



SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS
DOUGLAS
LIBRARY



QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
AT KINGSTON

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA



from the Author.

Clarendon

11 -

CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
ALLIANCE
BETWEEN
Christianity and Commerce.

—»«««—
1806.
—»«««—

✓ Harkness, 1806

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

THE ALLIANCE

BETWEEN

CHRISTIANITY & COMMERCE,

APPLIED TO

The Present State of this Country.



LONDON:

SOLD BY CADELL AND DAVIES, STRAND.

1806.

(1) 3... 1866 1

Printed by D. Walker, Gloucester.

INTRODUCTION.

SINCE these pages were written, events have taken place which add a melancholy weight to the arguments employed. In the two great principles here proposed,—the accommodation of our Commerce to Christianity, and an increased attention to the morals of our lower orders,—all will agree: but on the mode of acting in consequence of these principles, opinions will differ. Every one may be allowed to offer his ideas. The very expression of them is some relief of his anxiety for the public good—for the preservation of a Country in whose cause thousands would be joyful to lay down their lives. Whatever be our faults, it will appear, as we humbly trust, should

should the last experiment be made, that so patriotic a nation never yet existed on the earth ; and with good reason, since never yet was a Constitution formed, whose Government, Laws, and Commerce, but, above all, whose Religious System was so worthy of being supported by the Wise and Good, and by the multitudes who are prepared to follow their illustrious example.

December 8, 1806.

PRINCIPAL TOPICS.

	<i>Page</i>
COMMERCE assisted by Christianity	16
Why the Gospel does not expressly encourage Commerce ..	17
No Commerce advantageous which is adverse to Christianity	23
No Precept of the Gospel destructive of Commerce	25
A Commercial Nation must promote Christian Knowledge ..	27
Religion necessary for a Free People	28
It enlarges the Intellect.....	31
Its Comforts to the Poor	33
Preaching insufficient without previous Instruction.....	37
Christianity prepared for Propagation.....	40
Missionaries	41
Aids to the Progress of Christianity	43
Union recommended.....	48
Sunday Schools	54
Objections to Sunday Schools	57
Powers of Men when combined	62
Eastern Settlements	64
First Object of this Nation	72
Continental States	74
Auspicious Prospect	81

CONSIDERATIONS

ON

THE ALLIANCE

BETWEEN

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMERCE.

THE times in which we live are distinguished from every preceding period, by their peculiar circumstances and character. With the amplest means of defence, and the most abundant sources of enjoyment, a navy more completely appointed, and a Commerce more widely extended, than any former age could boast, we cannot but regard our situation with singular anxiety, and apprehension for the future. Uncertainty, insecurity, and want of confidence in the approaching state of things, mark our calculations, our contracts, and our whole cast of mind. We look to our

B

trade,

trade, with reason, as our great human support; but we are sensible that, however strongly it appears established, trade may change its abode, and migrate to another region. Under this disquietude, it must afford a degree of satisfaction, to consider our system of Commerce as allied to that of Christianity, and to reflect that by strengthening this alliance we may give a stability to the former, such as no political power can communicate. On this interesting topic, serious persons possibly will not refuse their attention to a few pages, which by good fortune may engage the eye, and hereafter call forth the pen, of some able writer, well qualified for doing justice to the subject.

Upon reverting to the history of antient states, we find a variety of instances to justify the remark, that Commerce, while it tends to polish the manners, seldom fails to corrupt the mind. Proceeding from Tyre and Carthage, to Corinth, Athens, and other mercantile communities, we so clearly perceive this fatal influence on the public morals, that we are inclined to applaud the
wisdom

wisdom of Lycurgus, and the discernment of Plato; the first of whom actually banished Commerce from his country, as the other excluded it from his ideal republic. Yet, on the opposite side of the question, we find the most important advantages arising from Commerce, and observe that the arts both of utility and elegance have been principally cultivated by nations, to whom the affluence acquired by traffic, had given those opportunities of leisure, which encourage men to exercise their intellectual faculties.

To reconcile this discord between traffic and morality, was far beyond the reach of lawgivers and philosophers. The Christian principle alone is capable of performing so benign an office, and of regulating Commerce, when arrived at its highest point, in such a manner as to harmonize it with the purest and most exalted morals. Contemplating the necessity of this singular concurrence for the good of man, we cannot but remark with humble admiration that order of events by which the two great instruments of human intercourse, the Ma-

ner's Compass, and the Art of Printing,* were kept back from notice, until Christianity was prepared to counteract the evils that would naturally arise from these powerful engines, entrusted to the conduct of undisciplined agents.

During the period which elapsed between the fifth and fifteenth centuries, commonly called the middle or dark ages, mankind had learned from experience the tremendous effects both of superstition and of enthusiasm, and were in some degree prepared duly to estimate, and cordially to receive, the benefi-

* The attractive power of the Magnet was known to the ancients: it is mentioned by Plato, and described by Lucretius. But its polarity was not discovered till the fourteenth century, and, from the selfish policy of the Italian merchants who first possessed the secret, was not brought into use for above one hundred years after.

About this time, (that is, near the middle of the fifteenth century,) the Art of Printing was invented. It is matter of astonishment, that so simple a substitution for the labour of writing, should never have occurred during the ages of Greek and Roman literature. Cicero (in his 2d book on the Nature of the Gods) drops a hint, which appears sufficient to have led to the introduction of printing, and even to the moveable type, its last improvement. Exposing the absurdity of a world created by atoms, he says: "If innumerable moulds of the letters of the alphabet, made of gold or other metal, were shaken together, and thrown out upon the earth, we could not suppose that such letters would ever take the form of an epic poem, or even of a single line in metrical arrangement."

cial

cial doctrines of true religion. These being essentially requisite to restrain and correct the powers and passions of men, augmented as they were by the lately discovered arts, it must confirm our belief of a directing Providence, to watch the remedy keeping pace with the disease, and to observe Evangelical knowledge, not only advancing with Commercial affluence, but aided in its progress by the increased intercourse between distant countries.

In the political system of Europe, which for many ages had contributed to fetter and depress the mental powers, a revolution was gradually brought about by that traffic with the eastern world, which immediately followed the crusades. While the attention of the higher ranks was thus turned from military enterprises to mercantile transactions, the mass of the people, who, under feudal servitude, had sunk into sloth and ignorance, was roused to activity and importance by views of profit, by the diffusion of knowledge, and the opportunities now afforded to vassals and inferior tenants, of emancipation, or of purchasing their
B 3
freedom.

freedom.* It is necessary that we should be men, before we can be Christians. Some degree of cultivation, some acquaintance with the arts, and some introduction to the comforts of life, must take place, before we can have leisure or ability sufficient for a due attention to the dictates of the Gospel. These previous requisites were supplied by Commerce, which soon received an abundant recompense for the service it had rendered.

*Commerce
assisted by
Christianity.*

To speak distinctly, and as the subject deserves, of the benefits which Commerce

* It may be asked, if commerce contributed so much to emancipate the northern nations from the papal yoke, why did the mercantile parts of Italy continue, for many ages after, in subjection to that dominion? To this we may reply, That, as the power of superstition, while it exists in vigour, is most despotic in the provinces which are remotest from the seat of empire; so, when once the principle of obedience begins to languish, those distant tributaries seldom fail more zealously and completely to assert their freedom.

The Italian towns were kept in order, and deterred from exercising their rational faculties, by the dread of those neighbouring potentates who still maintained an attachment to the Pope; and we may add, that the luxury of these Italians, together with their depraved morals, both disqualified them for resistance, and reconciled their minds to a corrupt religion. It must likewise be observed, that over these Italian States, particularly Venice, the Pope has long exercised a very temperate sway, conducted rather by address and management, than by authority.

derives

derives from Christianity, would far exceed the limits of a light essay; but in comparing together the two great sources of human welfare, we must undoubtedly place that as first in rank and importance, which immediately relates to our spiritual nature, and superior interest.

It may be asserted then, as a truth nearly self-evident, that the Christian Religion only could have communicated the virtues which are essential to Commerce,* extended

as

* We shall not be supposed to imply, that every merchant of integrity is a believer in Christ, but, that the general system of credit and confidence among men is supported by the doctrines of Religion. If this be doubted, let us imagine that for the next ten years Christianity was totally rejected by all its present professors. We shall be sensible that a general distrust would ensue, which must soon be destructive of the invaluable intercourse that is now maintained by the reciprocal opinion of conscientious dealings.

The number of real, unfeigned Christians in the mercantile world, may bear a small proportion to those who are irreligious and unbelievers. Yet if we estimate the general standard of veracity, both in our own times, and in the most cultivated ages of Greece or Rome, we shall have reason to conclude, that "this little leaven hath leavened the whole lump," and that by this *salt* alone the *earth* is preserved from total *corruption*.

Many, indeed, of our countrymen, who govern their conduct by the morality of the Gospel, seem ashamed of acknowledging their obligation to its Author. And it is a striking fact, that the Hindoos, who see very little of our religious observances, but much of our commercial and political transactions, express their astonishment,

as it is over the habitable globe; and that no other principle than the Gospel could have prevented Commerce, when thus extended, from bringing on a general corruption of manners.

In the management of contracts and dealings among men, we acknowledge the necessity of truth and justice, which were never established on principles equally affecting all mankind, until the Gospel laid open to their view, and impressed upon their minds with irresistible force, the awful doctrines of an omniscient Providence, and an all righteous Judge. The same Gospel enforces a government of the appetites and passions, which philosophers had in vain attempted to inculcate on their disciples, and which to the vulgar and illiterate was totally unknown. Yet without this check and controul, no one can estimate the mischiefs which wealth and luxury, with their attendant train of appetites and passions exalted by indulgence, might have occasioned.

nishment, from whence we derive our principles of justice, humanity, magnanimity, and truth.

See the Rev. Claudius Buchanan's Memoir, p. 25.

In

In the antient world, and during the ages which preceded the extension of Commerce by the Load-stone, both luxury and literature were confined to a comparatively small part of the community; but when every part of the globe was laid open, connected, and rendered, as it were, one republic, the accession of knowledge and of wealth to numberless individuals, tended of course to produce in them an opinion of their own wisdom, an indulgence in sensual pleasures, and a disposition to accumulate the means of that indulgence; that is, it led them to pride, luxury, and avarice.

At this period it was, that Christianity, purified from the corruption of the dark ages, was prepared to counteract the evils consequent on the abuses of Commerce and of Literature. As these abuses engendered pride, luxury, and avarice, Christianity was ready to infuse the spirit of humility, temperance, and liberality; an indifference to present, selfish gratifications, and a desire to promote the happiness of others. That such effects did by no means universally prevail, we must confess; and the obstacles
 might

might easily be pointed out; but the *tendency* to produce them cannot be disputed. Even in the most corrupt period of Christianity, we find its precepts thus affecting the minds of its zealous professors, and, in the pilgrim, the hermit, and the monastic orders, producing a total disregard to worldly profits, and corporeal enjoyments.

These excesses of piety were as hostile to Commerce, as true Religion is favourable to its progress. This appears evident, from the influence of superstition at that period on the conduct of individuals, and on the public judgment. By a perverse application of passages in the Old Testament, Lending money on interest was by the school divines reduced to a level with usury and extortion; and, from a corrupt interpretation of evangelic precepts, the retirement and abstraction of monastic life was represented as the state most favourable to virtue.

Commercial intercourse favours the right interpretation of the Gospel.

Happily for mankind, the growing intercourse between nations, the revival of letters, and the more liberal use of reason, assisted them in discovering the true sense of the divine oracles. They now began to examine

examine the principles of the Gospel, with a reference to the constitution and course of nature, and to regard both as proceeding from the same Author; whence they concluded, that the two laws, rightly interpreted, must be congenial and consistent with each other.* Reasoning in this manner,

ner,

* When we speak of the alliance between Christianity and Commerce, it immediately occurs, that no part of the Gospel appears to have a *Commercial* tendency, and that prudence, industry, and œconomy, qualities essential to the merchant, are nowhere directly inculcated. To this we may reply, that throughout the Gospel these qualities are, as it were, taken for granted, or supposed to have been already cultivated by those whom it addresses. Precepts exhorting to beneficence and liberality, do in fact imply the supposition, that we have exerted our faculties and opportunities so as to obtain a share of worldly goods; otherwise we could not impart them to others, or incur the danger of confining them to ourselves. The Author of Nature and of the Gospel does nothing in vain or superfluous. It was not therefore to be expected, that Revelation should repeat the lesson already taught by Reason, but only that, falling in with our natural principles, it should direct their operation, and restrain their excess. However, this apparent defect of any evangelical exhortation to industry, even in the time of the Apostles, was abused by some enthusiastic converts; whom St. Paul, in five of his Epistles, severely reprimands. The same perversion of the Gospel, in succeeding ages, gave rise to the monastic vow of poverty, the mendicant orders, and that unnatural renunciation of the world, from whence at length resulted the opposite extreme of luxurious indulgence.

Although the Gospel does not excite us to mercantile concerns, or enjoin those qualities which more directly tend to the acquisition of wealth, yet we must be sensible that an observance of its discipline

ner, they found that prudence and industry are qualities essential to the well being of man; but that we are not, in the Scriptures, to look for positive injunctions to the exercise of virtues which the constitution of the world every moment inculcates. According to the established course of life, no advantage can be procured without industry, or preserved without prudence. The Gospel does by no means oppose this divine appointment, but, having a more important object in view, leaves the wants, and the wisdom of man, respecting his present existence, to their proper operation; for which the Creator of the world had made ample provision, by so arranging the order of things as to stimulate human foresight, and to reward its right application.

The powers of the mind, impelled and exercised in one direction, are prepared to move with greater alacrity in another;

discipline will communicate the character of truth, justice, and benevolence, which every merchant would wish to bear; and we may add, that in these virtues are implied the qualities essential to mercantile success; since without industry no man can be consistently true and just, and without œconomy he will not be able to carry his benevolent intentions into effect.

and

and thus the habits of action acquired in our temporal affairs, are turned with advantage to the furtherance of our spiritual concerns. The man who is industrious and vigilant to improve his property, will, if a sincere Christian, employ a similar, though superior, attention to secure his eternal interest. But ill consequences beyond our calculation might have arisen, if prudence and industry in our secular pursuits had been directly enforced by the words of Christ; for such precepts, falling in with the selfish part of our nature, would have been far more easily carried to excess than those of mortification and self-denial, of forbearance and long-suffering.

Why the Gospel does not expressly encourage Commerce.

These distinct tendencies of the two systems, (the one exciting us to industry, whilst the other requires humility,) and the union of both in completing the character of man, we may consider as an argument, that the pursuits of Commerce are by no means adverse to the spirit of our Religion. A variety of circumstances confirming this inference, may be adduced from our observation of human life. If Commerce be taken

Commerce & Religion mutually helpful.

taken away, agriculture, including tillage and pasturage, would afford the only just and peaceful means of employment and subsistence. But possessions of this kind will naturally accumulate, and fall into the hands of a few proprietors, in consequence of which the major part of the people must suffer want, or become slaves to the owners of land.*

Commerce alone can furnish the means of regular subsistence to every individual, and therefore it must be favoured by a religion which forbids the exercise either of force or fraud, of rapine or injustice. But as a flourishing trade will naturally produce affluence, and cannot be conducted without a large portion of political liberty, these benefits will by men be carried to the fatal excesses of luxury and licentiousness, unless religion be at hand, and in sufficient vigour, to counteract the evil. This com-

* This consequence was felt in the Roman and Athenian Commonwealths, and was one of the evils which it was the object of Lycurgus to remove in that of Sparta.

The Jews, indeed, depended only on the produce of their soil; but amongst them a portion of land was allotted to every family, and that allotment was maintained by a Theocracy or Divine Government, which implies a series of miraculous interpositions.

bination

bination of opposing principles, each cor- *Man re-*
 recting the other, seems to be peculiarly *quires*
 suited to a creature composed of soul and *opposing*
 body, spiritual yet sensual, whose noblest *principles.*
 qualities, unless limited and restrained, be-
 come destructive of his own and the pub-
 lic good. We may add that, as Commerce
 applies an immediate motive to that acti-
 vity which is essential to human happiness;
 as it is inconsistent with pride, the source of
 idleness, and with the malignant affections,
 envy,* hatred, and misanthropy, which
 obstruct

* Envy, in the strict sense, as distinguished from emulation,
 is the pain we feel on the prosperity of another, and our conse-
 quent pleasure in his decline and downfall. But trade is carried
 on to the greatest advantage with wealthy, flourishing nations.
 From present interest therefore, as well as from Christian prin-
 ciples, we shall desire to promote the welfare and affluence of
 those with whom we traffic, especially if our near neighbours; the
 most profitable customers being those who make the speediest re-
 turns. We shall not rejoice even in their luxury and extrava-
 gance, although from the demands of such a people we might
 reap immediate and extraordinary profit. But we shall wish them
 to continue industrious and economical, and likely to maintain
 an even flow of well-merited success. This desire, expressed by
 acts of benevolence, must naturally produce a reciprocation of
 good offices, until the only contest will be, which shall surpass
 the other in communicating to their competitors the means of
 happiness. For the establishment of this harmony between rival
 states, a course of years will be required; but there is no reason to
 despair

obstruct the intercourse between men; so does it require the aid of true religion, or of a strong and settled principle, to prevent the evils which naturally flow from increasing wealth, and the importation of foreign manners.

In descanting on such a topic, it may by some be thought presumptuous, if not profane, to represent a revelation from Heaven as in any degree dependant on institutions of earthly origin. But it must be remembered, that we are not speaking of any particular system of Commerce, but of that general propensity to barter and exchange, which is the great motive to intercourse between different countries. This disposi-

despair of its gradual advancement, since the doctrines of Christianity, and the true principles of Commerce, are every day better understood; and since, in proportion to that improved intelligence, their alliance with each other will be more clearly demonstrated.

These ideas may be treated as visionary: but when Commerce shall in truth be confederated with Christianity; when her votaries in general (as some even now in particular instances) shall have the great source of human welfare nearest to their heart; when the conversion of the Jews shall be established; and other events, whose dawning we now scarcely discover, shall have reached their meridian; changes in the sentiments of men, which at this moment we deem impossible, will then succeed as it were of course, and in the way of natural consequence.

tion,

tion, which is implanted by the Author of Nature,* we may consider as co-operating with another and higher part of the divine œconomy; and in consequence we may venture to affirm, that in the present state of things, miracles having ceased, Christianity, without Commerce, could not at-

* Men are disposed to Commerce, both by their nature and by the circumstances in which they are placed. The love of novelty is universal; and the diversities of soil and climate on the earth, which tend to gratify this inclination by their various productions, furnish inexhaustible materials for barter and exchange. The restless temper of numerous individuals, the desire of gain, and the spirit of adventure, are favourable to commercial enterprizes, however attended with difficulty and danger. The ocean, with its many seas, gulfs, and inlets, covering two-thirds of the globe, is designed, as it seems, expressly for the conveyance of merchandize, wafted by the winds which blow in turn from every quarter, and some of which, by their stated variations, facilitate an intercourse (the most important in its effects) between the Eastern and the Western World. Above all, the polarity of the magnet, by whose direction the mariner, leaving the coast, commits himself to the wide expanse, has carried the commercial system far beyond the regions even of antient fancy, and poetic fiction. We may add the improvements that are continually made in the structure and management of ships, by which the health of seamen is rendered as secure as that of men on shore. Combining the above circumstances with the eminent advantages which society derives from Navigation and Commerce, we reasonably ascribe these means of intercourse to the Author of all Good. Evil consequences will ensue for a time, from the perverseness of men, who abuse these benefits; but an effectual remedy of such evils may be expected, from the gradual operation of Heaven's last and best gift to the human race.

tain its purpose, or duly influence the minds of men.

When agriculture and arms were the only occupations in repute, (as during the period which we call the middle ages,) the temptations to rapine and oppression in one part of the community, and to fraud, deceit, and base servility in the other, were stronger than we, who live under different circumstances, can easily imagine.*

Commerce raises the multitude from extreme indigence, and at the same time tends to prevent the higher ranks from arriving at that comparative elevation which would place them beyond the reach of religious instruction and reproof. This Alliance then being established between the two great sources of our welfare, the one of our present comfort, the other of our fu-

* In this age of darkness, men habituated to plunder, were impetuously hurried on to that which promised at once an ample supply of all their wants. Regular employment, attended with an honourable and fair profit, was hardly to be procured. The majority were suffering under hopeless poverty, whilst a few were rioting in luxury and excess. In such a state of society, the influence of the Gospel was felt only as that of the sun on a wintry atmosphere—it preserved life, but could not communicate that genial warmth which is necessary to fertilize the soil.

ture hopes, we may deduce from it consequences of peculiar importance to a nation like our own.

First, “*That no Commerce can be advantageous, which is adverse to the principles of Christianity, or which evidently tends to corrupt the morals.*” This maxim would directly lead to an abolition of the slave trade, which, being unjust in its commencement, can never be reconciled to the spirit of the Gospel. On the same ground, no other species of traffic can be encouraged which requires the persons employed in it to sacrifice their truth or integrity, in order to carry it on with success; such as the Dutch are said to have maintained with the people of Japan. Omitting other particular instances which might imply national censure, we may remark in general, that the Commerce most beneficial to a country will always be congenial with the spirit of Christianity; that its plans will be regulated by the same attention to the good of others, the same benevolence and liberality which is the distinguished character of the Gospel.

No Commerce advantageous which is adverse to Christianity.

Widely different, as we hinted above, was the opinion of our ancient theologians,

who having by their scholastic comments on the words of Christ, unnaturally connected traffic with selfishness and extortion, determined it to be contrary to the profession of his true disciples. The greater thanks are due to that Providence, who not only, by the Reformation, dissipated this cloud of error, but has now enabled us to discover, by the aid of revelation and reason united, that Commerce is both consistent with Christianity, and conducted to the greatest advantage upon the enlarged principles of that religion. Thus illuminated, our ablest writers teach us, that Commerce, like the Gospel, not only exhorts us to peace, but to promote the affluence and prosperity of our neighbours, in whose wealth we ourselves are nearly interested. They insist, from the evidence of facts, that the flourishing state of our country has been chiefly owing to the general progress of nations in the arts and improvements of social life, and that, as her Commerce is employed in spreading civilization and comforts over the globe, so is it nourished in return by the industry which she has

has excited among savages and barbarians. In the same liberal spirit, our *modern* systems for the regulation of mercantile affairs discountenance monopolies, and repress the grasping, avaricious disposition of individuals, as unfavourable to the public welfare. The mildness and humanity, which characterise the British Government in civil affairs, have no less influence on its commercial transactions; and, without repressing the activity of the merchant in consulting his own advantage, prohibit him from infringing the rights, and depressing the interests of others. It must be allowed that we are now speaking of principles, not yet, in all parts of our commercial system, reduced to practice; but the acknowledgment of their truth leads to their complete establishment, and the continual approach of Christianity to primitive, uncorrupt simplicity, will forward and facilitate its union with institutions most friendly to the human race. For,

Secondly, It may be asserted, as a counterpart to our former proposition, that

“ *Every precept of the Gospel, rationally interpreted,*

*No Precept
of the Gos-
pel destruc-
tive of Com-
merce.*

terpreted, contributes to the present as well as future happiness of man; and, in consequence, that if any passage seems to require what is destructive of Commerce in general, we have reason to suspect that it is misinterpreted or misapplied."

A striking instance of this misapplication we have in the excessive abstinence, the desertion of social duties, together with the austerities, of monastic life.* Our countrymen, happily delivered from the yoke of superstition, have escaped these perversions of holy writ, and have in consequence, as Montesquieu observes,† availed themselves, beyond any other people, of those important subjects, Government, Commerce, and Religion. They have most ef-

* The tenor of the Gospel implies that it is intended for rational beings, who are capable of interpreting and of applying its dictates, not to the extirpation of those qualities which the Author of Nature has implanted, but to their correction and improvement. Thus understood, the Christian rule calls not for that distinction into counsels and precepts which the schoolmen imagined, supposing that a conduct is required of the mature and complete Christian, incompatible with common life; but the whole is delivered indiscriminately to all, mixing itself with daily occurrences and temporal affairs, and tending to keep the minds of men, who are thus engaged, in a state of moderation, tranquillity, and mutual benevolence.

† L'Esprit des Loix, l. 20. c. 7.

fectually

fectually applied Religion to the regulation of their Government and Commerce ; and we may subjoin with confidence, that, on the more exact accommodation of these two last to the religious principle, depends their future advancement in wealth, power, and general prosperity.

Thirdly, These deductions from the alliance of Christianity with Commerce, naturally introduce a consideration of more immediate concern ; namely, “ *That a Commercial Nation, which understands its true interest, will bestow a part of its wealth on the promotion of Religious Knowledge.*”

A Commercial Nation must promote Religious Knowledge.

Among the different methods which may be pursued for this important purpose, the early instruction of the lower orders presents itself at once, as a measure peculiarly adapted to our national circumstances. It is superfluous to insist on the value of religious principles imbibed in childhood ; and all must be sensible, that, in the case of our laborious class, their tender years only can be allotted to learning. But there are considerations which render this care peculiarly incumbent on a commercial people.

*Religion
necessary
for a Free
People;*

ple. The political constitution of such a people must be favourable to liberty; and its penal laws, at least in their administration, will be mild and lenient. The operations of executive justice, under a government of this nature, are slow, and frequently allow to the profligate an opportunity of committing many crimes, before they can be accused, convicted, and brought to condign punishment. The happiness of society may be subverted by vices which elude the grasp of human legislators, and which, in a free country, are only to be checked by motives of conscience, the result of a religious education. The necessity of this attention becomes more urgent, when we take into our account the numbers which, in a district of manufactures, are usually assembled under the same roof. In companies of this kind, human corruption, accumulated in masses, seems, as it were, to undergo a fermentation which exalts and aggravates its malignity.* On the other hand, it must be allowed, that religious sentiments are more

*Particu-
larly in
great Ma-
nufactures.*

* Dr. Whitaker's History of Whally.

easily

easily communicated to large congregations, are cherished with greater fervour, and produce more striking effects, than we generally observe in the case of scattered individuals, or of small societies. Appetites and passions are natural to man, but so likewise is the religious principle,* which, if properly cultivated by precept, and encouraged by example, will prove sufficient to curb and restrain, at least, the propensity to what is wrong. Crowded cities afford occasion to popular tumults; yet great assemblies of men, being particularly susceptible of religious impressions, may on this account be more effectually controuled by the Scripture doctrine of submission to authority. Such being the nature of man, most evident is the duty and wisdom of labouring to direct aright its powerful affections; to which endeavour we are especially encouraged in large communities, because every instance

*Multitudes
controuled
by Religion.*

* In the mind of man there appears a disposition to apprehend some invisible power, something beyond the external objects of sense. It is discovered among the most savage tribes (if not in acts of devotion, yet) in certain rites of sorcery and divination, which indicate ideas of supernatural agency. The same propensity (which able reasoners assert to be the strongest of all that actuate mankind) when guided and corrected by Revelation, becomes true Religion.

of

of success extends in some degree to others ; and because virtuous habits, when settled and established in the hearts and lives of persons collected in a body, add new confidence to virtue, and form a barrier against the progress of vice.

*Division of
Labour.*

This effect of Commerce, in drawing numbers together, brings on a consideration of its influence in the *division of labour*. That distribution of the employments and arts of life among a variety of persons, and the assignment of his peculiar province to each, which takes place in every commercial country,* occasions a vast increase of their productive labour, and is one great source of national wealth. From hence it proceeds, that a part of the community can be allowed complete leisure for the cultivation of science, and of elegant learn-

* This separation of different trades and employments from each other, is carried farthest in those countries which possess the highest degree of industry and improvement ; what is the work of one man in a rude state of society, becoming, as cultivation advances, the business of several. Each work is not only in itself a trade, but is divided into a number of inferior branches, of which the greater part are likewise peculiar trades. In England, the business even of making a pin is partitioned into eighteen distinct operations, which in great manufactories are all performed by separate hands.

See Wealth of Nations, book 1. chap. 1.

ing ;

ing ; and that others have opportunities, in the intervals of business, of acquiring a degree of intellectual improvement unknown among persons of the same rank under the antient governments. But, in the mean time, even in our own country, the lowest class, whose life is taken up in procuring subsistence, have neither leisure nor inclination for literary pursuits ; and, in the progress of dividing or subdividing labour, their employment becomes more and more confined, and requires nothing beyond strength of body, or that facility which is acquired by habit.

As the intellects of men, in general, are influenced by their usual engagements, the man, whose life is spent in performing a few operations, similar in their effect, having little occasion to exert his understanding, or to exercise his invention, loses by degrees the habit of employing his mind, and becomes stupid and ignorant. Magistrates and philosophers would interpose in vain to prevent this evil, for which the Gospel alone can provide a remedy. The principles of Christianity may be inculcated

Religion enlarges the Intellect.

cated in childhood ; and as they can communicate to the intellect, when matured by age, an elevation and enlargement greater than are derived from science and literature, the infusion of such knowledge into the mass of the people, must be esteemed an object worthy of our most strenuous endeavours. Consider the situation of a labouring manufacturer in a great city, sunk amidst the crowd in obscurity and darkness. His conduct being observed by none, it is likely that he will neglect it himself, and of course will indulge both his appetites and passions. From this obscurity he is raised by Religion, which, assuring him that he is placed under the regard of Omniscience, renders him an object of respect to himself, and of consideration to those around him.

*Eccellence
of modern
Christianity.*

The precepts of Christianity, it must be acknowledged, before the Reformation, were so grossly perverted by superstitious teachers, that reasonable objections might have been raised against their general utility ; but, at the present period, all have the power of consulting the word of Truth
in

in its pure original ; and as the Gospel was given to mankind without exception, the tenor of it is on a level with the understanding of every one that has received the common advantage of a Christian education in this country. When we contemplate such persons in their hours of leisure, and especially in the seasons of debility, under sickness, or old age, the comforts resulting to them from a power to read the Gospel are great beyond estimation, and infinitely overbalance the danger to be apprehended from an abuse of that power in the perusal of improper books.

Its Comforts to the Poor.

A new anxiety on this subject is awakened by the vast increase in the numbers devoted to our fleets and armies ; concerning whom, it is a proper question ; Where shall they attain a knowledge of Christian duty, if the years of childhood be suffered to pass unimproved ? The faculty of reading they may in later life acquire, impelled by interest ; but worldly motives will not incite them to the consideration of religious subjects ; nor will a man, when once involved in the toils and tumults of life, be easily persuaded to enter upon a

work,

Increase of Military.

work, which begins with penitence, though it ends in joy.

Our country's defence, and the support of our commerce, being objects of the first importance, we cannot be indifferent to the religious principles of our soldiers and seamen ; and although we may not hope to diffuse among the greater part such purity of manners as becomes the Christian profession, yet is it of high importance that the leading truths of the Gospel should be acknowledged, and the conduct which its rules enjoin, respected.

We must also recollect that observance of order, prompt obedience, endurance of hardship, and contempt of danger, virtues essential to the military character, are powerfully enforced by the Christian system. We may possibly think of supplying the whole by strictness of discipline ; but we must remember, that all authority by which that discipline is upheld, arises from opinion, which ultimately is founded in the religious fear of God. Such, at least, is the case in a government like our own, depending on the sanctity of oaths,
and

and the apprehension of a Supreme Being, the inspector of hearts, and the judge of actions. Take away the sense of religion, and you remove not only the true foundation of every moral duty, but a main principle of attachment to the British Constitution, which allows to every one the form of worship agreeable to his conscience, and restrains his actions only by equal and impartial laws. Among the lowest of our people, so far instructed as to understand the blessing of religious and civil liberty, we may expect to find numbers prepared for suffering in their country's cause; but we can hardly demand this sacrifice from mere machines, whose intellectual faculties, benumbed by ignorance, extend to little beyond the means of animal enjoyment.

In this degraded state, men are peculiarly exposed to the mischievous delusions of superstition and enthusiasm. The less they know, the better are they prepared to become the instruments of seditious zeal and furious fanaticism.* The higher ranks undoubt-

Danger of Ignorance

* An instructed and intelligent people are always more decent and orderly, than a people who are ignorant and stupid. They feel

undoubtedly desire, that their inferiors should be temperate, honest, humble, contented with their lot, and conscientious in discharging their respective duties; but these dispositions we cannot expect from human beings uncultivated, undisciplined, and unrestrained by principle. The bet-

feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors; and are consequently more disposed in turn to respect those superiors. They are more inclined to examine, and more capable of seeing through, the interested complaints of faction; and on that account are less apt to be misled by a spirit of discontent and disaffection. In free countries, where the safety of the state depends much on the favourable opinion which the people may entertain of the administration of the Government, it must surely be of the highest importance, that they should not be disposed to form a rash or capricious judgment concerning public affairs.

Wealth of Nations, lib. 5. chap. 1. part 3. art. 2.

The truth of this remark is exemplified by the Scots themselves; amongst whom, education is singularly cheap, and universally promoted. The regular conduct and sobriety of the lower orders in Scotland, compared with their neighbours, together with their respect for authority, and for established ordinances, we must ascribe to early discipline; and, accordingly, we seldom find a native of that country who has not learned both to read and write. The attention which men of rank and property, as well as the Clergy, in Scotland, pay to the cultivation of their inferiors, does honour to that national spirit, for an excess of which they are sometimes censured. The late good and glorious Abercromby (who, at the age of 70, was called again into service from his patrimonial domain) had bestowed peculiar care on the children of his dependants, whose education he regarded as a momentous concern attached to his estate.

ter

ter sort, however neglected in their infancy, yet learn morality, or something in its place, from the common intercourse of civil life. The lower orders, if destitute of religious education, have no controuling principle beyond the fear of legal penalties, which, as we must all be sensible, cannot reform the heart, or improve the moral character.

But, much as Government is interested in these early impressions on the minds of its subjects, there is no *law* amongst us which professes to take the instruction of the poor in general under the public care. They are left to imbibe, as they can, those principles, of which to be ignorant, is most dangerous to themselves and others. They are deserted at an age when they most of all require the best lessons to guard them from the impressions of prevailing custom and bad example.

Their *parents* may instruct them, some will say. They may so, if they are able; but we know that in general they are unable, and that, if the task of instruction be left to them, ignorance must be entailed on

*Preaching
not sufficient
without
previous
Instruc-
tion.*

such families. Others perhaps will alledge, that all may go to *church*, and learn their duty. This provision, indeed, our laws have made; but for whom is it a provision? Certainly not for minds totally unformed by any previous discipline. Where no rudiments of divine knowledge have been taught, what lessons can such hearers receive from the pulpit to any useful purpose? The Gospel itself, though written in the plainest style, yet, containing the history of events so distant from us in time and place, requires some previous instruction, and a habit of thought adapted to the subject. We shall in vain expect the Clergy to build the superstructure of Religion, where no foundation has been laid by early care and education. Perhaps it is not possible, in a great kingdom, that merely political institutions should do more, in this respect, for the advantage of the lower classes, than is done by the Constitution of our own country; but, that it is within the reach of human industry to produce a great amendment in this particular, we cannot entertain a doubt.

It

It may seem visionary to expect, that a plan for educating the children of the lowest ranks should, throughout this country, be systematically pursued; but difficulties, however great, may be successfully combated, when men are prompted to the struggle by the strongest motives, and impelled by the pressure of necessity. A conviction of impending danger, of incumbent duty, and of the part allotted to our nation on this theatre of the world, may call forth a spirit which now lies unperceived, and excite us to combine for the purpose of spreading Christian knowledge, as we do for other purposes of immediate urgency, where the laws are silent or ineffectual. The motives, which respect our present safety, have been already mentioned; and they are seconded by another, less at hand in its consequences, but in itself of exalted dignity, as connecting our Island with the whole habitable globe.

*Difficulties
vanquished.*

The close of the eighteenth century has been accompanied with events which awaken general attention; and religious minds, amidst the convulsions and changes

*State of
Europe.*

*Christiani-
ty purified;*

of states and nations, seem to discern a tendency towards the completion of certain prophecies respecting the Church of Christ. This having suffered a succession of trials, from the persecution of her enemies and the corruption of her friends, for fifteen centuries, began, about three hundred years ago, to emerge from bigotry and barbarism. Since this æra of the Reformation, philosophers and sceptics have attacked, with every sort of speculative argument or sarcastic ridicule, the Religion of Christ; which, after its other trials, having stood one more severe than all, (*i. e.* the scrutiny of enlightened reason) may be regarded, by human judges, as in circumstances more favourable to the successful communication, and general reception of it among the different nations upon earth, than at any period since the Apostolic age; its evidences being now confirmed, and its doctrines established beyond the reach of open, or concealed hostility. In the course of this last, and sharpest conflict, Christianity being cleared from the superstitious appendages with which

which

which the folly and the fraud of men had loaded it, appears at length in its primitive simplicity, prepared "*to have free course,*" to pervade the earth, and to produce the predicted change in the hearts of its inhabitants. That the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, we are assured by Christ himself; and the impediments which have hitherto obstructed its progress, gradually giving way, we may be allowed, with due submission, to look round, and consider by what means it shall be conveyed to those regions that are still in darkness.

Its first promulgation was assisted by the immediate agency of Heaven; but since that period it has been left to the operation of human agents, from whom we must now expect the advancement of its empire; nor can we hesitate in concluding, from probable appearances, that the means employed in this great work will be Commercial Intercourse, conjoined with that important auxiliary of knowledge, the Art of Printing.

And prepared for Propagation.

When we reflect on the sums expended, both by Catholics and Protestants, to for-

Missionaries.

ward the propagation of the Gospel in foreign parts, together with the unfeigned zeal and persevering labours of the missionaries themselves, we are with reason surprised at the general failure of success in these charitable undertakings.

The fact is, that Protestant missions have chiefly been directed to the conversion of *savages*; and the cause of their miscarriage seems to have existed in the want of that civilization among their converts, which is a necessary prelude to Christianity itself; for our Religion, plain and simple as it is, requires an intellect above that of a mere savage, before it can be embraced, and properly understood. By Commerce only shall we supply these previous steps to religious information. The merchant must pave the way for the missionary; and, by importing the arts and accommodations of life, give leisure to the mind for higher subjects than corporeal wants, namely, for the contemplation of itself and its future destiny. The affections of the people, whom we visit, being conciliated by our actions, by our fairness in dealing, and by substantial

*Merchants
must lead
the way.*

substantial services, they will naturally feel a desire of imitating those to whom they feel themselves so much indebted. Accordingly, on this must be founded our first hopes of converting others to the Religion we profess; that its effects appear strong and evident in our own manners, character, and conduct; that our words are regulated by truth, and our transactions by justice. As these virtues will in vain be inculcated by missionaries, whilst the opposite vices are practised by our colonies, factories, and settlements, a reformation must be brought about in the latter, if we would ensure success to the former; and we must correct our own countrymen, before we can reasonably enter on the conversion of foreigners.

For the present, all attempts to spread the light of truth appear to be suspended by the rage of war; but this circumstance, however pernicious in its present effects, may give birth to changes that will conduct mankind in due gradation to the accomplishment of the divine prediction.

Approaching Aids to the progress of Christianity.

The subversion of Papal superstition in

*Conversion
of the Jews,*

the West, and of Mahometan enthusiasm in the East, (events which, in the opinion of many, are fast approaching,) will probably be attended with public confusion, and other calamitous effects; but amidst these shocks and convulsions, the Christian system will acquire new strength and vigour, and, like the sun emerging from collected clouds, will shine forth with redoubled lustre. Struck with its brightness and increasing power, after these successive storms and tempests, the Jews at last may receive its beams, and gratefully admit their “*healing*” influence. The conversion of this people will, according to the Scriptures, at the time appointed by Divine wisdom, be brought about; and, we may presume, will prove a wonderful auxiliary to the propagation of the Gospel; not only as this event will add weight to the evidence from prophecy; but as the Jews, who for many ages have been distinguished in the commercial world, will then become the most active conductors of this heavenly warmth to the remotest regions.

The

The preservation of this singular race* under a series of persecutions, and their continued

* When the Prophet Daniel (in chap. xii.) foretels the restoration of the Jewish people, he connects with it circumstances that seem applicable to the mode of propagating the Gospel, which has been here suggested as not unlikely to take place. He predicts a time of trouble, such as never was before experienced, which shall be followed by the deliverance of his people, "*when many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*" The virtues of many who are now disregarded and despised, will be raised to esteem and honour, whilst others, who are now respected, will sink into shame and infamy. The Prophet, in this chapter, as our Saviour in the 24th of St. Matthew, employs expressions which relate probably not only to the restoration of the Jews, but to the great day of judgment, when the dispensation will be completed. The inspired writer then pronounces distinguished blessings on those who should be instrumental in the progress of true religion, and adds the remarkable declaration, that "*Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;*" apparently indicating that, by means of the ready intercourse which will ensue between distant nations, the glorious state of things shall be brought to pass, predicted by Isaiah (chap. xi. 9.), when "*The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.*"

The Prophet Isaiah also (chap. xviii.) describes the destined assemblage of the Jews from their dispersion, in terms most interesting to a nation which, both by commerce and territorial acquisitions, is connected with the fate of Palestine.—The introductory passage is peculiarly striking, as addressed to some great maritime power, skilled in navigation, and of extensive influence. "*Ho! land spreading wide the shadow of (thy) wings—accustomed to send messengers by sea, even in bulrush vessels upon the surface of the waters.*"

See the excellent Treatise (with a new Version and Remarks) on the Eighteenth Chapter of Isaiah, by Bishop Horsley.

In

continued separation from all other people,
notwithstanding their wide dispersion, for
above

In the history of the Jews, who, for so many ages, have been distinguished as a commercial people, we are peculiarly interested. When we contemplate the family of Abraham, nearly two thousand years before the Christian æra separated from every nation of the earth, and, amidst all their calamities and dispersions, adhering to the worship of the true God, whilst their neighbours and conquerors were abandoned to idolatry; when we regard them at the present moment, existing in every part of the globe, not intermixed with any other people, nor less numerous, as is asserted, than they were in the height of their prosperity; when we consult their most antient writers, and find them not only celebrating the Divine attributes in language worthy of the subject, but predicting the disasters which actually followed the impieties of this nation: when we review these circumstances, it seems impossible to doubt of the miraculous events recorded in their history, without which we cannot account for the political and religious state of the Jews. But the separation of this family, their various downfalls, and singular deliverances, having an undoubted respect to the whole human race, afford ample assurance to every other nation, that the Almighty takes an interest in their welfare, although he does not mark the peculiar instances of his interposition on their behalf, as he did in the case of the Jews.

Accordingly, in the progress of Britain from Papal superstition and Feudal despotism to light and liberty, we acknowledge a chain of causes, which, convinced as we are of a presiding Providence over the Children of Israel, we cannot but refer to the same Author. Whilst the course of nature is conducted by general laws, those events that we call fortuitous, are governed by a Power, who, without any signs of extraordinary interference, can give success to our endeavours, or disappoint the best concerted plans of human policy. When we add to this consideration the influence of the Divine Spirit on the human soul, and our total ignorance of the manner in which it may be communi-
cated,

above two thousand years, must be regarded as miraculous, although it has been accomplished without any direct or visible interposition. Reasoning from this analogy, we expect that the winding up of the Jewish dispensation, or its union with the Christian Church, will also be brought about by natural causes; and with humi-

cated, we must acknowledge that our affairs at this moment are no less dependent on Heaven, than the Jews were under the miracles of a Theocracy. These doctrines, of a particular Providence, and of Impressions on the mind of man, which were entertained by some of the ablest reasoners in the Pagan world, are now established by the authority of Revelation; and, so far as they prevail, their tendency is to remove the miseries of life, or to support us under them. They will indeed repress our eagerness for gain, and subdue our passion for conquest; but they will neither slacken our industry, nor abate our courage. Prudence, therefore, unites with piety, in urging us to govern our lives by principles, which, we know, will conciliate the favour of Him who controuls events, and who can, without interrupting any acknowledged laws of nature, either infatuate the counsellors, or intimidate the troops, on whom we repose our firmest confidence.

The Jewish system, we have reason to think, advances to its predicted close; and our own nation, distinguished by the favour of Providence, appears to be peculiarly fitted for the winding up of this great catastrophe, or for extending by its Commerce, in conjunction with these universal factors, (on whom our Faith itself is grounded,) the greatest of blessings to every inhabitant of the globe. The benevolent ardour, the holy ambition, and awful solicitude, which the present juncture must in consequence excite, we shall not attempt to express in words, but rather leave to the dictates of devout meditation.

lity

*Assisted by
this Coun-
try.*

lity we may presume, that nothing would more effectually contribute to this great revolution, than the example of a nation, whose individuals, connected with the Jews by Commerce, should afford in their conduct and transactions a substantial and shining proof of the morality inculcated by the Gospel. But, whatever may be the issue of present commotions, serious persons apprehend that some part of a plan, far beyond the views of politicians, is growing to maturity; and they are consequently anxious that our own country, from a virtuous and voluntary impulse, not from the pressure of calamity, may be found an instrument not unfit to be employed in completing the destined purpose. The lowest member of society, when trained and taught, as every one amongst *us* ought to be, may bear a part in this national concern; but how much more those, who by their example and their property might command an influence great beyond calculation, were it duly combined and concentrated!

*Union re-
commended.*

The knowledge and abilities, the benevolence and desire of doing good, which qualify

qualify men for public services, exist in vast numbers of our countrymen; but in many instances produce no adequate effect, from the want of union, and of some establishment that might draw, as it were to a focal point, these scattered rays of intellect, and of patriotic zeal. The reserve of Englishmen has by many been remarked in matters of religion; and that, from the fear of incurring the charge of hypocrisy, they often avoid, as individuals, duties of acknowledged obligation. The same persons, when aided by associates, would become intrepid and indefatigable; and would readily forego, in a cause approved by conscience, both personal ease and present interest. To exertions like these we are loudly called by the singular course of political affairs, and the general revolution which is taking place in the states of Europe; sensible as we are, that it is our wisdom to improve this momentous interval, before we are ourselves actually involved, or that our country is made in any degree the seat of war, and the scene of tumult. We shall be still more solicitous,
whilst

*Public
safeguard.*

whilst opportunity is granted, to provide some public safeguard, if we attend to an observation founded on experience: “*That during disastrous periods the mass of the people are liable to an epidemic immorality.*” Against the contagion of this pestilence, to which in our turn we also may be exposed, there seems to be no preservative but that of religious principles, infused into the populace by the means of education. Thus shall we fortify them against temptations that may arise in a season of alarm and public trouble; and we shall at the same time fix a striking mark of distinction between our countrymen, and our continental neighbours, amongst whom the profession of a Christian is regarded with indifference by the higher ranks, and has little influence on the lower. That our fellow-citizens, in such a period of revolt, should be signalized as the people who maintain their loyalty and attachment to the Gospel, (which our teachers expound with simplicity, and their hearers receive with sincerity,) is a circumstance which the ablest statesman will
 most

most highly value and revere, from a conviction that public spirit, integrity, and self-government, will give a decided superiority to any collection of men, in their contest with a like number destitute of these principles, though completely equal in bodily and mental powers. The tendency of the Gospel, when divested of superstitious terror, and of enthusiastic confidence, is to render every man, in proportion to his abilities, of service to the community. In the midst of commercial affluence, if duly cultivated, it would prevent luxury, and, in the full enjoyment of liberty, licentiousness. Prudence therefore, policy, and common sense, demand that doctrines of such a tendency should be carefully inculcated; and if we examine the Gospel itself, we find that it charges on the conscience of every well-informed Christian, the duty of impressing his own conviction on the poorest and most ignorant person within the sphere of his connections.*

*General
Duty.*

Heads

* We are taught by Christ to pray, in the first place, that a sense of true Religion, of Gratitude, Obedience, and Devotion to God, may prevail through the world. As we are enjoined to pray.

Heads of families, in particular, are answerable for the right instruction of those who, by the appointment of Providence, are committed to their care; nor can others, who stand alone in society, exempt themselves from the obligation of communicating this greatest blessing in life. They

so are we to labour, for the furtherance of objects on which the virtue and happiness of mankind depend. Consequently, in offering up these divine petitions, we solemnly engage, that by our example, and by every means in our power, we will promote the knowledge and practice of the Gospel, the most acceptable service we can perform to its Author. Having left this his last dispensation to be carried on by human instruments, He has given to us His creatures the opportunity of gratifying Himself, even our Almighty Maker. The very glance of such a thought excites sensations which, in human language, cannot be uttered. We feel ourselves at once transported to that future state, the enjoyments of which, in whatever they may consist, will of necessity be enhanced by the recollection of our having endeavoured to *hallow* that name on earth, which it will be the desire and the delight of all without exception to adore and magnify in Heaven. That we have the power of acquiring this transcendent bliss, by the employment (with a right temper) of a few fleeting years, is an instance of inconceivable goodness, which we should earnestly pray that we may duly estimate; and that having done so, we may communicate our own conviction to some other of our fellow-creatures. The attainment of this conviction (so as to act upon it) is the *pearl of great price*, which the merchant, in the Gospel, having found, sold all that he had to make the purchase. We seem advancing to a period when the wisest and the wealthiest will rejoice in having thus converted a portion of their property into one precious jewel, which may be conveyed, without risque, not only to a distant country, but to another state of existence.

may

may alledge, as individuals, their want of power ; and they might alledge the same with equal reason, if required, *as individuals*, to defend their country in arms. On either occasion, men must form themselves into bodies before they can act with efficacy. Associations for the purpose of promoting Christian knowledge, most honourable to their supporters and beneficial to the public, are established in many parts of this country ; but an effort is required at this moment, which, by its universal operation, may determine the national character. On Commerce we place, with reason, our chief human dependence ; and accordingly are labouring to amplify and extend it in every direction. But as Commerce will bring on its accustomed vices, we must counteract them by Christian virtues, with the elements and principles of which we may, by our concurrent and combined endeavours, effectually impress the people. To point out any precise manner in which these combinations should be every where set on foot, would deservedly appear impertinent, as the system must vary in form, according to the population of the town or district.

*Associations
necessary.*

*Sunday
Schools.*

Sunday Schools we may venture to propose as an object on which these associations would most usefully bestow their immediate cares; the institution itself being liable to less exception than any other of the same nature, and having an undoubted tendency, so far as it may avail, to forward the progress of Christian knowledge. It is indeed by some regarded as insufficient for the purpose in view, and therefore we propose it only as a preliminary step, or as the means of directing public attention to a concern, whose importance, if understood and felt, would carry us through every difficulty in the execution.

Charity Schools have been censured, as tending to unfit their pupils for some of the lowest, though most necessary employments; but no one will object to the simple communication of Christian principles, which *at this time* can rarely, if ever, be effected without the faculty of reading. Such a measure of knowledge as this, is held out by the institution of Sunday Schools, where the Child is instructed for the express purpose of reading the Gospel, is introduced

duced to habits of order, and accustomed to a regular attendance on the duties of public worship. It is vain to think of keeping the multitude in a state of stricter subordination, by our endeavours to exclude them from the power of reading. We shall probably, by such means, sometimes cut them off from the Gospel of Christ; but we must remember, that the Gospel of *Equality* may be conveyed, without the aid of letters, by a short and easy catechism, to the meanest understanding, and the most ignorant among the people. The lowest are capable of comprehending what are called the Rights of Man, and of acquiring expertness in every qualification necessary to render them able agents in commotions, insurrections, and revolutionary tumults.

On the utility of religious instruction we have already enlarged; but, beside this professed object, various good consequences must ensue from that inspection of the poor, which the plan here recommended would require of the wealthy. The vice and misery of the former, is greatly aggravated

Faculty of Reading.

Poor called into notice.

vated by their indolence and despondency, which nothing would be so likely to obviate as opportunities of calling them into the notice and observation of their superiors. The appearance of their children, even once in the week, at school, must not only excite in these young minds an idea of character, and some desire of distinction, but might animate the parents with an assurance that they likewise themselves, by means of their children, would become the subjects of benevolent attention. Magistrates may interfere, when indigence solicits parochial relief, or when crimes demand the regular application of legal penalties; but the benefactors, of whom we are speaking, can at all times exercise authority under a more conciliating title, and, while they patronize the children, can insensibly controul the conduct of the parents. By such an intercourse between the different classes, numberless mischiefs might be prevented, which arise and grow inveterate for want of some seasonable check and remonstrance from those whom the people respect. “*The rich and poor*” will

*Intercourse
between
Rich and
Poor.*

will thus “*meet together*,” without degrading the one, or improperly setting up the other; and that pernicious doctrine, which teaches the lowest member of society to regard himself as on a level with the most dignified, will be counteracted, not only by principles themselves, but by the manner in which they are communicated.

Some persons of great worth have lately discountenanced the institution of Sunday Schools, from a persuasion that, having been tried for several years, they have produced no effect; that our nation continues as corrupt as it was before they were set on foot.

*Objection
to Sunday
Schools as
ineffectual*

It would indeed be miraculous, if Sunday Schools alone should make it otherwise, or even if they should render all those who have been taught in them proof against a general depravity of manners. Every method, that can be used to reform the vices of the age, will appear to be of less effect, in proportion to the greater occasion there is for it; as the best cultivation will produce little fruit in a bad season; but this can be no reason why we should not labour to improve the world, or to keep it

from growing worse. The right tendency of the method in question will scarcely be disputed, as there cannot be a doubt, whether it be useful or not, to instil into children, notions of order, virtue, and religion.

*and dan-
gerous.*

These Schools are also censured, because fanatical teachers have in some places rendered them instrumental to the propagation of dangerous doctrines. In reply to this, we may alledge the well known maxim, that, as the best things may be perverted to the worst purposes, we cannot argue from the abuse of an institution against its use; which reasoning has peculiar force in the present instance, where the utility is general, and the perversion very limited. The importance of such Schools is acknowledged by this activity of persons, who endeavour to render them subservient to their own tenets; and, consequently, our fears that an advantageous post may be occupied by the enemy, should not induce us to abandon, but to fortify it with augmented diligence.*

By

* Sunday Schools are by a few persons treated as a violation of the rest enjoined upon the Sabbath. To this objection, (when we consider

By inculcating true religion, as we cannot fail to make those who receive it better men, so shall we more firmly attach them to our Church and State, provided that our Schools are conducted, under the joint inspection of the Clergy,* by teachers well affected to the Establishment.

Our hospitals, and other foundations for the relief and benefit of the poor, all contribute to this end; but, at the present juncture, a new and voluntary effort of the higher ranks to promote the welfare of their inferiors, would invigorate that union on which our national strength depends.

The pressure of taxes, and of other burthens, the consequence of war and of unprecedented circumstances, will be lightened in the ideas of the multitude, when

consider the necessity of the case, and that religious duties are not interrupted by the time employed in teaching,) we may venture to apply our Saviour's argument on a similar occasion; namely, that, in bringing the ignorant and lawless to useful knowledge and good order, we are performing a work of mercy, and a sacrifice well pleasing unto God.

* The Clergy, in numberless instances, cannot on Sunday command the leisure that is requisite for a proper attendance on these Schools, which in such cases must languish and become ineffectual, unless visited and supported by laymen of influence and respectability.

they observe their superiors combining on all sides for the purpose of instructing, informing, and improving their children. Our neighbours on the Continent, some from their rejection of Christianity, others from their coldness and indifference to its doctrines, have no such means of conciliating the populace, whom their governors will rather endeavour to keep in darkness and ignorance, in order to render them fitter instruments of despotic power. The British Constitution, and its code of laws, not only allow, but invite examination, and will be supported by none with so much constancy, as by those who are capable, in any degree, of comparing them with the rule of right and standard of justice, contained in the Gospel.

To communicate Evangelic wisdom, is the great object of our Established Church; but we must repeat with sorrow, that, in the present state of society, this public blessing is not felt by a large description of our countrymen, either from their unwillingness to attend a place of worship, or from their inability (through a total want
of

of religious information) to receive the instruction there afforded. We find continual instances, even in this enlightened age, of children that are growing up, unacquainted with the name of their Redeemer, except for the use of oaths and execrations.

Thoughtful individuals lament these effects of ignorance and irreligion, but, partly from defect of power, partly from indecision as to the manner of employing it, they remain inactive spectators of an evil at once so disgraceful and so dangerous to the community.

The primary and most simple measure, here recommended, of a Sunday School,*
in

* Mr. Colquhoun's valuable publication on the subject of extending education to the lowest class, has rendered that scheme no longer utopian or improbable, by the means which have been adopted for abridging the method, and reducing the expence of instruction. But this ingenious and philanthropic system, which introduces the scholars not only to reading, but also to writing and arithmetic, as it requires their whole attention for a certain period, may be thought incompatible with districts, where the hands of children are employed as soon as they are capable of learning any thing. Now, in what place soever twenty children are found to be growing up in ignorance, from the poverty of their parents, a Sunday School, properly directed, will supply the defect, and communicate that sort of knowledge which is necessary for a Christian.

Mr.

in many places has not been tried, because difficulties opposed its first commencement; but these, being in a great degree imaginary, will vanish upon the actual experiment, or, when religious motives have their proper operation, will be readily overcome.

*Powers of
Men when
combined.*

The strength and ability resulting from a combination of men intent on the prosecution of a benevolent plan, will render things easy which before were thought impracticable. In the persons thus combined, talents and faculties, which had hitherto lain dormant, will be called forth into action; the diffident will be supported by those of firmer habits, the plans of the sagacious will be aided by the liberality of the affluent, and Commerce will pay its just contingent to the cause of Christianity.

*Attention
to the cause
of Religion.*

It is earnestly to be wished, that, before necessity shall drive us to these exertions, a number of well-constructed plans actually

Mr. Colquhoun applies an additional spur to the efforts of benevolence, by his representation founded on facts, of our judicial punishments; the alarming increase of which, he deduces in great measure from the total want of religious education in a large description of our common people.

carried

carried into execution, should draw the public attention to a subject of such importance, and give, at the present critical period, a correspondent cast to our conversation and daily intercourse with each other. We by no means wish to revive the language of the Protectorate in the seventeenth century, or to countenance the affectation of talking piously: but at this juncture of awful suspense and political perplexity, we seem peculiarly called upon to cultivate that manly, sober, rational spirit of devotion,* which renders men, while occupied
in

* On considering the state of our country, new motives continually arise, impelling us to the cultivation of religious sentiments. The vast extension of our Commerce has occasioned a proportional increase of wealth and luxury; and as the modern system of life, by drawing men into society and the public view, gives unbounded influence to the law of opinion, outward objects, which the world admires, will in consequence generally absorb the heart and affections. As a counterbalance to these aggravated temptations from sensuality and splendour, the goodness of Providence has in our days afforded additional strength to the spiritual system, not only because the external evidences of Evangelic truth are placed (as was before observed) above the reach of cavil, but that, as the human intellect advances, or as we improve in science, literature, and true taste, we at every step more clearly discover the internal excellence of the Gospel, and its superiority to every other system of Religion.

We

in worldly affairs, alive to their higher interests, and anxious to promote, not only the present but the future happiness of their fellow-creatures. Such a spirit exists in thousands on this island, and requires only the impulse of some public emergency to become conspicuous in every district. The reasons which support it, are level to common understandings, and, being founded on truth, will become clearer and more convincing, the more they are canvassed and discussed.

*Eastern
Settlements.*

We are likewise powerfully urged to promote the knowledge and practice of

We seem, indeed, approaching to a period when this conviction will be complete, and the arguments which support it, irresistible; but it is to be feared, that our moral conduct will not improve in due proportion, and that truths, most interesting to our present comfort, will continue to lie dormant and ineffectual, because fashion and custom lead us to be silent on such topics.

Whilst the course of things is regular and tranquil, and men proceed without disturbance or alarm, religious principles, in the opinion of many, are little wanted. The laws of the land and common morality are sufficient. But let us suppose, that the mind of man is tortured by agonies of remorse, suspended by anxiety, or overwhelmed by sudden disaster; whence can he look for relief or refuge, but from the interposition of that invisible Power, who not only rules events, but has pointed out to the guilty conscience effectual means of obtaining pardon and peace, with an assurance of such support and consolation as will enable the soul to bear up under the heaviest load of sorrow!

Christianity

Christianity at home, when we regard our Settlements abroad, particularly in the East, where we find our countrymen not only opulent merchants, but at the head of a mighty empire. All attempts to plant the Gospel there, have hitherto proved ineffectual, from the attachment of the Hindoos to their ancient customs and hereditary establishment. But the benevolent interest which our Government has taken in their political welfare, and the means employed to instruct them in our arts, and language, aided by the example of British manners, will probably, in a course of years, elevate their minds, and enable them to shake off the superstitious despotism by which they are enslaved. The improvement, which has lately been remarked in the morals of our fellow-citizens in India, their cultivation of useful knowledge, and their attention to the Sacred Writings, together with the illustrious example of some characters among them that do honour to the present age, inspire hopes that our sway in that quarter of the globe will ultimately become a blessing to its inhabitants.

bitants. Nothing being so likely to impede this great work, as the profligacy of our seamen and soldiers employed in the defence of these distant territories, the instruction of our lower ranks in the principles of religion becomes an object of new importance, both on their own account, and also of those who are to witness their conduct, and to feel its effects. We may therefore consider every Christian School set on foot in this kingdom, as tending to the improvement of our most remote connections; and while we see the British Islands extending their power over Asia, it will lessen our alarm at such enormity of dominion, if we can be persuaded that it may prove conducive to the diffusion of Divine Truth, and to the real happiness of mankind.

It may possibly excite a sneer, to speak of our seafaring or military men, as affording examples of Christian virtue; but it will not be thought ridiculous to attempt the removal of those scandalous immoralities, which are strengthened by ignorance, and the total want of discipline in early life.

life. We cannot help repeating, that the remedy of these evils, the instruction of poor children, although it be a necessary aid to our Clerical Establishment, and liable to no valid objections, is not provided for by our laws, and can only be carried into effect by the voluntary interference of private citizens. Were this persuasion to become national, and were we as anxious to supply our people with right principles, as we are to perfect them in the use of arms, we should have no cause to fear either internal commotions, or external attacks; and least of all should we apprehend, what some forebode with peculiar uneasiness, an overgrown population, numbers greater than we can maintain. Increasing multitudes will become increasing strength, when they are trained and disciplined to that respect for authority which is founded on the fear of Him from whom both Laws and Magistrates derive their origin. The vast machine of Government, which in any country but our own would require deposite power to give it motion, will roll on, as it were spontaneously, whilst every wheel,

by

*Overgrown
Population.*

by a free performance of its own course, contributes, as it ought, to the active operation of the whole system. The doctrines of the Gospel, while they expel from each individual self-conceit, and independent arrogance, inform him, that his conduct in the most obscure station is of importance to the general happiness, and may bring down a blessing on the community.

By the same doctrines, he is taught to regard himself as distinguished by that Observer who, under all circumstances, can impart to his mind either present comforts, or future hopes, far surpassing bodily gratifications.

To expect, that from any mode of teaching, our common people should become animated with this spirit of devotion, would imply an overweening confidence in the plan proposed; yet, were the unfeigned Christians in each district combined, as the Gospel directs, for the public good, a change of manners must ensue, much beyond all calculations founded on the ordinary conduct of men; because it would be seconded by principles and motives which,
when

when once in action, overpower every human obstacle.

On casting our eyes over the globe, and contemplating the parts of it attached to our own island, either by commercial transactions, or by the right of conquest, we are naturally led to reflect upon the importance of our national character, on the mercantile and military talents requisite for a people engaged in concerns of such magnitude. Even supposing that our countrymen are endued with these primary qualifications, we must still regard them as liable to vicissitudes of fortune, in proportion to their extent of territory, and to a Commerce which covers either ocean. Our next reflection, then, would be, on the moral character of our people; whether it was such as might recommend them to His protection who directs contingencies; and we should venture to predict their stability as a nation, if we saw them anxious to supply an acknowledged defect in this particular, by an increasing attention to religious duties; if to the industry of merchants, and the intrepidity of warriors, they

*National
source of
Stability.*

Humility. were intent on adding the humility of Christians. A clear and unequivocal expression of this humility would be afforded, not only by our zeal in constructing plans for the diffusion of Christian knowledge, but by our condescending personally to inspect the manner in which these plans are executed. Societies formed for this purpose, as they cannot look for splendour or distinction from their labours, must be actuated by the single principle of Christian benevolence. And should it please Heaven, whilst we are thus occupied, to visit us with any public disaster; as the stroke itself would be lightened, in the common order of things, by a cordial union between the better sort and their inferiors; so should we apply with more consoling hopes for succour in distress, and bear up with greater fortitude under calamities inflicted by that Omnipotence which it was our object and most earnest endeavour to propitiate.

There is, at the present juncture, a fund of religious knowledge and conscientious principle in this country, greater, we believe,

lieve,

lieve, than ever existed in any other; nor is it absurd or chimerical to suppose a general reform effected, could our men of property and of intellect be induced, with becoming zeal and perseverance, to take into consideration those interests of Christianity which must ultimately determine the success of our arts, manufactures, and commerce.*

Supposing

* The substance of the preceding pages we will here beg leave to recapitulate.

Commerce is allied or essential to Christianity, as it supplies the means of employment, of intellectual improvement, and of propagating the Gospel.

Christianity is essential to Commerce, as it resists the corruption of morals by wealth and luxury; as it converts increasing population, assembled multitudes, and intercourse with foreigners, into sources of good; and, lastly, as it incites men to expend their surplus property on institutions beneficial to the public.

From this alliance it follows, not only that the pursuit of our temporal interest is consistent with a due attention to our eternal welfare, but that we cannot effectually promote the former, if we neglect or slight the latter. It follows also, that Commerce being intended by its author to aid the progress of Christianity, the nations who apply it to sinister purposes, cannot but expect to forfeit its emoluments. The passion for splendour, and a general emulation in expence, may give a temporary spring to arts and manufactures; but œconomy alone, the fountain of beneficence, can fix prosperity in Britain, by connecting the Commercial with the Christian system.

This subject the late venerable Dean of Gloucester, Dr. Josias Tucker, has expressly treated with his usual ability, in Sermon

*First ob-
ject of this
Nation.*

Supposing it possible, that we should continue to advance in wealth and power, whilst our morals were growing more and more corrupt, a real patriot could not rejoice in a career of prosperity; which, he was sensible, must at length conclude with a more distinguished downfall.

The Omnipresence of the Deity, that He takes an interest in human affairs, and that He has aided the establishment of Christianity, are truths of which no candid reasoner can entertain a doubt. Let us then ask ourselves, whether it is probable that,

mon VII. of a volume published at Gloucester, in the year 1776.

Dr. Adam Smith, in his excellent Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations, has likewise proved, that Commerce will ever be carried on to the greatest advantage on the enlarged-principles of philanthropic liberality. We cannot but regret, that so valuable a writer should be unwilling to refer this better part of man to its real origin; although he must have understood, that without Religion (and what Religion is there except the Christian?) neither Benevolence, nor even Justice* could prevail among men; and that Commerce, when deprived of her divine associate, must in time become the parent of a general depravity.

* *Haud scio, an pietate adversus Deos sublatâ, fides etiam, et societas humani generis, et una excellentissima virtus, justitia tollatur.*

Cic. De Nat. Deor. Lib. 1. c. 2.

If this could be observed of the grossest superstition, what homage should we pay to that pure light whose radiance can only be derived from the *Sun of righteousness!*

having

having by his providential care so long cherished this Religion, He will suffer it to stagnate and remain stationary for the sake of our present ease and accomodation; or that He will favour the commerce of a people who neglect the application of it to the cause of Christianity? Some amongst us will be satisfied, if Religion prevails so far as to promote the chief ends of Government; if it enforces truth and justice, submission to authority, and contentment with our condition. But the Gospel offers to us benefits infinitely greater, remedies both for natural and moral evil, a specific antidote to vice, and a sovereign cordial under misery; blessings which it can communicate, if taught with integrity, to people of every class and of every climate. Prudence, therefore, no less than piety, dictates an unfeigned endeavour to second this divine principle, which, after a preparation of near six thousand years, is matured and qualified, in conjunction with the commercial system, to form the character of man, and fit him for his high destination.

Were our gifts of Knowledge and Religion cherished with becoming zeal, they might, by the aid of our Commerce, be spread to every region of the globe, and we should be employed at once as the carriers of merchandize and of the Gospel; thus becoming “*a witness to all nations,*” and immediately conducive to the great change which Christ himself hath promised to effect by the instrumentality of man.

Degradation of the Continental States.

Our eminent advantages in Religion, Government, and Commerce, are enhanced by the degradation of other States from the rapid progress of a Power which threatens subversion and slavery to the whole Continent of Europe. Amidst this disorder and distress, no people in Christendom excepting ourselves appear competent to the office of propagating the light of Truth. On this country alone the charge devolves, if her citizens have the wisdom to understand the crisis, and obey the signal. Viewing ourselves thus, as separated from other nations, not only that, like the Jewish people, we may preserve the Sacred Oracles, but that

that we may also publish them, we shall, if we act under this impression, apply our minds to the stricter union of Christianity with our schemes of traffic. We have dwelt above on the remarkable preparation at this juncture for diffusing the light of the Gospel, from the removal of impediments, the renewed simplicity of its doctrines, the Art of Printing, and those various aids which modern ingenuity has invented to open and enlarge the human intellect; so that nothing more seems requisite, than the zeal of a commercial people who profess and practise the religion of Christ. If to us are granted those faculties and opportunities, and we omit the application of them intended by their author, no reason can be alledged why our Trade should not decline, like that of Venice, Lombardy, the Hanse Towns, and Holland. Should this event befall us, it is not improbable that some other part of Europe, reduced by calamity to purer morals and better institutions, may cultivate both Christianity and Commerce with greater success, and become fitted to the office which we would

Opportunities to be improved.

not execute. The regret,* which must affect us on such a deprivation, could we anticipate, we should want no other incentive to exert our utmost powers in the cause of

* This feeling is, in the Old Testament, stiled jealousy.* The Deity having condescended to symbolize the relation which He bore to the posterity of Abraham by that of conjugal union, Christians, of whom the Jews themselves were only typical, may be considered as still nearer objects of the Divine affection. Among Christians, the people of this island are distinguished by the purity of their doctrine, every Briton being allowed to derive his principles from the unadulterated Gospel. In their examination of its evidences, and in their interpretation of its precepts, they are assisted by a degree of literature and science, of taste and judgment, never attained by men in any former age. Their devotion consequently, or attachment to the Deity, should be of the most exalted kind, and their desire of advancing his glory, the most active that can occupy the soul of man. The opposite temper in such a people, implies a corruption of the religious principle similar to idolatry among the Jews; and accordingly by this very name the love of the world, and the love of money, are called in the New Testament. From hence, the Second Commandment in the Decalogue appears perfectly applicable to us at this period, who are, no less than the Jews, capable of moving our Maker to jealousy, and to a resentment so much the more tremendous, as we possess the power, through the means of Grace, of attaining virtues far superior to all that could be expected under the Mosaic dispensation.

Such sentiments, it must be owned, are more suited to a Sermon than to their present place; but the love of the world, the law of opinion, and the force of fashion, carry all before them with a rapid torrent, against which no rampart can avail of earthly substance. We are driven by necessity to borrow our materials from the stores of Heaven.

* I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people.
Deut. xxxii. 21.

true

true Religion. Impressed with these ideas of the Divine Economy, when we reflect on the dishonourable and debased condition of the European Courts, we cannot help recurring to their former splendour, and the opulence which they possessed, without exerting any proportionate endeavour to advance the great interest of man, and the object which they might have known to be acceptable to his Maker.

From their neglect of this principle, we trace their decline in morals, and consequent loss of power—an interesting lesson to ourselves, who can read without restraint the Evangelic page in its original purity, and who enjoy the ability, above all other Christians, of converting it to the improvement of our own people, and of the most distant nations. Our unparalleled and increasing Commerce, the source of this ability and of so many distinguished benefits, we cannot presume is bestowed upon us to gratify our selfish inclinations; nor can we doubt that our crowded cities,* unless duly restrained,

* The numbers that we now encounter in our streets, where, thirty years ago, all was quietness and nearly solitude, are striking

*Laudable
Scal.*

restrained, will become scenes of depravity, the natural forerunner of political confusion. Many of those amongst us, who are animated with a zeal well suiting the important crisis, would joyfully resign every present gratification, for the distant assurance

ing symptoms of our increasing industry and opulence; and were the individuals who compose these numbers trained and disciplined, as they ought to be in this Christian country, we should rejoice with reason in our progressive population. But for this distinguished happiness a great nation cannot hope without labour, attention, and expence; or, in other words, unless its wealthy citizens have the spirit to bestow a portion of their leisure time and surplus property on public concerns, instead of lavishing the whole on vanity and voluptuousness. We have seen the effects of patriotic principle, animated by the pressure of the times and general example. The principle of Religion, when brought into action, is the strongest of all that influence the mind of man. Supposing this awakened by a general sense of danger, and aided by the force of fashion, in every district associations would start up for moral, as of late for military purposes. Whilst one part of the community was training the youth to arms, the other would be forming their minds to virtue. To instruct the ignorant would be deemed as necessary, as to feed the hungry; and to prevent depravity, as to cure disease. Chastity being treated with its just respect, and concubinage in general discountenanced, marriage in proportion would be honoured and encouraged. Nor have we reason to apprehend from hence a superabundance of fellow-citizens, or that our population will outstrip the means of due provision. Their industry and temperance would prove an ample compensation for their overflowing numbers, whilst our distant territories supplied with such inhabitants, would gradually resemble, and eventually augment, the happiness of their Mother Country.

These

ance of contributing to the welfare of their country and fellow-creatures. Were these liberal sentiments reduced to action, encouraged by combination, and directed by wisdom, the example would no where be ineffectual ; and the frequency of such examples pervading the whole community, would put every man on considering how he might promote, at least might not impede, what the ablest of his countrymen esteemed essential to the public safety. When the body of a nation have acquired this disposition, their political affairs of course assume a more propitious aspect, and even disasters lose their accustomed terror; since all possess resources which no invader can cut off, and are bound together by ties which no hostile force can sever.

These plans of reformation, chimerical as they appear, require nothing more for their actual accomplishment than a consideration of the Gospel, with a conviction of its truth, and that on its author we depend for each moment of our existence.

In this favoured Island, (where Faith, although she slumber, still *abideth* with her lovely Sisters,) myriads would be roused to the consideration above mentioned, by a shock of national alarm. But *then* it may be too late to repel the danger. When our all may be to-day at stake, shall we fondly think it time enough to exert ourselves to-morrow ?

To

To attain this latter object, namely, a stronger attachment between the different orders in the State, what means could be applied with better hopes, than a general plan of communicating Religion, by the care and expence of those who have ability, to the children of the indigent? Union on such principles, would distinguish us from the nations on the Continent, in whose late decline the discontent, and dissatisfaction of the lower ranks, are no less evident than the selfish luxury of the higher. A striking contrast is even now presented by this Island, where those who excel in religious knowledge, both feel the desire, and employ the means of diffusing it,

*Auspicious
Prospect.*

Supposing this progression in Christianity to keep pace with the advancement in Trade and Affluence, we cannot but regard such a people as bidding fair for permanency. They may be chastened but will not be destroyed. From the calamities, which may be inflicted to exercise their virtue, they will rise with redoubled vigour, as the well-tempered steel recoils in proportion to the force impressed. To possess the
power,

power, in any degree, of securing the welfare of those around us, of adding strength to our country, of enlightening savage ignorance, and of co-operating with the designs of Providence, is a satisfaction greater than all other joys which life can offer. We know that there is a God,—that He wills the propagation of his Gospel, together with the moral improvement of his rational creatures, and that such effects must be produced through the agency of man. We know also that from God alone we can receive any solid comfort, and that he is able to bestow it under the most unfavourable circumstances. Premising these truths, we shall draw the inference, and act accordingly, if we are entitled to the name of Britons.



Walker, Printer.



