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D E I S M

NOT CONSISTENT WITH THE

R E L I G I O N

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R E A S O N A N D N A T U R E .

By CAPEL BERROW, A. M.

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TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS

G E O R G E,

PRINCE of WALES.

FIRST in descent as your Royal Highness is from our most gracious Sovereign, and his all amiable and illustrious Consort, eminent for, among other their *truly* patriotic virtues, that exemplary life of piety, practical as well as devotional, which gives such an added lustre to the diadem encircling the brow of each; perfected too as *you* are, by means of a well-directed mode of education, in the theory of a British constitution, and practised, from *principle*, in the *moral* precepts of that religion to which it is so nearly *allied*--not to mention those your
affiduous

assiduous researches in the *region of science*, with such acknowledged success too, as the *mathematician*, the *classic*, the *connoisseur in the Belles Lettres*, the *virtú*, acquisitions which serve to give to the world so confessedly, in the *august prince*, the sensible and accomplished GENTLEMAN, I will not doubt of your attachment at the same time, with a zeal congenial with that which glows so unremittingly in the breasts of your royal parents, to the cause of Christianity, genuine, *uncorrupted* Christianity, the *peculiar glory* of Protestant communities in general, the chief corner-stone in Great Britain's most happily constructed establishment in church and state in particular.

In order therefore to counteract the unwearied ENDEAVOURS of MODERN DEISTS to argue away the *necessity*, and in consequence the *credibility* of a *revealed* religion, to invalidate the authenticity, and, of course, the *authority* of that repository of the *Gospel dispensation* the *sacred pages*, and to repel, by the force of *reason*, attempts inimical, as those are,

to

to the *civil* interests of *every Christian* state, and daily encreasing to an alarming degree in *ours*---I venture to request *your patronage* and protection of a performance, the sum and substance of a *familiar epistle to a friend*, penned *formerly* with that *all-interesting* object in view, and now, with the utmost deference, laid at your Royal Highness's feet by

Your most devoted servant,

CAPEL BERROW.

to the local interests of every country. The
 only remedy to an existing defect is to—
 remove the defect from the system and
 to substitute the best and most effective
 remedy in a given case. The only way to
 do this is to study the case and to
 apply the best remedy for the case.

Your most devoted servant,

Wm. W. Phelps

It is the duty of every citizen to
 support the laws of his country and
 to pay his taxes. It is the duty
 of every citizen to support the
 laws of his country and to pay
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REASON AND NATURE.

DEAR SIR,

WHEN I had last the pleasure of a conversation with you at your house, you was pleased, from your wonted zeal for the cause of deism, to put into my hands a treatise, intituled, *Deism fairly stated, and fully vindicated*, which, agreeably to your request, I have perused with great attention, making those remarks, as I went along, which I now send for your perusal. And this I do the more readily, as they afford answers to a supposed *non-necessity*, and, in
B consequence,

consequence, the incredibility of a *revealed* religion. To the authenticity therefore, and, of course, the authority of that repository of the Gospel dispensation, *the sacred pages*, I will, in order to avoid trespassing upon your time and patience, take upon me to shew how incompatible the *Deists* principles are with the boasted design of deism, as stated by its formidable patron and defender, compared with that *promised* plan of redemption a future *universal restitution* : but to the purpose and to proofs.

From the beginning of the performance there occurs nothing worthy our notice, till the author comes to his *definition* of deism, which is as follows :

“ Deism, says he, properly speaking so called, whatever ill usage it may have met with, is no other than the religion essential to man, the true original *Religion of Reason and Nature* : such as was believed and practised by *Socrates* and those of old; who were as great ornaments, and did as much honour to human nature, as any Christian ever did.”

In the true idea of the *religion of reason and nature*, I understand to be implied an attention to all *extraordinary* intimations of our duty, as well as to such as arise from the *usual* exertions of our reasoning faculties. So that it may and must comprehend not only the observance of such rules as *Socrates* and other philosophers taught and practised, but a regard likewise to precepts delivered by a *divine* instructor, furnished with the requisite *credentials* as *Heaven's ambassador*. Wherefore if to deism our author unites not a distinct belief of *revelation*, he should consider himself as possibly falling short of the *religion of reason and nature* ; which teaches, or I know not what is meant by the religion of reason and nature, that every precept or point of knowledge, delivered *mediately* or
immediately

immediately to us by God, demands from us a distinguished reverence—as a separate superadded obligation on our consciences. It is, of course, incumbent therefore upon our deist, before he presumes to assimilate the cause of deism to the *religion of reason and nature*, to prove that in the former is included all that the latter recommends. Now, this I conceive to be a criterion of the propriety of the above comparison which deists are scarce apprised of.—And yet till they make both agree apparently *in rejecting revelation*, they cannot pretend to say that deism, and the *religion of reason and nature*, are absolutely one and the same uniform similar rule of moral agency. That we may therefore put the point here in dispute upon a proper foot of inquiry, and see how far deism, in its *antichristian* scheme of moral independency, can be justified on the principles of *natural reason and religion*; I will suppose you urging, as a rational foundation for our Deist's infidel persuasions, the three following, perhaps, only material arguments to be produced in their behalf.

First, It is not probable that any light, information or instruction touching the Deity, or our duty to him (which, our Deist says, is, properly speaking, a revelation, p. 17.) should have been communicated to men by an immediate, particular, special interposition of the Deity for that purpose; nor

Secondly, Does it appear, that Jesus Christ was really the instrument employed by the Deity to convey any such revelation to the world, supposing it not improbable that God may have been inclined at times to afford us one; nor,

Lastly, Does the authority of those scriptures, which are said to be a most faithful repository of that same revelation, come to us so clear and unquestionable in that point as might be expected;

nor are the writings themselves so well calculated, as they ought to be, to answer those purposes for which they are presumed to be intended.

If these most formidable obstructions to a general reception of Christianity, these standing stumbling blocks in the way of deists should haply at length be removed, though but even to *your* conviction, I shall rest myself contented with expecting, what will amply recompence my trouble (if there be any in this address) the pleasure of having happily prevailed over the two hasty prejudices of a valued friend, and restored *one* at least, from among the infatuated and unthinking *many*, to a rational and manly faith. I shall not however *multiply* reasonings on each particular branch of the enquiry, but satisfy myself chiefly in the use of one argument alone, when that one alone seems to me conclusive. “First then, it is not probable, says the Deist, that any light, information or instruction touching the Deity, or our duty to him, &c. should have been communicated to men by an immediate, particular, and special interposition of the Deity for that purpose.”—And wherefore? Why my reason, say you, in support of the assertion, informs me, that the connatural notices in my breast are so sufficiently declarative of the Deity, and of my duty to him, to myself and to all mankind, as to render any further instructions in my way to future happiness useless, which therefore could not have been intended me by my Creator.

Your reason! alas, another man’s reason, as *he* terms it, informs him that there is no God. And if the religion of reason and nature consists only in consulting what every man calls his own reason, atheism might as easily be resolved into the religion of nature by those who at any time espoused that particular persuasion, as you be justified in rejecting revelation, because your reason informs you that it is absolutely unnecessary.

But hold, say you again, by my reason I do not mean the suggestions of whim, prejudice, and partiality—nor a perverse and reprobate mind ; but (what points out to me the Deity, and my duty to him and to all mankind, and is therefore the *religion of reason and nature*) an unbiassed attention to the nature and fitness of things, a law in which is comprehended the whole extent of my duty considered in every relation and circumstance of life ; a law obligatory upon every individual, and claimant of my attention therefore in preference to, and even independent of all other *supernatural* guides to my conduct.

Aye, that, my friend, is indeed a true portrait of the religion of *reason and nature* ; and what pity it is that the world does not furnish out a few more *deists* on that plan !—There would then be a proportionally less occasion for revelation.—But what shall we say when nature, whilst she affords us so ample a system of moral and religious duties, abounds at the same time with such a group of specious allurements to recede from it ? What if men, if even *deists*, from the necessity of their constitution (as *degenerated* free agents I mean) are more liable to exceed, than to keep within, the bounds of their duty ? Did not sensuality and voluptuousness, did not envy, pride and ambition, too frequently usurp the province of right reason, the *religion of nature* would not stand so much in need perhaps, as it now does, of the proposed assistances of *revelation* ; but 'tis to remove those obstructions to a proper exercise of the one, that the other comes in aid.

If therefore you would have me acquiesce in your opinion, that a *revealed religion* is superfluous and therefore not probable, you must first prove it to be so by a disinterested enquiry into the real truth of the case—by a strict, *consistent* attention to your own golden rule, *the religion of reason and nature*. The meer suggestions of
your

your own fancy are of no moment at all in the affair, nor the prepossessions you may have imbibed from another man's hasty and authoritative declaration. These, added to the bias of your own wishes may easily enough induce you to believe that revelation is therefore indefensible. But alas! how easy a matter is it for a man to believe that to be false, which he has either an inclination to suppose, or too much reason to wish, not to be true! If *the religion of reason and nature* therefore my friend is the directory of *your* faith and practice in life, try whether from thence you can deduce arguments sufficient to justify a rejection of the Christian dispensation; see whether from the light of the one you can discover any thing really unnatural in the purposes from which originates the other. Whether, in the first place, it is in fact *not* agreeable to *reason* to suppose that nature (fallible as she appears to be) should receive from time to time such admonitions and instructions from the Deity, as may be a probable means to forward her in the discharge of her various duty? And then, secondly, whether revelation, having so apparently probability in its favour, can *reasonably* be treated with derision, insolence and contempt? If the principles on which your deism is supported will countenance such a procedure as this, they are but a sandy foundation for your confidence, carrying with them a manifest repugnancy to the very essence of *natural* religion, and dissenting from it in a point *infinitely momentous*.

True, say you, but what then? I am not (as I said before) one of those random contemners of revelation here supposed; I have reasons for my infidelity, well examined, well considered; and (a point which must necessarily be settled, e'er I can propose yielding up to you even any of my doubts and scruples) have the circumstance of *improbability* to oppose to the *presumptive evidences* of Christianity; the former greatly preponderating, as I apprehend, to the disadvantage of the *latter*.

For in the first place is not *the law of nature*, when attended to as it ought, (and with whom lies the fault if it is not) a full, sufficient guide to our conduct? Are we not prompted by the dictates of right reason, to act in a manner answerable to the end of our creation, and the dignity of human nature? How preposterous is it then, as says a late eminent writer,* “for a man to hunt after a guide to his conduct, when the author of his being has planted one in his own breast?”

But under the supposed influence of such an all-sufficient guide to his judgment, how comes it that that writer should with so little judgment oppose his own private opinion to the sentiments of men unquestionably his *equals* at least, if not his *superiors*, in every advantage that learning, application, and even natural abilities, could give them? How happened it that *he* was not instructed from *within*, to treat with more suitable respect a religion embraced and revered by those, who were not more remarkable for their piety than for their parts and penetration? And if the scriptures do really abound with such inconsistencies and absurdities, which he, from but a bare superficial knowledge of them, is pleased to lay to their charge, how comes it that they should have escaped the censure of a *Locke*, an *Addison*, a *Newton*? There is no reason to be given why *they* should be *more* partial to any fancied failings of holy writ, than Mr. *Chubb*; but many, why the judgment they have given in its favour, should be taken in preference to the calumnies and aspersions with which *he* has thought fit to load it. Unless, as Dr. *Rogers* observes, learning, study, and all those advantages which are usually thought to render one man's judgment preferable to another's, are to be esteemed, in the enquiry after truth, of no moment, of no consideration whatsoever.

* Vid. Chubb's Farewell.

He ought to have considered, that if some have, with more stubborn presumption, perhaps, than self-persuasion, pronounced Christianity to be false, none have yet been able to make it appear so to the conviction of sincere, impartial, and learned enquirers: and that it would have been worth the employment of his great *intellectual abilities*, to account for the conduct of the Supreme Being, in suffering a deceit of that kind (if it be one) to pass upon mankind through so many ages past, for seemingly no other end and purpose, than to be the parent of the most cruel miseries to its first champions and defenders,—a fountain from whence flowed an ocean of innocent blood. For I think it ought to be particularly remarked, that if at any time false religions have been obtruded on mankind by the irresistible *authority* of the sword, none but ours has been established on the more trying principle, a readiness *to perish with the sword*—none but ours has gained proselytes to its cause, under such strong *prophetic* intimations of what unparalleled cruelties they were to encounter, who engaged in its defence. And if you can conceive it possible, that men, acting under the most pure and fervent piety towards God, should be given up by him to such a complicated severity of fate, in consequence of opinions *really false and groundless*, you must acknowledge, that they were of all men, as *unaccountably* as *undeservedly*, the most miserable.

But to return.—That there is interwoven in our nature a directory to our conduct, which, would we attend to it, would secure us from ever erring in our practice; a rule for our judgment, to which if we would but appeal, we should be as seldom erroneous in our principles, I can readily enough admit. By the term conscience, we usually distinguish the one; right reason, we call the other. Two different names, in fact, for one and the same thing—It is the fitness of things which comprehends both. But is this same law of nature sufficient, *in fact*, to keep men within the bounds
of

their complicated duty? Do men invariably act up to the rules which right reason prescribes?---That this is not the case, the several daily violations of the laws of society, too abundantly evince, And if in answer to that, it be said, that neither is revelation, with all its coercive authority, or most persuasive allurements, sufficient for these ends---what will follow? Why, that men are men, subject to the controul of passions to which they even court an obedience, and will gratify, when it is their inclination so to do, in opposition to the persuasions of either reason or revelation.

The only question meriting, my dear Sir, your attention, is which of the two is most likely to answer *now*, as a *directory* for man's conduct. *Reason*, subject as it is to the many inherent frailties and imperfections of human nature; or *revelation*, which comes in aid to it, and is proposed to us for the very purpose of *removing* those imperfections? From the appearance which the former now makes, we are apt to entertain a fallacious idea of its *native* endowments; not considering the advantages it has borrowed, and the education, if I may so speak, which it has in various instances received from that revelation which has furnished it from time to time with insights into the wondrous views of Divine Providence, impossible to have been attained *solely* by *human* penetration. And if you would but carry your thoughts back to those past times of wretchedness and despair, when a gathered cloud of darkness, ignorance and error, overshadowed the whole earth; you would surely cease to doubt the *occasion* of God's sending to us that day spring from on high to visit *us*. You would, on the contrary, be induced to acknowledge, with a becoming gratitude, the many essential advantages so happily derived to us from the seasonable event.

For as, by his fatal transgression, our first parent had bereaved himself, in a great measure, of that inward purity of nature, wherein he was created, and had contracted, in length of time, a general proneness to sin and wickedness; it is not to be supposed, but that he must transmit to his descendants some share at least of that deadly and diffusive poison. And accordingly we find in fact, that the present generation of men (his offspring) are all born into the world, with a predominant bias towards evil, are become complexionally averse to every thing that is good, and disposed to a life of impiety, unrighteousness, and sensuality. And from the several histories of the heathen world we learn, that men, through a kind of gloomy and sullen despair of divine mercy, arising from a too conscious sense of their own unworthiness, and variously contracted guilt, fell at length into a settled indifference towards that God, on whose deserved wrath and indignation they could not reflect but under the most terrifying fears, and foreboding apprehensions; till at length, succeeding ages lost sight of both him and his laws; were so far from perceiving, or even wishing his regard for them, that they did not even choose to retain him in their knowledge, but transferred the worship due to the only true God to an impious adoration of the meanest of his creatures, even to birds and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

And if the wiser and more understanding part of mankind, were not so universally lost in ignorance and error, so wholly abandoned to a prostituted worship and service; yet were *they* notwithstanding in a confessedly wretched and disconsolate state. They were sensible of their lost innocence, and of course forfeited interest with their maker, of which their consciences too plainly reminded them; and, what must considerably awaken their fears and apprehensions, could not frame to themselves, any probable scheme for re-instating themselves in his favour. They could easily enough, by the light of
nature

nature alone, discover the danger they were in of being punished for their bad conduct; but could not, from any conclusions of reason, assure themselves, that, become, as was unhappily their case, obnoxious to God's justice, that he would remit the punishment due to their crimes, upon either the merit of their repentance, or any *piacular* oblations in their power to offer up to him, "though they gave their first born for their transgression, the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul."

No, this was the great work reserved for our *Saviour* to accomplish.—It was he, and he alone, who was to ease them of their fears with respect to that most momentous concern, and be the happy instrument of reconciling them to their offended God.—He it was whom God himself sent into the world to *save sinners*—to preach to them a *remission* of sins, in an unlimited degree, (unlimited, I mean, as to the nature of their crimes) upon the limited, but rational terms of the Gospel—In a word, there was wanting, says a very sensible and useful writer,* "there was wanting a revelation to discover, in what manner, and with what kind of external service, God might acceptably be worshipped;—there was wanting a revelation to discover, what expiation he would be pleased to accept for sin, when his honour and authority were affronted;—there was wanted a revelation to give man assurance of the great motives of religion—the rewards and punishments of a future state; in fine, there was wanting a particular revelation to make the whole doctrine of religion clear and obvious to all capacities; to add weight and authority to the plainest precepts; and to furnish men with extraordinary assistances, to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature;—and without the assistance

* *Vide Stackhouse's Body of divinity, p. 19.*

such a revelation, their wisest men were always of this opinion, that the world can never be reformed."

You may even give over, says *Socrates*, all hopes of amending men's manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send you some *other person to instruct you*: for whatever is set right, as says *Plato*, in the present ill state of the world, can only be done by the interposition of God.*

This, in short, is the multiplied business of revelation; this the great work begun by the *Abrahamic*, continued by the *Mosaic*, and completed by the *Christian* dispensation.

Now if such a supposed circumstance in the divine œconomy, seems to you either impossible or incredible; if you think it an absurdity in nature, to suppose that God should *send* a person into the world purposely to make discoveries, merely and solely for the consolation and future happiness of *his creatures*; that the person thus sent, should be enabled to work miracles in *testimony* of his mission, and at last suffer death to *accomplish* the benign purpose: if you say all this *kind* of reasoning is amounting in fact to an absurdity, and is therefore, with respect to the subject matter of it, really incredible, you must dispute the merit of even *any* person's claim to an authority, the declared end or design of which is, in nature, so extraordinary, and, as you think, so unwarranted.

But if reason will not, cannot, authorise a diffidence so derogatory to those most unquestionable attributes of the Divine Nature, his love, his tenderness, and compassion towards his creatures, in the one case here supposed, I know not how you can justify an insinuation so unfavourable to the dignity and divine authority assumed by Jesus Christ, intimated and implied in the other.

* *Vide Plato*, in *Apol. Socrat.*

That there was actually born into the world such a person as Jesus Christ, we have at least the same rational evidence for believing, as that there ever existed an *Alexander*, or *Julius Cæsar*. That that same *Jesus* did also work frequent miracles, not even his enemies could deny; though they were pleased, sometimes to ascribe them to the agency of *Beelzebub*, the prince of devils. That he was *therefore*, fully authorized to demand our attention to those several doctrines exhibited to us in his Gospel, as truths delivered by the will and approbation of God (a point now *secondly* to be considered) we are sufficiently encouraged to believe from the following plain and obvious conclusion of right reason: the only argument on this point to which I shall request your attention at present.

It is a truth, I think incontestible, that our Saviour could not work miracles, in support of doctrines so unquestionably good and useful, as are those which characterize the precepts of the Gospel, but by the concurrent agency of a good spirit *necessarily residing in*, or immediately *derived* to him, from the fountain of goodness himself. In either case, it is quite consistent with the dictates of right reason, to attend to the miracles, on account of the doctrines; and to pay a regard to the doctrines, in deference to the miracles.

I am not insensible with what raillery this maxim is treated by many, who term it arguing in a circle; yet am I not, therefore, the less satisfied of its force, propriety, and usefulness. For if, at any time, men's attention to a train of truths, not so naturally obvious and intelligible, perhaps, as necessary and important, could be best and most effectually engaged by an awful display of some unusual, some miraculous testimonies of those truths: it is far from being incredible, that such expedients should occasionally have been employed to so noble, generous, and useful an end. But will it as naturally follow, that God should at any time direct, or even permit

permit the use of such *extraordinary* means of working upon men's senses and passions, barely to mislead them into error? That invariable principle of universal love and benevolence, which gave birth to, and is, as it were, the very soul of creation itself, will ever restrain its Divine Author from reversing, or suffering others to reverse the *natural* to the destruction of the *moral* government of the world. Nor can any of those stated laws of nature, by which is regulated, with such consummate wisdom, each distinct system in the grand *universal whole*, ever be interrupted, but by virtue of a power adequate to, or in part and on purpose communicated from that which at first established them. So that miracles must ever come with a greater or less degree of credibility, in proportion to the appeal made to them, in proof of a greater or less *universal* utility.

Nor will the confident report of other miracles, which seem to be urged only in support of doctrines in themselves false or frivolous, discredit in the least the testimony of those wrought by our Saviour, in evidence of what is true and important—with men, I mean, who are willing to distinguish truth from falsehood—what is, from what is not—with men, in short, who can proportion, properly, their assent to the several different degrees of credibility with which attested facts come attended. For two or more recorded miracles may come supported by the same *external* circumstances of credibility, and yet they may not be *therefore* all equally, all *internally* alike credible. A fit occasion for every *supposed* miraculous interposition of Divine Power, should be first proved, e'er we give a willing assent to even the most plausible evidence brought in favour of it;

*Nec Deus interfit nisi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit.*

HOR.

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This consideration, added to the known completion of prophecies, which adds a degree of probability to the recorded miracles of our Saviour and his apostles, with which none others come attended, is what gives that partial but honest bias to our faith in *them*, preferably and in contradiction to all others of a more modern date.

Point me out some doctrine fairly deducible from those miracles ascribed to Abbé Paris; a doctrine evidently claimant of so extraordinary a token of the divine sanction; a doctrine of real consequence to the present and future happiness of mankind; and which they could not have arrived to the knowledge of, but by some actual *immediate* intelligence from the Deity; and I should be cautious how I disputed the veracity of the reports given of them. But when, on the other hand, the reverse is more evidently the real case, it concerns me not to make them at all a subject of my enquiry. If they would influence men to views and practices discountenanced and condemned by laws natural or revealed, I, in that case, may reasonably conclude, that there is some latent impenetrable juggle in the affair; and in fact, that they are no *miracles* at all; but such lying wonders, only, as have been frequently *foretold*, and might possibly be effected by the cunning craftiness of men interested in casting a mist before the eyes of those who loved darkness rather than light; and whose subtilty might be sufficient to deceive even the *elect*.

Not to dwell, therefore, unnecessarily long on a point of enquiry, in itself of so *little* moment, on only *imaginary* disadvantages to the important cause of Christianity; without dwelling upon those several previous dispensations of God's providence, introductory to the mission of *Jesus* in the fullness of time; the wonderful preparation with which it was introduced, *viz.* a long train of preliminary incidents; direct promises to the ancient patriarchs; a variety

riety of prophetic intimations, both before and under the legal œconomy; and lastly, an express declaration, that He (by name) should come so and so qualified and circumstanced in life as did our Saviour, I say, waving these corroborating evidences of a divine sanction, which might be urged in further evidence of the sacred character he assumed; it may be sufficient, I presume, to conclude, from his power of working miracles, in support of doctrines so evidently good and useful as were those recorded in his Gospel, that Jesus Christ was that *anointed* of Heaven whom we are called upon to hear and of course, to believe and obey in all things *whatsoever he saith unto us.*

Well, allowing, for argument sake, the *probability* of God's having actually revealed himself (by means of the Gospel of Jesus Christ) for the information, comfort, and future happiness of mankind, yet, shew me, say you, in the *third* place, the genuineness of those writings, which are said to be such a faithful repository of that same revelation, and their expediency to answer those very purposes for which they are presumed to be intended.

How, in the first place, does it appear, that the Scriptures are really the writings of those very persons, under whose names they are published, or, that the several circumstances therein related, were evidenced by real matters of fact?

Why, all this I believe, upon those grounds of credibility, which challenge my belief of the authenticity and genuineness of any other book or history you shall name me.—But are writings, say you, in which are said to be concerned the salvation of mankind, to be put upon the same footing with books which contain in them little more, perhaps, than mere matters of amusement? Is it of the same consequence,

consequence, whether those histories, in which are recorded the exploits of a *Cæsar* and an *Alexander*, are true and genuine relations, as the history of our Saviour and his apostles?—No, that be far from me to insinuate. But then, unless you can think it reasonable to disregard all faith in history, as a point of credulity in itself absurd and unwarrantable, and will insist upon it, that nothing in fact is to be believed, but what we ourselves see done before our eyes; I would ask you, how things transacted at a considerable distance of time past, whether of sacred story or prophane, can be transmitted to posterity, but through the same kind of channel? What other methods need be used, to engage our confidence in the one, than are necessary to establish the credit and authority of the other? Or by what *arguments* you would endeavour to convince me, that *Livy* and *Herodotus* were in reality the authors of those histories which go, with such unquestioned pretensions, under their names, and that the accounts given by each, have, as historical narrations, a proper evidence to support them, which will not lie with equal weight, in either of those particulars, in favour of the histories of both the Old and New Testament?

Well—supposing that to be a consideration, as much in proof, as you would wish, in the first place of the *authenticity* of the Scriptures in general, yet wherein, say you, consists their *importance* in point of *information* and *instruction*? For how shall I know where, among such a variety of readings in the same book, to fix upon that which is the true one?—Why, the same rules of criticism which you would make use of, to discover the true reading of any one author among the classics at large, must be employed in your perusal and examination of these. In either case, your reason (as far as you have qualified it for passing judgment upon a matter of such *essential* import by those usual assistances, which enable a man to become a critic in any other learned *composition* what-

soever) must be your guide. If at any time, in the course of your enquiries, doubts and difficulties arise, which you yourself cannot master, you must, in order to their being set in a true and proper light, have recourse to, and depend on, in proportion to their superior skill and acquirements, the judgment of others. And unless you would conclude, because various have been the readings of *Homer*, of *Virgil*, and of *Horace*, and contradictory accounts given by established historians, that therefore neither of them are to be regarded as genuine and established writers, or as authors deserving our perusal, I will desire you to put it home to your breast, and ingenuously tell me, whether you think there is, in reality, any foundation for impeaching the sacred writings of non-authenticity and integrity, of insufficiency as a rule of faith, or of unwarranted pretensions, as a repository of revealed truths—because *they* have accidentally given occasion to a variety of dissonant readings and interpretations ?

But who, say you, in the difficult cases supposed above, are the judges by which I am at last to be determined, when among those very persons, who claim an *authority* to preach and expound scripture doctrines, so few, even among these, agree in giving the same unvaried meaning to the same passages and expressions in those admired pages ?

A question is here supposed, which may be best answered by the following important piece of advice : it is this—

After having thoroughly examined the grounds and evidences of *Christianity*, make the due distinction between *that* and the *pretended* truths charged upon it. Make yourself master of every argument which points out the divine authority of our Saviour ; and when that is done, attend closely to the several doctrines he

advances as an *appointed* revealer of the will of Heaven. What *He* says you will, of course, in deference to that *authority* with which he *speaks*, receive and believe. What *others* say for him, or assert of him, by virtue of *their* commission and inspired powers, *that* claims, *in proportion*, the same regard. So that those doctrines which our Saviour delivered concerning the Father, himself, and all mankind, or the apostles, in his name, are by all means to be embraced without reserve—Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther—I mean, for faith necessarily *undefiled*—For practice you may go farther; from the Scriptures you may repair to those venerable lights, the *fathers*, for edification, for discipline, for patterns of sanctity and moral purity—There you have before you an unbounded field of instruction.

But if, through an excess of pious zeal, *they* would, at any time, carry you into matters of faith (or practice) not warranted either by reason or revelation, there, if you are wise, you will take your leave of them: for though we are not to consider them in that ridiculous light, in which a late eminent writer* has penciled them out to the world, yet neither are we to view them through the medium of *infallibility*. They claim from us much for their transmitted records of primitive story; much for their exemplary piety and devotion; much for their unshaken constancy and Christian fortitude. Let us, however, not be afraid to acknowledge, that they *casually* shared weaknesses and imperfections in common with the rest of mankind. And when these are made the subject of ridiculous banter by some, let us not be under such an alarm, as if, with *theirs*, those *fathers* I mean, the reputation of *Christianity* is proportionally endangered. The reasonings of those pious sages are at best but the reasonings of *men*. All doctrines therefore deduced by *them* from Scripture, which are not apparently *profitable* for *edification* as well as *instruction*, may reasonably be considered as coming with so *questionable* a claim

* The late Dr. Middleton.

to our attention, that neither, if we believe them, are we better, neither, if we believe them not, are we the worse.

But will you, because disputes may have run high on some topics of enquiry, weakly or wickedly termed *Christian*, conclude, that therefore our genuine *unsophisticated* code of religion is in the gross, to be disregarded? Your boasted *religion of nature*, in which there is scarce any one principle which has not been made the subject of dispute, may, by a parity of reason, be rejected also. "Has not the existence of a God, the liberty of man, the nature of good and evil; what is happiness; what it is that thinks within us; whether the soul be material or immaterial, mortal or immortal; the nature of justice and moral honesty; in short, every point of morality or natural religion, been controverted? Is the inference from thence, that there is or can be no such thing as natural religion? Is there no such thing as truth, because the question has been, what is truth? Is there no such thing as right reason, because men have maintained infinite absurdities and contradictions about every thing in even matters of moral obligation?"*

But would not Providence, say the Deists, have prevented the Scriptures from becoming such a source of various sentiments and opinions, if he had intended them for that general and important benefit we imagine? Would he not have left us such an unerring criterion, for ascertaining a right interpretation of the *sacred pages* throughout, as that all who have the same opportunities and qualifications for consulting them, must necessarily unite in giving to the same passages and expressions the same meaning?

If this is reasonably to be expected from *revelation*, as a *guide*, I would ask, why it happens, that under the supposed *infallible*

* Vid. Dr. Benson, on the Reasonableness of Christianity.

direction of *right reason*, any two in life are capable of differing in point of judgment in even matters of meer moral obligation ? A supposed infallibility in the *writers* of revealed truths, does not necessarily preclude the natural fallibility of their several *readers*. The unerring *directrix*, in short, for discerning either the authority of the gospel dispensation, or the doctrines severally deducible from it, is absolutely and solely *right reason*. But whilst different men of different views, prejudices, and prepossessions, substitute in its stead *opinion*, it is no wonder, if many others are betrayed into a complaint, that no fixed rule at all is given us for that purpose.

I hope, by this time, that my friend accedes to the force of *reason*, and is convinced, that a Deist, in order to his thinking and acting agreeably to the *religion of reason and nature*, is under an indispensable obligation to be a friend to, and espouse with sincerity, the religion of Jesus Christ ; and for this reason, because *that* coming to us as a promulgation of divine truths and instructions, lays evidently as great a claim to our notice and esteem, as any moral obligation whatsoever. Nor is it my friend, an argument of any weight, which some urge against the probability of a supposed *revealed* religion, that the moral duties it means to enforce, are none else than what natural reason recommends : this should serve rather to strengthen than weaken its authority ; since to those instinctive impulses of *nature* which Christianity recommends to our regard, it superadds as well proper motives as proper means, to engage us in the practice of them. To name no more at present with regard to the latter, than the duties of *examination, mortification, and self-denial*, which are indisputably such points of discipline, as all, who impartially consider them, will acknowledge to be established upon views truly rational, and universally serviceable.

So far considered then it must appear very evident, I think, to the impartial, that a rejection of revelation is not authorized by the *religion of reason and nature* ; or the cause of *Deism* in the least advantaged by a supposition, “ That *Socrates*, and those of old, were as great ornaments, and did as much honour to human nature, as any *Christian* ever did.”

Had it been said, that *Socrates*, &c. did as much honour, and were as great ornaments to human nature, so circumstanced as it was in *their* days, as *Christians* do and are now, to the improved religion, and other superior advantages *they* pride themselves in the possession of, there had been perhaps too much truth in the remark. But if they mean to infer from that concession, which most assuredly they do, that nothing more is required of *us*, in point of moral and religious obligations, than, besides copying those worthies of old in their practice, to attend with a becoming conscientious deference to their precepts, they undoubtedly mislead their followers into a most palpable and fatal error. They, in that case, either weakly or wickedly deceive them. They must either not know what are the grand extensive purposes of revelation, and then their random aspersions on it are an argument of a most unpardonable wantonness of impiety, a prejudging irreverence of behaviour towards its divine author ; or they must knowingly and wilfully misrepresent them---and then I would ask how such a conduct quadrates with the dictates of the *religion of reason and nature*.

They cannot be under any the least degree of doubt, but that the design of Christianity is to make such discoveries as should, and if duly attended to, would lead to actions more suitably good and rational, than were before in *general* practice ; to enforce the obligation

gation of moral duties, by stronger and more persuasive motives than the religion of nature *depraved*—than even the religion and improved sentiments of *Socrates* could, with any proper *authority*, establish; and to complete men for attainments for which they were created.

The religion of old (totally devoid of those strong enforcements to the practice of the law of nature, with which Christianity abounds) furnished out such intimations concerning the nature of things as were either very doubtful, dark, and obscure, or else conspicuously weak, whimsical, and absurd—Witness their many extravagant conceptions of the first cause all things and the nature and origin of man; their confused ideas of the formation and government of the world, and their still more inconsistent views and practices in the course of their *religious* forms and ceremonies, which were distinguished by either a solemn series of idolatrous impiety, or, if I may so speak, by a course of *pious* inhumanity, by their either *worshipping stocks and stones*, or *offering up their sons and daughters unto devils*.

The intended redemption of mankind, from the guilt and misery they were too conscious of having contracted; the doctrine of a resurrection from the dead, of a judgment to come, and of rewards and punishments in an after-state, are verities, which if men ever arrived to any tolerable degree of knowledge concerning them, vanished from the world a long time before the coming of our Saviour—Nor does it appear, that life and immortality were ever clearly brought to light, but by the Gospel: No, not by the all-penetrating *Socrates*, or even the divine *Plato* himself. The *nature* and *terms*, however, of the *redemption*, the *person* by whom it was to be effected, and by whom the world is at last
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to be judged, were circumstances of information, in their nature, not capable of being derived to men, but through the channel of *revelation*.

But if *Socrates* was confirmed in the belief of some of these truths, yet could *he* make them equally apparent to others? Could he publish them to the world with that degree of confidence and authority, as did our *Saviour*; who, by a series of miracles, prophecies, and an unspotted conduct in life, gave sufficient evidence to the *impartial*, of a derived commission from *Heaven*, to declare, confirm, and establish them?

And if, after all, you could prove to me, that moral obligations, to which *Socrates* is presumed so remarkably to have attended, and which we will *suppose* him so illustriously to have discharged, work so universally strong and powerfully on men's consciences, as that they naturally perform what they see or know to be their duty, I would grant you, that then nothing more would seem needful, as a law to their conduct, than the awakening voice of nature and right reason. But since daily experience evinces, that men want more to be excited to the practice of their duty, than to be informed wherein it consists, it is evident, that revelation, if only on account of its many *peculiar motives* to virtue, is *therefore* highly eligible, and *worthy of all acceptation*. For what can we conceive more necessary and important, more conducive to the safety and well-being of society, than to solicit men's attention to, among others, the important duties of integrity, piety, temperance, chastity, and charity on the principles of *Christian* obedience; Of what general advantage, I say, must it be, to have these duties *enforced* on the consciences of men, by the added hopes and terrors of a day to come, when *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*.

But

and terrors of a day to come, when *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

But to proceed.—Our Deist, in page the sixth, gives us a notable specimen of his dexterity in forging, on occasion, the stamp of *authority* on the Deist's principles, in order to make them pass with a more specious splendid currency through the world; and the instance I am going to give of it, serves, at the same time to shew, with what eagerness and assiduity the Deists will catch at every the smallest twig they can meet with in their way, to save a sinking cause; the great name *he* has been pleased, in the following case, to make free with, being ever before universally distinguished by principles as dissimilar to his own, as light is to darkness, or orthodoxy to infidelity.

Dr. *Sherlock*, if you will believe our Deist, is one of those rational divines who asserts, "that Deism is the only excellency and true glory of Christianity." (p. 6.)—If he had consulted the bishop with any other view than by laying hold of some detached, disjointed passages in his sermon,* to make it speak, if possible, with some seeming approbation of *his* scheme of thinking, he would, I am persuaded, have found, in instances without number, that his Lordship and he think as differently of revelation, as a believer and an unbeliever *can* think.

"The religion of the Gospel, says the Bishop, is the true original religion of reason and nature.†" And again, "the Gospel has reference to the law of reason and nature:"—and what of all

* Sermon for propagating the Gospel in foreign parts.

† Vid. Dr. Leland, p. 42.

that? Is the Bishop a *Deist* on the evidence of these declarations? If he is not, to what purpose is he quoted? And if he is, mark the consequence to our author.

Dr. *Sherlock* says, and our *Deist* himself *approves* the assertion, “that the religion of the Gospel is the true original religion of reason and nature.” Aye! what this from a *Deist*? Alas! our *Deist*, like a confused culprit at the *Old Bailey*, cites a t oncea fancied friend to his character, without considering that the man was too honest not to say what he thought; and that the evidence he must give, would but aggravate and add weight to the prosecution.

Here the bishop is called in, to vouch for our author’s rationality as a *Deist*. Well, and how does he prove it? Why, by asserting, that that revelation which the *Deist derides*, is nothing short of the religion of reason and nature, which he pretends to approve—Our author for your man of *sound judgment and nervous reasoning!*

Our *Deist* having here then, a little unluckily for himself, cited a passage from Dr. *Sherlock*, which proves too plainly, that his opposition to Christianity is equally repugnant to the principles of *natural reason and religion*, is forced at last to add, by way of supplement to his Lordship’s own words, conscious how inexpressive they were before to his advantage, or rather, how expressive to his confusion, something, though full as little to his purpose, from the product of his own brain.

After telling us that Dr. *Sherlock* says, “it is true, that there are some institutions in the Gospel, which, in their own nature, are no *constituent parts of religion*,” I will venture to add, says he, “that the same may be said, for ought that appears to the contrary, of
some

some *doctrines* of the Gospel, which doctrines, together with the institutions referred to, may be said to constitute pure Christianity, by way of contradistinction to pure *natural* religion." (p. 6.) So that according to the very modest reasoning of our Deist, what constitutes pure Christianity in the gross, is an absolute and entire opposition in all its parts, in its precepts, ceremonies, and doctrines, to the very being of *natural religion*; and that those institutions, and ceremonies, and doctrines, and those only which are no constituent parts of natural religion, do collectively make up the sum total of *Christianity*. Was this in reality the case, was Christianity in fact so unreasonable, I will add, so *irreligious* an institution, I would myself join our author in condemning and rejecting it; or, with Mr. *Chandler* agree, that it would then be scarce worth while to enquire what the religion of Christ is. (p. 7.)

But what if after all it appears, that those very institutions, ceremonies, and doctrines, which constitute pure Christianity, are the institutions, the ceremonies, and the doctrines, which absolutely constitute the Religion of *Reason and Nature*—proportionally I mean, and as parts to the whole? For you must observe, that I regard every subservient *instrument of religion*, as a material part of religion itself. That a public worship of God therefore is not less a part of the *religion of reason and nature*, than any positive precept of the Gospel, our Deist cannot aim to disprove, without opposing, at the same time, the general sense and practice of all ages past; there being no people, of any religion whatsoever, but what always expressed in a *public* manner their veneration of the deities they owned, by such external tokens of reverence, as were most in use among them.*

* Scott's Works, vol. II. p. 130. fol. edit.

“*Lactantius*, as an argument of the absurdity of *polytheism*, supposes it an universal concession among men, that they should pay to *each* God, whom they acknowledged, divine worship: and this not only in honour of his divinity, but in consideration of his *paternity*, as *that* one common parent, from whom they received life, health, and food.†” And of such consequence to the happiness of a state, says *Tully*, is piety towards the Gods, “that take away that, and you undermine the very foundations on which integrity, friendship, and that most excellent of all virtues, justice itself, is supported.‡” And if we would endeavour, says *Woolaston*, to behave ourselves towards God according to truth, we shall find ourselves bound to worship him in the best manner we can. By worshipping him, I mean, says he, owning him to be what he is, and ourselves to be what we are, by some most solemn and proper act; that is, by addressing ourselves to him as his dependents, and as the supreme cause and governor of the world, with acknowledgments of what we enjoy, petitions for what we really want, or he knows to be convenient for us.*

And yet how can a plan of public worship, with any propriety, any decency, be executed but by some such visible observances, some such outward religious actions and declarations, which the wisdom of Christian societies shall adjudge to be most expressive of that internal faith, love, and obedience, to which they are called by

† *Omnem Deum qui ab homine colitur necesse est inter solennes ritus et precesiones patrem nuncupari, non tantum honoris gratia verum etiam rationis quod et antiquior est homine, et quod vitam salutem victum preestat ut pater. Lactant. de verâ sap. et relig. lib. IV. p. 177.*

‡ *Pietate adversus Deos sublata fides etiam et societas humani generis, et excellentissima virtus justitia tollitur. Cic. de nat. deor.*

* *Woolaston's Religion of Nature.*

their *religion*; and what are most likely to kindle in each other's breasts a lively and lasting sense of piety, devotion, and every virtue? Instead therefore of disregarding these necessary appendages to public worship, as *no constituent parts* of religion; as mere niceties and trifles, of no manner of consideration in the sight of God (as do avowedly too many of the several *seperatists* from our communion) men should consider, whether they have or have not an apparent view to the known purposes of religion; whether outward actions, which are so many presumptive evidences of inward dispositions to piety and virtue in individuals, are not likely to promote the same worthy affections in the community at large? And whether, in proportion to the importance of the end, we are not to regard the *means* conducive to that end?

As for those two *sacramental* duties of our profession, viz. *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*—Are they not, let me ask, institutions, solemn, rational, and morally instructive? Do they not serve to raise our devotions, to inflame our gratitude, to infuse *generous* sentiments? A question which those best can answer, for those only know, who have personally *ratified* the one, and been *seriously* participant of the other. Be pleased, however, if it be not a subject too grave to engage your attention, to take an opinion of both, from the learned Dr. *Jenkins*.

“ One of the purposes, says he, for which sacraments were instituted, was to be the outward and visible sign of our entrance into covenant with him. For if covenants between man and man be made with all the formality of witnesses of hands, and seals and delivery, in solemn and express words; if men know themselves too well to trust one another, without this solemnity, it may well be expected, that when God is pleased to permit them to enter into covenant with himself, he should not receive them under less obligations of caution and security for their integrity

“ integrity, than men are wont to use among one another; since
 “ every breach of covenant with him is infinitely more affronting
 “ and sinful, than any breach of covenant with man can be. And
 “ as their outward signs serve to raise our attentions and fix our
 “ minds, and so put us in remembrance, that heaven and earth, an-
 “ gels and men, are witnesses against us, if we prove treacherous
 “ and unfaithful in this covenant; so they are as tokens and
 “ pledges to us of God’s love and favour, and give us sensible
 “ and visible assurances of that grace which is invisible and spi-
 “ ritual. ’Tis not a little in the nature and temper of man, to
 “ be better pleased and contented with something present in hand,
 “ though of small value, and insignificant in itself, as a token and
 “ pledge of what is made over to him, than with the greatest pro-
 “ mises and protestations, without any thing as an earnest to con-
 “ firm them. Now, what is inward and invisible, is absent as to
 “ sense, and what is future stands in need of something present
 “ to represent it to us; and therefore God, who was pleased to
 “ bind himself, as it were, by an oath, that he might be want-
 “ ing in nothing which might help our infirmities, and assist our
 “ faith, has been pleased, for our comfort and trust in him, to
 “ appoint visible signs and pledges of that which is invisible, and
 “ to give such assurance to our very senses, as they are capable
 “ of, that all the promises of his spiritual blessings, shall be as
 “ certainly fulfilled to us, as the outward signs and pledges are
 “ duly received by us; that the soul, even in this case, where it is
 “ more immediately concerned, might not be wholly independent
 “ on the body; but since both must be happy or miserable toge-
 “ ther in the next world, both might be assistant in the way and
 “ means of salvation in this.”

And to shew the moral influence which the use of these sacra-
 ments has naturally on our minds, the same author observes, of
 “ baptism,

baptism, that “ it is a very significant and apt representation of the
 “ cleansing and purifying the soul from sin; and that in this,
 “ men of all nations and all religions seem to have been agreed.
 “ For nothing was more frequent among the heathens, than their
 “ washings and purifyings, and though they attributed a great
 “ deal too much to them, yet the superstitious opinions which
 “ they had of these outward cleansings, could never have so uni-
 “ versally prevailed, if there had not been some foundation for
 “ the use of them, in the nature of things; and that is, the great
 “ fitness which is in those outward washings, to excite us to pu-
 “ rity of mind, and to represent the great duty which lies upon us,
 “ to keep our consciences undefiled, which only can render us ac-
 “ ceptable to God.

And of the Lord's Supper he observes, that “ the elements of
 “ bread and wine have a peculiar suitability, to bring to our
 “ remembrance the body and blood of Christ, offered upon the
 “ cross for us, to make us partakers of them, to become the
 “ commemorative and representative signs of the eucharist, and to
 “ be pledges of all the benefits which we receive thereby.* It is,
 “ as Dr. Scott observes, a solemn commemoration of Christ's
 “ death, and is an expression of kindness, sufficient to captivate
 “ the most ungrateful souls, and extort obedience from them; it
 “ is a fœderal right, whereby God and we, by feasting as it were
 “ together, do, according to the antient custom of Jews and Hea-
 “ thens, mutually engage ourselves one to another, whereby God,
 “ by giving us the mystical bread and wine, and we by receiving
 “ them, do mutually engage ourselves to one another, upon those
 “ sacred pledges of Christ's body and blood, that we will faithfully
 “ perform each their part of that everlasting covenant, which was

* Vide *Jenkins's Reasonableness of the Christian Religion*, *Stackhouse's Body of Divinity*.

“ purchased by Christ ; and what can be a greater restraint to us,
 “ when we are solicited to any sin, than the sense of being un-
 “ der such a dreadful vow and obligation ? With what face dare
 “ we listen to any temptation to evil, when we remember how
 “ lately we solemnly engaged ourselves to the contrary, and took
 “ the sacrament upon it ?” †

If at any time these established mementos to our conduct fail having the intended influence on our morals ; it is, because the design of each is not so sufficiently attended to as to operate with the proper impressions of gratitude on our hearts. The remembrance of that God, to whom we have devoted ourselves in baptism, passeth away perhaps from off our mind, as the remembrance of a guest that tarrieth but a day ; and the *cup of blessing* is too frequently taken from our lips, as if we only *drank* to one ; that cup which, instead of being a proper test of our aversion to those sins which occasioned Christ’s death, is—alas ! how oft made only an occasional introduction to an opportunity of prosecuting them in higher life.

But religion, says a distinguished advocate for Deism,* is a matter purely personal, and the knowledge of it to be obtained by personal considerations, independent of any guides, teachers, or ceremonies. An observation which, however confidently urged, will, I am persuaded, then only hold good, when there cease to be such men in the world as he who first advanced it—If human nature was really in such a state of perfection, as that every man left to himself, would reason justly, judge truly, and ever act with propriety, there would be little occasion not only for revelation, but for

† Vide *Scott’s Christian Life*, vol. I, p. 115.

* Author of the *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*.

any *established* laws, governments, or civil authority whatever in the world. But men, taken in the gross, are, and ever will be, weak, ignorant, passionate, and conceited; and must therefore be regulated by *juridical* authority of some kind or other.*

With what consistent goodness therefore has the Deity interposed an authoritative declaration of his will, in a matter of such mighty importance (which *none* can claim a right to dispute) and given a law to our conduct in the great points of piety and morality, which cut off all *reasonable* occasions for doubts or difficulties in either!

The great use and intent of all the enjoined positive duties and ceremonies of our religion, are obvious enough to all those who examine them with fairness and impartiality; nor do any of its doctrinal points, when not misinterpreted and misapplied, convey any sense and meaning, which right reason will not allow to be rational objects of our faith, and, in proportion, *constituent* parts of religion. They not only afford us such noble discoveries concerning the nature of the Deity, the origin of the universe, the great, the important plan of redemption, as were not sufficiently developed by the painful researches of philosophers of the most penetrating genius, but propose to us, at the same time, a system of *morality* which surpasses all that comes recommended either by a *Lycurgus*, a *Numa*, a *Plato*, an *Aristotle*, &c. And would men examine the reasonableness of the doctrines and moral precepts of the Gospel, with coolness and impartiality, by the unerring test of sober reason and reflection, and not by the treacherous direction of their depraved wills and affections, they would at once acknowledge, that to *love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength,*

* *Regers's* Preface to his *Vindication of the Christian Religion.*

is but a just debt of gratitude to our Maker, for those numberless blessings, we are every moment receiving from his all bountiful hand; and as the God and Author of nature is *holy*, that it should be our study to be *holy in all manner of conversation*; that again, if we would pass through the waves of a troublesome world, with a chearful and serene mind, we must be *patient*, under the afflicting hand of Heaven (whose will we know to be an irresistible law) and resign up our wishes to his sovereign pleasure, in confidence of that tenderness which we know he bears to every individual of his creation.

As to those precepts of Christianity, which seem to bear the hardest upon human nature, viz. *repentance and restitution, mortification and self-denial, humility, contentment and resignation, forgiving, yea, and loving your enemies*; what are these, when rightly considered, but injunctions highly reasonable in themselves, and subservient to our real happiness? What can be more reasonable than sorrow, or a repentant anguish of mind, for offences more immediately committed against God, or restitution and retaliation for injuries we have at any time offered towards men? What more reasonable and advantageous, than that we should mortify and subdue those fatal and rebellious lusts, which dare oppose the dictates of right reason, which would intice us into a violation of the laws of virtue and integrity, and subject us to the vengeance of an angry God? And humility, is not *that* a prudent, laudable, and advantageous species of conduct? That reputation or respect, which is the supreme ambition of *all*, how surely is it the portion of the affable, meek, and humble only! And then for those *pacific* virtues, of rendering good for evil, forgiving injuries, and even loving our enemies, how notorious is it, in their behalf, that they ever appear to the advantage of those who are eminent in the practice of them! How mollifying and attractive! how preventive of those many
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restless tumults, which are ever harrassing the minds of the revengeful and malicious! What then will follow? Why, that all those institutions, ceremonies, and doctrines, which constitute pure Christianity, demand our utmost reverence and esteem; that we do not act up to the *religion of reason and nature*, when we dare to treat them with *contempt, neglect* or *indifference*; and that if you would be a rationalist, not in speculation only, but in practice; you must add to the virtues of mere *morality*, the faith and principles of Christianity: unless it appears that those writings from whence we draw our belief as Christians, are a cheat and imposition on mankind. If they come in fact with that authority we ascribe to them, the very dictates of *natural religion* challenge our regard to them; and that they do not, it is at your peril to assert, but upon sure and *unquestionable* grounds.

Nor is the cause of Christianity so *immaterial* a point of enquiry, as you seem too fondly to imagine, and which has been so frequently the subject of debate between us. What! shall the Maker of Heaven and earth be *said* to address his creatures in the language of *men*, and they either treat *him*, through whom he speaks to them, with open scorn; or carelessly *unconcern* themselves, whether he speaks to them or not? Shall an ambassador from temporal majesty and power claim so much, and one from Heaven so little reverence and respect? If you doubt, do you think it necessary to inquire into the credentials of the one, and will you not be at the same pains to examine the pretensions of the other? How does this consist with the dictates of even common sense or common gratitude? *You* may perhaps thank your God, with the proud Pharisee in the Gospel, that you are not as other men are, *extortioners, unjust, adulterers, &c.* you may possibly transcribe into outward practice that law within your breast, to which we suppose revelation comes in aid! *you* may want none of its imagined motives to in-

fluence *your* conduct—you may perhaps be able, unassisted by any external guides, to learn, and live within, the measures of your duty to God, your neighbour, and yourself; to do justice, love mercy, and to walk, as you think, humbly with your God; may contemplate thoroughly the nature and fitness of things, the native obligations and inducements to piety and virtue, and the inherent odiousness and destructive qualities of vice and irreligion; *you* may perhaps be instructed from within yourself, in the knowledge of even the whole duty of man—Happy you, who *know* these things so well! happier still if you *do* them!

But are there none in life who, with the *knowledge*, have not yet the *prudence* here supposed? Or rather, are there not millions in the world that have *neither*? And shall all your regards center in your own important self? Have you no tender workings of humanity towards the wants and necessities of your fellow-creatures? Have you equally no regard for them who *know* not, and for them who *will* not *do* their duty? Have *you*, who enjoy the glorious light of the sun, no sense of the wretched state and condition of those who still sit in darkness? What if *you*, through a whimsical contempt of day, should choose rather to pursue the business of your ordinary calling in the night; must day-light be therefore of less benefit and importance to the more rational part of the world? If *you* are whole and need not a physician, must they that are sick not be prescribed to? I will grant *you*, for argument sake, to be possessed of right rational sentiments of the Deity, and to be versed in every species of worship and service that it is necessary you should pay him.

But are you sure you are indebted to revelation for no part of this knowledge? If that be the case, how comes it to pass, that there are so many inconsistencies in those corners of the world, where

where the rays of revelation have not been *permitted* yet to reach, in both those particulars? How comes it, that those gross absurdities in the heathen worship of old, are in part continued among the pagan *Indians* (in the extensive empire of the Great Mogul) to this Day?—The darkness, alas! which those unhappily labour under, how surely is it owing to a perverse, *uncontrouled*, inhuman exertion of power in those *rulers* over them, who unwarrantably intercept from them the important light.

But whilst kings of the earth stand up, and rulers take counsel together, against the religion of the Lord's anointed; some by diverting that stream of divine benevolence, which means to flow alike to all, from its genuine and natural course; others, by polluting it with impious and unwholesome vanities; let me wish *you* to take care, that *you* do not stand charged with the lamentable guilt of either, directly or indirectly, impeding its progress within *your* sphere of action.—Let me wish that *you* would be as industrious in inquiring into its real excellencies, as *you* are to expose its imagined imperfections—Let not popular prejudice gain an ascendancy over reason. On reason Christianity is founded—Let reason therefore be the judge (the only judge) to determine the merit of its pretensions.

What regard the Heathens would have paid to a *divine* revelation, had they been favoured with one, may be gathered from their esteem of the Sybilline Oracles. For when those books were burnt with the temple, during the wars of Marius and Sylla, the loss was deemed the greatest that could happen to the Roman republic, and people were sent into all the provinces of the empire, and to the neighbouring villages, streets, and alleys, to gather up what could be found of those books, and a collection was made, to apply to as before upon extraordinary occasions. And before those books were
known,

known, Numa Pompilius, to give a sanction to his laws, spread a report of his frequently conversing with the nymph Egeria, which wonderfully disposed the people to receive all his new regulations, as so many divine inspirations. Hence it appears, that the Heathens saw the necessity, believed the possibility, and earnestly desired the happiness of a supernatural instructor and director.

But, alas! to what satisfactory purpose, say you, shall a man engage in an enquiry of this kind, so productive as it is, of never-ending disputes? Why should I not content myself, with endeavouring to discharge all the more *immediate* duties of morality, which is in fact acting up to, or answering, as far as is incumbent on each individual, all the ends and purposes of revelation?—A question, which I will answer by *another*, alike pertinent—It is this—Can any point of knowledge be of equal importance, with that which, in any degree, respects a man's salvation? And, if it is not impossible (but on the contrary highly probable) that God may have made, from time to time, some express, some more explicit declarations of his *will*, can any thing be more unjust, ungenerous, and unwise, not to enquire what that will is? Is your happiness dependent on his pleasure, and will you not use your endeavours to learn what his *whole* pleasure is? Is it of no consequence to be informed how to arrive to a right knowledge of the only true God and Saviour of mankind; that he will have mercy and not sacrifice:—that he delighteth not in the blood, of bulls and of goats, or of men? (and yet had your education been among those with whom *religious* barbarities of the latter sort prevailed, are you sure you should not have *conscientiously* complied with them?) that the sacrifice of carnal lusts and appetites, are the oblations he requires? Is it of no moment to be directed to the *means* proper for obtaining pardon and forgiveness for past offences? Are there any measures prescribed by *natural* religion for that purpose? No. Whither then but to *revealed*, would
you

you go for methods proper to appease your offended God ? or does the *religion of reason and nature* direct you to imagine you may be at liberty to offend, and he not authorised to take vengeance on the offence, or remit the punishment due to it, on what terms he himself shall propose ? But those terms, how shall they be known but by revelation ?

True it is, he brought you into being by no voluntary concurrent act or consent of your own ; but, if from that arbitrary exertion of creative power in the Deity, which gave birth to the frail creature you are, you lay claim to an exemption from future misery, notwithstanding any transgressions in life, you may have fallen into ; I would ask you to whom you are indebted, for the *means* afforded you for obtaining *happiness* ? And with whom lies the blame, if future *misery* is your portion ? He that made you capable of sinning, enabled you at the same time, to see not only into the natural and destructive tendency of sin, but also into the advantages resulting from a life of virtue.

When two ways lie before me on my journey, I am doubtful perhaps in my choice, whether of the two to take. One, conversant in the country, says to me, Go you here, and you are sure to meet with bogs or quicksands in your way ; go you there, and you will find a country safe, fruitful, and delightful. Whether of the two directions is it most likely I shall pursue ? The latter, most assuredly—but that there are, I am told, some favourite recreations in the way, peculiar to that other road, which I would willingly indulge myself in, though at the hazard of my life. Well, I go, and am lost. To what, let me ask, but my own wayward misconduct, can I with any propriety ascribe my miscarriage ? You will urge to me, perhaps, that however man's freedom of action may be illustrated by the case here supposed, yet it does by

no means remove the difficulties more immediately under consideration. For as futurity is present to the Deity, all those lapses which may affect my *salvation*, must necessarily have been foreknown to him, ere my mother conceived me; how then does it consist with the supposed goodness of that Being, to bring me into a state, which he knew *would* terminate in my entire ruin?

For a full discussion of this point of enquiry, I must refer the reader to my Treatise on *Predestination*, &c. while I pass on to some other remarks on our Deist, whom I left deducing from Mr. *Chandler's* declaration——“ that if natural religion is not a part of the “ religion of Christ, 'tis scarce worth while at all to enquire what “ his religion is,” (p. 6.) the following conclusion, *viz.* ‘ that then ‘ the other parts of the religion of Christ, are scarce worth any ‘ thing at all of our notice. So excellent and glorious a part of ‘ the Christian *institution*, says he, is true deism: and that, notwithstanding all the absurdity of Dr. *Waterland's* assertion, what ‘ he has cited from those judicious divines, Dr. *Sherlock* and Mr. ‘ *Chandler*, proves, that deism is all in the Christian *institution*, that ‘ can possibly approve itself to the true genuine reason of man.’ Our author's dexterity, in thus creating patrons to the cause of infidelity, from among *real* and distinguished *advocates* for Christianity, is extraordinary enough; nor is his method of reasoning upon the point, less remarkable.

‘ After having said, that every thing enjoined in the Gospel to ‘ be believed as a rational doctrine, or professed as a natural duty ‘ relating to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, is an established ‘ part of deism; the single question, says he, between Christians ‘ and Deists, is, whether the belief of natural doctrines, and the ‘ practice of natural duties, are all that is strictly necessary, with ‘ regard to the divine approbation; and, consequently, human hap-
‘ piness,

‘ pines, both present and eternal.’ (p. 7.) And is this at last the case? Is the battle between infidels and Christians to end, after all, in ‘a friendly shake of hands? If the single question between Christians and deists, is whether the belief of *natural* doctrines, and the practice of *natural* duties, &c. are strictly necessary to salvation, I here take upon me, in the name of the whole body of *rational* divines, to join issue with the plaintiff, and to declare, that the belief of *natural* doctrines, and the practice of *natural* duties, are always looked upon by *them*, as necessary, with regard to the divine approbation.

And when he says, that this is a question or doubt which universally obtains among Christians, he advances what, from a number of our most orthodox divines, I could prove to be not true. Nay, those *duties* (*viz.* the belief of *natural*, &c.) are, in fact, the very basis on which *Christianity* stands; and the only difference between Christians and deists is, that the former *do* practise, or recommend to the practice of mankind, those above-mentioned duties, and that the latter, in reality, do not. For, as I before observed, those doctrines are *natural* doctrines, and those duties *natural* duties, as well what appear to be *mediately* or *immediately* recommended by God, as what arise from the dictates of *natural reason*. So that deists, by rejecting those doctrines and precepts which evidently make a part of, are contained in, or may reasonably be deduced from the Gospel institution, do manifestly oppose (and it concerns them much, to give the argument its due weight) the religion they pretend to espouse; *viz.* the belief of *natural* doctrines, and the practice of *natural* duties—in other words, the belief and practice of their boasted ultimatum of deism, the *religion of reason and nature*.

And when I acquiesce in the *conclusion* drawn from those six re-
fined propositions, as well as the *propositions* themselves, the sum

and substance of which is, ‘ that those duties only are necessary to
 ‘ be believed, and practised by us, the *reason* of which we perceive
 ‘ to be founded in *nature*, and the discharge of those in the best
 ‘ manner we can, is intimately connected with our happiness, and
 ‘ the approbation of him, whose favour is better than life; and
 ‘ that then, if any thing else is enjoined as a duty in any, even in
 ‘ the Christian institution, it cannot be necessary to be observed, in
 ‘ order to eternal salvation,’ (p. 8, 9.) what will follow from this
 very fair and honest concession, but that the *Christian* only is the
 man (where Christianity I mean has been taught, and is established)
 of true genuine religion, and that the deist is not; for as the sum
 of all religion is the belief of *natural* doctrines, and the practice of
natural duties, and if those become *such*, which are either *mediately*
 or *immediately* proposed to us by God (p. 9.) how can the deist pre-
 tend to be *religious*, and reject at the same time that plan of salva-
 tion, which is formed from those very principles?!

Having kept pace with our Deist, so far as his refined definition
 of deism goes, and shewn, that before he proves *that* to be agreeable
 to *the religion of reason and nature*, he must make it appear that the
 idea of a *revealed* religion is an absurdity, and Christianity an im-
 position, let us proceed to the examination of those difficulties
 with regard to Christianity, which he says, lie out of the *reach of*
our reason, to determine of their truth or falshood, and those insti-
 tutions which are confessedly *no constituent parts* of religion (p. 12.)
 And here, after a formal harangue upon the business of the under-
 standing, and the end of our creation, and that great caution and
 circumspection which he professes to have observed in his inquiry
 after *truth*, or rather in his endeavours to rivet himself in *error*, he
 tells us (p. 13,) “ that though it is said by some, that Christianity
 “ is grounded on natural religion, and is an improvement of it; yet,
 “ after all that has been said to exemplify it, or that has been of-
 “ fered

“ferred in proof of it, I cannot possibly conceive, says he, how an
 “entire and *perfect* structure (which is the case of natural religion)
 “can be only a *foundation* for a perfect structure; or how a *perfect*
 “religion can be *improved*; or what is essential to man, can be
 “but of small importance to him, in comparison of what is su-
 “peradded, and to which his understanding is inadequate.”

Though our Deist cannot conceive how a *perfect* structure can be a *foundation* for a perfect structure, will it therefore follow, that an *imperfect* structure cannot become a *foundation* for a *perfect* one? The *religion of reason and nature*, I suppose *now* to call our attention not only to *natural duties*, strictly, or *abstractedly* called such, but to such likewise as are really *revealed*; that the *latter* therefore may be added to the *former*, I hope you will allow possible; and if so, that *natural* religion was not the *perfect* structure *without* such addition as *with* it. *Perfection* is a term purely relative, and may therefore oft times become a comparative *imperfection*. That which directs a man to an obedience *now* required of him, is his present *perfect* rule of action; but would it be alike entire and *perfect*, should a more extensive obedience be demanded of him? Would it not necessarily *call* for some *superadded* notices and instructions, proportioned to the *superadded* duties? And may not what was once *essentially* obligatory upon him as *meer man*, be of small importance to him, when compared with that *superadded* system of duties, prescribed to him as a *Christian*? Yes most assuredly. For what says the author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews*? *The law*, says he, *made nothing perfect, but the coming in of a better covenant did; by which we draw nigh to God.* Heb. vii. 19.

But, observe with what solemn absurdity our Deist again amuses his readers, and imposes on their easy credulity.

Having ventured to tell us with an air, which we are to interpret into a *well grounded* confidence, that what he asserts is most infallibly *true*, and that his present sentiments may very properly be “termed deism, as *that* imports the religion of things, and not of “unmeaning or many meaning words——of the heart, but not of “the book; it is not nominal, but real deism, says he, I now intend; and by which I would fain be understood to mean that “religion which consists of only such doctrines and precepts, as “appear to have their *foundation in reason and nature*,” (p. 13.) and then having attempted to shew, that *Christianity* is not *that* kind of religion, he vouchsafes to tell us, that he is *coming* to the *point*, well knowing that he was then evidently the farthest from it, when he seemed *endeavouring* to be nearest to it. And what after all is the *point*? Why, I think, says he, “that the grand foundation of “the difference betwixt deists, and the religious of all other persuasions, is, whether any doctrine or precept, that has not its “foundation apparently in reason and nature, can be of the essence “of religion, and with propriety be said to be a religious doctrine “or precept.” (p. 14.)

Among the religious of all denominations, the Christian surely may be allowed to make *one*. I would then gladly know of our author what sect or sects of *Christians* assert that doctrines and precepts, which have not their foundation apparently in reason and nature, are *religious* doctrines or precepts—teaching, at the same time, doctrines, that apparently have not their foundation in reason and nature? If he goes to the determination of some *councils and synods*, he may certainly find not a few. And yet, even *then*, he may be altogether as distant from the point in debate, as were their *infallible* decisions, too frequently, from the *truth*. Search the *Scriptures*, and let me see him prove from *thence*, a sanction to absurdities, of that, or of any other kind, and I will not wonder at the derisive treatment,

ment they meet with from him. Till he can do that, he is fighting with a shadow, and evidently reprobates rather from prejudice than principle the merits of the Gospel of Christ. But to proceed—

“ The whole body of Christians, says our author, may be ranked under the two following classes, *1st*. Those who maintain that doctrines and practices which have no foundation in reason or nature, may be of the essence of religion; and *2dly*. Those who maintain that doctrines and practices, which do not *apparently appear* (pray observe his *expressions*, for they are incomparably *expressive*) to be founded in nature and reason, may yet, notwithstanding, be of the essence of religion.

That we may not, for want of *method*, confound our author's distinct arraignment of Christian writers, and the separate classes in which he has placed them, we will bring each of them under a separate distinct examination; for which purpose it will be necessary, in the first place, to take a view of the *names* of those who make up the *first* class of Christian writers.—And here, lest you should too hastily *expect* to see that composed of *all*, or of even any of *such Christian writers, as had obtained the greatest reputation, both for sound judgment and nervous reasoning* (p. 2.) I must charge you, as you value the credit and reputation of our author, to be *satisfied* with the single, though singular testimony, of the all-sufficient *Zynglius*.—One *good* evidence to a reasonable man, is as satisfactory as a thousand—And he (the great *Zynglius*) is pleased, it seems, to affirm, “ that God may, *if he pleases*, out of the vast sovereignty of his will, command all that wickedness, which he has forbidden, and make it our duty; and also forbid all that holiness, which he has commanded, and make it sin to us (p. 15).”

The extraordinary nature of such a kind of doctrine as this, it is just as necessary for me to controvert, as it was for our author to introduce it—and that is not all; unless he could prove, that in *it*, is comprehended the united sense of the whole body of Christian writers. And, if that in fact is the case, how comes he to have been so sparing of *quotations* from them? I should rather have expected that he would triumphantly have ushered in a few *English divines*, of *sound judgment and nervous reason*, to have kept his *Zynglius* company. But, that not being the case, all he has built on his *first* class of Christian writers, rises to a superb building indeed—a *castle*, however, in the *air* only.—Let us see then, if he is more successful in his *second*.

“ Those Christians of the second class, he says, so far agree with
 “ the deists, as to own, that God, who is infinite in knowledge,
 “ and can never know things to be otherwise than they are in
 “ themselves, cannot possibly consider, nor constitute any doctrine
 “ or precept, to be of the essence of religion, which is not so in it-
 “ self, as not being founded in truth and reason (p. 15).”

An observation which (it being just expressive of common sense) our author is pleased to make the *distinguishing* characteristic of the *second* class of Christian writers; and, what is more, to compliment it with the *deists* solemn sanction, and yet, no sooner are they thus happily and amicably joined together, than (most unfortunately) an officious *but*, sets them at once asunder.

“ They agree, says our author, with the deists, in owning, that
 “ God, who is infinite in knowledge, and can never know things
 “ to be otherwise than they are in themselves, cannot possibly con-
 “ sider, nor constitute any doctrine or precept to be of the essence
 “ of religion, which is not so in itself. *But* then they agree, as
 “ the

“ the religion of nature thus absolutely considered, and in its full
 “ extent, is only known to God, if he should be pleased to make a
 “ *supernatural* revelation of such parts of that law to us, which our
 “ *unassisted* reason could never have discovered, *such* a revelation
 “ ought to be gratefully received, and readily acknowledged. And
 “ this, he tells us, we alledge to be the case of all speculative, me-
 “ taphysical, and sublime doctrines contained in the Scriptures,
 “ which collectively compose the Christian faith (p. 16.)”

And where, let me ask, lies the absurdity in this case? Our De-
 ist grants, that God annot *possibly* consider or constitute any doc-
 trine or precept to be of the essence of religion, which is not so of
 itself: what should hinder us then from acknowledging those things
 to be of the very essence of religion, which we suppose him actual-
 ly to have considered, *constituted, and appointed*—though they be
 even such things as our *unassisted reason* could not have discovered
 to have been so? His first concession supposes every thing *ap-*
pointed by God to be truly consistent with religion, and consequent-
 ly, that it is inconsistent with *the religion of reason and nature*, to
 oppose what he actually *has appointed* (p. 16.).

Ah! but says he, they (*i. e.* the rational Christians) go farther
 still than all this: for *they* say, “ though no doctrine that has not
 “ its *foundation in reason and nature*, can be truly a religious doc-
 “ trine, yet doctrines that have such a foundation (though that
 “ *does not appear*) may, if God pleases, be communicated to us,
 “ either by himself immediately, or mediately by his agents, with-
 “ out any reflection on, or repugnancy to, any one of his attri-
 “ butes (p. 16.)”

The unfairness of this representation of Christianity, is, I pre-
 sume, obvious enough to every one, who thinks not, or writes
 not,

not, with the partiality of a deist. For all that men of any importance in the great business of explaining scripture truths,—in other words, all that the *rational* divines have advanced on this point, is, that it is no argument of *weak* credulity, or of an *irrational* foundation for our faith, if, in the general plan of revelation, there are some circumstances *not* revealed, which lie beyond the *reach* of our enquiries and that things in *this* respect may be, *incomprehensible*, and yet not *incompatible* with reason, or the purport of revelation. The errors and absurdities which the patrons of either popery or enthusiasm may have unwarrantably ingrafted on Christianity, and which have in reality no foundation in the *religion of reason and nature*, affect not the real intrinsic merit of the latter, and it must be ignorance, or downright knavery in a writer, to lay them to the charge of the Christian church.

Our *Deist* then having so very *justly* and *judiciously* stated the case in difference, between *us* and deists; observe the conclusion he *as* justly and judiciously draws from it. “The difference, says he, betwixt
 “rational Christians and deists, will, without any farther trouble,
 “be adjusted, when this proposition, which Christians lay down
 “for a certain truth,” *viz.* “that the collections of writings, com-
 “monly called the Scriptures, are of divine inspiration, and a reve-
 “lation from God to mankind;—be plainly and clearly made ap-
 “pear to be so; and therefore the material question depends upon
 “the proof that is to be made by Christians, that the Scriptures are
 “a divine revelation, and the very word of God. For if that point
 “be proved, says he, the controversy is at an end, there being no
 “true deist that will hesitate a moment to allow, that what God
 “saith, is truth (p. 16, 17, 18.)” Which is declaring, in as ex-
 press terms as can be imagined, that if Christians can but once
 prove to Deists, that the Scriptures are of divine original and autho-
 rity, we deists will absolutely acquiesce in all those doctrines which

are *deduced* from them, even though they appear not to have their foundation in *the religion of reason and nature*.

Here then you see the ultimate resolution of a deist. If you will not suffer him to enjoy in peace the principles of a deist, he will, rather than become a *true* Christian, be content to be a Papist or enthusiast; for who but such as those pretend to ground the obligation of believing things not founded in *reason* and *the nature* of things, on any pretended authority from holy writ? —But passing by the compliment here paid by our author to Popery, enthusiasm, and superstition, let us attend him in his enquiry into the *asserted* authority of Scripture, which he promises to carry on with the utmost *impartiality*.

“ Alas; alas! says he, here we have a surprizing instance of “ the want of *unanimity* among Christians, where it seems to be “ so peculiarly requisite, that *without* it, they must not only “ expect to fail of convincing deists of the truth of their cause, “ but also render it a doubtful point, whether they are rationally “ convinced of the truth of it themselves. For if we begin with “ the Roman Catholicks, who have vastly the advantage in point “ of numbers, and plainly ask *them*, how know you the Scripture “ to be the word of God?—*They* answer, by the testimony of the “ church (p. 18).”

Now I would venture to appeal to any man of common sense and understanding, whether the Popish method of proving the *sense* of Scripture, from the *implicit* testimony of *their church*, is of any weight in our author's arguments for disproving the *Scriptures to be the word of God*. Nay, he acknowledges, that the weakness and absurdity of this method of proof has been so fully shewn by some eminent *Protestants*, as to render it perfectly needless for deists to make any repetition of what is so generally known and

approved (p. 19.). What a trifler then, even from his own confession, is our worthy friend the Deist;—But now for the principal answers vouchsafed to us by *Protestants*.—“Why the one part, says he, maintain, that they are known to be the word of God by *themselves*, to those only whose eyes the Spirit of God is pleased in a distinguishing manner to open, to *perceive* the certain characters of divine truths in them (p. *ib.*). Another sort maintain, that they are known, and will manifestly appear to be the word of God by *themselves*, upon an honest investigation of mere natural reason, to any man who shall impartially exercise it about them (p. *ib.*)” meaning what follows from Mr. *Pemble*.

Mr. *Pemble* in his *Treatise of Grace and Faith* says “We know the Scriptures are the word of God by *themselves*, the Spirit of God opening our eyes to see those natural and lively characters of divine truth, which are imprinted on those sacred volumes. But how (asks he a little after) does the Holy Ghost reveal unto us the *truth* of Scripture? (He answers) by removing those impediments that hinder, and bestowing those *graces, illuminations, and sanctification*, that make us capable of the knowledge,* —Bravo, my dear Deist!—and those whose eyes the Spirit of *God* does *not* open are—Who? Why those most certainly “in whom, as the Apostle speaks, the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Well—The Roman *Catholicks* in *their* turn, continues our Deist, reply, that Scripture is delivered to most Protestants as by *translations*, from men, who by their *contrary translations*, have proved themselves *fallible*; therefore granting that the *originals* be true,

* See our author, p. 19, 20. See also Dupin's *Biblioth. Autor.*

the *translations* may be far otherwise, at least, only one can be the true one, and which must that be?

Why, that for which you have the best and most *reasonable* evidence—Because “alterations in language, are, as our Deist “avers, unavoidable (p. 21.);” must there therefore of course be no such thing as *true* language?—But says he, in reply, “As “they might possibly be corrupted by transcribers, and we cannot be certain that they were not, the Scriptures, in those latter ages, cannot be proved to be the word of God, by *themselves*. “For shall we know them to be so by their own testimony concerning themselves, or by the reasonableness and apparent truth of “each and all the doctrines and precepts contained in them? “(p. 21.)”

If by the testimony of Scripture concerning *themselves*, our author had meant nothing more than a testimony arising from the reasonableness of their doctrines and precepts, I would ask him, whether the reasonableness of a doctrine is not one of the strongest arguments, though not the only one, to be expected in support of its credibility? “Well, but says he, the assurance of the infallibility and inspiration of the several *authors* of those books “called the Bible, is the very point in question, and requires to be “proved.” Here again he subjoins this very shrewd remark (as if it had been a point of universal dispute among Christians) that its own testimony, concerning itself, can be no proper evidence (p. 22.).

He is in too great a hurry to ask us, whether we have or have not any other proof of the inspiration of the *authors* of those books called the Bible, than what arises from their *own* testimony concerning themselves, well knowing that we have many; for one of

which I must refer you to a note below,* left I should lose sight of our Deist in his hasty transition to the *second* kind of proof of the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, *viz.* the reasonableness and apparent truth of each of its doctrines and precepts respectively. “ This, says he, is not so much as pretended by *those* Protestants, whose answer we are now particularly considering.” Well, and how can we help it if it is not? Are the supposed absurdities of one class of men to be placed to the account of the whole body of Christian writers?—As well may we assert, that there is no such thing in the world as right reason, because our author, whilst he pretends to espouse it, shews so little of it in his writings. But to proceed—

“ *They (i. e. Mr. Pemble)* esteem mere morality, and the bare exercise of our natural powers in matters of religion, altogether ineffectual with regard to salvation : things beyond morality, and out of the verge of human reason, they are so well assured are not to be acquired by reason, that they ascribe the acquisition of them wholly to the operation of the Holy Ghost (p. *ib.*).” Do they so? and what then? Do *they (viz. that body of Protestants represented by Mr. Pemble)* declare, that mere morality, or the bare

* Not to insist upon other arguments, which might be alledged with great strength and cogency of reason; that complete system of morals, which gives so great a lustre to their writings is, I think, a sufficient proof that the Evangelists, and the rest of the sacred penmen of the New Testament, were divinely inspired; 'tis true indeed, there is scarce any one precept therein contained, but what may be met with in the writings of the heathen philosophers, but then they are so detached from one another, and so destitute of a proper sanction to enforce them, and are so defaced by a monstrous heap of absurdities, which are delivered along with them, that they fall far short of that perfection which ought to be expected, to make them come home to men's purposes, and render them of general use. Whereas, in the Scriptures, all the doctrines are summed up in a plain and easy manner, and in a small compass, free from any embarrass, and at the same time that they exhibit to us a full rule of duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, have all the authority that either reason or revelation can give to recommend them, and are enforced by such proper sanctions, as must necessarily have a great weight upon every sober and well disposed mind.

exercise

exercise of our natural powers in matters of religion, is altogether ineffectual, with regard to salvation?—Yes—and the assertion is just implying nothing more or less than this—*viz.* that mere morality, *i. e.* that kind of morality, falsely called such, which would exclude revelation from the religion of *reason and nature*,—the morality in fact of *deists*,—is and ever will be ineffectual to salvation. A truth to which every rational divine you can name me, will, I am persuaded, most cordially subscribe; and not only this, but agree with Mr. *Chandler*, that “the religion of Christ must be *understood*, before it can, or ought to be believed, and that it must be proved to be a consistent and rational religion, before a man can be under any obligation to receive it.”

When therefore our author took upon him to assert, from the one example of Mr. *Pemble*, that this is not so much as pretended by any established body of divines (p. 23.), and that none but such as Mr. *Chandler* were so rational as to maintain that opinion, he does not do justice to the church of *England* clergy. If they declare that a man must be *supernaturally* illuminated, in order to perceive the characters of divine truth in the holy Scriptures, what more do they mean, than that a man must cherish in his breast something superior to the too *natural* dispositions and bias of an infidel; something more than the suggestions of pride, prejudice, and partiality (which too usually usurp the sovereignty of right reason) to judge rightly of the truth of revelation.

Nor is *Chillingworth*, as our author would insinuate, the only great man among the several patrons of Christianity, who cares to own that “natural *reason* is the only true judge in those controversies, where the Scripture itself is the subject of them” (p. 24.)”

Mr. *Locke* says, that without the evidence and use of reason, men cannot be able to distinguish divine revelation from diabolical impostures.*

Mr. *Hales*, speaking of the *laity* of the *second* century, observes, “ That one great cause of error was, that the people, through sloth and blind obedience, *examined* not the things that were taught, but like beasts of burthen, patiently couched down, and indifferently underwent whatever their superiors laid upon them.†”

Mr. *Bullock* says, “ If I cannot depend upon the plainest dictates of reason, how can I be assured that any doctrine is a revelation from God? If I receive it without consulting my reason, then for aught I know, it may be an imposture, and I am every way as liable to embrace an error as the truth.”‡

Bishop *Taylor* has well observed, “ ’tis reason that is the judge, fathers, councils, tradition and Scripture the evidence.§”

Mr. *Chillingworth*, Archbishops *Tillotson* and *Sharp*, Bishops *Burnet* and *Wilkins*, Dr. *Scott*, and indeed all our ablest divines agree, that we ought to make use of our reason, in an enquiry into either the authenticity of a pretended revelation, or the doctrines which it teaches. You see then, that by the united testimony of men of the greatest reputation for *sound learning*, &c. that reason was never meant to be excluded from our enquiries into either the subject matter or authority of revelation. Nor does it

* Vid. *Locke* on Human Understanding, vol. II. chap. 18.

† Vid. *Hale's* Tract of Schism.

‡ Vid. *Bullock's* Sermons, p. 19.

§ Lib. I. chap. 2.

appear, that even what we call *supernatural* matters, or, what seems to us to come from Scripture as such, are incapable of being investigated by that criterion,—“for *supernatural* matters are what our author charges us with believing, upon Scripture authority (p. 24.)” I admit the charge, and let the Deist make from it what advantages he can.—“Why,” says he, “matters *supernatural* are incapable of an examination by *natural* reason, and therefore are incapable of being apparently reasonable, or being *approved* of as such,” by our reasoning faculties (p. *ib.*).

If mere confident assertions were equivalent to real argument, I know not who would merit more, as a writer, than our author—Supernatural matters, says he, are incapable of an examination by natural reason. But wherefore? Why must it necessarily be beyond the reach of natural reason, to make a discovery of truths which were once *supernatural*; *i. e.* beyond the conception or invention of the original strength of reason?—Truths which *still* lie out of the reach of human conception, of which sort there are undoubtedly not a few, are, and will be *supernatural* till *revealed*. But will it therefore follow; that *when* discovered they become not objects of our *natural* reason and examination? What I was not *able* to discover of myself (and all men were once upon the same footing, with respect to some particular truths with which they were afterwards made acquainted) was surely a *supernatural* discovery to *me*, when made by another person; and cannot my reason, do you think, enable me to determine rightly concerning the truth, falshood, or probability, of that with which I was thus *supernaturally* made acquainted?

And our Deist, will he dare to say, that even *Chillingworth*, and our other rational divines, are gravelled, when they come to the discussion.

discussion of this, what he calls, *unmanageable* point ; and at a loss to prove that the Scriptures are known to be the word and revelation of God, upon an *honest* investigation of mere natural reason ? (p. 25.) And shall he, with a sneer, talk of a thing ‘ being what it is, and *more* than it is at the same time ? And of a man’s having the understanding of a man, and yet discerning what is out of ‘ the reach of *human* intellectual faculties to perceive (p. 2.)?’ Why must the evidence of supernatural truths considered as above (and what other kind of *supernaturals* are there, but mere *contradictions* and *inconsistencies*, which our church absolutely disclaims ?) why must the *evidence* of *supernatural* truths, really and in fact such, be necessarily out of the reach of *human investigation* ?

But not to dwell any longer on the evidence arising from the *internal* characters of the divine pages, let us hear what our Deist would object to those *external* ones, *prophecies* and *miracles*. These, he thinks, “ even when we have reckoned up all the prophecies given by *Sybils*, *Jews*, or *Christians*, or miracles at any time wrought, fall vastly short of affording the proof or *satisfaction* to be *expected*. For *they* never, he says, can *prove*, that the collection of tracts, commonly called the Bible, were written by the persons respectively whose names they bear ; that the Deity immediately dictated to, and impressed upon the mind of each writer, the subject matter contained therein, effectually restraining each one from mixing his own conceptions with what had been thus dictated to him ; and that these books have been faithfully transmitted from their original copies, down to us, without any corruption, alteration, addition, or diminution ; and then if prophecies and miracles fall short of proving these points, which most certainly they do, *then consequently* they fall equally short of proving the Scriptures to be a divine revelation, and the very word of God (p. 26.)”

Observe

Observe now with what *ſyllogiſtic ſagacity* our Deift attempts to reaſon away the authority of holy writ. Becauſe the divine *original* of the *ſcriptures* cannot be proved by a medium, by which it was never intended it ſhould be proved, therefore it is not capable of being proved at all. He ſuppoſes that miracles and prophecies given forth by Chriſtians, Jews and Sybils, are *urged* to prove, in the firſt place, that the Scriptures were written by the very perſons whoſe names they bear; and ſecondly, that thoſe perſons were inſpired, and infallible in every word they wrote. Now if that be the caſe, he can ſurely produce ſome prophecies given *forth* by Jews, Sybils, and Chriſtians, and miracles ſomewhere wrought, to which Chriſtians refer, as what were expreſsly given or done for that very end. Till he does that, his charge is groundleſs, inſignificant, and impertinent.

But if he means to ſay, that prophecies actually *accompliſhed*, and miracles really known to be worked by thoſe very perſons under whoſe names the *Scriptures* are ſaid to be wrote, have, added to the intrinsic merit of the doctrines they enforce, a rational claim to our attention, he ſuppoſes the very fact. And if evidences ſo confirmative of their *authenticity* ſtamp not conviction in *his* breaſt, we may reaſonably conclude that *he* would not be convinced, though one *roſe from the dead* to atteſt it. And though *miracles* and *prophecies* do fall ſhort of proving that theſe books have been *faithfully tranſmitted* from their reſpective original copies down to us, without any corruption, alteration, addition, or diminution, what is that to his purpoſe, unleſs he can prove that they ever were *appealed* to for that *end*? *Parts, learning, and integrity*, are the uſually ſuppoſed requiſites for the diſcovery and removal of any difficulties of this kind, to which the Scriptures in common with other writings may reaſonably be preſumed to be ſubject. And had our Deift poſſeſſed an equal ſhare of the *latter*, with his perhaps juſt pretenſions

to the *former* of those qualifications, he would not have sunk thus low in the esteem of impartial men, as a reasoner on *revelation*.— But to proceed:—

Our Deist seems very sagaciously to imagine, that we must first prove that every *tittle* of the writings of the Old and New Testament was penned by immediate inspiration, and that the penmen deliver to us *nothing* but what was actually dictated to them by the Deity, ere we can pretend to recommend those books to the world, as an established repository of *revelation*. But this, let me tell him, was neither intended nor necessary.

The *infallible testimony* which the several writers received, and did afterwards give to the truth of the particular facts they relate, is sufficient to give them credit as *authors*, with all impartial enquirers; even allowing them, at the same time, the general fallibility of nature as men. In order to do justice to revelation, we should be careful to distinguish rightly the *man* from the *minister* of *revealed* truths, the historian from the prophet; nor expect inspiration where inspiration is out of the question. Some things are proposed to us in Scripture, as necessary objects of our *faith*; some more especially for proper guides to our moral *practice*. Of the first sort, are those particulars which the prophets and apostles received, by either an articulate sound from Heaven, or by visions and other supernatural appearances, or by prophetic suggestions of the divine spirit; the truth of which they did—What, my dear reader?—Why *either seal with their blood*, or confirm by *extraordinary miracles*. Nor will it be at all difficult to distinguish truths advanced upon the authority of *inspiration*, from those which are recommended to our notice as matters merely historical.

The sacred writers, by a more serious and sincere enquiry into the real truth of things, added to the many *extraordinary* lights they from time to time received, furnish out to us a more noble treasure of useful doctrines and maxims, than are to be drawn from the most elaborate researches of other men, the observance of which they enforce by the discovery of many important truths *supernatural*—truths not attainable by *natural reason*, which, and which *alone*, were the objects of their inspiration. Out of the four Evangelists, two of them were eye and ear witnesses of what they relate, *viz.* St. *Matthew* and St. *John*. Did they need *inspiration*, do you think, to make them write as honest men? If so, a man is a fool to believe one word of *English*, *Greek*, or *Roman* history! The two others wrote confessedly by the directions and instruction of St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*; and were equally capable of writing with historical honesty and integrity, as the former. So that it is not so necessary for the credibility of Scripture story, as our author would insinuate, that the subject-matter of it in general should be impressed on the minds of each writer; and every thing therein penned, be the result of actual immediate inspiration.

According to our present *translation* indeed, it is said, *all Scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, &c.* 2 Tim. chap. iii. v. 16. The pointing of the *original* as it stands in, among others, Beza's Translation, proves however that Θεόπνευτος here is put in *apposition* only—Πᾶσα γραφή, Θεόπνευτος, καὶ ὠφέλιμος. that καὶ, instead of *et*, is to be rendered *etiam*, with εἰ understood, the *translation* should run thus—All scripture, given by inspiration, is *even* profitable for doctrine, &c. *

* For the incorrectness and unexactness of Scripture style, and different readers, vide Dr. Brocklesby, p. 20. to 26.

The Apostle's meaning from which words is, that all Scripture given by inspiration, *i. e.* every *prophetic part* of Scripture, every prophecy given, or declaration made by those several inspired teachers and prophets, is a memento to our rational and moral conduct; and, when considered with due attention, becomes profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, &c.

But to return: "Our Deist cannot *conceive* how plain and *obvious* truths can be revealed, in a miraculous and *supernatural* manner (*ib.*).” And where, I would ask, is it required of him that he should? What more is proposed to our belief, than that some plain and *obvious* truths (truths which are the immediate object of even *natural* reason and religion) are in the sacred writings enforced by some *other supernatural* doctrines, *i. e.* doctrines so *supernaturally* made known to us, that reason alone could not *naturally* have attained to the knowledge of them—Such as God's creating, with a view of hereafter judging the world by *Jesus Christ*, his sending that very divine person among us, who one day is to be our judge, to be first our teacher and instructor, that by his life and conversation he might approve himself a complete pattern of *virtue* and *holiness* here, and by his death and resurrection, give *assurance* that he came to open to us a way to perfect bliss hereafter.

Are these, I would ask, intelligible doctrines, or are they not? And may they, or may they not be admitted into our creed, without offering any violence to our understanding? Let me, for the present, suppose our Deist to answer in the affirmative, and to admit that they are worthy and valuable truths, deserving our utmost veneration. But what then? "It cannot appear to *me*,
 " says he, that they were therefore *miraculously* and *supernaturally*
 " revealed; because, in the *first* place, they have not been *proved*
 " to

“ to be so ; and, *secondly*, because they are to be discovered to be
 “ what they are by the human understanding, in the ordinary and
 “ natural use of its faculties (p. *ib.*).”

Here I must lay before you another instance of our Deist's great talent for sophistry and false reasoning, and his dexterity in substituting splendid nonsense in the room of real argument. In the first place, nothing is to be admitted in proof of revelation, but what meets with our *Deist's* solemn sanction. Secondly, Things cannot be discovered to be what they *are*, by our understanding, and the ordinary and natural use of our faculties, if they were at *first* made known to the world in a *miraculous* and *supernatural manner*. His reasoning thus on this point, I impute to his confounding the *nature* of *revealed* truths, with the *manner* of their being conveyed. He imagines that every truth must be in fact, supernatural, *i. e.* not capable of being known to be what it is, by the *natural* use of our reasoning faculties, even *when* discovered, provided it was made known in a *manner* supernatural. He that sees not into the fallacy of this deduction, must be but little qualified to judge of the force of any argument at all.

But again.—“ As to all the mysterious and unintelligible parts
 “ of Scripture, they are the same, says our Deist, as if they were
 “ not written, as to any good purpose that can be served by them ;
 “ and to suppose that they give forth unintelligible instructions
 “ and propositions to his creatures, is to prove God, in fact, a
 “ mere *trifler*.” If by mysterious, unintelligible propositions, our Deist means such things only whose *manner* and *form* of existence are unintelligible, do but only consider, how many mysteries there are of that kind in the system of natural religion ; and then judge, whether any but such arrant triflers as *himself* will pretend to oppose them to the prejudice of revelation. Whether or no any *other* un-

intelligible

intelligible propositions have the pretended sanction of revelation, I may perhaps enquire, as I go along with our Deist's answer to a reply to the *author of Christianity not founded on argument*; which seems principally to have been the occasion of this very extraordinary treatise. The reason for it is very obvious. *That* being a book, on the credit of which the very life and soul of infidelity seemed principally to depend, it was necessary that an answer so apparently conclusive, should not pass upon the world, without meeting somewhere with an *attempt*, at least, towards a reply. But how disproportioned our Deist's abilities are to his *endeavours*, to overturn the sound reasoning of *Dr. Benson*, we shall easily see by the few following observations, which I offer not in the least in defence or vindication of the latter (for he stands in no need of any) but to expose the gross sophistry of the former. The Doctor speaks truth, honesty, and integrity in every page, and flashes unwilling conviction even in the face of our Deist, as appears from the various subterfuges to which he is forced to have such frequent recourse.

It having been asserted, that the rational divines prove all things, and hold fast that which is good, and that what is good in all cases may readily be distinguished from what is evil*, “the inference which our sagacious author draws therefrom, is, that as in mere matters of morality, only reason can readily distinguish what is morally good from what is morally evil,—such matters only can, he says, according to this way of arguing, be cases of importance, that is, with regard to the favour of God and eternal salvation (p. 31.)” Here our Deist thinks he has drawn such a conclusion from his antagonist's mode of reasoning, as must necessarily bring him under difficulties insurmountable; and disable him from proving matters of *faith* to be matters of importance.

* Vid. Benson's Reasonableness of Christian Religion, p.

But I would ask, whether it is not the united opinion of the whole body of rational divines, that morality is one principal end of Christianity? And if so, must not the means conducive to that end, such as are its articles of faith and positive precepts, be proportionably important too? (*vide supra* p. 47.) And can you, I would ask, separate with any manner of propriety a belief of truths revealed by the *immediate direction of God*, (and not *natural* objects, perhaps, of our notice) from the catalogue of *moral* duties? But “how, says the Deist, does it appear, that the grand articles of Christianity, when they are now no more to be judged of by human powers, than they were before to be found out by them, are matters of importance? And how can things with propriety be said to be revealed to the human race, of which man has no faculty of forming an adequate idea or judgment? (p. 34.)”

What gave occasion to this query, was, an insinuation that without the Scripture, reason, or men's natural faculties, would never have found out many things that are revealed in the Bible.* It may be true, that many things revealed to us in the Gospel, could not have been *found* out by the unassisted powers of human reason; but as I observed before (p. 90.) no conclusion can be drawn from that conception, that now they *are* discovered, they become not objects of our examination. Till that assertion can be disproved, the wretched cavil merits only our contempt. But then, says he, “to talk of a revelation of things to man, in aid of reason, which though easily understood, yet reason cannot discover any proper use that can be made of them, is alike absurd and contradictory. But so absurd and contradictory a declaration is this, says he, that God will judge the world by Jesus Christ. This, says he, does not appear to have any foundation in reason or nature;:

* Vid. Ben. p. 90, 91.

“ nor is there any principle or premises from whence they may be
 “ drawn. God will judge the world in righteousness, and it is a
 “ matter of indifference to the creature by *whom*. And as reason
 “ cannot make any improvement of this doctrine, how can it be
 “ said, with either propriety or truth, that it was given in aid of it
 “ (p. 35.)”

Because a deist can make no improvement of this doctrine, is it therefore evident that nobody else can? or that what he himself may advance on that head, does actually proceed from the suggestions of reason, and not rather from some principle which best suits him, for the present, to substitute in its room? Is it not some confirmed prejudice, some inveterate obstinacy lying in the way *between* reason and conviction, which hinders *him* from reaping that advantage from the declaration of God's judging the world, by Jesus Christ that he otherwise might?

“ Admitting it to be a truth, that God will judge the world by
 “ Jesus Christ, of what more consequence to the world in general,
 “ says he, is the knowledge of this truth, than that there being a
 “ burning mountain in the kingdom of *Naples*, is an advantage to
 “ the people of *England*? Then this is a just objection, says he,
 “ against the divinity of this doctrine, because it is greatly impro-
 “ bable, that God should specially interpose to acquaint the world
 “ with this, or any other truth, the knowledge of which mankind
 “ would do altogether as well without (p. *ib.*)”

There cannot be required plainer proofs of the desperate state of our Ceist's cause, than are the mean artifices to which he thinks it necessary to have recourse for its support. Like a fox, well nigh run down by his pursuers, and unable any longer to trust to a fair and open chace, he begins to practise at last all the little shifts and doubles he can make, to protract, though but for a moment, the fate
 he

he sees unhappily approaching. Had this circumstance of God's judging the world by *Jesus Christ* been omitted, and nothing more had been observed concerning the *distribution* of rewards and *punishments* in another state, than that such a state would one time or another commence—how natural would it have been for men to have enquired how it came to pass, that revelation, the principal business and boasted merit of which is its making discoveries not attainable solely by reason, should yet leave us so much in the dark, as is here supposed, in a matter of such great moment?

The time *when*, the manner *how*, and the person by *whom* this grand affair is at last to be conducted, are circumstances of information, which every *right reasoner* would naturally have expected from revelation; nor do I believe, that even the deists would have been the last to have complained of such deficiency.—And if such be their hardened insensibility and ingratitude, as that instead of its being a motive to their praise and thanksgiving, they make this so material a discovery an additional argument to support them in their presumptuous infidelity—I judge them not—there is one that judgeth—even that same *Jesus* whom they despise.

As for those twelve propositions, which our Deist has introduced with such an air of solemnity and importance, it may be but justice to him and to the reader, to transcribe them, that the latter may make what advantage from them he can (p. 37, 38, 39, 40.*.)

I own

* 1. That the first cause of all things is a being, not only of the most boundless power, but also of the most unlimited and perfect reason or understanding.

2. That in nature, there is the right and the wrong, of every case that can possibly exist, or result from the infinitely various positions and modifications of either simple or complex ideas, propositions, or things, at least, of all those cases that right and wrong can possibly be relative to.

I own, that I think eleven out of the twelve might have been spared, and that the *last* is the only one which affords matter for a serious attention. But this I leave to your consideration, whilst I hasten to investigate *that* which our author seemed to intend as a corollary.

3. It may fairly be presumed, that infinite reason is alone capable of distinguishing unerringly, betwixt right and wrong, in all and every of that infinite variety of cases that ever has, does, or can possibly exist.

4. How far each individual of the human species can, or may in reason and equity be expected, to go in conformity to the immutable laws of rectitude in judgment and in practice, is probably only known to God; and as we cannot know, so we ought not to presume to determine concerning it.

5. How deficient soever we are in the knowledge of nature, of each others intellectual abilities and moral conduct, much more of the abstract nature and perfections of God; yet we are, in general, as certain as we are of the existence of such a being, that he is possessed of every possible perfection, and will not in the least deviate in his conduct from perfect rectitude.

6. Therefore if God will require a perfection of God (if I may express it thus) from his imperfect creatures, but in proportion to the perfection of their reason; for to produce a rectitude of manners more perfect or conformable to truth than they have reason or understanding to direct them to, is impossible.

7. To govern our conduct by our reason is our duty, and is all God requires of us; and to neglect to regulate our conduct by our reason, in that proportion which God has been pleased to dispense it to us, is criminal, or blame-worthy.

8. As there is no individual of our species, but what has been more or less guilty of deviating from the rule prescribed him by his reason, either the whole species are unpardonably guilty before God, or else repentance and reformation are the means of reconciliation with him, and of restoring us to his favour.

9. That repentance and reformation are the natural means of reconciling us to God, when we are conscious of our having offended him, is manifest, from their being invariably recommended to us by our reason on all such occasions, as the means proper for effecting it; for were the case otherwise, they could not be dictated by reason, as a means to that end; because had they not a natural tendency to answer the end, they would be unfit for our use, on account of their significancy; and to make use of insignificant means, is a preposterous and unwarrantable conduct; and to suppose what is preposterous and unwarrantable can be the dictate of reason, is absurd and a direct contradiction.

10. Therefore to repent of what, upon a cool review of our conduct, appears to be criminal, and to reform it, is a detail of our reason, is what God the author of our being requires of us, in order for us to do on our parts what he knows to be necessary to our happiness.

lary to all the rest, which is this: “ All other means, says he, (be-
 “ sides reason) for procuring happiness, that either have, are, or
 “ may be deemed necessary, and made use of as such, by Jews, Pa-
 “ gans, Christians, Mahometans, or others, are unnatural and
 “ foreign to the purpose, and consequently are superfluous and
 “ downright superstition.”

If our author will give me leave to except two out of the four institutions, above mentioned, I will, from my soul, join issue with him at once—But can he see no difference in point of importance, between the Christian and Jewish dispensation, and the Heathen and Mahometan rituals of religion? A set of words jumbled together into such a confused inconsistent mixture of ideas, can be paralleled only by the celebrated *Bos, Fur, Sus, atque Sacerdos*, in the mouth of every school-boy. But that the Deist might not be thought to give the preference, among this medley of dispensations, to that which we call the *Christian*, he tells you at once, that the “ supposed satisfaction for sin, by Christ’s death, is a doctrine “ entirely repugnant to reason, and as such, to be rejected with “ scorn (p. 41).”

Whether it is, or is not an absurd doctrine, it is not my business to enquire, till it can be made clear to me, that the *Scriptures* advance that, or any other doctrine, in the *absurd* sense, he or some others, may happen to *suppose* they do. I only desire it to be considered, that so far are articles of religion, supposed by *our* church

11. If God requires and directs us by reason and conscience, to perform what he knows is necessary to our happiness, he will certainly do on his part what he knows is necessary to the end, *viz.* forgive us our sins, and re-instate us in his favour. And *if* so, then,

12. All other means that either have, are, or may be deemed necessary, and made use of as such, by Jews, Pagans, Christians, Mahometans, or others, are unnatural and foreign to the purpose; and consequently are superfluous and downright superstition.

to be obligatory upon our *faith*, and no farther, than as they consist with the dictates of *right reason*; and that therefore let this or that particular doctrine be enjoined by a *Luther*, a *Calvin*, or a *Pemble*, as essential to salvation; let the tenets of a *Whitefield* or a *Wesley* captivate the giddy minds of the vulgar, and draw them into absurdities (*supposing*, I say, *that to be the case*) Christianity never meant to establish, must all or either of those *supposed irreconcilables* be made *reconcilable* with right reason, or *revelation* be no more? And must Christianity itself be a cheat, because perhaps there are those, among its several interpreters and expositors, who would cheat men out of their *reason*, in order to palm upon them their own enthusiastic *antichristian* extravaganzas, for sound, genuine revelation-tenets? The *Magna Charta* of a Christian is the Bible, with this *peculiar* circumstance attending it, that *no power* on earth can claim a *right* to add to or diminish from it. Here then let God and the Scriptures be true, and every man, every wrong-headed commentator a liar; nor think we that because perhaps some doctrines, *unwarrantably* drawn from scripture, are in reality *superrational* and *supernatural*, that therefore *genuine, unsophisticated* Christianity is neither rational or natural.

“ But how, says the Deist, can revelation be said, or at least
 “ proved, to be an aid to human reason, when so many various
 “ and even contradictory *interpretations* are put on several great
 “ and important passages in it? And how does it appear that those
 “ who so much value themselves upon their being possessed of this
 “ glorious additional talent, have been so much *aided* in the right
 “ use of their natural reason, and lessening the perversion and abuse
 “ of it, as might well be expected from the pompous representation
 “ and high character that has been given of it? (p. 42, 43).”

When we talk of *revelation* as an aid to *human reason*, we can only mean that the one has made (as I have before observed) discoveries which the other was inadequate to, in its *depraved* state of nature; and

that a collection of writings (containing such a revelation) may have been preserved to us for that purpose, I see no manner of reason to dispute; but that those writings should not in some degree share the fate of *others*, and like them be *capable* of being misinterpreted or misapplied by the ignorance, pride, and prejudice, inherent in the frame of some, or by the dishonest and disingenuous perversion of parts in others, I can see no manner of reason to admit: or again that there is a greater obscurity in the *sacred* than is observable upon the whole, in what we call *profane* writers; but whilst there are those not only of different parts, capacities, skill in languages, but of different *sects* and *parties* also who, instead of *searching* the Scriptures for a discovery of what is *really* contained in them, hunt only for a support of preconceived prejudices *against* them, who can wonder “*if such are not aided in the right use of their natural reason and the lessening the perversion of it,*” as our author thinks might be expected?

But then how comes it to pass, says the Deist, if Revelation “*was intended in fact to restrain men from vice in general, and of consequence those prejudices and partialities above-mentioned, how comes it that such prejudices and prepossessions should yet abound? And why if it was intended to aid men in the right use of their natural reason, and lessening the perversion and abuse of it, has it proved so manifestly insufficient for those ends?* (p. 47.)”

If a *guide* to men's actions must necessarily *govern* them too, there might perhaps be some weight in the objection; though that would lie equally strong against *reason*, the Deist's unerring guide—And in fact so long as we admit the free agency of mankind, no argument can be drawn to the prejudice of revelation from the perverse uses it is put to. “*But yet it is said, whoever takes a view*”
 “*of*”

“ of the Christian world, and beholds the abominable wickedness
 “ that has rode triumphant in it, as well in past as present times,
 “ and observes how the Christian religion, and what is called the
 “ Christian revelation, has been made a cover and a pretext to the
 “ most base and vile designs, will see the justness of this reflection,
 “ that if revelation came in aid of reason there very much needs
 “ another revelation to be given in aid of both. And though Chri-
 “ stians are apt to boast of the great benefit that has accrued to man-
 “ kind by the promulgation of the Christian revelation; yet it is
 “ much to be questioned whether the poor *Americans* have not too
 “ much reason to consider the coming of Christians, and the Chri-
 “ stian religion among them, to have been the greatest evil and curse
 “ that ever befel them, and that not only on account of the mil-
 “ lions of people among them who have fallen a sacrifice to Chri-
 “ stian piety and zeal, but on account of that perfidiousness and
 “ baseness, and that much greater degeneracy of action and affection
 “ that has taken place and prevailed among them since the intro-
 “ duction of Christianity (p. 48.).”

As for the bad *methods* taken to establish Christianity in *America*, or elsewhere, it is very sufficient, I imagine, to observe upon that subject, that *Christianity* is no more answerable for *them*, than *right reason* was for the practice among heathens of offering up their sons and their daughters unto devils; and consequently that the deist's reflections on this head are as foreign to his purpose, as were those practices to which he alludes. There are, what even Mr. Chubb allows, many bad things practised by *Christians*, which are not the *natural* produce of, and should therefore not be placed to the account of, the *general plan* of the Christian cause.—But to proceed now to some notable remarks of our *Deist*, on this truly noble declaration, that “ reason is the inseparable as well as peculiar glory of every intelligent being.”

“ Reason,

“ Reason, says he, is the idol the Doctor chooses to bow down to.” I much wish the Deist had not offered incense to a much worse. Let us however hear what he has to say upon that point. “ If reason, says he, is the inseparable as well as peculiar glory of every intelligent being, then it must be a sufficient guide to every intelligent being in all momentous affairs;” and then, after some of the most refined *nothingness* I ever read (p. 52.) he draws the following conclusions as deducible from the Doctor’s account. 1st, “ That reason is the glory. 2dly, The inseparable glory; and 3dly, The peculiar glory of every intelligent being.” And how gloriously he reasons on those separate degrees of glory conferred on human reason, our author’s own words in his 53d and 54th pages, which I chuse to submit to the reader’s observation in a note below*, whilst I pass on to another remark on his antagonist shew sufficiently.

“ Reason

* *First*, If reason be the glory of an intelligent being, it is so because it is that by which alone he is capable of justly arranging his ideas, and perceiving their agreement or disagreement, and thereby of distinguishing betwixt truth and falsehood, good and evil, in all those things in which his duty and happiness are concerned; and consequently whatever knowledge is useful in these respects, it is only to be obtained by the due use of his reason or understanding. *Secondly*, If reason be a glory inseparable from an intelligent being, it could never, at any time, by any means, much less by the transgression of any one individual of the species, have been separated from the whole human race, without sinking the property of intelligence to the species (which is not pretended) because while any one continues an intelligent being, he must continue to be possessed of every property essential to intelligence; and reason being so specifically essential to it (in that higher sense in which Dr. *Benson* uses the term intelligence) that a being void of reason cannot with any propriety be denominated intelligent: and therefore a being void of reason, that is, void of a capacity of ratiocination, which will enable him to perceive the connection or repugnance of his own ideas, when under a proper arrangement, and to draw just and natural conclusions from their proper premises; such a being cannot be accountable for the use or abuse of a faculty which he has not, nor will God expect the performance of duties proper to intelligent beings at such a one’s hands. *Thirdly*, If reason be the peculiar glory of every intelligent being, then it must be the peculiar glory of the first principle of life and intelligence. And hence it evidently follows, that

“ Reason was not designed, says the Doctor, like our cloaths, to be put on and off at pleasure, but it was intended for constant and perpetual use; and which we ought to make use of, not only in the affairs of this life, but much more in religious affairs, which are of the highest importance. But alas! alas! says our author, it is a certain, though melancholy truth, though reason was not designed, like our cloaths, to be put on and off at pleasure; yet that *some* of our sanguine divines, like labourers in summer, throw off their cloaths the better to perform the task assigned them; they cast off their reason the better to reproach and *vilify* their innocent neighbours for not blindly submitting to their duties (p. 55.)”

Had the deists in return but luckily put *on* their reason in examining the grounds of revelation, they neither would have minded nor merited those revilings. And if this great champion in the cause of deism, whilst he so studiously avoided splitting on the rock of enthusiasm and superstition, had not struck on the sands of blasphemy and profaneness, but steered judiciously between the two extremes, *he* would have made a much safer and more reputable passage through life. If others have deduced from Christianity doctrines Christianity never meant to establish, their weakness or wickedness be to themselves. But will that lessen *his* guilt in not attending with proper deference to the declarations it *really* makes? If God has thought fit to propose to our faith a system of truths truly rational and interesting, becoming the Creator to establish, and his creatures to embrace and reverence (and be it an unquestionable truth that he has not, or the deists *unquestionably* throw aside

if reason be the peculiar glory of the Creator, then it must be the peculiar glory of the creature, in the respective proportionate degree in which he possessed it; and that nothing which he is or can be possessed of besides, *can*, abstractedly considered, be equal, much less of superior glory to him.

their

their reason in rejecting revelation) must those important truths be overlooked, because others perhaps have annexed to them absurdities and inconsistencies of their own *framing*? Must the original dispensation be despised because it has at times suffered the abuses of priestcraft and enthusiasm? And what if some call it a promulgation of the law of nature, and others a superadded revelation? What if sometimes it is one and sometimes it is the other, which deists, with a sneer, observe to be the case? (p. 55.) What! does this, I would ask, make revelation not revelation? There is something in brutes that unaccountably determines and enables them to provide for the welfare of themselves and their offspring.—Some call it instinct, some reason, some a divine impulse. Sometimes it is one, and sometimes it is the other.—But what then? Shall we dispute a known fact? Deny that there is something equivalent to an *intelligent* principle in brutes, because we want a name by which to distinguish it from the reason of *man*?—The end, in short, proposed by an institution (not the *name* by which it is called, no nor the bad *uses* to which it is put) will alone determine a rational man to approve or reject it. And as revelation was intended to promote the practice of true religion, it matters not by what particular name you dignify or distinguish it. It is sufficient (in negative duty I mean) if you do not disown, dishonour, or deride it. But to return—

It has been asserted, “that the more the works of creation and Providence are searched into and understood, the more they confirm the truth of the Christian religion, and add such supports and evidences as could hardly be expected or believed (p. 151.)” Our Deist’s remark on this assertion is so very disingenuous and dishonest, that I scarce can have patience to bestow any notice on it; and yet I know not how, totally, to pass it over in silence.

“ If, says he, the consideration of the works of the creation must enable us to draw *such* conclusions from them, as give a proper proof of the divinity of the doctrine of the *trinity*, the *hypostatic union*, and all such other *supernatural* doctrines and precepts, as constitute the Christian religion, properly so called, it can work wonders indeed; to which, says he, I may add the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, the truth and divinity of which is as provable from the works of creation as the others. And if reason is sufficient for these things, then what is it not sufficient for? (p. 58.)”

If the Deist had been so just to his antagonist as to have given his words a fair introduction, and not disjoined them from the main argument he was upon, the inference he has drawn from them would have been too glaringly inconclusive for the most hasty reader not to take notice of it; so that he very modestly waves doing the one, the better to disguise his cunning craftiness in the other.

“ Dr. *Benson* having previously observed, that those profound searches into the cause of things, and the formation of the world, made by such great men as Dr. *Clark*, Dr. *Derham*, and Mr. *Ray*, &c. had added strength to the more common arguments brought in support of religion, adds—that the more the works of creation and Providence are searched into and understood, the more they confirm the truth of the Christian religion; and add such supports and evidences as could hardly be expected or believed. If so, says our author, they must necessarily prove the doctrine of the *trinity*, *hypostatic union*, *transubstantiation*, or the like; and if reason is sufficient for these things, what is it not sufficient for?”

Why,

Why, it is not sufficient to make a man *honest* who is *determined* to be a knave. Excuse the warmth of the reply, to which I am provoked by our author's scandalous subterfuge. The Doctor's design, in the passages quoted above, was, to shew how learned men had fully answered objections and difficulties started by unbelievers; "by leading them into arguments of a more abstract speculative kind; such as the creation of the world, the eternal fitness of things, moral differences of actions, moral obligations, and the like, the former of which being more distinctly explained and expatiated on by the help of revelation, and the latter shewn so entirely to coincide with the end of Christ's coming, served, as he very justly apprehended, to furnish out such additional supports for the truths of Christianity, as could hardly have been imagined by men not attentive to such reflections." How our author therefore can be justified in his laboured *conclusion* from these passages concerning the doctrine of the *trinity*, the *hypostatic* union, or the like, I leave only to common sense and common *honesty* to determine.

In page 59, our author quotes as follows, from his antagonist. "As the Gospel, says the Doctor, (p. 233.) was a matter of pure revelation, St. Paul was in the right of it not to mix his human learning with it; but faithfully to preach the Gospel in that purity and simplicity in which he had received it from Christ. Our Deist's conclusion from these words is, that natural philosophy or human learning cannot be exercised about it without corrupting and defiling it; and that therefore the Doctor had gone beyond himself, and has carried the matter too far (p. *ibid.*)." .

Whether his antagonist or our Deist is guilty of the mistake of going beyond himself, and carrying the matter too far, I will appeal

to the judgment of the reader on what follows, which, though an altercation between the Deist and the Doctor merely personal, will be thought, I imagine, upon a perusal, not altogether unimportant as to the subject matter of it. “ If, says our Deist, reason is capable of drawing such conclusions from the works of creation and Providence in favour of Christianity as aforesaid, then St. Paul, not using it to answer that purpose, must render him not commendable, but on the contrary greatly blameable. For when he went from place to place preaching the Gospel at *Thessalonica*, at *Berea*, and elsewhere, nothing could have been more proper, nor was better adapted to answer the purpose of his ministry, *viz.* the working conviction and the conversion of his hearers, than for him to have exemplified his human wisdom and skill in natural philosophy, by drawing those conclusions and thereby producing those evidences from the works of creation and Providence as proved the truth and divinity of what he exhibited to his respective evidences (p. 60, 61).”

If our author had not stopt short in his quotation from his antagonist, he could have found no reason for this objection; it being most solidly obviated by the Doctor’s own words immediately subjoined. “ As the Gospel, says the Doctor, was a matter of pure revelation, St. Paul was in the right of it not to mix his human learning with it, &c. For, when he could work miracles, and enable others to work miracles, he had a much shorter and more effectual method of making converts and establishing them in the faith, than from any thing he had learned in the school of *Tarsus*, or at the feet of *Gamaliel* in *Jerusalem*. In renouncing his human learning, he did not renounce common sense. But human learning could be of no service to an Apostle to make him master of the Gospel, or to enable him to work miracles, though it may be of great service to us if it be made right use of (p. 234).”

The Apostles, says Dr. *Benson* again (p. 221.) “ took quite
 “ another method to prove the truth of Christianity. They did
 “ indeed make their appeals to *men's* understanding, but in a diffe-
 “ rent way from modern apologists—being endued with readier and
 “ more decisive means of conviction, more suitable to the apostolic
 “ character, to the bulk of mankind, and to their own necessary
 “ course of dispatch. They grounded Christianity upon facts,
 “ they wrought miracles before the faces of their hearers, in proof
 “ of a divine commission; and then conferred upon the converts
 “ miraculous powers; these were immediate appeals to men's
 “ senses, and what the lowest of the people could judge of, and
 “ reason from.” What is this but dealing with mankind suitably
 to their intelligent nature? (of which deists affect to urge the
 necessity, p. 61.) What is this but making “ an appeal to their
 “ understanding, requiring their assent in a proper way, and bind-
 “ ing them with the cords of a man? (p. *ib.*)”

But again, Dr. *Benson* says (p. 27.) “ Are not these moral vir-
 “ tues (which are the *principal* things in Christianity) the very
 “ things which all true philosophers have ever attempted to re-
 “ commend? Can any thing be more worthy of God, than giv-
 “ ing men such a revelation, when men had confessedly corrupted
 “ themselves, and that to such a degree, that not only reason
 “ or the light of nature was altogether unlikely to restore true
 “ piety, but even that light itself, as *Tully* expressly acknow-
 “ ledged, did no where appear.” And then it being urged by
 the author of Christianity, whom he was then answering, that
 when Christianity appeared, it was an enquiring age, he answers
 (p. 134.) “ Suppose we allow it, as we readily do? What then?
 “ What would he infer from that? The Gospel spread in that
 “ enquiring age, when, as he asserts, reason was in the highest
 “ request

“ request and reputation, and spread with most amazing swiftness.”

Now comes the most bare-faced misrepresentation of a man’s argument, that a writer can become capable of exhibiting. “ The Doctor, says our Deist, has averred, that the Gospel is a matter of pure revelation, and also, that the principal things in Christianity are the very things which all true philosophy has ever attempted to recommend. Again he informs us, that the world was in that profound darkness, when Christianity first made its appearance in it, that reason or the light of nature did no where appear; and yet he informs us, it every where shone forth in that remarkably happy age, with such resplendency and lustre, that reason was in the highest request and reputation.” Good God, says he, is such confusion possible ?

Such a heavy charge of confusion and contradiction, so *confidently* brought by our author against Dr. *Benson*, was, I doubt not, implicitly admitted by every *Deistical* reader as, among others, one demonstrable proof of their *patron’s* most profound penetration.

And yet what more or less does it amount to, than a fresh display of his usual dexterity in the exercise of his profession, as a dealer in sophistry and misquotations, which he artfully gilds over with a few gewgaw expressions, in order to dazzle the eyes, whilst he is playing upon and misleading the *understanding* of his readers.—He cannot perceive how the Gospel can be a pure revelation, and yet contain things which every philosopher has attempted to recommend?—Had it been said, that the Gospel contains those things *only*, which every philosopher attempts

tempts to recommend, there might, perhaps, have been some foundation for our author's critical dissatisfaction and seeming astonishment.

But what if, beside those duties which Christians and philosophers *unite* in recommending, there are contained, in the *Gospel*, motives to the *practice* of them, which neither did or could arise solely from the *religion of reason and nature*. This and this only the Doctor supposes to be the case, and had the Deist viewed the *Doctor* in that fair, intelligible and rational sense, he might, in some degree have saved his own reputation as a reasoner, whilst he is thus fruitlessly endeavouring to pull down the *envied* merit of Dr. *Benson*.

But hold, say you,—your friend the Doctor is not to get cleared from the charge of absurdity and confusion so easily as you imagine. For, says our author, *he* informs us, that the world was in that profound ignorance, when Christianity first made its appearance in it, that reason or the light of nature did no where *appear*; and yet *he* informs us, that it every where shone, &c. He! Who? What the Doctor? Why truly, no.—

But the Deist, finding that the Doctor could not become absurd of himself, and without *his* assistance very charitably helps him out with a few words of his own, so artfully slid in, that estimating *aright*, the *penetrating* powers of his *admirers*, and trusting *ambidexter-like* to a judicious management of a single *article* only, he aims—alas, how unsuccessfully! to *disarm* the Doctor in a trice.

If you refer to the Doctor in p. 134, you will find he is only arguing from *this* concession, which for argument sake he had a
mind

mind to allow the *author of Christianity not founded, &c. viz.* That when Christianity first appeared, it was an enquiring age. And what, says the Doctor, would *he* infer from that concession? The Gospel spread in that enquiring age, when, as *he* asserts, (who asserts? Does the Doctor assert it? Is *he* not evidently talking of the assertion of the author of Christianity not founded, &c.—Shameful!) reason was in the highest request and reputation, though he before had declared, it did no where appear. Is such a groundless *charge* of confusion in an antagonist *possible!* Is it possible, in short, that a man can boast being actuated by the *religion of reason and nature*, and be so shamefully deficient in moral *honesty* in his writings? Or is it possible, that *you*, my friend, should sacrifice your reason to an implicit faith in so presumptuous, so prevaricating a *dictator?* But to proceed—

In answer to an observation, that reason is of constant and perpetual use in all things concerning Christianity in particular, our author asks, “Where is the man that durst, on the principles of pure reason, attempt to prove, so as to convince the understanding of another man, that an unoriginated, uncompounded, immaterial, and pure spirit, should, *like* one of the derived, compounded, material, human species, have a son?”

And I in return ask, where is the Christian, &c. that believes or would wish to promote such a doctrine?—*viz.* that such an unoriginated, &c. being, has a *son like*, or begotten *after the manner* of one of the derived, compounded, material, human species? I would gladly know from what corner of the world, from what synod, or council, or established creed, has our Deist picked up that secret? Into what *Creed-monger's* cabinet council has *he* been admitted?

But

But I will not enlarge on this point till I have considered another charge brought against the Doctor as a *trifler*. “When some of those doctrines that are peculiarly Christian were brought on the carpet, and it became the Doctor’s present business in his answer to the author of Christianity not founded on argument, to shew or prove them to be all reasonable, he instead of that only asks, says our author, are not all these things highly reasonable? and there he stops short of his excuse—he forbore to enlarge, for fear he should seem tedious, which his not having done, proves that his book is all waste paper (p. 66.)”—so that in order to avoid wasting pen, ink, and paper, you must, it seems, trifle with your readers all you can—must amuse them at all events, though it be even with words no ways *necessary* to the purpose.

The point upon which our author thinks the Doctor *ought to have enlarged*, he thinks not at all to his *purpose*; but *because* he has not so done, all he has wrote on that head is waste paper. This is a conclusion which our Deist had an eye to as of consequence, I presume, to himself; well considering that if talking not at all to the purpose would preserve a book from the scurvy fate of waste paper, his own famous work would stand as fair a chance for immortality as any book whatsoever. But the argument against the Doctor is—that when he asked whether all the doctrines of revelation were not reasonable, he did not take upon him to prove to our *Deists* that they *were* so.

The internal evidences of the truth of Christianity are these, says the Doctor (p. 21, 22.) *viz.* “that both the doctrines and precepts of Christianity (if we take the scriptural account of them) are highly wise and reasonable.” Let our Deist, if he can, prove the contrary.

Not to waste, however, yours or my own time any longer on our author's *inconsistent* attempt to *do away* the *necessity*, the *importance*, the *glory* of the *Gospel dispensation*—sophistry not solid reasoning being his *fort*—I now take my leave of him, little or nothing more occurring in the subsequent pages of his Treatise, than a very laboured endeavour to prove, that if the “*Koran is false, the Gospel of Christ cannot be proved true, without subjecting the Deity to an impeachment of partiality towards his creatures inconsistent with our ideas of infinite rectitude**.”

I cannot however close this *Address* to you, my dear Sir, without reminding you, in the first place, that the derisive insults with which the *Deists* treat the *Christian dispensation*, are so many concurrent completions of that express Scripture prophecy, viz. *that there should be mockers in the last days :---denying the Lord Jesus that bought them---and secondly, that they will, as we may reasonably conclude, share the fate of those of whom the Psalmist speaks---He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh---the Lord shall have them in derision.*

* See from p. 80, to p. 90.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours, &c.

F I N I S.

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