though David judged this man unworthy to be his friend, he may make a very good figure in the unbelievers' catalogue of ſaints, and I would recommend him to occupy a nich in that temple.

Let us, however, for a moment, ſuppoſe, that David had judged otherwiſe; that he had rewarded him handſomely, and promoted him to honour. What would have been ſaid, then? Why, that poor Saul had eſcaped the ſword of the Philiſtines, but ' this ruffian' (ſuch is the courtly appellation beſtowed upon David) had employed an aſſaſſin to diſpatch him, during the hurry and confuſion of the retreat!—O it had been a delicious morſel, exactly ſeaſoned to the palate of infidelity!

P. 27. The infidels are much diſconcerted, it ſeems, about the book of Jaſher: it was extant previous to the writing the book of Joſhua, and was not finiſhed till after the acceſſion of David to the throne of Iſrael; ſo that, as they apprehend, either the author of Jaſher muſt have lived upwards of four hundred years, or the book of Joſhua was not written till after the time of David.

Here again, a little Hebrew would have done us no harm. It does not appear that Jaſher was the name of an individual, or that the book ſo ſtyled was all written in the ſame age by the ſame man. The tranſactions of the times were regularly entered in a public regiſter, by a perſon denominated the recorder or hiſtoriographer, a ſtated officer to the Jewiſh kings. And the book of Jaſher was the ſtandard authentic book, in which they were ſo entered by authority, and from which extracts were made, as occaſion required.

P. 29. Some difficulties are ſtarted relative to the hiſtory of David numbering the people.

In our tranſlation we read, 2 Sam. xxiv. that "the Lord "moved David to number Iſrael;" and, 1 Chron. xxi. that "Satan moved him to do it."

Nothing is more common with the ſacred writers, than to repreſent God as doing that which, in the courſe of his providence, and for the purpoſes either of mercy or judgment, he permits to be done by the inſtrumentality of ſecond cauſes, animate or inanimate, corporeal or ſpiritual. In the caſe of Ahab, 1 Kings xxii. he is repreſented, after the manner of men, and in condeſcenſion to our capacities, as a king keeping his court, with ſpirits of all kinds in waiting before him, prepared to execute his will upon earth. One of theſe ſpirits is commiſſioned to influence the falſe prophets, and they perſuade Ahab, who will not liſten to the true prophet of God —Taking the matter, therefore, as it ſtands in our Engliſh tranſlation, the import of both paſſages laid together, according to a fair explanation, would evidently be, that, for good and ſufficient reaſons known to himſelf, God permitted ſatan to tempt, and David to yield to the temptation, in this inſtance.

But if we conſult the original, we ſhall find there is no neceſſity to ſuppoſe that David was excited either by God, or by ſatan. The word ſatan, though often denoting that perſon who is emphatically ſtyled the adverſary, ſignifies only, in general, an adverſary; and therefore the paſſage 1 Chron. xxi. may very properly be rendered, 'An adverſary ſtood up 'againſt Iſrael, and excited David.' This adverſary might be

be ſome counſellor, or &c. The other paſſage, 2 Sam. xxiv. may as properly be tranſlated, 'The anger of the Lord was 'kindled againſt Iſrael, and one excited David,' 'or, David 'was excited by ſome one, (the perſon mentioned in Chro-'nicles) ſaying, 'Go, number Iſrael.'

Of the different kinds of puniſhment offered to David for his choice, upon this occaſion, one is that of a famine for ſeven years, according to 2 Sam. xxiv; but for three years only, according to 1 Chron. xxi.

It has been obſerved by ſome learned men, that the year in which this happened was the fourth year ſince a famine had commenced on another occaſion, mentioned 2 Sam. xxi. 1. This circumſtance conſidered, the queſtion, as it is worded in one place,—"Shall ſeven years of famine come "unto thee in thy land?"—is tantamount to ſaying, 'Wilt 'thou chuſe three additional years of famine,' &c. Which removes the apparent contradiction.

It may be urged, that the 'prophet delivered the meſſage 'no more than once, and therefore muſt have ſaid either 'ſeven, or three: he could not have ſaid both.'

True; but the ſacred, like other hiſtorians, often relate the ſame converſation in different terms; that is, they give the ſenſe and ſubſtance of what paſſed, varying the phraſeology. Inſtances frequently occur in both Teſtaments.

If no other ſatisfactory ſolution of the difficulty could be aſſigned, candour and common ſenſe ſurely would ſuppoſe, that the word ſeven, in 2 Sam. xxiv, was originally three, eſpecially as three is the word in the Greek verſion of the lxx.

But—'If David only ſinned, why ſhould the puniſhment 'fall upon the people?'

Such is the union between king and people, like that between the head and the body, that this happens continually in the natural order of things; and therefore, why not, judicially? What greater misfortune can befall a king, or a father, than the loſs of his ſubjects, or his children?

It is poſſible, however, that ſuch might not be altogether the caſe, in the preſent inſtance, though David, like a true patriot king and moſt affectionate father, intercedes for his people, and deſires to receive in his own perſon and family the ſtroke that was ready to deſcend on them—"I have ſinned, "and done wickedly: theſe ſheep, what have they done? "Let thine hand, I pray thee, be upon me, and upon my "father's houſe."—Notwithſtanding all this, I ſay, it ſhould ſeem, that the people were by no means without fault. For the hiſtory opens thus; "The anger of the Lord was

"kindled

" kindled againſt Iſrael, and"—as a conſequence of it—" David was excited to number Iſrael."

But of what nature, then, after all, was this act of numbering the people, and why ſhould it have been followed by a plague?

I am perſuaded that we are much in the dark upon this point. If any light can be thrown upon it, that light muſt proceed from a paſſage in the book of Exodus, ch. xxx. 12. where God ſays to Moſes, " When thou takeſt the ſum of " the children of Iſrael after their number, then ſhall they " give every man a ranſom for his ſoul unto the Lord, when " thou numbereſt them, that there be no plague among " them, when thou numbereſt them." To number the people, then, was not, as it ſhould ſeem, merely to count them out of curioſity, or vain glory. It was a religious rite, it was a muſter, a review, a viſitation, an inquiſition into their conduct, into the religious and moral ſtate in which they at that time ſtood before their God. For upon ſuch inquiſition ſomething came out, or appeared againſt them, which required an offering, by way of atonement or ranſom for their ſouls—" They ſhall give a ranſom, that there be no plague " amongſt them when thou numbereſt them;" A very obſervable expreſſion; for when David numbered them, this was the very thing that happened; there was a plague among them, in conſequence of their being numbered. They might be in ſuch a ſtate, that God would not accept them, or their offerings. It is not improbable that they ſhould be in ſuch a ſtate, if we conſider what corruptions muſt needs creep in under Saul's wicked reign, and David's long wars, during moſt of which time the country had been over-run by the Philiſtines, &c. who would propagate their idolatry, with its flagitious concomitants. In ſhort, Iſrael had provoked God; for otherwiſe, his anger would not have been kindled againſt them, as we are informed that it was; their offences called for puniſhment, and on the numbering the people, an opportunity was taken to inflict it. Joab appears to have been aware of the conſequence, as a known caſe. " Why (ſays " he) will my lord the king be a cauſe of puniſhment, treſ- " paſs, or forfeiture, to Iſrael?" As if he knew, that, upon a viſitation, they muſt be puniſhed who ſhould be found guilty; and was unwilling that the number of the king's ſubjects ſhould be leſſened. But David might think it neceſſary, and his zeal prevailed. Otherwiſe, it is extraordinary that ſuch a man as Joab ſhould ſee what David either could not, or would not ſee.

This

This account of the tranſaction was offered to the public, many years ago, by a learned writer, well ſkilled in Biblical knowledge and criticiſm. That it is entirely free from objection, or will ſolve all difficulties, is more, perhaps, than can be affirmed. But it is curious, and certainly deſerves attention.

On the whole, to adopt the words of Dr. Chandler, 'If 'they who object, credit the hiſtory of the Old Teſtament 'in this part of it, and think it is true, that one of theſe 'three plagues was offered to David, as the puniſhment of 'his offence; that he choſe the peſtilence, that it came ac-'cordingly, and was removed upon his interceſſion; they 'are as much concerned to account for the difficulties of the 'affair, as I or any other perſon can be. If they do not be-'lieve this part of the hiſtory, as the ſacred writers repreſent 'it, let them give us the account of it, as it ſtands in their 'own imagination; and tell us, whether there was any 'plague at all, how and why it came, and how it went and 'diſappeared of a ſudden.'

LETTER IX.

A FEW more doubts remain, touching the prophecies, and ſome paſſages in the New Teſtament.

P. 39. 'The great evangelical prophet could foretel the 'downfal of Babylon by Cyrus, but could not tell the name 'of the Meſſiah.'

Who enabled him to foretel the downfal of Babylon by Cyrus?—'He might take the advantage of writing that pro-'phecy after the events took place,' ſay the infidels, p. 40. But how ſo? Iſaiah ſpake of Cyrus at leaſt 100 years before his birth. Had a hiſtory of Cyrus been among the books of ſcripture, under the name of Iſaiah, they would have placed the author, for longevity, in the ſame claſs with their friend Joſher.

'Iſaiah could not tell the name of Meſſiah.'—He could have told it, had it been communicated to him, as that of Cyrus was. He has deſcribed Meſſiah in a manner not to be miſtaken. There might be very good reaſons why the name was not declared beforehand. And as God did not ſee pro-per to do it, there certainly were ſuch reaſons.

But 'if Chriſt were intended by the name Immanuel, the 'prophet was miſtaken, for he was never called by that 'name.'

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The first commentator one opens will inform one, that in ſcripture language to be called is the ſame as to be. Thus, of Meſſiah it it is ſaid, ch. ix. 6. " His name ſhall be called " wonderful, counſellor," &c. though he was never called by any of the names there enumerated; of the ſame perſon, Jer. xxiii. 6. " This is his name whereby he ſhall be called, " The Lord our Righteouſneſs;" of Jeruſalem, If. 1 26. " Thou ſhalt be called, the city of righteouſneſs."—No man ſhould preſume to criticiſe a book, if he will not be at the pains to ſtudy the phraſeology peculiar to it.

P. 40. ' If the prophecies are evident and clear, how hap-
' pened it, that the whole Jewiſh nation, together with the
' angel Gabriel, ſhould miſtake, and ſuppoſe the kingdom
' of Meſſiah to be temporal?'

The angel Gabriel was certainly under no miſtake upon this point, becauſe of Chriſt he ſays expreſsly, Luk 1. 33. " He ſhall reign for ever, and of his kingdom there ſhall be " no end." And as to the caſe of the Jews, it is treated of at large in a diſcourſe under that title, by the author before mentioned at p. 173. to which theſe gentlemen are referred.

P. 40. ' Could not thoſe inſpired writers, who propheſied
' concerning things of no conſequence, as the thirty pieces
' of ſilver, and the caſting lots for Chriſt's garments, have
' predicted with equal certainty the more important circum-
' ſtance of his death and reſurrection?'

The death and reſurrection of Chriſt are predicted in the ſtrongeſt terms, Pſ. xxii. cx. Iſai. liii. And what can add more weight to this kind of evidence, than the prediction of particulars ſo minute and circumſtantial as thoſe of the thirty pieces, and the diviſion of the garments by lot? One would think, at the contemplation of them, all infidelity would ſtop its mouth, inſtead of opening it.

P. 41. ' In ſhort, they beg to be ſhewn a ſingle prophecy,
' concerning which divines are agreed.'

What Tully ſaid of philoſophers may be true perhaps of divines, conſidering the multitude of them that have lived from the days of the Apoſtles to the preſent times; namely, that there never was an opinion, however abſurd, which has not been maintained by ſome one or other. And therefore, to reject the evidence of prophecy, till all divines ſhall agree exactly about it, argues a conduct as wiſe in the infidels, as if they ſhould decline ſitting down to a good dinner, till all the clocks in London and Weſtminſter ſtruck four together.

P. 41. ' They

P. 41. 'They desire to know, why the revelation of St. 'John should be more obscure and ænigmatical than any 'which was written during the typical and shadowy dispen- 'sation of Moses?'

Much valuable instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion may be gathered from the Revelation, in the most clear and perspicuous manner; witness the Moral Reflections on that book, by Pere Quesnelle. Of the predictions in the former part of it many have been explained to general satisfaction; and others may be so explained hereafter, as by the studies and labours of different persons the symbolical language of scripture becomes better understood, and the events predicted are brought forward in their order. If sufficient reasons may be assigned why prophecy should be in some degree obscure for a time, they will hold with regard to those of the New, as well as those of the Old Testament.—Let gentlemen bestow due attention on the evidences of Christianity so often set before them. When they shall thereby be happily induced to believe, it will be time enough to argue with them on such points as the obscurity of St. John's Revelation, and the doctrine of the Trinity, which is scoffed at in a very unbecoming manner, p. 32.

Thus much for prophecy. We proceed to some objections against particular passages in the New Testament.

Of these the first respects the difference between the genealogy of our Lord Christ, as given by St. Matthew, and that given by St. Luke. On this subject let it be observed,

1. That genealogies in general, and those of the Jews in particular, with their method of deriving them, and the confusion often arising from the circumstance of the same person being called by different names, or different persons by the same name, are in their nature, and must be to us, at this distance of time, matters of very complicated consideration, and it is no wonder they should be attended with difficulties and perplexities.

2. The evangelists, in an affair of so much importance, and so open then to detection, had there been any thing wrong to be detected, would most assuredly be careful to give Christ's pedigree as it was found in the authentic tables, which, according to the custom of the nation, were preserved in the family, as is evident from Josephus, who says, 'I give you 'this succession of our family, as I find it written in the 'public tables.'

3. As it was well known the Meſſiah muſt deſcend from David, the genealogical tables of that family would be kept with more than ordinary diligence and preciſion.

4. Whatever cavils the modern Jews and others make now againſt the genealogies recorded by the evangeliſts, the Jews their cotemporaries never offered to find fault with, or to invalidate the accounts given in the goſpels. As they wanted neither opportunity, materials, ſkill, nor malice, to have done it, and it would have afforded them ſo great an advantage againſt the Chriſtians, this circumſtance alone, as Dr. South well remarks, were we not now able to clear the point, ought with every ſober and judicious perſon to have the force of a moral demonſtration.

Thus much premiſed, let us hear the objection.

P. 33. 'Matthew reckons 27 generations from David to 'Chriſt, Luke reckons 42, and the names totally diſagree. 'Matthew traces the deſcent from Solomon, and Luke from 'Nathan, both ſons of David. According to our feeble 'notions, 27 cannot be equal to 42, neither can Nathan be 'imagined to be Solomon.'

But were the objectors never informed, that in the opinion of thoſe who have moſt conſidered this queſtion, and were beſt qualified to conſider it, St. Luke deduces the genealogy of our Saviour, not, as St. Matthew does, on the ſide of Joſeph, but on the ſide of Mary, who by Jews and Chriſtians is agreed to have been the daughter of Heli. If therefore Jacob, according to St. Matthew, were Joſeph's father by nature, Heli, who is ſaid by St. Luke to have been his father, could only have been his father in law, by his marriage with Mary, the daughter of Heli, whoſe genealogy is then given by St. Luke; to ſhew that every way Chriſt "ſprang from Judah," as was evident (by the teſtimony of the author of the epiſtle to the Hebrews) to all of that age; and that he was "of the ſeed of David;" his real mother, no leſs than his ſuppoſed father, being "of the houſe and lineage of David."

Diſputes may be raiſed and maintained to the end of the world on many other difficulties which occur in the two genealogies. 'But thoſe who are acquainted with the cuſtoms 'of the Jews know there are many genealogies which ſeem 'repugnant, and yet are not ſo. And that may happen va-'rious ways, as may eaſily be proved from books which the 'Jews and we jointly acknowledge. There are ſeveral me-'thods of reconciling theſe difficulties, though it be often 'hard to ſay which is the beſt, at the diſtance of ſo many 'ages, all records and even memory of theſe things being 'utterly loſt."

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I would gently admoniſh the infidels, if they touch upon this ſubject again, to behave with better manners than they have done in their 34th page.

The excellent Paſchal has obſerved, as many others have done before and after him, that the evangeliſts, by differing in ſome things from each other, have afforded us a proof of their not having written in concert, and that ſuch difference is ſo far an argument in their favour. The obſervation is ſenſible and juſt. Not ſo the inference drawn by the objectors, p. 35. that therefore 'contradiction in evidence is 'a mark of truth.' For Mr. Paſchal did not allow, or ſuppoſe, any more than we do, that the evangeliſts, when rightly underſtood and explained, really contradicted each other. His words, as cited by themſelves, are, 'Les 'faibleſſes les plus apparentes ſont de forces,' &c. This is a piece of coin from the mint of Ferney, and bears ſtrongly impreſt upon it the image and ſuperſcription of the coiner.

P. 35. 'When Chriſt was baptized by John, the heavens 'were opened, and a voice was heard, declaring his divine 'origin: ſuch a prodigy muſt have awakened the attention 'of all Judea; yet we find the hiſtorians totally ſilent.'

What hiſtorians? A pagan hiſtorian would not concern himſelf with the report of a Jewiſh prodigy; nor would a Jewiſh hiſtorian have related a circumſtance favourable to Chriſtianity, unleſs he had himſelf become a Chriſtian. But would any writer of common ſenſe have hazarded the relation of ſuch a fact, as having happened in the preſence of a multitude of witneſſes, if it never had ſo happened?

P. 35. 'It is ſtrange that the horrid maſſacre of the 'children by the command of Herod, ſhould be totally un-'noticed by Joſephus.'

It was too nearly related to the birth of the wonderful child which occaſioned it, and concerning which Joſephus thought that queſtions might be aſked. For otherwiſe, is it not equally ſtrange, that he ſhould be totally ſilent concerning the life and death of Chriſt, and the appearance of a new religion which had extended itſelf to Rome, and attracted the notice of the hiſtorians there? Yet, if the celebrated paſſage be an interpolation, (as theſe gentlemen deem it to be) of ſuch events has Joſephus ſaid nothing, though falling within a period, the tranſactions of which are by him minutely and exactly related. But though Joſephus was ſilent, and had good reaſons for being ſo, it evidently appears from the often cited paſſage of Macrobius, that Herod's ſlaughter of the infants in Judea was a thing well

known in his time, and was not conteſted by Heathens. We may add, as in the caſe above, that St. Matthew muſt have been out of his ſenſes to have told ſuch a ſtory as this, had it been otherwiſe than true; nor is there any thing in the character of Herod that renders it improbable.—Quite the contrary.

As to the ſneers upon interpolations and pious frauds, in p. 36, I am ſorry occaſion has ever been given for them. We want no ſuch aids. Magna eſt veritas, et prævalebit. I only wiſh that our adverſaries, in their repreſentations of the Scriptures and Chriſtianity, were never guilty of frauds which are not quite ſo pious.

The purport, in few words, of all the parade and flouriſh, is this, p. 37, ' Our Lord and St. Paul foretold the end of the ' world, as an event that ſhould happen in their time. It did ' not ſo happen; therefore they were under a miſtake and ' deluſion.'

Our Lord, Luke xxi, in that figurative and majeſtic ſtyle well underſtood by thoſe who underſtand the language of ſcripture, deſcribes the deſtruction of the Jewiſh polity and ſyſtem. The terms may and do apply to the end of the world, for this obvious reaſon, that the two events are in many inſtances parallel and analogous. His own declaration ſhews plainly of which he was primarily and immediately ſpeaking—" This generation ſhall not paſs away, till all theſe " things are fulfilled:" And the figures are thoſe uſually employed, in like caſe, by the prophets of old.

The charge againſt St. Paul is founded ſolely on his uſe of the firſt perſon; 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. " We, who are alive " and remain, ſhall be caught up to meet the Lord in the " air." But how common is it for us, when ſpeaking of a ſociety, an army, a nation, to which we belong, to ſay, we went, or came, or did ſuch a thing, or ſhall do ſo and ſo; though we ourſelves neither had nor ſhall have any perſonal concern in the matter; though the event happened before we were born, or is to happen after our deceaſe? Thus, in the Old Teſtament, Pſ. lxvi. 6. " They went through the " water—there did we rejoice." Hoſ. xii. 4. " Jacob found " God in Bethel; there he ſpake with us." By the terms " we, who are alive," the apoſtle means, doubtleſs, thoſe of his Chriſtians who ſhall then be alive. In another place, 1 Cor. iv. 4. he ſays, " We know that he who raiſed up the " Lord Jeſus, ſhall raiſe up us alſo." He could not believe contradictory propoſitions, that he ſhould die, and that he ſhould not die. But what is deciſive upon the point, in the

ſecond epiſtle to the ſame Theſſalonians, written only a few months after the firſt, he moſt earneſtly admoniſhes them not to be deceived, as if by any thing that had fallen from him, either in ſpeech or writing, they were to imagine 'the day of 'God was at hand;' ſince the grand apoſtacy, and other events, which required much intervening time for their accompliſhment, were firſt to take place in the world. See 2 Theſſ. 1. 1, 2. Nay, he reminds them, ver. 5. that he had told them as much, 'while he was yet with them;' that is, before either epiſtle was written.

P. 41. 'How came it to paſs that Chriſt ſhould curſe a fig 'tree for being without fruit in March; or be ignorant that 'it was not the ſeaſon for figs?'

1. It is certain, in fact, that one ſort of figs were ripe at that time of the year, namely, at the paſſover.

2. By the ſeaſon of figs may be meant the ſeaſon of gathering figs, as in Matt. xxi. 34. "When the time, or ſeaſon, "of the fruit drew near," that is plainly, the time for gathering the fruit, "the Lord of the vineyard ſent his ſervants to "receive the fruit." If therefore one ſort of figs was ripe about that time of the year, and yet the time for gathering them was not fully come, Chriſt might with reaſon expect to find fruit on the tree. In conſtruing the paſſage thus interpreted, as Mr. Macknight obſerves, the latter clauſe muſt be joined with the words he came if haply he might find any thing thereon, and the intermediate words thrown into a parentheſis, thus—He came if haply he might find any thing thereon (and when he came to it he found nothing but leaves) "for the time of figs"—of gathering figs—"was not yet." That this is the true conſtruction (adds Mr. M.) is plain, becauſe the evangeliſt is not giving the reaſon why there were no figs on the tree, but the reaſon why Jeſus expected to find ſome on it. He tells us, the ſeaſon for gathering figs was not yet come, to ſhew that none had been taken off the tree; and conſequently, that having its whole produce upon it, there was nothing improper in Chriſt's expecting fruit on it then. Whereas, if we ſhall think the reaſon why he did not find any figs was, that the time of them was not come, we muſt acknowledge, that the tree was curſed very improperly for having none. This interpretation makes a trajection neceſſary, but there is one of the ſame kind in Mark xvi. 3, 4. Where the clauſe, "for it was very great" namely, the ſtone at the door of the ſepulchre, does not relate to what immediately precedes it, and muſt be conſidered parenthetically, but to the remote member—"They ſaid

" among themſelves, Who ſhall roll us away the ſtone from " the door of the ſepulchre? (and when they looked, they " ſaw the ſtone rolled away)—for it was very great."

I cannot help here obſerving, once more, that when in any writer we meet with abſurdities ſo glaring and palpable as this and others imputed to the evangeliſts, it is but doing him common juſtice, whoever he be, to take it for granted that, by ſome means or other, we miſapprehend his meaning; and mere candour ſhould induce us, inſtead of caviling and ſquabbling, gladly to accept of any fair and equitable interpretation of his words, that may ſerve to clear them of ſuch ſuppoſed abſurdity, and to ſet him right in our opinion.

P. 41. Our Saviour is ſcoffed at, for having affirmed, " that wheat does not produce fruit, except it die."

A grain of corn, when laid in the earth, ſwells, putrifies, ſuffers a diſſolution of its parts, ſhoots its fibres, and diſappears. This is a death and reſurrection ſufficient to anſwer all the purpoſes for which the illuſtration is adduced by our Lord and St. Paul.

P. 42. 'John the Baptiſt being aſked if he were Elias, 'anſwered " I am not;" but Jeſus affirms the contrary.'

He was Elias in ſpirit and in power; but he was not the perſonal Elias, or Elijah, whom the people erroneouſly expected, and the prieſts meant, when they aſked him, " art " thou Elias?"

P. 43. 'Out of forty goſpels we receive four as canonical '—Why do we receive them, and not the reſt?'

For the beſt reaſons in the world, aſſigned at large by Dr. Lardner in his Credibility, &c. a work which theſe gentlemen ſhould anſwer, or for ever hold their peace upon this ſubject. The true goſpels are ſhewn by proper evidence to have been written at the time when they are ſaid to have been written, and by the perſons whoſe names they bear. It matters not how may others were written, if upon their appearance, after due examination, they were found to be ſpurious, and rejected as ſuch.

P. 43. The primitive Chriſtians are complained of, for 'preventing the arguments againſt their religion from being 'expoſed to view.'

I hope there is no ground for any ſuch complaint now. There is no argument yet deviſed againſt Chriſtianity, we may preſume, which has not been propoſed in public; and there is none, we may affirm, which has not received its anſwer.

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The few remaining pages of this pamphlet are ſpent in enumerating ſome particulars in the hiſtory of our Lord's paſſion and reſurrection, which are differently related by the four evangeliſts. But how many times have theſe objections been conſidered, and replied to? Have the infidels the modeſty or the conſcience to expect, that we are to draw up a new harmony of the Goſpels, as often as any one of them ſhall think proper to aſk a few old queſtions over again? If any Chriſtian find himſelf perplexed by difficulties of this ſort, let him carefully peruſe the goſpels as they lie in Macknights's Harmony and Commentary, and weigh well the ſolutions of ſuch difficulties with which that book will furniſh him.

Theſe gentlemen tell us in plain terms, p. 46. that 'the 'event of Chriſt's reſurrection bears every mark of a for-'gery;' and ſpeak of the apoſtles as men 'engaged in the 'attempt of forming a ſect or party;' that is, as men who had projected a plan (and thought themſelves able to execute it) of perſuading the world that their maſter was riſen from the dead, when he was not riſen, and of propagating over the earth a new religion, upon the ſtrength of that perſuaſion. We can know no more of the apoſtles than the goſpel hiſtory with great ſimplicity and evident ſincerity informs us. Let any man duly conſider their characters and qualifications as there deſcribed; let him then ſtand forth, lay his hand upon his heart, and ſay, that he can poſſibly bring himſelf, for a ſingle moment, to believe, they could ever have entertained the thought of projecting and executing ſuch a plan. I ſhould be glad to ſee that man. I would ſubſcribe handſomely towards erecting a ſtatue to his memory. For, take him either as a fool, or a knave, he is at the top of his profeſſion.

But if no ſuch plan by ſuch perſons were or could be concerted, then the evidence of the apoſtles and diſciples (to 500 of whom Chriſt appeared at once, and among whom he walked in and out for forty days together) is as good and valid for the fact of his reſurrection, as for any other fact concerning his life or his death. Nor is it true, that 'God choſe to 'deprive all mankind of the proper evidence of the reſur-'rection, becauſe the Jews of that age were ſinners,' Whatever evidence it had pleaſed God to vouchſafe to 'the Jews 'of that age,' 'all mankind' beſides could have received it only upon teſtimony; and they enjoy now, upon teſtimony, more and better evidence for the reſurrection of Chriſt, than ever was produced for any one tranſaction that has happened,

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from Adam to the preſent hour. The deſcent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecoſt; the propagation of the goſpel by inſtruments otherwiſe totally inadequate to the work; the converſion of ſo many thouſand Jews; the deſtruction of Jeruſalem; and the eſtabliſhment of the Chriſtian church, in oppoſition to the efforts of the whole Roman empire—all theſe conſiderations, added to the original poſitive evidence for the fact, and the futility and abſurdity of the arguments then and ſince employed to invalidate it, form ſuch a moral demonſtration in its favour—the only demonſtration we can have, in caſes of this kind—that there muſt be ſomething very wrong indeed in the head, or the heart of him, who, at this time of day, ſets himſelf to deny and blaſpheme it. With joy and pleaſure I deſire to riſk upon the truth of it every thing that is dear to me, in this life, and that which is to come.

P. 47. It is aſked, whether God expects that we ſhould 'ſhew our faith and reliance on him by making a ſacrifice of 'our reaſon, and believing, not by an act of the underſtand-'ing, but of the will.'

How neceſſary, in many caſes, the concurrence of the will is towards the production of faith, daily experience may convince us. We ſee men rejecting the ſtrongeſt evidence, when oppoſed by intereſt, prejudice, and paſſion; and accepting the ſlighteſt, which falls in with them. The beſt arguments in the world avail nothing on one ſide, when pride, pleaſure, and profit are engaged on the other. Hope of what is deemed good, and fear of what is deemed evil, will find means to elude the force of all the ſyllogiſms which the moſt ſkilful diſciple of Ariſtotle can frame. "This man "(ſaid the rulers of the Jews) doth many miracles."—Acknowledge and receive him, therefore, as a man ſent from God.—'No: we will apprehend and crucify him.'—For what reaſon?—"Becauſe if we let him alone, all men will "believe in him; and the Romans will come and take away "our place and nation"—But he has raiſed Lazarus from the dead—'Why then, we will put Lazarus to death again'—What can be done with ſuch people as theſe? Or what effect would the appearance of Chriſt among them after his reſurrection have produced, but that of provoking freſh blaſphemies, and freſh inſults?

And thus you ſee, dear Sir, we are come round to the point from whence we ſet out. Aſſent to proper evidence is an act of the higheſt reaſon. Such evidence for revelation, once eſtabliſhed, is not to be ſet aſide, or invalidated, by any

any difficulties, ſuppoſed or real, which may occur in the matter of that revelation. Malice and ignorance will always find room for objections, and they will never believe, who have no mind to believe. The infidels, therefore, have not ground for the ſurmiſe, that we want to ‘ deprive them of ‘ God's beſt gift.’ We wiſh only to teach them the right uſe of it. Reaſon is not ‘ the firſt and only revelation from God;’ for it is, properly ſpeaking, no revelation at all. Man, at his creation, was not left ſo much as a ſingle day to reaſon. It is the eye, not the light. It can with certainty know nothing concerning the things of another world, but by information from thence. To this truth the writings of the beſt and wiſeſt among the Heathen philoſophers bear a teſtimony irrefragable and inſurmountable. It is the faculty which enables us upon proper evidence to receive, and after due ſtudy to underſtand, ſuch information. And bleſſed is he, who, at the return of his Lord to judgment, ſhall be found to have ſo employed it.

The production which has thus paſſed under our conſideration, from the low and illiberal manner in which it is penned, has been by many accounted to be beneath notice. But nothing is beneath notice, which is calculated to deceive and ſeduce the ignorant and the unwary, among whom, though even now ſcarce known in the ſhops, this pamphlet has been privately ſpread and recommended as a chef d' œuvre. And though the execution be coarſe and mean, the objections, in ſubſtance, are ſuch as continually occur in writings of a much higher claſs, which make part of the furniture of every circulating library through Great Britain, from whence they paſs into the hands of our idle young people of faſhion, while under the diſcipline of the friſeur, in the metropolis, or at the watering places. The anſwers publiſhed by Nonnotte, Bergier, and others, to the books of Voltaire, Rouſſeau, Helvetius, Boulanvilliers, &c. &c. have been much called for, and done eminent ſervice, upon the continent: and it is humbly hoped the foregoing ſtrictures may not be without their uſe here in England. *Letters on Infidelity.*

55. Rev. Thomas Stackhouse, M. A.

THE books of the Old Teſtament, which were written by the divine will and inſpiration, were by the Jews of old uſually divided into three ſeveral claſſes, whereof the firſt comprehended the five books of Moſes; the ſecond, all the prophets; and the third, thoſe writings which they called

Chetubim

Chetubim, the Greeks Hagiographa; or books that were written by holy men, but not with ſuch fulneſs of ſpirit as to be ranked among the prophets. In this diviſion they reckoned five books in the firſt claſs; eight in the ſecond; and nine in the third; in all two and twenty; according to the number of the letters of their alphabet, and as fully comprehending all that was neceſſary to be known and believed, as the number of their letters did all that was requiſite to be ſaid or written; for in this method it is that they range them.

The books of Moſes. 5.	Geneſis.
	Exodus.
	Leviticus.
	Numbers.
	Deuteronomy.
Four books of the former prophets. 4.	Joſhua.
	Judges, and Ruth.
	Samuel 1. and 2.
	Kings 1. and 2.
Four books of the latter prophets. 4.	Iſaiah.
	Jeremiah, and his Lamentations.
	Ezekiel.
	The books of the 12 leſſer prophets.
And the reſt of the holy writers. 9.	King David's Pſalms.
	King Solomon's Proverbs.
	His Eccleſiaſtes.
	His Song of Songs.
	The book of Job.
	The book of Daniel.
	The book of Ezra and Nehemiah.
	The book of Eſther.
	The book of Chronicles 1. and 2.

But be the books ever ſo genuine, and their tradition ever ſo certain, yet we cannot ſuppoſe them wrote by perſons divinely inſpired, ſo long as we ſee in them certain characters inconſiſtent with ſuch a ſuppoſition. Surely the pureſt language, the moſt perfect ſtyle, the greateſt clearneſs, the moſt exact method, the ſoundeſt reaſoning, the man of apparent conſiſtency, and, in a word, all the excellencies of good writing, might be expected in a piece compoſed or dictated by the Spirit of God; but books wherein we find the reverſe of all this, it is idle, if not impious, to aſcribe to the Deity.

I. One

I. One great miſtake which the generality of readers run into, is, to judge of the compoſition of the Scripture, not from its original, but from its tranſlations: for, beſides that in ancient writings, ſuch as the Bible is, there are alluſions to many rites and cuſtoms that are now laid aſide; and, for this reaſon, muſt needs ſeem flat or impertinent; which, when they were in uſe, had a great deal of ſpirit and propriety in them; and beſides that the Hebrew, in particular, is a language of a peculiar caſt, both in the contexture of its words, and the cadence of its periods, and contains certain expreſſions, whoſe emphaſis can no more be tranſlated into another language, than the water of a diamond can be painted, without detracting from the original: beſides all this, I ſay, the tranſlators themſelves, ſometimes by running into miſtakes, and at all times by adhering too religiouſly to the letter of the text, have contributed not a little to make the ſtyle of the Sacred Writings appear leſs advantageous. For, whereas other tranſlators have taken a liberty to accommodate the beauties of the language whereinto they tranſlate, to the idiotiſms of that wherein their author wrote; theſe have thought themſelves reſtrained from uſing ſuch freedom in a divine compoſition; and have therefore left ſeveral Hebraic, and other foreign phraſes in their verſion, which ſeem a little uncouth, and give the reader, who can look no farther, a very odd notion of the original: though it is certainly manifeſt, that the moſt elegant piece of oratory that ever was framed, if we render it literally, and not give it the true genius of the language whereunto we are admitting it, we loſe all its beauty, and appear with the ſame diſadvantage.

II. Another miſtake that we run into, is, when we confine eloquence to any nation, and account that the only proof of it, which is accommodated to the preſent taſte. We indeed, in theſe European countries, whoſe languages, in a great meaſure, are derived from Greek and Latin, make them the patterns for our imitation, and account them the ſtandard of perfection; but there is no reaſon why the eaſtern nations, whoſe languages have no affinity with them, ſhould do the ſame; much leſs is it reaſonable to expect it in writers who lived long before theſe Greek or Latin authors, we ſo much admire, were born. It is ſufficient for them that they wrote according to the faſhionable, and eſteemed eloquence of their own times: but that the Holy Ghoſt ſhould inſpire with certain ſchemes of ſpeech, adapted to the modern taſte, and ſuch as were utterly unknown in the countries where they lived, is a thing that can never enter into any ſober

mans

man's conſideration. The truth is, ſince Moſes was bred up in all the refined learning and wiſdom of the Egyptians; ſince Solomon was excellent in all kind of knowledge, and in a manner idolized by the eaſtern world; and ſince Daniel's promiſing youth was improved by the learning of the Chaldean ſages; we have all the reaſon imaginable to believe, that they wrote according to the perfection of ſtyle which was then in uſe; that though their eloquence differs from ours, yet it is excellent in its kind; and that, if we have other notions of it, it is only becauſe we are unacquainted with thoſe bold allegories, and figurative ways of diſcourſe; thoſe dark ſentences, ſurpriſing brevities, and inconnected tranſitions, wherein the nature of their true ſublime did conſiſt.

III. Another miſtake we run into is, when we ſuppoſe that the critical rules of eloquence are any ways neceſſary in divine compoſitions. The deſign of God, in recording his laws, was to inform our underſtandings, to cure our paſſions, and rectify our wills; and if this end be but attained, it is no great matter in what form of diction the preſcription be given. We never expect that a phyſician's receipt ſhould be wrote in a Ciceronian ſtyle: and if a lawyer has made us a firm conveyance of an eſtate, we never inquire what elegancies there are in the writing. When, therefore, God intends to do us far greater things than theſe; when he is delivering the terms of our ſalvation, and preſcribing the rules of our duty; why ſhould we expect that he ſhould inſiſt on the niceties of ſtyle and expreſſion, and not rather account it a diminution of his authority, to be elaborate in trifles, when he has the momentous iſſues of another life to command our attention, and affect our paſſions? In ſome of the greateſt works of nature, God has not confined himſelf to any ſuch order and exactneſs. The ſtars, we ſee, are not caſt into regular figures; lakes and rivers are not bounded by ſtraight lines; nor are hills and mountains exact cones or pyramids. When a mighty prince declares his will by laws and edicts to his ſubjects, is he, do we think, careful at all about a pure ſtyle, or elegant compoſition? Is not the phraſe thought proper enough, if it conveys as much as was intended? And would not the fine ſtrains of ſome modern critics be thought pedantic and affected on ſuch occaſions? Why then ſhould we expect in the Oracles of God an exactneſs that would be unbecoming, and beneath the dignity of an earthly monarch, and which bears no proportion or reſemblance to the magnificent works of the creation? A ſtrict obſervation of the

the rules of grammar and rhetoric, in elegant expreſſions, harmonious periods, and technical definitions and partitions, may gratify indeed ſome readers; but then it muſt be granted that theſe things have the air of human contrivance in them; whereas in the ſimple, unaffected, artleſs, unequal, bold, figurative ſtyle of the Holy Scriptures, there is a character ſingularly great and majeſtic, and what looks more like divine inſpiration, than any other form of compoſition.

Theſe obſervations being premiſed, if we ſhould now conſider the nature of eloquence in general, as it is defined by Ariſtotle to be a faculty of perſuaſion, which Cicero makes to conſiſt in three things, inſtructing, delighting, and moving our readers or hearers mind, we ſhall find that the Holy Scriptures have a fair claim to theſe ſeveral properties.

For where can we meet with ſuch a plain repreſentation of things, in point of hiſtory, and ſuch cogent arguments, in point of precept, as this one volume furniſhes us with? Where is there an hiſtory written more ſimply and naturally, and at the ſame time more nobly and loftily, than that of the creation of the world? Where are the great leſſons of morality taught with ſuch force and perſpicuity (except in the ſermons of Chriſt, and the writings of the apoſtles) as in the book of Deuteronomy? Where is the whole compaſs of devotion, in the ſeveral forms of confeſſion, petition, ſupplication, thankſgiving, vows, and praiſes, ſo punctually taught us, as in the book of Pſalms? Where are the rules of wiſdom and prudence ſo convincingly laid down, as in the Proverbs of Solomon, and the choice ſentences of Eccleſiaſtes? Where is vice and impiety of all kinds more juſtly diſplayed, and more fully confuted, than in the threats and admonitions of the prophets? And what do the little warmths, which may be raiſed in the fancy by an artificial compoſure and vehemence of ſtyle, ſignify in compariſon of thoſe ſtrong impulſes and movements which the Holy Scriptures make upon good men's ſouls, when they repreſent the frightful juſtice of an angry God to ſtubborn offenders, and the bowels of his compaſſion, and unſpeakable kindneſs, to all true penitents and faithful ſervants?

The Holy Scripture indeed has none of thoſe flaſhy ornaments of ſpeech, wherewith human compoſitions ſo plentifully abound; but then it has a ſufficient ſtock of real and peculiar beauties to recommend it. To give one inſtance for all out of the hiſtory of Joſeph and his family: the whole relation indeed is extremely natural: but the manner of his diſcovering

diſcovering himſelf to his brethren is inimitable. " And " Joſeph could no longer refrain himſelf—but, lifting up his " voice with tears, ſaid—I am Joſeph—doth my father yet " live?—And his brethren could not anſwer him; for they " were troubled at his preſence. And Joſeph ſaid to his " brethren, come near me, I pray you: and they came near, " and he ſaid I am Joſeph—your brother—whom ye ſold " into Egypt." Nothing certainly can be a more lively deſcription of Joſeph's tender reſpect for his father, and love for his brethren: and, in like manner, when his brethren returned, and told their father in what ſplendor and glory his ſon Joſeph lived, it is ſaid, " that Jacob's heart fainted, for " he believed them not; but when he ſaw the waggons which " Joſeph had ſent for him, the ſpirit of Jacob, their father, " revived; and Iſrael ſaid, it is enough—Joſeph my ſon is " yet alive—I will go—and ſee him—before I die." Here is ſuch a contraſt of different paſſions, of utter deſpondency, dawning hope, and confirmed faith, triumphant joy, and paternal affection, as no orator in the world could expreſs more movingly, in a more eaſy manner, or ſhorter compaſs of words.

Nay more, had I leiſure to gratify the curious, I might eaſily ſhew, that thoſe very figures and ſchemes of ſpeech, which are ſo much admired in profane authors, as their great beauties and ornaments, are no where more conſpicuous than in the ſacred.

One figure, for inſtance, eſteemed very florid among the maſters of art, is, when all the members of a period begin with the ſame word. The figure is called anaphora; and yet (if I miſtake not) the 15th pſalm affords us a very beautiful paſſage of this kind. " Lord, who ſhall abide in thy taber- " nacle? Who ſhall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh " uprightly; he that back-biteth not with his tongue; he " that maketh much of them that fear the Lord; he that " ſweareth to his hurt, and changeth not; he that putteth " not out his money to uſury, nor taketh reward againſt the " innocent. He that does theſe things ſhall never be " moved."

The ancient orators took a great deal of pride in ranging finely their antitheta. Cicero is full of this, and uſes it many times to a degree of affectation; and yet I cannot find any place wherein he has ſurpaſſed that paſſage of the prophet. " He that killeth an ox, is as if he ſlew a man; he " that ſacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he " that offereth an oblation, as if he offered ſwine's blood."

But

But above all other figures, that whereon poets and orators love chiefly to dwell, is the hypotypoſis, or lively deſcription; and yet we ſhall hardly find in the beſt claſſic authors, any thing comparable, in this regard, to the Egyptians' deſtruction in the Red Sea, related in the ſong of Moſes and Miriam; to the deſcription of the Leviathan in Job; to the deſcent of God, and a ſtorm at ſea in the Pſalmiſt; to the intrigues of an adulterous woman in the Proverbs; to the pride of the Jewiſh ladies in Iſaiah; and to the plague of locuſts in Joel; which is repreſented like the ravaging of a country; and ſtorming a city by an army: "A fire de-"voureth before them, and behind them a deſolate wilder-"neſs, and nothing ſhall eſcape them. Before their face "people ſhall be pained; all faces ſhall gather blackneſs. "They ſhall run like mighty men; they ſhall climb the "wall like men of war; they ſhall march every one in his "way, and they ſhall not break their ranks. They ſhall "run to and fro in the city; they ſhall run upon the wall; "they ſhall climb up upon the houſes; they ſhall enter "into the windows as a thief." The deſcription is more remarkable, becauſe the analogy is carried quite throughout without ſtraining, and the whole proceſſes of a conquering army in the manner of their march, their deſtroying the proviſion, and burning the country, in their ſcaling the walls, breaking into houſes, and running about the vanquiſhed city, are fully delineated and ſet before our eyes.

From theſe few examples (for it would be endleſs to proceed in inſtances of this kind) it appears, that the Holy Bible is far from being defective in point of eloquence; and (what is a peculiar commendation of it) its ſtyle is full of a grateful variety; ſometimes majeſtic as becomes that "high "and holy one who inhabiteth eternity;" ſometimes ſo low as to anſwer the other part of his character, "who dwelleth "with him that is of an humble ſpirit;" and, at all times ſo proper, and adapted ſo well to the ſeveral ſubjects it treats of, that whoever conſiders it attentively will perceive, in the narrative parts of it, a ſtrain ſo ſimple and unaffected; in the prophetic and devotional, ſomething ſo animated and ſublime; and in the doctrinal and preceptive, ſuch an air of dignity and authority, as ſeems to ſpeak its original divine.

We allow indeed, that method is an excellent art, highly conducive to the clearneſs and perſpicuity of diſcourſe; but then we affirm, that it is an art of modern invention in compariſon to the times when the ſacred penmen wrote, and incompatible with the manner of writing which was then in vogue.

vogue. We indeed in Europe, who, in this matter, have taken our examples from Greece, can hardly read any thing with pleaſure that is not digeſted into order, and ſorted under proper heads; but the eaſtern nations, who were uſed to a free way of diſcourſe, and never cramped their notions by methodical limitations, would have deſpiſed a compoſition of this kind, as much as we do a ſchool-boy's theme, with all the formalities of its exordiums, ratios, and confirmations. And, if this was no precedent for other nations, much leſs can we think, that God Almighty's methods ought to be confined to human laws, which, being deſigned for the narrowneſs of our conceptions, might be improper and injurious to his, whoſe "thoughts are as far above ours, as the "heavens are higher than the earth."

The truth is, inſpiration is, in ſome meaſure, the language of another world, and carries in it the reaſoning of ſpirits, which, without controverſy, is vaſtly different from ours. We indeed, to make things lie plain before our underſtandings, are forced to ſort them out into diſtinct partitions, and conſider them by little and little, that ſo at laſt, by gradual advances, we may come to a tolerable conception of them; but this is no argument for us to think that pure ſpirits do reaſon after this manner. Their underſtandings are quick and intuitive: they ſee the whole compaſs of rational inferences at once; and have no need of thoſe little methodical diſtinctions which oftentimes help the imperfection of our intellects. Now, though we do not aſſert, that the language of the Holy Scriptures is an exact copy of the reaſoning of the ſpiritual world; yet, ſince they came by the inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt, it is but reaſonable to expect that they ſhould preſerve ſome ſmall reliſh of it; as books tranſlated into another tongue always retain ſome marks of their originals. And hence it comes to paſs, that though the Holy Ghoſt does vouchſafe to ſpeak in the language of men, yet, in his divine compoſitions, there are ſome traces to be found of that bold and unlimitted ratiocination which is peculiar to the heavenly inhabitants, whoſe noble and flaming thoughts are never clogged with the cold and jejune laws of human method. *Hiſtory of the Bible.*

END OF VOL. I.